

APPROPRI-ACTION BEHAVIOUR
CAMP VERSATILY
CONTAMINATION CONNECTIVITY
PATTERNS HAPTIC
TRANSFORMABILITY DECOR.ACTION
INFRA-MALL IN-BETWEEN
LANDSCAPES MEMORIALISED
EPHEMERAL NATURE
PLACES PERFORMATIVITY
THEATRICALITY PROSTHESIS
NEARNESS TRANSGRESSIVE
HOMELY CITY **INSIDE**
LAYERS VISTA
ASSEMBLAGE NETWORK
THRESHOLD CON.NO.TA.TION
WORDS ELEGANCE
INTERACTION
FETISH TRANSITION
INTERIORITY HYBRID
OPENING INHABITING
PERFORMANCE BOUNDARIES
PROGRAMS CONFIGURATION
CONTEXTILE SHELTER
SHelter MONTAGE
MONTAGE PERMEABLE
UNITY PAPERSPACE
POETRY SURFACE
REPRESENTATION PATHS
TEMPORALITY EXPERIENCE
EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATION
CROSSING TRADITION OBJECT
TRADITION COLOURS STRUCTURE
COLOURS RE-FUNCTION
HOME PRIVACY
PRIVACY INTERIOR WOR(L)DS *

Luca Basso Peressut
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with
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INTERIOR WOR(L)DS *

INTERIOR WOR(L)DS. This publication wants to outline, in one single narrations made of various contributions, the complex scenery of contemporary Interiors by means of words that best characterize them. Words denominate things, words tell stories, word open to other worlds and to different ways of thinking. We also wish to understand, discuss, and compare everyone's notes without any need of traditional classification. While going around, words spread ideas and stimulate images. In a steady process of self-reinvention, words are never definitive and fixed, on the contrary free and open to change. Words represent things and things can be an instrument to create new stories and ideas. As words transform with time in any society, country or economy we should look for the "key words" of Interiors: we will freeze-frame certain ideas, by clarifying and asserting them – always remembering they belong to an open panorama of thought.

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ATMOSPHERE **LIGHT**
BODY HOSPITALITY
EXPERIMENTATION MEMORY
COMPOSITION PROPORTION
INCLUSION FLEXIBILITY **SKIN**
FLEXIBILITY MEETING TECHNOLOGY
MEETING ARTIFICE MOVEMENT
ARTIFICE DEPTH SUSTAINABLE
DEPTH RE-USE PERCEPTION



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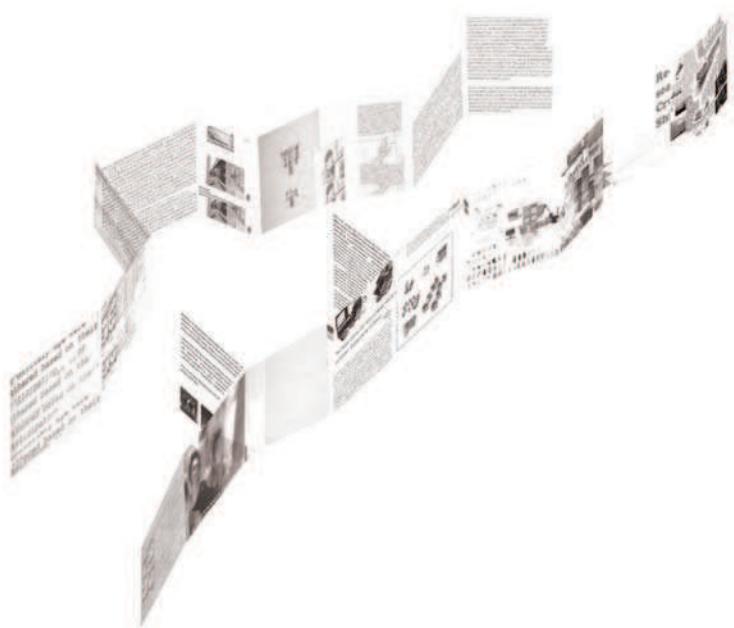
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Foreword

The editors

The transformations which now affect contemporary society require a critical review of the ground rules that apply to architecture and interior design as disciplines and to the articulations between the two, as they face the challenge of today's new and more complex forms of social organization. A prominent part of that review is due to the critical research activity which has been developed both oncontemporary and historical architecture. A contribution was also given by "Research by Design", where the beginnings of a radical approach in the critical investigation of Architecture, starting from Interiors, are immediately apparent. Teaching and research activities are showing signs of change in their focus, which is no longer Interior Architecture in its classical manifestation (rooms, for instance) but also Built Environment, Public Spaces and Dwelling, as expressive surroundings of our collective and private lives. Such considerations can provide materials and be a stimulus for a worthwhile reflection on needs, methods, aims andcontents of this beautiful field. Our discussions on ideas, concepts and thoughts concerning Interiors are contained and expressed in a series of key words which describe basic characteristics and which mould and re-mould what we refer to as "Interior Wor(l)ds". This publication wants to outline, in one single narrations made of various contributions, the complex scenery of contemporary Interiors by means of words that best characterize them. Words denominate things, words tell stories, word open to other worlds and to different ways of thinking. We also wish to understand, discuss, and compare everyone's notes without any need of traditional classification. While going around, words spread ideas and stimulate images. In a steady process of self-reinvention, words are never definitive and fixed, on the contrary free and open to change. Words represent things and things can be an instrument to create new stories and ideas. As words transform with time in any society, country or economy we should look for the "key words" of Interiors: we will freeze-frame certain ideas, by clarifying and asserting them – always remembering they belong to an open panorama of thought.



Atopic interiors

Aristide Antonas
University of Thessaly (Greece)

The interior of an archive

A technical sophistication within the public sphere created some years ago a type of residence in particular archived spaces. Residing in an archive is more than ever before a condition of everyday life. This archive's interior gives shape to the architectonic character of meeting places. "The" archive we are referring to, mostly realized on the Internet, organized some interior spaces of its own; at the same time it produced another "natural environment", and another "administrator of immediacy": other conceptualizations of what can be understood as the exterior of this archived invisible "chora". When we refer to a natural environment or to the immediacy of human attitudes, we have to pass through the concepts of the archive, in order to construct the meaning of the words. The constitution of the Internet created a new type of archivisation of the world that has its political and architectonic significance.

Some months ago, trying to describe some of the characteristics of the "cities" we live in, I claimed that the public sphere, which may be understood as an urban space, is organized hastily and impatiently in the way an infrastructure is built. (1) The archival constitution of the public sphere offers to the human sociality a particular scene: the actions of this scene are either recorded or recordable; a meeting corresponds to a gathering around deposited entries; an event in the archive is an open possibility for a deposition of some data in some platforms. The rooms in which we mostly meet in 2010 are not materially built. But neither are virtual, represented rooms such as those of *Second Life* or any other "illusionary pseudo empirical" spaces. We could then rethink the meaning of "interior space" after experiencing the spread of formed, banal meeting frameworks such as the descendants of the web as a tradition: Google Talk, Facebook, Twitter or the storage frameworks that work as communication meeting points, such as the data repositories of Youtube, Vimeo, Flickr, My Space or some existing commercial frameworks (such as Ebay). Moreover, within the inner space prescribed by these

Fig. 1.
Aristide Antonas, *The Screen Wall house*.
The material condition of residing within the Internet archive as an architectonic proposal.

(1) Antonas 2010, 20.

(2) The control panel of Paris water network described by Bruno Latour may serve as a guide to those regulatory platforms of an infrastructure.

In his Paris Invisible City, plan 18, Latour is talking about any “modernized” city on the planet, perhaps about the city par excellence of a “homogenized world”: “Is it water that flows through this immense control panel on which different colored lights correspond to altitudes? Of course not, it’s signals sent by sensors connected to the sluices – other paper slips, assembled by decentralized computers to which the most local regulations have been delegated by software.

In addition to the flow of water in the pipes, we need the circulation of signs in wire networks. Water leakages must be avoided; data leakages must be mopped up. A neighborhood of Paris can be drowned; or we can drown in data. Incidents that could break the pipes must be avoided; or shots that would overwhelm the operators, on the watch around the clock, hands on the controls.

The operators claim that this huge synoptic table helps to distribute water in Paris just as the instrument panel helps to pilot a Formula 1 racing car. For sure, it’s a matter not only of information sent up, but also of orders sent down, down to the sluices themselves constantly regulating the dense network of over eighteen thousand kilometers of pipe work. Although every drop of water spends an average of six hours in their system before being consumed, in the operators’ eyes (or rather, at the extremity of their joy sticks) the fluid behaves like a solid: it reacts immediately, so that they physically feel the vibrations under their bodies of the multitude of flows, and are able to anticipate the orders to give, in a flash, eyes riveted to the feedback from the water towers, reservoirs and exchangers.”

The city’s structure and infrastructure are presented together in this text, as if

frameworks, we can distinguish different kinds of archiving actions that take place, of classification mechanisms used, of visualizing archiving, of interface strategies, of connections between people through filed data. Within the spaces of stored entries we should reconsider – in totally banal terms – the concept of a common space within the archive architecture of the web. Its interior is most strongly constituted where it is not presented as an interior; it emerges where it is not anticipated, as the fantasy of a user to simulate a particular role, in the belief, at times, that the user is organizing a presentation of “himself” or “herself”. An entry and an image of the self form the architecture of a meeting system in the archive.

The terms in which this existing background of a meeting infrastructure is formed, and its meanings form the architecture of a new immediacy. The condition of virtual coexistence on the Internet is, for the time being, much less impressive than expected, yet already operational and amazingly widespread. A significance of this particular archived everyday life in relation to “the political” opens some questions for an integrated sphere of infrastructures and for a person within the interior of such a public sphere.

Platforms and entries

The sphere of infrastructures is constituted together with a transition of sociability to the era of data transmission. We could examine the Internet infrastructure starting from technical adjustments observed along conventional infrastructures, such as those of water, natural gas or electrical power. The way data are used in a technical way to regulate the infrastructure that determine a modern city, can be schematized in a perspective. In the case of new infrastructures, the data traffic regulates an active, automatic classification of information. Predetermined answers can take preconceived series of answers. The flow of data and this type of regulation (presupposed for a performance of the mechanical part of traditional infrastructure) can be projected to a constitution of human meetings in the archive. We would then have an idiosyncratic interior to be examined as an architectonic function in all possible senses: that of the infrastructure – meeting space. An infrastructure automatically interprets the information it is producing. It provides mechanisms for internal consumptions of its own data. The function of an infrastructure already provides a system of bifurcation between its interior and its exterior: the interior structure in the case of infrastructure is to remain hidden. In its functional interior space the information is classified and assessed without external control,

and the assessment leads to an automatic action. The information does not need to undergo external interventions; all actions of the infrastructure are reactions to a predetermined platform of prepared question and answer sets. The infrastructure platforms are blind architectonic interiors that we could reconsider as particular space constructions. Interventions are only undertaken either to improve the infrastructure (re-order the platform's architecture) or in the case of an unforeseen malfunction (where the platform did not correctly predict an action) to fix it. The platform needs to be maintained, improved and developed – certainly not refuted. If we technically describe this infrastructure mechanism, we may conclude that an abundance of information decreases the information's value. The regulating platform of any infrastructure shows one of its most powerful principles related to a hypnotic repetition of similar, interior, hidden actions. An infrastructure constitutes its actions in order that they become unimportant. An act of the infrastructure is performed as a function of oblivion: the infrastructure regulatory platform is defined by a practical mechanism of forgetting.

Data flow and the hypnotic constitution of communities

The regulatory data flow that controls normality in an invisible way also applies today to the “infrastructure” that forms communities on the Internet. This analogy, between infrastructure formations and common meeting spaces, structures an important topic on which I will focus on. The platform rationale is based on a function of regulation that controls, limits or auto-erases the consciousness of its acts. A similar regulatory, “platform based” space imposes its technical rules to human meetings performed inside those archive spaces. I will observe some technicalities of this condition avoiding any moral judgments. Infrastructures primarily determine the things we do not need to know, while at the same time they build the interior spaces of the “normal”, “urban, elementary” everyday life. Normality already refers to hypnotic platforms; we describe its architecture today. The abundance of regulatory information is welcome in the innermost depths of the social fiber through the use of the Internet. However, this is a far cry from transforming a description of the global community and its interactions to a mere technical case. We wonder about the meanings this abundance of information takes on and may seek for new forms of social actions that derive from it. The different values of the many different data slightly change the regulated operations of each occurring network. (2)

“Events” in this infrastructure are prefabricated traces, significant within a particular framework. The framework has already begun

infrastructure had prevailed over any possible form of structure. The infrastructure is also “identified” with its system of operation, installed in the a-topic mechanism that regulates it. A hidden political side of this data flow is located from Latour by the description of the lost subject and its lost environment, residing in the active stratification of dissecting archival strata; Latour's argumentation does not yet stress out the structural constitution of normality nor the particular institutionalization of oblivion in the places of web urbanism; some observations prepare however the comprehension of the particular mechanisms within this web infrastructure: the one of the meeting places. The consequences of the different modalities of this infrastructure still propose an open field of political research.

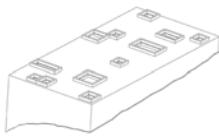


Fig. 2.
Aristide Antonas,
*The Water Deposit house (or
RealFake house II)*.
Linear axometric
exterior view of the existing
unfinished water deposit
space.

to organize its actions from the moment they are undertaken, since – from the outset – it proposes them, it determines them and it registers them, in a specific way, on itself. Tomorrow's policies would have to be decided either as constitutions of frameworks or new platforms that will treat and rule the traffic of data in a determined way or as meditated interventions in each platform's rationale. This way or the other, the infrastructure frameworks necessarily operate while assimilating given platforms of the increasingly ballooning sphere of infrastructures.

The web is the carrier of the unification of infrastructures and at the same time an exemplarily populated infrastructure: its regions hide inhospitable places and a number of invisible restrictions. I think about the laws that rule the movements in it. Search engines, receiving results with escalated accessibility, the prohibitions that the web constructs, the passages through which different things are linked, the entrance codes into one or another archival space, the elements that appear without us summoning them, the local disabilities of the various networks, the exclusion and discrimination practices, the security mechanisms and restrictions and defining mechanisms that do not appear, since they occur in illegible codes, all show an architecture of this interior. A new space for action or inertia is built in this lived archive. The networked skeleton of the recent global condition can be described simultaneously as a binding format and as a limitless rejection of a format, as a place of incarceration and as a place of offers: as being enclosed in an infinite opening, within the plethora of incompatible or relative entries. The interior of this archival space has to be considered at the same time as a function of this openness that inaugurates new constitutions of the experience, and as a function of its enclosures that lead this experience in predefined representation frames.

In the condition of the unified infrastructure, “reality” can be organized through a different description. Located inside the infrastructure or found through this archive's interior, “reality” ceases to be the dream of an “exterior” view addressed outside the infrastructure's archive; nor does it form any structure of totality that could be taken as another unified world different than the infrastructure. Every possible meaning (related or “not” to the infrastructure) is also inscribed in this interior of the same infrastructure. The infrastructure becomes a kind of fantasmatic, acting, independent “collective” subject, made up of an impossible sum of possible operations and communities. Everything human tends to be recorded or recordable. The fact that the “collective” subject is a recording platform (in many cases controllable and not excluding modalities of repression of the social networks it institutes) is to be noted. Even at a personal level, intrusions in “personal places”

are the everyday agenda when we become the inhabitants of such an interior, urban, archival construction.

It would be naive to directly denounce the structure of hypnotism when talking about infrastructure; it automatizes technical solutions to possible problems and hosts selected representations. The infrastructure works toward the hypnotic repetition and at the same time asks by hypothesis to be forgotten. It constructs oblivion in its own way: if it does not function while it is forgotten, it is no longer called infrastructure. The temporal constitution of the infrastructure (even the primary, traditional infrastructure) takes place as this exact hypnotic, repetitive deletion of the consciousness of actions: the infrastructures are organized while they promote a certain invalidation of their presence and of the functions they operate. This invalidation of the presence projected to a constitution of the “presence itself” or the “presence in the community” (if we accept that the infrastructure controls the main place of meetings in this infrastructure part of the world and if we describe the constitution of the public sphere as a growing infrastructure) leaves pending the political question: a political act or an architectonic intervention in the infrastructure may either be an interior “event” of the infrastructure (a post, a link, an entry to a given platform), a work on the construction of other platforms or an intervention concerning the concepts of its exterior. In another level if we accept that the constitution of self and of the community occurs within this particular infrastructure’s interior places, we will have to propose different ways to understand what an exterior space of this infrastructure would be. (3)

(3) Infrastructure structures an interior space and out of it an exterior. The extremely polarizing reading of the public and private contemporary space by Richard Sennett, which describes with animosity the end of the city as a field of politics, also nervously describes the unified infrastructure (without naming it) as a surrender to degraded banality and a certain mournful oblivion. Thus, Sennett remains repulsed by the everyday quality of the familiar, ballooning infrastructure sphere. We read his book as a curse upon contemporary “familiarity”, while it is a fact that the aggrandizement of the infrastructure and the continuous residence in its interior renders sociability a certain “homecoming”. But in this condition neither a curse nor an effort to return to the previous paradigm will have the significance of a return from an abstract archived space to “reality”. Within the sphere of the infrastructure’s invisible mechanisms sociability will inevitably be the sociability of masked virtual figures. A new concept of struggle is needed while a community would be defined together with the notion of a post-network conflict, founded on virtuality. A transformation of the political in a different condition is a quest of this new internal space of a growing “self regulated” archive.

We may describe or propose this “exterior” of the archival space as an idiosyncratic waiting area, functioning as space residue, remaining off this atopic inhabitation of an idiosyncratic, living archive. Building such waiting areas or such waiting rooms already forms the description of the existing condition. We can design something we already know even if we do not have its material experience. I designed many of those waiting rooms; they propose an awkward familiarity; in the same time they describe an existing condition (through an ambiguous comment) and they propose something that seems functional given the situation of space today. The “exterior space” we know is already marked by the signs of an inhabitation of the archive. An obvious lack of “archiveness” or the determination by a certain recordability present a subordination of the “real” to the archive. The “exterior space” expanded to an urban level would propose different populations of isolated rooms; in those series of waiting rooms we may experience the exterior of the web infrastructure: this experience will be performed as a temporary stay in the threshold between exterior and interior, between an immediate



Fig. 3.
Aristide Antonas,
*The Water Deposit house (or
RealFake house II)*.

Interior view showing the transformation of the unfinished water deposit space into a subterranean networked house. The interior space is condensing the necessary material support of a web inhabitation and the necessary auxiliary functions orienting a house program to a different idiosyncratic minimalism of an archive inhabitation.

world of the past and the archive world we are moving into. This bifurcation has not yet shown its political meaning.

The invalidation of any sense of prototype in this overgrown archive space lends value to the way in which the data that make up an entry have been arranged or presented, and no longer to the most valid reference to a “prototype”. Within the dynamics of an integrated sphere of infrastructures we imagined the space of encounters among people today; we also imagine people themselves. A person in the archive is not the prototype of himself but a series of functions undertaken in different platforms or frames. Within the infrastructure, a multitude of fragmented entries prevails over the constant reference to the space outside the archive. An entry introduced, perhaps to include such a trace of an exterior within the archive, ceases to refer to the prototype and seeks order among other entered data that are related to it. The archives within which we reside are defined more by the structure of their interior, than by their “external” references. The bifurcation between an interior archive space and its exterior, on which the political question could be posed again and elaborated, is marked from the outset by an impossible rupture. The inner space we describe still has no limits and no face: its “architecture” in this description will remain constantly changing. The archive’s interior is built in its own particular way each time.

Actors, masks, encounters and results

Not in totalities but in fragments; not in unity but in fragmentation; the operator never being here but always elsewhere is constituted through different multiple functions: the presence of a person in the space which is to be organized by the instability (as the presence of a person directly elsewhere, Via the mechanisms of the Internetal archive) and the indefinability of constant, general concepts of reference pose the question of identity in different ways.

The permanent activation of a personal computer alongside a person today requires a first redoubling. We continue to say “personal computer”, and yet we tend more and more to store our data in the Internet’s common infrastructures. The personal computer only marks an active place in the archive’s platforms. The assuming of an identity, which may vary in importance, is already replacing in its own way the outdated, state-issued, laminated paper identity card. An active identity which is directly and constantly updated determines and defines the presence of the operator inside the Internetal archive; the place of a person in the “real” world can be a constant parameter of visiting some platforms and some entries.

The consequences of the permanent, more or less visible panoptical organization of society will soon showcase the range of their political consequences. The active identity is formed either with one's consent or without it, depending on the way in which one chooses to manage it or the way in which one will forcibly bear it; depending on whatever definition each one of us is given within this unprecedented community order. Presence concerns every one of us, but takes place according to criteria that will be determined by controllable or non-controllable groups of people that decide about the way in which we will reside in the active archive of the Internet.

The concept of "encounter" within its contemporary framework firstly shows the prospect of architecture as an administrative mechanism of illusion. Political architecture within the archive concerns a consciousness of illusion and a performance related to this consciousness: an architectonic description of this sphere seen in its possible interior and exterior spaces is related to its political constitution that is hopefully still flexible. Different architectures of the archive organize different worlds for us to inhabit. The archival organization of the world demands new determinations of what a *political* action would be. Furthermore: it demands an architectonic elaboration of this interior and exterior archive space in a practical and conceptual context. Multiple identities seem to dismantle the power of communities. They can however organize "combat structures" following a "video game rationale". We read about the constitution of the public sphere as if the acting subjects in it were the same individuals who were forming human communities in the past. But within a world performing the hegemony of such an archive sphere, the overlapping populations of identities construct different "communities" in diverse ways. The facade of – mostly – irresponsible masks that one can use in order to participate in these communities creates a new condition for groupings and for power practices. Irresponsibility is constituted in many new interesting ways. Irresponsibility can conclude to multi-controlled mediocre Wiki knowledge, or it may perform a sacrifice of personal signatures towards common Wiki creations. The constructive power of this Internet archive is impressive but its operation depend from the architecture of its invisible interiors.

The concept of identity is defused and performed as a multitude of common control panels with regulated features such as the ones that control a city's water system or the cockpit of a fighter jet. We can understand the Web2 applications as a first literal performance of this strange communal multi-platformed sphere; this infrastructure determines the reality of these communities or their virtual composition. Every Internetal community, every post-network conflict organized, directed or recorded within the integrated sphere

of infrastructures is defined by an irresponsibility of the ruling, “virtual” element. Flat conflicts with no depth are being prepared in the space of virtual communal structure within the integrated infrastructure. We used to call this kind of flat conflicts “wars”. One of the most important political questions regarding representations today is the question about the individual; the substitutes for responsibility in this condition of an upcoming multi-faced, “virtual” individual form an architectonic field of research.

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Fig. 4.
Aristide Antonas,
Population of keg Apartments.
A post urban view of moving
isolated units forming
precarious communities of
networked cells.
Here the units are using old,
transformed keg vehicles.



Aristide Antonas

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A designer of buildings and interiors but also a writer of six literature books, four stage plays and many essays Antonas has lectured at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the Instituto Universitario de Arquitectura de Venezia (IUAV), the Architectural Association (AA), the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe (ZKM), The Technische Universität in München, Madrid's Jose Cella University, the Bauhaus University in Weimar and the University of Cyprus.



Parole d'interni / Interiors words

Luca Basso Peressut
Politecnico di Milano (Italy)

Words are actions

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 1953)

Build, don't talk

(Ludwig Mies van der Rohe address to students, 1960s)

Architecture lives on words. Written or uttered, single or put in speeches, narrations, aphorisms, theories, principles: words in contrast to the universe built by man and to the material objects that crowd it. Words can mirror this reality as well as they can reflect ideas and projects never carried out, visions, possibilities.

Words evoke images and images substantiate words. (1)
Words and images are the two sides of the same coin: the reality of architecture, its history, its values, its art expressions. *Logos* and *Ichnos*, language and imagine are all along socio-cultural paradigms: “For Vitruvius, as for (Gottfried) Semper, language and architecture were two primordially civilizing institutions, preconditions for as well as expressions of human culture. Man’s need to communicate – and his urge to impress a mark of human order onto the world around him – is the foundation of architecture as it is that of culture as such. The origin of language and the origin of architecture are intrinsically linked, as two primary moments in the formation of human world.” (2)

Every word isolates a small fragment of the world and makes it analyzable, but it has also a connotative power, since it creates, builds, plans, has the power of the imagination defined by Gaston Bachelard as the “greatest power of human nature” because it “simultaneously draws us away from the past and from reality, and opens to the future”: (3) the distance between words and things coincides with the distance between the real and the imagine, between the existent and the possible. The imagination of the words can play a great role in modifying reality: “*ceci tuera cela*”, the written page will kill the stone building, the archdeacon from *Notre-Dame de Paris* complains, revealing the collision between the dynamism of the

Fig. 1.
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,
Farnsworth House, Plano,
Illinois, 1951 (ph. L.B.
Peressut).

(1) “In his work, the architect uses more words than pictures” is written in the introduction of a recent anthology about the words of architecture: Wingårdh and Wærn 2008,
(2) Hvattum 2004. One of the first Vitruvian precepts claims that an architect should have literary skills to “leave behind a lasting memory with written explications”.
(3) Bachelard 1957.



Fig. 2.
Marc-Antoine Laugier
primitive hut (*Essai sur l'architecture*, 1755).

(4) Hugo 1831.

(5) Foucault 1966.

(6) "If you think to language as a second world that man, according to the impressions he receives from the real one, objectifies from inside on the outside, then the words are the only objects in it whose character, also in the form, has to be preserved". Humboldt 1836.

(7) Forty 2000.

(8) Among the masters of the Modern Movement, an exception is, apparently, the proverbial reticence of Mies van der Rohe to the use of the written and oral word in dealing with architecture ("My main work has been the planning of buildings. I have never written nor spoken much"). Neumeyer 2008.

(9) Toporov 1983.

(10) Gottfried Semper defined the original hut as a "mystical-poetic, even artistic motif, not the material model and schema of the temple". Semper cited in Hvattum 2004.

As I mark, the graphic representations of the original treatise are lost.

ideas embodied in the words written in books and the stillness of the messages carved in architecture. (4)

Long since anthropologists, philosophers, linguists have explained that the Modern Age broke definitively the denominative relations between words and things, objects and concepts, (5) giving language the status of "second world", autonomous from that of the phenomena that surround us. (6) But this condition cannot be truth for architecture. As Adrian Forty says, "as well as being a part of architecture, unquestionably language is also a system in its own right (...) Language itself constitutes a 'reality', which, while not the same of that formed through the other senses, is none the less equivalent." (7) Whether in architecture the primacy of knowledge has to be discursive or sensitive is thus an open question, considering the close relationship between the theories on architecture and the concreteness of a presence that asserts itself as a *matter of fact* of building, shape and space to live.

Words participated in the construction of a knowledge that has filled up architecture treatises, handbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias, glossaries and vocabularies since antiquity until nowadays. They were instruments to denominate, determine and define categories, "organize" facts and ideas. But we have also had more discursive expressions: the lyricism of the words written and uttered by Louis I. Kahn, the books and the programmatic manifestos by Le Corbusier, confirmed and advertised by any means, the stream of theories by Gottfried Semper, the autobiographical narrations by Frank Lloyd Wright, and so on. (8)

All of these texts appears as real "word architectures" that show an enviable ability to last, at least in the sphere of the myths that belong to human culture. The narrations have, in fact, an undoubted mythopoetic ability. Architectural *mythopoeis* concerns buildings and objects, is created by words and things, ideas and images, figures and projects, and turned into a space: a space that "doesn't precede the things that take it up, but, instead, is built by them. Mythopoetical space is always full and always real; out of the things it doesn't exist (...). Space is not only tightly bound to time in a relation of mutual influence and determination, but also to one's filling with objects, (...) that is with everything that in some ways organizes the space, puts it together, binds it, inserts it in a single centre." (9)

We have to consider to what extent the myth of the origin of architecture, with its archetypical cave and hut generated a long series of iconographic exegesis in the history of treatise writing. (10) This is an essentially literary trick originating, according to Vitruvius, from the instinctive gesture of protecting oneself from bad weather with the arms over the head. Moreover, a mythical and poetically described space necessarily becomes, in architecture, the object of



Fig. 3.
Henry David Thoreau,
Walden or, Life in the Woods.
First edition title page
Boston: Ticknor and Fields,
1854.

planning attention. The interpretation of these proto-architectures is continuously repeated and renewed over time through personal narration, presenting again the shapes according to the culture of the particular era, both as a verification of the general aspects of building and – more significantly – as an ontological search for a primordial inhabiting condition.

The essential framework of the ancient hut (columns, girders, roofs), for instance, is the matrix of the small wooden house that Henri Thoreau in July 1845 built in the forest of Walden Lake, Massachusetts, then describing it with intense words in his popular book:

Merely a defence against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough, weather-stained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. (...) This was an airy and unplastered cabin, fit to entertain a travelling god, and where a goddess might trail her garments. The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere. This frame, so slightly clad, was a sort of crystallization around me, and reacted on the builder. It was suggestive somewhat as a picture in outlines. I did not need to go outdoors to take the air, for the atmosphere within had lost none of its freshness. (11)

The cabin, that also appears in the title-page of the first edition of the book (a bit like the *cabane rustique* that appears in the facing title-page of the *Essai sur l'architecture* by Marc-Antoine Laugier published a century before), is an expression of the desire to return to a Rousseauian “state of nature”, to a solitude felt as necessary to purify oneself from the encrustations of the merchant society. Truly this is something more than a shelter, it is the instrument for symbolically taking possession of the site, the lake and the surrounding forest, it is a metaphor for a meaning of inhabiting that spiritually involves the whole world. (“With this more substantial shelter about me, I had made some progress toward settling in the world”, Thoreau writes). We can find the same feeling after more than a century in the planning of Mies van der Rohe for the summer house of Edith Farnsworth on the riverbank of the Fox River in Plano, Illinois. In a site whose environmental features are similar to those of Walden

(11) Thoreau 1854;
particularly in chapter 2
“Where I Lived, and What I
Lived for”.



Fig. 4.
Sir John Soane's House
and Museum, Lincoln's
Inn Fields, London. The
Sarcophagus Room
(*The Illustrated London News*,
June 1864: 616).

– the water, the forest, the relative isolation – but in very different cultural and social conditions, we assist to the most beautiful and convincing materialization of Vitruvius' words. Beyond the formal qualities of the architecture, here the space of Farnsworth's house is not defined by the perimeter of the building, but by the tree belt that surrounds the property and by the river waters, while a fundamental “piece of furniture” is the big black sugar maple tree that shades the southern side of the house, that Mies considered one of the settlement elements of the project. Notwithstanding the diatribes with Mies about the costs and the dysfunctionality of the house and the criticisms to the usage comfort of the spaces, doctor Farnsworth definitively lost her interest in her house only when the county of Plano, in the late Sixties, built a new road and a bridge over the Fox River too close to the property, creating a visual and sound intrusion, unbearable for a woman that expresses her desire to inhabit in solitude, in a substantially uncontaminated nature. (12)

Moreover, the house is also the place where little by little we build a sort of scenography of our everyday actions, a shelter, as Bachelard says, soaked with metaphors, symbols of protection (“nest”, “egg”, “shell”), prime space of the memory and of the build-up of objects, a sort of “personal museum”, receptacle of collecting manias, but also of a more simple search for continuity of the family genealogies, of the most personal memories. In this view we recognize the archetype of the cave, of its introversion, of its surfaces covered with graffiti and paintings of gods and animals, symbols and allegories, (and we obviously think of the Fifteenth-Sixteenth century *Wunderkammer*, an intimate and eery microcosm, where the semblance of the universe is rebuilt in a room, and where objects and finds cover the walls and the ceilings while, if there are any, the windows never show what is outside). (13)

The house-cave par excellence is surely the house-studio of Sir John Soane in Lincoln Inn's Field, London, archeological *Wunderkammer* and superb example of a labyrinthine domestic interior, whose architect left us some images that prove the original search for introspectivity, verifiable still today by passing through its musealized spaces.

In Italy the Roman house of Mario Praz in Via Giulia stands out, defined by himself as a “cemetery of memories”, space of memories and dreams, residence of a worshipper of the past and of collecting, a place full of objects and of works of art that represent completely the spirit of the inhabitant. As it is customary, he left a written testimony. Here peep peeping out meant “going at the window that overlooks the back of the house, the solitary court where the perpetual stream of a mountain that sings the song of the past is heard”, as if he was

(12) Schulze 1997. On inhabiting in Modernity see Ábalos 2000.

(13) On the iconography of the *Wunderkamern* see Lugli 1983.



Fig. 5.
Galerie Vivienne, Paris,
1823-26 (ph. L.B. Peressut).

describing a prison or a convent, where from the interior of the cell you can only see another interior. (14)

So the 66th Street's house in Manhattan, where Andy Warhol, great protagonist of the New Yorker jet set, liked to live in solitude and where he accumulated the famous *time capsules*, appears, after the death of the artist, as a museal repository of the most different objects. The executors are vis-a-vis busts of famous characters, "bronzes of horses, greyhounds, boxers and dancers", Chippendale, Art Nouveau and Art Déco furniture, portraits of Americans ancestors, an oil painting of George Bellows, paintings by Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist and Cy Twombly, besides a bric-a-brac of furnishings, clocks, jewellery, wigs:

There, in the spacious dining room, was a handsome Federal dining table, surrounded by a dozen Art Deco chairs. Underneath lay a luxurious carpet – obviously an Aubusson. The paintings, hanging or leaning against the walls, most of them American primitives, and a small woodcut by the Norwegian master Edvard Munch, were all of the first order. But you can't enter in the room. Every centimeter of the floor, of the table, of the cupboard, was covered with a myriad of boxes, shopping bags and parcels – such a mass of unidentified *stuff* – that blocked the way. In this room no one had ever had lunch, at least during the last few years. Nor that was the room of a collector that would like to contemplate his treasures with the connoisseur's eye. It was rather the room of a buyer, of a collector, of a regater that has all the money of the world at his disposal. "I was stunned" Barbara Deisroth, Sotheby's curator of the Art deco, remembers. "The most part of what Andy Warhol bought have never seen the daylight." (15)

Though, with time, the relation between words and objects changes and the same term – hut or cave – can indicate new and ever changing configurations proposing again and again a similar conception of housing, it is certain that "the phenomenon of the inhabiting cannot be confined to one unitary definition", as stated by Maurizio Vitta. (16)

For words change meaning and sense, they need to be revised from time to time. It is also necessary to contextualize a word, a dynamic entity deeply connected to time and places, on the basis of the culture and the historical period.

(14) Praz 1958. Praz defines Via Giulia "quiet as an isle between the rooms that were the courtyards of the buildings".

(15) Bockris 1989.

(16) Vitta 2008.



Fig. 6.
Massimiliano Fuksas,
My Zeil Shopping Mall,
Frankfurt am Main, 2009
(ph. L.B. Peressut).

Adrian Forty speaks of a “constant flux between words and meanings” (17) and so, while new words continue to come up on the scene of the architectural debate or various word combinations describe new realities (“non-lieux”, “junk space”, “superspace”, “hyperspace”, “cyberspace”, “overconsumption”), other more common words are replaced by others, due to their stronger expressive and communicative power. Nowadays, in France, the term *scénographie* is becoming increasingly used compared to the traditional *muséographie*, marking a change-in-progress in the language of museum planning and setting.

As far as interior architecture is concerned, several issues – the subjectivity of concepts such as comfort, habitability and environment; the yearning for past lifestyles; new models of life which suggest a more fragmented working and familiar condition – reshuffle the cards of definitions which seemed to last forever. The same basic and seminal concept of “interiors” has been subjected to deep reconsideration.

If we look at the following definition of “Interior”, given by Giulio Carlo Argan almost fifty years ago in the *Enciclopedia dell'Arte*, we will notice the inadequacy of this yet authoritative entry, whose first lines say:

The art of architectural interiors has features which are fundamentally different from architecture. The matter is not to define spaces but to adapt these spaces to life necessities and activities according to practical needs, which, should they be translated into aesthetic solutions, affect the whole furniture and interior decoration, relating one to the other in a unitary vision. (18)

What these words impress is the idealist approach as art historian, the traditional conception of domestic space and above all – to our eyes of third millennium citizens – the missing “innerness” referred to those spaces which provide a backdrop for social and collective life, mobility and metropolitan communication; an innerness which now participates in lifestyles, spaces, objects and architectural configurations in ways totally unexpected for that epoch.

It is certain that the transformations which have affected, in the last few decades, the structure of social relationships, both inside and outside the city, have had a strong and evident impact on the shape and configuration of buildings and public spaces as well as on their usage. (19) The traditional idea of domestic space has been replaced by that of “inhabiting the city”, reflecting Heidegger’s vision of *disorientation*, “not feeling like at one’s home”, as true existential

(17) Forty 2000.

(18) Argan 1958.

(19) I refer to some of the themes developed in the introduction speech at the First National Congress on Interior Architecture, Iuav, Venezia, 26 ottobre 2005, held with Gennaro Postiglione.

Basso Peressut 2005.

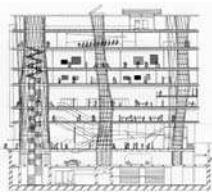


Fig. 7.
Toyo Ito, Sendai
Mediatheque, Sendai, Japan,
2001. Section.

condition of the “being”. Therefore, today, “being” means less and less lying in the privacy of one’s home and more and more “being in the world”, in a condition of agitated mobility and travel among different places and with different purposes. (20)

Michel de Certeau suggested how everyday practices are about spaces, for example about inhabiting spaces: in everyday life beside the “strategies” of institutions (which plan and manage architectures) the “tactics” of individuals support “innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production”, succeeding to compose “a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces.” (21) Such practices consist in the creation and recreation of interiors in the different places we cross everyday, passing through many “thresholds” which symbolize a change of state and environment and with a steady occupation of space – experienced by individuals as an act of inhabiting (habitus) between loneliness and socialization. We can say that our metropolitan everyday life is a continuous movement from one interior to the other: home, car, underground, railway station, coach, road junction, taxi, workplace, tram, bus, supermarket, museum, theater, cinema, and restaurant.

On a rainy day it is possible to transit in a system of sheltered and connected spaces without opening an umbrella. Buildings and transportation networks are always better equipped to meet this way of usage of urban spaces. (22)

The house is merely a crossing place among many standing points (with a longer lapse of time compared to the others, of course, though there are exceptions). Technological devices enable us to bring “extensions” of our home, to live everywhere, in smaller or bigger “shells”, to create an internal-interior whose boundaries are represented by as many shells which press or **dilatateour interior** space while we move: from the *i-pod* with its headphones, through the *i-phone*, the glasses (which in a near future will let us watch TV and the pc by isolating, on command, from the surroundings), to the fully accessorized car. These are all devices which make possible the continuous appropriation of the space in which we act, to make it habitable in a more or less transitory manner.

Crossing spaces (stations, airports, the underground, air and harbour terminals...) meet with workplaces (including the home), cultural and leisure buildings (museums, exhibition spaces, media libraries, theatres and centres for performing arts, multiplexes) and crowded commercial spaces (shopping malls and arcades, department stores, mega-multi-stores). These new “dream-like collective residencies” – to quote Walter Benjamin – (23) are increasingly oriented to the bigness. From an architectural point of

(20) Heidegger 1977.

(21) “In the technocratically constructed, written, and functionalized space in which the consumers move about, their trajectories form unforeseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across a space. Although they are composed with the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, supermarkets, or museum sequences) and although they remain subordinated to the pre-scribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of spaces, etc.), the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop.” de Certeau 1980.

(22) The North American Life Insurance Building in Chicago, 35 East Wacker Drive, originally contained a system of elevators and stalls which let people working there to go up with their car and park it literally in front of their office.

(23) Benjamin 1982.



Fig. 8.
gmp, Hauptbahnhof, Berlin,
2006 (ph. L.B. Peressut).

view most of these buildings are “typological aggregates” plenty of functions: they tend to absorb and homogenize different traditional buildings to a sort of multifunctional housing “model”, sometimes built from scratch, some others reusing old buildings (former factories, for example, are suitable to be internally readapted to the various internal uses and link big architecture with landscape). Such constructions are often covered by a false and fleeting luxury which characterizes the “stage” in which the consumerist plays and media ecstasy is set. It is no coincidence that artificial light, in all its static and dynamic expressions, plays a central role: it outlines and determines external and internal space, materializes, becomes “light architecture” (in all senses, including the economic one), with surfaces for media projections and luminous led panels which replace traditional decorations, proposing a new version of Semper’s theory of dressing.

The domestic space is hybrid and transitional, less intimate and private, more collective and dynamic in its habits of usage, performative, technological, no longer described by traditional concepts and open to contaminations in scale and disciplinary vision: an indoor space which looks more and more often at the surrounding world. To this new conception of home corresponds a metropolitan scenery made of mobile interiors able to change with time and space, a space of human fluxes which sounds like the space of information and communication fluxes of Manuel Castells. (24)

The “motion towards a place” enters the interior system (“the nomadic space: a pure interior” states Teyssot). (25) This is surely a theme (or better a series of themes) which can be included under the concept of collective interior: that is a complex system of public space in which contemporary architecture – especially monumental and commemorative buildings – takes shape involving various disciplines such as architecture, design, graphics, image and multimedia communication strategies, as a new frontier of the interior and project culture.

In architecture and urban spaces this “expanded” condition of inhabiting needs new “words” in order to describe phenomena, to call images, to introduce new categories and typologies, to comprehend different spatial configurations or imagine possible future sceneries. Working on words is equivalent to working on concepts, a sphere of action which is at the same time interpretative and creative and which analyses phenomena as they appear to us, to get over them and reach new reality levels. This is a project, or better, an idea and architectural project. The way we look at current and future architectural phenomena and concepts of innerness and interior architecture should be rethought.

(24) Castells 1996.
(25) Teyssot 2000.



Fig. 9.
Frank O. Gehry,
Guggenheim Museum,
Bilbao, 1997. Hall view
during Giorgio Armani
exhibition (2001) (ph. L.B.
Peressut).

Such reconsideration is the aim of a series of recent publications addressing the “linguistic community” of people who *discuss* around the themes of architecture, city and their manifold interiors. These contributions represent a precious instrument for the elaboration of concepts and a projection of the dynamics of current transformations, with consequent theoretical renovation and relational change in the universe of words and languages. Some substitute the classical dictionary structure with a freer, more empirical and exploratory approach. It is the case of *Ex Libris* by Giovanni Corbellini, where the author proposes and deals with 16 keywords, (26) and *Crucial Words*, where to each of the 31 terms chosen by the curators corresponds a contribution by different personalities, mostly – but not only – architects. (27) In other cases, such as in *Words and Buildings* by Adrian Forty, who investigates 18 word referred to “Modern Architecture”, a more traditional structure prevails. (28)

Interior Wor(l)ds wants to be an anthology about terms of interior architecture and it is not intended to be a dictionary, since it does not present either the structure or the appropriate methodology (alphabetical order, method, goal). *Interior Wor(l)ds* is a list of words, an open list, created by authors who have freely decided to write about a *keyword* they thought to be relevant. The criterias with which the contributions were included or excluded, were the quality and the interest of the proposals arrived in answer to the *call*. This empirical method, states Umberto Eco, “makes possible a disorderly collection of materials which will later enable the discovery of unexpected relations among objects of knowledge.” (29)

Interior Wor(l)ds is above all an experiment on the concept of *eterotopia*, for the goal was – and it is to verify whether it has been reached – the creation of “other spaces”, of a territory of knowledge in continuous self-assessment from a topological perspective and not a “petrification of knowledge”, in compliance with Foucault’s statement:

Heterotopias frighten because they secretly undermine language, prevent from nominating this *and* that, break and tangle common words and devastate “syntax”, not only that which builds up sentences, but also the less evident one which keeps together (side to side and one in front of the other) things and words. (30)

(26) Corbellini 2007. The entries are (not alphabetically ordered) : “parole”, “evento”, “densità”, “mobile”, “diagramma”, “superficie”, “dizionario”, “collusione”, “indeterminato”, “assenza”, “grande”, “bello?”, “gioco, ““contest”, “veloce”, “estremo”.

(27) Wingårdh 2008. See for example entries: “Architects” (M. e E. Fuksas), “Everyday” (D. Scott Brown), “Future” (H.U. Obrist), “Memory” (J. Pallasmaa), “Technology” (J. Rykwerf), “Tradition” (V. Magnano Lampugnani), “Why” (O. Pamuk).

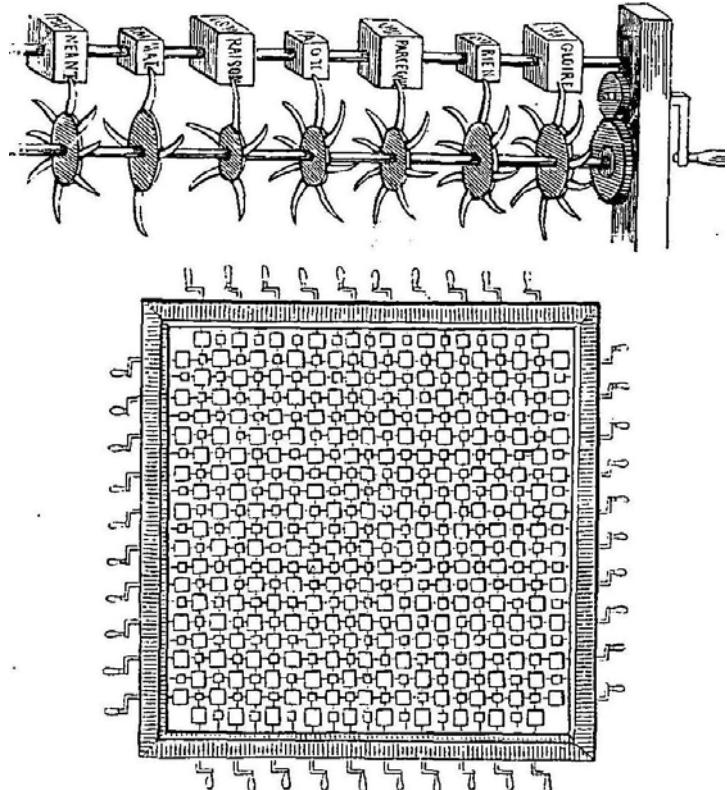
(28) Forty 2000. The developed entries are: “Character”, “Context”, “Design”, “Flexibility”, “Form”, “Formal”, “Function”, “History”, “Memory”, “Nature”, “Order”, “Simple”, “Space”, “Structure”, “Transparency”, “Truth”, “Type”, “User”.

(29) Eco 2009.
(30) Foucault 1966.

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Fig. 10.
 "Word machine", in
*Johnathan Swift, Travels
 into Several Remote Nations
 of the World, in Four Parts.*
 By Lemuel Gulliver, First
 a Surgeon, and then a
 Captain of Several Ships,
 Part III. Chapter V (Voyage
 to Laputa), 1726. Drawing
 by J.-J. Grandville from the
 French edition, 1856.



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Interior architecture and nature

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Exemplary sources of form

When we consider the outcomes of architecture only as they affect our senses and our aesthetic awareness, disregarding their manner of construction or their potential usefulness, then the physical forms that architecture takes may be traced to at least three basic areas of reference, or sources of figuration.

First, there are the *abstract* sources, which deploy the expressive values of geometrical shapes, positions, rhythms, measurements, the textures of materials, lighting and colours. Then there are the *historical* sources: languages already made use of in the past, the primary example being the classical Orders. The third great source of forms in architecture, furnishing and decoration (decoration being the expressive emphasizing of such forms) is *nature*, the explicitly naturalistic use of objects from the living world (a flower, tree, animal or person) as a figurative theme, in one or another of the infinite guises or formal adaptations in which such things can be incorporated in a design. The Modern Movement turned away both from the classical styles that late 19th century eclecticism had emptied of meaning and from its more immediate predecessor, the flowery Art Nouveau: it deployed a new, abstract code for delineating and furnishing occupied spaces. In Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's work it tempered the elementary starkness of its geometrical forms by making much of the intrinsic decorative qualities of the materials used. In this it closely allied itself with the early 20th century's avant-garde painters, poets and composers, who strove against the historicizing or naturalistic references of traditional modes of expression and concentrated instead on the abstract and unalloyed expressiveness of the various media they used.

The critical fashion is different nowadays: we cannot fail, for instance, to find permanent and evergreen values in William Morris' 1883 fabric design *Strawberry Thief*, with its life-like thrushes stealing strawberries against a dense pattern of leaves, shoots and flowers, or in the ox-skull and ribbon motifs of Michelangelo's early 16th century

Fig. 1.
Prehistoric paintings on the
Hall of the Bulls left side,
Lascaux Cave (Pérignon,
France), ca. 20.000 B.C.

design for the floor and ceiling of the Medici Library in Florence, or the highly magnified “Bacteria” laminate flooring designed by Ettore Sottsass.

Organic forms

Analytical forms, derived by putting together component parts of recognizable outline which form joints or connecting lines (as in a prefabricated building system whose components are left showing, or a rustic chair of jointed wooden uprights and cross-pieces) may be distinguished from *synthetic* forms whose parts are not themselves recognizable as shapes, but are contractions, expansions or plastic deformations of some continuous and homogeneous material. The latter are also known as “organic” forms, by analogy with the skin that covers all an animal’s internal organs or the bark which hides the place where a tree’s trunk gives way to its branches. Many forms in cast concrete are of this kind, as in the double shell roof of the Chapel at Ronchamp; so are pressed steel or plastic shapes such as the famous *Tulip chair* by Eero Saarinen, its seat curving without a break into back and arm.

We should note that surface finishes and decoration make it possible to change the kind of shape implied by purely constructional considerations from analytic to organic or *vice versa*: in architecture, for instance, render, plaster and paint can play an all-over unifying role or can be used to pick out boxes, frames and mouldings; in furnishing, turned wooden uprights and cross-members in Baroque chairs introduce discontinuities between faceted shapes (where components fit together) and rounded ones (along the stretches where there are no joints) in a predominantly “analytic” approach to shaping that contrasts with that of Rococo upholstered chairs, whose separate wooden components are joined in a way that is made “organic” not just by the unbroken and flowing geometrical shape of their inner and outer profiles but also by the surface gilding or lacquering that covers up all their joints. (1)

From this strictly morphological point of view, then, organic forms cannot strictly be classified as “naturalistic”, in that there is nothing in them which is instantly recognizable as belonging to any particular living thing; yet as soon as we move away from abstract morphology and begin to consider the underlying life present in organic forms – especially animal ones – and the part they have played in shaping the spaces in which and the objects with which human life has been lived since the earliest times right up to the present, we find ourselves among a different, more complex set of questions, which I now propose to set out.

(1) Ottolini 1996, 62-64.

Earliest documents

The first real “theatre of human awareness”, with its dramatic liberation of the individual and, even more, the group mind, is revealed to us in the French and Spanish caves occupied between 40,000 and 20,000 years ago as living spaces found in nature rather than constructed, such as the Altamira caves where whole walls or roofs were covered with the images of groups of animals or animal contests painted in charcoal, ochre or red earth. (2)

As Dino Formaggio has written:

(...) This was a people of hunters: they understood animal life, lived with it (...) they had it there in front of them, as in a hand-to-hand fight. It filled a need, for food (...) but it was also the Other, their mortal enemy, terrifying lord, or slave (...) Palaeolithic humans sought to free themselves from the animal by dominating the animal – in this case through the magic of painting; and they represented all this as *struggle*: men fighting animals and animals fighting men, but also animals fighting animals, possibly as totems of mutually embattled clans (...) Social and political struggles, battling for power or for life, fighting to control the animal world and the world of things through the ritual techniques of magic and by using tools or weapons (...) It was this furious, savage combination of magical forces, the violent clashes – sexual, cognitive and social – of wandering hunters and herdsmen, that gives the artist's direct hand-print on the cave wall its full meaning: a sign of the magical forces of dominion, a characteristic tool of ritual evocation, and a modular element of composition which already fully grasped and applied the Golden Section (...) (3)

We can only note a few flash bulletins from the record as we move from prehistoric to historic times: the Lion Gate at Mycenae, as paranoid as any other entrance narrowed for greater security of occupation, its two symmetrical animals watching over the central stele that perhaps gave the direction to some sacred object; the lotus-flower outline of Egyptian temple capitals and Tutankhamun's bier in the stylized and elongated form of two lyre-horned sacred cows; the Roman rites described by Joseph Rykwert for founding towns, cities or military camps, in which augurs studied the flight of birds, thunderclaps and the motion of clouds to see whether the place

(2) Formaggio 1973, 29.

