

The Troubled Relationship between Architecture and Aesthetic:
Exploring The Self and Emotional Beauty in Design.

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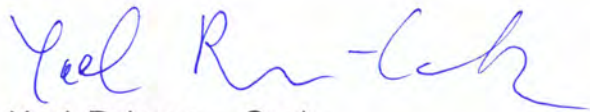
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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.



Yael Reisner – Cook

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Abstract

As its title informs us, this research has a double agenda: investigating the troubled relationship between architecture and its generated aesthetic since the early 1940s when the Self was repressed - the Eye and the 'I' - as well as exploring, through my test-bed project, a design process where feelings and emotions are an integral part.

My research is an investigation into what seems to be a great paradox within architectural discourse. While good architecture or brilliant buildings tend to be judged by their capacity to produce an aesthetic experience, many architects claim they generate architecture in response to rational utilitarian issues, often insisting on removing themselves as personalities from the design process. This down-plays the direct relationship between personal judgement and visual discrimination, a position which has broader cultural implications.

After a short decade (1977-88) of free imagination, lateral thinking and celebrating the Self, from the late 1980s the intellectualisation and further rationalisation of the architectural design process came again to the fore and became an authorial voice substituting the Self by introducing either philosophy, math or both to the design process.

Investigating this troubled relationship took place alongside exploring the creation of an emotional environment within the architectural context; ways in which space becomes emotionally charged. G. Bachelard's exposition of issues contained within poetry teaches us that like poetry, visual poetic images might release people into reverie, the state of mind in which the eidetic memory is accessed.

The wonder and beauty of nature is a constant reminder of wonderful possibilities - with great relevance to architecture. My intention is not to depict or describe nature, but to evoke human emotions (as nature does) through the architectural spaces that I design. Using and evoking poetic images in the design process forming the preludes to emotive architecture.

Spatial-Depth or Depth-Scape were two equivalent terms I coined for a new architectural spatial pursuit; it is the spatial-depth quality and effect that I explored which I believe is the aspect of my research that is a contribution to the field of architectural design. A new spatial concept and a new architectural language that substitutes the ubiquitous and already old Modern planar architecture. Opposed to the prevalent topological surface, with continuous and consistent skins, an exuberant 'inside-out', complex three dimensionally with an enhanced depth to be inhabited or involved with at close distance. A new spatial quality engulfed with emotional triggers such as the manifold silhouettes in the interactive time-cycled Light and Acoustic Installation - an emotional beauty.

For architecture, aesthetics has the power to synthesise poetic and emotional values and at the same time give coherence to the design itself.

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I dedicate this book to Peter and Alexander for their tolerance of my fixation and obsession and for their unconditional support.

Dissemination

Lectures, seminars, workshops

2004 January: Lund University, Sweden, Faculty of Architecture; Lecture: 'Aesthetics, Ethics, Poetics.'

2004 May: Royal Technical Academy, Stockholm, Faculty Architecture: Lecture; 'Aesthetics, Ethics, Poetics.'

2005 April: 'Inside-Out' Symposium, Melbourne; Lecture and Exhibit: Emotional Environment, Spatial Depth and Beauty

2005 January: Lund University, Sweden, Faculty of Architecture; Design Workshop

2006 December: International Design Symposium; AHO School of Architecture, Oslo; Lecture; 'Aesthetics and Emotions.'

2006 March: 'The Shock of the Beautiful' conference, Bezalel National Art Academy, Jerusalem; Lecture;
Architecture, images, memories and emotions.

2006 November: 'Shenkar' College of Design, Ramat-Gan, Israel; Four week design workshop for the jewellery department
on the theme of 'Spatial Depth'(using plastics, textiles, wood and metals).

2007 January: Lund University, Sweden; Three week design workshop on
theme of : Self-expression and Aesthetics as Formative generators of Architecture

2007 January: Lund University, Sweden; Lecture: 'Architecture and Beauty - Conversations with 16 Architects'

2007 July: Southern California Institute of Architecture, LA; Three week design workshop

2007 March: City of Holon, Israel; “Women’s Day” Symporisum speakers: Odile Decq, Winka Dubeldum, Yael Reisner

2008 February: South Bank University, London; Inaugral lecture 2008-9 series

Exhibitions:

2006 April: Melbourne, Australia; A Digital show for the ‘Inside-Out’ symposium exhibition

2007 June-September: Summer exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London; Exhibited ‘Music Pavilion’ A1 B&W print .

Publications:

2004 Catalogue for Israeli Pavilion, Venice Biennale; ‘Tel-Baruch Promenade’s Extension into the Sea’ (2nd interpretation)

2004 UCL Bartlett School of Architecture: Summer Show catalogue, Diploma Unit 11

2005 UCL Bartlett School of Architecture: Summer Show catalogue, Diploma Unit 11

2006 ‘Architecture of Israel’ magazine No.64 : *‘a house and a pavilion’*

2007 December: South Bank University, London : LSBU Review (book of lectures)

2008 Wiley book: ‘Architecture and Beauty, Conversations with Architects about a Troubled Relationship’
(completed, now with publisher for production); expected launch date October 2009

1. Introduction: The Self and Judging by Appearances

“So, in a sense, the way the thing looks is the real domain of the architect because it’s about visual sensibility and culture. It’s been around through the centuries, and it’s still here although it’s treated differently – we have different technology and ways of communicating and developing that culture – but there is an intelligence in the way things look. Whether it’s the way a plant or flower or the sky looks, there is something we need to analyze about it and understand rationally. It’s not just emotion; the way things look is actually deeply intellectual.” (Lebbeus Woods, in a conversation with Yael Reisner, New York, November 2006)

“In Images...beauty was the agency that caused visual pleasure in the beholder...I direct your attention to the language of visual affect -to the rhetoric of how things look- to the iconography of desire- in a word, to beauty!” (Dave Hickey 1999)

“It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The mystery of the world is visible, not the invisible” (Oscar Wilde)

1.1. Preface

Following the wide dissemination of the values of Modernism many of the vanguard architects over the last 70 years have deliberately generated their architecture without a primary consideration for its appearance;¹ meanwhile their critics, some colleagues and the public still paradoxically blame architects for being driven by stylistic decisions. For example, in the April 2007 issue of the popular weekly Building Design (BD) magazine - read by most architects in the UK – a headline on the front page claimed:

“Public wants space not style, architects told. Over-design is creating public spaces that people don't want to use, warns top think-tank....A new report, the Social Value of Public Spaces, for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, attacks key aspects of current government policy concerning public space.”

Similarly, in March 2008:

“Starchitects are merely stylists, say RMJM boss. Peter Morrison calls on architects to regain status of 'master builder' in unprecedented attack...”

1 For example: At the end of 1940s Peter and Alison Smithson engaged with the notion of 'New Brutalism' where they denied aesthetic considerations while designing the Hunstanton High School in Norfolk. In the 1950s Aldo van Eyck called for a return to humanism as a generating force of architectural design. In the 1970s, Christopher Alexander from Berkeley University school of architecture wrote his influential book 'Pattern Language' that prescribed templates for good design. At London's AA, John Frazer, the forefather of the computational process in architectural design, continued to advocate his theory of 'Evolutionary Architecture' – an approach evolved from the 1970s to the 1990s where the 'genetic code's logic was borrowed and became the generator of form'. In Australia, Glen Murcutt – a Prizker Prize laureate – claimed that his architectural process had no connection with aesthetics, while Italian architect Gaetano Pesce also suggested he was not led by aesthetic values throughout his career. The digital architect Mark Goulthorpe also continues to suggest that his computational process is not led by an aesthetic discourse; the list goes on.

2 The objectivity of this sort of data was already mocked in the early 20th century by the Italian play writer Luigi Pirandello who said: "Facts, then, are like sacks. They won't stand unless you put something in them." These words of wisdom haven't seemed to deter architects.

3 One of Colin Rowe's great phrases about Modern architecture (Architecture of Good Intention, pg25)

4 Rem Koolhaas, Ellen van Loon. Completion planned for 2011.

5 Architects are treated by colleagues or critics as ego hunters who impose their will along with their pursuit of vision.

My proposition came as a consequence of a long preoccupation with what I refer to as the 'troubled relationship' between architects and the content of their architecture and its relationship with form and aesthetics. Good architecture and brilliant buildings tend to be judged by their capacity to produce an aesthetic experience; however, many outside the architectural profession may be surprised to learn that architectural design is not led by a process that is engaged with issues of aesthetics or visual thinking. As the task of servicing society in a practical manner took on a new significance following the Second World War, words such as 'style', 'beauty' and 'aesthetics' virtually disappeared from the architects' vocabulary. Modern architecture was now discussed in terms of utility - in fact, in terms of everything other than Form and its derivatives.

As the process of eliminating the individualistic approach developed over these 70 years or so, debates about the meaning of objectivity - as opposed to the subjective areas of aesthetics and taste - became more significant. New definitions of the subjective arose, drawing examples and reassuring analogies from physics (from the Theory of Relativity, for example) to psychology, philosophy and the social sciences. These debates examined and redefined what might be the most objective way to produce architecture. As well as the functional aspects of design, facts and statistics became sources and generating forces for architecture; as these came from the results of scientific and empirical processes this sort of data was considered reassuring.² Diagrams were overpowered by the moral issue of being objective and became little more than the 'appearance of the impeccable logic'³ (a recent example is the Hamburg Science Centre in Hamburg, Germany, by OMA partners).⁴ During debates on the validity of signature or iconic architecture versus neutral architecture,⁵ subjective insight was often regarded as an irrational response, while the

“Appereances of the Impeccable Logic”
OMA Hamburg Science Center, Hamburg, Germany, to be
completed in 2011



OMA Social Housing, Fukuoka, Japan, 1990s



Preface

1 The expression 'hegemony of the eye' appears during the 20th century as a form of criticism. Many important books became historical evidence for this, especially: David Michael Levine's *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1993) and Walter J. Ong's *The Presence of the Word* (Yale University Press, 1967). Other examples include Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes – Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994) and, more specifically discussing it in architectural context, Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses* (Polemics, Academy Editions, UK, 1996).

2 Indicative of this approach to architecture is that one of the most well known architects internationally and a Prizker Prize Laureate, Rem Koolhaas, is inconsistent in his use of the diagram. Recently, in Hamburg, the diagram was used to generate ideas-based design, while in the early 1990s when he built a residential complex in Fukuoka, Japan, aesthetics played a more direct role in the design process. We can trace this through his numerous faxes to the collaborating local architect (I came across these faxes at OMA's exhibition at the ICA, London), insisting on not giving up the blackness of the built physical frame that visually holds together each of the two blocks of apartments. On meeting Koolhaas at the Royal Academy in London (in the late 1990s, after the ICA exhibition) I asked him why he likes to build in Japan; his response was that the Japanese had an incredible sense of beauty. I wonder if it matters to him these days?

3 Juhani Pallasmaa, in a conversation with Yael Reisner, Helsinki, December 2004.

4 Zvi Hecker, in a second conversation with Yael Reiser, Berlin, December 2006.

5 Leon van Schaik, *Mastering Architecture, Becoming a Creative Innovator in Practice*, Wiley-Academy, Great Britain, 2005 p.176

6 As Leon van Schaik expands: "If they regard it as a profession at all." Until the Victorian era architecture was considered an art. Now most registered 'architects' consider it a business. I like Davis McCaughey's definition of profession: practice based on a body of knowledge and exercised in order to help society. The body of knowledge is held in trust for society and its nurture provides the professional with the autonomy needed to make judgements about how to help. "Professionals are advisers, not agents." Leon van Schaik, *Mastering Architecture*, p.177 (Davis McCaughey, *Piecing Together a Shared Vision 1987 Boyer Lectures*, ABC Enterprises (Cross Nest, New South Wales, 1988).

7 However, he expands: "That this is not accepted by society today is partly, I think, a swing of the pendulum towards an ideology of the market...it is also, I observe, the result of architects embracing 'social engineering'....the knowledge applied was not architectural."

notion of the 'spirit of the time' was never questioned, despite being an idea that in itself is in conflict with pure empirical approaches to architecture. The 'hegemony of the eye'¹ and the seductive eye² with its 'deceits' no longer suited the demand.

