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This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

[Brott, Simone](#), Deamer, Peggy, Massumi, Brian, Genosko, Gary, Prelinger, Ernst, Grosz, Elizabeth, & , (2002) Architecture and affect. In Pelkonen, Eeva-Liisa (Ed.) *Architecture and Affect Interdisciplinary Colloquium*, 2002, Yale School of Architecture, Yale University. (Unpublished)

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*“the ‘gleam of the knife that will kill,’ the ‘blush on the cheek of the protagonist.”*

In Deleuze’s Cinema Book, *The Movement Image* Deleuze describes affect as “*a reflecting and reflected unity*”<sup>1</sup> where as well as the bodies or elements that enter into an affective relation with each other there are also the singular effects themselves, or what Deleuze calls “the expressed” – everything that is expressed or left over.<sup>2</sup> In architecture there is always a dual-series of both reflecting surfaces, or, reflectiveness, (walls, persons, and actions) and the reflections themselves (i.e. the shimmering reflection of water in the wallpaper, the person’s look of wonderment)—what is produced by the affect, what the affect leaves behind and how.

What is the expressed affect of Prada at 575 Broadway? 575 Broadway is all about absorption, about being absorbed into its prolific surfaces. The expressed affect, rather than being reflected, is withdrawn into a blur of soft and hazy surfaces. As opposed to Deleuze’s notion of affect-as-entity—surfaces who colonise the character from the ‘outside’—the absorptive surfaces of 575 Broadway effect a kind of negative pull, drawing one inside them. This withdrawn and withdrawing affect owes itself to the spongy materials and blurry detailing of the store. Unlike the traditional, hard and reflective surfaces of status, (granite, gold, glass) the surfaces of 575 Broadway are soft, porous and non-reflective. Even the metallic surfaces are matt or perforated, and what appears to be hard turns out to be foam, fabric and drapery.

The materials, objects and surfaces of the store are: “alifoam,” “soft foam,” “silicone mat,” “silicone bubble,” “metal cloud,” “polyester screen,” “gel wave,” “foam brick,” “foam trays,” “foam box,” “resin shelves,” etc. Consider by contrast the expressed affect of the Barcelona Pavilion in terms of surface and reflectivity: the glossy onyx and hard reflective chrome columns, which express reflection and surface traits over structure. (Koolhaas is, also, an avowed Miesian.) The *expressed* affect in 575 Broadway is no longer a unity of reflection and reflecting but the inverse: anti-reflection, dissolution.

Entering the store from Mercer street, I look ahead and see the mirrored reflection of a three foot high timber partition, in the distance, and a grey metallic vertical member, somewhere in front of the panel, perhaps a duct or column. As I walk over to the stair to investigate, I discover the huge timber skate-hill that fills the room and, later, carries shoes. To my surprise, what I first saw is not a reflection, but the upturned wooden floor curving up away from me. When I walk around the valley, what appeared to be a duct or column is a chain-mesh drapery which hangs from the ceiling (loosely in the form of a cylinder) and falls away behind the hill.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 87

<sup>2</sup> The power of affective singularities, he explains further, is their *anticipatory* role, “they prepare for the event which will be actualised in the state of things and will modify it ... [and, thus,] they are already the event in its external aspect.” Then, quoting Blanchot, he says [the expressed] is “the aspect of the event that its accomplishment cannot realise.”

This proliferation of surfaces and surface effects, leads to a heightened aura of distraction and dissolution in space. The kind of distraction of 575 Broadway is unlike the distraction-space of the mall where surfaces, signs and objects leap out at walkers-by in a mass competition for attention. Here the distraction is not that the surfaces project themselves *on*, but that you're somehow drawn into and dissolved into the surfaces—lost inside surfaces that are almost *there*. What leads to this effect is the general anti-articulation of space. While the axonometric depicts a cogent formal arrangement: a double height space delineated by the cut away valley, and mezzanine walkway, and cylindrical elevator element etc. the experience itself is of a total loss of space, zero articulation, a liquefaction of edges and boundaries. This blurry space is apparently not caused by the formal arrangement or anything to do with the way the space is carved up but, instead, is an effect of surface and detailing: the translucent resin-y, and corrugated white plastic surfaces that dissolve shelving units into walls, and blurry presentation of boundaries.

The excitement of this space is just this liquefaction and giddiness of surfaces accessed visually, but felt bodily, intensely, as vertigo, distraction, disconnect. The affect retracts or hovers around you—you're never really "in" this space so much as you're dissolved by and into it. This aura of dissolution and distraction raises the question of shopping. The promotional book *Projects For Prada* discusses the marketing strategies. Consider the architect's statement "**Luxury is Attention:**"

As the noise level increases (see Times Square), the demands on our nervous systems... accelerate. The ultimate luxury is focus and clarity. Museums are popular, not for their content, but for their *lack of...* you go, you look, you leave. No decisions, no pressure. Our ambition is to capture attention and then, once we have it, to hand it back to the consumer. Rem Koolhaas<sup>3</sup>

But as I describe, it isn't the customer's attention that is pursued, so much as the customer is dissolved into the architecture. There are few "options" in the store and little merchandise, so it is not the clothes but the architecture that demands, that mesmerises.

The next statement "**Luxury is "Waste"**" reads: "In a real estate context where every square meter counts, the ultimate luxury is wasted space. Space that is not "productive" – not shopping – affords contemplation, privacy, mobility, and luxury." Yes, this interior is largely empty space, but the fact of open volume is not felt here as emptiness. This is neither the empty space of a gallery nor the open space of contemplation of Louis Kahn. The surfaces of 575 Broadway, actively 'fill' in their withdrawn and withdrawing character, in an encounter that very much demands attention—psychologically, bodily—through the dissolution of the self that 'attends,' the self that can be 'commanded.' Luxury here is over-attention. The *expressed* affect, what Koolhaas calls waste, is the waste-space or absorbed affect, that fills the interior. So the equation becomes **Luxury = Pure Surplus, Affect**. But it's not only the customer who is consumed in this auto-immersive environment. Here the architecture as 'over-desiring production' subsumes the clothes too, which themselves become the surplus value of the architecture.

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<sup>3</sup> Koolhaas. "Luxury is Attention" in *Projects for Prada*.

The last thing I want to talk about is the 2x4 wallpaper, the black and white mural, (which no longer exists). A series of large repeating black smudges, stretched across the entire 200 foot length of the inner wall—vaguely reminds me of Warhol’s “Flowers” series. (1970) But the graphic smudges of 2x4 present more the after taste of Warhol, the expressive affect of the flower image—a big blot. The blot refers [almost] only to itself, while it once in fact *was* a properly signifying flower, which has been blurred, pixilated, rendered unreadable—almost. It remains on the side of affect, not signification. The blot or smudge, flower-affect—not referent “flower”—is primary. This calls attention to an interesting relation between affect and semiotics which Deleuze raises for contemporary architectural discussion.