(3) Ibid., 26-28.



Fig. 2.
Fresco wall painting in a
cubiculum (bedroom) from
the Villa of Publius Fannius
Synistor at Boscoreale
(Napoli), ca. 40–30 B.C.,
Metropolitan Museum of
Art, New York.



Fig. 3.
Michelangelo Buonarroti,
Laurentian Library high-
backed chair and marble
floor, Florence, ca. 1535.

and time were propitious or not, and – even more important – they studied the condition of the livers taken from sacrificial animals pastured in the district, to ensure that they had enjoyed good grazing and salubrious drinking water; there are also the delightful little naturalistic wall paintings in Pompeii, and the snarling dog in the *cave canem* mosaic on the threshold of the Casa del Fauno there; the cloud-painted ceilings of the Renaissance, and the plant shapes of the metal structures, windows, wall decorations and fittings of Victor Horta’s Hotel Tassel or, indeed, the whole of *Art Nouveau*.

Animals, already for the most part tamed and trusting, were a constant theme for creative artists in the Greek and Roman worlds of classical antiquity, their looks and characteristics illustrating individual and social forms of behaviour. Direct experience and repeated observation of nature, the forms and vital forces that were seen as animating it and inviting constant comparison, provided for centuries a foundation for the poetic principle of *mimesis* or imitation, in which individual and collective consciousness at various times achieved what was no longer an exorcism of unfamiliar or hostile forces, but rather a balanced coexistence between humans and the environment in which they lived.

It was only the coming of a radically different ontology and eschatology in Christianity that reorganized these relationships between people, animals, trees and things hierarchically, making everything look to its Creator as the single centre of life and indeed of all possible significance, in architecture and the other arts as everywhere else.

From the first modern writer of an architectural treatise (in Latin)

After the animals portrayed in Christian art – pregnant with symbolism, from the tame lambs in the mosaics of Galla Placidia’s tomb at Ravenna, which inspired Le Corbusier’s decorations for the tabernacle at Ronchamp, to the monstrous griffin gargoyles on Gothic cathedrals, whose Modernist reincarnations are Antonio Gaudí’s remarkable “dragon’s back” ridge crowning the Casa Battlò and the symbolic forest of the Sagrada Família – the classical ideal of naturalism returned with the Humanist Renaissance.

In Leon Battista Alberti’s treatise *On Architecture*, which sets out an ideal model of modern architect as a learned, responsible and independent intellectual, there is the suggestion, time and again, of a structural similarity between a building and a living body, in which nature is imitated not through its external forms but in a deeper way: “Our predecessors... determined that their model must be nature, creator of the best forms. They sought accordingly to discover the



Fig. 4.
Victor Horta, Hôtel Tassel
glazed court, Bruxelles
1893-94.
Model by Stefania Borsani e
Cristina Pivato, Politecnico
di Milano, scale 1:20.

principles whereby nature guides the shaping of things, so that they might apply them in their own construction methods". (4)

Alberti investigated the structural rules of beauty conceived, above all, as consonance or "conciinity" (from *cum+canere*, to sing together): the mutual concord and harmony of parts within the whole; in his view, "as in the living organism every limb fits the others, so in a building every part must fit the rest" (5) according to unchanging numerical principles, ratios of size and positioning which make it possible for a work to achieve such perfection that "nothing could be added or taken away without do it worse" (6) – as in the shape of a hen.

Even though some of the recommended principles are "operational" instructions ("Taking their example from Nature, they never made the 'bones' of the building – meaning its columns, angles and so on – odd in number: for there is no animal that stands or moves on an odd number of feet..."), (7) nature is referred to mainly for its simplicity, its coherence and the functional way it shapes body parts, i.e. its tendency to achieve the greatest aesthetic impact with the least complication of form or organization. It is thought of as the *living form* that "makes real the Beautiful, in infinite particular cases where formal balance has the miracle of life behind it." (8)

The modern "animal as machine"

Among avant-garde architects five centuries later, organic nature's position as the fount of all wisdom had been undermined and subsumed into *mechanical interpretations* which stressed lucid rationality in the posing of problems even more than in their formal solution. In Le Corbusier's designs from the early 1920s the machine – a human creation – is regarded as "composed of organs whose functions resemble those of natural phenomena (...) [it] presents us with a sparkling display of discs, spheres, and cylinders of polished steel (...) shaped with a precision that belongs to theory and a sharpness never found in nature." (9)

This position, as Maria Lucia Cannarozzo has demonstrated, is based on the 19th century's discoveries in the new science of life, Biology, which explained the very conditions of life's existence in all its varied manifestations, its comparative anatomy describing the unseen co-operative functioning of any living body's organs as a single whole for the purposes of respiration, movement, locomotion, reproduction, and so on. (10) The layout of the human body, with its three theoretically distinct functional systems ("the skeleton for load-bearing, the muscles for action, the viscera for supply and operation"), was in Le Corbusier's view the paradigm for the

(4) Alberti 1989, 453.

(5) Ibid., 36.

(6) Ibid., 235.

(7) Ibid., 454.

(8) Portoghesi 1989,
xxviii-xxix.

(9) Le Corbusier 1959,
107-113.

(10) Cannarozzo 1994.



Fig. 5.
Carlo De Carli, Mod. 683
Chair, Compasso d'Oro,
Cassina production, 1954.

automobile (“chassis, coachwork, and engine”) and also for the house (“self-standing frame, external light-admitting facade, internal partitions loosely circumscribing the space of the home’s internal organs, contact with ground and sky”). (11)

Thus, with a touch of rationalist arrogance (which Le Corbusier himself later rectified in the Brutalist plasticism of the post-war period) modern functionalism once more made Nature’s tightly-knit triad of construction, form and function into the foundation of architecture and design, hiding its organic origins even in its metaphor of the “house as a machine for living in” and its more explicit definition of a home as a residential “cell” that shared the life both of the *organism* that lived in it and of the urban *fabric* of which it formed part.

The resulting aesthetics strip out all waste: one single principle – purity – governs mechanical selection and natural selection alike.

An Italian master

In opposition to the thorough-going functionalist’s Utilitarian conception of the machine, which had reduced form to an abstract, calligraphic geometrical expression within the closed rectangular rigidity of an over-strict architectural etiquette in which nature had only a subordinate place, Carlo De Carli and others in the Italian organic movement of the early 1940s reaffirmed a love of “forms arising from the diagrams of the new age” of which speed was, indeed, a hallmark but only as part of that single “great poetic act, life in motion”. He points to the “essential” shape of aeroplanes alongside “the swift and vibrant lines of antelopes, gazelles, the great fliers and their precise expression of movement” in tense fibres ready to react (but “there is no sense of arousal, because everything that is full of power is in perfect balance: it gives a sense of calm potency”); and this he translates into the outlines of his furniture, from the strong “bony” nodes seamlessly connecting the wooden structural elements to the curved connections between uprights and cross-members in the airy loggia of the residential/office building on the Via dei Giardini in Milan, whose detail confirms the rounded tendency of the entire mass. The focus of attention is the “continuity” between architecture and nature: “In the infinite and no longer merely functional field of nature, where there are exact functional prerequisites inherent in nature itself... the architect can live to the full, can create architecture that continues nature’s own handiwork without abrupt discontinuities, in perfect harmony with all natural forms”. (12) So “the interior becomes a vital nucleus, no longer a physical void, an abstract thing immobile on the ground,

(11) Le Corbusier 1979, 143-146.

(12) De Carli 1943.

but the inside that animates the walls through which the coming and going of people makes the house a living thing, between humans and plants... Every home is born spontaneously, and steadily grows by following the vibratory movement within, the movement of colours, sounds, smells, and images both human and divine. A home is not an object, but the continuation of everything around it.” (13)

Two disciplines

While the architect's culture has diverged further from that of the industrial designer, there are two disciplines that nowadays seem increasingly ready to combine in developing the method and feel of working by *analogy* which are traditionally involved when designers of either culture refer to animal organisms.

On the one hand there is Bionics, which by studying living or quasi-living systems aims to discover new principles, techniques and processes that can be applied in the design of new products and technical systems. When applied strictly to shape, Bionics works essentially through geometrical abstraction and the mathematical representation of bodies whose full three-dimensional detail and formal structuring principles have been thoroughly investigated with a view to carrying them over into mechanical analogues. The outline of a whale, for instance, which enables it to swim with great economy of effort, is transferred to the shape of a hull; or a snake's heat-sensitive “vision” leads to infra-red photography.

On the other hand there is Environmental Design (destined, perhaps, to be combined with Bioengineering in the future), which again compares buildings to animals' bodies, not in this case in terms of shape or geometrical ratio or spatial/functional relationships, but by thinking of buildings as living organisms in themselves, increasingly equipped with devices for self-monitoring and self-regulation as well as AI (Artificial Intelligence) sensors, which interact not only with changes in external and internal environmental conditions, but also with alterations in the bodily state or even intentions of the people living in them.

In this way zoological analogies, together with the new economic and ecological requirements connected with energy saving and environmental sustainability, suggest new systems for controlling the various *environments* of which a building may be regarded as composed (lighting, heating/cooling, acoustic, atmospheric, tactile), and – indirectly – the design of new products, construction methods and building materials. As heat stores, for instance, buildings now need a skin or membrane which like an animal's epidermis can respond in a variable way to the varying challenges from the

(13) De Carli 1944.

environment; the design of a building's envelope is once again becoming more important than the traditional business of designing its installed equipment – and indeed the two are having to interact more and more.

Living forms

Both these disciplines work under a predominantly functionalist conception of nature and the artificial creations inspired by it; they disregard, wholly or relatively, the aesthetic question of *living forms* in nature and in art, the apparent identity and indeed the substantive character encoded in their physical make-up.

In zoology itself, this functionalist approach concentrates so hard on those activities which are obviously connected with the preservation of life that even the colourful ornamentations of the skin – even the occasional tinge of silvery crystal from the guanine in a fish's scales, for instance, or the colours on a butterfly's wings – are seen only as a necessary consequence of their metabolism.

As Adolf Portmann has put it, however: "In their relationship with the world, creatures are not just living machines whose activity is metabolism, and whose life consists of nothing but that. They are first and foremost beings which manifest themselves in their own peculiar natures (...)" (14) The "animal interiority" and its "self-presentation" (through the appearance of each as a *right shape*, the shape that instantly impresses itself on the sight or other sense, creating more intense impressions than any other shapes) are the characteristics that come first in these organisms' relationship with the world; the principles of metabolism, conservation, thermal regulation, reproduction and evolution are all "subordinate" to these characteristics, as to an essential biological fact. (15) So, to quote Konrad Lorenz, "the bluethroat, the blackbird... sing the songs that seem to us the loveliest – and are objectively the most complex – when they are most relaxed, when they are, so to speak, engaged in poetic self-communion. When the song becomes functional – because the bird is dealing with a rival, say, or seeking to attract the attention of a female – all finesse is lost... the masterly imitations vanish, leaving just the distinctive, innate component predominant in their song: a shrill sound, unarguably somewhat less beautiful." (16) The formal – that is, substantial – problem of architecture and furnishing seems to me to be just the same, whether we are engaged in analysis or design: it is the problem of finding a clear identity for things, not as objects but as living creatures, as *animate* configurations of matter, capable not only of allowing or furthering some function or use, but above all of expressing significance, a

(14) Portmann 1969, 70.

(15) Ibid., 234-236.

(16) Lorenz cited in Portman 1969, 89.

personal and social point of view on the human meaning of that function, through the character that is materialised and made manifest in them.

Present day problems

Nowadays we have lost all our fear of – and friendship with – the world of animals; they have been relegated to roles in infants' processes or as toys for infantilized consumers (like the duck-shaped drive-in Robert Venturi found on Long Island). (17)

In recent decades we have more or less consciously and collusively become immersed in a world where a technologized, functionalist view of nature and its economic exploitation have become the new paradigm of significance.

"The idea that we rule the world, or that our environment is something we can produce, is becoming increasingly dominant" – Portmann again, some forty years ago, noting as a corollary that "the possibility that life's most intriguing forms might utterly vanish from the Earth, and that life itself might come to be represented (apart from its less visible or microscopic forms) only by those organisms we ourselves rear because they are of practical use to us, or those we still tolerate for some other motive." He adds that "the more we lose sight of these living witnesses to the greatest creative processes we have ever been privileged to observe, the more feebly will we appreciate that our own creative activity depends in the last analysis on the very same forces, the unacknowledged powers of the spirit." (18)

As Umberto Galimberti has observed, while the animals silently watch us from their places in a highly technologized food chain or the genetic holding-pens of experimental cloning, passively putting up with living conditions that flout their original instincts but give us humans new opportunities of prolonged life, we ourselves seem more and more to be "passively carrying out technical possibilities" (19) – so much so, indeed, that we look on, like emotional illiterates, as weapons proliferate and wars multiply, as the ecological system is destroyed, as wealth not rooted in reality accumulates – and poverty, too – and as the means of total communication outstrip the real content which we have in us to communicate.

On the other hand, as humans constitutionally have an adaptive plasticity that allows us to achieve through culture the stability that other animals naturally have through instinct, it is possible that a more adequate sensibility might help us once more to "rise to the challenges engendered by our all-pervasive technological

(17) Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour 1985.

(18) Portmann 1969, 265.

(19) Galimberti 1999, 484.

behaviour”, and stir ourselves out of the “individual irresponsibility that will otherwise let the totalitarianism of technology to proceed unhindered.” (20)

We know that such a hoped for enlightenment as to the present condition and possible futures of ourselves and the whole of living nature is to some extent (and perhaps most of all) in the hands of artists, including those who design and redesign the things we own and the places where we live.

(20) Ibid., 713-715.

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Fig. 6.
Carlo De Carli e Antonio
Carminati, Apartment
and office house, Via dei
Giardini, Milano 1949.



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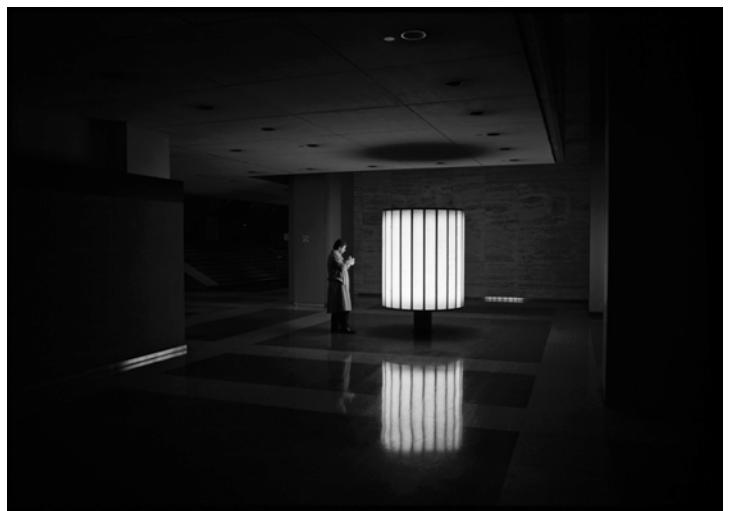
He carried on theoretical, critic historical and design studies about interior and furniture design, particularly regarding domestic dwelling.

In 1994 he won the Silver Prize at the Design International Competition, Nagaoka (Japan) with the design of a "Home in a room" for the elderly. In 1996 and 1997 he presented two large exhibitions of interior architecture models designed by students during his didactic laboratories at the Salone del Mobile of Milan, later in many International exhibitions.

He was scientific director of national and international research projects, and connected exhibitions on: "Spaces and furniture of Special Housing" (Triennale di Milano 2002); "Civilization of Living", (Triennale di Milano 2003); "Humantech" and "IDIA" (Salone del Mobile of Milan 2003); "Artidesign Furniture" (Galleria del Design e dell'Arredamento of Cantù 2003); "Peripheries and New Urbanism" (Triennale di Milano 2004).

In 2004, for Aler-Milano, he directed studies and projects for the renewal of the historical residential Quarter "Mazzini" in Milan.

Main publications: *Forma e Significato in Architettura* (Milano: CLUP 1996&2005); *Carlo De Carli e lo spazio primario*, "QA20" (Roma-Bari: Laterza 1997); *Civiltà dell'abitare* (Cantù: Galleria del Design e dell'Arredamento 1997); *La casa attrezzata* (Napoli: Liguori 2005); *Il progetto delle residenze speciali* (Milano: Unicopli 2008).



Notes on the very extensive or continuous interior

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The most common type of contemporary large-scale space – with which almost everyone who has walked through a shopping mall, an international airport or the entrance area of a major museum is familiar – embodies aspects of the corporate lobby, the winter garden, the shopping mall and the transport terminal concourse. These various resemblances are frequently blurred or ambiguous, emphasised by such spaces' scale and extensiveness. In the largest instances, one passes from one “mood” to the next in what is presented as a continuous and potentially limitless interior. Their internal diversity of programme and conditions marks them out as environments rather than specific interiors; but interiors are precisely what they are. The self-sufficiency of such environments seems to negate the existence of the World without altogether: the World is simply that area from which people who use the interior are captured.

Fig. 1.
Montréal CA 1991© Mark
Pimlott.

Interior and interiority

The word *interior* suggests to most of us a space or abode separate from the public world, which stands apart from its chaos, its politics. This is a fiction: myriad media outlets connect us with the world without, and our relation to these media is no longer passive. We busy ourselves with connecting, with inquiring, and often, in so doing, expose ourselves, rendering our private thoughts and intimate lives public. The private individual is furthermore a creature inscribed in and produced by the politics and ideologies of his society. The boundary between the public self and the private self is consequently rather difficult to draw.

Despite these contradictions of fact or behaviour, the attachment of privacy and private space to the interior remains potent. Even with the removal of homely connotations, the idea of interior promises refuge from the antagonism of the exterior world. The interior presents itself as good, necessary, useful and reassuring. The development of ever larger, ever more comprehensive building programmes since the 1960s has led to a condition in which the interior or the device of the interior



Fig. 2.
Montréal CA 2005
© Mark Pimlott.

has been predominant. It sounds unusual to say this in a period when object-making is the pre-eminent motif of avant-garde architecture. Yet the correlate of the object is what it contains, the content of the development it represents. Building programmes, increasingly complex rather than dedicated to any single use, may rely upon iconic forms to announce their presence, and give them a sort of identity, but it is the interior that enables the unfolding of their contents, subduing their irregularities and the confusion that arises with their complexity. These interiors are no longer conceived as a succession of discrete spaces. Rather, they are thought of as a continuum of overlapping or adjacent zones, whose treatment tends toward the horizontal and the suggestion of landscape, of interiorized territory. The visitor finds himself in an interior that tends to a condition of *interiority*. There is only *within*: all references to a world without are lost. The antagonistic exterior disappears; one is in a potentially endless environment that offers perpetual intineracy and an illusion of freedom from which there is no escape.

These spaces are now familiar to us. They include metropolitan developments that connect several city blocks by means of lobbies, atria, mini-malls and entertainment zones; inner-city and out-of-town malls that mix shops with food courts, cinéplexes, fun fairs and gaming dens; casinos that assume the guises of malls, theme parks, and exposition halls; museums that fill their lobbies with shops and restaurants, allowing each to segue into exhibition spaces; and international airports, distributing shops, restaurants, bars, lounges, kiosks, clinics, hotels, convention centres, alien detention centres, financial institutions and multi-denominational prayer halls across a network of concourses and passageways that link regional infrastructural networks to waiting aircraft.

One is first impressed by the implied freedom of such spaces, of one's liberation from convention, whether from one's relation to programmatic contents, to attractions, or one's contact with other people. One can drift across terrains, under streets and through buildings; walk unhindered across boundaries and territories, or connect, should one choose, to a plethora of facilities and conveniences, all under one roof. One becomes the denizen of a sheltered, well-tempered environment that nurtures ease of movement, choice, and what appears to be interactivity. One's movements and actions, however, are so subtly prescribed, however, that one is not aware that one is being directed or manipulated. As many of these spaces are given over to spectacle, performing as frameworks for publicity's apparatus and representations, one is quite unaware that one is constantly prey to publicity, in the process of being prepared for consumption.

These conditions are germane to very extensive or continuous interiors,

spaces foreseen by Superstudio and Archizoom in the 1960s, in their *Continuous Monument* and *No-Stop City* projects. Such spaces were already in some sort of existence before these distinct articulations. The subject of Koohasian odes or laments, (1) the very extensive or continuous interior has become, perhaps, the preeminent interior typology.

The freedom offered by these interiors is, of course illusory, despite their territorial ambitions, their disregard for conventional limitations of boundaries or enclosure. Their contents and their arrangements are designed to effect predictable and profitable behavioral responses, in which processes of consumption are smoothed to maximize financial return. The techniques of such design were initiated in the arcades of Paris at the turn of the nineteenth century, developed for a mass public in the 19th-century's latter half *grands magasin* of Paris, other European metropolitan centres and their American counterparts soon after. Entertainments or spectacles were offered to entice people to stay all day within these artificial streets and palatial warehouses, where they could abandon themselves to reveries of consumption. (2) Later, and closest to our time, the casinos of Las Vegas and the shopping malls of 1960s suburban America gave new forms to a well-founded tradition of desired interior performance, and shepherded users already trained in the image-repertoire of advertising through ambiguous, artificial domains that echoed the dream-worlds of publicity.

Advertising has long claimed that freedom may be obtained through consumption. (3) The satisfaction of personal desire is presented as self-realisation. Advertising's great achievement has been to fuse its appeal to mass markets with that made to individuals, giving the conformist, consumerist identity of the mass the aura of individual emancipation. Modern advertising and publicity has created the idea of the contemporary individual much as the ideology of the burgeoning American Republic created the Jeffersonian idea of the individual yeoman. The continuous interior, as the space of publicity, emulates the spatial condition specific to an ideology of individualism – interiorised territory – and gives it form.

(1) Koolhaas 1995.
(2) Grunenberg 2002.
(3) John Berger discussed the nature and performance of photographic imagery in advertising in his television series "Ways of Seeing," (Berger 1972); artists such as Victor Burgin and Richard Prince have based large portions of their œuvres on advertising's elision of commodity, imagery, and lifestyle. See Burgin 1986; Spector and Bankowski 2007; Guégan 1990. The Taschen series of decade-by-decade surveys on American advertising clearly illustrate advertising's intentions to equate the possession of commodities with personal emancipation. See Heimann 2005. See also Friedberg 2002. For the role of advertising in shaping the urbanized territory of the United States, in particular the suburb, and the making of the suburban consuming "norm," see Cohen 2003.

Prototype and experience of the very extensive or continuous interior: Place Ville-Marie, Montréal; Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam; Place Ville-Marie

The *model* for the very extensive interior is the lower section of Montréal's Place Ville-Marie development, designed by Pei Cobb Freed in association with ARCOP and completed in 1962. The scheme connected diverse spaces, facilities and buildings across three large city blocks through a dominating, partially-submerged concourse,



Fig. 3.
Bruxelles B 1993
© Mark Pimlott.

and a network of connecting passageways. Taking advantage of the circumstances of the local topography, in which an escarpment produced dramatic level differences over the depth of the site, the architects were able to develop connections between adjacent sites, and very useful infrastructures over several underground levels. The consequence was a three-dimensional matrix of extremely varied spaces through which one was able to move both horizontally and vertically, while retaining an impression of primarily horizontal movement.

Nearly one-half of Place Ville-Marie's 280,000 square metres was beneath street level. Directly beneath the plinth, the retail concourse covered 59,000 square metres, deriving the obvious benefit of being protected from the city's extreme winter and summer climate. Below the concourse were two levels of parking for 1,200 cars; and below these, platforms and rail lines to the city's northern and southern suburbs. The complex was an infrastructural node; it mastered the many functions contained within it and held a daytime population of thousands of workers. The direct link to a central railway station ensured that 60,000 individuals, or ten percent of those coming into the city's downtown core each day, were compelled to pass through the development.

The interior of the Place Ville-Marie concourse, presented from its outset as a *shopping promenade*, was rendered in a contemporary "universal" manner that fused shopping mall (à la Victor Gruen), airport concourse and corporate office lobby. It was very low; and articulated to emphasise horizontality in view and movement. Daylight was provided by windows into courtyards cut into the plinth. The interior was almost anti-spatial: it negated any kind of stasis and enforced one's view of displayed commodities. The concourse was the *nexus* of a network of spaces, all of which were identified as being part of a so-called *underground city*. Other interiors presented to the wandering public were beautifully-illuminated tunnels that became arcades when lined with shops; lobbies for corporate offices, banks, and a grand hotel; and vast interiors, like the hall of central station concourse and the Piranesian vaults of the Bonaventure Métro station. When the multi-functional Place Bonaventure was added in 1967, an even richer variety ensued, including lofty yet cavernous interior arcades, expansive trade halls, and a rooftop hotel and garden, where, even exposed to the sky, one had the sense that one still occupied a protected, interior world.

The view, argued by Vincent Ponte (the urban planner working with Pei's office whose primary interest was the "three-dimensional urban plan"), regarding extensions to the growing network of underground passageways was that they should be pragmatic by nature, and so, accretive and opportunistic. As a consequence of this strategy, the cumulative experience of the core of the *underground city* offered a

series of surprises and anomalies, both spatial and functional. The character of its interior enabled the natural inclusion of extraordinary elements. Its accretive logic unified all elements, great and small, as though they were simply part of a single, continuous interior.

Schiphol

Amsterdam's *Schiphol Airport* (Bentham Crouwel, 1995) is, in its totality, representative of the continuous interior as a framework for publicity and control. Plugged into the national infrastructural network, it is a sprawling megastructure that claims, in its own promotional literature, to be more like a city than an airport. Its hydra-headed arrangement is premised on efficiency. Particular attention is given to issues of security and the uses of free time of travellers, purportedly with urbanism in mind. In its vast, extensive spaces, one is subjected to myriad demands and entreaties. Though some relate to boarding an aircraft, the majority appear to relate to opportunities for consumption.

The airport is designed as a system: one arrives either directly from the motorway or the integrated mainline train station; one departs by the same means or by boarding an aircraft. Queuing with fellow travellers in the large departure halls is followed by participation in clearing operations of Taylorist precision, until one's release into a capacious realm that is at once concourse, mall and amusement environment. Yet, in reality, it is another processing space through which one is swept along toward any of many destinations. In its largest spaces, sparkling surfaces, illuminated advertisements and commodities dominate the signposts of essential directions. Long passages connecting malls to departure gates provide opportunities for contemporary art installations and corporate "messages". In-between spaces are occupied by opportunistic kiosks. Schiphol is a conglomeration of spaces of flows, in whose eddies, little places are crafted as pauses, extravagantly staged in a menagerie of architectural styles to suggest a kind of cosmopolitanism. All incidents have their own expression as free agents in a free space. Yet all are united by the architecture of their frame: an infrastructural architecture that expresses technology.

This unity ultimately gives way to a kind of predominating democracy of the market, consistent with the principle of "everything under one roof", the by-line of the shopping mall. The blurring of distinct domains and boundaries and the complementary interference between competing enterprises is central to the success of the mall as a profit-making environment. Apart from their management of flows of people through compulsory routes lined with grazing-places, the contrived,



Fig. 4.
Maastricht NL 1993 © Mark
Pimlott.

quirky propinquities of both Schiphol and the suburban mall makes them seem anti-deterministic and anti-hierarchical – free – when they are in fact the opposite. Schiphol's huge plan and its panoply of spectacular effects exaggerates its separateness and profound interiority. The outside world is intimated, albeit vaguely: All views through the abundant fenestration are oriented towards aircraft, aprons and runways, reinforcing the interior's self-referentiality and self-sufficiency. In its omni-directional plan, one's view and attention is forced inwards.

“Junk-space” as continuous interior

The acceptance of extremely artificial conditions and their concomitant interiority has been celebrated by Dutch protagonists of the architectural *avant-garde*, for whom systematisation, statistical arrays, and the accidents of circumstance are compelling. The Netherlands is a nation of measurement and management of the environment against the odds, its efforts directed towards engineering an equitable society and maintaining the land's existence against the sea. The very extensive or continuous interior stimulates this interest, most acutely represented by Rem Koolhaas's essay *Junk-space* (2004), (4) because of its mechanistic orientation towards performance, its typically system-obsessed organization, its spaces of flows, its analogies and parallels with scientific theories and natural processes, its topologies as opposed to typologies, its ambiguous boundaries and hierarchies, its incongruous adjacencies, its unapologetic vulgarity, its preoccupation with enormity, and its symbiotic relationship with spectacle.

In its description that constantly gives the impression of horror, it may be regarded as an antithesis to the fascination felt in Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour's appreciations of the cavernous and disorienting interiors of the casinos of 1960s Las Vegas, described in *Learning from Las Vegas: the forgotten symbolism of architectural form* (1969).

It is, inevitably, Rem Koolhaas/OMA's projects that work in any critical way with the material and programmatic complexities of the continuous interior. Their compositional strategies echo the expedient arrangements of American cities (fragmentary, antagonistic, anti-hierarchical) and are designed to effect a naturalism that allows their oppositions, diversity, and endlessness to flourish. In projects such as the *Kunsthal Rotterdam* (1992), in which circulation routes cut diagonally across the sections of the building; or the *Seattle Central Library* (2005), in which the faceted, glazed enclosure/structure enhances perception of the building's programmatic containers and platforms, each programmatic fragment is revealed and distanced from others in an elegant spectacle of simultaneity that is perceived rather

(4) Koolhaas 2000.

than experienced, despite one's movement. The individual *follows* the choreographed scenes and scenarios of the buildings' programmed self-regard. (5)

The essay *Junk-space* describes an end-game in which a representative, fictional, glutted, exhausted, vernacular, continuous interior reveals its artifice. The interior feels familiar to us. Its failings bring to mind its promise, which was presented in the archly critical projects of Archizoom (*No-Stop City* 1969); and Superstudio (*A Continuous Monument: An Architectural Model for Total Urbanization* 1969). (6) In the former, the "great indoors" assumed and could support any programmatic arrangement. Always serviced and equipped it promised another nature: in the case where the interior was required to serve as dwelling, the familial occupants, have returned to naked, Edenic authenticity. In the latter, evident in the image "A Journey from A to B," a generic landscape has been scoured clean of architecture. All that remains is a glacial, endless grid over which hippies amble like 19th-century tourists. Electronics built into its surface provide mediated worldly contact, engineered shortcuts for communication that one "plugs-into". In Superstudio's vision, technology softens the blow of reality and distances the individual from direct engagement with others. Indeed, it demands exclusive engagement, rapture, and dependence, and neither proffers nor permits any alternative.

Architecture disappearing into the "nature" of technology

There are still other precedents from the continuous interior and its phenomena seem to spring. The "everything under one roof" motif in modernity extends back at least to the *Crystal Palace* (Sir Joseph Paxton 1851) and the Exhibition buildings that followed its direction for years after. These structures were pieces of spectacular infrastructure: extensive, insubstantial, and luminous; they sustained interior displays and events that were intended to capture all attention; they impressed the public with the vastness of their interior spaces, their abundant glazing, their absence of differentiation between the interior and exterior, and a transparency that induced the disappearance of architecture as a recognisable and hierarchical system of representation and organisation of space, replacing it with the *nature* of technology and the dream-worlds evoked by their spectacular interiority. (7)

(5) For a lucid and telling description of the interior of the Seattle Central Library, see Stadler 2004.

(6) Lang and Menking 2003; for an extensive restaging of the definitive utopian projects of both Superstudio and Archizoom, see the exemplary publication that associates these projects with those of Yona Friedman and Constant: van Schaik and Mácel 2005.

(7) Giedion 1941.

Universal space/Mies's clear span

The disappearance of architecture in these 19th-century exhibition halls (or in public conservatories, train stations, the glass courts of



Fig. 5.
Paris F 2003
© Mark Pimlott.

(8) A number of publications describe the work undertaken at IIT in this direction, a subject worthy of closer study. Parallel research was conducted by Konrad Wachsmann at the neighbouring Illinois Institute of Design over the same period. On the work of Myron Goldsmith, see Blaser 1987; the interviews conducted with Chicago architects by the oral history program of the Art Institute of Chicago, including Betty J. Blum with Myron Goldsmith and Pauline Saliga with Gena R. Summers, are illuminating: <http://www.artic.edu/aic/libraries/caohp/>. The education program is discussed in both Carter 1999, and Achilles, Harrington, and Myhrum 1986. For insights into clear span, see Blaser 2001.

(9) For an extensive discussion of the relation of the horizon to the Miesian interior, see Evans 1997. The use of figurative sculpture in Mies's Concert Hall collage and its importance for ideas of space in Mies's work is developed by Penelope Curtis in her Patio and Pavilion (Curtis 2007). The Concert Hall is further discussed in Lambert 2001.

(10) Dal Co 1985.

(11) Regarding the properties and effects of Jon Jerde's work in retail design and the Mall of America in particular, see Herman 2001.

shopping centres and markets) was re-enacted in the *beinahe nichts* (almost nothing) ambitions of postgraduate research into clear-span structures conducted under Mies van der Rohe (and Myron Goldsmith and Fazlur Khan) from the 1940s through the 1960s at the Illinois Institute of Technology. (8) Mies sought to find an abstract, "universal" space that was specific to the American urban-territorial context. The designs, whether academic or determined for real building opportunities, were oriented toward the horizon, yet spatially omni-directional, and integrated, by virtue of their difference, into the anti-hierarchical urban "jungle". They were clear-span structures, column-free spaces formally proposed as clearings. The ground and ceiling planes acted as earth and sky. For example, the perspective collages made by Mies's office for a *Concert Hall* (1945–1948) feature a series of suspended and superimposed planes that define the limits of meaningful space within a vast given hangar. The insertion of floating walls, ceiling planes and figurative sculpture infer an architecture of dispersed and generic infrastructural support, playing host to the complementary forms of specific, figuring, animating, and arbitrary events within. The collages realise an extreme interiority. Although the perspectives of Mies's courtyard house projects, including those of the *Barcelona Pavilion*, are enclosed by external walls, their subtly inferred horizons always signal exteriority and the world. No "other" space is suggested in either the *Concert Hall* collages or that of the *Congress Hall* project of 1953. In these views, there is no external world or apparent limit to interior space. (9)

Mies's structures appear to occupy a transitional position in a trajectory that connect the patterns of territorialization of the American West to the contemporary phenomenon of the very extensive interior. His propositions were idealised, static. The research projects that followed Mies's example found themselves applied in the architectural profession at large: commercial adaptations of IIT's models gave their nearly absent architectural frameworks the character of infrastructure, frameworks ready for wiring, equipment, servicing components, and the apparatus of publicity. In these, the structure departs the world of architecture and representation, and becomes pure technology, accommodating, servicing, and integrated with other infrastructures. As discrete architecture, it disappears, and joins a wider tendency in which all urban components are thematically and physically connected, a continuous interior at territorial scale. Kevin Roche's description of the relation between the home and the office as manifested in his practice's *Union Carbide Corporation Headquarters* (Danbury Connecticut, 1976–1982) made it clear that they were, along with the motorway and that tied them together "like an umbilical [cord]," all of a piece, all components of one system, one environment). (10)

Aberrations or realisations/Mall of America

In the *Mall of America* (1992) near Minneapolis, designed by the Jon Jerde Partnership, the Miesian objective of clearing- or place-making is completely transformed into the making of specialised infrastructure for the delivery of publicity and its manipulations. Its structure accommodates shopping, food courts, entertainment zones, a children's day-camp, and more; (11) it is treated as background to its contents, enabling the "everything" of the interior to carry on and make itself an "environment". The visitor's perception of an insubstantial architecture, of unhindered movement and the cathartic experience of consumer choice lends to an illusion of a greater form of freedom, in harmony with the freedom in which he is ideologically tutored. As an "environment", it affects the apparently boundary-free condition of the great outdoors. The *Mall of America* successfully grafts clear-span solutions onto the problem of integrated infrastructures, producing an infinitely extendable space for everything, with that "everything" legitimating itself through its gathering of "real life" activity. Yet, the "everything under one roof" epithet used to describe retailing environments of this kind is apt in another way: outside this structure, nothing matters.

Alternative states, alternative models

There have been authentic rather than such manipulatively artificial versions of such interior domains: Cedric Price's *Fun Palace* project (1959-1962) stands out as an unrealised model: its infrastructure of pylons, cranes, and gantries were to enable highly inclusive interaction, servicing unknowable or unplanned events. (12) Two realised projects in the Netherlands by the Dutch architect Frank van Klingerden, the *Multifunctioneel centrum De Meerpaal*, Dronten (1966-1967) and the *Multifunctioneel centrum Het Karregat*, Eindhoven (1970-1973), are also significant. (13)

Both schemes were conceived as open, sheltered facilities for the public, who could remain there all day and sit, talk, watch plays, drink, play games, take classes, shop or learn, all under pragmatically constructed, large-scale sheds (Van Klingerden was trained as an engineer). *De Meerpaal* offered unobstructed views to the outside world; *Het Karregat* was conceived very much as an interior set within a neighbourhood. These projects were intended to create some sort of indeterminate public facility, in which the word *freedom* did not correspond to unhindered consumption. Neither building relied on the phantasmagoria of publicity to excite activity within; their skeletal enclosures were made to support self-generated activities.

(12) For discussion of Cedric Price's plans for the *Fun Palace*, see Banham 1984; Price 2003 and Matthews 2007.

(13) The documentation of Frank van Klingerden's work in English is relatively scarce. Martien de Vletter's survey of Dutch architecture of the 1970s situates the work in the midst of contemporary developments of Dutch ideas regarding architecture and society. de Vletter 2004. *De Meerpaal* is well known, nevertheless, for its regular appearances as a backdrop to events on the Dutch national television network in the 1970s and 1980s. Van Klingerden's social ideas were central to his architectural ideas; the eclipse of his social ideas by "market forces" has been accompanied by the obscuring of his architectural ideas.

Conclusion

The continuous interior is beguiling: within, one feels free and empowered. Both impressions are false. In the technology-laden, publicity-saturated continuous interior, these feelings are enhanced by publicity's assault on the individual's desires and "needs", which it preconditions and predetermines. Publicity addresses individuals as though on intimate terms, reinforcing their isolation among others. The continuous interior's self-referential forms compel its occupants to turn in on themselves and to that voice that they are induced to believe will remedy their relative inadequacy: publicity's mediated succour and friendly counsel. This condition is germane but not exclusive to the continuous interior: it can be recognised as characteristic of the contemporary urban territory, much of which has been increasingly "interiorised" by commercial strategies. This interiority is opposed to improvisatory human interaction and stifles the possibility of an authentic public.

Alternatives to the treatment of the very large interior, as offered by Cedric Price, Frank van Klinger, or even Mies, are perhaps anachronistic, in their suggestion that their users are citizens rather than consumers, engaged with each other in real places and time rather than suspended in atemporal states within infrastructures and their technologies, effects, and products. Price and Van Klinger felt it both necessary and urgent to make frameworks for events generated by people as they interacted while doing what they wanted to do. In the case of Mies, the very large interior bore the potential of being a "universal space" for Man, a clearing or place in the larger space of the world. Its interiority was proposed as significant, placing the individual within a contemplative condition, where people and things were "others" to be encountered. This kind of interiority was not continuous, but specific, despite any dimensions it might assume. Within the settings of these alternative visions for very large interiors, it was hoped, and we might continue to hope, that a public might emerge.

This article is largely derived from two previous essays by the same author: "The continuous interior: infrastructure for publicity and control", originally published in *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall 2008 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); and the chapter "Prototypes for the continuous interior", in *Itabout and Within: Essays on Territory and the Interior* (Rotterdam: episode 2007).

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Words and Worlds

Shelter

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The inside/outside boundary has been a crucial place throughout the history of architecture, an age-old site of exchange and transition.

Ledoux' engraving entitled "the poor man's shelter" (*l'abri du pauvre*) is one of the discipline's archetypical images. While one of the purposes of interior architecture is to make a comfortable environment, what we have here is the dream of an entire world that is wholly comfortable, the yearning for an "absolute" interior, and – most importantly for our purposes – the extension of the feel of indoors to the urban scene.

"Urban interior" can mean many things, but it is also an oxymoron, one which seems at first sight to be reviving the old opposition between architects and tapestry-makers in the framework of contemporary debate.

Let us start by examining the terms of certain questions, for these are thick with complexities however they are viewed.

Cities, and with them the categories of urban design, are configured and described in just one particular way at present: in terms of their characteristics as sites of communication and exchange, of the public sphere.

The interior ("interiority", or what at the start of our modern age was called *l'intérieur*) is primarily a matter of the private sphere, of security from transgression. These two cross-fertilize mutual inferences, so we are obliged to clarify relationships and define our terms. So: let us agree that the "interior" is first of all a state of mind, an opportunity to make something one's own by arranging a space. Furthermore we may define "interior architecture" as a system of procedures and arrangements which *makes architecture habitable*, matching its rhythms (and also of the city) to those of living.

Light is cast here by Walter Scott's brief description of the sense of "interior" in Ivanhoe, explaining how, when a lady was to occupy an apartment, the servants would hang its walls with cloth coverings: an operation, a mediation was required in order to make a given piece of architecture habitable. There are analogous operations in the case of the city, and also differences; the first sign of the appropriation of

space, of the city's existence, is its boundary, the city wall.

Here we should recall Ryckwert's essay on myths of origin, and the complexities that underlie the city as an institution. Founding rites, too, can be seen as procedures for matching the rhythms of habitation with those of the world.

The city, says Fustel de Coulanges, is the human place *par excellence*: dense, variegated, the construction of all men; in this it differs from the clarity of the ideal city of architects or philosophers, which expresses a reflective view of habitation and lives its own parallel life, cosseted in the aquarium of theory.

Cities and their buildings have, incidentally, a relationship with beauty that is only partial, only marginal; few portions are created by the official professionals of beauty. Humans adapt, get used to their city and its architecture. Much that is thought hideous today will win our hearts in the end, if it survives. A Klossowsky tells the story of an extraterrestrial visitor who discovers one dominant species on our planet, Great Buildings, and a subordinate species (mankind) which exists only to serve them and extend their domain. We should also remember the shipwreck of Erik F. Russell's Martian Village, which reshapes itself day after day – even changing completely – to suit the shape of its builders: a charming story with much truth. We should also remember the notion – which appears in many places – of the “chair that fits anyone”: clearly, a more plausible idea is that of the human child, born small in a world full of objects and growing up until he can sit in the chair (with our present subject, though, we should always bear symmetrical correspondences in mind, starting with Alberti's house/city parallels).

Clearly, though, cities and architecture must be affected by a general crisis like the present worldwide one. This is undoubtedly a difficult moment for architecture (I prefer not to use the term “crisis” in this instance, because crisis is almost a necessary condition for art; and, I believe, for the city too, for it cannot be tranquil for ever: its dynamics require constant changes in understanding and accommodation; I also agree that our cities suffer from stagnation – and not just miserable transport, either). With revivals, pseudotechnical myths, a surfeit of change, kitsch, remakes, etc, architecture right now is at best in hock, at worst in thrall to the other arts.

The city's “difficult moment” is proving a hallmark of this new millennium: plans to militarize space, nostalgia for the ordered *castrum* (though considering Baghdad this is less plausible...). Virilio said we just have to accept that the city is disorderly, and necessarily so (remember, too, Quaroni's account of the tension between Rome and other Roman cities, and his *Tower of Babel*).

We have Benjamin's description of the labyrinthine Paris of the

Arcades; and likewise, from a century earlier, Victor Hugo's (partly invented) Paris of the sewers. No Metro then, no Zazie; nor had Beineix yet made the film he should have called "Nôtre Dame des Métros". Above all, Prefect Haussmann was yet to finish his work of demolishing houses and deploying boulevards, his new city spinning what have been called the "Tales of Haussmann".

(Bloggers attacking Haussmann's work claim his new metropolis with its huge new sewer system unintentionally created an ideal habitat for vampire bats, which the Parisians therefore call Haussmann's Children). Virilio has good grounds, then, for saying that Paris is not all open, despite Haussmann, but a succession of interiors: closed in by walls or other boundaries; house walls, city walls, right up to the walls of the world.

Before Kansai airport was built it was said – and will be again when, it seems, that airport is submerged again – that the Great Wall was the only artefact visible from the moon. It was built to give physical form to a definitive, universal judgement on the world: on the one hand, the civilized world of humans; on the other, the world of barbarians and fairs.

Rome, too, built its walls and carefully marked its *Limites*; the determination to give meaning to the contrast between inside and out has always been a hallmark of every culture. This is charmingly put in Ivan Morris' essay on Heian Japan "The World of the Shining Prince": the harshest sentence for a nobleman was to be sent out of the city, even on a mission we would consider important; it meant leaving civilisation (I have no idea whether in Japanese the words for "city" and "civilisation" share the same root as they do with us, but in this instance they are inseparable); beyond the city boundaries were brutes, storms, and discomfort: *the world outside was not habitable*. Some centuries later, the rude creatures of the countryside were first redeemed as leading characters in *Il Ruzante*'s works. Later still, they and their habitations became the very subject-matter of the myths of the Noble Savage and the State of Nature, the original housing of the soul, and bore witness to the threads linking Laugier, Rousseau and Thoreau.

The last fifty years have unfortunately seen other walls, from the Berlin Wall to the "security barrier" in the West Bank, unwitting and miserable replies to the tragedies of the ghetto. Earlier came the Maginot and Siegfried Lines, the Atlantic Wall and the smaller Alpine Wall: but everywhere, as for the *La Marquise d'O* in Rohmer's film, the enemy (and the new) always wins by appearing along an expected route. Walls, then, as well as setting limits, *express the limitations of their builders*. On both sides they fail to restrain, they define oppositions whose weaknesses – limits – they reveal, often with unexpected consequences.

Now I turn to the origins of the modern world; the walls are down, the city/country boundary dissolving; but simultaneously the urban world is dissolving too; we face an almost Oriental suggestion, dissolution as harmony. The elements of civilization become more and more “interior” as they move into buildings. This is only marginally due to the Rationalist redefinition of the city in terms of functional parts. True, functionality’s categories have over time dissolved and diminished the irreducible complexities of urban life; but when the Rationalists made this simplification, they were surely carrying forward what Virilio calls the “mental map of the city”, their attitude of civilization. They could experiment with annihilating complexities, based (at the extreme) on a “city of houses alone”. This attitude however, not far from the spontaneous attitude of the wall-builder, has exhausted itself over the years and grown remote; mock-experimental has nowadays replaced the real thing.

Theories of the ideal city, with their various approaches, have also contributed much to today’s situation, from theoretical constructions (ranging from the Eighth century to the Nineteenth) to the visionary communities of America. A model has been progressively worked out, which is not just a shared house or common home, in which the characteristics of urban living – of community – begin to redefine social and spatial relationships together, placing them *inside* the buildings. This leads to two paradoxes: Asimov’s Trantor, a wholly-constructed world, an immense indoors whose outdoors has vanished; and Metropolis, where the city/country dichotomy renews Hugo’s city/underground one; and finally Ballard’s great Condominium, where order triggers violence and self-destruction. For those outside, the talking-point is urban wastelands, social problems, jobs, resources, from their role in the ancient city as the *outcome* of building, to the consequences of defending the hollowness of Rationalism.

As Caesar built a desert (another oxymoron) outside the *limes*, so the Rationalists by taking the city to pieces began to build *a desert of houses* (Virilio recalls Aragon’s *Paysan de Paris*, who inhabits a wilderness of houses; opera-lovers will recall that La Traviata made the same point fifty years earlier). In this wilderness, civilization has to be sheltered indoors; the alternative solution of suburban destruction, merrily embraced by some, “is formal suicide”.

Let us reconsider the destruction of the city walls. This replaced static masonry with free passage; but the secure, constricting boundary of stones gave way to the unbearable steel-and-rubber boundary of ring roads and Beltways. Structures made to encourage movement have turned out paralysing snares. We cannot but remember Godard’s *Weekend*, stopped dead more than thirty years ago like Warhol’s “Empire”, but not even managing silence.

A Paris taxi-driver maintained that what was wrong with the *boulevards* is that they were longer than they are broad: the other way round, traffic would flow just fine. The paradox is both a caricature and a description of what one might expect of a city designed by Le Corbusier, a *tabula rasa* on which great buildings would rise to house civilization, to *summarize* the city within themselves. In fact such summaries are most problematic; the tradition is an ancient one: the earthly paradise of the walled garden, the animals sheltered in the Ark, nature domesticated in the glasshouses of Kew, the whole world assembled and explained under the vaults of the Crystal Palace.

Firstly notice how, in a series of steps, we slide from the Wunderkammer to Disneyland to *Italy in Miniature*: representation, not construction, is central to each: travel, as Papanek's student says after his Italian trip, is confused, wearisome and dirty; much better Italy's theme park epitome.

Instead of the construction of the city we have the collecting of souvenirs, the *representation of events* (with a miserable use of "event" which reveals our inability to bear the necessary grandeur).

Our pre-eminent features are now fakes or representations, their short duration itself an (improbable) representation of life's mutability. In this tranquillized representation danger appears suddenly, regardless of the creators' intentions; Fuller's Manhattan Dome foreshadows the alien spaceship in "Independence Day". Modern architecture, designed to cover and protect, has, on the contrary, incubated within the city the germs of destruction; another reason why the cities of Utopia are enclosed inside their buildings.

When I was studying, Cumbernauld Town Centre had a great – perhaps excessive – reputation. Designed as a container of civilization; at once a scion of the good English tradition and a faded echo of the underground river of Utopia.

The "creation" of events places architecture what we could call "next door" to the other arts: all its peculiar difficulties of expression have been removed. This subordinate status is immediately clear from the disorganized repositioning of the new architects in an over-busy "star" system looking like something out of a Marvel cartoon (apologies to the Fantastic Four). Here again, though, there are long-established roots: critics who retail the history of architecture as some League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (without seeing the film, and without a shred of its irony).

We could call this breathless hysteria of time-worn novelties a period of Olympian architecture, of a quest for records and achievements aptly summarized in the motto "faster, higher, stronger". As to "higher", a new dimension, almost, was invented with the elevator: the start of a new race, with unknown rules and results; but remember "who knows not where to go, goes up."

After beholding Manhattan from his ship, Le Corbusier wrote that the skyscraper is a cataclysm in slow motion; worryingly, the thought is almost a premonition; worryingly, also, the collapse of the Twin Towers has been described as “a great work of art for a new century”: we who have felt the horror have difficulty understanding that this description refers not to the tragedy but to the significance which art has to take on: Virilio says to create art is to cause an accident.

Nevertheless, accidents should be avoided in architecture, however stupid we find the safety rules; living in battle is – perhaps – the job of demigods, and entails a need for much rest. For humans, perhaps, there is the possibility of irony; but that implies detachment. The tragedy of this century’s beginning is that irony is actually the *Unsafety Exit* for anyone still wanting to participate, to mark the landscape. As Victor Hugo put it: a joke made about a misdeed is more horrifying than the deed itself; nothing is more abominable than a crime that does not remain serious.

(Translated by Dick Nowell – Textformedia.it)

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ConNoTaTion

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The Architect, by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is a pure creation of his spirit; by forms and shapes he affects our senses to an acute degree and provokes plastic emotions; by the relationships which he creates he wakes profound echoes in us, he gives us the measure of order which we feel to be in accordance with that of our world, he determines the various movements of our heart and of our understanding; it is then that we experience the sense of beauty. (1)

En·vi·ron·men·tal Con-no·ta·tion (2)

1. The act or process of sensory connoting.
2. Accumulated or individual environmental element connoted; idea or notion suggested by or associated with a single sensory stimulus, group stimuli, etc. in addition to its explicit meaning, or denotation.

Logic. The properties possessed by all the environmental stimuli in a term's extension; intention: comprehensive ability to feel, appreciate, or understand some quality.