This poignant issue is encapsulated in the classic dyad of 'content and form' and how, as a principle, it is understood or perceived by architects of our time. As the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa eloquently describes in his interview:

"The discipline of architecture is 'impure' in the sense that it fuses utility and poetics, function and image, rationality and metaphysics, technology and art, economy and symbolization. Architecture is a muddle of irreconcilable things and categories."³

Zvi Hecker pinpoints one of the everlasting difficulties of the architect's career: balancing professionalism with creativity and experimenting:

"[The] architect is always within a schizophrenic situation because, on one hand, he is a professional and on the other, he is within the creative process of searching, [experimenting] and developing the design."⁴

Leon Van Schaik explains that the source of the architects' troubles with their mastery is that the notion of architectural professionalism, as we understand it, originated at the beginning of the 19th century when architecture was perceived and defined as technology. Leon van Schaik emphasises that architects continue to confuse their 'knowledge base':

"When architecture was professionalised in the early 19th century, it was done on the basis that the unique area of knowledge that this profession had custody of – in the interests of serving the public disinterestedly – was that of the master builder....The error was that this placed technologies at the forefront, instead of quality that all humans strive for. In medicine and the law, technology serves in pursuit of health and justice...but defined as technology, architecture is impoverished as a practice and fails as a profession. The impoverishment stems from a limited definition of what is appropriate architectural knowledge. I propose a wider, more inclusive, definition."⁵

Leon van Schaik suggests that architects can enlarge their definition of the 'knowledge base' of their profession⁶ and develop a knowledge originating from their encounters with the world and engage with architecture in the same way as people might engage with it.⁷ Thus it seems that the tendency to undermine the cultural and artistic facet of architecture for the sake of pragmatic needs is one of the aspects of the 'troubled relationship'.

1.2. My Intimate Landscape – Part I: Memories from Indoors life

1.2.1. The architects' 'black box'

The historic struggle of the 'troubled relationship' between architectural content and form within the second half of the 20th century resonates with me at a distinctly personal level and, over time, provided the provocation for my engagement with the notion of the difficult position that Aesthetics holds within architecture. Before discussing this, however, I would like to say few words about the 'black box' phenomenon. The first time I saw the term 'black box' in its architectural context was at the end of the 1990s, when I read an essay by the architectural historian Reyner Banham.¹ Banham claimed that architects' black boxes are impenetrable:²

"I propose to treat architectural mode or presence as a classic 'black-box', recognized by its output though unknown in its contents."³

The essay is aiming to define what makes a building architecture and what makes a designer into an architect. He claimed that:

"Professionalism and taking responsibility on the overall act of architecture don't make architects, but just a noble profession."

The essay raises the difficulties in revealing how architects create architecture, and it seems that Banham in the end blames it on the architects - that they are not clear on how they have created a building confuses the public and works against them.

For a long time I thought that my 'intimate landscape', as I call it, contains only memories of things I was attracted to in my childhood and thought they were all visual memories and visual affinities – but in 1997 I realised that this is not entirely the case. It was Mark Cousins, the head of general studies at the AA, who, when I met him in December 1997 (ten years after I finished my studies at the AA),⁴ drew my attention to an existing, latent part of that box, that container of my intimate landscape. When I briefed him about all the things to which I am attracted and the things I like dealing with in architectural design, his first (and last) question was:

"What do you really hate? Why do you think only about the things you like as the triggers to your work?"

I left his room knowing my answer, knowing in intricate detail what it is that I really hate. That Christmas was the first time I wrote down what I hate most of all. I explain this here, under the title Indoor Debates - a longer and more elaborate description of the earlier version of this text.

1 I realised, after years of preoccupation with the subject of the troubled relationship, that Reyner Banham and Colin Rowe were discussing similar issues, mainly to do with their disbelief as to how architects during the 20th century distanced themselves from an open engagement with aesthetic through their design process.

2 Although originally published in 1990, Banham wrote this article just before March 1988, just before he died.

3 Reyner Banham, 'A Black Box; The Secret Profession of Architecture', in *A Critic Writes*, essays by Reyner Banham, University of California Press, 1996 p.293

4 I had to do the notorious essay for the AA, which no one ever completes on time, some years after I finished my Diploma studies. This was a well known, silly phenomenon of the time. I approached Mark Cousins in order to assist the completion of this essay.

1.2.2. Indoor debates

Since my youth I have admired beautiful objects and adored the look of things. I was born with a sensitive eye which developed during my childhood and adolescence,¹ despite growing up in the context of the Socialist,² Modernist and cosmopolitan culture of the provincial city of Tel-Aviv in the 1960s. The Israeli collective identity of the time idealised modernity and simplicity; ideological debates were prevalent and aesthetic 'indulgence' was absent, frowned upon and treated as reminiscent of the old habits of the European Bourgeoisie.

As I grew up in the modernist white city of Tel-Aviv, I gradually became aware that its beauty was the cultural statement that shocked most visitors between the 1930s and 1960s. However, I suspect that the Modernist Socialist attitude of the people of Tel-Aviv was the major cause of the dilution and bad treatment of the city's new beauty. The socialist agenda focused on the practical, utilitarian, socio-economical-political issues and categorically left aesthetics behind. 'Content' was satisfying and more significant, and, as Tel-Avivians often remark: 'we don't argue about taste and smell'. This prevalent expression politely cuts off any conversation with such a personal attitude as it interrupts the conversation with a reminder of the 'agreed' consensus.

My persistent attitude towards the look of things was further triggered by my father. Towards the end of the 60's I entered my teens. At home, 'indoor' life was saturated with many vivid discussions and exchanges of views about people, books, theatre and films. Most of these emanated from that very jolly Austro-Hungarian-Jewish intellectual, my father, a chemical engineer whose heart and time belonged to European Modern culture. He loved his daughter dearly, but rarely missed an opportunity to tease his girl for her appreciation of things because of their look.

1 In 1786, Goethe wrote in his diary *Italienische Reise*: "It is evident, that the eye is educated by the things it sees from childhood on."

2 And to be more precise one must add that the Socialist attitude of Israelis was reinforced by the Jewish iconoclastic tradition. Walter Ong threw further light as he wrote:

"...It has been a commonplace the ancient Hebrews and the ancient Greeks differed in the value they set on the auditory. The Hebrews tended to think of understanding as a kind of hearing, whereas the Greeks thought of it more as a kind of seeing." (1967).

3 The jar in the picture is of an Israeli advertisement that hung on my father's office's wall.

I was accused of adoring empty vessels rather than admiring 'content' produced by intellectual activity (and therefore, in my father's opinion, worth critical appraisal). Our conflict was reinforced daily by a famous Hebrew saying 'don't look at the jar but at its content', which finds its parallel in the English saying, 'don't judge a book by its cover'. The Hebrew does not translate directly, however, as we use a word related directly, and solely, to the word 'content'.³ I was blamed for adoring this pointless empty vessel which, because it contained 'nothing much', was not worth thinking highly of. The content must be the important thing, the loaded content, the product of intellectual activity, worth having a critical view of. I assume my father used the Hebrew expression as a popular local variation of a prevalent German expression with which he grew up: "Est kommt auf di inneren werte



Fig.1. A poster which was hung in my father's office. It says: "Our future is where our past is", a metaphor related to the Hebrew prevalent expression "Don't look at the jar but at its content". The metaphor relates the jar to a container of knowledge, of content; the content is the significant aspect, as here in the poster: the future is in being clever, creating significant industry, science, technology...



Figs 2-9: Tel-Aviv as the new beautiful white Modernist city during the 1930s-40s





Ben-Gurion Boulevard, Tel-Aviv, 1980s

it always depends on the inner value.

As a consequence of my paternal influence, I observed that intellectuals often do not have a developed 'eye' with which to truly appreciate the range of values that can be captured within the 'look of things'; this is even more pronounced if these intellectuals are also socialists. Indeed, they have no genuine interest in looking for the sake of it and turn a blind eye to a visual set of references; over time, visual sensibilities are lost. It doesn't matter if any object is defined by its ugliness, its originality of form, its beauty or its reflection on culture as it will always be reduced to the status of a mere decorative phenomenon.

The Hebrew saying about content is a general cultural remark; however, in my home it was also closely allied to gender: it made a point about superficial girls such as myself who take interest in appearances. The enjoyment of the 'look' of things would be interpreted as the product of 'typical' and 'shallow' feminine indulgence, while appreciation of content was reserved for men; the chauvinism in this view is not well hidden.¹ So, as not to be 'silly', 'shallow' or 'girlish', I went for everything that was 'brainy' and 'boyish': I did well in maths, chemistry and physics. It was an intentional decision to prove that I could be intellectually capable and not just take delight in objects of vanity. It gave me a satisfaction that I needed: my self-esteem depended on it. I relied on this psychological boost so much that I decided to take it to my higher education and read Natural Sciences at the Hebrew University.²

However, I knew all along that deep down I really craved the artistic culture and not the scientific one; in the end, this manifested itself in architecture. While preparing my design portfolio I studied 1st year Art History in Tel Aviv University and went up to Jerusalem the year after, to embark on my architectural studies in autumn 1978. In 1978 I joined the department of Environmental Design in the Art Academy Bezalel in Jerusalem, and received my RIBA part 1 in 1985 and AA Diploma, including RIBA part 2, at the AA London in 1987.

¹ The Austro-Hungarian world, as Beatriz Colomina puts it, "is emphatically male" (Colomina 1996, p. 37). The ornament, which for "the child, the Papuan and the woman" is a "natural phenomenon", for modern men it is "a symptom of degeneration." (Adolf Loos, 'Ornament as Crime') As appearances were always reduced by my father to the status of 'decoration' or 'ornament', no wonder my father wanted to rescue his daughter from these worrying symptoms of degeneracy.

² I got a BSc in Biology, (with extended studies in Chemistry) from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, in 1977.

1.2.3. The 'Tonio Kroger' effect

One of the offshoots of these indoor debates was what I called the Tonio Kroger effect. In my late teen years my Austro-Hungarian book list¹ was far more elaborate than my Israeli one as that was the one being encouraged and discussed at home. I enjoyed – even loved – those that had been translated, mostly from German, and I still keep them as a nostalgic reminder of home. I found the human psyche and Romanticism particularly compelling in those days.² Most aspects of Early Modernism appealed to me, but some of these also presented, albeit subtly, certain sets of values that troubled me. One of the most relevant and disturbing memories of my early twenties is the short story Tonio Kroger by Thomas Mann (1902). As I remembered it, the character of Kroger, who I thought very highly of, wore very undistinguished suits. One day, he was confronted by a lady friend, a painter, who asked him why he chose to be dressed in this manner. His reply was that such a suit disguised everything that is different about him - a disguise for his awkwardness, perhaps... an important message about Thomas Mann, the author, via his character, Kroger.

Affected by Tonio Kroger's position, I started to doubt my instinct to read people by their appearances or to give appearance too great a role in my judgements. This was reinforced by the fact that most of the people who I admired on an intellectual level tended to dress in an understated manner. I felt guilty and stupid for having different needs, for choosing my appearance so carefully and not disguising my taste, my nature, or my personality. For me, getting dressed involved a highly considered set of decisions, very consciously undertaken: my appearance must simultaneously suit the occasion, my mood and convey the desired image. My aim was to create an original combination of form, material and colour: in short, a cultural event, a celebration of individuality, enjoyment and self-expression through one's appearance. Such efforts were, of course, considered by others to be a superfluous bother. I spent time observing how people 'pigeonhole' their own position – most of the time quite willingly (even if they found this hard to admit). Often people would refuse to admit to sparing time or thought on their physical appearance: they would claim that what they wear is relatively insignificant.³ We all know the feeling of discomfort when wearing the 'wrong' clothing and not representing ourselves correctly (if you don't, try wearing someone else's suit). Tonio Kroger, his plain suit, and the resulting collusion with my father lingered for a long time as a disconcerting memory.

After about twenty-five years, I read the book again - in the English translation this time – in order to check my memory of it. I discovered that Kroger is actually a young author trying to explain to his painter friend what it takes to be an artist, a creative writer who, as he says, is a: "masked man, mysteriously different from other people – ordinary normal folk ...a man



Hayarkon St., Tel-Aviv, 2006; An apartment block opposite the sea (as reflected on the glass door). Looking East away from the sea and into the city the degeneration of Tel-Aviv is revealed.

1 On my list were the likes of Goethe, Henrich von Kleist, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Franz Verfel, Heinrich Heine, Kafka, Hesse and also extended to Dostoevsky, Chekov, Gogol, Albert Camus and Marcel Proust.

2 It was later that I realised how many of them were the modernist writers who explored the big issues of the individual, the inner-life, the irrational.

3 I would always notice how people, even when restricted by school uniform, would signify themselves with unusual socks, badges, hats, shoes – every possible accessory, even when the range was limited.

The 'Tonio Kroger' Effect

predestined and foredoomed to it... you can read in his face that he is a man apart, a man who does not belong, who feels that he is recognised and is being watched...everyone will know that you are not a human being but something strange, something alien, something different.¹

In response to his artist friend's criticism, he exclaims:

"Oh stop going on at me about my clothes,..Would you like me to be running around in a torn velvet jacket or a red silk waistcoat? As an artist I'm already enough of an adventurer in my inner life. As far as outward appearances are concerned one should dress decently, damn it, and behave like a respectable citizen..."²

I was amazed: why had I remembered some passages for such a long time and yet forgotten everything else from the story? This was evidence – as if I needed any more – of how disconcerted I had been made to feel for judging by appearances.