Purpose

A creative interior design is not only highly effective functionally, but it also evokes emotional and meaningful experiences for intended users. While scholars and professionals share the notion that creative thinking involves highly complex decision making processes and is equally important with scientific thinking, a gap exists in that the general public perceives the creativity in interior design as intuitive and personal aesthetic judgments for ornamentation. Even interior design practitioners isolate creativity into media skill sets and personal artistic judgments. However, creativity in a design process takes a much more complex and vital role; it enables designers

(1) Le Corbusier 1959, 7.

(2) Adapted from the definition of connotation. Agnes 2002, 309.

to orchestrate tangible and intangible design elements to create a meaningful place. Science enhances functionality and creativity evokes emotional, meaningful experiences.

Therefore, this paper argues that the creative design process of generating design solutions to manifest meaningful spatial experiences deserves more attention and that the concept of “connotation” symbolizes these aspects of creativity. They are *meaningful environment connoted*, a creative product as a result of creative design processes; *acts of sensory connoting*, highly *articulated creative and innovative thinking processes*; and *anti-replication, an ever-changing concept of creativity*.

A missing piece of the pie

At last, collective efforts, including interior design jurisdiction legislations to gain public awareness of interior design as a legitimate profession in the United States, have resulted in a single unified voice on the definition of interior design. (3) Interior design is now defined as “a multi-faceted profession in which creative and technical solutions are applied within a structure to achieve a built interior environment. These solutions are functional, enhance the quality of life and culture of occupants and are aesthetically attractive (...) The interior design process follows a systematic and coordinated methodology, including research, analysis and integration of knowledge into the creative process, whereby the needs and resources of the client are satisfied to produce an interior space that fulfills the project goals.” (4)

From this definition, two distinctive characteristics can be found: logic/scientific knowledge and emotion/creativity. It is important to note that in the definition of interior design, creativity and analytical/scientific thinking are treated as equally important. However, in interior design education and research, creativity has not been paid equal attention. (5)

Empirical research and/or science-based research in the “body of knowledge” (6) seem to get more prestige than aesthetics and creativity. In turn (thanks to interior design legislation efforts, as well), knowledge-based, engineering- and technology-centered, and standards-based curricula have become prevalent in interior design professional education. Creativity, therefore, has been de-emphasized.

It is obvious that creativity is a notable characteristic of interior design identities and is a powerful image for fostering future

(3) American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and International Interior Design Association (IIDA) both refer the interior design definition to the National Council for Interior Design Qualification website.

(4) National Council for Interior Design Qualification. Definition of interior design. <http://www.ncidq.org/AboutUs/AboutInteriorDesign/DefinitionofInteriorDesign.aspx>.

(5) Pable 2009.

(6) Guerin and Martin 2004.

designers. Unfortunately, both the delivered and the perceived concepts of creativity by professionals and the public are shallow. Creativity tends to be isolated in aesthetics; therefore, a person with good drawing skills and intuitive artistic judgment is considered a creative designer. Moreover, in HGTV and reality TV shows, intuitive artistic judgments have been shown as the creative practice of interior design. As a consequence of this public image of creativity and the de-emphasis of creativity in academics, the interior design identity is in deeper trouble. Therefore, serious efforts to broaden the concept of creativity in interior design are vital. (7)

Meaningful environment connoted

In semantics, connotation “refers to the implicit, conventional, second meaning of a sign, imposed by a specific culture.” (8) In linguistics, connotative meanings are context-dependent, meaning they are fussy, emotional, multi-faceted, cultural, and associated with users’ personal experiences. Unfortunately, this meaningful/ emotional experience in a built-in environment has been neglected due to the emphasis on the scientific design approach. (9) As Ching states, “architectural forms and spaces also have connotative meanings: associative values and symbolic content that are subject to personal and cultural interpretation, which can change with time (...) The art of architecture makes our existence not only visible but meaningful.” (10)

According to Rapoport, in a physical environment “meaning (...) is itself a most important aspect of function. In fact, the meaning aspects of the environment are critical and central (...) Physical elements not only make visible and stable cultural categories, they also have meaning; that is, they can be decoded if and when they match people’s schemata.” (11) Creative interior design is implicit in its meaning and explicit in its function. The intended audiences share this value and meaning emotionally. (12)

The spatial experience of a highly creative environment is rather implicit and emotional. A highly successful and creative environment communicates its meaning of functional intentions, its social and cultural meanings, and its aesthetic values to the intended audiences. Indeed “the meaning” is paired with “the function” as two equally distinctive elements of a product. Function represents the utilitarian dimension and meaning is connoted by “symbols, identity, and emotions.” (13)

(7) Pable 2009.

(8) Leeds-Hurwitz 1993, 26.

(9) Rapoport 1982.

(10) Ching 2007, 406.

(11) Rapoport 1982, 15.

(12) Portillo and Dohr 2000, 54; 41-57.

(13) Verganti 2009, 28.

Acts of sensory connoting

Acts of “connotation” represent the creative design process. As a poet uses his/her creativity to create an evocative and emotional poem, creativity takes a central role in the design process to transform design elements into a meaningful environment for intended users. The “body of knowledge” becomes “denoted” and/or “connote” factors for designers encoding. In poetics, meanings of a word are decoded and the connotative and denotative meanings are constantly analyzed by the poet to generate new ideas. He/she then articulates his/her languages and ideas to create a poem to evoke emotional experiences that are meaningful to audiences. He/she needs a system and grammar for encoding. The process requires a critical and analytical process. In this process, creativity takes a central role. For the poet, grammars, rules, and systems are meant to be changeable and breakable. It represents the innovation of meaning. Indeed, the interior design decision process is much more complex and holistic toward solving problems and it requires a high level of creativity. (14)

Creativity is recognized as “successfully integrating individualistic, artistic, and intellectual aspects of design problem solving.” (15)

From literature within design and allied industries, a study found that ideas and innovation are two common attributes of creativity. (16) These attributes are also recognized as critical values of design in business. Verganti states that “designers have an amazing capacity to get close to users, understand their needs, and then creatively generate countless ideas.” (17) Design thinking, lacking in the traditional mode of innovation in an analytical world, sometimes refers to creative thinking that is understood as an ability of finding alternative and new ideas. “Design-driven innovation” that refers to radical innovation meaning gains more attention in marketing. (18) It proposes “a different and unexpected meaning (...) This meaning, unsolicited, was what people were actually waiting for.” (19)

A design decision is a result of orchestrating collective knowledge, experience, and artistic judgments that could be a Glass box and/or a Black box approach. The decision is not only holistic, anecdotal, and implicit, but it is also analytical, empirical, and explicit. Design languages are acquired from architectural stimuli, knowledge, technologies, and jurisdictional information, and the creativity empowers an interior designer who has high motivation, diverse experiences, and a good body of knowledge (20) to use acquired languages to encode user-centered meanings and beyond. The solution affects users functionally and emotionally. It evokes specific

(14) National Council of Interior Design Qualification.

(15) Portillo 2002, 24; 10-26.

(16) Pedersen and Burton 2009.

(17) Verganti 2009, x.

(18) Ibid.

(19) Ibid., 4.

(20) Jeffries 2007.

socio-cultural meanings for particular audiences and fulfills their desires and beyond through the spatial experience.

Anti-replication

Connotation has an ever-changing concept. It represents characteristics of creative outcomes. Connotative meanings are additive rather than definitive. For instance, a sign in an advertisement can induce new meanings and novel experiences that characterize the notion of a creativity attribute, the originality. In the humanities, a creative design solution is meant to be original and novel. Design activity is for sophisticated constructive addition rather than for accumulations of replicated scientific findings. Creativity enables designers to use their design skills, technologies, and scientific knowledge in a comprehensive way to create an innovative environment for intended users. Indeed, the characteristic of an interior design solution is not only context dependent, but it is also the presence of the novel and original. In this case, it is important to note that a creative design outcome is not meant to be “repeated, or copied.” (21)

In empirical/scientific studies, replication validates findings and objectivities of the studies. Under this umbrella, scientific methods that are analytical, rational, systematic, and/or technological reject ambiguity and creativity that are an inherent part of the humanities. (22) It seems that this notion of scientific methods is dominant among interior design practitioners and scholars under the norm of “evidence-based design” and that this scientific design idea is getting stronger attention in the field. This objective approach cannot validate the other important values of interior design identity, the ambiguity of meaningful experiences reflecting creativity. The word connotation suggests the characteristics of creativity embedded in the nature of interior design practice. It represents the other part of human nature, emotion and novel meanings. It rejects replicability.

This paper does not attempt to ignore the aspects of design that are evidence – and knowledge-based. Rather, it suggests that creativity deserves more attention and should be treated as having equal value and that the word “connotation” suggests important identities of creativity that the interior design profession has overlooked. Alternative and/or original ideas and innovative thinking are also important characteristics of creativity and are paired with comprehensive thinking processes. This article also suggests that the concept of connotation addressed in this paper will increase public

(21) Cross 2001, 51.

(22) Ibid.

awareness of interior design that is not only evidence driven, but that is also a highly creative profession. More attention should be on creativity in design education and research, and two implementations are suggested to promote this idea of creativity in the field. First, creativity can be considered a separate group in the interior design body of knowledge. (23)

The body of knowledge in the creativity group can be categorized into three subgroups, the creative trait, the creative process, and the creative products. (24) Within the creativity group, open-ended and subjective inquiries are welcome. The knowledge is multifaceted, innovative, rigorous, suggestive, persuasive, and/or constructive, but it is also not limited. Second, this study opens inquiries of how to improve the design process, as well as personal creativity skills, and what constitutes the creative design process. Human-centered design, value innovation, and meaningful experience are by-products of creativity that, in interior design, are a missing piece of interior wor(l)ds.

- (23) Guerin and Martin suggest 6 groups for body of knowledge: codes, communication, design, human needs, interior building construction, and professional practice. Creativity appeared as "creative design" and is treated as a single knowledge area under design.
(24) Dohr 1982; Pedersen and Burton 2009; Portillo and Dohr 2000.

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Transgressive

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Stripping back, subtraction or even demolition can be considered as a process that actually precursors the real act of intervention. As some step, intellectual or intuitive, that the designer must pass through to reach the main or central point of the design process. The designer often sees this as an important, but secondary stage, it has little more than a minor role in the creative method.

Fig.1
Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Caixa Forum,
Madrid 2008.

Fred Scott describes it as a means “(...) to establish a means by which the designer can begin a negotiation between the ideal and the actual, and also begin the process of intervention by which disparate parts must be made to cohabit.” (1)

However, this process can be viewed as the most significant and essential element of the design process. Subtraction doesn't contain the glamour or the productive nature of intervention. It does not construct something new. It is not part of that most basic of human instincts, that is to create. It does not satisfy the sense of self-worth of the architect or designer. It is less than doing nothing, to take away is a process of reduction, or removal, it reduces what is available and what is there. It is a very strange process indeed and one which is much overlooked, but a number of key projects are testament to its significance.

The Caxia Forum in Madrid, once a brick power station, was converted into a museum by Herzog and de Meuron in 2008. This project contains two examples of quite brutal subtraction; the first was the extraordinary act of removing the whole of the ground floor of the building, thus bestowing upon it the impression that it is floating or gently hovering above the ground. The second destructive act was to demolish any extraneous structures immediately in front of the museum to create a new public square. The removal of the base of the building allows this new plaza to flow into the museum, thus creating spaces that are neither inside nor outside, they are under the building, but are not enclosed by it. This is a building that appears to

(1) Scott 2008, 113.



Fig. 2-3.
Gunther Domenig,
Documentation Centre
at the former Nazi
Kongresshalle, Nuremberg
1998.

defy gravity, it is full of wonder, ambiguity and whimsy. Another project that uses the quite uncompromising act of subtraction in a transgressive manner is the extraordinary Centre for the Documentation of the Third Reich in Nuremberg. When constructed it was one of the most significant structures in Nazi Germany, but after the end of the Second World War, it lay dormant for years. No one quite knew what to do with it, but equally, its massive social significance meant that it couldn't be demolished. By virtue of its position within the German psyche as a city of great tradition, Nuremberg was in 1933 officially designated the "City of Congresses", a privilege that entitled it to host the greatest gatherings of the Nazi Party.

The great Nazi architect Albert Speer was responsible for the planning and development of a stadium for 400,000, parade grounds, Zeppelin fields, halls, barracks and other structures to house these spectacular shows. The site was linked to the centre of the town by a two kilometre long avenue. The centrepiece of the master plan was the Kongresshalle, designed by Ludwig Ruff, with his son Franz. It was a massive horseshoe-shaped auditorium intended to house 50,000 party officials. It was more than 275m wide by 265m deep, the colossal size and shape being a monumental backdrop for the huge rallies held there. The hall suffered from structural problems caused by the marshy ground that it was built upon, the heaviness of the granite cladding and the sheer weight and size of the roof. It was never completed.

The building was declared a national monument in 1973, and after reunification, the government held a competition to remodel the Kongresshalle to house the documentation centre; Gunther Domenig won it. However, the building is so huge that this project only occupies a small proportion of it, just the rectangular court-yarded hall to the north of the main semi-circular buildings. The centre was designed to contain exhibitions, lecture rooms, film studios and workshops, the purpose of which were to provide a documentation of the events that took place within the city specifically focusing upon the Party Rally Grounds.

Domenig made a direct statement of intent which symbolised the new use. He inserted a dynamic diagonal cut directly against the grain of the original orthogonal building. This 21st century shard slices through the building. It begins as an entrance in the most northerly corner of the structure, brutally and uncompromisingly cuts through the rooms and the courtyard and emerges into the massive open space in the centre of the horseshoe building. This blade-like element lacerates the space to create a circulation route through the building.

The remodelling is not a subtle statement, as this was not the time or the place for sensitive reappraisals and careful installations. The form of the new directly counterpoints the old. This is a bold proclamation on the history of the building and its relationship with the new function. The heavy masonry of the fabric of the Kongresshalle is literally just cut away to accommodate the insertion. The end of the shard opens out to form an entrance for the museum. Inside it links a series of rooms, which were originally intended as the meeting chambers and offices of the party and now form the exhibition spaces and the documentation archive. The 130m by 1.8m wide corridor is inclined, and rises through the space until it shoots out of the back of the building into the main central arena of the hall. Here the objective of the original architects becomes shockingly apparent as the enormity of the hall impresses itself upon the viewer. Domenig's intentions were to counteract, heighten and expose the existing building: "I used oblique lines against the existing symmetry and its ideological significance. To contrast the heaviness of the concrete, brick and granite I turned to lighter materials: glass, steel and aluminium. The historic walls are left in their original state without ever being touched by the new work." (2) The scale and the orthogonal geometry of the existing building are extremely significant and Domenig undermines these with a direct, almost savage, slice through the very body of the structure. This is a very symbolic event in a notorious building.

The reworking of existing buildings, often thought to be the sole territory of restorers or conservationists, or even an adjunct of architectural practice, is actually the most radical and controversial of all spatial disciplines. The desire to re-order what already exists is inherently an act that interprets, conforms to, or even disobeys existing orders. Therefore the process of designing new uses for existing buildings, of occupying spaces that were once constructed for a particular previous purpose, provokes the designer into accepting or editing previous patterns of existence. This can be interpreted as an act of judgement upon the existing. This draws interior theory closer to the disciplines of site-specific installation art and cinematography. Here analysis, understanding, editing and postproduction are central to the creation of each project. Nicolas Bourriaud states in his seminal text on filmmaking: "It is no longer a matter of starting with a 'blank slate' or creating meaning on the basis of virgin material but of finding a means of insertion into the innumerable flows of production." (3)

Bourriaud uses the example of the methods employed by the DJ to construct music. He argues that a new musical work can be produced without the composer being able to play a single note, by making

(2) Capezzuto 2002, 90.
(3) Bourriaud 2002, 17.

use of existing records. Through the use of the sampling of playlists, new works can be created. The process of crossfading, pitch-control, rapping and cutting of existing music can be combined to generate original, innovative and transient compositions.

This act of appropriation and alteration is not dissimilar to that of the interior architect. The DJ adapts the sounds that he or she owns and customises them to his or her own personality. The process of cutting is very relevant to this discussion. The DJ will take elements of production, such as parts of TV programmes, films, records or radio programmes and refashion them to their own design. Cutting and joining what could be described as dissimilar or disparate sections to create a continuity and thus a sense of order.

This process of selection and cutting, of using what the DJ or designer considers to be the best bits and removing the rest is very like the role of the interior architect, who will, through a process of understanding and analysis retain the important elements of a building while demolishing the rest. Dominic Roberts of Continuity in Architecture describes this process with the motto: Remember, Reveal Construct. (4) In 1985 The Spanish architectural Historian Ignasi de Solà-Morales outlined a theoretical framework for understanding adapting buildings and remodelling them. In the ground breaking article *From Contrast To Analogy – Developments In The Concept Of Architectural Intervention*, he described the development of remodelling as a concept that is closely related to understanding history. Solà-Morales also understood the foolishness of establishing a too rigid formula for remodelling buildings.

It is an enormous mistake to think that one can lay down a permanent doctrine or still less a scientific definition of architectural intervention. On the contrary, it is only by understanding in each case the conceptions of the basis of which action has been taken that it is possible to make out the different characteristics which this relationship has assumed over the course of time. (5)

This discussion has shown that the transgressive act is not something that is completely lost to the generation of the twenty-first century, an audience who are very difficult to shock. The use of subtraction as a primary method of remodelling buildings can produce results that are full of surprise, wonder and delight as well as deep understanding and symbolic judgement. It is an act that is usually a necessary stage

(4) www.msa.mmu.ac.uk/continuity.

(5) de Solà-Morales 1985, 37.

(6) Snozzi Luigi cited in Cramer and Breitling 2007, 29.

in the process of interior architecture, but for some projects it can be the most important, the most significant, central and vital method of communicating the character of the building.

“Every intervention results in some destruction. Destroy then at least with understanding.” (6)

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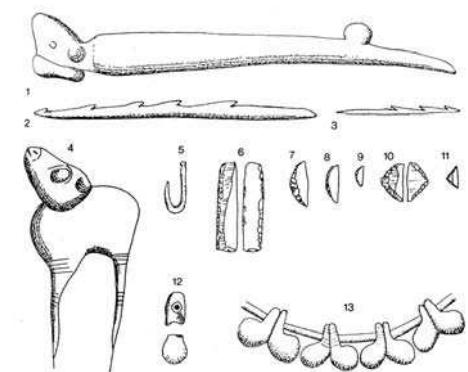
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They are the co-authors of *Re-readings* (London: Erprises 2004), *Form and Structure* (SA Switzerland: AVA 2007), *Context and Environment* (AVA 2008), *The Visual Dictionary of Interior Architecture* (AVA 2008), *Objects and Elements* (AVA 2009), and *What is Interior Design?* (Hove: Rotovision 2010).

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Prosthesis

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Prosthesis, meaning and depth of the term

As a word, prosthesis is commonly used to indicate an artificial replacement device of a human body organ or missing limb. However, rather than a replacement or a failure remedy, the original word meaning refers to an increase, a strengthening of capability. The original Indo-European word is derived from the Greek *protithenai* consisting of *pro*, “before”, and *tithenai*, “put.” It means “put forward”, “expose”, “anticipate”. The meaning “put forward” contains the concept of “interpose” and introduces an element of mediation between us and the world outside. The true sense of the term is then obtained by combining the idea of “adding” with a mediating action. In the broadest sense the meaning is “prolongation” or “extension.” Not by chance the architectural word “prosthesis” is used to indicate a small room to keep sacred objects, built in the apse of the Greek Orthodox Church, literally a useful addition to supply a particular purpose.

So inserting or adding a prosthesis is not just replacing a missing body part with specialized equipment, but an activity which would not otherwise be permitted becomes possible or more effective with the use of an “extra tool” or a device designed to achieve a specific purpose.

Undoubtedly the sphere of influence of “prosthesis” as a term refers to the human body and the relationship with the natural environment. Faced with nature and the need to protect, defend, find food and live create the need to solve problems which otherwise would not be solvable only with man’s own natural strength but with instruments thought of ad hoc. These devices solve unsolvable problems with the only natural forces assigned to mankind. Action to “put first” implies adding a mediation element which can do an otherwise impossible activity to a limited human body.

So the idea of “extension” is not limited to the body/environment relationship, namely between elements belonging to the same natural sphere, but implies a collaboration principle between natural and

Fig.1.
Stone Age worked bones
used as weapons, tools and
ornaments.

artificial. Prosthesis is an artifice, primarily a mental act, which extends and enhances the human natural body. It is an artefact, a transformative principle and an artificial object. From this point of view the umbrella-prosthesis which protects us from rain is artificial as the leaf-prosthesis over the early cave-man's head and the cave-prosthesis that originally protected our ancestors from storms. Conceptually, prosthesis indicates not only something concrete – a tool – but the act of seeing beyond the surface of things, assigning a specific “extra role” to something which can virtually amplify the potentiality of the natural human body. This allocation act contains an ancestral principle of interpretation and transformation. It is the ability to read objects and forms beyond their original texture, and their transformation through a process.

Tendency to artificial

But the high point of prosthesis generation is a creative act of invention. Creative act and invention are the result of an interpretation on a potential matter along with technological opportunities to achieve it: an animal bone becomes a cutting knife, a sewing needle, an ornament to show. Turning matter into material, changing natural to artificial, are the prior actions toward the production of an instrument which is intended to amplify the reduced functionality of a human body. But the main passage of this action has to be seen in the creative interpretation and decisive option to interact with artificial, typical of mankind.

The evolution of Humanity has been structured around this continuous and exponential change of natural to artificial. At the same time, the human tendency towards artificial has altered the naturalness concept more and more. Since the first artificial body extensions with simple mechanical tools to more sophisticated work instruments, up until cybernetic intelligence, the artificial world has played an increasingly important role in removing primordial nature and filling entire human life sectors. The artificial way of life generates new nature undermining natural nature and replacing it not only at a habitat level, through the building of urban environments, but especially at human body level too. Artifice and Nature tend to coexist and intersect one another until what is natural and what is artificial cannot be recognized. The human body has gradually lost its naturalness insofar as technology became itself a body part as an integrated prosthesis system. Some of these implants such as silicone bypass and artificial organs are so integrated into our body that their existence is no longer felt. Other “implants” have been constantly with us allowing new actions which change



Fig. 2.
Stefano Panunzi, video
Menopossibile, Firenze,
2001. Display room
conceived for a total screen
space.



Fig. 3.
Stefano Panunzi, video
Menopossibile, Firenze,
2001. Display room
conceived for a total screen
space.

the collective life dimension. Cell phones, computers, webcams, and internet constitute a great mass phenomenon which extends their specific sensory sphere to a large number of people. The result is a perceptual distortion: natural senses cannot work at their best without the help of these artificial extensions. Paradoxically, in the absence of "interactive implants" the natural condition of the body is perceived as a disability. The organic body is complete only with computer connection partners, the main junction elements with a collective dimension. The organic dimension of the body gradually decreases to clear some space for the interactive prosthesis. Artificial tools became so familiar as to be perceived as something natural. The boundary between nature and artifice is made thinner, reducing the gap between the natural body and its artificial extensions. The new post-organic body feature, neither natural nor artificial, is a mixture of both. Interactive objects lead the millenary way of world artificialization in a new dimension, reducing or even cancelling the difference between artificial and natural. In post-organic terms the human body evolves mainly through an artificial way, not only regarding its functionality but its perceptive power. As Ezio Manzini pointed out: "the computerized generation prosthesis-item appears as a multiplier of sensory and brain activity. It tends to move deeply away from traditional extension nature of our physical potential which instruments have always had. What emerges is a sort of 'super virtual prosthesis': information organized as a tool." (1)

Architectural prosthesis

In parallel to the evolution of the organic body, even in the new cybernetic dimension, architecture, as a human duplicate, incorporates new instances.

Architectural space as a human body extension is not a new concept. The analogy between prosthesis and architectural space, which the building is symbolically seen as a living organism, is an anchored concept in humanistic tradition of architectural design. As clothes protect from the weather, buildings allow a private dimension, they separate and link different activities and make their specialization simpler. At the same time commodities become more complex and performative day after day, and space makes itself richer and manifold.

Use and furniture development interfere with architectural space, affecting stable architectural elements in different ways over time. Interactive objects – computers, televisions, cell phones, ipods, etc., together with home automation – more than others tend to challenge the architectural space as a concluded environment, eroding the

(1) Manzini 1990, 50.



Fig. 4.
Stefano Panunzi.
Telecontiguity experiment.
Testing of graphics
between the Architectural
Departments – DiAR,
Università di Roma and
Università di Termoli, 2008.



Fig. 5.
Stefano Panunzi.
Telepresence Town Square.
Public telecontiguity point
for Italy-China connection,
2008.

concept of limit. Well beyond traditional categories of human body extension – to protect, give shelter and provide privacy, set comfortable temperature, etc. – interior space tends to extend itself outside, opening virtual windows on the world beyond its physical limits. Not only as material elements such as conceptual ones, thresholds and casings enter into crisis, losing traditional significance. The organizing content of language, which in the limit between inside and outside of buildings finds its privileged action field and its place of main architectural eloquence, fall into crisis.

Architectural space extends beyond its casing, expanding itself from a specialized objectual prosthesis to an informational limitless extension. It changes the architectural concept of space as a human body extension because the body itself enters into a phase where it is no longer just manipulating a few tools made up of a few materials, but it is also accepting new dimensions in which architecture interacts with information technology.

Interior space performs this relationship using at least three different ways. The first consists in the usual mere presence of several devices that invade interior space: more than the antique fireplace, television and computers generate one or more virtual spaces inside the real space of the house. These virtual spaces have a great presence as a catalyst of attention. However those interiors are not dedicated only to information. Information technology spreads over architecture and exchanges its perceptiveness without affecting physical features of space. Although this space is not only a protective prosthesis, but it becomes an interlocutor: the house is specialized by the interaction of its plant with other informational equipment. By my mobile phone I can remotely control an electrical home automation panel and assign weather changes, level of security, electrostatic charges present in my flat.

A second way of home informatics invasion is related to an informational equipped interior space. It is the example of informative integrated areas, such as video walls or interactive walls, and even telecontiguity equipments. The ancestor of these installations is the nineteenth-century diorama derived from *trompe l'oeil*, a scale setting reconstruction in order to reproduce a scene with established learning goals. Architectural space takes on an illusionistic character as, for example, Piero Della Francesca's painted perspectives on frescoes. However, in these cases the information content is not static but may change in relation to subjective requests. The casing itself changes its architectural appearance and becomes an informational addition, scene and connection with the world. While architectural space breaks its limits and goes beyond its limit, the lived-space assumes its own autonomy and embodiment through the informational interface.

Even in telecontiguity experiments, a large transparent touch screen receives the image of people who are in different spaces, giving the illusion that they are in the same space simultaneously.

Stefano Panunzi tells how this technology, which in addition to working as a computer, the screen returns as a scanner of what lies ahead: "Ensure mutual consistency between the two shots transmitted, building a 'fourth wall' common to the two indeed far spaces and making them perceptually adjacent and contiguous." (2)

In a third mode space becomes non-architectural but truly virtual, identifying itself with the global informational community. Then it disappears widening excessively in the ether immensity. The so called "streaming rooms" are examples of this kind of virtual shape, neither interior nor exterior, permanently interconnected information spaces whose boundaries are linked to the extent of interaction with the stream of audio/video data transmitted over the network. These are no-perimeter spaces matching with sensory perceptiveness of people there. Their fleeting form overlaps with the information field they themselves generate.

On the contrary, the interaction phenomenon with the computer network affects non-informative architecture too. Some contemporary architectural space examples simulate the creative potential of computers, generating event sequences by invented spaces next to new realities. These spaces have an interactive purpose at first. It doesn't matter whether achieved through true or false representation to the extent it could generate wonder, atmosphere, new realities. The risk is an architecture reduced to image, communication equipment, independently of any content. The message could become only exterior, located on the surface.

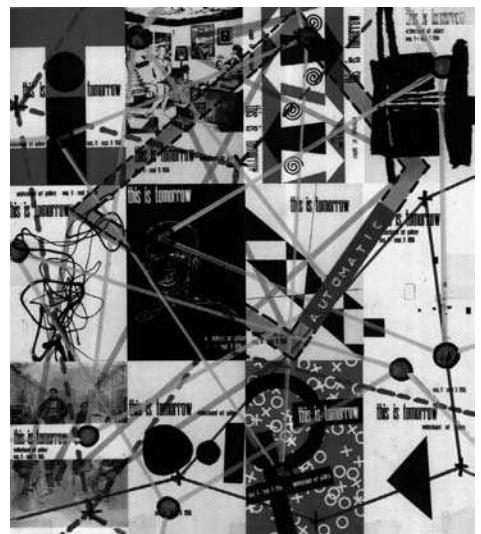
(2) Panunzi 2009, 180.

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Assemblage

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Man's visual environment is a mess today because most people have eyes that do not see; they don't feel the need for visual organization. The exhibition is evidence of a trend towards a new sort of order, a way towards that the integration of the arts must come if our culture is not merely to survive, but come to life again. (1)

On 9th August 1956 the Whitechapel Art Gallery opened its doors for the experience of a new interior full of possibilities, the exhibition *This is Tomorrow*. Organized by Theo Crosby and Lawrence Alloway – ex-members of the Independent Group and collaborators of the *Architectural Design* magazine – the exhibition was the expression of what a group of young technicians desired to display together as the ideal portrait of the future of the human beings. It was not only a collective exercise of *assemblage* but also a practice of *democracy*. In a time of emergency when the echoes of the bombs over the city of London were still playing and the memories of the milk and bread rationing were still rolling in the bodies of the Londoners, the technical ideals of Crosby and Alloway forced them to propose a new stage of re-construction: the utopian environment called “to-morrow”. The inventors, the public, the artists and the users – as participants of a whole reality – were invited to feel again the hopeful existence of a “new beginning” (2) where everybody would re-cycle, represent, interpret and express the reality according to their own ideals of growth and the specific qualities of their own identity.

As Alloway stated, *This is Tomorrow* was “spontaneously and democratically organized” to prove that “the ability of painters, sculptors, architects and designers to work harmoniously together did not die out with the cathedral builders or the Georgian interior decorators – as older critics and Royal Academicians maintain – but is flourishing still.” (3) As he also described in the internal papers of the organizing committee, the exhibition not only faced “the continued fragmentation of the arts [and] the lack of a coordinating principle” (4) – the characteristics of its period – but also demonstrated various

Fig. 1.
Juan Cabello Arribas,
Sensitive Automatism, 2009.
Posters of the exhibitors
assembled in an Automatic
Map.

(1) Crosby and Alloway 1956.

(2) Alloway 1956.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Crosby and Alloway 1956.

ways in which technicians could work together to arrange the space of the gallery as a whole reality where the visual and circulation continuity of the “complete assembly” would offer the public the ideal environment for the experience of life: an aesthetic travel through different times, fragments of matter, memories and desires. Alloway and Crosby understood the exhibition as a playground of partnership and collaboration inviting all the participants to explore the transcendent meaning of technique:

El hecho absoluto, el puro fenómeno del universo que es la técnica, sólo puede darse en esa extraña, patética, dramática combinación metafísica de que dos entes heterogéneos – el hombre y el mundo – se vean obligados a unificarse, de modo que uno de ellos, el hombre logre insertar su ser extramundano en el otro, que es precisamente el mundo. Ese programa casi de ingeniero, es la existencia humana. (5)

The possibilities of collaboration between architects, painters, sculptors and other artists was not a novelty for the participants of the exhibition, but the constrictions of their present involved them in the creation of a new interior of time where the “ideal art architecture” could be achieved.

The *Revival of Architecture* by William Morris, the utopian thoughts of the early Bauhaus technicians and the synthetic approaches of *Le Groupe Espace* – the French collective who presented their artistic manifesto in 1951 – were the basis for this transcendental experiment devoted to facing the postwar “socio-psychological and aesthetic obstacles” (6) of the human beings and their environment.

Accepting variety and complexity – as the qualities of the postwar world explained by the French community in their “manifesto” – Alloway and Crosby expanded the boundaries of “their” spatial experiment beyond the traditional limits of the artistic disciplines and their synthetic approaches. They proposed the space of the gallery as a context devoted to communication.

In order to face the emergency reality where they were living as concerned inhabitants of a “fragile” relationship between society and its environment, both architects trusted in the regenerative power of the creative process, and they assembled all the artists with the public in a “unique act of democracy”: an aesthetic dialogue about the future within the energetic topography of feelings and sensations. The exhibition.

The energy of the creative process - as an assembling and transverse component – came across all the exhibitors enabling them “to aim at simultaneous mastery of several channels of communication” (7) and

(5) Ortega y Gasset 2008, 54.

(6) Alloway 2008 (1956), 366.

(7) Ibid.

preparing the emotional conditions for a new field of communication between artifacts and visitors. It was the “art work” in itself.

This is Tomorrow was “a lesson in spectactorship.” (8) Although Alloway didn’t include the communicative thoughts that Marcel Duchamp or André Breton developed in their exhibitions and “readymades”, but as a heir of the surrealism roots of the ICA and the Independent Group, he acted as a real assembler. Using the words of Octavio Paz, it could be said that he promoted “the reconciliation between art and life, the work of art and the spectator” (9) in order to create an energetic interior where every visitor could invent their own spatial image of the reality between times, materials and meanings. Between the work of art and the spectator arose another interior: the work of art in itself.

Presenting the exhibitors and their arrangements as “the Artists and the Art of the Future”, Crosby and Alloway promoted the creation of artifacts against the perceptive machine of the spectator, the sort of art that Paz defines in his *Apariencia Desnuda*:

Arte fundido a la vida es arte socializado, no arte social ni socialista y aún menos actividad dedicada a la producción de objetos hermosos o simplemente decorativos. Arte fundido a la vida (...) el arte más difícil. Un arte que obliga al espectador y al lector a convertirse en un artista y en un poeta. (10)

Artists and architects were forced to abandon their traditional methods of invention in order to establish contact with the public, but the spectator would be able “to get naked” under the regenerative power of the plastics. As Alloway explains, *This is Tomorrow* was an exhibition that cut across “the learned responses of conventional perception” (11) in order to reconstruct the environment of the human being from the deep perception of his own experience, including not only his body but also all the dimensions that usually constructed his identity within *the interior of time*, where the present would be the past of the future.

In order to achieve these regenerative and democratic objectives the organizers established a list of basic procedures. First, they allocated “a certain amount of gallery space to each of the groups.” Second, they gave them a complete initial freedom of interpretation but also the responsibility of each spatial portion. And finally, they forced them to the creation of a single structure in which the contributions of the separate disciplines had to be “completely fused.” (12)

They really wanted to achieve a sensation of coherence (similitude, antagonism, agreement, disagreement): the construction of a total interior where the visitor could be exposed to “space effects, play with

(8) Ibid.

(9) Paz, 2003, 99.

(10) Ibid., 100.

(11) Alloway 2008, 366.

(12) Crosby and Alloway, 1956.



Fig. 2.
Juan Cabello Arribas, *Living between*, 2010.
Two fragments from Nigel Henderson *Patio & Pavilion*, London, 1956; and *Petticoat Lane*, London, 1952.

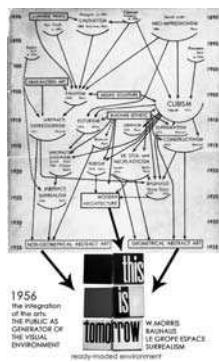


Fig. 3.
Juan Cabello Arribas,
Integration of the arts, 2009.
Images extracted from
the cover of the catalogue
for *Cubism and Abstract
Art exhibition*, New York,
1936; and *This is Tomorrow*
exhibition catalogue,
London, 1956.

signs, a wide range of materials and structures, which taken together, make of art and architecture a many-channeled activity, as factual and far from ideal standards as the streets outside.” (13)

As Alloway explains in *Design as a Human Activity*:

The spectator will have to receive, in addition to the overall effect, the competing messages of the dozen exhibits for, of course, the intentions of the individual groups differ from any total effect. The exhibits are the result of choices made under ordinary human conditions and not manifestations of universal laws. The freedom of the artist and architects concerned is communicated to the spectator who cannot rely on the learning responses called up by a picture in a frame, a house in a street, words on a page. As he circulates the visitor will have to adjust to the character of each exhibit (a walk through four cubes versus the sight of human symbols in a pavilion, and so on). This is a reminder of the responsibility of the spectator in the reception and interpretation of the many messages in the communications network of the whole exhibition. (14)

They wanted to trap the spectators in the interior of the aesthetic experience and take them to the enclosure where the technician works observing and putting together *fragments with diverse dimensions* in order to offer every man and every woman the tools for the construction of his/her own interior between realities, dimensions, emotions and desires. They wanted to trap every participant in that regenerative topography devoted to “reconcile” the humans with their own identity: the connected interior of the “environmental self” or the *romantic enclosure of the intersubjectivity*. Twelve “stands of ideas” (15) were displayed in a unique interior of interchange between the visitors and their own perception of the reality. Ex-members of the Independent Group and other artists were invited to provoke a shortcut in the perceptual machine of the public. They were invited to assemble new “technical tools”: tectonics with architectural objectives. As it appears in the Memorandum of the exhibition:

Mr. Theo Crosby, the “Leader” of the Group expresses the opinion that it is unnecessary to have a catalogue in order to understand the exhibition aesthetically; in addition he does not want the groups numbered because he says that it spoils the flow of the exhibition and that without a catalogue the numbers are meaningless; with a catalogue there is a plan. (16)

(13) Alloway 2008, 366.

(14) Ibid., 367.

(15) Ibid., 366.

(16) Whitechapel Secretary 1956.

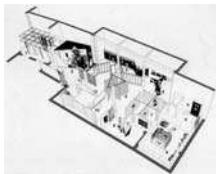


Fig. 4.

Juan Cabello Arribas, *This is Tomorrow* reconstructed, 2008.

3D reconstruction from plans and images extracted from the Whitechapel Art Gallery Archive.

This paper presents the reconstructed exhibition as a spatial labyrinth where every visitor was invited to feel immersed aesthetically in the regeneration of new relationships with his environment. Without a plan but with numbers inside, the 3D reconstruction shows how every group expressed their ideas as a part of an *automatic interior*, (fig.1-4) but they stated them in the interior of the catalogue.

Group 1 (Theo Crosby, William Turnbull, Edward Wright, Germano Facetti) reconstructed a stimulating interior where the oppositions between “nature and artifice” tried to reconcile the observers to the idea of change and force them to assume their portion of responsibility. As they stated in the catalogue: “the elements of this exhibition are not only the concern of the artists; they are yours. We share the same visual environment; we are all in the same boat.” (17) According to these holistic and visual approaches, *Group 2* (Richard Hamilton, John McHale, John Voelcker) decided to underline “the discrepancy between physical fact and perception of that fact.” (18) Their “magic portion of reality” – conceived between constructivist and surrealistic ideals – acted as a *tool for the expansion of the sensitive machinery* of the visitors, trying to involve them in the resolution of this discrepancy in a playground of observation where they had to accept that “any change in man’s environment is indicative of a change in man’s relation to it, in his actual mode of perceiving and symbolizing his interaction with it.” (19) Therefore this union of void and presences worked as a *regenerative tool of the symbolic environment* of the observer, involving him in the topological reconstruction of his own symbolic structure between different presents and futures. A time conception where “Tomorrow is shut up in today and yesterday.” (20) *Group 3* (James Hull, J.D.H. Catleugh, Leslie Thornton) welcomed the visitors in a corridor constructed between loves and hates. This portion of the city – the street as another interior – worked as an *intensifying tool* of the everyday environment of the observer to remind him that he was an active responsible of his surroundings. *Group 4* (Anthony Jackson, Sarah Jackson, Emilio Scanavino) trapped the visitors between “those who feel” and “the critic” in order to wake them up to construct their own creative imaginary and to develop their own critic machinery. Living between feelings and critics could be possible if everybody could accept that life is relational: “object and viewer merge into a oneness of experience.” (21) This installation worked as the *basic tool of analogical signification*.

Group 5 (John Ernest, Anthony Hill, Denis Williams) re-constructed a room of the “old museums” where the visitors were always invited to be statically in-front-of-the work of art. Although they included the word “new” systematically between their phrases, they didn’t invent a “new interior”.

(17) Crosby, Turnbull, Wright, Facetti 1956, 20.

(18) McHale 1956, 20.

(19) Stirling 1956, 76.

(20) Ibid.

(21) Matthews 1956, 76.



Fig. 5.
Juan Cabello Arribas, *The experience of Tomorrow*, 2008.
Map assembled with images extracted from *This is Tomorrow* exhibition catalogue.

Conceived from its origin as an *articulating hinge of relationships*, the tool assembled by *Group 6* (Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, Alison&Peter Smithson) represented the example of the “complementarity” they developed from their early years of working together. Immersed again in a field of pure communication, the four assemblers not only established a deep dialogue with the visitors but also with their environment.

Patio&Pavilion was assembled as a “technical link”, an environmental mediator between the humans and their context aimed to detonate the creation of new relationships able to guarantee the continuity of both within a romantic dialogue.

Group 7 (Victor Pasmore, Ernö Goldfinger, Helen Phillips) elaborated a spatial identifying tool aimed to involve the observer between the simple geometry of its structure and the complex configuration of the artworks that were hung within it.

Group 8 (James Stirling, Michael Pine, Richard Matthews) explored the boundaries between architecture and art talking about interchanging fragments. James Stirling demanded the abolition of the “ego maniac in the attic” (22) and he also claimed that “if the fine arts cannot recover the vitality of the research artists of the 20’s (who through the magazines generated a vocabulary for the practical arts), then the artist must become a consultant, just as the engineer or quantity surveyor is to the architect.” (23)

The words of Richard Mathews included the figure of Schwitters and his woody “merz objects” in order to explain that “the total plastic expression (architecture, painting, sculpture) will be in the landscape with no fixed composition but made up of people, volumes, components - in the way that trees, all different, all growing, all disrupted into each other, are brought together in an integrated clump” (24): an *assembled environment*.

Group 9 (Kenneth Martin, Mary Martin, John Weeks) worked under the geometric laws of Max Bill and the lightness of Alexander Calder in order to conform an always changing tool which could offer different spatial interiors to the visitor. It acted as a windmill located in the middle of the exhibition, transmitting movement to all its “neighbours”.

Group 10 (Peter Carter, Robert Adams, Frank Newby, Colin St. John Wilson) played with the sensitive machinery of the observer including their installation as a “performative” *tactile tool*, which had been rescued from Le Corbusier’s world of forms. In order to create “a more integrated human environment” (25) the plastic corridor involved the visitor in a game where the only scale factor was himself: the only creator of meanings.

If the solitary concrete block wall made by *Group 11* (Adrian Heath, John Weeks) acted as a *tool for expressive arguments*, confronting the

(22) Carter, Adams, Newby, St. John Wilson 1956, 87.

(23) Robbins and Baas 1990, 147.

(24) Matthews 1956, 76.

visitor with the static and traditional vision of the “constructive” process, it also worked in proximity with the “assembly kit container” (26) erected by *Group 12* (Lawrence Alloway, Geoffrey Holroyd, Toni del Renzio).

Between the static wall of repeated fragments and the communicative tack board of images from the Hiroshima bombing, a cutting press and fashion designs, the observer was invited to look intensely around him, and as a big lesson of observation, the exhibition showed him the threshold where he finally could walk from seeing to vision, from matter to energy, from a fused environment to a complex assembled interior: his own “extra-world” interior.

Artists and visitors experienced together the re-construction of the same interior, belonging to a wider universe: reality and existence in the “same boat”. the humans, their context under a continuous state of transformation. *This is Tomorrow* was an assembled interior for constant assemblers. (fig. 5) *Assemblage* was the interdisciplinary technique and the democratic method that conformed the romantic interior of tomorrow: the energetic and socio-plastic enclosure of the eco-democracy.

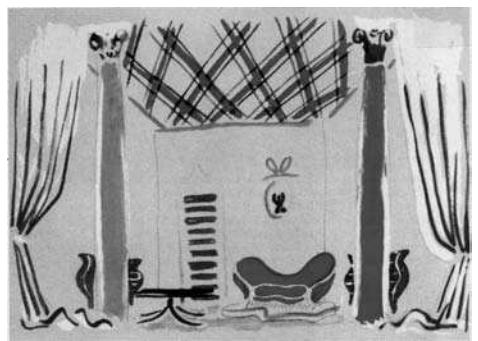
- (25) Carter, Adams, Newby, St. John Wilson 1956, 87.
 (26) Robbins and Baas 1990, 147.

Juan Cabello Arribas

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Theatricality

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nomina consequentia rerum

(Giustiniano, *Institutiones*, libro II, 7, 3)

Fig. 1.
Gio Ponti, *L'importanza di chiamarsi Ernesto*, 1939, Act I, sketch.
© Gio Ponti Archives

If it is true, as stated by Jean-Paul Sartre in his *Critique de la raison dialectique* that language includes all the words, and every word can be understood in regard to the whole language, the semantic value of every word that composes it creates an *Imago Mundi* that strictly connects it to the tangible reality.

The same close relationship that associates a part to the whole is implied by the interiors culture. In it the single conceptual rooms – among which we can find the interior decoration for public and private spaces and arrangement of shows and museums – create an actual *Weltanschauung*.

The distance that affects “*il nostro saper fare, saper dire e saper scrivere nel senso più ampio di queste espressioni*” (1) and that for over four Centuries has generated categories such as architecture, painting and set design supposed to be an artistic *unicum*, keeps from understanding that the conception of a space within another space is concretely making architecture; similarly the words associated to the generated forms allow to read architecture as a text. In these terms, it is essential to consider the theatre arrangement as a relevant part of the disciplines of interior designing.

The stage design places itself in a very neatly framed emptiness, strongly self referenced in relation to the hosting place: the space recreated on stage becomes a connection between the container and the content, i.e. the audience and the performed text.

If the external forces us to a necessary confrontation with reality, the internal becomes here, more than anywhere else, expression and depiction of the oneiric: it is neither necessary for reality to be reflected or sweetened up, nor to communicate with it.

Most likely, in this place where everything is possible, the unexpected situation that is produced becomes essential.

The same fixed scene of mans’ life, the city according to Aldo Rossi, becomes creation of the dream, and can even transform the

(1) Sini 1999, 25.

circumstantial reality, as already happened with the urban scene of the Renaissance, where the city was inspired by theatre and vice versa.

On stage the place of dream and the place of action get mixed, as well as words and space in an oneiric universe that originates from notions and portions of known space transformed and changed according to the needs of the theatrical action.

Among the most suitable examples of the link between theatricality and interiors, Gio Ponti, in one of his seven shows, depicts the continuous osmosis from the domestic project to the scene project. In fact, his entire work is a continuous juxtaposition of ideas oscillating from painting to poetry, from architecture to interior design that led him to state that “*non esistono diversioni: tutto ciò che un uomo fa è sempre sullo stesso piano, nella sua continuità espressiva.*” (2)

Fascinated since his early years, as we learn from essays and short articles published since 1923, (3) in the 40's Ponti repeatedly faced the experience of set design.

His commitment and delight, perceptible in his letters to the directors, producers and technicians, and in a large amount of sketches, make it very clear how these works were considered by the architect as a unique opportunity to freely study compositions of shapes and colours he would later use in his architecture, or just in the ones published in *Domus* and *Stile*, the magazines he directed. In 1939 Corrado Pavolini, art critic and director of the famous theatrical company Cimara Maltagliati Ninchi, asked Ponti to design the scene for Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of being Earnest*.

The play that had a very complex dramaturgic structure featured two very different interior scenes: in the first act, the city house of Algernon Moncrieff, in the second and third act the country house of Ernest/Jack Worthing.

Deeply keen on trends and tastes, the architect knew that the Milanese audience would imagine the Victorian style upper-middle class interiors as the perfect setting, as narrated by the text.

The image of set designer in Italy was still strongly linked to the idea of sketcher or to the one of the interior designer who could use real objects to make truthful what happened on stage.

Ponti himself, notwithstanding the fact that he admired the work of Adolphe Appia, who brought 18th century scenography into modernity, on that occasion, took a very conservative position, while at the same time keeping his eccentric style.

The sketches published in the book that Daria Guarnati dedicated to him (*Aria d'Italia*), show us in the first act an optic space traditionally in perspective, framed between classical columns, a reference to the figurative experience he had in the late 20's at the Richard Ginori Company, where he created the role of Art Director.

(2) Irace 1989, 18.

(3) In 1923 Gio Ponti wrote a short essay entitled *Il teatro di Appia, l'opera d'arte vivente*, published in a volume with texts, among others, Gordon Craig and Max Pirker (Ponti 2003). The young architect's enthusiasm for the artistic unity proposed by Appia goes up to the critical final Ponti Italian drama to actuality: “*Se è vero che ogni tentativo di riforma del nostro Teatro si rivolge alla messa in scena, ciò dimostra che il nostro teatro ha oggi non altro che la scenografia che si merita; e poiché il Teatro è un fenomeno sociale ed attuale, ne consegue ancora che la nostra società ha il Teatro che si merita.*”



Fig. 2.
Gio Ponti, *L'importanza di chiamarsi Ernesto*, 1939, Act II and III, sketch.
© Gio Ponti Archives

The maze-like rooms “*modernamente ispirate al Rinascimento italiano*” (4) that suggested an architectural depth on the surface of vases hosting ephebes, muses and the first angels are represented in the set in a tripartite space.

Gio Ponti does not propose horizontal levels at different heights or volumes totally deprived from decorations that could recall an urban architecture. He looks up to Appia's 3D's scenic space, dividing the stage's depth into two areas thanks to the use of columns.

The indication of a brightly decorated ceiling, can be considered as a transversal element between theatre and interior architecture that can be found in many projects of his, like for instance in Villa Planchard in Caracas, where instead of lozenges we find the alternation of light blue and white stripes, as if recalling the clear sky over an imaginative sun shade.

Both sketches for *The Importance of being Earnest* allow us to see how Gio Ponti worked in the theatre with habits and mentality typical of an architect: he does not care how the scene will be lighted up on stage, and of the technical difficulty to limit the scenario in its upper part. He'd rather give a complete shape to the surfaces that frame the ephemeral room, including the ceiling.

In Ponti's mind, the dramaturgic word becomes the architectonic substance he uses to narrate a figurative universe where traditional and innovative elements are mixed together.

Behind the appearance and the care for shape that Wilde wanted to depict and mock, the architect from Milan hides many hints of subversion of the Victorian middle class' aesthetic rules, leading the spectator to solve a riddle between reality and innovation.

Observing the furniture, we can find a mix of objects belonging to the upper-middle class tradition with completely new components: the experiences in Villa L'Ange Volant and in Domus Nova were very important. Ponti does not renegade decoration: having assimilated the French style, he makes a well balanced use of the elements better known to the upper-middle class, i.e. the framed mirror over the decorated marble fireplace, the coffee table, the big amphoras of the classical tradition.

“*Egli conosceva bene la differenza fra la copia e il tocco anche impercettibile d'invenzione che rende talvolta originale il derivato del modello.*” (5)

Consequently, in the first sketch Ponti depicts an urban interior, trendy, where a few elements from the upper-middle class architectural tradition are the frame for innovative forms and for *ante litteram* elements that can be found in later interior projects, as a constantly repeated feature in his projects.

For instance, the door with wooden strips on the coloured glass in the background of the stage will be used again in the projects for the

(4) Falconi 2004, 31.

(5) Ibid., 51.

University of Padova and the Columbus Clinic; similarly thanks to a very basic sketch, also a sofa is designed, which will be made in 1956 by Cassina with the name “Lotus”.

In the second act, the columns frame a narrower stage with a triangular setting, whose right side shows a huge bay-window with velvet curtains, in the comedy it leads to the protagonist's country house garden.

The fact that the play was never completed leaves us to doubt if the opening was just a drawing hiding a door, as it used to be in the 19th century theatre, or if the Set Designer and the Director had agreed to create a possible side entrance for the actors. If it is true that “*la pianta porta in sé l'essenza della sensazione*”, (6) the architect from Milan, in the second sketch works in a totally opposite way: the triangular space where the action takes place clearly recalls a dramaturgic space which is more strict and traditional – suitable for the education of young Cecily – as opposed to the London house of the first act. Starting from a manor house interior context, Ponti manages to modify the appearance and essence with the introduction of innovations such as chandelier designed by Venini almost ten years later, or the “contrarier sofa”, where the couples in love used to spend time. The winding but extraordinarily clean lines and the duotone-colour Hot/Cold – used again later in many works of his – highlight the vertical surfaces' continuity that will become a must in the mid 50's with the single – layer chairs.

Urban and country house, notwithstanding the different scenic structure and the different uses meant for the two spaces, appear homogeneous regarding the decorative choices; this allows the audience to imagine a continuity in the protagonists' personalities, as they are both not “earnest”, which is an ambiguous element in the text. The Neoclassical influence that at first sight can be seen in this theatrical work (as most of Ponti's works until the 50's) is transformed by the use of contemporary forms.

What is most interesting, however, is that Ponti profoundly changes the role of the Decorator Set Designer and uses the stage as the place to experiment new architectonic forms, which in the following years will be the constant typological features of his interiors works and product design.

What appears to be genuine here, if compared to the rest of Ponti's work, is the total absence of characters on stage. The angels, usually the protagonists of Ponti's sketches, suddenly disappear or hide into the picture over the sofa in Algernon's house. They will later reappear as *dramatis personae* in the costume sketches, just as basic as the sketches drawn for the set. The designer gives the director the opportunity to fill up the stage with actions and actors.

This will not happen in any other of Ponti's theatre work. From the

(6) Irace 1989, 187.

(7) The following titles are all of Ponti's stage and costume design work in chronological order: *La vispa Teresa* (1939), Sanremo; *L'importanza di chiamarsi Ernesto* (1939-40), unrealized; *Pulcinella* (1940), Teatro della Triennale, Milan; *Festa Romantica* (1944), ballet, Teatro alla Scala, Milan, unrealized; *Mondo Tondo* (1944), ballet, Teatro alla Scala, Milan; *Orfeo* (1947), opera, Teatro alla Scala, Milano; *Mitridate Eupatore* (1954), Teatro alla Scala, Milano, unproduced.

(8) Cornoldi 2001, 19.

ballets *Festa romantica* and *Mondo Tondo* to the prose and opera plays, (7) the sketches are a merry-go-round of characters, who live and modify the spaces they move into. The concept of theatricality of interiors is made explicit mainly by “*l'elemento più importante nel progetto e nella realtà di un'abitazione – quello decisivo, eppure il più assente nelle immagini che ne vengono comunemente date – (...) è la presenza delle persone*”, (8) without whom on a stage or in any other space architecture has no meaning.

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Behaviour

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Nowadays interior architectural planning finds itself dealing not only with space and shape, but above all with everything that happens within that space: it pursues open and changing aesthetics, a *landscape of actions* in which the behaviour of users takes on an aesthetic value.

The celebration of urban living and daily routine, which are raised to a spectacular dimension, participate in the component definition of the project. This *aestheticisation of usage* presupposes that man is not just a simple user of architecture, but an actor that contributes to its composition, and also a spectator that observes it. In these continuously changing projects the temporal dimension prevails, since they can only be enjoyed “at that moment”; in this sense architecture borders on almost performing expressions and is expression of the new *momentary aesthetics*.

Unwitting, the users act out the part of an open script. This is a new spontaneous theatricality, which affirms itself within a society in which media, show business and reality live together, and in which projects increasingly take the shape of scenes in movement, modern *narrating compositions*.

In fact, in analyzing contemporary architecture, which is a reflection of a constantly changing and unpredictable society, there seems to be an emergence of strategies rather than projects, not unambiguous solutions but changeable forms, within a frame of unpredictability and the possibility of using space. This possibility of usage does not refer to a simple functional flexibility, rather it means to appeal to the multiplicity of motion, actions and relationships which, inadvertently manifested by the people who share an environment, give it a formal sense of completion. It's a new idea of architectural surfaces, highlighting change, temporality and spectacular relationships. Though this research is still embryonic, it seems to direct contemporary architecture, drawing its basic theories from the elaborated studies of Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi, who already in the eighties proposed “an architecture of program, action and event.” (1) Their priorities were always “designing the conditions

Fig. 1.
Achille e Pier Giacomo
Castiglioni, *Padiglione per
l'esposizione della RAI*,
Milan 1965.

External view of the pavilion,
which characteristic features
resemble a *millipede*.

(1) Tschumi 1996, 9.



Fig. 2.
Ma0, Piazza Risorgimento,
Bari, 2002.
Project detail: the square
assumes the form that its
users desire.



Fig. 03.
Rafael Lozano-Hemmer,
*Body Movies - Relational
Architecture 6*, Rotterdam,
Holland 2001(ph. Arie
Kievit).
Project detail: people's
gestures become texture on
the buildings which mark the
boundaries of the square.

rather than conditioning the plan”, (2) a conviction that has brought them to pursue strategic and meta-planned structures rather than the search for final architectural ones, often purely creative and formal. The Parc de la Villette is surely an expression of this poetry, emblematic example of a way to perceive architecture as a set design, ready for action, movement and occurrences. In this light, the architectonical language becomes secondary to the definition of (the) living space.

In this setting, architecture in general, aware of the processes it activates and allows rather than its formal characterization, seems to lead to processes: it solicits, stimulates, responds to the users' behaviour, not only placing them at the base of the very project, but allowing them to adopt that aesthetic value that, until now, has been attained solely by construction material components.

On one hand, there is architecture that causes behavioural reflections thanks to functional anomalies, which present endless possibilities for the use of the structures, allowing new settings for the project; the WOS8 of NL Architects is symbolic in this because it already contemplates the use of the facades of the power plant as walls to climb. Thus we are viewing technical buildings that have become tourists and sportsmen destinations, changing facades where people appear to be decorative rawplugs of textures that cannot be programmed.

There are instead other architectures that simply reply (in a more mechanical explanation, one could say that they react) to people's behaviour, their movements and their actions; examples are the interactive buildings The Son-O-House of Nox or the Hypersurface of Decoi. In these cases, the constructed element appears in its greatest formal and sensorial potential, only as a consequence of the motion of the visitors.

Other projects still require human presence (in the daily fruition of space) as structural element of the same: these are all those cases in which, in the absence of people, the project appears incomplete and the initial concept not followed. A forerunner in this sense was Achille Castiglioni in the RAI exhibition stand that had the characteristic appearance of a centipede, only if used by people. Facsimile of Diller+Scofidio, Relational Architecture of Rafael Lozano Hemmer and Piazza Risorgimento of Ma0 are among the most significant examples in this research. These are three urban interiors that cannot be set apart from human beings because the project's perception would be compromised: in every way, man is an integral part of the architectonic scene, which is both modeled on and with him.

In summary, contemporary architecture is oriented more and more to the concept of the work-user relationship, making man through

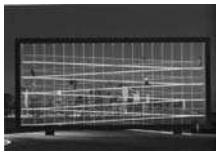


Fig. 4.
Frederic Schwartz Architects,
The Hoboken September
11th Memorial, New York
2001.
External view: the building
appears as a see-through
diaphragm, a speaking
composition of the actions
that take place inside.

various facets material of the project, allowing him thus, to go beyond simple function. In fact, architecture seems to stand apart from the traditional, but well-worn form-function relationship: today projects interact with unpredictable use and spatial motion. Architecture is not only interested in space and form, or space and events, rather in all that occurs within the space: "Interplay within and around the buildings, motion of the bodies, their activities and aspirations". (3)

An urban design, in which every function reflects a form, becomes a city made of people, behaviour and motion: alternatively, severe and prefixed aesthetics are replaced with one that is open, able to change and grow. Introducing the varied and complex concept of fruition, spotlighting the protagonists and not the context, seems to be the only way to paint this *scenery of motion*.

In this light, architecture exists because it is integrated with action that is created and dissolves in the interactions of man and space. It is no longer the case or object of an admired and passive contemplation, rather support for various uses that reach its finality, in time. At this point, the focus is on a temporal dimension, from time to time enclosed or amplified that finds correspondence in a dynamic and futuristic form.

In this light, the proposals of many contemporary architects of fame, such as Daniel Libeskind, Steven Holl, Peter Eisenman, Frank O. Gehry, Zaha Hadid, appear inadequate because, though seemingly fluid, they are caught in the labyrinth of rigid forms. In fact, these designers follow the realization of forms that seem to want to suddenly inhibit the fluidity of motion and instead to evoke it without restitution. In the architectonic concept to which we are referring, instead, the form is manifested in the very motion by the user: it is about architectures that "use" people by way of their actions with emphasis on gestures, creating texture of their relationships. There is a spreading confirmation of a phenomenon we can define as *aestheticism of use* because fruition, once viewed as plain purpose by architecture, becomes an element of the composition, and the relationships that occur in a space participate more and more in the definition of the project. Therefore, if until recently architecture created with man in mind, though often absent from the picture, immortalizing these new constructions, omitting people, would be absolutely unthinkable and would show a misunderstanding of the project.

This aesthetic usage reflects perhaps the main expression of that temporary and ephemeral character that connotes contemporary architecture: time, as an integral part of the project, becomes a fundamental parameter, not only in relation to a building's life span, but also figuratively. It is therefore necessary that architects take even

(3) Costanzo 2002, 43.



Fig. 5.
MARC Studio, *Slice of your pie*, Turin 2004.
Project detail: the shower becomes an integral part of the composition of the house.

this aspect into consideration in order to analyze (and control) the ephemeral – besides materialistic or technological functionality – also in its possible aesthetic results.

Enhancing the *temporal composition* of architecture brings it closer to expressions of performance; therefore, one might view the artistic aspect for direction and potential that could soon be transferred into our discipline.

In this setting that we are now able to view, we can therefore legitimately refer to momentary aesthetics even in a field like architecture that is slow and stable: it is the daily matter that is brought to a spectacular dimension.

They are the celebration of urban life and placing a value on daily rituals that introduce that which some critics call “architecture of experience.” (4) Its characteristics are the cancellation of limits between intervention and context, internal and external, public and private. These researches often lead to emphasize (and at times overturn) the relationship between internal and external: the internal is shown inside the city and the “processes of fruition” come into light. Living breaks into the collective space, and thanks to the overlapping of private and public dominion interiors take part in the construction of the city itself. At some point perhaps, the external setting will disappear altogether in favor of multiple internal scenes. The innovative range is such that some psychologists consider these proposals as an expression of a “change in shape.” (5) Besides Diller+Scofidio’s installations (a type of modern and technological magnifying glass on the facade which portrays details of everyday life that happens within the units), or the MARC devices (which play with transparency and unexpected openings that denote – and share – intimate moments, usually portraying the private sphere), these theories are endorsed by W Downtown: the aim of all these projects is to frame and show the ordinary details of domestic life, create shared experiences between passers-by and families, build stages where people become the protagonists.

In this way, the tradition of internal architecture does not contradict or betray its tradition, simply proposing a new outlook, proposing that architecture not only offers a *show* of our daily life, but it shows and narrates it. It accepts it, and it exhibits it.

Architecture stands out, therefore, even more intensely, as *art of daily life*. In this same way it has been defined by the best critics and great architects, from Pablo Picasso to Henry Moore, from Frank Lloyd Wright to Renzo Piano, but never more than today does that definition ring true: the man who uses space is a part of its aesthetic definition, because he is an integral part of the setting that contributes in the dynamic structure, but he is also an interested observer of all the multiple settings that appear around

him. Obviously, these characters are not univocally defined because the positions continue to reverse, mixing actors and spectators. It is a pleasing and constant co-creation that exalts the unrepeatable and sudden occurrences of daily life.

Contemporary culture, post-functional and directed at entertainment, has thus transformed the city into a stage of these architectonic and performance-fed micro-happenings that ascribe urban spaces to a new social and cultural centralism.

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Nearness

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The idea of things that have nothing to do with me as an architect taking their place in a building, their rightful place – it's a thought that gives me an insight into the future of my buildings: a future that happens without me. (1)

Introducing the concept of *nearness-in-interior-architecture*, the following paper sets out to explore the conceptual possibilities of a subject-centred, de-objectified, fluid, ethereal design language, by which the narratives of living or more generally, subjectivities, will not be generalised, but personalised, not unified, but multiplied. To this purpose, we will suggest the idea of architecture as *infrastructure*, scrutinising Toyo Ito's underlying "desire not to create joints", "not to create beams", "not to create rooms", "not to create architecture." (2) We will question to which extent Ito's metaphor of (Japanese) architecture as "theatre," "an empty space", "when the spectators have gone", (3) can be reconciled with the notion of (human) *nearness-in-architecture*, where time, change, birth, death, recycling are being emphasised. Or perhaps the concept of *nearness* is pre-empted by Peter Zumthor's firm rejection of architecture as pure form and construction, celebrating everyday life, instead: "The magic of the real: that to me is the 'alchemy' of transforming real substances into human sensation." (4) Finally, the question will arise whether Vassal&Lacaton's economy of giving, geared towards investing the subject with more space for less money, can be successful in pushing the peripheralized user(s) of buildings into the *centre* of architecture? *Nearness-in-architecture*: what exactly do we mean when voicing this idea of a subject-driven architecture *into* theory, *into* language? *Nearness* opposes distance, alienation and detachment. Transferred to architecture, to the interior, to space, *nearness* opposes the explicit objectified quality of vast chunks of contemporary architecture; its grand, if not overpowering gestures, its overflowing (postmodernist) language, its bottomless hat of tricks (of disappearance); seemingly implausible; nearly always self-advertising. The master builder-

Fig. 1.
Anthony Gormley, *Press*,
1995.

(1) Zumthor 2006a, 39.
(2) Ito, Yamamoto, Buntrock 2009, 24.
(3) - Ito in Roulet and Soulie 1991, 105.
(4) Zumthor 2006b, 85.



Fig. 2.
Toyo Ito, Tama Art
University Library (Hachioji
Campus), Tokyo, 2007.



Fig. 3.
SANAA, Rolex Learning
Centre, Lausanne, 2010.

architect is, hence, *everywhere*; the users, on the other hand, are almost always *nowhere*. Or in other words: the user's factual position within current design practice is too little *before* and too much *after*. He/she has largely become objectified too.

As early as 1991, Amos Rapoport infamously fuelled his "anti-architect" reflections, calling contemporary architecture "a completely decadent profession", on the brink of professional extinction: "The sooner they disappear, the better, and unless they change completely they will disappear." (5) The reason for this premature death, Rapoport continues, lies in the architect's destructive allergy for theory: "(...) We cannot just look at what architects do", "we have to look at the whole environment, not just buildings", "not only at the whole environment but at all environments." (6) Not altogether ascribing to Rapoport's pamphleteer-like style, nor his plea for one overarching, explanatory theory, driven by environment-behaviour research, we definitely value his call for cross-cultural research in (interior) architecture. Twenty years on, Rapoport's critique on architects as "very formalist, very esoteric", "not concerned with users at all", has hardly lost any of its urgency: architects "just make their projects for themselves." (7)

More recently (2007), Shashi Caan has echoed Rapoport's concern for the lack of theory in design. Unlike Rapoport, Caan's call departs from an interiors perspective, turning away from the traditional "territorial games with architecture", identifying interior design with psychology instead: "I wonder why we continue to play turf games with architecture when our parallel is not physics or structure but psychology and the behavioural sciences (...) The psychological, physiological, sensory and the emotional must not be ignored." (8) Introducing Toyo Ito's work as a provocative subject-oriented statement may well seem provocative in itself. Yet, we largely agree with Dana Buntrock's reading of Ito's infrastructural "architecture", when she argues that Ito's "mind-bending rejection of architectural aristocracy's anti-social inclinations will in the end be more important than the fact that, for the moment, only the amazing Mr Ito and his extraordinary engineers appear able to bend spoons of steel." (9) Ito's "desire not to create architecture", but infrastructure, undeniably demonstrates a resistance to the critical community's conventional cry for little else than formalist acrobatics. Ito's desire to create large, "empty" spaces, as embodied by the Sendai Mediatheque (Miyagi, 2000), does not just implicitly engage with social behaviour. His idea of infrastructure is explicitly theatrical; always open to (social) alteration: "If we compare the architecture of Western civilization to a museum, Japanese architecture is like a theatre. It provides various architectural elements, which are put together to form a stage where an event is to take place, rather than being there

(5) Noschis 1992, 94, 99.

(6) Ibid., 94.

(7) Ibid., 93.

(8) Caan 2007, 54.

(9) Ito, Yamamoto, Buntrock 2009, 25.



Fig. 4.
Peter Zumthor, Thermal Baths
Vals, Graubünden, 1996.

permanently.” (10) The greatest theoretical feat of Ito’s infrastructure – not in the least for the interior designer – is its consciousness of subjectivity as performative, multiple, and changeable. (11) Read in this way, infrastructure leaves the interior designer with an “empty space”, readymade for social alterations, open to plural subject-made design solutions.

In a similar fashion, SANAA Architects (the acronym for Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates) deploy infrastructure as a generator of human movement, celebrating transparency, social interaction and spatial continuity. Their idea of free human movement reaches a new high in the Rolex Learning Centre (Lausanne, 2010), a large curly, horizontal one-room academic space, referring to, yet not imitating, the surrounding slopes of the Alps. In a videoed interview, for the official Rolex Learning Centre website, Sejima and Nishizawa disclosed their philosophical intentions as follows: “Human movements are not linear like the way a train travels, but curve in a more organic way. With straight lines we can only create crossroads, but with curves we can create more diverse interactions. Architectural forms can be created from human movements and, in turn, architecture influences humans.” (12) SANAA Architects’ infrastructure without walls links the possibility of free human movement, not only to new social interactions, but also to the proliferation of new ideas. The borderless design of their not-done-before, one-room library annex study space provocatively resists traditional academic niches, inducing new, cross-disciplinary sets of knowledge instead.

For Swiss architect, Peter Zumthor, too, “architecture involves movement.” Disrupting the classic Lessingian divide between literature (time) and art (space), Zumthor’s book, *Atmospheres* (2006), conceives architecture not just as a spatial art, but like music, also as a “temporal art” and “that means thinking about the way people move in a building.” (13) Unlike Ito or SANAA Architects, Zumthor’s desire “to induce a sense of freedom of movement, a milieu for strolling”, is sensuous in nature. The name of Zumthor’s particular brand of direction is seduction. His “stage setting”, the thermal baths at Vals (1996). (14) His sensorial bag of directorial tricks: texture, sound, smell, temperature and light. For Zumthor, “architecture is not abstract, but concrete”, “it’s a body coming into being; always physical; always sensuous.” (15)

More, significantly yet, is Zumthor’s explicit focus on “human surroundings”, “buildings becoming part of people’s lives”, “a place where children grow up”: “It increases the pleasure of my work when I imagine a certain building being remembered by someone in 25 years time (...) That quality is far more important to me than the idea that the building will still be mentioned in architectural

(10) Ito in Roulet and Soulie 1991, 105.

(11) Here we refer to Butler’s cutting-edge, theoretical work on identity as performativity. See: Butler 1990, and Ibid. 1993.

(12) Rolex Learning Center.

(13) Zumthor 2006a, 41.

(14) Ibid., 43.

(15) Zumthor 2006b, 66.

(16) Zumthor 2006a, 63-65.



Fig. 5.
Lacaton and Vassal,
Latapie House, Floirac,
1993.

reference works in 35 years". (16) Zumthor designs from a language of memories; a language deeply rooted in auto/biography. "We all experience architecture", he writes, "long before we have even heard the word." (17) Rather than making history, Zumthor firmly insists on building from personal history *as well as* from the "future of rooms." (18)

Zumthor's "dissatisfaction" with "recent architecture", buildings designed with "a will to find a special form", his irritation, too, with the contemporary architect, talking "unceasingly from every detail", certainly resonates a sense of *nearness-in-architecture*. (19) Yet, despite, Zumthor's imagination of his subjects' futures, despite his awareness of an architectural *life-beyond-him*, Zumthor's own biography remains triumphant over the biographies of the users he is building for.

In Vassal and Lacaton's work, *nearness-in-architecture* takes on yet a different, if not, primarily economically based meaning. Here, aesthetic man turns into economic man. Hence, for Vassal and Lacaton, the de-objectification of the architectural object, is its dematerialisation: they defy architecture's obsessive preoccupation with outside aesthetics. Or to put it differently, what they defy most is the exterior imperative. Inspired by Le Corbusier's *machine à habiter*, they pioneered The Greenhouse as a conceptual reference. "If one adapts this architecture to human needs then one can live very well in it." (20) Besides Le Corbusier, The Green House cites Einstein's motto, "as simple as possible but no simpler than that." (21) Simultaneously, they are geared towards adding additional space. That is, they are committed to create the potential for additional space. In contrast to the majority of their colleagues, Vassal and Lacaton want to build "cheap", delivering more space for less money, stripping their buildings to the bare essentials of living, reducing architecture to what they call the "necessary programme" or "an economy of giving." (22)

For Vassal and Lacaton, the concept of added space is intrinsically linked to "added life and experience." (23) Whereas the *necessary programme* caters to basic human needs and is firmly set in the now, *added space* allows for human change instead, anticipating future needs and future desires. In the vision of Vassal and Lacaton, *added space* cannot be planned. Added space delivers spatial potential for the unforeseen, life's twists and turns. While the *necessary programme* is embodied by the central living unit, the *added space* is the green house. A transparent structure extending the basic house: a blank canvas open to future needs.

Vassal and Lacaton's economic reading of *nearness* is certainly useful, but not free of flaws. The spatial distinction they make between basic needs and added needs cannot be but hierarchical,

(17) Zumthor 2006b, 65.

(18) Zumthor 2006a, 39.

(19) Zumthor 2006b, 33.

(20) Ruby 2001, 13.

(21) Ibid., 13.

(22) Ibid., 6.

(23) Ibid., 9.

not only prioritising the basic, but also freezing the very meaning of what basic living needs *are*. Therefore, Vassal and Lacaton's *necessary programme* seems burdened with a universalising sense of necessity and permanence. Instead of being critically questioned, the programme is simply extended (added space).

In conclusion, our critique of the omnipresent, (interior) architect versus the absent, silenced, *user* of designed spaces, seeks to move far beyond the textual limits of a Barthesian-like burial of the architect. (24) Instead, we argue, that within the context of *nearness*, "the birth of the audience", (25) (the user/s) *can never be* limited to the field of interpretation (appropriation). It cannot but be extended to the creative process of building: any *architecture of nearness* implies the dynamic involvement of its future inhabitant(s) not *after*, but *before* space(s) are designed. The interior designer could well be ideally positioned to guide the *everyman's narratives* right into *infrastructure*, as a close intermediary, equipped with cross-disciplinary sets of knowledge.

(24) Barthes 1977, 142-148.
 (25) Ibid.

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Coby Manders

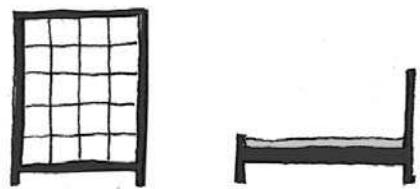
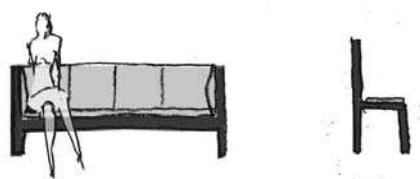
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Interiority

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Using our senses we intuitively recognize the inviting *interiority* of the precisely orchestrated interiors of, for example, Mackintosh, Loos, Le Corbusier, Wright, Schindler, Aalto and Fehn. In the sensuousness of these works, we experience how *building envelope* and *furniture* merge as a result of a deliberate engagement with functionality and scenography in the transformation of the *building envelope* into *furnishing* spatial elements inviting the inhabitant to see, touch, hear, smell and taste *home*. Such detailed spatial engagement with the intangible concept of *home* is, however, easily disregarded within the increasingly complex practical, economic, and climatic realm of architecture leaving our houses as raw *constructions*. Consequently, this paper investigates whether the perceived interior qualities of the previously mentioned works can be articulated and activated as principles in a future positioning of *interiority* within today's practical realm. A preliminary research result discusses *interiority* (1) as a theory and design methodology for transforming the actual structural and economic elements of *construction* into *furnishing* details, signifying *home*.

Fig.1.
Furniture: sofa, chair, bed,
shelf, table, and closet.

(1) In the 18th century dictionaries the term *interiority* initially described "inner character"; it was not until later that the term became related also to the interior of a physical space (Rice 2007, 2). Thus, when utilizing the term here we are not only suggesting a necessary venture into a boundary field interrelating that of *building envelope* and *furniture*, but also interrelating senses and mind.

(2) Herbert 1984; Arief and Burkhart 2003.

The increasingly complex processes affecting society today pose new demands on architectural practice. Especially within domestic architecture, where prefab processes have for over a century been envisioned as the means for achieving a general improvement of the ordinary dwelling, the sensuous furnishing aspects of architecture are often pushed in the background, leaving the produced houses as raw *constructions* rather than sensuous inviting *homes*. (2) Consequently, it seems that one of the greatest challenges for architecture as a discipline is to increase our involvement with industry, herein our ability to actualize, communicate, and develop the sensuous aspects of *home* within the processes preconditioning practice. The question is, however, how to define and articulate the rather intangible concept of *home*.

Through our sensuous perception we intuitively recognize the soft upholstered *interiority* of furniture, described by Praz as a

(3) Praz 1964, 24-35.

(4) Here it should be mentioned that a study of the subtle differences between these architects' approaches towards the interior is worth a study in itself. However, in this paper we try to uncover and articulate similarities in their underlying principles at a more general level.

(5) The material presented summarizes parts of the PhD project "Interiority – Architecture in the Future Prefabricated Home." A research project pursuing a development of the concept of interiority, not solely as a sensuous-aesthetic matter as argued by Praz and many others (Praz 1964; Rice 2007; Taylor and Preston 2006), but also as a constructive-technical means. Through a combined theoretical and practical research strategy a development of interiority as a theory and design method for transforming constructive challenges into furnishing details, improving the sensuous quality of the prefabricated home is herein pursued.

(6) Unwin 2003.

(7) von Meiss 1998; Arnheim 1977.

(8) Works such as Villa Moller, Fallingwater, and Villa Stein are examples which have become icons, known by architects and to some extend even by laymen. However, as described it is our hypothesis that there is still reason to address these works in a search for principles of interiority; elements necessary in approaching a spatial definition of home. Many before us have been examining these particular works of which (Risselada 1988; Rizzi 2003) are just two examples of reference-material used in our studies.

precondition for our experience of a place as *home*: (3) a *interiority* which is our claim, can be rediscovered as a spatial discipline interrelating *building envelope* and *furniture* in the precisely orchestrated Functionalist interiors of, for example, Mackintosh, Loos, Le Corbusier, Wright, Schindler, Aalto and Fehn. Here details such as built in seats and niches create points of actual sensuous interaction with the house, details in which wall and chair merge as a result of a deliberate engagement with functionality and scenography inviting the inhabitant to see, touch, hear, smell and taste the *interiority* of the house as *home*. Not only do they provide for functionality embracing the senses, it is our belief that they also stage the complex pleasures of the mind such as in Mackintosh's choreographed meeting of male and female in precisely defined niches demarcated by his high-backed chairs. These works can be considered total works of art, built under conditions which are radically different from the ones governing the ordinary dwelling. However, it is our hypothesis that they contain crucial principles necessary in attempting to spatially define the intangible concept of *home*. (4) Consequently, it is the goal of this paper to investigate how the perceived *interiority* of these works, having kept their relevance in the present, can be articulated and activated in a future positioning of *interiority* as an architectural theory and design method for transforming the structural and economical elements of *construction* into *home* in the ordinary dwelling. Methodologically this is pursued by attempting to utilize *interiority* as an analysis-method, pursuing a testing of the particular hypothesis that a single furnishing element contains the seed for *constructing* a *home* in its entirety. (5)

Interiority as an analysis-method

In Unwin's *Analyzing Architecture* his notion of "architecture as identification of place" has led to a listing of specialized analysis-parameters; *stratification, transition, hierarchy*, etc. (6) In a similar manner von Meiss and Arnheim uses notions such as *order, disorder, solid, hollow* etc. in describing architecture. (7) However, rather than attempting to describe the architectural work and the instruments at play in their entirety, it has been our strategy here, to look at architecture-analysis in a more immediate manner; from the point of view of the chair. Herein we use *interiority* as a critical perspective through which to dissect the spatial principles governing our sensuous experience of *home*. In this matter we have begun by zooming in, first on the concept of *furniture*, hereafter on the *building envelope* and finally their interrelation, *interiority*, using Corbusier's Villa Stein as an analysis-example. (8)

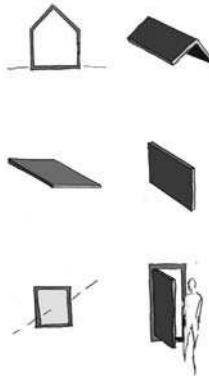


Fig. 2.
Building envelope: floor,
wall, roof, window, and door.

Furniture

As described by Lucie-Smith there exist an endless number of furniture variations, dining-tables, sofas, bookcases etc. However, all of which derive from one of the four typologies; pieces on which to sit, put things, sleep or recline and pieces in which to store things. (9) One could say that furniture unfolds a sensuous invitation, “serving our bodies and possessions” to use the words of Abercrombie, who defines two basic typologies of furniture; one serving our bodies, *sofas, chairs*, and *beds*, and one serving our possessions, *shelves, tables and closets* as illustrated in fig. 1. (10) Pieces of furniture are mobile elements wherein our bodies and our things can rest upon surfaces and inside cavities, often upholstered, offering a soft encounter. Brayer has argued that a chair is immediately inhabitable, “a symbol of the dwelling”, as an effect of this particular softness and proximity to the human body. (11) However, there are also differences between chair and house.

Building envelope

In opposition to the mobility of *furniture* the *building envelope* once erected is in general fixed. Rather than supporting and serving our bodies and possessions, it shields us against the weather, basically consisting of *floor, wall, roof, window, and door* as exemplified in fig. 2. However, as described by Semper in his studies on the origins of *construction* the house evolved first and foremost as an enclosure preconditioned and derived from the technique of weaving. (12) Thus, whereas in general we think of the house as a framework large enough for us to stand up and walk around in, it derives from the principle of dressing, describing a proximity to the human body even more intimate than that of furniture and opposing the raw *constructions* making up our houses today. We cannot only conclude that the softness of furniture preconditions our experience of a place as a *home* as stated by Praz, but also that the actual technique for *constructing* the house derives from this particular intimacy. Thus, rather than looking at furniture as a mobile addition to the fixed building envelope and an autonomous discipline, we can begin to look at *furniture, building envelope* and *construction* as being interrelated architectural dimensions of the *home*.

Interiority

In interrelating *furniture* and *building envelope* as proposed above, both are transformed. Rather than being mobile the chair is now

(9) Lucie-Smith 1979, 8.

(10) Abercrombie 1990, 80.

(11) Brayer and Simonet 2002, 42-43.

(12) Semper 1989, 74-130.

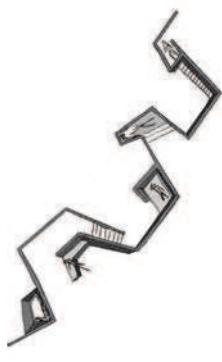


Fig. 3.
Interiority; a place to sit, eat, sleep, bathe, and synthesize.

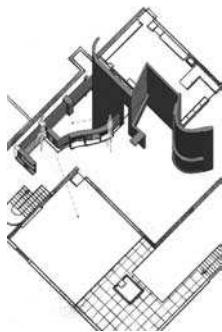


Fig. 4.
Isometric drawing of spatial element in Villa Stein.

(13) In his privacy Le Corbusier kept a collection of found objects, some kept because of their functionality such as the two whisky boxes used as stools in Le Cabanon, others kept for less tangible reasons, such as a pebble which he thought of as a self-portrait (von Vegesack et al. 2007 p. 142). Thus, not only was Le Corbusier architect of grand-scale urban visions, he also appreciated the smallest of things. It is our claim that his interiors invite us, not only to move in with our possessions, but to interact with the spatial elements of interiority in creating our home.

contextualized accentuating particular qualities of the house. The chair is no longer just a piece on which to sit, it becomes *a place* in which *to sit*. Likewise the house is no longer a raw *construction*, but contains sensuous *spatial elements* inviting the inhabitant to sense the house as a *home*; *places* in which to *sit, eat, sleep, bathe* and *synthesize* as illustrated in fig. 3. Thus, after having zoomed in, first on *furniture*, subsequently on the *building envelope*, we can now attempt an actual formulation and testing of *interiority* as an analysis method. Looking at Villa Stein as an example, we can hereby direct our analysis to particular spatial elements, points of encounter between furniture (*sofa, chair, bed, shelves, table, and closet*) and building envelope (*floor, wall, roof, window, and door*). Fig. 4 shows how the spaces in Villa Stein actually evolve from the principle of a *shelf*. In creating a curvature contrasting the rigid constructive framework of the house, the *shelf* interacts with the *wall* in the creation of niches, bookcases, and seats, further slicing a hole in *floor* and *roof*, creating a visual contact to the storey below. One example is how the seat created by the *shelf* directs the inhabitants' attention towards the small window opposite the seat. Another is how the *shelf* wraps around the *wall* to the right creating a cavity serving as a sideboard on one side and as a decoration-shelf on the other. Thus, not only does Le Corbusier provide for functionality and sensuous encounters in the creation of a *place to sit* and *to eat*, but also for *places of synthesis*, for displaying our *object trouvé*, (13) objects signifying the complexity of the mind. We cannot only conclude that it is in this particular and deliberate transformation of the *building envelope* into *furnishing* spatial elements that the seeds for *constructing the home* in its entirety are to be found: But also that the specialized instruments governing architecture as a discipline are hereby made physical, and articulate.

Discussion

In returning to our examples, the works of Mackintosh, Loos, Le Corbusier, Wright, Schindler, Aalto and Fehn, we can conclude that they do not solely represent an exclusivity unknown of the ordinary dwelling; they also contain precise and prosaic principles of *interiority*, thus making the significance of *home* physical and articulate both for the senses and the mind. The future challenge, however, is how to relate these principles to the structural and economic means of construction; *plate, shear wall, beam, column, bolt and screw*, illustrated in fig. 5.

We close the paper by proposing a development of *interiority* as a theory and design method for transforming the actual structural



Fig. 5.
Construction: plate, shear
wall, beam, column, bolt,
and screw.

elements of *construction* into *furnishing* details, asking whether it is possible for the softness of upholstery to evolve directly within the economy of *construction*? This is a challenge which not only requires a passionate engagement with the concept of *home*, but also with the practical realm of the ordinary dwelling: an inherent and increasing architectural challenge, which may be utopian in its destination, but which is nevertheless captivating and necessary.

The work presented in this paper is partly financed by the Danish housing manufacturer Boel Living A/S. In addition Boel Living A/S is our project partner offering not only a view into the practical realm of prefabrication but also an actual and engaging context for pursuing a practical testing of theory, a matter discussed further in a paper recently published in *Design Principles&Practices – An International Journal*, vol. 4, i. 2. The support is gratefully acknowledged.

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iSpaces

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It becomes necessary to coin a new term when it is impossible to communicate a phenomenon or a thing with words that already exist, to give an expressive, repeatable and concrete form and so a definition to a process. In trying to define “interiors key-words”, we need to distinguish words which describe actual phenomena, therefore “spaces or forms which express the future of the interiors *in nuce*” designed for the life of man, the words which describe the current or already consolidated phenomena with those terms which instead intend to communicate situations in evolution or even processes not yet fully shared or recognized. Having new verbal signs represents new ways of living and could even contribute to the definition and promotion of contents for which there will be significant expressions.

The term which is proposed – *iSpace* – (1) is not without roots and has a long and critical scientific path characterized by other words which were already known and used in the past. However, they are inadequate to indicate today’s transformations and ongoing processes in which they exist and are used in a theoretical way, but are not always tangible.

With *iSpace* we want to indicate the evolved, shared and socially useful form – therefore the prospect of possible future development – declined in its own coherent and current language, not changed by other typologies or formal expressions, of those spaces of relationship, poli-functional and symbolic containers, which our daily life is full of. These spaces have already been defined as *non-places* by Marc Augé and in their evolution and social expansion redefined as *superspaces* and *iperspaces*.

Therefore, to understand these new terms, taken from daily technological language, it is necessary to reread the studies of the 80’s about spaces that were developed, forgetting the characteristics which make an empty space a lived one and a useful space a significant and symbolic one.

In 1986 Marc Augé coined the term *non-places* (2) by which he meant all those places which are produced by super-modernity,

(1) This word is used by the Stanford Center for Innovations in Learning (SCL) with a different meaning: “The iSpace project is creating an international network of usable augmented environments, or iSpaces, for collaborative, project-driven learning and working”.
(2) Augé 2005.

which cannot be defined on the basis of their identity, relationships and historical aspects, characteristics which on the contrary determine the very concept of “space”. Even if Augé’s theories are referred to a social and economic situation that differs from the current one, they remain exemplary from an anthropological viewpoint, because they have succeeded in expounding, with great clarity and equally great concern, the danger of alienation and loss of personal values to which the individual is exposed. Moreover, his studies have highlighted the difficulty of managing functional spaces which do not create an organic social event, but rather a condition of “solitary contractuality” which is defined not so much by the communicative impact of the architecture as by the “words” which slavishly describe environments, suggesting behaviours and goals. Man’s role is reduced to that of a mere “user”, without any cultural and psychological expectation, something which results in a loss of identity.

A more recent neologism, *superspace* (3) reinterprets the meaning of *non-places* within the context of a global society, based on new lifestyles and on completely different expectations of social relationships, in the final analysis revising the judgment of value and relation with the territory. The *superspace* interprets the need to have immediate and complex, diversified and simultaneous responses (solutions from public and collective places, both in the territory and in the historical space of the city); from an anthropological point of view it therefore represents the meeting of a need for a social space in which to consume the rites of everyday life. But these places, differentiated and contradictory, fail to put into words a symbolic aspect that may represent a model and image of the identity of the new social networks.

The transition between the *non-places* analyzed by Augé and the present-day *super-places* is characterized by an inability to create new languages. Scenic effects prevail on substance, and rather than giving a concrete form to a new function, the architect creates a stage on which to live a dreamed reality which may serve as a noble background to the more pragmatic and material action of consumption, be it material or behavioural. The renunciation – cultural, social, and architectural – to define a contemporary form, in order to seek refuge in a design of ideal and idealized worlds and lifestyles, is the underlying cause of *hyperspaces*. (4)

The last frontier area in which to meet, get to know one another, shop, find information and enjoy exciting experiences. However, it is not a matter of real places, but of virtual dimensions, in which it is nevertheless really possible to carry out these operations.

Cyberspaces (5) used by internet navigators, some of which are informal – a chat, a social network – (6) and some of which are

(3) Paris 2009.

(4) Desideri and Ilardi 1997; Bittanti 2005, and Céolin 2004.

(5) Lévy 1997, and Jenkins 2006.

(6) Sassen 2002.

planned, also in their formal expression, such as Simcity and online role plays.

Today the reality of *superspaces* risks more and more to look like the immaterial realty of *hyperspaces* because it prefers to go to a place, that is artificial manifestly, far from urban spaces, as long as it has precise performances: it must be accessible quickly and easily, it must be efficient and it has to be able to satisfy any hourly need, it must be soothing in the offer, and it must change with fashion. Exactly like a web-site chosen with a few *clicks*. There always exists a precise coincidence, or even an overlap of means between virtual and real places. Atopical places characterized by solitude, by eradication from context, as Augé said. Places that represent and produce more levels of guided, controlled and filtered relationships, and that morally absolve from isolation.

To try to understand what could be a possible payoff of these places that now appear necessary for daily life and, at the same time, destructive of the constructive basis of social relationship, we must start from the consideration that some *virtual hyperspaces* can represent the critical answer to *superspaces*, like a dream and a decadent style form of material and functional need.

Now social networks, virtual communities, theme forums, blogs, news online, shopping online are daily habits and are also the alternative to physical displacement in the places where it is possible to do these different activities. They are personal *places* but not exclusives, which help to enhance relationships and to create new communication conditions.

Today the PC is the open window on the world, not only to observe but also to interact concretely with. These virtual places that are contained in the small technological and portable world become welcoming, recognizable, expressive and communicative, and they suggest a creative and selective relational globalization. These places, global and homogeneous but not approved, are places where the individual can choose and assert and communicate his character, his ideas and where he can still hope to have free expression.

To break the rules and the contract conditions imposed by *non-places* before and by *superspaces* after, permits to choose not only the form but also the measure and types of relationship that we want put to use in balancing to satisfy both social relationships and individualities. It has been shown that globalization can be used to our advantage if it becomes a shared and intelligible language by all; that is, if it is possible to propose an agreement between contents and expressive forms. If these considerations seem obvious, what needs to be done is to translate this into a comprehensible architectural form, and then experiment with it.

Above all this means redefining an architectural language for these

functional containers, finding a location and a relative system connected with the consolidated historic city and the territory, which is continuative and not fragmented. It means proposing morphologies of the spaces and connections between the functional events which come from traditions, but which are at the same time totally adequate for the foundation of newly constructed realities and that therefore avoid returning to language and conformations belonging to the past.

Future *iSpaces* will be places of transit, commerce and entertainment whose material form will always return to the new function they represent and where the articulation of spaces

Will consider the physical and psychological needs of users will be able to creatively use the relationship spaces, defining them and adjusting them to their own needs, moods and characters.

They will be spaces where you can experiment sensations and emotions, and not where you are subjected and stimulated by publicity or other means of promotion; spaces where you can have your own personal choices and not where one's solitude is amplified, where you can communicate and meet, where you can study and bring into play your life experiences.

All things considered a real, physical and tangible space, where it is possible to reconstruct dynamism, flexibility and creativity that are embedded in "virtual places", which define and condition the new system of relationship and communication today.

For this reason the *iSpace* term has the suffix "i" in addition to the concept of "space, place". Starting from the very famous Apple's products, this suffix is now a concept based on everything that suggests "interactivity", and indicates instruments and ways that are more like "interfaces", which can relate and connect to others systems, rather than objects with a precise and determined function but closed in its own *raison d'être*.

As previously said, the interactivity implies that the user can choose, autonomously construct the system of actions and information needed, adapting objects or spaces as desired in order to never put up with conditionings, prepackaged offers.

The user, from passive viewer, from simple user, becomes protagonist and actor of the choices he wants to make and of the character of the setting that he lives in. Thanks to a real interactivity, and not as a slogan, the places can to be different from user to user, from day to day, in that they are really "designed" for the occasion of each visitor. Spaces of interaction and exchange and therefore spaces that are very flexible and adaptable and not defined and absolute in which every desired or requested action can be achieved. At last, spaces full of personality, of "identity and relationship character" and no longer aesthetic concentrations of functions where people can do what they

need to do, but finally significant spaces where people can spend their free time creatively and free.

A relational and identity character, however based on new values that change the attention from typology and morphology of a space to its flexibility and adaptability, from direct communication between the space and the user to the possibility of weaving new relationships and connections with the space you are in, while at the same time with other similar spaces with the same capability, from the delimitation of the defined function to the opening towards other needs and requirements through which it is possible to understand reality and to communicate with others. We speak again of “spaces” to return to the original definition suggested twenty or more years ago by Marc Augé, daily spaces, of the present where utopia can be cultivated and therefore the hope of designing a place which is fit for everyone and capable of adequately narrating one’s life.

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In Between

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Words without things

Living spaces, primary interiors, absence of typology, loss of divisions and/or differences in *served* and *servant spaces*, the ending of hierarchy in architectural structures, contemporaneity of vision, the presence or absence of architectural boundaries: all these expressions (and many more) have for some time now been part of the specific lexicon of architecture. They all have a veiled vagueness of meaning that reflects the amorphous nature of the architectural components that they attempt to portray. Words are not enough to describe things; things frequently avoid being pinned down by the meanings of words. And so, where we have no precise framework of reference, but possess a large supply of images that conjure up the idea of architectural space, and when we want to reflect on the nature of architectural forms in contemporary interiors, we need to look closely at the phrase “in between” to see if it can effectively describe certain architectural and urban transformational events.

The urban set-up of facilities and artworks, temporary stores, transitory housing, re-use and partial use of abandoned or temporarily disused buildings; all these have their place in neutral spatial terms within the contemporary urban fabric and increase the latent performative potential of the space and its users. These current features of the use of “internal” space in architecture and in cities shift our whole notional apparatus away from the figurative dimension towards a new linguistic standpoint that has to be codified or upgraded to the new dynamics of changes in the use and the form of architectural interiors and the interstices within the city fabric.

Kinds of spaces that can be described by the idea of *in between*; the phrase literally brings to mind the interrupted nature of a space, and establishes a value to the discontinuity in a form which tells us something significant about architectural and urban interiors. These features are not defined in the design project itself but rather arise from an interspatial transformative movement that spreads through the internal spaces of the urban fabric, generating new intangible

Fig.1.
Dan Graham, *Half square, half crazy*, Como, 2004.



Fig.2.
Dan Graham, *Half square, half crazy*, Como, 2004.

energies that change and are modified over time. It is like a kind of liquid substance that has no precise shape of its own, but takes on that of its container. (1) Thus *in between* is the ephemeral, transitory yet inescapable state of a space that is continually transforming itself, of a container that is not to be perceived as present in the fixed state of a traditional building, or the site of the design project and the representation of the functions and activities that take place within it. *In between* is the idea of spaces that are endowed with the performative potential of urban interiors and exteriors. *In between* should be seen as a phrase serving as a key to the understanding of these kinds of spaces at different scales of the project, from the large-scale of the city to the distinctive features of architectural interiors.

Words and artworks

Words and artworks belong to a narrative we can provide, to enable us to examine a certain comparison/opposition within architectural space. There are three occasions where a space that is inside or close to the architectural structure comes into use: an encounter between an artwork and an architecture in an urban context, between a *liquid* facility and a container-interior, and between an architecture and a place; these are the occasions where we can reflect on the distinctive qualities of the idea of *in between*.

1. *Half square, half crazy*: Dan Graham and inter-subjectivity.

Dan Graham placed an artwork in front of the abstract structure of the Casa del Fascio in Como, the work of Giuseppe Terragni. The sharp lines of the rationalist architecture of the building were contrasted with the transparency of the strange cube entitled *Half-square, half crazy*. Terragni's Casa del Fascio, the epitome of Italian rationalist architecture, contains a sequence of spaces, from its interior to the *design* of its four facades. The atrium, the central courtyard, the storeys of its façade are produced by a compositional strategy for surfaces that overlap each other, perceived in terms of figures deriving from the geometry of the square. The depth of the surfaces of the faces of Terragni's cube is mirrored and distorted by the surfaces of Dan Graham's pavilion: "The mirror reflective anamorphosis in my pavilion refers to the 360 degrees skyscraper and the spectator's body and gaze. The interiors of Terragni's Casa have reflective surfaces which function in a similar way." (2)

In this blurring of the distinctions between artwork and architecture, a kind of dissolving of the architectural image into the insubstantiality of the figures distorted in the glass, another experience takes place that captures the essence of the *in between*:

(1) Bauman 2002.

(2) Graham 2004, 17.



Fig. 3.
Olafur Eliasson and Günter
Vogt, *The mediated motion*,
Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2001.

when people interact with the transparent/reflecting surfaces, they heighten the effect of removing the border between the observer and the observed, between the real image and that reflected by the architecture; only by means of *in between* can we attain this experience of inter-subjectivity: “I’m interested in inter-subjectivity, exploring how a person, in a precise and given moment, perceives him/herself while at the same time watching other people who in turn are watching him/her”. (3) The use of reflecting distorted surfaces helps to convey the meaning of *in between* as regards architectural form, in that it acts as a background for the spatial form of the installation. The multiplicity and movement of the reflections and the distortions of the images of those who enter into this condition of *in between* very effectively communicate the meaning of the phrase, so that we can understand the relationships that are created in space, between the observer and the artwork, and between the artwork and the architecture.

2. YES (*your engagement sequence*): Olafur Eliasson and Peter Zumthor and the dissolving of form within architectural settings.

“Your engagement sequence (YES). Everything is situated within a process – everything is in motion (...) If people are given tools and made to understand the importance of a fundamentally flexible space, we can create a more democratic way of orienting ourselves in our everyday lives. We could call our relationship with space one of co-production: when someone walks down a street, she co-produces the spatiality of the street and is simultaneously co-produced by it.” (4) All of Olafur Eliasson’s research deals with the interaction between users and space. He is not interested in spatial configurations as such, but in the potential offered by the interaction between artwork and architecture, between users and the space that contains them. *In between* is the place where one physically experiences the nature of space; it conveys the idea of an architectural interior as an *open work*, which is elastic and indeterminate, which assumes a form as a result of actions that issue from the interior and are reflected back from their surroundings. With his installation *The Mediated Motion* (Bregenz, 2001), Eliasson, together with the landscaper Vogt, filled the concrete and glass box of Zumthor’s Kunsthaus with “liquid” substances, fogs and perfumes, triggering novel sensory and perceptive interpretations of the architectural space. The neutrality of Peter Zumthor’s architecture was capable of accepting Eliasson’s physical experiments, showing that *in between* is the characteristic of architectural interiors that is changeable, versatile and dynamic. The unexpected introduction of natural substances, which follow an unusual sequence of pathways inside the building, helps to describe the different figures to be found in architectural space.

(3) Ibid., 45.
(4) Eliasson 2006.



Fig. 4.
SANAA, Serpentine Gallery,
London, 2009.



Fig. 5.
SANAA, Serpentine Gallery,
London, 2009.

3. Serpentine Pavilion in London 2009: SANAA and reflective surfaces and space *in between*.

The *in between space* between a form and its representation: a small architectural self-portrait describing a temporary expectation of a provisional space near the Serpentine in Kensington Gardens; neither a pavilion nor a building, but the prime essence of an informal architectural threshold. A surface imitating a puddle of water is held up by a variable set of slender supports from which it slopes down, almost touching the ground. “The relationship between the space under the roof and the space it creates outdoors was very important for us. The balance between the two determined the final shape.” (5) It is a reflecting surface which does not actually contain a space yet creates an interior volume that is complex, fluid, and which changes in the presence of visitors. It is the space between the treetops and the ground, intersecting the landscape with the passage of the visitors; an idea of architecture as *space in between* in its purest form, as a model where the space expands beyond its true borders.

These three artworks define the relationships that are created *in between* in architecture, the *in between* acts like an *enzyme*, (6) in other words, it penetrates the metabolic system of the body of a contemporary city and triggers processes of change. Just like within the perimeter of a building, space is an *open work*, flexible, provisional and changeable, thanks to the movement of the bodies that pass through it; it acts like a fluid that is activated by the elasticity of our vision. The architecture of *in between* spaces abolishes the traditional internal hierarchies of a building and its figurative place in the city, and instead inserts itself into the cracks formed by the functional re-use of buildings which creates new forms of space; it inserts itself into the processes of change, into the design of the open spaces and internal spaces of the city, into the environment of the urban landscape.

In between is the idea that best describes the complex nature of dimensional relationships (figure to background, depth to surface, form to structure to envelope, etc) and temporal relationships between forms and the objects inhabiting architectural space. *In between* rejects the traditional relations between the parts of a building, and becomes a network of unexpected formal structures within interiors, where the primary components of space, i.e. the volumes, surfaces and elements of line are related one to the other by a system of relationships based on flexibility and fluidity as against functionality and separateness. The differences are brought about in the interstices between the independent and self-sufficient parts of a system of transient connections and the temporal relationships between forms. SANAA and Olafur Eliasson created another *in*

(5) Nishizawa 2009.
(6) Branzi 2006.

between event in the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa; the space is a field in which the interweaving of architecture with objects and of objects with users takes place, revealing the architectural forms of the museum's interior spaces, which are always different because of the diversity of the objects and users that inhabit them. This conception of architectural space as a work open to the presence or absence of boundaries is created by transparent reflecting screens which progressively alter the experience of a person passing by, just as the differing proportions of the rooms, which define a variation in the density of their space, are reinforced by the *in between* interruptions, which widen and attenuate the spaces between volumes. Eliasson's work is placed within this particular context of architectural space, as an opening between art and architecture. The museum is a work open to the intrusion of artworks which disclose its formal nature. The transformation of the space in the absence of typology, of traditional types of dialectical relationships between form and content is heightened by the installations of artists who are working at the boundary between art and architecture. It is not the architecture of the museum, which is host to the dimensions of the artworks, but the interaction between two languages that give rise to a new experience and a new reality in the architectural forms. *In between* expresses all of this. Flexibility and the interior context of the architectural body and the urban form of buildings and organisms that take shape thanks to this interaction taking place *in between*, between different reality contexts.