However, it is this attitude, developed in my formative years, which has fed my conviction and influenced my way of life, both personally and professionally in the form of architecture. This dialectic of form versus content informs my research and drives my frustration with the collective message from cultural theory and, more specifically, architectural discourse that the 'content' of cultural and creative output is more important and often carries more weight than 'appearance', and 'appearance' is often misinterpreted as devoid of intellectual depth.

1 Thomas Mann, 'Tonio Kroger', Death in Venice and Other Stories

2 Thomas Mann, *ibid*, p.157.

1.2.4. 'Our Manner of Appearing is Our Manner of Being': The Importance of Content over Form - Historically

If I had read Susan Sontag's book *Against Interpretation*¹ (1961) during my late teens, I might have had some better ammunition against the prevalent attitude surrounding me. I still remember standing in the Triangle bookshop in the AA's basement and reading the two quotations on the top of the first page:

"Content is a glimpse of something, an encounter like a flash. It's very tiny- very tiny, content."²

"It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible."³

I bought the book immediately: she clearly shared my views.

In Sontag's essay *On Style* (1965) she explains how the old antithesis of style versus content lives on in the practice of criticism. However, she suggests:

"Indeed, practically all metaphors for style amount to placing matter on the inside, style on the outside. It would be more to the point to reverse the metaphor. The matter, the subject, is on the outside; the style is on the inside. As Cocteau writes: "Decorative style has never existed. Style is the soul and unfortunately with us the soul assumes the form of the body".⁴

She continues to clarify:

"Even if one were to define style as the manner of our appearing, this by no means necessarily entails an opposition between a style that one assumes and one's 'true' being. In fact, such a dysfunction is extremely rare. In almost every case, our manner of appearing is our manner of being. The mask is the face."⁵

I could have read *Against Interpretation* at about the same time that I was haunted by *Tonio Kroger*, which was written by Mann in 1902. The two texts were written nearly sixty years apart, with sixty years of cultural change between them, and yet it seems that architects keep coming back to the old notions of treating appearances with suspicion and not as the locus of portraying one's culture.

Ever since the Western civilization theorized art, form has been discussed in terms of content. As Susan Sontag clarifies:

1 Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation*. Vintage, London, 1961

2 Willem De Kooning, in an interview.

3 Oscar Wilde

4 *Ibid*, p.17.

5 *Ibid*, p.18.

“...all Western consciousness of, and reflection upon, art have remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art as mimesis or representation” (Plato and Aristotle). And it is the defence of art which gives birth to the odd vision by which something we have learned to call ‘form’ is separated off from something we have learned to call ‘content’, and to the well-intentioned move which makes content essential and form accessory...Even in modern times...The content may have changed. It may now be less figurative, less lucidly realistic. But it is still assumed that a work of art is its content.” (1965)

Sontag was commenting on this in the 1960s, irritating art critics discussing American Abstract Expressionism. Sontag explained how they were looking for translation into content, an interpretation. That x really means y. As she wrote:

“A great deal of today’s art¹ may be understood as motivated by a flight from interpretation.” (1961)

Films were easier for the critics since it was obvious that the visual quality is at least as important as the message within the script, if not more:

“The merit of these works - films with a visual quality, such like Orpheus by Jean Cocteau - is that their content certainly lies elsewhere than in their ‘meaning’.” (Ibid)

What this confirms, among other things, is that content is still, psychologically and culturally, far more important for a lot of people than form. Susan Sontag admits that “What is needed is a vocabulary – a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, vocabulary – for forms.” (Ibid), and her explanation for that is that:

“One of the difficulties is that our idea of form is spatial (the Greek metaphors for form are all described from motions of space). This is why we have a more ready vocabulary of forms for the spatial than for the temporal arts.”

She further confirms that describing the appearance² of a work of art is even harder to do than formal analysis. As she ends the essay *Against Interpretation* she adds:

“What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more....our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all...the function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means.” (1961)

1 In the 1960s, Abstract painters aimed for no content, meaning there could be no interpretation. Pop Artists were working by opposite means to the same result; using a content so blatant that it was never interpreted. The artists fought by talking out their personal views through the image and openly presented their views if they were asked.

2 It seems there is so little intellectual interest in description of form that, despite seeming like a straightforward thing to do, Western languages are not very good at it. We lack the words to describe, for example, the look of a face; The police struggle to illustrate inadequate descriptions of faces.

There is a wider vocabulary available to describe space, as opposed to two-dimensional forms, and this might make one think that conversations about architecture will be richer. This is not the case. Architects have the issue of cultural difficulties which has discouraged discussion of form, appearance, or the aesthetic discourse of their work.

1.3. The design process has nothing to do with aesthetics”: True or False?

For years architecture has mostly been discussed in terms of its ethics, contents or, as a matter of fact, activity, as opposed to discussions of its imagery, look, visual values, or composition. Since moving to London in the early 1990s I have listened to a wide range of architects giving lectures¹ and I have noticed that the familiar expression from my childhood – ‘don’t look at the jar but at its content’ – is a metaphor for the persistent phenomenon of elevating ethics above aesthetics which takes place in architectural discourse. Architects are fighting against, quite vehemently, the emotional, psychological and intuitive personal voice that should work with the cerebral element of the design process. It seems to me that, tragically, a lot of architects have lost interest in the cultural importance of aesthetics, and its ties with individuality in discussion as well as in the making of architecture.

1.4. November 2003: Embarking on my PhD Research

I wished to embark on a PhD by project and I was in search of a supervisor with whom I share a background or affinity. In 2003 I applied for a PhD in RMIT and asked to be supervised by Leon van Schaik. Choosing the right place was also crucial for the success of my PhD research and, by choosing to study at a different school from the one in which I was teaching (Bartlett), I became engaged in a new ‘community of learning’ - using Leon van Schaik’s vocabulary and set of definitions. Two active and progressive communities of learning would never be the same, but I had to be certain that my mastery would share some values with the RMIT Melbourne’s ‘community of learning’ and to feel that there was a positive affinity with my future supervisor Leon van Schaik.

The Bartlett had been my firm ‘community of learning’ since the academic year 1998-1999, when I already felt part of its culture. However, I started teaching there in 1995; it took three years to feel that I was in a position to contribute to its culture through my teaching and my students’ work. Some of the teachers there, in time, became my peers and when the students’ portfolio reviews took place, as well as informing the system and reporting on our students’ work (the students are not present at these biannual reviews, just their portfolios), they became peer reviews. Leon van Schaik quotes in his book *Mastering Architecture*:

“Ernest L. Boyer, who investigated the professoriate in the USA, came to the conclusion that in all the domains of scholarship, whatever the discipline or the intent...peer review was the way in which contributions were evaluated and validated”²

¹ Many of the international guest lecturers who appeared at the Bartlett would often make a statement that their architectural decision-making has nothing to do with aesthetics. For example, Kathryn Findlay, Thom Mayne, Mark Goulthorpe (dECOi) and Gaetano Pesce all presented this view, each with a slightly different take.

² Leon van Schaik, *Mastering Architecture, Becoming a Creative Innovator in Practice*, Wiley-Academy, Great Britain, 2005, p.14

1. Tidal Surge - Dust Wave, no.1, 2007, by Philip Hunter, Melbourne, Australia.



2. Wave Crest - Moon, 2007, by Philip Hunter, Melbourne, Australia.



3. A students' projects' Crit in Unit 6 at the AA, School of Architecture, London, in winter 1987. Peter Cook and Christine Hawley -who were U.6's teachers- and Leon Van Schaik as a guest lecturer- all here in the picture, taken from the AA prospectus- autumn 1987.



4. Nevo, 2986m (I bought this painting) from the series: Artificial Light Gardening, by Larry Abramson, Jerusalem, Israel



5. Impression de Soleil III, 1987, by Larry Abramson, Jerusalem, Israel

Philip Hunter and Larry Abramson are contemporary painters who clearly belong, in my opinion, to the long tradition of the Northern Romantic that Robert Rosenblum wrote about in the mid 1990's, in his book 'Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition'. (I'll talk about it in the chapter that starts in p.326.) In his book Rosenblum discusses many painters from Caspar David Friedrich all the way to Rothko.



6. The Chalk Cliffs on Rugen, (1825 - 26), by Caspar David Friedrich.

Of course the worry was always there, and I can't agree more with Schaik when he wrote:

“What passes for mastery in one city can look suspiciously empty to the practitioners from another city, even when they are at first impressed...”¹

I had to be certain of my choices before making such an important decision.

The first reason for making my choice was my good memory of Leon van Schaik from the time I was a student at the AA; he was part of the jury on a crit of mine for Diploma Unit 6 at the AA. I think it was in early 1987. He probably doesn't remember this occasion, but students usually remember every crit. they have - I certainly do. I remember his positive comments on my architectural approach: it was the lead up² for my last diploma project, the one located in the Zuider Zee. Secondly, a further impression was made on me by the AD Magazine published in 2002, when Leon van Schaik was its editor. He wrote on “Poetics in Architecture”, and I was reminded of Bachelard's seminal book Poetic of Space, which, my generation had just heard about it had missed the peak of the interest amongst architects. Van Schaik's introductory essay on poetics in architecture intrigued me from the first paragraph, as he wrote about our “informal knowledge that everyone holds in an internalized, often subconscious way.” I think at that time I hadn't fully understood van Schaik's examples regarding the architecture that was based on people's eidetic experience, but I was inspired by the flow of sentences such as:

“It requires individual architects to surface their own history in space before they engage in helping others connect with their own deeply internalized knowledge.”

Or, quoting from Bachelard:

“the heroic in space as in the sea and the desert and their horizons”, and “Immensity is within us’. This is his novel conception of intimate immensity, a quality that invests wonder in its architectural manifestations.”

This ‘intimate intensity’ was a quality that interested me in architecture, but I had not previously been aware that its origin was Bachelard's ‘poetic in space’. Leon van Schaik embarked on a conversation that at that time was quite alien to the Bartlett's culture. However, it clicked with me straight away: it was very closely related to my consistent architectural preoccupations present from my early days. Another essay, or, to be more precise, the paintings the essay was discussing, in this AD issue that, not surprisingly, I

¹ Ibid. p15

² I still remember he enjoyed the set of visual references which I had pinned up on the wall, relating to the desert and low horizon (some were photocopied from the book by Bernard Rudofsky, Architecture without Architects), which were early starting points for my upcoming project relating to the deserted landscape of the polder, but very telling about what I was enjoyed working with.

was touched by, were Philip Hunter's paintings from the year 2000. By the time I saw them in life (in Melbourne in 2008), I was quite smitten and emotional. I desired my architectural work to have a similar feel to it, to have a similar impact on the inhabitant or the onlooker. These paintings were proof that the northern Romantic tradition - as described by Robert Rosenblum in his book *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition; Friedrich to Rothko* - is still alive and kicking and continuing, in its most refreshed form, in Melbourne, Australia.

I thought that my PhD proposal would be led by an imaginary project designed for the city of Beer-Sheva, the capital of the Negev, but, as it happened, two months after my first presentation in London in November 2003 regarding my PhD proposal, I had a new client and thus the PhD project began to revolve around my newly commissioned project.

1.5. My PhD Study: An Activity in Three Platforms in Parallel, from 2004

The body of my PhD study is yielded by activities on three platforms; the preface and Part 1 have provided the background for this: the background that acted as a trigger for my impulses in thought and action.

The first of these platforms was taking place in my design work as a practicing architect. My impulsive response took place within a locus constructed by my design value system and the daily assessment of my positions. This impulsive response led to a design method which aims to bring a conscious and deeper engagement with aesthetics. The second platform is the teaching platform which, through acting as a thought leader with groups of students where design processes are performed and analysed, provides a parallel with my own value system and allows me to assess my own approach as a designer-architect who runs a practice. The third platform was my routine of preparing a book for publication. Its text will be comprised of conversations I had with influential architects over the course of three years; it is a study of the troubled relationship observable in architectural circles between the thought behind architecture and its final appearance.

Relating to the third platform was an actual architectural project that I worked on and developed for three years, from early 2004 until the end of 2006, when the client announced that the project had to be put on hold. As we had been given the go-ahead from the local municipality and were just about to start the working drawings stage, the sudden halt was incredibly frustrating. However, I continued to develop an aspect of the project that I found interesting until February 2008.