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Haptic

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How do we perceive the space around us? In many senses the built space is invisible to us, we act in it habitually. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art, the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction, (1) wrote Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. The notion of the *haptic* (from the Greek *haptikos*, able to touch or grasp), is discussed in this article from Walter Benjamin's state of distraction. This concept is mostly attached to the modern subject who defends himself from a surplus of visual images produced by the urban space: alternating visual data, a multitude of directions and contexts, countless consumerist temptations and fragmented information.

What are the manifestations of this "state of distraction"? According to Benjamin, "buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception – or rather, by *touch* and *sight*." (2) Optical appropriation is bound to the noticeable contours of objects in an expanding space, and *haptic* appropriation is regarded as attachment to the surface, the materiality and the texture. As Benjamin says: "For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation." (3) The state of distraction releases the subject from the traditional visual experience of space and introduces him to direct haptic knowledge. Distraction in its positive function as a category of "lack of sight", introduces new *haptic* knowledge, which opens the space and enables a means of access from observation to action. Action becomes possible by broadening the senses through habit and use. The tactile and the optic, touch and sight, (4) are folded into each other, reciprocally generating a *haptic* sensibility.

This essay relates to the interior space as critical space, as interiorty, and as the other space, through the notion of the *haptic*. Interior space in this sense is not architecture's insides, (5) it is not the binary

(1) Benjamin 1969.

(2) Ibid., 242.

(3) Ibid.

(4) The use of the pair touch and sight connected to the distinction made by art historian Alois Rieg (1858-1905) between two kinds of visual experience: the optical which is connected to the outline of distinguishable objects in deep space; and the haptic which is conceived as an attachment to a surface.

(5) Mostafavi 2009.

between the inside and the outside; it is the fold that these two concepts are generating. Critical thinking of the public space should encapsulates interiority as *haptic knowledge* that provokes design questions which take into consideration habit, use, materials, events, human experiences and questions of identities. It is the human dimension that folds the optic and the *haptic* together and generates this unique knowledge.

As mentioned previously, optical appropriation of space is bound to the contour of objects, meaning the architectural way of perceiving the space – asking “what is the plan”, (6) looking from the oblique point of view. Interiority reduces the distance from the surface, attaching to materiality and texture. This reduced distance from the surface, allowed by *haptic* closeness, opens a new field for an action to be taken, an opportunity for a shift from contemplation to praxis by being performative. (7) We are moving from the singularity of the architectural envelop to the interior space multiplicity of identities. This allows us to perceive identity in a far more fluid and dynamic way than traditional approaches; it is precisely our actions and behavior inside the space (8) that constitute our identity. In other words, perception of the built space is always engaged with performative acts in which common or private activities construct identity. These activities are accumulated over time by repetition in space, in this repetition the subject’s way of action and the potential for change is embedded. (9)

Haptic technology

Following Benjamin, *haptic perception* can be defined as an overcoming of the precedence of the optical by means of the optical apparatus themselves. Mediated by technology, the *haptic* has changed our way of operating in the world, generating a shift from contemplation alone to active involvement.

“With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject.” (10) Interiority is “closing up” the space but not in sense of different scale, it is new configuration that reveals different knowledge and perception into space and the design language. New structural formations in the interior space mean simultaneously looking at the whole picture through the new pixilation of space.

Benjamin finds affinity between the spatial experience of distraction

(6) Somol and Whiting 2005, 5.

(7) Neil Leach’s concept of belonging refers to Judith Butler’s approach of “performativity”, that relates to the way the subject acquires his/her identity. It is precisely our actions and behavior that constitute our identity and sense of belonging. (Leach 2006) We also relate to another sense of the term in J.L Austin’s concept of performative utterances. Performatives operate in such a way that speaking about it makes it so; it is the action that is executed in the statement itself (Austin 1962).

and the experiencing by technological intermediaries: panoramas, dioramas, photography (and finally the cinema) all of which have broadened visibility and the perception of the body in space. Benjamin identifies the cognitive, hence the political, potential of modernity's new technologies and spaces, generated an expansion of vision and other bodily perceptions. This new mode of perceiving, empowered by technology, is not subservient to traditional conventions or representations, thus it enables an absent-minded perception that activates a deeper, more haptic involvement of body in space. It is the positive role of distraction as a kind of "not seeing" that releases architectural space from the pure visual experience and opens it up to new intuitive *haptic knowledge*.

The cinematic gaze has often been compared to the powerful gaze of an invisible prison guard at the Panopticon prison. Feminist theorists have linked the panoptical model to the male dominant gaze, emphasizing subjectivity and the effects of being constantly scrutinized, while ignoring the subjectivity of the viewer. Anne Friedberg coined the expression "the mobile virtual gaze" (11) to refer to the viewer's desire to overcome spatial and temporal limitations by observation. Friedberg locates the departure point of the mobile cinematic image at the junction of two visual practices which developed in the 19th century: on the one hand, trains, steamships, elevators, and varying tools changed the relationships of sight and physical motion in space and provided the field of vision with mobility; on the other hand, phantasmagorical urban representation techniques (such as the diorama and the panorama) have provided the viewer with a powerful illusion of imaginary mobility in space and time.

(8) Beatriz Colomina's article Battle Lines: E.1027. "The horizon is an interior: it defines an enclosure" This concept gives a new meaning to interior space.

(9) Butler 1997.

(10) Benjamin 1969, 236.

(11) Friedberg 1993, 202. Here the term "Virtual" refers to the register of representation itself that can be either simulacral (where the image has no referent in the real) or directly mimetic. i.e., the virtual is the effectiveness of representation as the appearance of the actual thing, without the mediation of its materiality.

(12) Tschumi 1994.

(13) Ibid.

(14) Benjamin 1969.

Another meaning of "haptic" stems from media itself. Space, event and movement (12) are inherent to the cinematic medium. As the mobility of the gaze becomes increasingly "virtual" and the illusion of reality reaches its peak in the moving cinematic image, so the viewer's body becomes more and more passive. (13) With film apparatus, and particularly with the camera itself, came a change in the social conditions of perception, meaning that any attempt to grasp the world is already a constantly mediated way of acting in it, by language and practices of representation. Benjamin explains how film technology places the observer in the role of a passive critic, as she or he penetrates and ruptures reality through cinematographic operations. Being both apparatus and operation, the viewer is already situated in a position that forces him to take action , but this, according to Benjamin, happens in a "state of distraction", when the "optics unconscious" breach. (14)

Haptic interiors

Interiority and design process through the critical notion of the Haptic relates to broader social and cultural practices in which the interior space discourse is embedded. The *haptic*, which is both a visual experience and praxis, conjures up space through transformation, duration and temporality. It allows architecture and the interior space to be perceived as a sequence of events and multiplicity rather than a singular articulation. In this sense it is the affective experience of a surface rather than a singular point of view situated in a distance, on the outline or the gestalt. The *haptic* grants an intimate immersion with surface, a new “closeness” to matter and texture. In this sense it is the interior space which becomes a critical space and the “other” space.

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InfraMalls

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Hybridization figures

Mobility spaces are nowadays a catalyzer around which clot many urban situations seeking a central role at various levels.

These dynamics involve existing urban spaces and infrastructural facilities as well as recent nodes; in any case the definition of the nature and the character of these spaces posts an issue.

Historically the nature of the spaces for collective mobility has had hybrid connotations, constantly oscillating between the technical-engineering dimension, which is full of novelties and potentialities, and the urban monument dimension, which is uncertain in its references but determined to symbolically identify the new spaces of the moving city.

This issue doesn't have the time to find a resolution while mass transportation quickly storms on the scene of the consolidated city claiming new spaces which will find their way, digging new subway lines underground or establishing great new urban atriums on the surface, the new rail-road stations.

These will be in fact the first spaces embodying the backdrop of metropolitan modernity: and very soon, due to urban and technological obsolescence, they will once more be caught in radical reconversion or “restyling” operations. A vast process of reconfiguration of many large stations has been triggered on one hand by the reorganization of transport systems and on the other hand, the real-estate desirability of spaces has become central. While the underground spaces of the subway, with the excuse of security and comfort needs, are interested by analogous restyling interventions, more and more connected with a parasitic intrusion of commercial spaces.

The great atriums and the galleries are colonized by new, mainly commercial facilities attracted by the huge functional magnets in contrast with the decline of other spaces of the city; the cases of the Liverpool Station in London or the Gare Montparnasse in Paris, important intermodal exchange nodes, are examples of successful

Fig. 1.
CPG+SOM, Changi airport
terminal 3, Singapore, 2008.



Fig. 2.
ECE Architects and HPPP
Architects, Promenaden
Hauptbahnhof, Leipzig,
1997 (ph. ECE GmbH).

(1) In London the old station opens a gallery onto the city enriched with new activities, while the historical building maintains its original characters: these are the typical traits of a technical architecture functionally expressed through large glass naves and aisles and almost invisible on its street-side façade.

In Paris, the material is more recent, but the intervention has a greater multifunctional trans-typological energy: the original building is strongly remodeled (even though it's quite recent) overlapping functions and inventions (the roof covering of the rails with the Jardin Atlantique) on to a node that was already infrastructurally dense.

(2) This is the case of the new station in Basel (Cruz&Ortiz), the renovation of the Tiburtina Station in Rome (ABDR), the new Central Station in Bologna and of many others.

re-elaborations solving the public space issue as well as the dialogue with the quality of the existent. (1)

At the opposite end we find the “re-qualifications” of the Leipzig, Hannover, Karlsruhe stations where the historical travelers’ building is characterized by a solemn great hall configuration with a large empty space: this space is literally transfigured as a hollow in a shopping mall, at a point where on the façade the signs of the commercial promoter go as far as taking the place of the signs of the Station. Union Station in Washington had the same destiny, becoming the ideal “location” for shopping and banquets under the neoclassical great arcades.

The pioneer-experience of the Utrecht Station, drowned in the Hoog Catharijne, is one of the largest shopping malls in Europe, and it stand as the gateway to the city: starting in the seventies it opened interesting perspectives for integrated infrastructural operations, premonitory at the same time of the drift towards the homologation and vagueness that characterizes the same imposing development actually in progress: its urban planning organization confirms the central role of the transit node, represented by the bridge station. The bridge is a model adopted in many urban renewal interventions, used as an engine or connector of entire city parts split apart by railroad parks of different consistencies (2); very often, however, the great connectivity potential is not supported by truly innovative models in terms of urban configuration, and the field is rather left to a *déjà-vu* effect sustained by the recurrence and permeability of the same commercial brands seen all over the world.

It's also due to this fact that there's a growing need for the *styling* support offered by great international designers, as is recently happening in some main airports: the dominant logics is very close to the search for a figurative-promotional performance even where the interventions are already capable of revolutionizing the image and the context of entire cities, or even districts. (3)

The hypogean situation concentrates many of the characters of the new mobility spaces: controlled climate, light, routes, attention; typical interior traits, even though these interiors are larger and more complex, always providing increasing services and enriched in formal definition; the Châtelet-Les Halles node in Paris (from the sixties' onward) is among the first cases opening the way to strategies regarding installation in the existing city in an almost parasitic custom, as well as encrustment strategies or duplication in depth of surface layers and characters. In recent years, around the intermodal node of Umeda and in the new North Station in Osaka, where the superfast Shinkansen train joins several subway lines, enormous real estate operations are clotting interwoven by a network of commercial malls, connected reciprocally as well as with the stations, forming



Fig. 3.
Eaton centre, Toronto.

a giant interior, a parallel public space, or rather a public mall alternative to the surface ones.

Figures Hybridization

Stations, airports, subways, ports etc. as forcedly loaded with people and therefore with potential clients, are attracting more and more commercial activities.

We are nowadays witnessing an overturn of the relationships where the commercial dimension almost justifies the transportation dimension: or rather, prevails in terms of character, image, and model. New centralities become in fact the nodes of mobility; spaces created to host and celebrate movement are drained of their symbolic dimension, long sought through uncertain results, by attempts to define an identity always oscillating between previous and not often fitting models.

In the meantime, the city is indeed changing and its traditional public places trudge in the effort of sustaining their social aggregation role; “requalification” interventions, or better an up-dating of the urban facilities are in fact multiplying, as these hollow spaces are at this point unsuitable to represent and attract its inhabitants.

Not to speak of the new public spaces, most of the time fanciful in their formal definition and inadequate in providing an answer to the need for identity.

If the model that overcame all this in the past decades is that of the shopping mall, today this same model becomes more sophisticated: it returns to the city, or rather, it replaces it; even better it strives to resume it into huge urban condensers of which we can trace the constant generatrix: mobility.

More so, in many cases they generate mobility themselves, interlinking in almost molecular sequences through addition, germination, overlapping; they often originate from climatic needs, as occurred for opposite reasons in Canada with the *villes souterraines* in Montreal and Toronto, or in Singapore, where the sequence of great commercial interiors goes as far as becoming a parallel world alternative to the street.

Now, an issue comes up regarding both the architectural and the urban planning dimension. Which images today of the contemporary city are identifying and qualifying public spaces? The functional mix reasonably invoked from many sides as an essential condition for the success of an agglomeration is in fact generating complex as well as interesting hybridizations, which are oriented towards a more and more globalized homologation of architectural images, of spatial modalities and lastly, even of life styles.

(3) In this sense the Dutch cases of the Via Breda “rail city” (Koen van Velsen), Arnhem Central (Un Studio) and Rotterdam Centraal set a model as well as the German cases of Berlin Hauptbahnhof (GMP Architekten) and Stuttgart Hauptbahnhof (Ingenhoven Architekten); especially this last project is the center of an infrastructural project at the European scale called Stuttgart 21, “Das neue Herz Europas” which is bringing high-speed to the center of Stuttgart will run underground and side by side with the historical station of Bonatz generating a great hypogeal intermodal forum branched beneath the entire area of the station. See also new airports such as Changi airport terminal 3, Singapore (CPG+SOM), or maritime stations such as Yokohama terminal (FOA).



Fig. 4.
gmp, Hauptbahnhof, Berlin,
1996-2006 (ph. Marcus
Bredt).

If, at one point, there was a set trend to mimic the city reproducing it in grotesque caricatures, thus imagining to satisfy a never dozing desire of urban identity, in more recent years the established trend is manifestly promotional and sensational.

Where once there was an establishment of civic relationships due to the need of commercial supply, nowadays markets can flourish due to a forced transit without however establishing social relationships, but only agglomeration. Density and proximity are indeed among the first factors generating urban sense, and transit nodes provide this kind of raw material, abundant and costless.

In fact, the pressure of the mobility demand naturally “loads” users with the “necessary” spaces created for mobility itself; on the contrary, the planned spaces of the modern and contemporary city hardly perform their duty: the dissolution of the “finite” space hasn’t brought up the definition of new characters for public spaces in a transformed city; aperture has often turned into dispersal, dominated by the supremacy of isolated objects.

On the other hand, the decline of the solid city, the loss of density, the drop of an optimal operating pressure of the circuits of the urban plant are unable to elaborate alternatives to the need/nostalgia for the citizen (user) agglomeration; two alternative aggregation modalities are offered: the first one, forced, represented by mobility nodes, the second one, voluntary, offered by the various artificial and parallel centralities represented by commercial agglomerations where citizens and passers-by abdicate their status to become voluntarily “clients”.

New mobility forums

The violent impact of the commercial dimension on existing or designed physical spaces, as well as on customs, goes towards solutions aligned with the image of the mall, grand container ready for anything, just to astonish and entertain us both from an expressive and a morphological point of view. Which are then the characters of the new great mobility nodes? It is important, first of all, to recognize a strong shifting towards interiors of spaces and functions traditionally inhomogeneous and connected by external spaces.

This implies the setting of at least three factors:

Light and conditioning – Parameters subordinated by nature to fortuity are instead subject to the normalization of values constantly under control. Air conditioning has homogenized the quality of the air under the most disparate latitudes; light quality is undergoing the same treatment: more and more far away from the (pleasant) natural variability, artificial light outlines too often conformist configurations, slave of misunderstood commercial and security requirements.



Fig. 5.

A. Cruz, A. Ortiz, Central Station of Basel, Basel, 1996-2003 (ph. Filippo Lambertucci).

Typological-functional mix – In a general context of acceleration set by the new economic policies, the increasingly complex organisms that are being developed are claiming full-optimal transit nodes around which commercial and service facilities should concentrate: these shall be grand collective interiors where the enormous hybridization potentialities offered by the new trans-typological categories, are instead too often flattened expressing sort of a commercial *International Style* identical all around the world.

Context – Assuming as context the system of environmental and cultural pre-existences in the sites, then the formation of the big multifunctional nodes of mobility offers opportunities for new declensions of the very same concept of site specificity, operating, with globalized features, a radical shift towards the supremacy of the architectural object, more and more self-referred.

The interiors' discipline should then have to determine the definition of the suitable characters for the Infra-Malls, new frontier of these mobility forums:

a new approach for the light design, more careful to the natural-artificial relationship, more daring in the features, more incisive in terms of comfort and sustainability;

a new approach able to manage the typo-functional complexity, avoiding the inexpressive continuum generated by simple accumulations;

a recovery of the positive contribution of the characters of the context, attentively receptive of the values of the natural, urban, cultural landscape.

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PONTHILL ABBEY.
THE HALL.

Memorialised

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The interpretation of domestic interiors is complex, and the relationship between objects and the domestic locus is one that is subjected to continuous redefinitions and interpretations. Interiors cannot just be seen as the reflection of contemporary fashions or the product of idiosyncratic aesthetic pursuits. Scholars have already demonstrated the non aesthetic functions performed by objects, and, say, their political and economic use. As elemental and often intrinsic constituents of cultural practices, those goods participate in emulative patterns of consumption and are employed as markers of class distinctions and as instruments in the forging of both social and individual selves. (1)

Fig. 1.
J. Le Keux, *View of The King Edward Gallery at Fonthill Abbey*, 1823, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

This paper proposes to examine how the acquisitions of luxury objects and their integration into the domestic space can be a product of emulation which allowed individuals to define and construct their social identities. In addition, it will interrogate how the need for socio-cultural definition could intersect with the reification of a nostalgia for a past that could not be reclaimed. In other words, the notion of objects as relic and the construct of the interior as a text and memorialising instrument will be addressed. Expanding from this idea, the present paper will also consider how the construction of interiors could be employed as acts of self perpetuation and inscription within wider biographical and historical narratives.

Social identities are dynamic and fluid and social groups are characterized by changing interests and desires which are constantly projected onto culture. (2) Aristocratic art collecting and patronage have been extensively analysed by art, social and economic historians. One of the most recurrent concepts to emerge from those studies has been one which stresses the importance of competition in grandeur and rivalry in conspicuous consumption and investment amongst the aristocracy. (3) For instance, the consumption of luxury goods in the *Ancien Régime* matched requirements of rank, and nobles were

(1) Bourdieu 1984; Veblen, 1960.

(2) Birmingham and Brewer 1995, 4.

(3) Jackson-Stops 1985, 22-27.

entangled in a system of consumption that used objects to declare their pre-eminence and difference from other social groups. (4) Such works have demonstrated that art collecting, like country house building, was partly rooted in the need to consume in order to keep one's place in society: high rank entailed the duty to own and display a house which contained appropriate goods such as paintings by the most celebrated masters and rich arrays of objects made of precious materials. Interiors were thus enlisted as a means of expressing the rank and status of their owners; they made a splendid demonstration of wealth and power.

However, it would be misleading to argue that acquisitions of art and their inclusion in the domestic locus spring from similar motivations, or, say, that collectors acquire objects for similar ends. Fixed and stable relations between cultural practices and groups of people do not exist. (5) It is crucial to understand that those pursuits are embraced by individuals to varying extents, depending on their abilities, needs and interests. (6)

Class identities are dynamic and relational, and the consumption of culture is a function of the changing relationships between classes. For instance, late nineteenth-century plutocrats eagerly appropriated the collecting habits validated by generations of patrician connoisseurs. That period of time saw indeed the proliferation of Kunstkammers in the houses of the wealthy, as exemplified by the cabinet of curiosity assembled by the diamond magnate Julius Wernher in his London residence. Those cabinets functioned as a display of wealth and status, but also as evidence of the breadth of learning their owners possessed since their fundamental concept was the structuring and imparting of knowledge. (7) Interiors could thus be the reflection of a competition in luxury while the art collections they contained were associated with virtue, learning and discernment and marked the boundaries between polite and vulgar society.

However, the production of the domestic locus should not be exclusively seen as a function of emulation. As Bermingham has observed, models for the consumption of culture must move beyond ideas of emulation to embrace complex workings of aesthetics and fantasy. (8) For instance, in nineteenth-century Britain, eighteenth-century French decorative arts were throughout the century envisaged as the tangible reminders of the French *Ancien Régime*, they were “the records of (...) a particular period.” (9) Drawing on Elsner’s argument that collecting “is a cult of fragments (...) that stand as (...) metaphors for the world they (...) refer to”; (10) one can argue that the inclusion of those objects in the domestic realm

(4) Elias 1983, 53-67.

(5) Klein 2002, 873.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Elsner and Cardinal 1994, 137-154; Hein 2002, 177-192.

(8) Bermingham and Brewer 1995, 13.

(9) *The Art Journal* 3 (1 March 1851), 77.

(10) Elsner and Cardinal 1994, 155.



Fig. 2.
Portrait of William Beckford,
after Joshua Reynolds, Victoria
and Albert Museum,
London.

intersected with a “*besoin (...) qui seul nous dérobe aux amertumes et brutalités du présent.*” (11) In other words, a nostalgia for a vanished past that could not be reclaimed underpinned the formation of some collections. This aspect was particularly salient in the during the regency of the Prince of Wales (later to become George IV), as the events of 1789 and the ensuing wars with Britain made France a physically inaccessible, isolated realm, and the political changes threw the *Ancien Régime* into sharp and distinct relief as a domain irremediably separated and distant. The socio-political context in which the Regency collecting of French decorative arts was conducted therefore had not only an impact on the market availability of goods, but also invested objects with a symbolic resonance.

Rooms and the objects they enshrined thus produced an aesthetic effect and carried a weight of historical affect. Embodying multi-faceted narratives, interiors invoked and recycled the ghosts of history and simultaneously intertwined them with personal histories and atavistic pursuits. Far from disrupting the historical narrative, the non-historical objects, suffused the evocative powers of the relics and allowed for an appreciation that was not “*une idolaterie des chefs d'oeuvres en des lieux consacrés*”, but “*une qualité esthétique qui peut (...) accompagner le quotidien.*” (12)

Interiors were therefore performative loci of reconstruction and recollection. Implicit in this is the idea that the material creation of those spaces was not only confined to the realm of the tangible. Equally important is the concept of the interior as stage where individuals could aestheticize, fictionalise and also memorialise their own lives. For instance, the interiors of Fonthill Abbey, the palatial abode of the infamous collector William Beckford, could be read as a visual genealogical narrative that unremittingly alluded to his believed royal descent. (fig. 2) Heraldic symbolism combined with the insertion of armorial shields in the architectural frame physically and spatially articulated Beckford's forged story and fabricated ancestries. (fig. 1)

Similarly, some decades later, when Ferdinand de Rothschild deployed the portraits of George IV next to a marble relief portrait of Louis XIV, he was ostensibly engaged in writing a visual genealogy of taste, and was implicitly weaving his own name in its fabric. (13) And when his cousin Alfred ostentatiously incorporated his monogram in the decorative scheme of his country house, he was including more than a dynastic symbol: he was recycling the artistic legacy of previous epochs and inscribing himself within an exalted lineage of royal patronage. Here we see how the creation of the lived-

(11) Bonnaffé 1873, viii.

(12) de Goncourt 2003, xi.

(13) Ibid.



Fig. 3.
Horace Walpole in the Library,
Victoria and Albert Museum,
London.



Fig. 4.
Thomas Sandby, The Gallery at Strawberry Hill, 1781,
Victoria and Albert Museum,
London.

in space is one of interlocking and conflicting memories between the real and the imagined, the actual and the desired.

The construct of the interior as mode of remembrance and memorialising instrument engaged in the simultaneous construction of historical and biographical narratives becomes particularly salient when the latter was transmuted into text. This textualisation, often in the form of catalogues, could be systematic or fragmentary, undertaken in the owner's lifetime or posthumously. Once can argue that these textual strategies did not only serve to spatially circumscribe objects, they could also effectively blur and even obliterate the materiality of the architectural frame, "*faisant [disparaître] les fondations architecturales du lieu dans la somme de la collection.*" (14) They emphasised the historical displacement inherent in the construction of some interiors, and our understanding of them. But more importantly, once frozen on paper, interiors and their multifarious components became integral parts of wider historiographical narratives. These texts ensnared the myriad of objects that inhabit the interior within occasionally rigid and absolute taxonomies, yet also permanently inscribed its creators in dynamic and ever expanding networks of exchanges and consumption. For instance, Horace Walpole's publication of the description of Strawberry Hill, which offered a description of the villa and inventory of the collections, participated in his self-fashioning as a man of taste. (fig. 3) However, it simultaneously provided the very images Walpole wished his contemporaries and future viewers to remember. The publication can be envisaged as Walpole's attempting to retain control over the memorialisation of the house and its interiors, an endeavour which so far has largely proved successful. (fig. 4)

Equally, the interior can act as a metaphor and text for what has perished, but also what is about to vanish. It becomes a chamber where history is re-invented and materialised, and a site where the living can re-enact the past. Discussing his collection, Henry Clay Frick famously noted "I want this to be my monument." (15) The last concept this paper wants to address is that of the interior as mausoleum, and its posthumous function as bearer of memory. As Carol Duncan established, individuals who bequeathed their collections often came to regard them as surrogate selves, and their assembly and preservation was not simply a matter of social ambition but a search for some lasting value to which they could attach their names. (16) Such collections became monuments to the taste and cultural practices of their owners. When Richard Wallace left his collection to the British state in 1897, he ensured that, in the

(14) Maleuvre 1995, 434.

(15) Harvey 1928, 336.

(16) Duncan 1995, 83.

absence of legitimate heirs, his name would nevertheless survive and succeeded in institutionalising his own name. Indefinitely frozen within the confines of his interiors, the bequest was (and still is) a triumphant act of enclosure with the owner mediating between the objects and the viewers and determining the way it was seen and by whom it was seen. The bequest can thus be seen as an act of self-perpetuation and the Wallace Collection held to be an immutable and permanent shrine to his name. (17)

The sites discussed above were not just aestheticized spaces of commodity display, and the material (re)constructions they contained were envisaged as memorialising rituals and acts of engagement with the past. The externalisation of the social self via objects and their domestic deployment simultaneously constructed personal biographies, invoked wider historical narratives and fragmentarily materialised the evanescent beauty of idealised histories.

(17) Lasic 2009, 173-182.

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Fetish

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In the world of media communication, globalization and hegemonic individualism, society appears to be divided by an archaic dualism: the *visible* and the *invisible*.

Regarding this, a term could be borrowed from the anthropological vocabulary that we find as a connection between these two parts of the dualism – the word *fetish* (17th century; French *fétiche*, Portuguese *feitiço*, from the Latin *facticus*, artificial). Fetish represents a particular element of the human-divine relationship, it is a concept that refers to the supernatural, but belongs to the human world, also being a manufactured product. The fetish assumes all the power and the characteristics of the deities, breaking down the barriers that separate the material world from the immaterial one.

Through time and due to changes of social conditions, the concept of fetish experienced a historical evolution: from the “seductive” logic of Marx’s *Commodity fetishism* theory, (1) to Freud’s clinical studies on fetishistic perversions. (2)

In this paper I will analyze how the evolution of the concept of fetish is related to the contemporary world. In this epoch the *raison d'être* of humanity (in particular of the West and of the Developing Countries), is no longer gained by the fideist consolation, thus by the rites of consumption, the logic of comfort and the false myths of image. The loss of important ethical and spiritual values brings about a shifting of interest towards other new values. This change appears as a fetishist process.

Therefore, this idea needs a multi-focused discussion, considering sociological, anthropological, philosophical and aesthetic elements that were the main object of study of the world of *things* and its evolution in the past century. Moreover, this multi-focused approach is also related to the correspondent complexity of our world, in which the new significance of the word fetish is connected.

To this end, it is important to consider that *fetish objects* are related to *things*, *things* are strictly related to *interiors*. Thus, we need to consider what should be a new domestic landscape, characterized by

(1) Marx 2006.
(2) Freud 1971.

thousands of objects of consumption, or on the contrary, the total absence of objects due to the *dematerialization* of many functions and services. In both cases the doubt still remains of what the true emotional value of these *fetish-objects* should be, and what their influence will be on the interiors. Probably the most important mutation of the interiors world would not be in the changing of the space itself, but in the relation between humans, objects, spaces and new technologies. In fact, *fetishism* has a new significance in this topic because it is related to a new immaterial world, made of images, messages and also digital communications. The boundaries between interiors and outdoor spaces are extremely thin, the same as the new objects of consumption no longer have a material substance.

Going a step backward, I would like to start with a brief comment about what I mean for mutation of our times in the world of design, and in general in everyday things and spaces.

In the 20th century, the “shape of time”, (3) went through a different evolution compared to the previous centuries. The central question is the radical transformation of the space-time relation. On one hand space appears as a fluid, and on the other hand, time and its perception is compressed and extremely accelerated.

This change has completely modified the rhythms of consumption, styles, and the way objects and live spaces are used. Thus, in this context, design, as one of the most powerful aesthetic and socio-cultural expressions of the present civilization, has assumed different shapes, adapting and fragmenting itself to all the different components of society, and the global market.

The process of *fetishization* of objects appears extremely related to this change. Supporting this claim, there are some influential authors of aesthetics and sociology who have already written about this.

The Italian art critic Gillo Dorfles, in the first chapter of one of his recent publications: *Fatti e Fattoidi, gli pseudoeventi nell'arte e nella società* (2009), asserts that today “we assist a phase of our civilization in which many cultural, artistic and *existential* aspects seem to be captured by a global or partial, voluntary or involuntary, falsification and *fetishization*. (4) The Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti, also continues with this concept, talking about a sort of “hallucination of the fetishism”, (5) which influences economy, sexuality and religion: “it penetrates in all the *interstices* of everyday life, determining the distinctive code of all human beings’ condition.” (6)

First of all, we can start from an important distinction between the definition of the word “thing” and “object”. The first one is completely different from the second one because it also includes people, ideals, and in general all that involves and is effective. An *object* becomes a *thing* when society and history plan concepts, symbols, and emotions on it, distinguishing the *thing* from the

(3) Kubler 2002.

(4) Dorfles 2009, 11.

(5) Gregotti 2008, 130.

(6) Mistura 2007, 7.

commercial commodities, or from a mere expression of a *status symbol*. (7) The important historian Fernand Braudel, once remembered that “material life is made up of people and things.” (8) But today meanings and memories are less and less incorporated by the perishable objects that surround us. The objects are designed to be easily replaced and not to last. In fact, in our world the *objects landscape* changes so quickly, and a new generation of objects is always ready to substitute the previous one: more elaborate computers transform all the computers built a few years before into obsolescent technology, the microwave oven takes the place of the home fireplace. Thus, “if technologies, demands and preferences are changing, why is it necessary to remain attached to the things and technology of the past? The reason is that, the things from the past reestablish the connections between the different segments of our and collective history: saving things from insignificance means understanding ourselves better.” (9)

Therefore, today the object becomes a thing, not for personal and emotional investments on it, but due to the effect of advertising, that surrounds objects with a *shining halo*, that dissuades from the real credibility of the product. As a consumption accelerator, advertising projects a series of archetypal qualities on commodities, like beauty, safety, pleasure, happiness, wellness, family, tradition, adventure, innovation and above all eros. Thus, advertising becomes a kind of art, it is able to manipulate symbols and calibrate them to the prevalent trends. Publicity is one of the factors that furthers the affirmation of the so called “sex appeal of the inorganic.” (10) Although it is ingenuous to think of a total unconsciousness of the choices of the consumer, in the rich world, the flux of images and sounds in the houses seems to be natural. Today everyday life flows over a background of a multitude of pictures and sounds, transmitted by millions of screens in a constant flux that could communicate endless quantities of information in a few minutes, also to all papers, journals, web sites, newsletters and blogs. Of course, this type of “bombing” goes over the domestic walls, in fact the use of “media facades” is more and more extended in cities, and this dimension of the (contemporary) domesticity continues in the public space, expressed paradoxically by the presence of the television screen.

For instance, the discovery of the real identity of the single object becomes more pressing, where the fusion or the miniaturization canceled the same object. This back to the object is not already taking place, could not be realized for products that have just found their structuring, but will be applied to other sectors where there is already a possibility of a formal representation. In this manner, we assist and will assist in the future to a recovery of some kinds of crafts that

(7) Bodei 2009, 12-13.

(8) Braudel 1987.

(9) Bodei 2009, 60.

(10) Perniola 2004.

are apparently dead or that have not found their right utilization. Therefore, to the preeminence of the industrial object, probably there will be a new crafts time, maybe more linked to the world of art or to the discovery of natural materials forgotten in the last years and now rediscovered. Not only, there will also be a rediscovery of symbolic factors that once were inherent to many objects. On the other hand, this last sentence can also be valid for many recently manufactured products; in fact it is impossible to not feel the symbolic value of objects like a telephone, or a personal computer, or of a Swatch clock and more over household appliances. It is not by chance that many products of industrial design have names of animals, or people, or of other formal assonance (the Vespa and Ape Piaggio, the Eclissi and Parentesi lamps, the Grillo telephone, the Ant and Tulip chairs, the Egg armchair, the Luisa easy-chair, or the Le Bambole sofa, and so on). Most of these names – invented by designers, marketing and publicity – often do not superficially coincide with the nature of the correspondent products and end up assuming an analogical and metaphorical meaning of which no one was conscious at the beginning.

Lastly, we can say that we are in front of the origin of a “fourth kingdom” (11) of the objects, and it becomes impossible to image them as prophetic instruments, the extension of the human body (the “objects *membres-humains*” of Le Corbusier), and of the human mind, but as “others” from us, as partner-instruments: moreover they seem to be like autonomous organs, and the world of objects will be more and more similar to a fourth kingdom, beside the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdom.

Eventually *type object* and *emotional object*, find a common interest in the same wish of surpassing technique in its banal manifestations, instead promoting a technological *imaginarium*, that will transform technology to human and vice versa.

“Finally, we trust in the contemporary and future designers to continue to think objects that could be further than simple tools, but more like *objects of contemplation*, bringing formal values and identities in which people could recognize themselves.” (12)

In fact, saving objects from their insignificance or from their instrumental use means better understanding ourselves and the events into which we are involved because things set synapses of sense between the different segments of individual and collective histories, between human civilization and nature.

The new domestic landscape is now strictly related to this “fourth kingdom”. The relation between space and the objects is now of a different nature, the same as the relation between humans and objects.

I would like to conclude by quoting Alessandro Mendini, an

(11) Francalanci 2006, 22.

(12) Bosoni 2010, 119.

(13) Mendini 2010, 12.

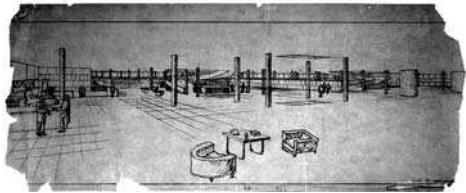
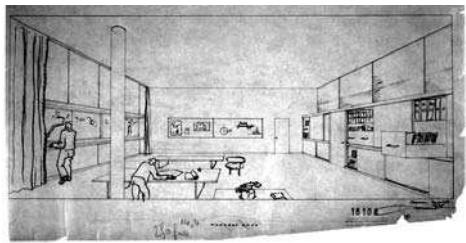
important Italian designer and scientific curator of the last exhibition of the Triennale Design Museum of Milan, who when explaining his choice of the system of objects exhibited said: “(...) This third Museum is a huge hermetic room that has the ability, the miracle, to regenerate itself. A living organism, now happy, now melancholic. A social and objective situation which axis continues to rotate. Objects that breathe and tell. They breathe for their designer and for their constructor. They tell something to those that use them, or better still coincide with those that use them. We are things among things. So, which things are we?” (13)

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Montage

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In 1928, Sigfried Giedion expressed in *Bauen in Frankreich, Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton* that the simple and isolated “still photography” could not apprehend architecture clearly; only film could “make the new architecture intelligible.” (1) Giedion used the film metaphor in order to refer to the addition of images that a disembodied eye – comparable to a physical viewer – had to necessarily capture when moving through space over time. Giedion relied on Le Corbusier’s *Quartiers Modernes Frugès* in Pessac to explain the ability of both the experience of the subject and the cinematographic *montage* to construct space.

The same year Le Corbusier traveled for the first time to Moscow and met Sergei Eisenstein, the most renowned filmmaker and theorist of *montage* of the 20th century. Le Corbusier considered his practice converged with that of the Russian filmmaker, and explained how “in [his] work he [seemed] to think as Eisenstein [did] in his films.” (2) Le Corbusier in fact always tried to avoid his architecture from being understood from a single point of view. Thus, he always obliged the viewers of his buildings to “accompany the eye as it moves”, to use a “memorizing eye.” (3)

In 1937, Eisenstein wrote “Montage and Architecture” and explained how film, *montage* of images, was not a new phenomenon: its “undoubted ancestor in this capability [was] architecture.” (4) Eisenstein found the clearest example in the Acropolis of Athens where the buildings had been organized in a picturesque way. (5) With this example, literally quoted from Auguste Choisy’s *Histoire de l’Architecture*, Eisenstein explained that the cinematographic *montage* was the way to link in one plane – the screen – “various fragments of a phenomenon filmed from many different dimensions, sides, and points of view.” (6) Not by chance, this sequence of images was the same that Le Corbusier had previously inserted in *Vers une architecture* in order to refer to the “great stage director” that had to display the different elements of the plans. (7)

In 1934, the German literary critic Walter Benjamin delivered “Der Autor als Produzent” at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in

Fig. 1.
Le Corbusier, Centrosoyus,
View of the interior of the
upper offices, 1928 (© FLC
16109).
Le Corbusier, Centrosoyus,
View of the entrance of the
ground floor, 1928 (© FLC
16112).

- (1) Giedion 1995, 168-169.
- (2) Cohen 1992, 49.
- (3) Giedion 1995, 176.
- (4) Eisenstein explained that “painting has remained incapable of fixing the total representation of a phenomenon in its full visual multidimensionality (...) Only the film camera has solved the problem of doing this on a flat surface, but its undoubtedly ancestor in this capability is – architecture.” Eisenstein 1938, 117.
- (5) Eisenstein literally quoted a series of pages of Choisy 1889, 328-333.
- (6) Eisenstein 1980, 16-17.
- (7) Le Corbusier 2007, 121.

(8) Benjamin 1978, 230-238.

(9) Benjamin wrote to Giedion an enthusiastic letter in 1929, upon receiving a complimentary copy of *Bauen in Frankreich*. "When I received your book, the few passages that I read electrified me in such a way that I

decided not to continue with the reading until I could get more in touch with my own related investigations that I had been." Georgiadis 1995, 53. Later Benjamin copied several parts of Giedion's descriptions on Le Corbusier's houses in his *Passagen Werk*. Benjamin 1999, 407, 423.

(10) It should be noted that the parallel between the way in which architecture and film signify does not come from the filmic idea of sequence of images, but from the idea of a necessary collapse of different images in a single montage. See Benjamin 1968, 233.

(11) "Une maison sans escaliers. Le Palais du Centrosouïen Construction a Moscou. 1928-1933" is the title of the project Le Corbusier published in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 10, December 1933. Le Corbusier 1933, 105-108.

(12) Le Corbusier 1933, 107.

(13) Le Corbusier showed these two perspectives when he presented the second proposal of the project, in which the most important changes of the development of the project happened: The two halls were transformed into a single one and the entire building was elevated on pilotis. The transformation can be clearly seen from FLC 31154, FLC 15678, to FLC 16108, FLC 16106.

(14) Le Corbusier 1990, 47.

(15) Le Corbusier 1990, 46-47.

Paris. (8) Benjamin, who profoundly admired Giedion's *Bauen in Frankreich* and had quoted several of his passages in his *Passagen-Werk*, was familiar with both Le Corbusier's work and the overall advancements of modern architecture. (9) In his interdisciplinary discourse on behalf of technical progress, Benjamin opposed the retrograde and old-fashioned aesthetics of "art for art's sake" and offered *montage* as a new aesthetic model of subjectivity endowed with an emancipator role. As Benjamin defined it, *montage* was a technique of radical juxtaposition of fragments of reality that could afford new readings inaccessible for the everyday perception. Due to its necessity to "fix the total representation of a phenomenon in its full multi-dimensionality", modern architecture was comparable to film. (10)

Une maison sans escaliers

In 1933, Le Corbusier presented the first large institutional building he had ever realized in the monographic issue that the French journal *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* devoted to his work and described it as "une maison sans escaliers", a house without stairs. (11) The memo that accompanied the publication of the project clearly reinforced this point: "The staircases are substituted by two 'gentle slopes' (...) that will be covered in rubber to avoid possible slips. Besides, the cooperative building will have eight passenger-elevators and two serving-lifts." (12)

Le Corbusier considered that the great number of people that worked in the cooperative offices obliged to classify "the crowds entering and leaving all at the same time." For him it was necessary to build "a sort of forum (...) for people whose galoshes and furs were full of snow in winter" (13) and to distinguish between two worlds: the one on the top – the offices – and the one below – the halls. (fig.1) Thus, he made this distinction very clear because "such a building [had] two aspects." The first, which he described as "an arrival in disorder on a vast horizontal plane on ground level", was compared to a lake. The second, which he described as "that of stable, motionless work, sheltered from noise and coming and going", were the offices. (14) The plans reveal how "a set of pilotis covers the site entirely. The pilotis carry the office building which starts only at the second floor. Under it one circulates freely, outdoors or in rooms opening into a big space, fed by the two entrances and creating the 'forum' suggested above. The elevators leave from this forum (...) and immense helicoidal ramps, instead of staircases, allow a more rapid flow." (15) Le Corbusier thought that the volumes and surfaces had to be clearly legible in order to speed up the interior movement. Not by chance,

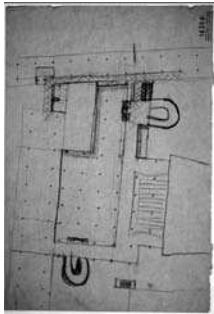


Fig. 2.
Le Corbusier, Centrosoyus,
Sketch of the plan, 1928 (©
FLC 16309).

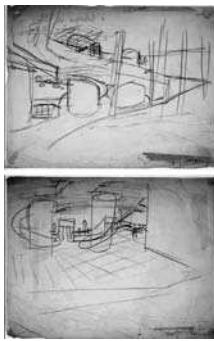


Fig. 3.
Le Corbusier, Centrosoyus,
Interior, 1928 (© FLC
16333A); Le Corbusier,
Centrosoyus, Interior, 1928
(© FLC 16333C).

Le Corbusier thought “circulation” was the most important feature of the building, a corollary of the *plan libre* he had defined in 1927.(16) And for this reason, he endowed the spiral ramps with a great volumetric presence. Le Corbusier, in fact, created this project relying on the two systems of independent organization that constituted the principle of the *plan libre*: “Dom-ino” – the columns and the structural elements – and the “Cloison” – everything that surrounds the structural grid, the non-supporting parts. (17)

As one of the first schemes of the plan distribution evidences, the way in which the vertical circulations were distributed was completely independent from the structural grid. (fig. 2) This plan shows how Le Corbusier operated with the principle of “enjambment”, an operative strategy borrowed from poetry, which refers to the rupture of syntax and metrics congruence that happens when the end of a sentence and a line do not coincide physically. (18) In the same sense, for Le Corbusier, the ramps had to be displayed independent to the structural grid, up to the point of invading a space on the following one, which favored a plurality of views, itineraries, and points of view.

Keeping attached to the principle of the *plan libre*, Le Corbusier found it extremely difficult to introduce the ramps or the twisted plans of the floors in the *pilotis* forest, as the interior perspectives drawn during the evolution of the project evidence. (fig. 3)

As a consequence, the conflicting tension between the pillars, the ramps, and the enclosures impeded the visitors of the Palais du Centrosoyus to navigate through the space in a linear way and led them instead to create a *montage* of the fragmented spatial experience in their minds.

(16) Le Corbusier 1990, 47.
This principle explains how the vertical partitions of the buildings are completely independent to the structural elements and can be freely distributed in order to respond to the programmatic needs. Thus, the employment of the *plan libre* is always dictated by the circulation and movement of the different plans. According to this definition, the *pilotis* never structure the space; they only support the weight of the building, always producing a dialectical tension with the non-supporting enclosures.
(17) Blau 2005.
(18) Le Corbusier 1926, 46-52.
(19) Terragni 2003, 262-271.

Una casa di vetro

In 1936, immediately upon its construction, Terragni published the Casa del Fascio in Como in *Quadrante*, the most popular Italian architectural journal at the time. Terragni printed the interior view of the Assembly Hall seen from the Executive Board Room and pointed to the “notable effect of mirroring in the glass.” (19) (fig.4) It was a symmetrical photograph that not only avoided showing the side limits of space, but also duplicated its vertical height by means of a material reflection achieved in a transparent horizontal surface. Terragni also introduced planes of transparent glass in the desks of the Federal Secretary’s Office, so that he could both capture the urban space and duplicate its spatial relation with the interior. Following the Mussolinian concept of fascism, Terragni constructed “una casa di vetro in cui tutti possono guardare” (a house of glass

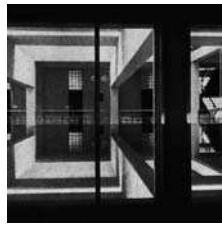


Fig. 4.
Giuseppe Terragni, Notable effect of mirroring in the glass: the Assembly Hall seen from the second floor, 1936.



Fig. 5.
Giuseppe Terragni, Casa del Fascio. Upper part of the membrane, Como, 1936; the Assembly Hall seen from the other side of the second floor, Como, 1936.



Fig. 6
Giuseppe Terragni, Casa del Fascio. View of the upper terrace with the Duomo Catedral in the background, Como, 1936; Entrance formed of eighteen doors that open and close simultaneously, Como, 1936.

into which everyone may look), and endowed the building with an “organic unity, clarity, and honesty” that created “no obstruction, no barrier, no obstacle between political leaders and the people.” (20) Terragni covered the Assembly Hall of the core of the building by means of a membrane composed by two layers which structurally overlapped in two perpendicular directions. The lower layer, composed by a series of large-side beams, supported the structure of the upper ceiling. The upper layer, composed by a series of glass-brick walls laid in the opposite direction, was the main source of light for the Assembly Hall below. (fig. 5) This horizontally layered membrane was in fact a “plane” of symmetry that separated the building into two equivalent halves.

Terragni also dematerialized the ceiling of the entrance hall by means of a plane of polished black marble and visually paralleled it with the space of the terrace in the upper floor. (fig. 6) In order to ensure an uninterrupted continuity of space, Terragni extended the pavement of the exterior portico in the interior of the building, and composed the vertical glass surface by means of an array of eighteen glazed doors that could be simultaneously opened. In the ceiling however, Terragni introduced a different kind of polished black marble. In doing so, Terragni constructed a mirror-like horizontal surface in which the architectural objects – the columns, the walls, the stairs and the glazed doors – were reflected, while the subjects entering the building captured.

By means of a series of material and spatial horizontal symmetries, Terragni impeded a single and continuous view of the building from the ground up, and emphasized the horizontal relationship of the interior world and the urban realm. The impossibility to experience the two sides of the symmetrical worlds at the same time obliged the visitors of the Casa del Fascio to acquire a critical distance and to create a *montage* of the fragmented spatial experience in their minds.

Montage

As these two institutional buildings constructed in different political contexts evidence, *montage* was a strategy of design that operated in the interior worlds of architecture since the end of the 1920s. Both Le Corbusier and Terragni relied on *montage* in order to produce new readings of space that were not accessible to conventional perception. However, while Terragni made the supporting structure and the spatial structure of his buildings coincident, Le Corbusier always distinguished between the “Dom-Ino” and the “Cloison.” That is why *montage* operated quite differently in both the Palais du Centrosoyus in Moscow and the Casa del Fascio in Como.

By means of play of opposites, *montage* invited the modern subjects to solve the conflict between gravity and circulation – structure and enclosure – in the “*maison sans escaliers*.” By means of geometrical symmetries, *montage* attempted to conciliate the material and the reflected worlds in the “*casa di vetro*.”

Both Le Corbusier and Terragni avoided their buildings from being understood from a single point of view and relied on *montage* in order to render the various fragments of the spatial experience into a single narrative. As Giedion, Eisenstein, and Benjamin had already stated, it was only by means of *montage* that modern architecture could acquire its full meaning.

(20) Terragni 2003, 265.

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Ephemeral

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In the classic British film, *Great Expectations* (David Lean, 1946) Miss Havisham sits in her shabby wedding dress, surrounded by her wedding feast, desperate to preserve the day when she was jilted. But much as the spinster tries to preserve the interior, the mice nibble at the decomposing cake and the grey cobwebs coat the furniture and furnishings.

All interiors are ephemeral. They are difficult to preserve and study as they constantly change, they are a moving target. The interior has received little attention when compared to the historiography of other design disciplines, as the subject has been consistently marginalised by architectural, art and design histories. The trouble is, interiors lack permanence. This is not the high culture of the art museum, nor the fixidity of the built environment, nor is it the abstract artfulness of a Starck lemon squeezer. Indeed, the majority of interiors are not even designed by a professional, as they exist in private homes, assembled over years by the occupants. But it is the ephemerality of the spaces inside which makes the subject tantalising, interesting, and worthy of study from a whole range of perspectives. And the tide is now starting to turn, with a range of critical texts and scholarly histories of the subject being published, including the new journal – *Interiors: Design, Architecture, Culture*. (1)

This paper aims to present a critique of the modernist historiography of interior design, mainly constructed as a legacy of architectural accounts. Taking key examples by Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, I will unpack the fetishisation of permanence in modern architecture, by looking at key examples and their representations. Modern architects and critics tried to freeze time in the black and white images of sparse, interior spaces in the 1920s and 1930s, locked in space and time, like an insect frozen in amber. This is platonic perfectionism designed to last forever. For example, the images included in the Museum of Modern Art show, *The International Style* of 1932 are static and flat, caught in a

(1) Published by Berg, Launch Double Issue 1&2, July 2010.

moment before weeds grew outside and future occupants reordered the furniture and the decor. As the Purist artist and Le Corbusier's collaborator, Amédée Ozenfant argued:

But what strikes me... is not how ephemeral all this is, but particularly how prodigiously stable mankind is, and the common qualities that characterise everything that everywhere and at all times has profoundly affected them. These vast "constants" I call it "Purism." (2)

But it can't be denied that any room is in a constant state of flux. Interior spaces are inhabited by a range of people, and their fixtures and fittings are renewed at an increasingly rapid pace. And if the interior reflects identity, then to repress the evolving nature of personal development, generational changes and fashionability in the home is to be dangerously repressive. The personal expression of changing tastes and life narratives are mirrored in the domestic landscape. This has been explored by the anthropologist Daniel Miller, and his book *The Comfort of Things* contains thirty case studies of domestic interiors in one London street. Miller examines the links between the occupants, their life stories and the representation of their perceived place in the world through their ordering of their domestic environment over time.

In *The Final Reminder: How I Emptied My Parents' House*, psychoanalyst Lydia Flem describes clearing her parental home following their death. Her potent account of their life stories as she disposes of their personal belongings attests to the power of the domestic environment in reflecting identity, and the impact of passing time. It was also a cathartic experience for her:

Clearing my parents' house of its furniture, like a sinister bailiff. Taking away what was in their drawers, their cupboards, like a thief. Scattering the linen, crockery, clothes, papers, traces of their life, like a looter. In emptying their house, isn't it rather my parents that I am clearing away, the way one removes entrails from a fish or a chicken? (3)

Short lived, with a fleeting existence, the unique domestic interior is created by the occupants to reflect their life histories and identities. But professional architects, artists, designers and theorists have also worked with the ephemeral.