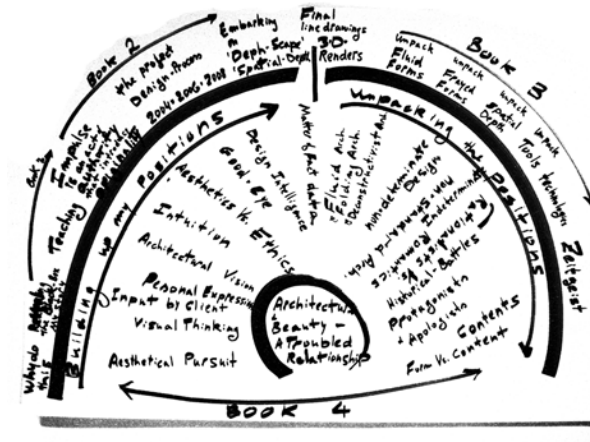
At the same time as this, I was teaching a Diploma Unit (Unit 11) at the Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL (this came about in October 2002 when I transferred from teaching the Master course, which I had been teaching since 1997). I taught the Diploma Unit until July 2005, when I decided to dedicate more time to the upcoming project and book. Running in parallel with this I was preparing an application for an AHRC grant for a three year research-by-practitioner working with Brighton University's School of Architecture in collaboration with the School of Textile design, under the Head at that time, Anne Boddington. The preparation for the AHRC grant contributed to my PhD study regarding my design ambition, and I will report on this as well.

The first interview for the book took place in February 2004 and the last in July 2007. I interviewed 19 architects, prepared for 20, and 16 of them were put forward for publication.

Preparing for the interviews involved studying the body of work of each of the contemporary influential architects I was going to meet: their value systems and how these relate to the book's subject. Often the conversation would branch into discussion of how the architectural community related to the architect, as part of an indication of the troubles.

PhD Structural diagram, June 2008

That diagram was drawn so as to sum up my overall PhD research; not a linear process but lateral movement, in and out of the three platforms I was engaged with; The Practice platform, the Teaching platform and the Book platform. (*Architecture and Beauty, Conversations with Architects about a Troubled Relationship*). The four mentioned books along the diagram were actually four big binders with images only. (About 500 images per book).



2. Practice Platform - Part I: Understanding the Nature of my Mastery

2.1. Pre-practice: Studying Architecture at the art academy Bezalel, Jerusalem

When I started my architectural studies in 1978 in Bezalel, the Environmental design Department at the Academy of the Arts in Jerusalem, I moved from an academic, scientific world of studies to architectural studies. I was yearning for an artistic activity as an architectural student. I didn't wish to join the 'Technion' – the polytechnic, in Haifa - that had a primarily technical approach to architecture, but much preferred the one that was within the main art academy in Israel.

In that department in Jerusalem, as in many other schools of architecture generally, there was more than one school of thought regarding architecture. There was a passion for architecture, for the belief that making architecture is dependent on personal involvement and that one should influence society. Hence, being responsibly suggestive was important; new visual material was not really the pursuit; projects looked mostly like those already existing in the world outside. Nevertheless, new ideas and individual thinking were valued, intellectual reasoning was appreciated – backing the visual material with a sound knowledge

that often didn't influence the design input enough – and inspired fascination in both critics and students.

Drawings skills were not anyone's strength; fairly basic two-dimensional drawings, plans, sections and elevations, were mostly what one saw, with the odd perspective here and there. Cardboard models were the prevalent ones. Starting design with diagrams was common, so much so that sometimes since we were so occupied with diagrams they took over and became the leading characteristics of the design itself.

The design projects were always related to the existing social and architectural debates locally, reflecting what was being built at the time in general, as well as global climatic, social and political issues; the aim was to give reason and meaning to our architecture. The department was in the art academy, but there was no real relationship with the other departments. In our department, one felt that being creative was a valued quality, but it could take the form of thinking creatively, and not necessarily being visually creative. Knowledge per se, and establishing a relationship between it and the architectural production, was important and encouraged. 'Meaning' was important – it still is – as it solidified the background, the context. The 'historical' material of a project was seen as such an important accompaniment to the design process that it often took over, became more important than the design itself.

2.2. The Architectural Association (AA), School of Architecture, London

When I arrived at the AA for further studies – for my Part 1, Part 2 and my architectural Diploma – I thought I was liberated fairly fast from the earlier emphasis on content and 'meaning' and moved towards a visually-led approach to my design. This was what I was looking for, although it took me quite a while to adjust to architecture without the emphasis on diagrams, organisation and content which had previously been the skeleton of any intuitive visual act in design. I was 'cured' only just before embarking on my Diploma studies, hence getting into the third year was a crucial step.

2.2.1. Towers in Florence

In my preparation for the end of the third year project, the project which would award me with RIBA Part 1, we had to submit an essay driven by the main project; it was all about affirming and asserting ideas and backing them up intellectually and culturally. The main concepts and ideas design-wise were mostly formed before the essay-writing process, but I was not really satisfied until I started working on the supporting study. The location was in Renaissance Florence, the historic centre of the city, and I felt I needed to support my project more firmly by looking at the city's past and future.

I raised the existing tower in Piazza Davanzati, opposite Palazzo Davanzati, to make it tall enough so as to become one of 6 tall structures, alongside the Duomo and Palazzo Vecchio, all on the Duomo side of the Arno river. One could see all six from Palazzo Pitti and the Boboli Gardens. The 'content support' for me was as important as the design, though the depth of it evolved after the design was nearly complete. That was one of my memorable first lessons during my studies at the AA.

The context of the AA generally during that era changed something in me. I consciously decided to be more honest about the design process and what really interested me personally was to lead the design by visual qualities, building up the affinity between meaning and appearance. Meaning was not losing importance; on the contrary, I became more ambitious to create a building whose appearance was highly related to its meaning, while not trying to impress the audience, the critics, and later on the inhabitants or clients, by intellectual and scholarly support of its content.

2.2.2. Music School project located at the top boundary of Hampstead Heath, Winter 1985

As one of my earlier projects in the first Diploma year, I designed a music school to be located at the top of Hampstead Heath, as part of the Kenwood complex, among existing trees right above the open air concert theatre – an area famous for family picnics at the free summer concerts.

One of my early sketches was a plan where I drew the school organisation diagram with collaged musical notes I collected from music book notes of contemporary composers. The drawing was expressive and dynamic, with a focus on which areas of the building would be most intense visually. I was influenced by an exhibition at the AA: 'Chamber Works' by Daniel Libeskind, where I saw his beautiful horizontal and vertical line drawings in ink; I had an ambition to become more expressive in an abstract way. I remember I looked at Anthony Caro's sculptural work a lot, especially admiring his big Corten sculptures positioned in green parks. I felt they could become architecture very easily and I could see the music school built of Corten panels. This was in winter 1985. I wished my work to become increasingly led and driven by design ideas and materials and less by verbal concepts. The mid 1980s at the AA was the right time for this feeling.

1.-5. Anthony Caro, large-scale outdoor sculptures; rusted and varnished steel.



1. Back Cover Flat.1974.



2. Chorale, 1975-76.



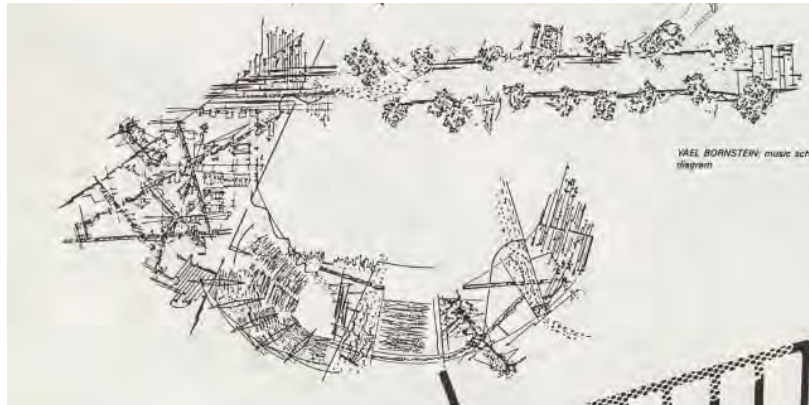
3. Trunk Flat, 1974.



4. Veduggio Sun, 1972-73.



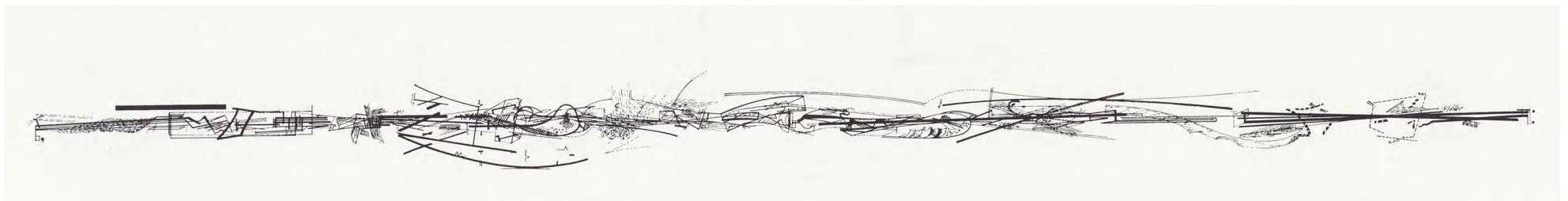
5. Young Steel Flat, 1974.



1. Yael Reisner [-Bornstein], Music School: a diagram that expresses organization, composition, layout, scale and movement through contemporary musical notations. Diploma Unit 6, 4th Year, winter 1985. Ink on tracing paper.



2-3. Daniel Libeskind, Chamber Work Exhibition at the AA; Ink drawing, 1984



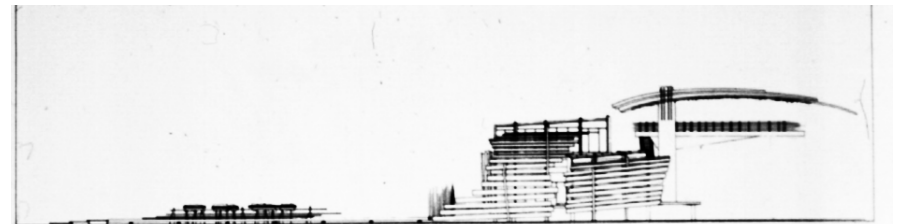
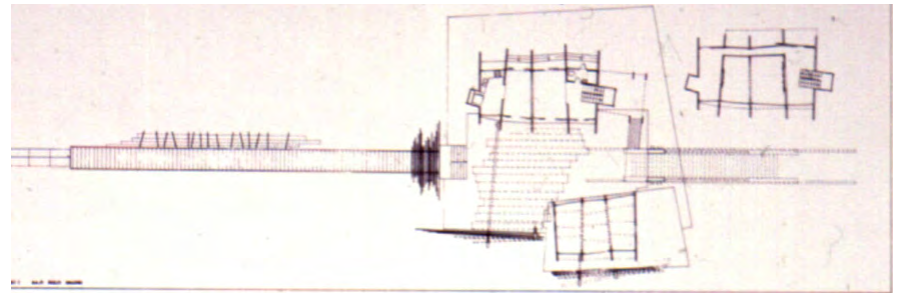
2.2.3. A house and studio for the composer Luciano Berio, wheat-field, Tuscany, Italy, Summer 1985

I still like this project,¹ which at the time felt like a breakthrough. As a fourth year student, in the summer of 1985, I designed a house and studio for the Italian contemporary composer Luciano Berio. Again, it was my choice, brief and location. Before the design work started I was listening to his music in a record shop following an exposure to it by a radio recording from Edinburgh's summer Festival. The piece I was most inspired by was a song which started with a long period of whispering. Those voices made me think of wheat fields in a light wind. I imagined the house situated in a middle of a wheat field in the Western part of Tuscany, where the surrounding environment changes with the seasons just as the wheat field changes its appearance: lined brown clods of earth sprout short, green, thin stems which grow into the yellow-gold beautiful wheat, tall in its prime. Throughout the year the sound of the wind through the wheat changes, the colour changes, and the wheat's height changes, affecting the house's relative scale.

I started to work on the design, at first through many sketches of silhouettes rising above the open field. I used a thick, black felt-tip pen (I have always had a better line with this than with pencil) and drew many sketches very fast, so as to capture a certain dynamic, while listening to Berio's vocal track which I liked. As I developed my ideas I added a wooden path to walk on – a wooden path with a slight wobble. The long, flat wooden beams sat on heavy springs so that you were forced to slow down; the walk became a sensual experience, as if you were swaying with the wheat. There was also a long triple bench, a fixed, stable one so you could sit on three different levels at three different heights outside the house territory (this is actually still in the field, on the leading path towards the houses); this allowed you to enjoy the smell of the soil, the growing field and change of colour and size throughout the year, while watching the sun's path in the sky above the open field. The entrance to the courtyard was from its southern side and was signed with tall thin dark plastic sticks which stood vertically like the wheat stems. The courtyard was in shadow as its canopy reached the ground on its eastern side, with the house situated on its west. The southern side had the entrance feature and the north side was opened.

From far away the complex of the bench, the courtyard, the house and the very high detached 'viewing balcony' (much higher than the roofs of the house and studio), all appeared as one big silhouette hovering below the wide open field of clouds or rising above the wide open field of wheat full in its growth.

¹ One of the few projects of which I still have images: I lost my portfolios while moving back to London in 1990.



2.2.3. Raft in the sea – a place to swim to and rest

5th year in the Diploma school started with a project we were asked to design within the space of two weeks: a floating project requiring that its scaled model would float on water for at least 2-3 minutes before sinking (it was to be tested in a pool in the unit 6 space in the school).