The work of the Independent Group, for example, bears witness to the importance of the ephemeral. This tightly knit collection of

(2) Ozenfant 1952, xiii.
(3) Flem 2007, 15.

architects, artists, photographers, designers, critics and writers met in London during the 1950s. In a team effort, the members developed a creative, and often, antagonistic, new approach to visual culture using the concept of the ephemeral.

The space-time continuum was acknowledged in the interior design work of Alison and Peter Smithson; the artwork of Richard Hamilton and writing of Reyner Banham, John McHale and Lawrence Alloway. The Group re-evaluated modernism as a style emerging at a particular moment, rather than a universal, everlasting aesthetic. The Group succeeded in exploring and exploding disciplinary boundaries. Hierarchies of knowledge were challenged, with the proposal of a continuum, or flat structure. The ephemeral was celebrated and modernism challenged. The significance of the consumer in the design process was incorporated and new technology acknowledged. The everyday life of the street was documented and thresholds between outside and inside problematised. As Reyner Banham argued in his seminal article, *Vehicles of Desire*, published in 1955, Platonic values are outdated and lack currency:

We eagerly consume noisy ephemeridae, here with
a bang today, gone without a whimper tomorrow
– movies, beach-wear, pulp magazines, this morning's
headlines and tomorrow's TV programmes – yet we
insist on aesthetic and moral standards hitched to
permanency, durability and perennity. (4)

In the Smithsons' *House of the Future* (1956) the architects designed a house which could be thrown away or traded in when the family expanded or shrank. The Group was also involved in curating and designing a multitude of innovative exhibitions – the ultimate ephemeral interior. From *Parallel of Life and Art* (1953), *Man, Machine&Motion* (1955) to *This is Tomorrow* (1956), the Group organised total environments which completely immersed the visitor but only lasted for three months. The artist and member of the Group, Eduardo Paolozzi's London studio is preserved and on display at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. However, the emptiness of the space attests to its lifelessness. Interiors preserved in the museum of gallery space always lack the dynamism of the lived space, demonstrating once again to the ephemeral nature of the interior.

But what about the concept of the ephemeral for the designer in the digital age? The work of architects such as New York based architect, Joel Sanders and interdisciplinary designer, Jason Immaraju,

(4) Banham 1955, 3.

demonstrates the endless possibilities. The digital has validated the ephemeral, the permanence of modernism has been superceded. Joel Sanders easy Hotel project of 2001 consisted of a shell hotel room in trademark bright orange that could be installed in a new build framework or in a new use, older building. Jason Immaraju's Shinkenchiku Residential Competition project consists of a space created by light:

The proposed residence aims to create an ephemeral interior space constructed of nothing but light. The spatial elements such as walls and columns will be constructed (or implied) by various light sources. All the lights will be controlled and programmed by the resident via remote computers. (5)

The “slash and burn” approach to refitting commercial premises, particularly shops, bars and restaurants which reached a peak during the 1990s, has now receded with the recent economic down turn. In Australia, it is estimated that retail buildings will now be built to last ten years, with their interiors refitted every two to three years. (6) But it is not only the recession which has curtailed the refitting frenzy, but also a new consideration for sustainability. As designer Rhymer Rigby argued in the *Design Council Magazine* recently: “Since the early 1990s, our *neophilia* has reached dizzy heights, largely driven – in the case of interiors at least – by magazines and companies whose interests lie in a regular (and, historically, shockingly short) upgrade cycle.” (7)

So, the ephemeral remains a central issue for the scholar and/or designer of the interior. Whilst it is difficult to imagine a return to the modernist stoicism of the twentieth century, the fantasy of everlasting good design seems as unachievable then as now. The main reason for this is that it leaves out the central role of the user in the creation of interior spaces, particularly the domestic. But as historians and theorists, the ephemeral needs to be taken far more into account when considering the interior.

Paul Greenhalgh has been one historian of design to take this into account in his history of the architecture of the worlds' fairs in his book, *Ephemeral Vistas* (1988). But this is a rare example, and a history of temporary exhibitions and their architecture and meaning necessarily will look at the ephemeral. As the field of the history and theory of the interior is established and developed, the realisation that nothing lasts for ever needs to inform our work. And this is what makes the study of the interior so different, so appealing.

(5) Immaraju 2010.

(6) Stockdill 2010.

(7) Rigby 2009.

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Camps

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What is a Camp?

Words such as dwelling, inhabitation and occupation convey a set of meanings that are significant for Interiors. They carry suggestions of settlement, stability, and durability. A different significance is ascribed to these words when they are used in conjunction with the word camp, and consequently they call forth a different appreciation of interior. The word camp lends a casual and contingent quality to suggest informal dwelling, conditional inhabitation and an occupation wedded to time more than to place.

Camp spaces always contain something of the extraordinary or the exceptional. They are commonly fashioned for recreation and pleasure, or occur as a consequence of natural disaster, conflict or displacement. They speak of both the momentary event and the marginal space. Camps therefore accommodate an increasingly diverse set of occupants – tourists, pilgrims, cadets, refugees, migrants, soldiers, activists, humanitarian workers and detainees. People can (and do), set up camp in any space. Camps may occur as temporary shelters in sports grounds, airport lounges, and universities; they may be deliberately implanted into disused buildings; or occur as forms of illegal occupation in houses.

The refugee camp

Camps have acquired a central place in the struggles and unresolved encounters between people and have become an increasingly prevalent condition of urbanity. This paper will focus on one particular form of camp, which is at the centre of questions of identity, residency, safety and mobility. Refugee camps consist of improvised interiors, located outside the norms of dwelling where the usual tools and values of inhabitation are called into question. They are almost always perceived to be transitory spaces located on the edges of urban centres. They are usually formed in situations of

unease, threat or emergency, and they can take on a permanence that confounds their temporary nature. Frequently identified with neglected, abandoned or not considered vestiges of territory, the configuration of refugee camps eludes the recognised structures of formal cities they are attached to – structures such as intentional design, specified use and recognisable typology.

The state of exception

The camp is a piece of land placed outside the normal juridical order, but it is nevertheless not simply an external space. (1)

The “state of exception”, identified by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, as the abrogation of the principle of law, provides a frame through which to examine the refugee camp. The state of exception is based on the suspension, overthrow or abolition of the pre-existing juridical order. Agamben begins his book *Homo Sacer* with the distinction that the Greeks made between zoe, or life in its natural state and bios, the qualified, cultural form of life. Zoe stands for the factual, animal functioning of the living organism (translated as the private sphere) and bios represents politicized life in the polis or community (the public sphere), which gives life meaning. (2) For Agamben, it is the camp and not the city that is currently the bio-political paradigm of the West. (3) In his hypothesis, he contends that the camp is the place where the state of exception has become the rule. Life in a state of exception means that the distinction between our biological body and our political body, (private survival and public participation), disappears. It is a zone within which inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, city and house, are indistinguishable. Within this space, the individual is deprived of his or her prior condition as citizen. The most extreme manifestation of this is the death camp, the place where life does not even have political value and where law is transformed into an endless series of arbitrary regulations. In such extremes life is whittled down to mere biological existence, to what Agamben calls bare life.

Agamben writes that people in the death camps in world war two existed in absolute privacy and, at the same time, they had absolutely no private domain. This blurred distinction between biological body and political body, exists in other spheres or sites of exception such as refugee camps, enclosed asylum centres, military bases and occupied zones. Places such as Camp Delta in Guantanamo bay, and the hidden camps established by the Bush Administration for the rendition of prisoners have become emblems of the state of

(1) Agamben 1998, 169.

(2) Ibid., 1.

(3) Bio-politics is the intervention of authorities into citizens' bodily, biological lives. Described as the basis of modern politics it designates the regulation of the security and welfare of human lives as its primary role.

exception. Agamben argues that the current political condition is thus manifested as a confusion of the private and the political and thus the disappearance of the private domain. Private events are now turned into spectacle. A “phenomenon such as Big Brother is paradigmatic, where television merges private and public into what is almost literally a camp situation.” (4)

The refugee camp belongs to those spaces, which cannot be easily accommodated within a rigid polarity of inside/outside, a space that is often only acknowledged apologetically. It is an “outside” caught within the “inside” of the city or of planned collective existence. Every city has such an outside – a displaced group in a neighbourhood cut off from the major flows of the city. The refugee, the Illegal immigrant and the asylum’ seeker are those who can no longer claim citizenship. They “abide in a zone reduced to bare life with no rights”, where “the distinction between zoe and bios, between mere life and a humane existence, has been eliminated.” (5)

The refugee camp contains the paradox of mobility and insecurity. Refugees are uprooted, stateless, deprived of state, place, function and papers. For the refugee, the road back to the lost home is all but cut. For people dispersed in camps, regions, quarters and zones the stability of geography and the continuity of land disappear. Inhabitants of a refugee camp are usually subject to special laws and special status. Borders and barriers deny residence. Travel from one place to another is barred and lives are interfered with arbitrarily. Thus life is scattered, discontinuous, marked by the artificial and imposed arrangements of interrupted or confined space and by the dislocations and unsynchronized rhythms of disturbed time.

Refugee camps belong to non-spaces of a shifting transitory and volatile materiality. They usually lack basic amenities and services, including water, electricity, streets, sidewalks, gardens, patios, trees, plazas, or shops. There is an increased exposure of private life, while public space is simultaneously eroded. The camp inhabitants experience an extraordinary proximity to their interior world and its contents, which in turn may deprive them of a larger or comprehensive understanding of their surroundings and environment. Refugee camps have both a permanent and provisional aspect. They are often simultaneously constructed and occupied with little assistance or regulation from outside agencies. The inhabitant is endlessly making do in makeshift homes. Construction is usually a long-term project of gradual improvement as the camp progresses from temporary refuge to temporary-permanent, taking on solidity over time. Because nothing is secure, the refugee camp is a territory where defence takes hold, commonly demonstrated through an obsessive personal control of space, an exaggerated sense of solidarity and a passionate hostility to outsiders.

(4) De Cauter 2004, 159.

(5) Ibid., 157.

There is a complex relationship between the non-hierarchical, decentralized, nomadic space of the camp and the environment within which it is situated. The space of the refugee camp is frequently interpreted through the sedentary space of the settler or resident, enclosed by walls, anchored to place and tagged by territorial control. Just as the camp, located on the edge of the city affects its surroundings, conversely, the city provides a field of references to transform the utilitarian logic that guides the design of the refugee camp. Maintaining a home-space requires the preservation of patterns that have become familiar. Habits of life, expression or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Edward Said has eloquently described the way that Palestinians in refugee camps maintain their sense of place against the hostile enclosure on the outside. He points to acts of repetition and an attention to detail in the closely managed acts of “speaking through the given.”

We keep recreating the interior, tables are set, living rooms furnished, photographs and objects arranged... but it inadvertently highlights or preserves the rift or break fundamental to our lives. Something is always slightly off, something always doesn't work. Pictures in Palestinian houses are always hung too high, and in what seems to be random places. Something is always missing by virtue of the excess. I do not mean that the result is tragic or sad; to the contrary, the rift is usually expressed as a comic dislocation, the effect of too much for too little a space or for too uninteresting an occasion. The oddness of these excesses and asymmetries, their constitutively anti-aesthetic effect, their communicated insecurity seems to symbolise exile – exile from a place, from a past from the actuality of a home. (6)

There is always an element of temporality within any concept of interior and the camp challenges space/time coordinates through which normative subjects orient themselves. By **their nature**, temporal phenomena cause disturbances and irregularities in regular and ordered systems. The mobility of the camp threatens basic assumptions about building and dwelling, allowing spaces charged with potential to emerge. Camps foster practices that can disrupt processes of territorialisation and create new concepts of deterritorialisation proposing alternative strategies and alternative positions for the inhabitation of space.

Camps unshackle interior space from architectural containment and challenge conventional notions of interiors as being determined by enclosure or defined by property and ownership. They are spaces without borders, without centre, and without periphery. The camp is a free-floating space not formed directly by enclosure but from

(6) Said 2000, 271.

controls that are subject to continuous change. Inhabitation is not bound to a particular place but marked by displacement. Camps are outside of static relations, predetermined rules and hierarchical and centralized organizational structures. As low, temporary/permanent constructions, they spread horizontally rather than verticality.

They do not possess totalised systems or schemas but can arrange and rearrange their co-ordinates in a number of ways, allowing unconventional spatial orientations.

The transitory home, rapidly formed and rapidly worked in ever changing localities is increasingly prevalent in the contemporary world. Struggles over the utilisation of public places, disputes over real estate, the forming of borders and fortifications, all encourage the appearance of informal dwellings or camps within developed cities. With rising costs of social and physical infrastructures, rising levels of immigration, unemployment, aging populations, increasing numbers of empty and abandoned buildings, the temporary condition of dwelling and the way spaces are commandeered or claimed can provide a vantage point to reflect on the nature of contemporary inhabitation.

The significance of camps lies in the opportunities they offer to rethink notions of the interior through situations that are mobile and constantly changing.

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Boundaries

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In this paper I discuss methods by which we might develop lace networks (1) as a means of configuring and negotiating the boundaries of interior spaces within the built environment. I allude to the Japanese notions of *Ma* and *Hashi*, I substantiate the argument through reference to relevant texts and exemplify it through visual reference to contemporary artists, designers and architects.

Fig. 1.
Elena Manferdini,
Merletti, SCI-Arc Gallery,
Los Angeles, 2008
(ph. Joshua White).

Space: we live in it. From cosmic space reaching and spreading beyond our comprehension, to the Nano space present in the intimacy between two surfaces pressed together. It's out there, it's in here and it is always with us. It surrounds us and we move through it. We portion it off with structures to protect us from the unimaginable space 'out there' forming manageable interiors, controlled spaces. We build walls delineating the barrier between one space and another, measuring the interval between your space and my space. We feel inviolable inside our space, behind our solid walls, and yet the wall is an arbitrary thing, a nominated threshold. What would happen if the walls began to leak and somehow the space flowed out and in, the borderline redefined by inter-relationships? Bernard Tschumi has said that "in the age of modernity architectural spaces can have an autonomy and logic of their own." (2) Therefore, as Elena Manferdini demonstrates (fig. 1), why should we not take those ruptures, cracks, holes and fragmentations that "are inherent in the manipulation of form" (3) as a starting point to discover means by which we may, as Japanese architect Toyo Ito has urged: "forge relations between otherwise walled-off spaces."(4) In this way, once we begin to question the materiality of the enclosure we may also question its form and purpose.

(1) For the purposes of this paper, I am indebted to my PhD student, Gail Baxter, for her definition of the term "lace" as referring to "constructed patterns of absence and presence in a random or pre-ordained sequence, formed by materials appropriate for the particular outcomes."

(2) Tschumi 1990, 99.

(3) Ibid., 100.

(4) Ito 1997, 22.

(5) Scott 2008, 3.

For the architect, ideally, a building once completed should fulfil its original purpose or be demolished but, as Fred Scott has countered, "The actual conduct of life, of course, is always more elusive than the architects' will." (5) In reality, we are constantly reinventing the interior spaces in which we act out our lives, never satisfied, always

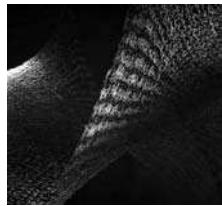


Fig. 2.
Machiko Agano, *Untitled*,
Kyoto, 2000 (ph. Toshiharu
Kawabe).

looking for a different, ultimate, solution – the one that will enable us to most perfectly experience harmony and balance, and will most closely express how we perceive ourselves to be.

If, as architect Juhani Pallasmaa has written, architecture redefines the contour of our consciousness (6) then with the Curtain Wall House, Japanese architect Shigeru Ban has shared the defining of that contour with the occupier of the space. The vast curtain is hung on the outside of the building and wraps around two sides of the house. When the curtain is drawn shut, the interior space feels established but not rigid as it is held within a soft, breathing, fabric casing.

When the curtain is drawn back, the house is totally open; the space flows in and out. In creating a participatory space rather than a static concept, Ban has removed the visible and unvarying boundaries, providing the experience of limitless space; whoever occupies that space has to negotiate their relationship with its fluid margins. The opacity, the transparency, the light, the shadow are all factors drawing us in, until the contour is no longer that of the space but of what we have become. Gaston Bachelard, in his influential book *The Poetics of Space* describes this state as one of allowing the room to “flow” into us so that: “We no longer see it. It no longer limits us, because we are in the very ultimate depth of its repose” (7): I am the space where I am.

As a starting point for our exploration of fluid space we need look no further than the spider’s web. Its delicate construction of lines and spaces allow us visual access to the space beyond, behind, above and below while at the same time forming a very effective barrier for those it is intended to stop. It is also an active space, a lace network arcing through the air between one point and another. The traditional lace makers in Burano describe their lace as *punto in aria* (stitching in the air) (8) and in doing so move the activity from pattern making to the configuring of space.

This incongruity – between expected form and use, and proposed form and use – creates an unease, a discontinuity, a fracture, which makes pause for invention. It is here, in this visual and temporal interruption, that the inherent qualities of lace net-works may describe the contours of space. Lace net-works are simultaneously both entrances and exits, each complete in itself and an unending series of connections, surrounding, but not enclosing space, forming boundaries and affording access. The Japanese artist Machiko Agano (fig. 2) has been hand knitting parabolas of space for many years as a reflection of the fragile strength of natural forms. As we look through her lace-like walls of paper, steel and fishing line we are drawn in and forward to the next space.

However, lace net-works are more than constructions, they also carry narratives, which are associated more with the body, and could

(6) Pallasmaa 2009, 20.

(7) Bachelard 1969, 226.

(8) Scuama in Ingold 2008, 52.

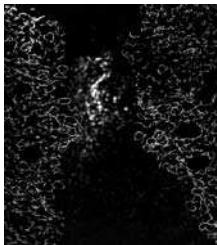


Fig. 3.
Yoshiko Tanabe, *Endless Net-way*, Kyoto, 2000
(ph. Toshiharu Kawabe).

be developed within the context of the configuring of space. I am referring to two particular elements in the use of lace in clothing. Lace in an outer garment allows for something glimpsed but not wholly revealed – an intimate space between two surfaces, that of the cloth and the body; the use of lace in under garments, lingerie, denotes a boundary, the edge of the garment and the beginning of the (untouchable) space beyond.

In examining the relationship between the body, the viewer and lace and its potential for the configuring of space, it may be useful to refer to the Japanese notions of Hashi and Ma. Tschumi has said that “there is no space without event” (9) which could be a description of Ma, a concept that contains both space and time not in a serial manner but as one and the same. Originally Ma was conceptualised as room between heaven and earth, and as such is a space of transition as we move from the physical to the spiritual.

Ma offers a way of seeing and experiencing, at the same moment, the space and time contained within the interval between two elements that exist next to each other. The architect Arata Isozaki has written that “Space appears only in the *time* that humans perceive, therefore it is always (both) specific, concrete, (and) flickering (...) never fixed.” (10)

As Ma expresses the space between two elements, Hashi describes the edge of the element itself. Hashi is the end or limit of one thing, which is, at the same time, the beginning of something beyond that edge/border, boundary.

The relationship between Hashi and Ma as both spatial and experiential is exemplified in the construction and use of traditional aristocratic houses of the Heian period (794-1192).

In these houses there was no direct light, all light entered from the side, through the walls of the house, and was mediated by movable screens, ensuring that the interior, in particular centre space, or core, of the house remained dark and in shadow. The Hisashi, the interior space closest to the exterior, was the lightest area, forming the Hashi, the edge, between inside and outside. Those who moved into this space were more clearly defined, therefore it was considered shameful and lacking in graceful manner for a noble woman to enter this area. The woman would remain in the dark centre space of the house and, in order to find her, the man would have to enter the darkness. The light and the man entered the house from the same place, and, by crossing the Hashi, the edge, would penetrate the dark, core (female) space together – a concept combined in the *Tale of Genji* where the hero is called Hikaru, which means light. (11)

The work of Japanese textile artist Yoshiko Tanabe (fig. 3) demonstrates how the notions of lace net-works forming edges and describing spaces, brings together Ma, Hashi, the body and

(9) Tschumi 1990, 88.

(10) Isozaki 2008, 89.

(11) Yasuhara 2001, 370.

the built environment. Used as contours of space, lace net-works, through their association with the body, can act as the threshold for that magical, symbolic interior associated with darkness. They can also, through structure and pattern, configure the abstract, multidimensional spaces associated with emptiness (12) and light. Lace net-works are, in reality, a lot of holes surrounded by thread (13) that, used as I am suggesting, would create fluidity of space, contours that recall architecture but which are porous. In the holes between the threads, the contour is present and absent simultaneously, leading our gaze through one interior to another. And as the poet Pablo Neruda pointed out:

In this net it's not just the strings that count
but also the air that escapes through the meshes. (14)

This is not passive space it is active, performative. Not only is the air/space escaping/leaking through the mesh walls, but also the pattern elements of the lace net-work repeat and reconfigure endlessly, offering the possibility that the structure is continuously evolving. This brings us back to the spider's web which is never static, changing in response to environmental and creature needs. In the extraordinary installations of Chiharu Shiota the notion of performativity also connects the lace net-works back to another aspect of Ma: the requirement that we engage with the space through our imagination, forming a complementary relationship. In this way the space is in a relational state of incompleteness, constantly becoming. Scott discusses the notion of "incompleteness" as being a means by which buildings may achieve extended life, with each new state or figuration towards completeness containing elements of "incomplete perfection or perfect incompleteness" (15) and thus ensuring that the process will continue. Equally, through its permeability the lace net-work offers us an expression of contour not quite defined, never solidified, never definitely fixed always in a state of change.

In summary: what may appear as a flight of fancy – that walls might "leak" space – could, through our understanding of the language of lace net-works, transform our relationship with the edges of our carefully constructed, safe interior spaces within the built environment. Lace net-works mutate into metaphorical and actual signifiers of the Performativity of space; boundaries become transparent, thresholds are re-negotiated. As one space permeates another, the interval between your perimeter and my threshold is no longer resolute but capricious, determined by shadow and light, formed by a fluidity of both space and time.

(12) Isozaki 2008, 90.

(13) Earnshaw 2008, 10.

(14) Neruda 2004, 42.

(15) Scott 2008, 213.

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Contextile

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Gottfried Semper's pivotal and lasting *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten; oder, Praktische Ästhetik* asks that we consider four main categories of "raw materials" classified according to the artistic production of their technical purpose, and considered in their broadest sense. The technical divisions of: 1. textiles, 2. ceramics, 3. tectonics (carpentry), and 4. stereotomy (masonry, etc.) each "lead to a number of mutual relationships (...) [and has] its own domain of forms whose production is, so to speak, the technique's most natural and most ancient task." (1) This dissection, when considering an interior architecture, begs further distinctions of cultural specificity, as it is assumed by the material techniques of each category. This stems from what Semper refers to as a kind of purposefulness, or natural purpose, which allows the layered surfaces and objects of an interior to assume specific voices – those that become familiar to the context of society.

Fig. 1.
GPAIA's Wildeboer Delleclce
LLP Offices, Toronto, 2008
(ph. Tom Arbam).
Top: corridor view.
Bottom: stair detail.

Throughout the 20th century and after, these voices become persistently but selectively amplified in the interior project in order to not only make instrumental, but also to define the ultimate occupation of space. The bottle-bottom glass of Pierre Chareau, the elemental layer of venetian plaster of Carlo Scarpa, the waxed concrete "peel" of Tadao Ando, or the artifact glass wall of Diller+Scofidio with Renfrew, to name a few, take full advantage of the defining cultural tradition of each surface. The question is, can our contemporary condition, where consistent forms of occupation is a fugitive notion, use the manipulation of these devices to liberate a space from the traditional "hold" within which it finds itself?

This paper constructs an argument for the necessary violations of traditional or familiar limits imposed by material techniques, programmatic definitions, and social organizations in order to make explicit a new contemporary model – one that provokes a multiplicity of narrative appropriate to our global condition. In this way, the ground rules must change. The diversity of contemporary

(1) Semper 2004, 109.



Fig. 2.
GPAIA's Centre for Ethics,
University of Toronto, 2007
(ph. Tom Arbam).
Top: seminar room.
Bottom: hall detail.

society can no longer afford to define *uses* in architecture as singularities. Scenarios of live, work, play, study, heal are no longer sustainable as distinct, and must be liberated from their defining “boundaries” in favor of transgressions towards a greater complexity of inhabitation.

A series of recent interior projects of Giannone Petricone Associates (GPAIA) in the multicultural context of Toronto, Canada that privilege yet experiment with Semper’s original lessons will be unraveled and re-presented to trace the operations and tools of such transgressions. Critical manipulations in adjacency, technology, materiality, site and cultural specificity render each environment durable yet easily susceptible to self-customization. Often convertible without kinetic parts, these spaces adaptively re-use and re-inhabit existing building stock. With minimal exterior expression, these interior interventions remediate existing conditions and invite the host building and its systems to participate in new sustainable constructs. Economies of these spaces are tested for necessary multiplicity and diversity of use, virtues in beauty, new terms of comfort, accessibility, and ultimate joy in the transformation of the global city.

As one of Toronto’s well established mergers and acquisitions law practices, Wildeboer Dellelce LLP Offices expanded and relocated to three floors of a Bay Street office building in Toronto’s Central Business District. Coming from what Beatriz Colomina refers to as the distinctly “male” space of the office and the club, (2) complete with requisite oak paneling, leather sofas, brass railings, wool carpets, and marble tables and halls, Wildeboer needed to be unburdened by the old way of doing things, and advance their work environment to reflect their international, all hours portfolio. The design (fig. 1) leverages the familiar “Bay Street law office” palette of smoky men’s club materials to undergo a process of de-familiarization – a process of re-interpretation and re-presentation of oak, leather, brass, marble and wool. If the spaces of Loos’ interiors, as in the Müller house, in true Semperian style “cover the occupants as clothes cover the body (each occasion has its appropriate ‘fit’)” (3) the Wildeboer Dellelce Offices’ 25 meter long bowed brass wall defines a new “body.” It guides visitors into the usually private inner sanctum – reflecting, distorting and igniting activities with its alchemical properties against the familiar glass curtain wall of the Toronto skyline.

The host building, of international style, for this law office interior establishes an expected social order of private offices and privileged views. The material technique of Wildeboer’s design unravels this

(2) Colomina 1994, 248.
The space Colomina describes is the library of the Müller house by Adolf Loos distinctly “male” as the office and the club invading the domestic interior with the leather sofas, the desks, the chimney, the mirrors, etc.
(3) Ibid., 265. Colomina describes Loos’ writing as following Semper’s writing almost literally.



Fig. 3.
GPAIA's Herman Miller
Canadian Showroom,
Toronto, 2005 (ph. Richard
Johnson, interior images).
Top: plywood sheath.
Bottom: plywood chandelier.

existing order and sets the stage for a new occupation by a diverse subject. Similarly, the design for the new Centre for Ethics (fig. 2) at the University of Toronto works to break down the isolating and lightless effects of its 1960's concrete brutalist host. Via an intense lining of repeated "ribbons" of building vintage materials of varying degrees of absorption, reflectivity and transparency, the concrete walls and floors erode into a weave representative of inseparable strands of individuals and ideas. Occupying only the building's second floor, this new research centre of mostly single research offices, utilizes an invading row of Butternut wood fins that echo the monolithic pre-cast fins that define the building's exterior to destabilize the cellular office order in the Centre's expanded concrete block corridor. (fig. 2)

The juxtaposition of interior soft wood to exterior hard concrete of the new Centre for Ethics makes lucid an old versus new dialogue that enriches the meaning of each. With the same charge, the design for the new Herman Miller Canadian Showroom (HMCS) (fig. 3) inserts itself in an early 20th century Toronto masonry and timber warehouse building. The final design makes instrumental a routed plywood sheath, a kind of palette-cleanser that re-presents Herman Miller's signature material (plywood). The tube-like element is defined by a series of butt-jointed Fir plywood panels, routed in striped patterns to varying depths exposing multiple grains of ply and sublime adhesive patches to be read in stark contrast to the smooth, pristine bent plywood Eames furniture in the showroom and in two chandeliers made of repurposed Eames chair seats and backs. (fig. 3) These sit in further contrast to the existing wood timbers and deck of the floor structure. All the wood elements each participate in a cultural dialogue while organizing a deliberately overlapping definition of programmed space from meeting room to show room to lunch room every *thing* and every *one* is staged within the omnipresent Herman Miller sensibility. It not only resists the ideal white box showroom but transcends the quietness of the "backdrop" in favor of offering a culturally charged lens through which each object and activity is to be read.

(4) Tadao Ando states: "Our aim was to create places informed by the element of surprise and discovery generated when art makes its sudden appearance in a special sequence with a dialogue between old and new." Cited in Molinari 2009, 139.

(5) Carlo Scarpa perhaps taught the world how "the mechanics of stratification make visible levels that chronologically follow each other". Cited in Schultz 2007, 16.

In this way, although the HMCS takes clear lessons from Tadao Ando's design for the Palazzo Grassi Museum in Venice (4) or Carlo Scarpa's design for the Olivetti Showroom or Fondazione Querini Stampalia also in Venice, (5) it attempts to advance the idea of a stratified architecture by imbuing the "newest layer" with a flexible, re-organizing charge. This strategy becomes explicit in The Juggernaut Offices that occupy the ground floor of the same early 20th century Toronto warehouse building typology, The Juggernaut Offices (fig. 4) advance this layered approach to manipulate and

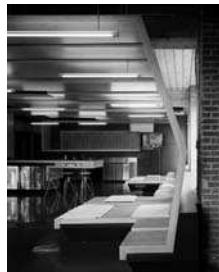


Fig. 4.
GPAIA's Juggernaut Offices,
Toronto, 2007 (ph. Ben
Rahn/A-Frame).
View of plywood, rubber
wrapper at kitchen.



Fig. 5.
GPAIA's Il Fornello
Restaurant, Toronto, 2006
(ph. Tom Arbam).
Top: niche detail.
Bottom: moving storefront.

even invert the usual workplace sequence. A new lining of suspended plywood ribbons (clad on either side with rubber and plastic) control natural light from contaminating light-sensitive monitors and video media, while creating surfaces for lounging, lunching, storage and display. The normally hermetic conditions of a post-production studio are challenged via this instrumental new lining. The office kitchen is pulled out to share the publicness of the main reception space for new opportunities of social exchanges.

Experiments in the programmatic adaptability or even self-customization of the instrumental material “linings” presented in the projects described above are pushed in the Sapele wood proscenium and moving storefront of the Il Fornello Restaurant on Toronto’s well known Church Street. (fig. 5) It speculates on the capacity for “tears” or “cracks” or “snags” in the lining to hold alternative but simultaneous narratives in the way each subject chooses to engage the space. The moment a material layer is moved or replaced with new, removable objects, the rules change, so to speak. In this way the contemporary interior can embrace unexpected possibilities for the clever manipulation of Semper’s original “hanging carpets.” (6) Although we maintain that this essential interior textile is a mask that as Mark Wigley so aptly explains: “dissimulates rather than represents the structure” and that architecture is worn rather than simply occupied. (7) It is its language, its rules of meaning and engagement that define the body it clothes.

As citizens of the global city, this body requires multiplicity in definition. A multiplicity engaged by the culturally charged “shrouds” of Herman Miller Canadian Showroom and The Juggernaut Offices, and the transforming, explicit coatings of Wildeboer Dellelce Offices and The Centre for Ethics, as well as the kinetic, rolling storefront of Il Fornello which tries to transcend Toronto’s -30° C to +30° C climate. These are not merely devices for flexibility of inhabitation, but the provocateurs of a self-customized occupation – a kind of self-tailoring when considered in the still durable Semperian context of *clothing*.

(6) Semper 2004, 74. Semper describes how hanging carpets remained the true walls, the visible boundaries of space.

(7) Wigley 1995, 12.

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Programs

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The notion of program is arguably one of the most complicated aspects of interior design. Yet understanding the different programs that interact with one another in a given interior space is crucial to appreciate the impact of the interior spaces we design, analyse or quite simply inhabit for a longer or shorter period of time.

Within the limited scope of this “dictionary” of key words for interior spaces, my discussion of the notion can itself be little more than a “program”, in the colloquial sense of the word: a scheme, an overview, a menu. Rather than to focus on one specific detail or issue, I opted for a broad overview, which obviously does not claim to be exhaustive. It merely aims to function as an invitation to use and to further elaborate this notion of the program, both in research and design, as a very useful tool to deal with the complexity of interior spaces.

I will discuss different kinds of programs, using examples from different historical and geographical contexts, and briefly consider two theoretical approaches that can provide a useful conceptual frame: the Actor-Network-Theory of Bruno Latour and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

At the most basic level, the design program for an interior space is a three dimensional translation of the client’s brief, the list of diverging requirements the design must meet. The basic program should be the successful synthesis of important aspects like ergonomics, acoustics, lighting, budgetary demands, the overall mood or ambience, the facilitation or discouragement of possible end-users’ programs (regarding their movements and behaviour), and – more recently – the ecological sustainability of the materials used.

Achieving this synthesis is often already quite a challenge, as the different requirements can easily come into conflict with one another.

More often than not, this basic design program is made even more difficult by the interference of other design programs. One of the other programs interior designers frequently have to deal with is the

program of the architect. In most cases, the architectural concept of the building precedes the conceptualisation of the interior design. This is obviously the case in the re-use of ancient buildings: when SATIJNplus Architecten had to design the Kruisherenhotel in Maastricht, they had to turn the religious program of an existing medieval cloister into the leisure program of a luxury hotel and to accommodate the authenticity and the unique location to a trendy design and the comfort requirements guests expect of a rather expensive five star hotel.

Of course, interior designers want to be more than just the docile translators of a client's brief into a practicable design. They often try to develop and implement an aesthetic design program of their own. In her *The House in Good Taste* (1913), Elsie de Wolfe's influential threefold "suitability, proportion, simplicity" (1) succinctly summarizes an aesthetic program which had to overcome the preconceptions of her wealthy clients, used to a Victorian interior design program which combined abundant decorative objects, rugs and curtains, without paying much attention to the overall unity of a room. And in his *In Praise of Shadows* (1933), the Japanese author Jun'ichirō Tanizaki defended the traditional Japanese aesthetics, with its preference for the mysterious seductiveness of shadows and *wabi sabi*, the weathered patina of things, against a Western design paradigm, which favoured plenty of light, and the use of hygienic, shining white porcelain for dishes and sanitary fittings.

Some aesthetic programs can be quite combative and uncompromising, like the functionalist program Le Corbusier presented in *Toward an Architecture* (1923). Out of his abhorrence of the both morally and physically suffocating bourgeois interior of his time he developed a Spartan program with a "taste for free air and bright light" (2) and a very laconic definition of the interior of a room: "an area for moving about freely, a bed for reclining, a chair for relaxing and working, a table for working, storage units for keeping everything in the 'right place'." (3) For Le Corbusier, interior design had to be merely functional and subordinate to the architectural play of volumes and shadows in space.

At this point, we should also take into account that both the brief of the client and the aesthetic program of the designer are imbedded in broader socio-political programs with an implicit or explicit view on gender, class, ethnicity... Elsie de Wolfe took it for granted that a domestic interior was a direct expression of the woman (but not the man) of the house: "We are sure to judge a woman in whose house we find ourselves for the first time, by her surroundings". (4)

(1) de Wolfe 2007, 21.

(2) Le Corbusier 2008, 148.

(3) Le Corbusier 2008, 165.

(4) de Wolfe 2007, 23.

So de Wolfe inevitably “programmed” in her interior designs a certain outlook on femininity and gender relations. Similarly, Tanizaki’s defence of the traditional Japanese interior was strongly rooted in the nationalism of pre-war Japan, and Le Corbusier never concealed that he was inspired by the ideology of industrial capitalism. Private space should be organized according to the same principles of efficiency and economy as factories, and their inhabitants should be productive and useful members of society, engineers that are “healthy and virile, active and useful, moral and joyful.” (5)

As such, interior design not only expresses but also actively establishes a social reality by imposing culturally defined programs of conduct: the users of any interior space are expected and encouraged, not only by a set of cultural conventions, but also by the actual make-up of the rooms, to behave in a certain way and to hold to certain beliefs regarding their gender, their ethnicity, their role in society.

Any interior space is thus a big jumble of different programs, interacting with one another. And to make things even more complicated, programs can easily be replaced by others in the course of time. The decision to put a Le Corbusier chaise longue in an interior can be an expression of the client’s and/or the designer’s optimistic modernist aspirations, but once intensive use has weathered the leather and tarnished the shining metal frame, the same furniture can start to function in a program of *wabi sabi*, causing its user to melancholically meditate upon the transience of past ideals.

These complex interactions and transformations of different programs clearly indicate that in order to analyse an interior design, we need an equally versatile, dynamic approach. At this point, some basic principles of the so-called Actor-Network-Theory can prove to be useful. What makes this theory especially interesting is that it stresses the active, influential role artefacts play in the direction of human behaviour. Actions are the result of hybrid combinations, whereby institutions, ideas, artefacts and humans operate in a dynamic network. Each actor in this network can perform a program, which can interact or conflict with other programs and which itself consists of an interlacing of many different aspects. (6)

The principles of Actor-Network-Theory can also be used to analyse complex interactions between the programs of the designer, the client and the society in which they operate. I want to illustrate this with one simple artefact, the nightgown of Dr. Edith Farnsworth. As an independent single woman, this physician asked Mies van der Rohe in 1946 to design a weekend retreat. Her program was quite simple:

(5) Le Corbusier 2008, 94.
(6) Latour 2005.

a getaway from busy city life, built in a modern style. Mies van der Rohe saw it as a perfect opportunity to design a pure expression of his architectural ideals. As Alice T. Friedman states in her “Domestic Differences: Edith Farnsworth, Mies van der Rohe, and the Gendered Body” (1996), one of the points on which both programs conflicted, was Dr. Farnsworth’s nightgown. This trivial object, an essential part of the domestic program, bathing-sleeping, made Mies van der Rohe change his initial program for the interior. Merely its presence in the house made him add a guest bathroom: “Mies let it be known that the provision of a ‘guest bathroom’ was meant to keep visitors from ‘seeing Edith’s nightgown on the back of the bathroom door’ (...) To display the nightgown was immodest and unfeminine, a disruption of the image of disembodied rationality that the interior arrangement so emphatically suggests.” (7)

On a broader level, this conflict between Dr. Farnsworth’s domestic program and van der Rohe’s aesthetic one was interrelated with other socio-cultural programs. It was made possible in the first place because of the existential program of an independent and rich woman in post-war America, a society which made it possible for her to lead a stylish, untraditional life, based on her own decisions. Subsequently, it became part of the critical program of architectural opponents of the international style, using the Farnsworth House as a typical example of the modernist disdain for everyday life and the misogynistic inhumanity of its “disembodied rationality.” And despite van der Rohe’s avant-garde principles, his response to the nightgown actually activated an age-old cultural program of spatial and hygienic purity, which emerged out of an abject fear of the (especially female) body. It is a program that haunts architectural theory and practice since Alberti’s canonical *On the Art of Building* (1450), as Mark Wigley indicates in his “Untitled: The Housing of Gender.” (8)

As the example of the Farnsworth House makes clear, the spelling out of the different programs of an interior design and their interrelations obliges us to reflect upon what is actually going on in the interior spaces we live in. These programs and their conflicts often reveal unnoticed problems or paradoxes, which can possibly trigger the critical formulation of alternative programs. In order to help us to find and formulate such alternatives, we can give a supplementary interpretation of the program. This time, we understand it as an experimental coupling of different intensities and affects, following the line of thought Deleuze and Guattari developed in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Applied to interior design, we could define the program as an assembly of intensities and forces that creates new constructions and establishes new links between the affects of the

(7) Friedman 1996, 190.

(8) Wigley 1992, 344 ff.

body, the actual and virtual spaces this body inhabits and the objects and artefacts it uses. A program in this sense is always an experiment that can open up new, still unknown ways of dwelling, of relating to our environs and ourselves. Interior design, as well as its critical analysis, can eventually help to trace and stimulate these virtual programs that continuously traverse our interior spaces, waiting to be actualised.

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Performance

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Of course a designer must know the technical performance capacities of materials, such as their durability or strength, but it is not this pragmatic aspect of performance that I want to consider here. Instead, I am taking the uncomplicated, *non-theatrical*, meaning of performance as “the doing of an action”. Part of the event of an interior concerns a relationship between matter and people, and what each does with, or to, the other. Both the *animate* and the *inanimate* are protagonists in this event. The performance that I wish to discuss is “what is happening” as a result of the complex entanglement of *these things in this place with these people at this moment in time*.

Interiors – their components and their relationships – come into full existence as they are received and experienced by the people who live them. Design history shows how the scope of what is considered to be an interior has changed from era to era. Within the idea of an interior as a *lived* thing, it is possible to identify an encouraging difference in the ways that things and people might come together to be “an interior” today. If the value of the subjective entanglement of performance and experience is assessed differently, it can offer ways for designers to be generous (or even to remove themselves from the scene completely). It would value those design acts that are not part of the commodification and consumption that can make some aspects of design seem wasteful or superficial.

By an entanglement of performance and experience, I do not mean something that happens in a particularly theatrical or dramatic situation, nor something that is unforgettable or spectacular. In the context in which I am using the words, there is no particular value to be inferred from them; the experience might equally well be one that is mundane and unnoticed, or the composite of a series of enfolded perceptions and conventions, or a singular and consciously heightened appreciation of qualities and possibilities. Spatial experience involves processes (subliminal, or consciously perceived) which may in turn be culturally or historically inflected.

Parts of the process may be physiological or neurological in origin. The totality of the event is subjective and contingent. Depending on the circumstances, elements may come forward or recede, take on character or fade into insignificance. There will be times when we may be aware of choosing what to see and on what to turn our attention – when finding our way through an airport perhaps, or visiting an iconic building that we have previously known as an image – but there is always the potential for us to receive *something* for ourselves from the situation. As individuals, we may curse the signage or be taken aback by the smell, be surprised by the height of the balustrade or the unexpected heaviness of the door, be delighted or amused by some unexpected detail, be frustrated by the procedures at reception, or peripherally aware that the place is like somewhere else, or not consciously be thinking anything at all yet still know that we are expected to leave through the door and not the window. It can be seen from this that the performance is being done on many levels at once, both by the components of the space and by the inhabitant.

It is common nowadays to think of a space in terms of how it *works*. We speak of it in *active* terms – passages “lead”; spaces “flow”, “close in” on us, or “open out”; colours “come forward” and so on. Rather than being a mere arrangement of inanimate matter, a space today exists through the behaviours it elicits or sustains, and in the thoughts which it brings up, which in turn also become part of the totality of the work.

This notion of an interior as a lived experience is not new: it follows the trajectory of interior architecture from its 19th century emergence into today’s discipline concerned with inhabitation, rather than composition or style. The 20th century conception of space itself as something that is active and malleable, whose qualities are capable of being created or annihilated by manoeuvres that do not involve simply adjusting the dimensions of its bounding envelope, was the result of a new way of thinking about interior space that evolved throughout the 19th century. Part of this, stemming from the new human sciences of the period, was an interest in the active ways that our surroundings can work on us, whether psychologically or physiologically.

One aspect of this was a sort of spatial introspection that gave opportunities for demonstrations of nuanced sensibilities. Studies in art and literary history have followed the relationship between the domestic interior and its *image*, mediated through its visual representation or in written imagery, noting how the performance of

the inanimate things around us began increasingly to be written of in novels in metaphorical or symbolic language that implied the power of objects to evoke moods and feelings. (1)

Here, interiority, although retaining its older sense of an inner mental life, made a new connection between representations of interior space, particularly domestic space, and the emotional life of the subjective self. Hence, according to Oscar Wilde in 1891, it was “(...) the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.” (2)

But concurrently during that century, the effects on our senses of spaces and objects were also being considered in terms of observable *physiological* responses. This conception, although also dependent on the embodied senses of the inhabitant, was different from the anguished intensity of the view that sees the ‘house as mirror of the self’. Some of these observations show the influence of the new sciences of empirical psychology, such as the theories of the physical mechanics of optical perception, which were also being taken up by artists. (3) Others were conscious explorations of the tacit knowledge contained in traditional building techniques. For example, the Arts&Crafts understanding of the way that a small window, if properly placed, could admit more light in a way that was more pleasurable to the eye than a larger window, was a combination of empirical observation and measurement mixed with a more subjective appreciation or valorisation of certain qualities (in this case, the beauty of light, with the absence of glare). The qualities that are considered to be important and worth attending to change through time and across cultures and subcultures, but the study is essentially one of the engagement between animate and inanimate.

Components that may not be tangible are also part of the interior performance that I am discussing. Dean Hawkes (4) has coined the phrase “environmental imagination” to discuss the synthesis of technics and poetics in the interiors created by a range of practitioners, from Sir John Soane to Peter Zumthor, in which performance has been the organising principle – not in terms of energy ratings or efficiency, but in terms of the *delight* that subtle modulations of the environmental elements of interiors can offer to their occupants once qualities, for example “warmth” or “chill” or “lustre” or “dimness” or “ingenuity”, are considered as protagonists to be engaged with and relished.

In the examples that I have given, there is an implication that the inhabitant has *recognised* the performance, even if only subliminally. What has been experienced is unique to that person. To think of interiors as the outcome of performances that are being done *between* our surroundings and us is encouraging. Let me explain why.

(1) For example of such studies see Sidlauskas 2000 and Grant 2005.

(2) Wilde 1891, preface.

(3) For example, writings such as those of Helmholtz on physiology and physics in 1867, developed by Ogden Rood in a textbook on the science of optics and colour mixing, became “the Impressionists’ Bible” (Kemp 2008).

(4) Hawkes 2006.

The psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott believed that “it is creative apperception more than anything else that makes an individual feel that life is worth living.” He contrasted this to “a relation to external reality which is one of compliance, the world and its details being recognised but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation.” (5) This state of compliance, “(...) as if caught up in the creativity of someone else, or a machine”, carries with it a sense of futility for the individual. I have tried in this paper to stay away from references to theatre studies because I am not discussing such deliberate acts of performance, but at this point the more active language of theatre does become appropriate, though I repeat that I am not referring to excessively dramatic moments. When “the actor” or “the protagonist” or “the audience” replace the detached coolness of design terminologies such as “the inhabitant” or “the occupant” or “the user”, the shift emphasises the subjectivity and contingency of point-of-view, for who now is “the audience”? It brings to mind Michel de Certeau’s well-known contrast between the god-like view of the planner looking down on the city from the air and the different, personal, knowledge that belongs to the individuals walking in the streets below. (6) This language allows for the individual response rather than the general, and for the idiosyncratic response of the engaged participant rather than the one anticipated by the authoring designer holding the pencil. It allows for eccentricity, and for the contingency of the moment.

The single parallel that I do wish to draw from much contemporary theatrical practice is with its acknowledgement of the audience’s part in the piece, especially when the separation between stage and audience is undone, as it is for example in street theatre or a multi-focussed situation like a carnival. Choosing *how* and *what* to see has become part of the performance frame. (7) There is no compulsion to be transported to another’s insight, or to fret because it has greater value than one’s own, when we are free to relish our own moments of awareness.

I am encouraged by the things that professional designers can then offer to the engagement that seem to have everything to do with interior practices and not a great deal to do with style or marketing. By supporting different ways of looking, receiving, and interacting, rather than by bringing more stylish “stuff” into the world, and by accepting interiors as being fluid entanglements between animate and inanimate that may exist in moments in time, or in such actions as the daily cycles of tidying and disordering, or in the way some thoughtful (or thoughtless) modulation changes things – opening a window, drawing a blind, breaking a mirror, entering a room, pulling

(5) Winnicott 1971, 65.

(6) de Certeau 1984, Chapter VII.

(7) Approaches such as, for example, Richard Schechner’s “selective inattention” acknowledge that people choose what to see. “Spectators come and go, pay attention or don’t, select what parts of the performance to follow.” (Schechner 2003, 234).

up a chair – interior designers are able to acknowledge and value such things as moments of individual pleasure, or of humble satisfaction of personal needs, and to be perceptive of moments of distress. Many of the recent examples that move me at the moment come from non-commercial areas, such as new hospital designs that attend to the relation between healing and design; others are ones that observe and subtly tweak an existing situation to adjust repressive hierarchies. These things do not photograph, and are not likely to be universally acclaimed; they ask for insight, generosity and modesty from the practitioner.

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Unity

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To conceive a space as “a totality of related parts” (1) is not strange to the architecture and interior design disciplines. The intention of this paper is to stress the importance of the word *unity* by explaining some of the many possible ways that we, architects and designers, can transform the many bits and pieces that compose an interior space into a unitary system. In order to explain this I will retrace history and critically review three operations used by one of the masters of design and architecture in Italy, Gio Ponti (1891-1979). It is important to clarify that Ponti still is a polemical and many times contradictory figure. Not being easily classified in any architectural streams of the establishment, he impersonates the “juxtaposition of the ‘novecentista’ arts to the modern architecture.” (2) For him, as he wrote in 1957, **the past did not exist**, in a sense that “everything is simultaneous” in the Italian culture. (3) Promoter of new ideas and an eclectic soul, he would play, as some of his contemporaries, with dichotomies such as: antique x modern, craftsmanship x serial production, affordable x luxurious, flexible x fixed, and so on. But his was a distinctive manner. Starting from his method of design, on which ideas came to him as a discovery of operations revealed during the act of action, the so called “invention (in the Latin sense of finding) of a way of making architecture”, rather than an elaborated “institution of principles derived from argumentation.” (4) During his very productive life, Ponti was always “*inventing*” himself and by doing so, re-encountering and reviewing his ideas through time, always in search of a unified space, since the early projects of the 1930’s. This paper, as part of a current PhD research project, has identified three operations used by Ponti that distinguish him and also demonstrate a common result of *unity* of space: 1. *Presence of Absence*: the amplitude of the user’s view given by the sense of material lack; 2. *Fantasy of Illusion*: the illusion of unity given by decoration; 3. *Expression of an Atmosphere*: the importance of furniture as an extension of the user’s body as a manipulator of the architectonic space.

(1) <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/unity>.

(2) Belluzzi and Conforti 1994, 28.

(3) Ponti 1957, 66.

(4) Ponti 1944a, 1.

Presence of absence

Our eyes can give us a sensation of unity thru the *presence of absence* by partially eliminating pre-existing elements. This can make the observer's eyes reach longer distances without necessarily doing a great deal of interference. To tear down walls or to make a hole in them to unify rooms is not something exactly new, but the way it is done makes all the difference. Gio Ponti started using his "display-window" ("finestra-vetrina") in the early 1930's, as one answer to achieve "space and amplitude" (5) and reaching, for him, the basic social function of the house as the central space to encounter (in his case, the living and dining areas). By doing so, he was also trying to solve a legislation problem of the small-medium class apartment, since having a room larger than 25 sqm was classified as luxury and could pay higher taxes. Solutions like his "display-window" came as a simple answer. It worked by dividing space but unifying it at the same time only by making an actual hole in a wall, dividing living and dining areas, serving as a kind of a diaphragm containing a window on which one could display selected precious objects. Ponti has also made use of other solutions in the case of new buildings. He would design a "virtual wall" with the use of a combination of low multi-functional pieces of furniture with or without a curtain. In both these cases, imaginary traces of the wall remained as a suggestion of a division but also had different functions: to embellish our eyes' view in the case of the "display-window" or simply a multi-functional piece of furniture to hide the back of a sofa that could be used as a book case, silverware case, and so on.

Fantasy of illusion

The sensation of being in a unitary space can sometimes be achieved by relations that will make our eyes connect to completely different elements only by having some details in common or by an overdose of information that can trick one's eyes, altering the dimension of a space. Achieving almost surrealist compositions in the collaborations with Piero Fornasetti, Ponti played with the observer's eyes, giving a tri-dimensional sensation to embellished surfaces. These collaborations took the idea of "the house conceived as a unity of total furniture" to an extreme. (6)

They included the over-decorated surfaces of the Dulciora (1949) store and the Lucano (1952) apartment, among others, but one of the most astonishing examples, though, comes from the detailed interiors of ships, including a series of competition drawings, kept now at the CSAC archives in Parma. At the amazing first class

(5) Ponti 1933, 49.