I designed a raft for the Mediterranean Sea: an anchored raft that people would swim to and use as an artificial island to climb on and rest in the sun, surrounded with water and sky. Being in London, to get my inspiration I took my camera to the River Thames, to the Hungerford Bridge – the pedestrian part attached to the railway bridge – so as to be next to water and get some ideas. The more interesting photographs were those where I captured the water from the bridge as if locked by a grid. I achieved this effect by shooting through the fence of the pedestrian bridge. I carried my ideas further by making black and white collages using photocopies of the photographs, drawing on them with black and white chalk. The photocopy machines had recently started appearing in the school's corridors and were seen as a new machine to play with. I built a model made of balsa wood, a raft enclosing a body of sea water within it so that one could swim safely under the watch of a life-guard.

The raft was designed to be anchored so as to float in the same place. There was a trail of small floats – about the size of a mattress – attached to it and splayed by the water currents, so one could lay down on those as well, alone. The design was driven by the activity it was designed for and shaped by its appearance from the sea shore and the way it would emerge for swimmers as they approached it.





1. On the left side of the collage - a fragmented view of the floating anchored raft. On the right side of the collage is one of the photos taken in Hungerford Bridge, as explained in the body text.



2. A photographic partial view of the raft.

3. The original photographs manipulated in a photocopying machine and collaged together to create new imagery; suggesting horizontal architecture



4. The original photographs manipulated in a photocopying machine and collaged together to create new imagery; suggesting vertical architecture.



2.2.5. Migration birds' Observation centre Ostvaardersplassen, Zeider Zee, Netherlands

When I designed my last project as a fifth year student (1986-87), I was looking for a large flat site which was part of nature and I found it near Amsterdam, the Netherlands. I found it in the form of a new dried land¹ between the new towns Almere (1980) and Lelystad (1966), along Marker meer.² A competition for that site was running at that time and it drew my attention. As you travelled around a polder, the dikes - high walls that keep the sea water away - and boats' sails above the water the dikes restrain, formed a surreal view as you stood on the new, much lower, ground level and looked up. This was a feature that excited me from the start.

That polder's landscape had got some water back during the years since it was dried, because the ground level was so near the top of the water table, and became full of shallow pools, islets and swamps, thus becoming a popular resting and foraging area for many species of waterfowl, to the extent that it rapidly turned into a nature reserve of national significance, the Ostvaardersplassen.³ While visiting the site I thought that it would be nice to design a centre for observing the migration birds – one that would be close to the surrounding nature as opposed to being a bold and foreign element on that beautiful site.

I built a half-kilometre arch as an observing bridge for pedestrians and people riding bicycles (a bridge that assists with both walking above the watery land and observing the birds). Along two thirds of this bridge were hanging cubicles, in order to hide groups of people observing the birds. At the two thirds of the arch, the bridge had a tower going through it and supporting it structurally. In that tower I placed a library dedicated to bird watching and a coffee shop for the visitors. Following that point on the arch, the last third, the bridge meandered down in a serpentine manner; the arch was not symmetrical. The serpentine meander made it easier to go walk across the bridge, in the same way as a zig-zag route across a mountain takes less effort, as well as strengthening the bridge structure as well.

All along the bridge were hanging nets, supported by columns, like curtains. Mostly these reduced the strong wind impact and slightly obscured the human presence from the birds - although you could of course see through it. However, the nets also softened the bridges stark outline and were reminiscent of the hanging fishing nets used in many of the local fishing villages. The observatory cubicles hanging from the bridge were made of colourful polyurethane and hardened by structural ribs.

1 It was part of the Zeider Zee big project carried by the Dutch government for decades, reclaiming the sea and drying parts of it so as to get more cultivated land for agriculture and for building new towns.

2 The Afsluitdijk (the closure dike) was built to separate the North Sea from the Zuider Zee; over a length of 32 km and a width of 90 km, at an initial height of 7.25 m above sea-level. When the dike was built (finished by 1933) its name was changed to IJsselmeer, as it stops the tidal movement of the sea, the surrounding water draining from the polders.

3 The Oostvaardersplassen is a nature reserve in the Netherlands. Despite its young age (it is in a polder which was only created in 1968) it already has international importance as a European wetland (Wikipedia).

2.2.6. Recognising evolving characteristics in my Architectural Aesthetic - Stage 1, 1987

While a student in the AA's Diploma school, I took delight in self-expression through an intuitive process while I tended to generate my architecture through aesthetics, through a process of developing an appearance I desired. Its organisation was dealt with as well, and quite pedantically, but it was in tandem with my aesthetic decision making, it was worked on at the same time. Since my days in Jerusalem I had very consciously avoided working through diagrams, almost to a fault, as I still remembered how in Bezalel we dealt so much with diagrams that the projects looked like the shapes the diagrams enlarged, and lost their own energy. Instead, I made models where material and colour were expressed in the first instance: I haven't made a colourless cardboard model since my time at the AA.

At the end of the Diploma's fifth year, after that last project of mine in the Netherlands, it became clear to me that when left to my own choice I tend to be preoccupied with an expression relating to nature with a clear, open, low horizon; I pick sites in nature where there is a flat ground and big sky above it and use my designs to interfere with it, mostly designing architecture that from a distance looks like a silhouette above the horizon with the sky as the backdrop. I became aware of this aspect of my work only after talking to my main tutor, Peter Cook, in one of my last tutorials of my two years in the Diploma school; he drew my attention to it - I had never thought about it before, I just did it.

I dealt with this aspect of my work consciously for the first time in 1991, while preparing a one-woman show for a gallery in Tel-Aviv as a young practicing architect there. I was in my late 30s and had finished my Diploma four years earlier.

Maybe this is the right moment to disclose the second part of my black box; I will just add a few words before I begin. I will explain later why I chose to pursue my PhD in RMIT and why I opted for Leon van Schaik as my supervisor, but I think it is highly relevant here to say that in our second meeting during the first year of my PhD research, in 2004, we began to talk about the importance of one's childhood memories to ones' architectural output, and as Leon van Schaik wrote in his book, *Mastering Architecture*, published in 2005, wrote:

“A large part of successful design is the ability to capture and richly describe qualities of architectural reality, that reality that we experience in our first years of learning about this world and its spatiality.... I propose that the knowledge that architecture and its allied disciplines hold in custody for society is of our engagement with the physical qualities of this planet, a knowledge held deep within every being and laid down in our childhood engagement with the world.”¹

¹ Leon van Schaik, *Mastering Architecture, Becoming a Creative Innovator in Practice*, Wiley-Academy, Great Britain, 2005.

2.3. My Intimate Landscape - Part II: Memories from outdoors: the landscape of my native land

2.3.1. The provincial city of Ramat-Gan

I was born in Tel–Aviv five years after Israel was established and recognised as an independent state. I grew up in Ramat–Gan,¹ a city near Tel-Aviv, which was perceived at the time as a healthy place to live and raise children: it has many gardens and green open spaces. During the '50s-'60s the city was indeed famous for its many public, medium-size gardens. It has a mixed urban tissue of mostly two- to three-floored apartment houses, most of them sitting on piloti and surrounded by a fairly small garden, next door to private one floor houses with fairly big gardens, usually with citrus groves, almond and tropical fruit trees, a remnant of the agricultural settlement. Many empty plots were scattered around the city, waiting to be developed. For a long time these functioned as extra playgrounds for the children, with flower beds in winter and dry thorns in the long summers.

The apartment blocks, the public gardens, the private houses with the empty plots, were all scattered here and there through the street layout of Ramat-Gan, which ran up and down along sandy hills. There were five main hills: one was part of the large Abraham Garden, the second was the Monkey Garden (a small zoo within a large garden) and three other hills which were uninhabited (but used as exploration space by children) at the time and were known as mountains (!): The Rabbit mountain, the Whale mountain² (the tallest of the three) and the Napoleon mountains.

From the apartment I lived in with my family, on the second to top floor of a six-flat apartment building located on a plot raised above street level, from the open west-facing balcony I could see the sun set each day above the blue sea, while from my bedroom looking east I could watch the sun rise – I often woke up early from the light streaming through the leaves of the two poplar trees in the back garden - from behind the fairly distant contour of the Judea Mountains (real mountains this time, beyond the border³).

Nature had a great presence in each town and city in the Israel of the 1960s. The physical framework, the new built environment, through those years felt rather provincial, typical to a young new city; however, the quality of cultural life and ambition at home was quite cosmopolitan and not provincial at all. Israel at this time was a place full of great ambitions technologically, agriculturally and culturally; big dreams of an old nation in the new/old land, socialist Zionist nationalism was there in full – a kind of nationalism present in every new state, I would think. Israel was provincial in its physical size and population, or in its look and appearance, but cosmopolitan in culture. Architecturally it was all white modern architecture, though less impressive than what Tel-Aviv had inherited from the 1930s and '40s.⁴

1 Ramat-Gan was established by the Ir Ganim (lit: Town of Gardens) association in 1921 as a satellite town of Tel-Aviv, a socialist-style Zionist agricultural settlement initially growing wheat, barley and watermelons. The name of the settlement was changed to Ramat-Gan (lit: The Hill of Garden) in 1923, a development on the Ir Ganim name. The settlement continued to operate as a moshav until 1933, although was recognised as a local council in 1926 by the British Mandate. At this time it had 450 residents. As the years passed, Ramat-Gan shifted from an agriculture-based economy to a more commercial and urban settlement; by 1950 it was officially announced as a city and by 1955 had a population of 55,000. By the end of 2007 it had 133,400 residents.

2 Where Zvi Hecker's two apartment houses were built, both mentioned in his interview.

3 Mostly part of Jordan; what is known today as part of the West Bank.

4 Most buildings built from the '50s onwards were modern but built by developers who were not interested in architectural values, but in a profitable market.

To get to know the native land was an important issue. The Austro-Hungarian passion for enjoying walks in nature, taking delight in moments of wonder (my father) went well with the patriotic message of establishing love and sense of belonging to the land through the knowledge of its flowers, its trees and its geography (my mother). Relaxing as a family and having picnics in nature is fairly frequently out there and was – on the one free day, Saturday - almost a weekly experience. In summer the sites for picnicking were up along the sea shore, while in autumn, winter and spring inland sites such as open fields were chosen. When I pick flowers (where it's still allowed) I am swathed in strong fragrant memories of cloudy winter days spent picking up the narcissus from the mud, knocked out by their amazing fragrance, or picking red anemones in the open almond groves: forested areas with the hidden pinkish-white cyclamens, remembered for their strong pleasant fragrance as well. I remember the views from the hills, every piece of land or settlement still unexplored.

1 - 3. A selection of colour slides taken by my father during Saturday's picnics in nature. Mid 1960s.



2.3.2. The Negev desert

Most of all I loved the desert. I experienced it for the first time at the age of seven. My father drove our new first car and took us through the Negev,¹ the Israeli desert, to the city of Eilat. In 1962 it took one long day driving by car arriving there by night. Eilat is located on the north end of the Red Sea and at the south end of the Israeli desert. We then went, as part of a family routine, once a year in December, when the warmth was an extra attraction.²

From the very first visit I found the Negev a very attractive and compelling place within its surrounding desert mountains. I loved nearly everything about it: the remote, arid, sandy or rocky land with the infinite open views, the very special low light projected on hills and mountains from far away, the warmth, the blue sky 365 days a year. No rain, very dry air, the presence of the big dome of sky above you with infinite stars at night; the sheer beauty of it all. Travelling in the Negev desert, like any desert, gave me a sense of adventure; I had a long history of many journeys in old open jeeps or 'command-cars', from the age of nine to my twenties, with people who knew every stone, flower, or geological strata. The desert feels vast - though nothing compared to the Death Valley in Nevada - big enough so that wherever you look you only see desert, all the way to the horizon. It was a very sensual and physical pleasure mixed with the sublime beauty.

2.4. Practice Platform - Part II: Beginning my Practice in Israel

2.4.1. Starting as a practising architect in Tel-Aviv

Beginning to work professionally as an architect, on small scale, mostly residential, projects, distanced me, for a short while, from the nature that I loved to experience. However, the visual pursuit was a leading factor in my design. Besides giving form to organisation, comfort and visual thinking, I often arrived at formal decisions by responding on site to its visual presence (combined with the clients' needs), while controlling atmospheres mostly through locations, forms and materials; these lead light – natural or artificial - into the inhabitable space. The early projects were the learning curve for gaining experience with handling materials and learning how a good drawn section feels spatially right on site.

2.4.2. Project 1: for Dror Schwartz: roof extension, Jerusalem, 1988

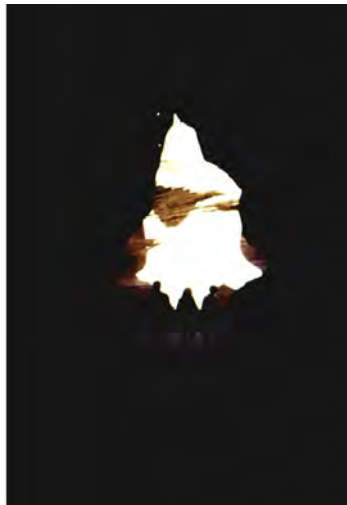
My very first project for a client, who was also a friend, mostly revolved around solving a major problem in a battle he was having with one of his neighbours who refused, out of principle, any extension whatsoever. The client's instructions were that any solution had to be cheap, built fast and made of materials that one could dismantle, in the case of losing the battle. The intention was to negotiate the extension with the municipality and the neighbour after being completed.

1 The Israeli desert – the Negev - is two-thirds of Israel territory, within the green line border up to 1967.

2 When I was 15 years old, the Sinai Desert came into my life. I was part of that landscape frequently, more than any other I know from my urban habitat.

I came up with an idea to build a metal structure of painted iron beams, covered with plastic sheets. To prevent the noise of raindrops falling on the sheets in winter (there is no drizzle in Jerusalem – just torrential rain), I suggested stretching fairly thick net 20 cm above the white plastic sheets, also providing further protection from the sun's radiation in summer (the plastic sheets themselves were also designed to reduce the damage from the sun).

1 - 2. Negev desert near Eilat.



A selection of colour slides taken by my father, late 1960s

3. Sinai desert, early morning sunrise; views from Moses Mountain, rising above Santa-Catherina Monastery.



4-5. Sinai desert, the Choral Island; its archaeological remains create a silhouette that is its iconic, recognisable sign, Red Sea



2.4.3. Project 2: for Orly Meiberg and Assaf Amir: roof-top flat, Tel-Aviv, 1989

My next project was to renovate and extend a flat on a roof top in the centre of Tel-Aviv, where the only good view was a wonderful tree and landscape in the south. That tree became the main view of the flat's public space. Lines on the plans were orientated so as to increase the focus on the tree, and the flat was also arranged to enhance this view.

I built a pergola on the roof that developed from the design concepts I came up with in Luciano Berio House, but instead of the wooden pergola as in the southern elevation of the courtyard, I created a rusted metal pergola.

2.4.4. Exhibiting in Tel-Aviv, January 1990 - Julie M. Gallery, 'Architecture and Art: A Mutual Feedback'

It was my fourth exhibition since being back in Tel-Aviv, and the second time I exhibited with Zvi Hecker.¹ The exhibition consisted of two artists and two architects: Nahum Tevet, Osvaldo Romberg, Zvi Hecker and myself.

I included in my show the new development of the floating raft project I designed as a student at the AA. This time I designed it for the Sea of Galilee, a sweet water lake, and I exhibited models and collages of the structure. The models were hanged in the gallery and the dimensions of this floating space were about 1.20 x 0.60 x 1.40m. I used rusted metal flat cuts and thin rods, balsa wood, and clear Perspex. An ironmonger, with whom I worked with in my second project, did the cutting and welding of the iron parts; I built the rest. The result was a horizontal silhouette juxtaposed with a vertical one, located one along the other.

¹ The first time I exhibited with Zvi Hecker was in 1989 at the Kalisher Gallery, Tel-Aviv, in an exhibition entitled 'Work By 6 Architects'. We were curated, along with four other young architects, by students from the Kalisher art school who were fond of our architecture work as art. My second exhibition was in the same year, in the international exhibition at the Israel Museum, entitled 'Architecture on Paper'. The third one was in 1990 and was the inaugural show of the Ami Steinitz Contemporary Art Gallery in Tel-Aviv. The fourth exhibition was also in 1990, at the Julie M. Gallery in Tel Aviv, entitled 'Architecture and Art: a Mutual Feedback'.



1. Looking into the big old tree and pergola from the kitchen/dining area. The only side of the roof that looked good and felt pleasant was the southern part, where there was a big tree that was taller than the roof level. Therefore we changed the flat so the roof terrace was next to the tree. We located there the newly built pergola for the hot sunny days; made of corten steel.



2. The pergola.

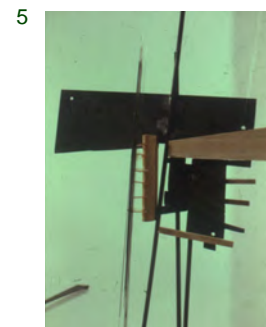


3. As seen in the picture the pergola's aesthetic was inspired by my "Berio house", the project I designed as a student three years earlier.

4-7. Images of part of my exhibit, in Julie M. Gallery, Tel-Aviv, Januray 1990. Its language was based on my aesthetic generated during designing the floating raft in the sea and Berio House; both projects I designed at the AA days. The exhibit was about a vertical structure in the Sea of Galilee for viewing birds, juxtaposed with a horizontal raft floating on the sweet water of the lake, to swim and rest.



4



5



6



7

3. Observations - Part I: New Aesthetic in Architecture evolved as a Self expression

3.1. The Battles of the Styles – England in the early-to mid 19th century

'Style' and 'individual taste' were already gaining negative associations in architecture in the mid 19th century as the 'Battles of the Styles' in England - the historical styles in architecture – were at their peak. This started at the end of the 18th Century and beginning of the 19th Century, at the same time as the Industrial Revolution when the spread of education among the masses brought an end to the domineering aristocracy and almost overnight the population transferred from working primarily in agriculture to developing urban industry. While this was taking place, educated people, including architects, took interest in the scholars' academic studies of the architectural past ages. And as the English historian JM Richards explains:

"It was fashionable, if you were an educated man, to take an interest in these investigations of the antique".¹

Before too long the different styles would creep into the houses:

"Chinese wall paper, Pompeian decorations, Greek ornament, Egyptian sculptures... thriving past styles according to fancy...the costume of the architect's choice."²

"It was perceived at that time as a reflection on the architects' taste and personality as a painting, does that of its painter,[and it] is indeed one of the principal legacies of the 19th century".³

While sometimes designed brilliantly, there was no consideration of the changing time in terms of technologies and progress.⁴

3.2. The Arts and Crafts in England, The Free Style: Voisey, early 1890s

At the same time as the Industrial Revolution, the Arts and Crafts architects in England were developing completely new and revolutionary aesthetic generated in respond to context. These architects were as active and as individualistic, although in a different way, as the continental architects of the new Movement of Art-Nouveau in the early 1890s.

The English Arts and Crafts architects came with a shift towards the New English domestic style of architecture during the 1890s led by figures such as William Morris, Norman Shaw (although in old age Shaw became a full Classicist) and Charles F. A. Voysey.⁵ Voysey,

1 J.M.Richards, An introduction to Modern Architecture, Penguin book, England, 1940, p.15

2 Ibid, p.15

3 Ibid, p.22

4. The engineers of the time were those who exercised lots of experiments in steel and concrete, designed railway stations, bridges, the great exhibitions in London (Crystal Palace -1851) and Paris (1867, 1878, 1889). These engineers didn't really influence building design at this time, although they have had a tremendous influence on modern architecture.

5 And continuing into the 20th century: " Ashbee, Bailie Scott, Mackintosh, George Walton, Dunbar Smith, CH Twonsend, Guy Dawbar, Edwin Lutyens, mostly houses for living." J.M.Richards, An introduction to Modern Architecture, Penguin book, England, 1940, p.57.



1. Perrycroft, Colwall, Malvern Hills, Herefordshire; garden front from south-west. 1893-1894. Voysey's first large commission. The buttresses rising the full height of the walls, the hipped roof is of green Westmorland slates (a favourite material of Voysey's) penetrated by big, tapering rectangular chimneys.



2. Drawn image for a house on the Hog's Back, near Guildford, Surrey, 1896.

Charles Francis Annesley Voysey (1857-1941), same age as Lethaby and an early member of the Art Workers' Guild (The Guild's first year was 1884). As Peter Davey expands in his book, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, "The horizontality of most of his work derived from a belief in the symbolic importance of long low straight lines: "when the sun sets horizontalism prevails, when we are weary we recline, and the darkness covers up the difference and hides all details under one harmonious veil, while we, too, close our eyes for rest..." [Davey, Peter, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise*, The Architectural Press, London, 1980, p.84.]

3. Perrycroft, Colwall, Malvern Hills, Herefordshire; garden front, 1893-1894.



4. Plan of 1893 for Perrycroft, by Voysey. An irregular L-shape.



5. Annesley Lodge, Platt's Lane, Hampstead, London. Entrance front: a long horizontal L-shape with the front door at the inner angle, 1896.



6. Studio Cottage, (sometimes called the Tower House), 14 South Parade, Bedford Park, London, 1891.



though the most modest of the domestic architects in 1890, was the most influential: “He was one of the people who made Modern architecture possible, because he discarded ‘styles’ and allowed the job to be done, and become the source of style, instead of a historical precedent.

This stylistic phase made its way to Germany via a deeply influenced Herman Muthesius¹, publishing English architects’ work in *Der Englische Haus* in 1904.

It became known as the Free Style thanks to the casualness of the work. Its freedom appeared as quite inspiring new architectural philosophy. As Banham expands through Muthesius and others:

“It had a critical influence on the development of the Modern Movement. Yet....Voysey’s own intention was only to improve and continue the native cottage vernacular of Southern England... (he seems to have had that almost pathological modesty of some English provincial intellectuals) and angrily deprecated any attempt to link his name with the Modern Movement.”²

But their application of personal observation and experiment and knowledge was so unusual in the architectural discourse at the time, especially in England, where in London the Battles of the Styles and the Beaux-Arts’ long tradition were prevalent. Banham explains:

“...the pure empiricism of the free style would have been difficult to pass on. An endless perceived of ad hoc decisions, based on first principles and personal responsibility for the whole of one’s career is much less attractive than a neat package of cut-and-dried answers such as a Beaux-Arts training could offer...But its masters were mostly coasting along on the accumulated moral momentum of the previous epoch.”³

1 Muthesius was in England from 1896 to 1903 as a supplementary trade attaché to the German Embassy, with a brief to study and report back on the high prestige of English architecture and design...his masterpiece ‘das Englische Haus’ which covered in three volumes ...in 1905, every aspect of the English free style...” – influencing Peter Behrens and Frank Lloyd Wright

2 Banham, Reyner, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Architectural Press, Butterworth-Heinman, Oxford, 1997, p.48

3 Banham, p.48

3.3. Continental Art Nouveau, early 1890s

The Art Nouveau architects were as individualistic but less modest, due to the very nature of their value system. It was capturing a yearning for 'the new', as was highlighted by the Norwegian art historian Stephan Tschudi-Madsen in his book on Art Nouveau, and the ambition to get free of the academism¹ everywhere. However, parallel to this:

"There was an affinity to bind up with the Symbolism trend in France and Belgium and with the Aesthetic Movement in England; literary currents in conscious opposition to Naturalism and Positivism claiming that the more subtle sensibilities of the human mind escaped it. The reaction against Naturalism, expresses itself in not being interested in the objective description but more of the 'after-impression' a synthesis of what had been experienced."²

Exoticism and sophistication, plants and birds, unfamiliar flowers carrying a message of aesthetic delight, as well as peacock feathers, were "an inheritance from the aesthetic movement. The plumage represented the magnificence of vanity and with its gorgeous colours and closed oval shapes".³ Buds were seen as symbolising the future and its unfolding beauty.

Well into the 1890s Nietzsche's influence expressed itself through the emphasis on the erotic and the sensual nature of the female form and motifs such as the sensual melancholic women of the Pre-Raphaelites or the demonic touch of Audrey Beardley's 'Woman' (1983).

In Art Nouveau in architecture, the ornamental plant motif was perceived as a structural symbol expressed through the constructive and decorative qualities of the iron. In favour of emphasising the structural function or effect of the ornament were Horta (influenced by Violett-le-Duc's writings) and Louis Sullivan, Van de Velde (the most committed writer of the Art Nouveau). Though Van de Velde believed that the ornament should be abstract and should symbolise the object's function rather than any literary symbols, this was a view that did not materialise among Art Nouveau designers, because "the symbolical aspect lost its significance."⁴ The constructive idea was interesting enough but it was not an end in itself: the construction was not to be freely exposed but incorporated into the decorative system. The sense of the three-dimensionality of the design work and architecture was enhanced also since "[The] aim was to fuse all formal elements in a decorative whole, without regard to material, whether these were stone, metal, or wood."⁵ It enhanced plastic values in architecture.

1 As was prevailing in architecture – in England – the English Style of the 18th century - perceived as a universal style; based on imported 17th -18th Renaissance, based on the revival of the classical architecture in Italy. It was accepted universally and architects as well as builders knew it and understood its language; the design followed the daily needs of the time, for convenience, spaciousness and dignity - much like the accepted conventions of dress.