(6) Ponti, 1957.

bar of Conte Grande, the traveller has a feeling of being in an aquarium and in the first class cabin of Giulio Cesare, all dressed up with zodiacal and marine forms, everything is gathered in one big image dismantling horizontal and vertical planes. All this was overly detailed and documented in many elevations, plans and perspectives, with colors and textures, including samples of it. As for Ponti, just like the house, the ship was not to be seen as only a machine, and its furniture should take advantage of its structure and “make its module from its own architecture.” (7) From that, a completely ordinary space should take form, from conception to the materials and the work of art used: a complete unity of space and structure. (8)

Expression of an atmosphere

The user also plays an important role in achieving a unity of space in interior design as he acts as a manipulator of this space. For that matter, imposed solutions do not leave room for any participation on the conception of the design or changes through time. It was what was referred to by Ponti (on 1938) as “the expression of an atmosphere” when he described the remodeling of apartment Vanzetti. (9)

He quoted Strand when stressing not to use immutable rigors on the conception of a space. He would continue to quote Strand in the following years when writing about the importance of including an elastic disposition in interior spaces, allowing change and participation. (10)

From those thoughts came many inventions, discovered by the act of designing and making, dating since the 1930's, when Ponti started his observer's *hide and seek games* reaching a unified and playful space. Ideas translated into action like those of the “composite furniture”, gathering more than one function as in the “armchair-heater-table” for the apartment Piccoli (1931). The list of inventions to be manipulated by the user continues with the “surprise furniture” of the “cabinet-fireplace” at the Cremaschi apartment (1950) and the “self-illuminated shelf” at the Lucano apartment (1952) – the shelf would change colors by the use of different materials when somebody opened it. Ponti also developed the “dashboard panels”, that can be traced from some ideas developed in the 1930's “composite furniture” published by *Domus*, (11) but clearly announced in the 1940's in the magazine *Stile*, as a “new idea.” (12)

They were a real “dashboard” with light fixtures and suspended shelves for the bed, and were further developed for the many different areas of the house (living, dining-room, office, and library). In 1951, he presented a hotel room at the IX Triennale of Milan

(7) Ponti 1931b, 22.

(8) Ponti 1950, 3.

(9) Ponti 1938, 13, 17.

(10) Ponti 1949, 14.

(11) Ponti 1931a, 64.

(12) Ponti 1944b, 40-41.

(13) Ponti 1933, 45.

(1951) – organizing space for the traveler but even in that case leaving an area for the guest to participate in the organization – a board for posting pictures and maps. At the remodeling of the apartment Vanzetti, as an announcement of the “organized walls” of the 1950’s, Ponti designed a wooden wall with shelves that would hide a disguised entrance door to a bar. The “organized wall” came as a natural wall version of the playful furniture transposed into a tridimensional surface. It invited the user to play and change space and to actually fulfill empty shelves with art work, accessories, books, etc. Ponti also applied the idea of the “organized wall” to the modernist “ribbon window” giving many uses with – that was the “equipped window” – in which the user would be able to decorate it with paintings and objects. A good example of most of these ideas was displayed in the one *bedroom apartment* at the X Triennale of Milan (1954). These playful pieces of furniture were always related to the overall design of the spaces and its users, in a unified dimension; spreading or duplicating walls, organizing space and suggesting how it should be used, but most of all, respecting the presence of its inhabitants through their participation, as an extension of their bodily presence.

Curiosity, illusion and action can be used to give the sensation of unity in an interior space. This was achieved by Gio Ponti in his interior design projects. Differently from some of his contemporaries, making use of ideas sometimes even excessively, his work defends a more pragmatic and less schematic perspective of reality. Reviewing his work critically, we can find a line of thought which demonstrates similar proposals for lower, middle and upper class interiors, always caring about details with a clear unitary result of the interior space. He would write in 1933 referring already to the *new houses*: “Clear organisms conceived unitarily to ordinate typical dwellings with all the resources that make it practical, pleasant, comfortable and sane.”

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Hybrid

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Space of flows and space of places versus hybrid space

Today, media networks are influencing and interacting with real places. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is radically changing the way we live, interact and perceive our world. Politics, economics, warfare, culture are increasingly taking place in the spaces of information-communication, media networks.

Manuel Castells describes in his book *The Rise of the Network Society* the immense impact ICT will have on our society. According to Castells the “space of flows”, these spaces of information-communication networks transform the “space of places”, our physical environments.

Castells juxtaposes these “space of flows” of information and communication, of services and capital (media spaces and information-communication networks) against the “space of places”, the local urban space.

Interesting as it is to consider architectural space and the space of information-communications networks as competing, even mutually exclusive frameworks of social interaction, it will be more fruitful to recognize the emerging interweaving of physical space and informational space and the fusions of analog space and digital networks. (1)

The term “Hybrid Space” stands for this combination and fusion of media and physical space. Hybrid space is the product of alliances between physical objects and information-communication networks, between architectural and media space.

More interesting than the juxtaposition and polarisation, than the distinction in media networks and urban places, is the interplay of media and architectural space. The concept of Hybrid Space sees the physical environment in the context of and in correlation with the networks which it belongs to and interacts with.

This distinguishes the Hybrid Space approach from the methodology which urban sociologist Manuel Castells introduced with his notion of the “space of flows”.

(1) Castells 1996, 376-428.

Hybrid space

We can find fusions of analog and digital space, the so-called “hybrid” networked spaces all around us. Such different environments as the trading floor of the stock exchange or the (dance) club with its disc-jockeys and video-jockeys are both hybrid spaces.

Examples of hybrid (combined media and physical) space can be found everywhere in our daily lives. With mobile telephony in urban open spaces private and public space intermingles. Mobile devices with, for example, Augmented Reality applications superimpose media information layers on our physical environments. In monitored environments cameras keep watch over open urban areas. We are increasingly dealing today with these fuzzy mixes of the analog and the digital, as for instance with miniaturized digital communication devices integrated in wearables as watches or safety coats.

More examples can be found in our private environments, as our homes become “smart” and our cars become networked spaces with, amongst others, Global Positioning System GPS navigation.

“Intelligent” home devices such as refrigerators networked via your personal portable information-communication system will in the near future tell you that you haven’t any milk left and, if you don’t want to teleshop, your car will guide you to the next shop where you can buy milk. Networked wall-paper, carpets and doors, as integral elements of the system of the “smart” house, will recognize the owner of the house and process the patterns of his habits. “Intelligent”, networked materials and objects will be everywhere.

Physical space and objects should not be looked at in isolation. Instead, they should be considered in the context of and in relation to the networked systems to which they belong. We therefore focus on the hybrid ambivalent spaces, analogue and digital, virtual and material, local and global, tactile and abstract, in which we live and interact.

Hybrid as a paradigm

Considering these combined media and physical spaces in their layering and stratifications, in their changing densities and discontinuities leads to a spatial concept with a high level of hybridity – reflecting a cultural shift away from a mindset based on clear – cut categories towards a flexible approach based on intermixtures and interconnections.

“Hybrid” is an ancient Greek word. In the times of the Aristotelian categories, the notion of the “hybrid”, the crossbreed, had a negative connotation. Today the notion of the “hybrid” is everywhere.

Hybridization is becoming an increasingly important issue in the

cultural field. Look at the attention paid to world literature. The new production and communication tool of the networked computer provides a common working instrument for a broad range of creative professions, paving the way for a series of hybrid professional fields. Today, you have hybrid cars, hybrid businesses, hybrid securities, hybrid plastics, hybrid plants, hybrid pigs. The clear-cut antinomy and the excluding logics of Castells' "space of flows" versus "space of places" does not correspond to the cross-breed character of the hybrid space all around us – in all its variations of combined physical space and media networks. While Castells' "space of flows" would be placeless – thus continuous – the hybrid space approach considers our environment in its discontinuities, its fluctuating connectivity to a multiplicity of media networks, in its changing densities of layered communication spaces.

Inversions of privacy

Today's hybrid urban realities require a more differentiated approach that considers their density and stratification changes. In this context traditional spatial categories, such as private space versus public space are dissolving. Today one can observe an inversion of privacy as public and private environments are becoming intermingled in the fusion of media and "real" space. We see this in the hybrid spaces of the publicly broadcast (inverted) privacies of reality TV or the "Big Brothers" and in the explosion of social media, in the media presence of war intruding our living rooms and in the islands of private (communication) space of mobile telephony within public urban space.

In his phenomenological analysis of lived space, *La poétique de l'espace*, the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard develops a "dialectics of inside and outside", contrasting the intimate felicitous space, the comforting private enclosure, with the space of the "outside". According to Bachelard, "[the house] is an instrument with which to confront the cosmos." (2) Architecture provides, in a dynamic interplay between an active mind and its surrounding space, such structures for organizing our experiences and fantasies, helping us construct (us in) our world. The notion of "privy chamber", emerging in English literature of the 17th century, describes not only the new private physical spaces as the introduction of the corridor layout in the English interiors of the 17th century but it enabled the development of the "private quarters". "Privy chamber" is used also metaphorically for the "soul". "Privy chamber" is the container of (private) identity. As John Lukacs writes "Domesticity, privacy, comfort, the concept of the home and of the family (...) are, literally, principal achievements of the Bourgeois Age." (3)

(2) Bachelard 1969, 46.

(3) Lukacs 1970, 620-621.

Within the traditional – bourgeois – concept of privacy, identity is based on private individuality. Today's changes concerning privacy are influencing the way we form our identity. The formally exclusive and contrasting concepts of “inside versus outside”, of private versus public space, are intermingling and blurring. This has implications on today's constructions of subjectivity and identity concepts.

Identity and density

In the last year of the 20th century, “Big Brother” (with its networked container), the notorious “reality-soap” was first launched in Holland and was cloned and copied all over the planet. What in the meantime, with the proliferation of Reality TV is an everyday reality, was then new and shocking – and was discussed all over the media, from the popular talk shows to the scholarly journals (“Is this the End of Our Civilization?”). What shocked was the broadcasting (the inverting) of privacy. What shocked was that the participants of the soap defined their identity not in the “privy chamber” but in the public networked character of the broadcasting-container. The ENDEMOL soap was an interactive environment (the television public had democratic rights, influencing developments). The captives in the container/networks witnessed their existence in the “Real Virtuality” (4) of their media presence. They witnessed their identity within the densities of the (communication) channels. In the same year, 1999, a big campaign was launched in Holland: on most billboards in major or minor cities, men and women, youngsters and the elderly – the average Dutch person – were declaring “*ik ben Ben*”. This was not the mass expression of an identity crisis, but an advertising campaign for the introduction of the new GSM company called “Ben”, targeting the public at large. The advertising slogan was based on a simple play on words, “ben” meaning in Dutch “I am” and “Ben” being a common male name as well as the name of the mobile phone company. But what makes this slogan such an interesting expression of our times is its definition of identity (I am: *Ik ben*) as connectivity (“Ben” being the network provider), the identity of the urbanite being defined as the density of the (superimposed media/”real”) communication spaces.

Identity

Within these new hybrid cityscapes traditional categories for analyzing space are becoming obsolete. A new field combining architecture and design with information-communication networks and media spaces is emerging that requires new tools and new research categories.

(4) Castells 1996, 327-375.
(5) Our survey was published online on the websites of Infodrome (2000), “DISP-Plus” of ETH Zürich (2001), the Center for Urban Research of New York University (2001), the Technical University of Athens/Greece (2002), the Global Development Research Centre/GDRC (2003), in the magazine *Space and Culture: International Journal of Social Spaces*, Ottawa (2004), in the *Sociology/Social Science discussion forum* – University of Abertay Dundee UK (2004), on *Planum – the European journal of planning* (2004). Our survey was also published in Dutch as *Ruimtegebruik in het informatie-communicatietijdperk. Verwerking van het onplanbare* on the website of Infodrome (2000), in the book *De burger als spin in het web. Essays over het verdwijnen van plaats en afstand in de informatiesamenleving*, editor Rick van der Ploeg (former Dutch State Secretary of Culture), Den Haag 2001 and in a summary form in the book *Controle nemen of geven – een politieke agenda voor de informatiesamenleving*, editor Rick van der Ploeg (former Dutch State Secretary of Culture), Den Haag 2001.

To help us understand this fusion, this superimposition and the interaction of media and “real” physical spaces, in 1999 we introduced – within the framework of our survey *The Use of Space in the Information/Communication Age – Processing the Unplannable* of the Think Tank of the Dutch government Infodrome, 1999-2002 – (5) a new term: “*Idensity*” does not differentiate between information communication networks and architectural environments and offers an integrated model for dealing with hybrid space today. It is a composite term, combining the word “density” – of real (urban) and “virtual” (media) communication spaces (density of connections) – and the word “identity.” “*Idensity*” integrates the concept of “density” (density of connections, of physical and digital infrastructure, of communication spaces) with the concept of “identity” (image policies, brands). “*Idensity*” addresses therefore the logics of today’s expanding economy of attention.

But it is not a mere summation of the concepts of “density” and “identity.” It is a fusion, as it inverts “identity,” linking it to communication, “identity” being defined by connectivity. Therefore, it does not just address the “clear-cut identity, the particularity, the individuality of the traditional places or sites” but also the layered identities of the “*non-lieux*” (6) – “**non-places**” – of today’s generic cities, which are to be found especially in the realms of mobility and consumption (airports, hotels, shopping malls, motorway rest areas, etc.). It does not refer only to object-qualities but describes a field of superimposed (communication) spaces: the branded space of the chain-shop, the symbolic space of the traditional building the shop is located in, the media space of mobile augmented reality applications integrating teleshopping... *Idensity* is a conceptual tool for researching and developing space today.

(6) Augé 1992.

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Network

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Networks have changed the way society is organized and how individuals interact within it. Whilst they are not new structures of human practice, through the interconnection of individual nodes, powered by the information transfer capabilities of linked technologies, they have taken on a totally new significance.

According to Bullock and Trombley “a network comprises a field of social relations, understood as being made up of different elements linked through multiplex relationships and comprising both interactional and structural criteria.” (1)

Network enterprises, epitomized by corporate collaborations, joint ventures, strategic alliances, partnerships, and supply chain optimization, have transformed business management into networks of cooperation. These herald the emergence of a new kind of socio-technical pattern of interaction between humans and technology, enacted by the person to person networks established. It would be naive to assume that such new patterns of social interaction do not also require an assessment of the role played by the built environment and those responsible for its creation and design. This places interior design and thus interior designers firmly within an emergent context and also as critical participants involved in a discourse around which the future is germinating.

The world we live in

Today’s networks have emerged from within a contemporary worldwide phenomenon, culturally manifested as a consequence of globalization and the knowledge economy. It is in this context that the internet revolution has prompted a radical re-ordering of social and institutional relationships and the associated structures, processes, and places to support these. Within the duality of virtual space and the augmentation of traditional notions of physical place, organizational structures pose new challenges for the design professions.

(1) Bullock and Trombley
1999, 576.

Technological developments increasingly permit communication anytime and anywhere, and provide the opportunity for both synchronous and asynchronous collaboration. The resultant ecology formed through the network enterprise has resulted in an often convoluted and complex world wherein designers are forced to consider the relevance and meaning of this new context. The role of technology and that of space are thus intertwined in the relationship between the network and the individual workplace.

Globalization refers to a range of significant world changes encompassing social, cultural, political, religious, and economic issues. Castells referred to globalization as “the process by which human activity in its different dimensions becomes selectively and asymmetrically organized in interactive networks of performance that function on a planetary scale in real time.” (2)

It can be linked to two distinct phenomena, the information technology revolution and the major socio-economic restructuring of western society that began taking place in the mid 1970s. As the global marketplace and the knowledge economy expand into the twenty-first century, the amount of accompanying information appears also to be growing exponentially. Work, education, family life, and politics are all responding to the possibilities opened up by the enormous expansion as well as the speed and subtlety of its processing.

A new social structure

The new social structure of the network society is made up of networks of production, consumption, power, and experience. Within this, productivity and competitiveness are the commanding processes of the economy. It is believed that productivity stems from innovation, whereas competitiveness is dependent on the capacity to be flexible. Thus firms, regions, countries, economic units of all kinds, are inclined to gear their production relationships to maximize innovation and flexibility. This has resulted in a dynamic world of hyper-competition, the pressure for companies to be innovative, the realignment of corporate activities, and the resulting re-invention of business, all now dominating organizational life. The creation of new knowledge, the effective capture of existing knowledge, and the efficient transfer or dissemination of this knowledge both internally and externally, are the characteristics which are permeating companies at the dawn of the new century. (3) (4)

Knowledge management theory regards the level of information connection in organizations as an important part of the knowledge

(2) Castells 1996, 198.

(3) Von Krogh, Nonaka and Nishiguchi 2000.

(4) Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt 2001.

creation process and interaction in an office environment is seen as essential to enhance people's knowledge. (5) Modern organizations are increasingly being perceived and described as ecosystems in which tacit knowledge is developed and exchanged through conversations, formal and informal. Communication, in the broad sense of an exchange of meaning may even be the fundamental production process of the knowledge economy. Workplace design is increasingly being perceived by both management and workers to be one of the main organizational factors in either the facilitation of, or as an impediment to the transfer of knowledge. (6) (7)

Social networks

The concept of social networks and the ability to facilitate their creation and maintenance has implications for the built environment and the physical infrastructure of organizations. Physical closeness or propinquity is often critical to encouraging interaction, in breaking down the barriers between tribes within organizations, and in facilitating opportunities for face-to-face meetings. In the distant past, networks began as face-to-face encounters and conversations. That legacy continues today. Virtual-teams, tele-commuters, and employees who utilize hot-desking facilities represent a special challenge in today's organizations. It is necessary to create places and reasons for people to encounter each other. Unwin (8) made reference to the importance of the ancient hearth as a place for establishing relationships and face-to-face encounters. It appears that the ancient art of managing networks around the hearth is making a comeback precisely because of the challenges faced by working virtually. The challenge for interior designers is to understand what organizational members interpret as today's equivalent of the ancient hearth in terms of actual physical space or the symbols which supplement the lack of place.

Application to workplace design

The micro-level processes of how knowledge is enabled in firms is still very much in the exploratory stage but insights being realized through research are highlighting that the issues of network management, social networks, and the network of spatial implications are important for the future of organizations. Of particular relevance for architects and interior designers is the need for a reconsideration of the spaces and places within which firms undertake their operations. Unlike information, knowledge is

(5) Palmer and Richards 2000.

(6) Kupritz 2002.

(7) Elsbach and Bechky 2007.

(8) Unwin 1997.

embedded in people and knowledge creation occurs in the process of social interaction. This was noted by Wiig in his findings that “people and their behaviors contribute much more to the enterprise success than conventional assets”, (9) and confirmed by Burgess (10) in his PhD dissertation on the social factors impacting on supply chain innovation.

It is apparent that future organizations will still be comprised of communities but the extended organizations of the knowledge economy may well be comprised of communities with potentially different social dynamics. These will require new interpretations of places and spaces by interior designers, encompassing permanent and temporary physical settings, together with virtual venues, and the meanings that these take on will depend on the interactions within the various networks.

A case of being-at-work

The phenomenon of new inter-organizational contexts enabled the identification of a gap in the knowledge relative to workplace design. The literature and research available indicated that there had always been a mono-organizational focus in relation to the strategies driving workplace design. (11) The specific investigation across inter-organizational contexts in a network configuration, prior to the NetWorkPlaceTM© study, had not been attempted. (12) This study became a critical component of an over-arching supply chain optimization research initiative involving an investigation which encompassed three corporations, extending a distance of over 12,000 kilometers across Australia. It was conducted over a two-year period by a trans-disciplinary team comprising a collaborative partnership between industry practitioners and academic researchers from four different universities. The NetWorkPlaceTM© study sought to investigate issues pertaining to organizational, sociological, technological, and spatial perspectives in order to uncover the complex dynamics of the network setting.

Subsequent to this, a recent research collaboration with a U.K. University in supply chain innovation being implemented by the British Ministry of Defence, has revealed a significant amount of evidence and as yet unpublished results which indicate that physical collocation of network members is generating improved performance efficiencies.

The supply chain management literature (13) makes it clear that innovation gains are embedded in socio-economic networks.

(9) Wiig 1999, 164.

(10) Burgess 2008.

(11) Duffy 2001.

(12) Smith 2008.

(13) Burgess, Singh and Koroglu 2006.

The Ministry of Defence is now working closer with suppliers to achieve innovative acquisition solutions and it is apparent that there is a need to foster more social engagement. While no definitive answer has yet emerged about how to guarantee an increase in the intangible assets such as trust and collaboration in order to increase innovation, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that spatial elements and workplace design do and will continue to play a role.

The hype surrounding multi-disciplinary research in recent times appears to have captured the imagination of the management, information technology, and design disciplines amongst others. The belief is that by combining disciplines and incorporating multi-institutional collaboration, greater creativity and innovation can be achieved.

Multi-disciplinary research connotes the involvement of a group of individual researchers from different specialty areas, combining their efforts towards a common outcome without any integration of the disciplines throughout the process. Newell and Swan described such an approach as the individuals being like “pieces of a jigsaw, where the pieces fit together but are not changed by being part of the jigsaw.” (14)

The term trans-disciplinary research is deemed in the NetWorkPlaceTM© study to infer that the research experience in some way influences the disciplinary participants or at least impacts on the way they are liable to operate in the future. It posits a post-experience transition in attitude and how researchers and practitioners then apply their own disciplinary knowledge. This approach has been reinforced by Stegmeier’s (15) publication focusing on innovations in office design which reports on both a methodology and a number of successful case studies.

The design of workplaces must be adapted to the ways that the structure and social complexions of organizations are being transformed through the requirements and trends associated with the knowledge economy. Design must correspond to the strategic and operational requirements of organizations both individually and as collaborative partners in the form of the network enterprise. The reshaping of space will rely heavily on new information technologies, not necessarily as the only or the primary cause of change, but certainly as a significant medium to facilitate the transformation and/or creation of workplace settings in the network context.

The roles that interior designers need to play in the workplace design process as a consequence of the network context requires a shift in the traditional methods of investigation and the ways of engaging

(14) Newell and Swan 2000, 1233.

(15) Stegmeier 2008.

with clients, users, and trans-disciplinary collaborators. It follows that for architects and interior designers, the scope of the problem has widened, the depth of knowledge required to provide solutions has increased, and the rules of engagement are required to change to accommodate these.

This places a responsibility on the profession at large to respond to the demands created by the network context.

It is obvious then that *networks* is a key word in which the future is germinating. It is part of the morphology of an emerging vocabulary and a critical field of discourse for the discipline of interior design. It is a multi-dimensional descriptor, thus providing both the content and context to be embraced by designers for research and practice in the future.

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Permeable

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The *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* defines “permeable” as “allowing liquids or gases to pass through; capable of being permeated”. (1) In this paper I am using the word metaphorically to address the proposal that, in the physical boundaries which supposedly distinguish inside from outside spaces, and in the socio-cultural and psychological ones (expressed through a visual, material and spatial language) that separate private, domestic interiors from public, non-domestic ones, a high level of permeability can often be found. In order to explore some of the ways in which this permeability reveals itself this paper will offer a number of 19th and 20th case-studies, both domestic and otherwise, with a particular emphasis on the role played by the inclusion of plants and flowers in the interior.

Domestic conservatories, described by Stefan Muthesius as “transitional spaces”, (2) have played a significant role in this area over a considerable period of time, acting as a powerful physical means of challenging the spatial boundary between the ideas of inside and outside in the domestic context. Most significantly, for this paper, the role of conservatories crossed the huge divide that separated 19th century eclecticism from 20th century modernism. In the second half of the 19th century the conservatory served to bring the garden into the home. Inasmuch as it extended the feminine private sphere of the home by providing a location in which the female accomplishment of growing and nurturing plants could take place, it was highly gendered. The conservatory built on to the house owned by S. J. Waring in Liverpool in 1896, is just one of the many examples of an additional domestic space created for sitting and relaxing in – an extension, that is, of the domestic parlour.

By the early decades of the 20th century some modernist architects were also using conservatories, primarily, however, as a means of drawing the eye out of the dwelling’s interior towards the garden outside. This was the case, for example, in Mies van der Rohe’s

(1) http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/permeable?view=uk.
(2) Muthesius 2009, 173.

Tugendhat House, built in Brno in 1929, and in Piero Portaluppi's Villa Necchi Campiglio, built in Milan between 1932 and 1935. (3) Both houses featured glass-enclosed winter gardens that blurred the boundaries separating the inside from the outside and created a buffer zone that was neither one nor the other. (The importance of new materials and technologies – from cast iron to glass – should not be overlooked in this discussion.)

One significant difference separates the roles of the conservatory in these two historical moments, however, the first embracing the idea of domesticity as a spiritual, educational and psychological necessity linked to middle-class family values and individual identity, and the latter seeking to reject those values and to imbue the modern dwelling with ones derived from the public sphere. In both instances – those of the 19th century domestic interior and the 20th century modernist dwelling – the conservatory, or winter garden, is used to render permeable the boundary between inside and outside spaces, however, whichever direction it looks in.

The importation of nature into the mid 19th century home was an important component of the image of middle-class domesticity formed at that time. That continuity with the world of nature, albeit in a tamed form, introduced a memory of the outside, linked to pre-industrial, non-urban past, into this otherwise strongly inward-looking interior. Thus, at a time when the “separation of the spheres” – an ideological programme that required a distinction between the masculine, public world of work and commerce and the feminised private sphere that focused on its role as a refuge or haven, and as a location for nurturing and educating, spirituality and identity formation – was being widely disseminated, efforts were being made to bring a pre-industrial, non-urban outside into the home.

Many modernist dwellings of the inter-war years sought to model themselves on the public sphere, whether through references to the time and motion studies undertaken in factories and offices, by embracing new materials linked to industrial manufacture, or by defining their furnishings as items of equipment rather than as signs of middle-class comfort. Nevertheless many also continued to embrace nature in their interior spaces thereby recognising, on one level, the importance of the 19th century model of domesticity. Plants were used somewhat differently in that new context, however, less, that is, for cultural purposes (spirituality, education and nurturing) than as visual and formal elements within spatial compositions. Thus while, on one level, domesticity was being acknowledged inside the modernist dwelling, it was simultaneously being subverted. This was also demonstrated in the choice of plants,

(3) <http://www.fondoambiente.it/beni/casa-necchi-campiglio-beni-del-fai.asp>. (accessed May 8, 2010).

such as cacti and Swiss cheese plants, which, although they were not newcomers to the living room, were now being almost exclusively exploited for their strongly formal properties. Nevertheless the softer ferns and palms that had dominated the 19th century domestic interior also made an appearance demonstrating the ambiguous relationship with domesticity that characterised many modernist dwellings.

The important role played by plants and flowers in the 19th century model of the domestic interior, which has remained influential right up to the present day, can also be found in spaces which, although ostensibly public or semi-public, contain, nonetheless, a significant component of domesticity within them. While, today, the language of domesticity can be found on public and semi-public spaces, from hotels to railway station waiting rooms to bookshops and shopping malls, the 19th century lunatic asylum, for example, saw the domestic parlour, complete with plants and vases of flowers, as a therapeutic space that helped in the healing process of mental illness. (4) In the second half of the 20th century the ambiguity between domestic (private) and non-domestic (public) was extended to many modern semi-public and public spaces in which plants continued to be used widely. A marked change in the way in which much public sphere, post-war modern architecture embraced domesticity (nature included) in its interior spaces was in the scale in which it was implemented.

On one level, it could be argued, the way in which nature has been included in public buildings – from restaurants to office and hotel atria to shopping malls – from the second half of the 20th century up to the present, owes less to the requirement of 19th century domesticity's to retain within itself a link with the pre-industrial world than to modernism's own interpretation of its commitment to the world of nature. This was demonstrated by architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, whose dedication to what the former called "organic architecture" was demonstrated in many ways, including their respect for the nature that was destroyed on the sites on which their buildings were constructed by choosing to leave trees on sites – Frank Lloyd Wright in his own home in Oak Park, among others, and Le Corbusier in his Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau at the 1925 Paris *Exposition Internationales des Arts Modernes Decoratifs et Industriels*. This suggested, arguably, a respect for the natural world in its raw state rather than the tamed, domestic version so beloved by the Victorians.

On another level, however, examples of trees growing through the middle of dining tables in 19th century domestic interiors can be found suggesting that there was less of a rupture than might be

(4) Guyatt 2004, 48.

imagined. By the time Philip Johnson's Four Seasons Restaurant was created within Mies's Seagram Building in New York in the mid 1950s the idea of taking whole trees into public spaces had been established and, indeed, was soon to become widespread.

From the 1950s up to the present the permeability of the boundary that divides domesticity from non-domesticity – the private interior, that is, from the public one – has been a marked feature of many large-scale, urban public interior spaces, often reinforced by the inclusion of plants and flowers within them. The work of the Atlanta-based architect, John Portman has been particularly influential in this context. He described the atrium of his 1957 Hotel, the Regency Hyatt in Atlanta, for example, as both a “living room in a city” and as a “Victorian parlour.”

If the city could be viewed as a house, he maintained, then, inasmuch he encouraged visitors to enter into his inward-looking space that offered opportunities for comfort, refuge, pleasure, calm and relaxation, his atrium was its living-room. Metaphorical ambiguity abounded, however, as, while this vast covered inside space was a parlour on one level, with its cobble stoned floor, full size trees and eating places, it was also a village square or piazza. Portman claimed to have been influenced by the Tivoli pleasure gardens in Copenhagen, a fact that was reflected in the lights that adorned the exterior lifts and his inclusion of filigree metalwork. Outside and inside, domestic and non-domestic exist side by side in the complex space of the Regency Hyatt atrium stretching the notion of permeability to its limits. The inclusion of nature within it – an aviary of live birds, fountains, trees, plants and tubs of yellow chrysanthemums – played a key role in reinforcing ambiguity. In Portman's own words, “Plants and trees can be used as an important way of forming spaces and modifying light in buildings (...) rows of trees can modify space, create and define separate areas. They can also provide places of solitude and privacy in the midst of the city's crowds and confusion.” (5)

The Portman model has influenced many public inside/outside spaces over many decades and the inclusion of trees, plants and water has characterised the inside spaces of countless shopping malls, hotel and office atria and other public spaces. Indeed it has become a cliché that ensures that a high level of outside/inside, domestic/non-domestic ambiguity is maintained in the contemporary built environment and suggests that the notion of permeability needs to become central to all discussions about it.

(5) Portman and Barnett 1976, 96.

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Performativity

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Performativity is an emergent quality of objects as they are experienced in everyday life.

The term is derived from the linguistic designation “performative” which the English philosopher John Langshaw Austin defines as a statement which does not simply describe the world but actually changes it; it is a speech act which *does* something. As he states, “The issuing of the utterance is the performance of an action”, (1) which is to suggest that “In saying something we are doing something.” (2) Derrida, in his critique of Austin’s text, then goes on to elaborate the idea by stating that the performative “does not describe something that exists outside of language and prior to it. It produces or transforms a situation, it effects.” (3) So, in linguistic terms the concept refers to an act such as stating “I declare the meeting open” or “I do” in the wedding ceremony. As Judith Butler notes “the judge who says ‘I sentence you’ does not state an intention to do something or describe what he is doing: his saying is a kind of doing.” (4) Therefore these are utterances which actually bring our social world into being; they constitute its actual existence.

This concept can then be transposed from linguistics into the study of material culture. This might then be to argue that it is possible to identify “performative objects”, that is to say things which do not simply lie mute and inert, but which actually act upon us and actively constitute the construction of subjectivity through their performativity. Kristine Niedderer undertakes just this task in her article *Designing Mindful Interaction: The Category of the Performative Object*. (5) Unfortunately, in attempting to identify “performative objects” she conceives performativity as springing from the disruption of function, which is then somehow supposed to shock the user into a form of enhanced consciousness or “mindfulness”, in her designation. (6)

This is to suggest that if I took a simple wooden chair and sawed one leg shorter than the others, thus meaning that every time it was

(1) Austin 1976, 6.

(2) Ibid., 12.

(3) Derrida 1988, 13.

(4) Butler 1997, 17.

(5) Niederrer 2007, 6-7.

(6) Ibid., 8-11.

used it was necessary to improvise a support for it, I would have created a “performative object” because the thing is actually acting upon the subject. In such a conception the proposition is that the function of the object having disrupted the user will then be stirred into consciousness to consider the nature of this function. Such an approach could be described in Austin’s model as the creation of “explicit performatives”, (7) or as Kosofsky Sedgwick terms them, “explicit performative utterances”, (8) whereby the subject is being made very aware of the performative nature of what they are experiencing.

However, as Austin argues, “A performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem or spoken in a soliloquy.” He argues that “Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances.” (9) Although, as Derrida notes, “context is never absolutely determinable”, (10) it does seem important to acknowledge Austin’s point, that the context and conditions in which the speech act takes place are vital to its efficacy as a performative utterance. Indeed, this may suggest that drawing attention to an object’s performativity, as in Neiderer’s conception, is actually to some degree to diminish its performative power, as it is to place it on the “stage” and wrest it from the very “ordinary circumstances” upon which its power depends.

It is possible to argue, therefore, that performativity is a quality of all objects that far from being a specialised feature of some objects specifically designed to have an effect, performativity is actually a facet of the nature of things as they are functioning in everyday life. This is to no small degree because performativity, it can be argued, is at its most effective as an iterative phenomenon, one that emerges from the repeated processes of living with things in the everyday, not least in the domestic interior.

Such arenas of activity are dressed and equipped by their inhabitants to allow for a particular subjectivity to flourish. Furnishings are chosen and used not simply to facilitate base functions, they also act as things which allow us to be who we are or wish to be. In this way the furnishings of domestic space can be said to have both utilitarian and symbolic function. However, the suggestion is that the things we live with everyday can be said to have “performative function”, in that through the iterations of everyday life certain relationships and discourses of power are not merely enacted through but generated by the subject’s relationship to things.

A simple wooden chair is already a performative object. It is not

(7) Austin 1976, 69.
(8) Kosofsky Sedgwick 2003, 4.

(9) Austin 1976, 22.
(10) Derrida 1988, 3.

necessary to alter it to affect performativity. Simply by existing, particularly when it is not consciously registered, it is acting upon the user and shaping them. We already have strange objects; a chair in itself is odd enough. There is no reason we should sit in the manner that a chair demands. It is not “natural” (there are plenty of cultures that do not sit in this way), rather it can be argued that the ideological schema of objects acts upon us to naturalise their existence. Therefore, it is necessary to unhitch Austin’s performative from its specialised existence in “a few exemplary utterances or kinds of utterance” to demonstrate how it is instead a property of discourse in a much broader sense. As Kosofsky Sedgewick argues, Derrida can be understood to be saying that “the only really interesting part of it is how all language is performative”, with Judith Butler adding “Not only that, but it’s most performative when its performativity is least explicit – indeed arguably, most of all when it isn’t even embodied in actual words.” (11) To this can then be added the observation that it is perhaps most effective when it is embodied in the material things we use every day.

Bill Brown in his article *Thing Theory* notes that “The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation.” (12) It therefore starts to become clear that it is necessary to break down the subject-object dichotomy and suggest that dynamic things (as opposed to static objects) can be said to be active agents which are not simply animated by human subjects, but which have agency in and of themselves. In this way all things can be described, in Bruno Latour’s terms, as “actants.” In Actor Network Theory the assertion is that all elements in any interaction should be regarded as actors (or actants) which do not simply “sometimes ‘express’ power relations, ‘symbolize’ social hierarchies, ‘reinforce’ social inequalities, ‘transport’ social power, ‘objectify’ inequality, and ‘reify’ gender relations” but in Latour’s conception they can actually be said to be “at the origin of social activity.” (13) In discussing performativity commentators often mistake the performative quality of objects for performance in its theatrical sense. So it is imagined that objects become performative when they are made to perform in some way. It is contended here that performativity is a feature of all things with which subjects come into contact, and it can be defined as the action of the thing on the subject.

The physical qualities of the chair are an utterance, a speech act which says “sit.” In recognising ourselves as the addressed, as the potential sitter, we take on a certain form of subjectivity, not just as a sitter, but as this particular sitter in this particular chair. As Judith

(11) Kosofsky Sedgewick 2003, 5.

(12) Brown 2001, 4.

(13) Latour 2007, 72.

Butler notes the performative actually contributes to “the social constitution of the one addressed (and hence, to become part of the process of social interpellation).” (14) Therefore things, no matter how inert they may appear, are actually constantly inciting us to discourse and constituting the nature and capacities of subjectivity. Butler continues:

In the famous scene of interpellation that Althusser provides, the policeman hails the passerby with “hey you there” and the one who recognizes himself and turns around (nearly everyone) to answer the call does not, strictly speaking, pre-exist the call. Althusser’s scene is, therefore fabulous, but what could it mean?

The passerby turns precisely to acquire a certain identity, one purchased, as it were, with the price of guilt. The act of recognition becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence. (15)

So it becomes clear that through their performativity the things with which we live, far from simply reflecting some pre-existent subjectivity, through a process of appellation and incitement to discourse, actually function to constitute the subject. This is then to propose that objects, as active things have certain recognisable behaviours, and it is to suggest that the acknowledgement of the performativity of objects may lead to a study of such behaviour, which could be described as an ethology of things.

Performativity, therefore, is a dynamic and emergent quality of subject-object relations, one which acts to break down the dualism of such interactions in the recognition of the fact that matter is active. Performativity is much more than the stimulation of an object to “perform” in a theatrical sense, rather it is the assertion that all things act, that things *behave* in a certain manner and that such behaviours then help to generate and define the nature of human subjectivity in a very real and identifiable manner.

(14) Butler 1997, 18.

(15) Ibid., 25.

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Patterns

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In recent years there has been widespread interest in patterns, perhaps provoked by a realisation that they constitute a fundamental brain activity and underpin many artificial intelligence systems. Theorised concepts of spatial patterns including scale, proportion, and symmetry, as well as social and psychological understandings are being revived through digital/parametric means of visualisation and production. The effect of pattern as an ornamental device has also changed from applied styling to mediated dynamic effect. The interior has also seen patterned motifs applied to wall coverings, linen, furniture and artefacts with the effect of enhancing aesthetic appreciation, or in some cases causing psychological and/or perceptual distress. (1)

While much of this work concerns a repeating array of surface treatment, Philip Ball's *The Self-Made Tapestry: Pattern Formation in Nature* suggests a number of ways that patterns are present at the macro and micro level, both in their formation and disposition. Unlike the conventional notion of a pattern being the regular repetition of a motif (geometrical or pictorial) he suggests that in nature they are not necessarily restricted to a repeating array of identical units, but also include those that are similar rather than identical. (2) From his observations Ball argues that they need not necessarily all be the same size, but do share similar features that we recognise as typical. Examples include self-organized patterns on a grand scale such as sand dunes, or fractal networks caused by rivers on hills and mountains, through to patterns of flow observed in both scientific experiments and the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci.

Alongside this distinction Ball also characterises the difference between pattern and form, although sometimes the two seem inextricably linked. He suggests that form concerns the "characteristic shape of a class of objects", but that they need not all be the same size. (3) Sea-shells and flowers are given as examples, particularly as no two are identical but share certain features that are typical. To this

Figg. 1-2.
Ingo Maurer, *Rose, Rose, on the Wall...* 2006. RGB LED programmable "domestic wallpaper" (blue) © Ingo Maurer GmbH, ph. Tom Vack, Munich).

(1) Rodemann 1999.
(2) Ball 1999, 9.
(3) Ibid.

extent forms tend to be characterised as bounded and finite, whereas patterns are extended in space. (4)

The patterns I am interested in are those that are unleashed into the environment, and placed over all interior surfaces including walls, bed hangings, curtains, cushions and coverings. Whether using botanical, floral, striped or geometrical motifs, the effect of objects imitating other objects causes the interior environment to become blurred and unclear. This assimilation of patterns into space hides or releases clearly identified physical forms from their role in assisting spatial navigation and perspectival orientation. In the case of the heavily patterned interior where bedspreads resemble walls, resemble lamps, resemble cushions, resemble hangings, and resemble covers and upholstery, there is a spatial disturbance.

In this saturated environment objects, artefacts and surface coverings occupy particular spatiotemporal, or proxemic, positions that render objects indistinct. We could say that the pattern of one surface has in a sense corrupted the other, or as Roger Caillois, suggested the “properties of objects are contagious. They change, reverse, combine and corrupt each other if too great a proximity permits them to interact.” (5) Caillois’ studies on insects indicated that surface mimicry such as wing colouration on moths imitating tree bark, has little to do with protection or hiding to evade predators, but rather concerns “distinctions and confusions” it produces between itself and the environment. According to Elizabeth Grosz this ability to morphologically imitate means that “the creature, the organism, is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but one point among others.” (6) We could therefore say that the disorder of spatial perception and the desire for similarity has a goal, which is to “*become assimilated into the environment.*” (7)

When looking at the interior, a number of historic and contemporary examples seem to resonate with both the notion of spatial extension and assimilation. One early example of surface mimicry occurs in the interior of Robert Adam’s Etruscan Dressing Room (1775) at Osterley Park in Middlesex. In this eighteenth century room, chairs are placed against the perimeter wall and brought to the centre when needed. The chair-rails are painted in a similar manner to the room’s dado, and when placed against the wall it renders them indistinct. This doubling of the painted surface blurs and confuses the chair’s relation to the wall, such that one might be mimicking the other, and the chair rail (as a distinct entity) disappears.

(4) Ibid., 10.

(5) Caillois 1980, 27.

(6) Grosz 1995, 89.

(7) Caillois 2003, 98.

Although this example depicts a momentary incident between furniture and wall surface, other interiors concern the creation of a

fully immersive environment where the whole space is saturated with the same or a similar pattern. Karl Friedrich Schinkel's design for a boudoir at Schloss Charlottenhof in Potsdam, Germany (1824-30), comprises a continuous fabric surface that flows across the ceiling, down walls and out into space. Fine timber stools, chairs and daybeds are upholstered with the same material, producing, according to Ben Pell, "an intoxicating atmosphere for Friedrich Wilhelm IV and his guests." (8) In this instance the room is, as Pell argues, a fully immersive environment constructed through the relentless repetition of the graphic as it extends into space.

Although both of these examples are composed of abstract motifs, other designs including floriated and biological images have infused domestic interior spaces. Some blur the real and artificial and dissimulate the environment through application of the same or similar patterns across several surfaces, fabrics and objects. Lady Barker in *The Bedroom and the Boudoir* (1878) describes an occasion when the real and artificial blend into one. Not only is the individual form (rose) recognisable as a garden plant, it is seamlessly accepted through its representation. She states: "I know a rural bedroom with a paper representing a trellis and Noisette roses climbing over it; the carpet is shades of green without any pattern, and has only a narrow border of Noisette roses; the bouquets, powdered on the chintzs, match, and outside the window a spreading bush of the same dear old-fashioned rose blooms three parts of the year". (9)

In this short description, Lady Barker established a direct connection between the inside and outside. The pattern of Noisette roses connects the interior to landscape, dissolving boundaries as the pattern of real and artificial flowers extend into space. The traditional reading of interior architectural space as a bounded volume no longer holds when conceptualised through the effect of a repeating motif. There is a spatial disturbance. The existing architecture is neither regarded as a structure/substrate for surface ornamentation, nor as an ordering system to be enhanced with decorative motifs. Lady Barker's room is disassociated from traditional physical and spatial systems, and is constructed in relation to the exterior vegetation, which is mimicked through a form of abstracted representation. It is an intense experience engaging the senses and producing an immersive intoxicating atmosphere for the woman in her boudoir.

This outlaying of biological patterns across objects and surfaces alters our perception of space and conversely alters architectural space. The resultant spatiality mimics the garden, in as much as patterned surfaces/objects imitate each other, such that the relationship

(8) Pell 2006, 117.
(9) Barker 1878, 11.

between pattern and environment is blurred and confused. The environment is no longer distinct from the object, but remains an active component of its identity. It is room becoming garden, becoming dynamic, disorientating; it is desire as production.

The above examples indicate how individual objects (chair/wall), spatial envelopment (striped fabric) and spatial extension (rose), disturb the presumed clarity of the physical interior. The new technologies of CAD-CAM manufacturing (laser-cutting, digital printing, etc), provide tools that are able to print, cut, fold and construct patterns on a diverse range of materials and in numerous variations. While such techniques are used in building construction their application to fabrics, including handbags and accessories, invite the print to travel through seemingly unrelated cultural categories.

Marimekko, the Finnish textile and clothing design company, has developed a range of prints that are inextricably bound through media and imaging as much as through cultural association. Applied to various products including handbags, bed sheets, crockery and clothing, these regular geometrical patterns are executed at different scales. They are not bounded by “real” interior space, but link the interior to clothing and accessories in a mobile fragmentary manner. Atelier Manferdini also operate in a similar manner, but unleash their digitally fabricated patterns onto metal objects, clothing, running shoes and architectural designs. The intention this time is not to hold a collective identity for these products, but to release the pattern from the constraints of conventional ordering devices, and allow it to take over. That is, to immerse itself within the environment rather than creating an immersive environment.

New technologies offer the possibility of non-static motifs, or the regeneration of patterns through interactive technologies such as those employed by Ingo Maurer. His recent installation, *Rose, Rose, on the Wall...* is a “wallpaper” project composed of 900 circuit boards with around 10 per cent equipped with RGB LEDs set out in a rose pattern. Complete with flat plasma-screen fire, the colour and brightness of this domestic wallpaper can be adjusted and programmed according to mood, thereby changing the appearance of the repeating pattern.

While this latter project is static in location but variable in intensity, other patterns discussed above are lured into material space and desire to be dispersed everywhere, to be within everything, and even to be matter itself. We could say that under this conception objects

and environment withdraw pushing back the constraints by which we realise space, such that it becomes a fully immersive environment. Although Caillois' *psychasthenia* is a response to the lure posed by space for the subject's identity, in the saturated interior the subject's (pattern) response is constructed in a similar manner. That is, the interior as a dissected and stratified entity is replaced by one of movement and shifting states, which for the occupants removes their traditional right to a "perspectival point" and, to use Grosz's terms, forces the participant to "abandon themselves to being spatially located by/as others." (10)

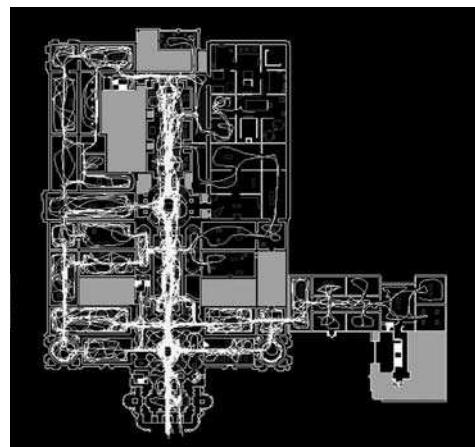
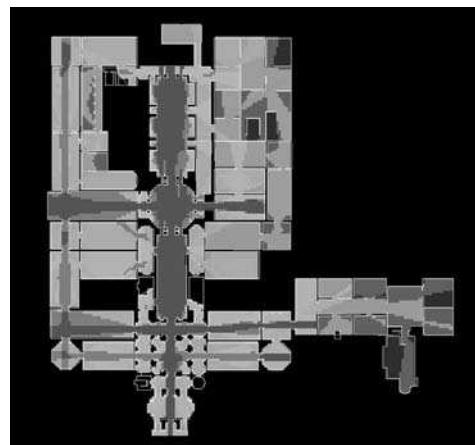
(10) Grosz 1995, 90.

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Configuration

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Both as physical objects and as organised spaces, buildings are *ensembles*: how parts are *configured* to form wholes is more important than parts in isolation. The key intellectual problematic of architecture lies in this. The human mind deals with *ensembles* as its deals with *configurations* in general: as ideas to think *with* intuitively, rather than as ideas we think *of* analytically. For example, languages have terms for simple spatial relations – “between”, “inside” – but no terms to describe the complex configurations of space in real buildings. Architectural space is in this sense “non-discursive.” We can intuit simple properties, but have no language to talk about more complex cases which elude intuition. Architecture is then in permanent need of a configurational language to make the nondiscursive properties of space discursive.

Fig. 1.
B. Hillier, (a) Visual integration analysis of the Tate Britain layout and (b) visitors' traces, 1996.

Here, we argue that such a language exists. (1) It sets out from the commonsense idea that the word “configuration” means taking into account all the inter-relations among the elements making up a complex. When we consider such properties, spaces which appear similar to each other are seen to be differentiated in terms of their positioning in the layout as a whole. These differences are vital to how layouts work. We can show these differences through techniques of *configurational analysis*, which calculates relationships between each space in a layout and all others.

In this presentation, we outline some key concepts proposed by *configurational analysis* and use the analysis of two pairs of contrasting interior layouts of museums to show how configuration affects the generic functions of buildings – meaning, the way they organise movement and create different degrees of co-presence among their users – and how it relates to the specialized function of museums – the display of exhibits.

The first interiors we consider are of two galleries under common ownership: Tate Britain, as it was in 1996, and Tate Modern, as it

(1) The language is known as “space syntax” and its foundations are set out in Hillier and Hanson 1984 and Hillier 1996. For its relevance to museum design see Hillier and Tzortzi 2006. For a wide selection of papers using space syntax see the Space Syntax Symposia at: <http://www.spacesyntax.org/>

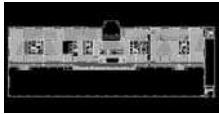


Fig. 2.
B. Hillier and K. Tzortzi,
Visual integration analysis
of the Tate Modern layout,
2003.

was in the first five years of its existence (2000-05), and for which the first was a model. Both galleries take the form of rooms linked by openings and varying degrees of visual connection, both have a roughly tri-partite layout, and both give emphasis to the idea of the visual axis that traverses the length of the building to structure the layout.

In spite of the apparent similarities and historic connections, configurational analysis shows that the two layouts are quite different in terms of how spaces are linked together. In Tate Britain spaces are organized in circuits along the axis with many points of route choice, while in Tate Modern the spaces are more strongly sequenced, offering only half the choices offered by Tate Britain, and where there is choice, it tends to lead quickly to a different space in the same sequence.

By using computer-based configurational analysis to examine the two layouts, we find more complex differences. One kind of such analysis is *visual integration* analysis. This means simply that, in a spatial layout, each point will be a certain minimum number of visual steps from all other points. The fewer visual steps needed to go from each point to all others, the more *visually integrated* we say the point is, and the more steps needed, the less integrated it is.

To make the pattern visible we colour spaces (in this case pixels) from red for most integrated through to blue for least, bringing to light the red *visual integration core*. In Tate Britain the core links the gallery spaces together and also links them to the entrance, (fig. 1) meaning that the visitor can grasp the global structure of the building by moving about in it, while in Tate Modern, the core is entirely peripheral, (fig. 2) and so once in the gallery spaces, the visitor has only local information, and cannot intuit the structure of the building as a whole.

Do these differences matter? The configurational differences are in fact reflected in the way people use the layout. By recording visitors' traces we see that in Tate Britain they take many different routes (fig. 1). The central axis is usually part of the route, but visitors leave it at different points, and again quickly find another choice of direction. The effect is that paths through the building tend to be individual and exploratory.

But what is more intriguing is that comparing the visual integration structure of Tate Britain with the movement traces, we find that the two patterns are very similar, and this can be checked statistically.

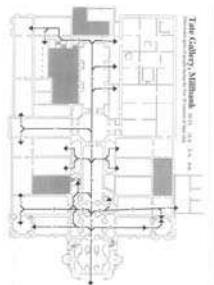


Fig. 3.
B. Hillier, (a) The “re-encounter potential” of the Tate Britain layout, 1996 and K. Tzortzi, (b) View of the main axis at Tate Britain, 2002.

The visual structure of the building accounts for about 70% of the differences in movement rates. In other words, although movement in Tate Britain is **exploratory and individual**, it is guided to a significant degree by the way visitors read the visual structure of the layout. We can say that through the visual pattern of the building, local exploration makes global sense.

But there is another emergent effect concealed in this, this time a social effect. The way in which route choices are structured in the building means that people who enter the building together, first split apart, and then later re-encounter each other, either in the gallery spaces or in the main axis, or in both. (fig. 3) Because of the way human beings recognise each other, this “re-encounter potential” resulting from the pattern of choice in the layout is a significant social property of the layout, and makes the building feel socially more exciting.