2 Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, Art Nouveau, World University Library, 1967, p.30-31

3 Ibid,p.32

4 Ibid, p.234-5

5 Ibid, p.235

Continental Art Nouveau

The real essence of the Art Nouveau was a great belief in everything being beautiful, pleasant and, if needed, useful:¹ “Art Nouveau was based on the artist and on a purely individual artistic approach to the artefact”² during a time when there was a demand to relate to the machine, industrial and mass production. The notion of the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk (uniting the arts) became popular in the late 1890s in Germany and fundamentally important to the Art Nouveau sculptors, painters, artisans and architects collaborating with each other.³

The theories of the designer and book illustrator Walter Crane, which he formulated in the years of 1888-93, were concerned with line and its emotional powers of expression:

‘Hence line is all-important, not the designer, therefore, in the adaptation of his art, learn upon the stuff of line – line determinative, line emphatic, line delicate, line expressive, line controlling and uniting’⁴

Van der Velde, the great theoretician of the art nouveau movement, was no less precise:

“When I now say that a line is a force, I maintain something very real. It derives its forms and energy from the person who has drawn it. The real essence of the Art Nouveau was a great belief in everything being beautiful, pleasant and if needed useful”.⁵

As every designer knows new styles are often the result of an impulse which emerges from a developing distaste for what the previous style represented. Banham wrote:

“Art Nouveau, widely regarded by then as a caprice de mode was visibly proving deciduous, a distaste for the arbitrary among younger generations was hardening into an admiration for the logical.”⁶

Choisy, the rationalist who published his book *Histoire de l’Architecture* in 1899, when Art Nouveau was just about to go into decline, was known for not appreciating personal effort, seeing it as:

“an attitude [which] was understandably welcome in a period of revulsion against Art Nouveau and its supposed excesses of personal wilfulness.”⁷

1 Ibid, p.55

2 Ibid, p.234-5

3 Ibid, p.43

4 Ibid, p.50

5 Ibid, p.55

6 Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Architectural Press, Butterworth-Heinman, Oxford, 1997, p.24

7 Ibid, p.27

Art-Nouveau in Paris and Brussels at its peak time, when the aesthetic became part of the spatiality and the cast iron became part of the exposed structural elements.



1. Hector Guimard. The main entrance gate to the castle Beranger in wrought iron and copper made by Balet according to a drawing by Hector Guimard, dated September, 23, Paris, 1896



2. Gustave Strouven, Residential building, 11 square Ambiorix, Brussels, 1903.



3. Gustave Strouven, Balcony's detail, Residential building, 11 square Ambiorix, Brussels, 1903.

4. Gustave Strouven, Balcony's detail, Residential building, 11 square Ambiorix, Brussels, 1903.



5. Paul Saintenoy, structural details; left: Grand Magasins, Old England, Brussels, 1899. Right: from a different building, Brussels, 1900.



6. Paul Hankar, Exhibition space, 1896, Brussels.



7. Paul Hankar, Dining Room in the 2nd house for the painter Bartholome, 249, Ave. de Tervueren, 1898



Mackintosh

1-3. Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Glasgow School of Art, 1898-1907



3.3.1 Three Art-Nouveau Individualists: Hankar, Mackintosh and Hoffmann

I do not include all the early prolific individualists, not even the most talented ones, since I am more interested in the moments of conflict and debate on individualism in Architecture and especially in those that still reverberate in our time - the early 21st century - so my observation here is just to cover briefly the background to the debates about this subject throughout the 20th century.

Nevertheless I feel I ought to say few words about an exceptional three - and I am sure that one should have mentioned more - European Art Nouveau architects from three different cities: Paul Hankar from Brussels, Charles Rennie Mackintosh from Glasgow and Josef Hoffmann who was active in Vienna.

Paul Hankar (born 1859 in Frameries, Belgium) started his career as a sculptor and continued to integrate with artists, furniture designers and artisans. Though inspired by aspects of the English 'Arts and Crafts' movement, Hankar's work in his own house (1893) and for the Hotel Ciamberlani (1897) – both in Brussels – invokes a colour palette and contrast of materials that might have shocked the more puritan ethics of the English.

Despite the strong traces of 'region' in the work of these three, they all felt free to invent and to use the 'eye' rather than craft doctrine. Whilst invoking the experience of a 'Gesamtkunstwerk' they all reached into the parallel creative territories as a mandate for beautiful design.

Mackintosh was born in Glasgow in 1868 and created most of his built work in that city. Personally (through his wife Margaret Macdonald) and instinctively, he was linked to crafting, decoration and the extension of Glaswegian shipbuilding techniques towards the fashioning of individual objects. More tellingly though, he understood the significance of light: the trapping and releasing of a commodity that becomes precious in Northern parts. This is most easily seen in his Glasgow School of Art (1898-1907), where shafts of space between bridges and corridor 'runs' are sheer formal poetics. Similarly, the interiors of Hill House in Helensburgh (1902-3) combine light, colour, openwork partitions, cage-type lamps and furniture in a spatial/dynamic composition that has been referred to as an anticipation of Russian Constructivism and de Stijl.

Hoffmann, though born in Moravia in 1870, can be considered as a Viennese architect who benefited (or suffered) the atmosphere of intense creativity within that city during the last years of the 19th century, yet he was sufficiently spirited to be one of the founders of the Wiener Secession. Influenced by Mackintosh and the Franco-Belgian 'Art Nouveau' he emerges with the Palais Stoclet in Brussels (1905) - a witty and thoroughly inventive essay in poetic composition that evokes Post-Impressionism and Symbolism. I will return to Hoffmann while discussing Adolf Loos .

3.4. 'The Mask' as part of Modernity and its ramification on architectural aesthetics

3.4.1. The notion of the Mask in the German-speaking world

"Modernity is bound up with the question of the Mask", wrote Beatriz Colomina in her book *Privacy and Publicity, Modern architecture as Mass Media*.¹ Historically it seems that the Mask notion was part of the Austro-Hungarian culture and was prevalent early in the 20th century. Clearly framed by Nietzsche in 1874:

"No-one dares to appear as he is but masks himself... Individuality has withdrawn within; from without it has become invisible".²

The individual in the new urban landscape, as perceived by Nietzsche, appeared already in novels³ as well as in conversations in social salons by the early days of the 20th century, especially in the German speaking world. A new notion that changed the perception of individuality as the concept of socialism was evolving and transforming.⁴ As George Simmel wrote on fashion in 1904:

"It is bad taste to make oneself conspicuous through some individual, singular expression... Obedience to the standards of the general public in all externals (is) the conspicuous and desired means of resolving their personal feelings and their taste".⁵

In other words, as Beatriz Colomina added: "Fashion is the mask that protects the intimacy of the metropolitan being".⁶ Hubert Damisch explains the predicament:

"Whereas in primitive societies the mask gave social identity to the wearer, modern man (and the artist) uses the mask to conceal any difference, to protect his identity".⁷

1 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity, Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, The MIT Press, 1994, p.23

2 Ibid, p.8

3 Such as Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kroger*, published in 1902. See p.25.

4 It is interesting to observe that different cultures absorbed from Nietzsche different aspects of his writings, and took it to opposite extremes.

5 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity, Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, The MIT Press, 1994, *ibid*, p. 273.

6 Ibid, p.273

7 Ibid, p. 273

Adolf Loos' attitude was more chauvinistic and very clear cut: "The ornament, which for "the child, the Papuan and the woman" is a natural phenomenon", for modern men is "a symptom of degeneration".¹ It seems that August Choisy, an influential art and architectural historian in Paris, was critical of the ornamental style associated with Art Nouveau at its days of decline, and earlier than Loos. They were both sharing the same prejudices,² but Choisy preferred a building free of ornament, though he was not hostile to it. As Banham explains, in Loos's *Ornament and Crime* published in 1908, ideas prevailed over a more cautious attitude because of three factors: his absolute anathema on ornament infused his surgical means, his attack was "timely and specific" against named Art Nouveau designers, and: "his mode of expression gave him his argument unwonted force".³

Loos shared his view with his Viennese contemporaries; quoted by Colomina, "one is modernly dressed when one stands out the least".⁴ Loos generalises for the 'Modern Man' that which Karl Kraus specifies for the artist:

"No doubt the artist is other. But precisely for that reason, in his external appearance he must comply with the others".⁵

1 Adolf Loos, "ornament as crime"

2 As Choisy wrote "...the Mycenaean age only thought of decoration as an applied and outward show" of the Doric (who revolted against the Mycenaean) - "They would need a more masculine accent; a firmer expression; they placed their architecture in an ideal, in an architecture that scorned the easy seductions of ornament, an architecture that aimed, above all, at a severe beauty of line... new types, more abstracted and more simple" (Reyner Banham, 'Theory and Design in the First Machine Age', p. 32). As for Loos, ornament and decoration presented the easy and feminine seductive expression, which was only an 'outward show' - hence not a very respected one. Femininity was conceived as an indulgence with decoration and ornament again, this time by a Frenchman. It was the opposite of masculinity, which could capture the severe beauty, the more abstract, more logical, beauty.

3 Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Architectural Press, Butterworth-Heinman, Oxford, 1997, p.93

4 Colomina, Beatriz, *Privacy and publicity, Modern architecture as ASS mEDIA, mit pRESS, cAMBRIDGE usa*, 1996, P.273

5 Ibid, p.37

6. Ibid, p.274

He concludes with the same criteria for the modern house:

"The house does not have to tell anything to the exterior; instead, all its richness must be manifest in the interior".⁶

The inner-life takes over, the interior is the precious core, the exterior is merely an envelope in disguise.

Loos' value system was expressed best in his Looshaus in Michaelerplatz. When the Looshaus building approached completion, articles in the press described it as a corn silo and stated that "due to its more than extreme lack of ornament, it comes to everybody's notice" (*Neuigkeits-Well-Blatt*, 17, September 1910). The building stands opposite the former Imperial Palace (the Hofburg) completing the Michaelerplatz - designed by Fisher von Erlach - with an eight floor residential block and a department store underneath. It is very much in the Viennese tradition where the upper floors are residential and have a plain rendered facade, while the ground floor and mezzanine levels consist of more varied materials.

As explained by Wang and Safran in their exhibition catalogue: 'The Architecture of Adolf Loos':

"The formal language of the columns and the profiles are classical, not invented by Loos himself. Yet the columns do not bear the weight of the upper residential floors, and the structural system consists of a reinforced concrete portal frame".

Thus it enabled Loos to follow his heart in creating a differentiation between the public and the private parts of the building, to begin with, and to emphasise that the side street elevation is different than the Square one, as the courtyard facade at its back; each had its own appearance. As Wang and Safran expands:

“From the grandeur of the giant external colonnade front to the Anglo-Saxon domestic interior of the Mezzanine gallery, the character and rhythm undergoes a total, if almost imperceptible, change.”¹

Thus it follows Loos' view of the difference between the public and the private: the ground floor elegance symbolises the metropolis while the domestic floors' facade is simpler. The apartments interior spaces were left to the owners to design as they wished - there was no specific and rigid typology.

3.4.2 Adolf Loos vs Hoffmann

The change in the perception of individuality expresses itself in the debates Adolf Loos had with Josef Hoffmann. We have to remember the context as well, where Loos was very critical of Hoffmann because of his success as an architect in Vienna. Hoffmann was one of the founders of the 'Viennese Secession', in 1897 which he had already by 1905. By 1906 he had built the Sanatorium in Purkersdorf, which was already much more abstract in its lines, and between 1905-1911 The Stoclet Palace, a private mansion in Brussels, for a banker and art lover. This integration of architects, artists and artisans makes it an example of Gesamtwerk, one of the defining characteristic of the 'Wiener Werkstatte', who were builders of the Stoclet Palace. The group, which he set up in 1903 together with Koloman Moser, “of studios and workshops, which under the name of 'Wiener Werkstatte' enjoyed a widespread success and fame for thirty years.”² Hoffmann was a modernist who kept his love for ornament, unlike Loos who was much more severe in his approach to architecture.

The years from 1900 to 1910 were years when the aesthetic in the architectural discourse was in the process of shifting and preparing the ground for the Modernist characteristics to come about. As Colomina asserts:

“...the different attitudes that Loos and Hoffmann reveal in their architecture can be understood as different ways of negotiating the same dilemma: the modern split between private and public and the related difference in the metropolis between the space of the intimate and the space of the social.”³

But from the descriptions of Hoffmann's attitude, even though in his architecture he came across as if he was in the process of rejecting trends from the 19th century, he still had the positive attitude of celebrating personal character through the visible world. Meanwhile Loos was searching to capture the invisible world.

1 Safran , Yehuda and Wang, Wilfried, An Art council exhibition, The Architecture of Adolf Loos, London, Arts council, 1985 [exhibition catalogue], p.48.