The spatial experience of visiting Tate Modern could hardly be more different. Visitors use very similar – even identical – routes through the building, and this in turn has the effect that the occupation rates for different rooms are (unlike Tate Britain) **very similar because** the same people are moving through the same spaces. Once in the complex, the visitors are more or less forced to take one of a very small number of routes, with little differences between them. At first sight, then, Tate Modern appears orderly and efficient in a way that Tate Britain is not. But neither of the emergent effects we noted in Tate Britain – the spatial guidance effect and the re-encounter effect – is present in Tate Modern, since the **visitor movement pattern is** more deterministic and ensures that re-encounter will not occur since people will tend to stay with those they came in with as they pass through the layout. This seems to give a clear meaning to the idea, expressed by director Nicolas Serota that Tate Modern is a “*machine for showing works of art.*” (2) In contrast, Visitor Audits at Tate Britain showed that visitors appreciated the *informal* and *relaxed* character of visiting. The two layouts generate very different spatial and social experiences, and configurational analysis, coupled to careful observation of visitor behaviour, can explain these differences.

The second pair of cases is Venturi’s Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery in London, and Scarpa’s conversion of Castelvecchio and shows how configuration, over and above the functional effects analysed above, affects the way visitors experience the intellectual structure of the display. Here the two layouts are manifestly different, Sainsbury Wing a compact grid of interconnected rooms with a strong central axis, and Castelvecchio a single sequence of otherwise

(2) Serota cited in Tate Gallery Archive, TGMA. Minutes of Assessors’ discussions of stage, Two submissions, Sunday 15 January 1995, 32.



Fig. 4.
(a) Main axis of the
Sainsbury Wing, National
Gallery, 1991 and K.
Tzortzi, (b) Perspectival axis
at Castelvecchio Museum,
2003.



Fig. 5.
(a) National Gallery,
Diagonal views in the
Sainsbury Wing, 1991 and
K. Tzortzi, (b) Arrangement
of sculptures at Castelvecchio
Museum, 2003.

unconnected spaces. But in both cases the pattern of movement has unexpected features. In the Sainsbury Wing, in spite of the choices offered by the layout, most visitors follow one of two routes, and in both the spaces along the central axis become least visited, contrary to design intentions. In Castelvecchio, although visitors take the same global route, there is striking variation in the way and degree to which local spaces are explored.

The effect at Sainsbury Wing follows from a simple flaw in the layout. There is no way in which the visitor can find a route through the galleries without at some stage taking a “wrong” direction having eventually to retrace steps. But function is not the main concern of the layout. In Sainsbury Wing, the organization of space has a strong intellectual intention – it works as a text to be read, not simply as an organizer of movement. Key works are placed at the end of the long visual axes, in the deepest parts of the building, (fig. 4) with a view to drawing movement towards them, while diagonal lines of sight offer glimpses of other key works in other rooms. (fig. 5) As the visitor moves along the two key, intersecting axes of the layout, he or she acquires visual information that reaches the periphery of the plan. The effect is that moving straight on means moving forward in time, while moving sideways means going to a different geographical region. Space and movement express the logic of the display.

Castelvecchio also uses long axes, but ending on blank walls (fig. 4) or exterior spaces rather than key works, with exhibits sometime grouped adjacent to the major axes, (fig. 5) or arranged to subdivide the route, and even stand in the way as temporary obstacles to screen what is ahead. The visitor comes up to the statues and the paintings from behind, and this prolongs the time of reading and invites exploration of the space locally.

We can say that in the Sainsbury Wing paintings are arranged symmetrically at the end of vistas to transform circulation axes into a global system of goal-directed tracks, while at Castelvecchio, grouped objects, asymmetrically arranged, create spaces which encourage local exploration. More simply, in Sainsbury Wing, spatial properties are used to enhance exhibits, while at Castelvecchio objects are used to re-order space and render the museum visit a more architectural and spatial experience.

So we see that in all four cases, the way the architectural layout is configured, especially through its use of visual axes, has a crucial effect on the visitor’s experience of the museum and its display. In Tate Britain, the spatial layout promotes an exploratory and

socially exciting visitor culture, in Tate Modern, one that is more controlled and more exclusively informational, in Sainsbury Wing the spatial properties of the layout enrich the conceptual narrative of the display, while in Castelvecchio, the conceptual order of the display is subordinated to spatial experience. More generally, we can say that in the first and fourth cases space acts *generatively* to create new experiences, while in the second and third cases, space acts *conservatively* to reinforce given conceptual and social patterns. Configurational analysis shows in a consistent way how these different outcomes are shaped by spatial design not though spatial determinism, but as emergent effects from how people experience and use the spatial patterns designers create.

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Elegance

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In this contribution I want to argue that since avant garde, elegance and beauty are too often neglected in judgements of interiors. It was a valid criterium up to the 19th century that deserves a revaluation. We will describe two types of elegance:

objective – visual, formalistic, harmonious proportions
(Leon Battista Alberti, Palladio, Le Corbusier),
Platonic and orientated towards an ideal world;

subjective – wonder and emotions/senses, relationship between interior space and happiness: Louis Kahn, Peter Zumthor, Alain de Botton, Gaston Bachelard, orientated towards personal subject.

Elegance and beauty are often used to describe interiors, or parts of it that please, enchant or fascinate its users or visitors. It expresses wonder, respect and admiration. Vitruvius' concept of *venustas*, alongside *firmitas* and *utilitas*, is translated in contemporary English as beautiful, and delight in Sir Henry Wotton's *Elements of Architecture* in 1624. We all value its essential character, but sometimes fail to pronounce it in our curricula of interior architecture. When evaluating project work, it is usually not on our list of criteria to qualify the design of a student; it is perhaps even advised to avoid this scheme of considerations in order to be more "objective". Yet in 19th century vocabulary on interiors there is no hesitation; in Robert Kerr's description of *The Gentleman's House* in 1864, for example: "The *character* to be always aimed at in a Drawing-room is especial cheerfulness, refinement of elegance, and what is called lightness as opposed to massiveness." (1) Indeed, "beauty is not a word readily found in the indexes of recent books on architecture, although it is a topic that seems to fascinate architects." (2)

Do we still suffer from the functionalist paradigm of modernism and are we really failing to catch up with *venustas* when we left it at the dawn of the avant-garde? Charles Jencks argues in *What is*

(1) Miller Lane 2007, 158.
(2) Johnson 1994, 408.

Beauty? that “beauty is back. Architects are designing harmonious skyscrapers for London, artists are producing works on the subject, and evolutionary psychologists are presenting evidence that canons of beauty are hard-wired into the nervous system.” (3) Jenks opposes the idea that “beauty is objective” and puts excessive sensual pattern-apprehension, through one of our five senses as a foundation for the experience of beauty. This contribution will not enter the discussion of defining elegance and beauty, but will rather dwell on its notion and the relation to interior architecture.

Despite the valuable momentum to move interior architecture closer to academia and to infuse it with research, an important competence will still be the creation of elegant interior spaces. The coveted theoretical basis of our discipline may partly rest in the exploration of this concept of *elegantia*. In the humanistic tradition, one was encouraged to use Latin in a correct and “elegant” manner, e.g. in Valla’s *De elegantiss Latinae linguae* (1471). A similar formalistic interpretation was common to define and interpret *venustas*. Most famously in this respect is Alberti’s attempt to describe the concept of *concinnitas* or beauty in book 9 of *De re aedificatoria* (1452): “Beauty is a form of sympathy and consonance of the parts within a body, according to definite number, outline and position, as dictated by concinnitas(...) This is the main object of the art of building, and the source of her dignity, charm, authority, and worth”. His emphasis on harmonic scale and proportion clearly inspired Palladio’s concept of beauty, obtained, in his view with a set of seven harmonic proportions for designing rooms – three of which he links to Pythagoras. (4) In addition to this classical legitimization, so characteristic for humanist argumentation, Palladio also links beauty with nature and its countless examples of embedded proportions and harmony. This is echoed centuries later in 1973 by Louis Kahn in a lecture at Pratt University:

When sight came, the first moment of sight was the realization of beauty. I don’t mean beautiful or very beautiful or extremely beautiful – just beauty, which is stronger than any of the adjectives you may put to it(...) It is like meeting your maker, in a way, because nature, the maker, is the maker of all that is made. You cannot design anything without nature helping you. (5)

The concept of geometry and proportion as a condition for beautiful architecture, revives also – including its neoplatonic connotation – with Le Corbusier’s modular, stating that “Genius is personal, decided by fate, but it expresses itself by means of system. There is no work of art without system”, or “Regulating Lines’ showing by

(3) Jencks 2001.

(4) Malnar 1992, 91.

(5) Latour 1991, 321.

these one of the means by which architecture achieves that tangible form of mathematics which gives us such a grateful perception of order.” (6) Another, less well known, proportion system of the same epoch is *Le nombre plastique* by Dom Hans Van der Laan. (7) Different from the Modular and its classical precedents, this system is more akin to the spatial character of interior architecture because of its 3D character. By implementing his model, the monk-architect generated fascinating, mostly sacred, spaces. In these interiors “the visual beauty refers to the invisible beauty, the odor representing the spiritual enlightenment (...) what are these but natural forms obtaining a spiritual meaning?” (8)

These “formalist” approaches – albeit with a metaphorical dimension – suggest that beauty depends on lines, proportions or patterns and that its perception is partly cognitive: one has to “understand” the rational behind a certain design. But can seeing and knowing be separated to experience beauty, opposed to what Ernst Gombrich claimed? Louis Kahn and Peter Zumthor enrich the discussion by introducing, respectively, the concept of wonder and the link between spatial experience and one’s emotional state. They want to argue that there can be strong experiences of beauty without knowledge or hermeneutics. Kahn in the same 1973 Pratt lecture said: “Now from beauty came wonder. Wonder has nothing to do with knowledge.” (9) Zumthor believes that beauty lies in natural, grown things that do not carry any signs or messages, or that beauty manifests itself in vagueness, openness and indeterminacy because it leaves the form open for many different meanings. (10) He invites us to examine his spaces with our senses and our intellect:

We may wonder what it was we liked about this house, what was it that impressed and touched us – and why. What was the room like, what did it really look like, what smell was in the air, what did my footsteps sound like in it and my voice, how did the floor feel under my feet, the door handle in my hand, how did the light strike the facades, what was the shine on the walls like? Was there a feeling of narrowness of width, of intimacy or vastness? (11)

The elegant combination of a contemporary addition (1990-94) to an early 18th century Swiss wooden farmhouse, known as Gugalun House, shows well his intention to create a sensuous space to give its users memorable experiences.

Indeed, in his phenomenological discourse on materials and perception the Swiss architect opens the architectural experience to

(6) Le Corbusier 1948, 21, 64.

(7) Van der Laan 1960.

(8) Ibid. 1985, 99 (my transl.).

(9) Latour 1991, 322.

(10) Zumthor 1999, 27-28.

(11) Ibid., 57.

all of our senses and he links it with our moods: “spatial situations in which people instinctively feel good.” (12) This is also one of the conclusions in John Armstrong’s *The Secret Power of Beauty* (2004), when he links the experience of beauty with finding spiritual value, such as happiness, in material settings, such as interior space. The French novelist Marie-Henri Beyle (1783-1842), known as Stendhal, coined it as beauty being the only promise of happiness. This paradigm forms the cornerstone of Alain de Botton’s *Architecture of Happiness*, (13) who traces the link between beautiful interiors and moral status to early Christian and Islamic theologians who would argue that beautiful surroundings make us good as they reveal us something of the Creator’s intelligence, good taste and sense of harmony. It is the task of the architect to design spaces that contribute to happiness by incorporating values. As such we are able to communicate via our interiors, which can become projections of our – desired – self.

Absent in the Botton’s quest for materialized happiness in spatial language, is a reference to Gaston Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*. (14) Yet, in his introduction the French philosopher develops a scheme of thoughts to frame his central concept on the phenomenology of dwelling and poetics. He explicitly refers to the love for *felicitous spaces*, which he likes to call *topophilia*: “they seek to determine the human value if the sorts of space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse force, the spaces we love. For diverse reasons, and with the differences entailed by poetic shadings, this is eulogized space.” (15)

Referring to Carl Jung, Bachelard then develops the notion that the interior of a house can become a tool for analysis of the human soul. It would be worthwhile to explore this further in the context of the Japanese notion of beauty where elements such as imperfection, impermanence (*wabi-sabi*), asymmetry and patina are essential ingredients, just as the bond between beauty and memory and the imperfection of one personal body. Jun’ichirō Tanizaki’s *Praise of Shadows* (16) would be a good guide to contextualize the discussion on beauty in western vs eastern tradition and how both blend in the work and discourse of various architects.

Elegance and beauty are complex notions without clear definitions, but we have tried to argue that it limits our schemes of reference if we would exclude them from our criteria to judge interiors. To make it more complex, the historical link between moral values, such as happiness and elegant interiors confronts us with even more subjective aspects of our disciplines. If interiors are expressions, or projections, of ourselves – see Jung *supra* – they are also becoming

(12) Ibid., 49.

(13) de Botton 2006.

(14) Bachelard 1994.

(15) Ibid., xxxv.

(16) Tanizaki 1933.

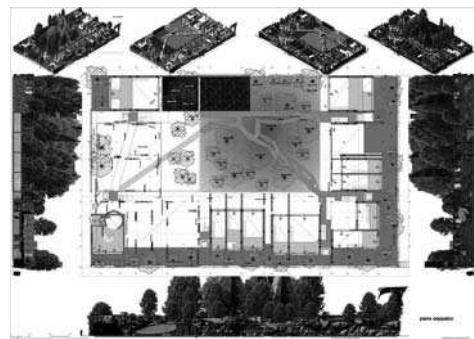
images of our desired felicity. But can we still talk of *topophilia* in our age and contemporary interiors, especially after post-structuralism? The increased attention in popular magazines – but also from students – for concepts like “*Feng Shui*”, “cocooning” or “healing spaces”, seems to suggest an affirmative answer.

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Transitions

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The transitional spaces are actually relational spaces, indoor and outdoor, with a level of privacy typical of semi-private spaces, but for collective use, which are found in more than one occasion in urban relationships.

The article starts from some examples to bring attention to the spatial context of “private group”, for example on the system of locations which are to be moments of connection, transition or conflict, between the building and the lot owned.

We are talking not just about indoor locations, but a set of spaces and elements, often small and not very showy, like the sidewalk, the fenced premises of the house, the entrance door, whose duty is to mark detachment, or to strengthen a link between the inside and the outside: they can be defined as “transitions.”

The following three situations – the house, the bank, the museum – clearly testify the presence in these special spaces and role of transition in which the transition is accompanied to host, with various behaviours in areas with different levels of privacy.

Together with the entrance of the house, the bank's foyer and the exhibition lobby are significant examples of space-filter with the role to mark a departure, or to strengthen a link between the inside and the outside.

In the home, the reception, which follows an invitation to enter, which most often occurs through a window or a door, preceded in turn by a sidewalk, a porch, a canopy, and at times through a filter made of a garden, or even by a small green area.

From here you access the entrance, where the reception can be articulated in sumptuous scenarios with rich suggestions, but most often is very narrow (the entrance hall, especially when there is not a guard concierge, almost always presents too poor finishings and furniture).

If we think the role of the architect is to model space and thus to dress empty spaces, we are obliged to assume that he works in the first place by modelling and building the floor, roof elements, wall perimeters, internal partitions, and integrating them with equipment

Fig. 1.
Luciano Pia, 25 Green
building, Torino, 2010.
General layout.

and furniture, and secondly through the interplay of materials, finishings, colours, decorations, creating chiaroscuro effects of light and shadows, aiming to arouse illusions, feelings and certainties, and while ensuring duties, customs, behaviours, observing rituals, customs, traditions, and sometimes inventing new ones.

In this context, a very interesting work for the interior designer, especially in multi-apartment buildings, is to suggest furniture and equipment for finishing both interior spaces (the communal stairwell, entrance hall), border spaces (the entrance door) and outdoor spaces (sidewalk, fenced premises).

We note in the contemporary design culture a renewed interest in those areas where in the housing boom years the attitude of indifference prevailed along with the lack of care by the designer, who gave great importance only to the functional aspects of transition, often solved with usual solutions and not deeply studied.

The list of elements involved in the furniture project includes:

a) Internal zones:

- the entrance door and its accessories (buttons and video intercom, plaques, etc);
- fixed furnishings of the entrance (mailboxes, any of windows overlooking the guard concierge) together with its fixtures;
- ramps, handrails, lighting of the communal stairwell, with particular attention to the design of the balustrade and handrail, which are very inviting on the ground floor;
- colors of the walls, of the stairwell and of the entrance.

b) External areas:

- pavements, seating, lighting, gates and fences along the paths, but also in the yard, garden, along the porch, in the driveway gate and pedestrian entrance to the building.

Recently we see greater attention to design, leading to enhance the features and quality of the building taking advantage of their areas of transition; see, among others, the building called "25 GREEN" which is under construction in Turin, Via Chiabrera; the architect of the project is Luciano Pia.

The project is distinguished for the use of green in front (with Cor-Ten steel structural elements, tree-shaped that support large terraces with wooden staves) and for the use of innovative technologies in energy saving (use of heat pumps of ground water with the consequent absence of CO₂ emissions). (fig. 1) Close integration between green and horizontal and vertical paths gives the common areas a highly original characteristic to the ground level, which is continued on the terraces at various levels. The block architecture, in



Fig. 2.

Team A (E. Chirico, I. Cillo, V. Colombo, M. Fiorini, E. Monti, J. D'Elia), The retail bank of the future, Torino, Milano, Alta Scuola Politecnica, dissertation 2009. Principal academic tutor: P. Neirotti; academic tutor: M. Vaudetti; external institution: D. Mazzocchi - ISBM-Istituto Superiore Mario Boella.

particular, affects the mood and imagination of the observer when it is stationary and when it moves: the fact of changing direction, level, overlooking unexpected visuals adds to the atmosphere filtered by personal experience and intensity of emotions that often arise from a mix of symbols and meanings in a space that is rich.

In the transition space of the bank the designer must create attention:

- to the behaviour of the audience in the access area that requires a specific kind of attention along the window showcase of the bank;
- to the area of ATM and Automated Teller Machines, with an increasing role of filtering and security between the main entrance area, window showcase and access to the foyer;
- to the foyer area above the counter area and doors, overlooking the most private area, often arranged on several levels, where lounges and safes are located.

The characteristics of these areas also depend on the type of banking office (bank teller, bank branch and bank headquarters).

In the scheme on the side (fig. 2) – as part of a dissertation in 2009 of Turin-Milan Alta Scuola Politecnica (ASP) – there are examples of studies on the organization of a small-medium sized bank branch, where you can see a clear correlation between the functional spaces and a similarity between urban and workspaces:

- the door, as the entry point and security;
- the square, as a common meeting area;
- the market, as the point of transaction and trade;
- the SPA, as relaxation and report point.

In the bank, the entrance hall aims to reinforce the public through the architectural prestige, credibility, image and wealth of the banking institution; the use of large spaces (intended wasted space) in the foyer and the use of precious materials, expensive furnishings rich in the tradition of high quality, which all contribute to give a reassuring look.

This way of understanding the meaning and role of functional areas by comparing them to places of common experience, other than offices, makes the design attitude detachment from tradition even stronger, as can be seen in recent examples in which the credibility and prestige of the bank are celebrated through the use of big names in architecture, offering spectacular and unusual solutions, such as surprising and impressing the audience.

For the new DG Bank headquarters in Berlin, Frank O. Gehry built a mixed-use building made out of a long rectangular plot which includes a bank, overlooking Pariser Platz, a casino and a wing of ten floors of apartments, facing Behrenstrasse.

The proposal spread dramatically in the large courtyard from which



Fig. 3.
Frank O. Gehry, Bank foyer,
DG Bank, Berlin, 2001.



Fig. 4.
Yoshio Taniguchi, Reception
area, MoMA, New York,
2004.

the offices are lit, the scene of an extraordinary representation of space compressed and dilated by reticular membranes transparent and animated by the presence of a sculptural element in steel. The plastic volume called the “horse head”, dominates the scene, patterned with shiny steel plates that contains a small conference room within it; that is the real surprise for those who went through the entrance to the bank and crossed the foyer and the lobby, overlooking the atrium.

The interior, lined with wooden strips printed with small holes, is made even more impressive by the glass membranes which close the holes.

In this comparison/conflict between heavy and opaque materials and soft, bright and transparent materials the designer mixes cultures which are very distant from the traditional stone and wood for the most sophisticated high-tech steel and glass, to amaze the audience and pay tribute to the authority and credibility of the registered bank. (fig.3)

The contemporary museum reception area is characterized by the need to integrate moments of access to conventional moments of presentation (videos, films, audio-videos, multimedia), moments of work by the school (lessons with moments of laboratory), moments of rest and relaxation, moments of consultation texts.

In fact, the foyer often overlaps functions:

- host;
- presentation of new exhibits;
- projection, audio videos, films and multimedia;
- Interaction/workshops (lectures/tutorials/schools);
- relaxation and recreation.

The reception area often contains elements of reference to general scale, whose role is to concentrate in one room – just the lobby of the museum – the urban reality and a series of references functional exposure with aspects of unusual construction captivate the audience. Also in the reception area there are – with the role of a reference point and meeting place for visitors – guides, explanations and tourism professionals, thanks to them that the museum is set up as a driving cultural, tourist and economic life of the community.

One of the most interesting examples from this point of view is the MoMA in New York; it underwent substantial renovation and modernization in 2002-2004 thanks to the Japanese architect Yoshio Taniguchi. The intervention has nearly doubled the available space by arranging almost 58,000 sqm of new space. The David and Peggy Rockefeller Building on the west side houses the main exhibition galleries, while the Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building on the east side houses rooms for conferences,



Fig. 5.
Yoshio Taniguchi, Sculpture
garden, MoMA, New York,
2004.

concerts, workshops for art teachers, the museum library and archives.

Between the two buildings, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden is also enlarged.

The atrium area is developed to allow height to enjoy the sculpture garden, and treated as a tree-walk procedure, rector axis and at the same time axis information of the entire museum system.

The reception is developed by two entrances, both from 53rd and 54th Street, which gives access to tickets, the coatroom, the information area, a theatre and shops and descends to the sculpture garden, arranged on a lower level compared to the lobby which overlooks the restaurant.

The modelling environment has turned this fairly conventional structure and common to many museums into a meeting place, where the many relationships between inside and outside – the hall and the garden – are alive, including routes in relation to different levels to which the visiting public is directed. (fig. 4-5)

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Contaminations

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Fig.1.
Christian Boltanski, *Tant que nous sommes vivants*,
Teatro Valli, Reggio Emilia,
2005 (ph. M. Caselli Nirmal
© Archivio Biblioteca
Mediateca Teatro Valli).

A word check on “contamination” defines it as: “the blending of two forms or of two constructs, in such a way as to give rise to a third form or a third construct”. (1)

The text, which refers to architecture and interiors, to crossovers and osmosis, musters a series of thoughts on the term “contamination” within the overall concept of scenography, not only for theatrical performance but also within an urban context.

Scenography, par excellence, that which relates to live performance in a theatrical setting, is closely linked to the theme of urban scenery. In these two diverse methods of “staging”, the disciplinary confines between the worlds of architecture, art and technology are weak and permeable boundaries; however, they share a common objective: to sensitize and harness the given space, whether it entails producing scenic elements for a show, a street, a piazza or a ludic event.

The substantial difference is that the scenic project is more often perceived, yet not fully experienced; in the case of urban installations, however, the user is invested with a key role in the event. One need only look at the Parco della Scultura in Architettura (in San Donà di Piave, Italy) to understand how architects and artists have realized axiomatic structures (2) where the interplay of art, design and architecture is an established fact.

The installation, even though rich in significance, is immobile; the spectator is therefore the active subject: the visitor is drawn in and thus engages with the architectural and sculptural elements of the object. By contrast, in theatre design it is the spectator who remains immobile and passive: here we have a clear reversal of roles.

As it often happens, the typical example is the spectator/user/inhabitant, the one who the performance/staging/installation is thought for and adjusted on.

That is the reason why the field of theatrical communication, once more, has resulted open to the most extreme themes and solutions: from the setting up of platforms for stadium megashows – of which examples of lack of balance between the audience and the stage – up to the total destruction of space as a collective place for theatrical

(1) “Contaminazione”, Italian dictionary: Treccani, Roma 2009.

(2) Krauss 2007.



Fig. 2.
Aldo Rossi, *La casa abbandonata*, San Donà di Piave, 1996 (ph. arch+art).



Fig. 3.
Pier Luigi Pizzi, *St. John Passion*, Teatro La Fenice, Venice, first night 1984.

communication. What I am referring to is the experience of “room theatre”, where actors – each in a little room – are visited by a spectator at a time and in front of him they play their parts.

At this point I will endeavour to investigate through the appraisal of a number of completed stage design projects in the Italian tradition, how and with what tools directors and scenographers have succeeded in actively engaging the audience. This can come about only if, in theatre, one speaks about the “contamination” of spaces (stage and stalls) and of people (actors and spectators). In an urban setting, however, we discover a different “contamination”, a contamination between experiences and fields of research apparently very distinct (art, sculpture, design, photography).

The theatre is the type of building that has been the least modified over the last two centuries; the vast majority of theatre buildings respond to the characteristics of the Italian-style theatre, the most widely used for the majority of productions. With this, one does not wish to refute the accepted principle of this hallowed spatiality, but it should be brought into question and freshly debated with the aim of creating active audience participation in the action: this is not a coercive space that imposes constraint, but a space that can be reinterpreted. The scenic container should in fact be regarded as a space where breaks with convention can take place in the sense that the standard model of frontal symmetry between auditorium and stage can be altered and shifted, thus challenging the traditional axial, one-directional vision.

The aim is to explore “a general loss of the optimal relationship between the volumes of the auditorium and those of the stage area (...) the result of this lack of dialogue between the world of architecture and that of the scenic arts often manifests as dissatisfaction felt by the theatre planner and designer, and by those who work in it, in addition to members of the audience.” (3)

New ways of making use of the performance space have been achieved by those directors and intellectuals that have made the scenic space a site for experimentation: I am referring to Copeau, to Schlemmer, to Grotowski and more recently to Wilson, Ronconi, Fura dels Baus, etc.

Luca Ronconi is a director who has often been proactive in reaching beyond the “traditional” by invading the auditorium; one need only look at two of his productions, *Calderon* (4) and *L'Orfeo* (5); Pier Luigi Pizzi employed the same process when staging his *St. John Passion* (6).

In these works the scenic apparatus occupies the place that has always been destined for the audience: the theatres, emptied of their comfortable seats, take on a new spatiality and the spectators watch the show from above from the boxes.

(3) Abbato et al. 2007, 9-10.
(4) *Calderón*, by P.P. Pasolini, directed by L. Ronconi, sets by G. Auletti, Teatro Metastasio, Prato, 1977.
(5) *L'Orfeo* by C. Monteverdi, directed by L. Ronconi, sets by M. Palli, Teatro Goldoni, Florence, 1997.
(6) *St. John Passion* by J.S. Bach, director and stage designer P.L. Pizzi, Teatro La Fenice, Venice, 1984.



Fig. 4.
Studio Azzurro, *Giacomo mio, Salviamoci!*, Teatro Lauro Rossi, Macerata, 1998
(ph. A. Tabocchini).

If Ronconi, in *L'Orfeo*, transforms the auditorium into a lake, Pier Luigi Pizzi transforms the auditorium of the Fenice into an immense German baroque church. Indeed, Pizzi attempted to link the typical Bavarian Catholic spectacularity, with its characteristic decorative wealth of rococo stuccoes, with the images of Italian Catholicism (from Caravaggio to Tiepolo, from Canaletto to Rembrandt).

To cite a more recent production, *Giacomo mio Salviamoci!* by Studio Azzurro (7): a multimedia opera-conference based on the life of Leopardi. The narrative unfolds and takes form through the close dialogue between the musical component and its literary and visual elements: the entire auditorium is surrounded by a circular wrap-around maxi-screen that represents the writing desk-world of Leopardi and it is here that a speaker recites his personal tribute to the poet; on this enormous “table” a chain of images dance across the screen, some of which are activated by the narrator’s hand as he touches the table. The audience observes from above the run of video projections of objects as icons and witnesses a continuous intersecting across the three different levels of narrative.

Reality-fiction, interior-exterior are the two points of departure of *Viaggio a Reims* (8): the audience inside the theatre sees the actions that take place projected onto a screen in three external sites: the piazza, the Gallery and the San Fedele Church.

The three screens, differently positioned, monitor, provide evidence of and document the events that unfold outside the theatre; they provide a spectacle, but above all they offer a fresh interpretation of an urban space and a scenic continuity between an outdoor space and an interior space.

The television shoot, by exciting different emotions, becomes a distinguishing element of the theatrical event.

A more recent production, one that is closer to installation than to total theatre: *Tant que nous sommes vivants* (9) by scenographer Christian Boltanski. This touring production sees an integration both of the musical elements and the visual and spatial aspects and involves the whole theatre: thus not only the stage area but also the foyer, the boxes, the stairways and the square in front of the theatre. It has the semblance of an “exhibition” where the show itself is displayed as a unique work of art and where the spectators, a hundred or so at a time, can wander freely through the theatre’s interior, just as if it were an exposition, becoming themselves an integral part of the “show” and therefore part of the entertainment.

As the scenographer states: “the audience isn’t simply facing the show, it is actually within it. The most important aspect is that it concerns a work that is halfway between the arts related to time (film, literature, music, theatre) and the arts related to space (painting, architecture, sculpture).” (10)

(7) *Giacomo mio, Salviamoci!*, by Studio Azzurro, music by G. Battistelli and text by V. Sermonti, Teatro Lauro Rossi, Macerata, 1998.

(8) *Viaggio a Reims*, by G. Rossini, conductor: C. Abbado, directed by L. Ronconi, sets by G. Auletta, Rossini Opera Festival, Pesaro, 1984.

(9) *Tant que nous sommes vivants*, touring opera by C. Boltanski, J. Kallman and F. Krawczyk, installation by C. Boltanski, light designer, J. Kallman, music by F. Krawczyk, Teatro Valli, Reggio Emilia, 2005.



Fig. 5.
Gae Aulenti, *Viaggio a Reims*,
Teatro alla Scala, Milan,
1984 (ph. M.Brescia, ©
Teatro alla Scala).



Fig. 6.
Christian Boltanski, *Tant que nous sommes vivants*,
Teatro Valli, Reggio Emilia,
2005 (ph. M. Caselli Nirmal
© Archivio Biblioteca
Mediateca Teatro Valli).

The action that invades the areas of use, traffic and waiting, which in turn become key performers in the theatrical narrative, also through the use of exciting installation apparatus, allows the public not only the prospect of free movement but above all provides a choice in the viewing and listening experience.

On one side the auditorium, the one place that is inaccessible to the public, covered by a plastic backcloth on which an enormous chandelier is placed; on the other side, the stage area with a lone flautist and a few suspended chairs, dotted here and there, in the boxes and foyer, some guitar players and, along the corridors leading to the boxes, ushers, usherettes and spectators sporting masks depicting animal heads.

If in *Viaggio a Reims* the spectator is seated according to tradition and the actor is mobile, in *Tant que nous sommes vivants* the spectator walks around, lingers in the boxes and follows the action from near or afar. In both cases, however, it is a work that relates to architecture and to how the spectator perceives this new theatrical "interior", this new "relationship."

The projects taken as examples reinterpret and reutilize the interior of the "theatre" space partly along the lines of experimental theatre (reaffirming Artaud's magic word "participation"), thus registering and fostering change. Such stagings are samplings of works considered significant as they support the theory of a new way of producing theatre and because they are instrumental in stimulating a collective reflection on the relationship between actors and audience, demonstrating that this can also occur within a conventional theatre space or by also involving localized urban spaces.

This type of stage design was used by the director and by the scenographer as a new constructional element for a performance space, unifying both the two structural elements of Italian-style theatre – stage and auditorium – and in consequence creating a transgression in their usual hierarchy; "it operates – writes Gae Aulenti – through systematic opposition to and with completely different methods from those that the site provides for." (11)

The number of performers, directors and stage designers that experience the limits of the traditional theatre model and who propose a theatre architecture capable of modifying the canonical relationship between stage and auditorium, and consequently establish and recreate a diverse relationship between performer and spectator, is on the rise.

Back in 1968, Peter Brook declared that the problem least resolved in theatre is that of place, namely the contact between the actor and the audience, and that there is still a lack of theatre buildings that offer a practical solution to this problem. (12)

Staging and/or installing are two very frequent ways of projecting

(10) Abbato et al. 2007, 134.
(11) Aulenti 1983, 35.

(12) Brook 1968.

in contemporary cities and must be considered as means of communication and showing up. In the meantime, they open to further enquiries and disciplinary crossings in that they focus both on the themes of new projects within the theatrical space and on the ones of architectural projects as urban interiors. Through providing several illustrations of the emblematic theatrical reality, the aim is to demonstrate that the word “contamination” is part of a “new dictionary” that tells of the complex world of interiors.

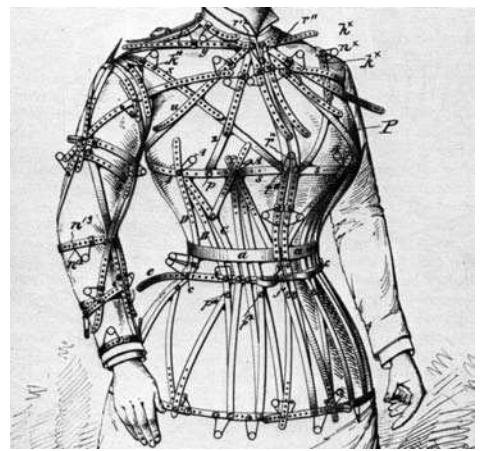
(Translated by Maria Harman)

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Layers

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Interior spaces can be found at a range of scales, from the clothing we wear to the city we inhabit. Between these two scales is an array of layers that can be pulled apart and further investigated, often revealing an identity by which we surround ourselves. The interior and its layers can be seen as the stage set by which we act out our lives as we move fluidly between the layers that encompass one another. This investigation into layers begins at the micro scale and moves to the macro scale, resulting in themes that cut across a range of disciplines and time periods. The first set of layers is tangible and is investigated at the scale of the body, starting first with clothing and moving through objects, furniture and surfaces. Where surfaces become a wall, this demarcates the threshold between “this side and that side.” It is at this point that the layers take a conceptual leap from tangible elements to conceptual realms of private and public as explored in layers entitled: private chambers, public interiors, and ending at the threshold of interior and exterior. By looking at the interior through adjacent layers, a new organization for reading the interior emerges. Inherently, a closer look at these layers elicits a broader set of issues that emerge as nostalgia, personal possessions, identity and gender. These major themes are found on the interior but are rarely discussed critically in the context of interior design. Emphasis is placed on these layers because there is no limit to their placement in history, and they reappear over and over again. Each of these layers can be unraveled allowing for concepts and themes to emerge, making visible their ability to transcend disciplines and scales.

1: Body+image

The first layer begins at the body, which is seen as the core of the interior, allowing layers to build upon it. The Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa writes about the experience of the body and the interior through the senses in his essay *An Architecture of the Seven Senses*. He describes the bodily experience of details and the ability to

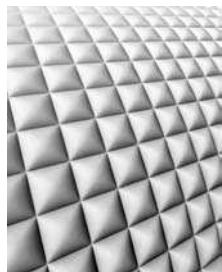


Fig. 2.
Carla Ross Allen and Peter
Allen, *KnoWear Quilt*, 2002.

understand objects through the tactile touch of materials. Pallasmaa writes: “The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes – and not just things”, more specifically, the “door handle is the handshake of the building (...) we shake the hands of countless generation.”(1) Pallasmaa’s writings use the body as a gauge to experience the interior through movement and details.

2: Clothing+identity

Moving one layer out from the physical and cognitive perceptions of the body, clothing wraps the body forming an immediate interior. The evolution of the cut of cloth reveals how the body has been wrapped, and with it, how clothing represents the body. Kerstin Kraft, in her essay, *Cutting Patterns* reveals the significant transition from cloth that was draped over the body to patterns tailored to the body. The difference between draping and tailoring reveals the representation of the body from two-dimensional to three-dimensional patterns. Draping the body in cloth requires little cutting, essentially, using a large circle of material and constructing an opening in the center for the head. (2) The development of tailoring brought with it tools for measurement and an understanding of the body as a curved three-dimensional form (fig. 1). These methods of construction translate into current fashion, especially when seen in experimental clothing. The clothing designer Hussein Chalayan draws a connection in his work between clothing fitted for the body, and upholstered furniture. Chalayan recognizes shared forms between body and furniture, and the cut of cloth as the transition between clothing and upholstery.

3: Furniture+objects

The transition from clothing to furniture leads to the third layer of furniture and objects.

Furniture is designed to receive the body, as well as objects that respond to the body through ergonomic design. Le Corbusier recognized that objects have an underlying form that allows for styles and fashions to attach onto. He called these fundamental forms, *typical-objects*, and believed in their usefulness by being functional, mass-produced and generated out of norms and standards. Le Corbusier championed mass-production as a means for eliminating unnecessary decoration and ornament.

Aside from whether or not objects take on an aesthetic of minimalism or ornamentation, we gain an attachment to objects while others we freely throw away. A sub-theme that emerges from one’s personal

(1) Pallasmaa 1994, 33.
(2) Kraft 1998, 67.

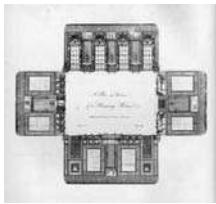


Fig. 3.

A plan and section of a drawing room from Thomas Sheraton, *The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book*, 1793.

collection of furniture and objects is the role of nostalgia and the degree to which we form an attachment to these items. The contrast between handcrafted objects versus mass-produced ones contributes to the degree with which nostalgia emerges.

4: Surfaces and color

The body, clothing, furniture and objects that reside on the interior are enveloped by surfaces in the form of carpets, paint or wallcoverings. Surfaces and color are often secondary to the role of architecture because of their dependence upon structure. Gottfried Semper, and later, Adolf Loos both focused on the relationship of surface to structure, noting that the need for textiles to line an interior is more necessary than the structure that supports it. This relationship guided Loos in writing his seminal essay, *The Principle of Cladding*. More recently, Ellen Lupton has written about new generations of skins that are generated from attributes of the body made applicable to building surfaces. Where Loos drew a distinction between structure and cladding, Lupton draws upon examples of new skins that hybridize structure and skin, making them no longer separate from one another. One example is an artificial skin that mimics a hybridized relationship of skin and structure developed by Knowear. (3) (fig. 2)

5: Mapping the interior

This fifth layer builds upon interior surfaces, such as wallpaper and takes a conceptual turn that situates surfaces, furniture and objects into a map. It is easy to imagine conceptually that a map of the interior can be constructed by peeling off wallpaper and organizing it into a full-scale map of the interior. The architectural historian and theorist, Robin Evans studies the role of representation and interiors in his essay, *The Developed Surface, an Enquiry into the Brief Life of an Eighteenth-Century Drawing Technique*. Evans focuses on drawings that challenge the conventions of architectural drawing in order to emphasize the interior through its furniture and surfaces. Evans reveals that by reorganizing the interior elevations of a room around the floor plan, the focus is drawn inward. (4) (fig. 3). The process of mapping an interior through orthographic projection is a timeless inquiry, as seen in a mapped interior by the architect Jeanine Centuori. In an experimental project, Centuori maps a collection of objects that includes a table, a chair, shoes, dishes and a few other household objects. Centuori coats the objects in liquid latex and once dried, peels away the skin through careful cuts based on

(3) Lupton 2002, 33.

(4) Evans 1997, 209.



Fig. 4.
Jeanine Centuori, *Flattened Room*, 1 of 6 six panels,
1991.

orthographic projection. The result is a map of the interior at the scale of personal possessions. (fig. 4)

6: Private chambers

Clothing, furniture, textiles and walls envelop us, representing the tangible world nestled in the realms of public and private. Notions of public and private are not tangible, but exist as conceptual layers that we perceive through social cues. Layers six and seven refer to examples that investigate notions of private and public.

Personal possessions bring a distinction to the classifications of private and public. One notable example is Sigmund Freud's office where he surrounded himself in a collection of antiquities that populated his office and consulting room. Freud established an intimacy within these rooms that can be compared to a boudoir because of the intimate relationships he organized through the placement of objects and people. This intimacy allowed for the discussion of sexual references to emerge during psychoanalysis. (5)

Reference to sex is inherent in private chambers. Examples include the seventeenth-century boudoir, or the contemporary closet that acts as a container of one's identity. The former being associated with sexual liaisons, while the latter used as a metaphor to describe a person as being in or out of the closet based upon their sexual preference. (6)

7: Public performance

The transition from private to public includes the presence of people as if on display. The early works of Diller+Scofidio used performance as a means for heightening the display of the body. Performance pieces include the design of costumes and props that heightened awareness of underlying systems in our everyday, whether in the act of watching or being watched. Museums are similar by providing collections to be viewed. One example is the Sir John Soane house that turns people and the antiquities inward through the placement of mirrors. In this case, private and public merge as the original intent of the house was to be private, but because of Soane's desire to transcend time, the private interior becomes a public museum.

8: Bridging interior and exterior

(5) Sanders and Fuss 1996, 124.

(6) Urbach 1996, 62.

The transition from interior to exterior can be found at the site of poché. The division between inside and outside, public and private

meet at walls, floors and ceilings depicted as poché. Two artists, Rachel Whiteread and Gordon Matta-Clark reveal the relationship of interior and exterior by cutting into and exposing the thickness of poché'd boundaries. Matta-Clark makes a physical section cut into a house, revealing a view into the interior not usually seen. Whiteread uses the perimeter of a house as formwork for casting the interior in concrete and peeling away the exterior to reveal the interior as a mass rather than as a void filled with objects. The desire to see the interior in new perspectives gives pause as to how we occupy these intimate spaces. The everyday familiar spaces that we know are now revealed to us as if we are occupying an orthographic drawing or architectural model. This last layer, the bridge between interior and exterior, holds the potential to reveal what is familiar by turning it inside out.

The organization of these layers from micro to macro envisions a new lens for how we look at interiors. The layers allow for unconventional examples to translate into the discourse of interior design. Where previously fashion and art may be located on the periphery of interior design, a look at the interior through layers allows for a shared discourse across many disciplines. The discipline of interior design is evolving by being informed of new technologies and space programming. The use of layers, whether the eight ones covered here, or an expanded version, allows for new criteria to enter into the discourse.

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Inhabiting

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The essay aims to describe the word *inhabiting* suggesting a possible debate on its future definitions. This word refers to an abstract concept, something we cannot touch or measure, but can only feel; something that communicates a certain space. The dictionary provides a double direction investigation (fig. 2) and drives toward a possible definition of *inhabiting*. (1) As a compound idiomatic structure this word has two interconnected meanings. The noun [*in + inhabiting*] comes from [*in + habit*], where the prefix *in* indicates a position into space and expresses a place characterized by being inside and not outside. *Habit* instead refers to a habitual behaviour; something that is hard to stop doing because it is intrinsically in the heritage of the performer.

From the word *habit* comes also *habitable* – meaning “suitable for living in”; (2) the word *habitat* – “a natural environment of an animal or a plant; home”; and finally *habitation* signifying inhabiting or being inhabited, as well as a place to live in, a house or home.

The verb *inhabit* means “live in; occupy”, which drives us to *Inhabitable* – something “that can be lived in”; and *Inhabitant* – a person or an animal living in a place.” (3)

In brief, the roots of inhabiting are related to habitat, behaviour, occupancy, inside, home and house, place and space. The sense of this wor(l)d is *living in a place*.

Living in a place is quite different from living in a space.

Marc Augé defined a *place* as a space in which an individual or a group of people recognize themselves. (4) A place is something more than the abstract geometrical *space*. Each place is characterized by an identity generated by the gestures of the inhabitants. Therefore it is subjected to transformation, and it refers to the inhabitant, either group or individual.

This special relationship between occupant and place is also called *habitat*, the natural or artificial environment in which a person, an animal or a plant lives in. Richard Neutra wrote “liveable space and liveable time are not at all the same for all creatures.” (5) Indeed we

Fig. 1.
Intimacy of inhabiting,
Sahara, 2009. Corner
solution in a residential
building (ph. Marzia
Zanolari).

(1) Hornby and Cowie 1989.
(2) Ibid., 559.
(3) Ibid., 642.
(4) Augé 1996, 38.
(5) Neutra 1962, 33.

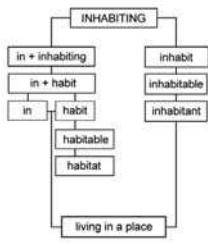


Fig. 2.
Lucilla Zanolari Bottelli,
Word investigation, Milano,
2010. Scheme of dictionary
investigation for *inhabiting*.

may not be able to understand or sense a foreign environment that we don't recognize as our own. He clearly identifies a home as a built object, may it be a nest or a house that fits into the contingent world of the inhabitant and reflects his needs as well as his sentiments: home "must anchor us on a spot of this earth." (6) This concept, similar to the Augé's *lieux*, has an explicit analogy with Martin Heidegger's theory on *Dasein*. (7) In 1951 he stated that *being in this world* means *living in it*, and that inhabiting should take care of this existential space. *Das Gewohnte* is then the familiar place, the habitual, and it is referred to the everyday life of the individual as part of the collective. In brief, in the living place we recognize our soul, and it becomes a mooring place, a very important spot for our existence. Inhabiting is then a matter of the soul.

Place and space are not the same, as well as home and house. Heidegger drew a distinction between *housing*, a technical problem, and *dwellings*, the condition of "man's being in the world." (8) Dwelling reveals the definition of "anthropological" existential space in which to experience the relations within the world. (9) This live-in space is described by Christian Norberg-Schulz as composed by many spaces: a *pragmatic space* in which people meet their biological needs; a *perceptual space*; an *abstract space* of pure logical relations; a *cultural space* in which people find their collective activities as a community; an *expressive space* related to the art as interpretation of changes. In this spatial composition man projects his image of the world into his environment in order to feel at home. (10) And when the world becomes an inside, man is capable of dwelling, which therefore implies something more than a shelter. (11) Inhabiting integrates both concepts of *house* – the shelter, the dimension of privacy, comfort, pleasure, and security, and the answer to our biological needs; and *home* – the cradle of inhabitant's existence with his thoughts, memories and dreams, man's primary world. In *The poetics of space*, Gaston Bachelard stated that "our house is our corner of the world (...) All really inhabited spaces bear the essence of the notion of home." (12) In this point of view inhabiting acquires an intimate character.

Indeed inhabiting is either a private issue as well as something that we share with others. Similarly, dwelling is something that we all do, each of us in a different way. (13) Heidegger strictly related dwelling to building as something that remains, that stays in the place, as the act of taking roots in the soil. But dwelling is also the place where exchanges occur, where common values are accepted, and where we can withdraw from the wider world outside. The ambiguity between the dwelling object and the dwelling action also concerns inhabiting. Each meaning outlines a distinct settlement scale such as the collective area of urban places, the public area of institutional

(6) Ibid., 33.

(7) Heidegger 1991.

(8) Lefas 2009, 8.

(9) Merleau-Ponty 1965.

(10) Norberg-Schulz 1979, 23.

(11) Ibid., 1979, 10.

(12) Bachelard 1969, 5.

(13) King 2004, 18.



Fig. 3.
Domesticity, China, 2010.
Hakka house after ancestors' celebration (ph. Lucilla Zanolari Bottelli).



Fig. 4.
Inhabiting objects, CineVolo,
Id-lab at Beyond Media 05,
Firenze, 2005 (ph. Lucilla Zanolari Bottelli).

places, or the private area of home. The nature of dwelling is indeed the belonging and the participation; either we deal with the public or with the private spheres of inhabiting. In this definition of dwelling, inhabiting bears stability instead of transformation. How does this statement match today's situation of economic changes and social mutations?

Different levels of transformations affect the domestic character of inhabiting. Ettore Sottsass defined domestic as the temple of inhabiting, (14) where we can preserve and protect the ancestral family feeling. On a conceptual point of view, domesticity, as the dogma of home, determines a threshold between the inside and the outside. At the same time a domestic place also responds to our social and personal needs. Nowadays society is based on information and immediate communication where home is no longer a physical place but has a virtual connotation. Together with the main service areas of kitchen and bathroom, today's houses provide an electronic platform of infinite possibilities. How is domesticity changing?

Through time, building has adopted new materials and new techniques. Habits have changed overwhelmed by politics, philosophy, style, and economy. In order to plan a behaviour, interior design aims to control habits occurring in a living space. (15) Manuel Gausa focused on the transformation of the family unit and the collapse of the residential stereotype *one room for each function*. (16) As a result of social instability and loss of certainties, the contraction of space shows new tendencies of the interior spatial distribution, both on the small and the large scale. The city produces a relocation of services that once were domestic, while now they are spread on a urban level based on the *self-service* offer. The increase of conscious acceptance of a residential mobility increases the demand for rental houses with an easy turn over of the occupants. This phenomenon requires "the greatest possible degree of flexibility, where the technical nuclei allow to be adapted to the inhabited space." (17) Houses become more and more technological, and services, such as kitchens and bathrooms, stop being marginal areas and loose their initial privacy aspect opening to other rooms. Moreover the *www* has transformed the image of home, no longer limited only by walls. With a PC and an internet connection the inhabitant *lives* on-line. On the web it is possible to work, meet people, find new friends, invite them *at home*. People of the new millennium also inhabit a virtual place. This digital environment needs a screen and a touch mode or a voice decoder as interfaces between the real and the virtual dimensions. Interiors are heading towards the *sur-space*, where digital surface/space becomes a whole, where walls may convert into full screens almost free of furniture.

While mobility, technology and internet influence future interiors,

(14) Sottsass 2002, 487.

(15) Morales 2003, 347.

(16) Gausa et al. 2003, 347-348.

(17) Ibid.



Fig. 5.
Infeeling the place, Peines en el viento, Chillida, San Sebastian, 2005 (ph. Lucilla Zanolari Bottelli).

what role do objects acquire? Many functions and actions are put into single unit devices to fit small interiors. Homes contain personal items of the inhabitant and objects of common use, some decorate the ambient, others furnish the place. In the temporary renting tendency furniture should come with the house, instead of following us. Together with reduced space and equipped interiors, will architecture revisit the habitable objects of the 60's and 70's? Joe Colombo, Bruno Munari, Alberto Rosseli integrated equipped blocks and adapted them to different situations or elsewhere created units completely out of context. Even earlier, Le Corbusier, proposing the *casier-standard*, stated "the notion of furniture has disappeared. It has been substituted by a new definition: domestic equipment." (18) Today's market proposes single design products for a status symbol to pursue, while the reality is a need for compactness and flexibility, where traditional furniture, such as the bed, table and closet, share the ambient with other objects of everyday use such as the PC, mobile phones, sound supplies, and hardware. Inhabiting objects are part of the place and influence the gestures of the inhabitant.

Looking for a given definition of inhabiting opens a variety of interlinked questions. Inhabiting deals with life and place. It is influenced by changes of habits. It is a necessity of the one as well of the many. But why is it an interior word?

The phenomenon of inhabiting generates a world of relations in space; relations building an invisible network of tensions and possibilities, between people that live-in, but also between objects that furnish the place. (19) The distances between these impalpable threads determine the context of the place, the *interior*. Without these relations, inhabiting does not exist. Carlo De Carli called it "*spazio primario*", (20) identifying the unity and uniqueness of this system of relations as the material of architecture. The *spazio primario* does not have a particular shape, neither dimension nor material, but it is pervaded by life as it is originated from any relationship within. Concerning the physical space, its limits and furniture, architecture by De Carli is found by the harmonic construction of this specific space that prefigures inhabiting and the gestures occurring in it. Architects must possess and exercise the "*infeeling*" (21) of such place, *primario*, futuristic and contingent at the same time. Towards an unknown and unstable future of this world focused on globalization, inhabiting increases the character of the heritage and local tradition, bringing the project to interiorize inevitable transformations.

As the instrument serving life that has place in it, architecture supports inhabiting.

(18) Le Corbusier 1999, 143; translation of the author.

(19) Calvino 1993.

(20) De Carli 1982.

(21) Neutra 1962, 33.

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