2 V.M. Lampugnani, [general editor],The Thames and Hudson Encyclopedia of 20th century Architecture,Thames and Hudson, 1986, p.150

3 Colomina, Beatriz, Privacy and publicity, Modern architecture as Mass edia, MIT Press, Cambridge, USA, 1996, p.39

“For Hoffmann, life is a form of Art. For Loos, who insists on revealing the void, life is the other of Art.”¹

Art, for Hoffmann, is to do with education and self expression:

“For the artistically inclined, to offer spaces corresponding to their individuality....”²

Loos believed that:

“everything that goes on inside it is the business of its inhabitants.”³

For Hoffmann the house was to be intentionally designed to be in harmony with the characters of its inhabitants, but the client could not add objects to the house on his own account, nor could he hire another artist to do so for him⁴ since it was understood as his Art work. So for Hoffmann the interior and the exterior had to be designed by the architect who is creating the artwork, expressing his own individualism. The interior had to portray the character of the inhabitant (as interpreted by the architect) and the exterior had to capture the forms of social convention, as the houses in the city are part of the city, belong to the public. All that, as Hoffmann believed, should be the artistic contribution of the architect reflecting on his personal knowledge and judgement. For Loos it was all too visual and based on the human sight; Loos preferred the sense of touch:

“photography renders insubstantial, whereas what I want in my rooms is for people to feel substance all around them....to feel the fabric, the wood, above all, to perceive it sensually, with sight and touch...how can I prove it to someone by means of a photograph?”⁵

1 Ibid , p.41

2 Ibid, p.41

3 Ibid, p.39

4 As Peter Behrens commented, Ibid, p.39

5 Ibid, p.64

6 Steffens, Martin, K . F. Schinkel,1781-1841; An architect in the service of beauty, Taschen, Koln, 2003, book cover. Schinkel was in harmony with the emotional world of the Romantic period. Caspar David Friedrich, who created a similar atmosphere in his paintings, was one particular role model for Schinkel. Steffens, Martin, K. F. Schinkel, 1781-1841; An architect in the service of beauty, Taschen, Koln, 2003,p.21.

7 Ibid, p.65

Loos' taste as expressed through his earlier interiors was similar to Karl Friedrich Schinkel who was active about a hundred years earlier. Loos obviously admired Shinkel who, unlike Loos, was an exceptionally good painter and communicated his ideas in very detailed and descriptive figurative drawings (a medium Loos was very suspicious of). Schinkel was the Romantic/Neo-Gothic architect who believed that “To turn something useful, practical, functional, into something beautiful – that is architecture’s duty.”⁶ His drawings led to that beauty but surely Loos thought differently to that, as he expands on architectural drawings as the communicating media:

“the true architect is a man who in no way needs to know how to draw; that is, he does not need to express his inner state through pencil strokes. What he calls drawing is no more than the attempt to make himself understood by the craftsman carrying out the work”⁷

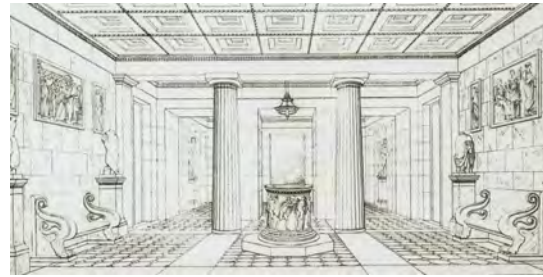
1. Adolf Loos, "American Bar", 1907. The exterior view with the large American flag composition commented as an ironic expression and differed from its interior which was considered lyrical at the time (It was built a year before his manifest 'Ornament and Crime'. The facade is not a 'mask' yet.).



2. Adolf Loos, The American Bar is also named The Karntner Bar, 1907. Its interior still feels 'old world': brownish, heavy atmosphere, dark, with the old lacunar ceiling of veined marble, as Schinkel created in the early days of the 19th century. The interior is highly decorated and according to the description by Benedetto Gravagnuolo: "a masterpiece of skilful manipulation of classical materials: marble, onyx, wood and mirror....spectacular chromatic and visual pattern."



3. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, A country house in Tegel known as Tegel Castle, Berlin, 1820-1824. In this drawing of the vestibule of the country manor (recognisable by the typical floor covering) the lacunar ceiling can be seen. Features of Italian villas are interwoven with Greek forms and classical style architectural sculptures. It seems odd that it is an interior Loos still find as relevant.



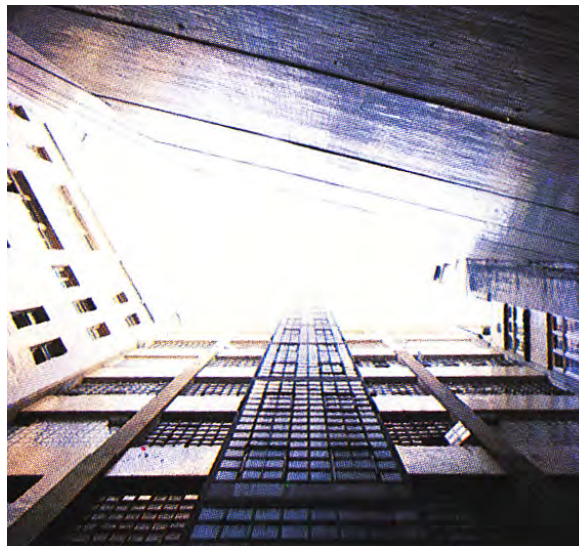
4. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Tegel Castle, Berlin. The antiquity hall on the upper floor (photo from around 1935) was designed to display Wilhelm von Humboldt's collection of sculptures. This was his and his wife's country house.



5-9. The Looshaus in Michaelerplatz, 1909-11.



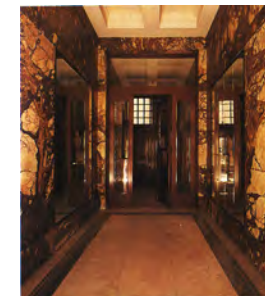
Main facade



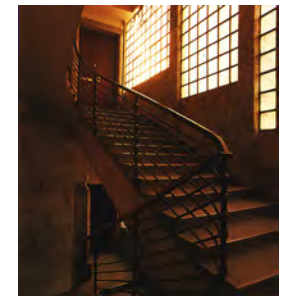
Inner courtyard



Full marble columns



Interior, Veined Marble



Interior

Loos vs Hoffmann

Loos wished to express his 'inner feeling' through the sense of touch, as he felt this was more effective than sight. Similarly to Hoffmann, he understood his work as a work of art, but what made their design approach so different was Hoffmann's perception of what individualism meant, which takes us back two decades earlier and to views as seen, for example, in Oscar Wilde's writings in 1890:

"it is to be noted that it is the fact that Art is this intense form of Individualism that makes the public try to exercise over it an authority that is as immoral as it is ridiculous...the public has always, and in every age, been badly brought up. They are continually asking art to be popular...Art is individualism and individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force, therein lies its immense value."¹

¹ Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, *Art in Theory, 1815-1900, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, publishing house, city pp.794-795; from: Oscar Wilde, 'the soul of man under socialism, was originally published in 'the fortnightly Review', London, Feb. 1890.

This was a view that had already changed by 1905 in Vienna and in Europe generally and become out of fashion.

1-4. Adolf Loos, Moller House, Vienna, 1928



1



2



3



4

5-6. Paul Engelman (a pupil of Adolf Loos) and Ludvig Wittgenstein; Interiors of the house for Margaret Wittgenstein - Stoneborough, Vienna, 1926 - are emptier than Loos' Moller's house interiors; a project he built two years later. Wittgenstein's design was more modern than Loos and more severe.

7-8. Josef Hoffmann Stoclet Palace



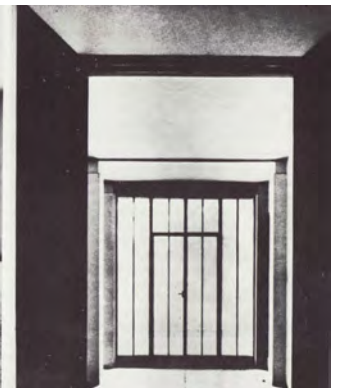
7



8. Reconstructed model, 1984



5



6



9. Senatorium Purkersdorf, 1905-11. Reconstructed model, 1985

3.5. The German Werkbund: Early days - Rationalists and Individualists

Herman Muthesius was the founder of the German Werkbund, together with Fritz Schumacher and Peter Behrens.

In the years immediately after 1907 Banham claims that: “it is to be noted, that those most closely associated with the pure service of function – Behrens, Muthesius, Mies van der Rohe and Gropius – were not normally inventive, while the Individualists, later termed Expressionists, of that generation in Germany – Poelzig, Berg, Marx, Stoffers – were among the most fertile creative minds in their profession at that time, and the most vigorous continuers of the spirit of the English Free architecture.”¹

But as Banham clarifies, there was no clear division between these architects until after 1922.² They were all connected to the Werkbund.

In 1922 in the Werkbund congress he influenced the younger architects who were attending his speech on the theme of the congress (which, as Banham suggests most probably evolved from him) “The Spiritualization of German production”. In his speech³ he introduced “... the idea that aesthetics could be independent of material quality...The idea of standardization as a virtue...Abstract form as the basis of the aesthetics of product design...”⁴

There has been another step forward in the spiritual regeneration in Muthesius’ speech, wrote Banham

“...far higher than the material is the spiritual; far higher than function, material and technique, stands Form.....Form that is not the results of mathematical calculation, that is not fulfilled by mere function, that has nothing to do with systematic thought...it is above all, architectonic, its creation a secret of the human spirit, like poetry and religion. Form, that is for us a unique and shining achievement of human art.”⁵

Muthesius, who saw a difference between being artistic and being individualistic, expanded:

“in painting, in Literature, to some extent in sculpture, Impressionism is conceivable and has conquered these realms of art. But the thought of an impressionist architecture is altogether terrible ...there have already been individualistic essays in architecture that fill us with alarm – as will the first signs of Impressionism.”⁶

Muthesius was worried about the impressionists, or, as he named them, ‘the Individualistic’, referring to the Expressionist architects. However, no one else called this, preferring ‘early expressionists’, ‘individualists’ or ‘impressionists’. But Banham clarifies:

“Worringer, who also actually coined the word ‘Expressionist’ to describe, roughly, what Roger Fry had termed post-Impressionism - but only in painting. The word was only later applied to German painting even, and only very much later to German architecture...[although] it was applied ...as early as 1907.”⁷

It became an evident chasm between the Expressionists and the Rationalists.

1. Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Architectural Press, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, (1960) 1997, p.69

2. In Germany and Austria the boundaries were blurred for a while, where some of the ‘individualists’ were in the Jugendstil and became expressionists - Peter Behrens is an example

3. As Banham informs us, among the listeners were those “young men who were going to shape the architecture of the post-War Germany – Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut – but of France as well, for Charles Edouard Jenneret, later Le Corbusier, had been sent to Germany in 1910 by the Art School of Chaux de Fonds (Switzerland) to make a study of the German progress in design, and of the Werkbund in particular.” Ibid p.72. (Corbusier worked for Behrens, and, at the time of the congress, for Heinrich Tessenow, but was still within the Werkbund orbit.)

4. Ibid, p.72

5. Ibid. p.73

6. Ibid. p.74

7. Ibid, p.75

3.6. German Expressionism in architecture, 1900-1920

3.6.1. 'Architecture is Art'

As Pehnt explains in his book, *'German Expressionism'* :

"The term 'Expressionism' began to be applied to pictorial art in the course of the year 1911, but it was not used in connection with architecture until somewhat after the 1st world war when people began to talk in terms of a pre-war Expressionist architecture."²

The affinity between the individual and the determination of the form is generally not confined only to the German Expressionists, as Pehnt claims:

"Certain characteristics of expressionist architecture are not uncommon outside this narrower compass, particularly the use of individual elements to determine form at the expense of all others ...this ... appears as deliberate strangeness, as a result of dogmatism or of a compulsion to expressiveness, is found not only in the work of Expressionist architects but also [with a different content] in some of the work of C.R. Mackintosh, for example, or of Frank Lloyd Wright, or of the Russian Constructivists..."³

I fully agree with Pehnt: architecture can never be only an outcome of external conditions:

'...architecture, in all cases where it does more than fulfill the simplest physical need, is never entirely determined by external conditions.'

Nevertheless, it became an argued position at that time as mentioned earlier, especially among the architects who belonged to the German Werkbund.

But the German Expressionists clearly treated architecture as art, as Bruno Taut asserted in 1919:

"architecture is art and ought to be the highest of the arts. It consists exclusively of powerful emotion and addresses itself exclusively to the emotions"

As Pehnt explains:

"In the Expressionist context the word *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or 'total work of art', had a double meaning. As normally used it meant the union of all the arts in architecture, but it also referred to the total environment that called upon more than one of man's senses. Expressionist architecture appeals to the eye, to the touch, to the synaesthetic sense. It awakes heterogeneous associations both in time and space."

Thus the expressionists - being interested in evoking emotions - added to the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk notion adopted by the Jugendstil /Art Nouveau, the characteristic of appealing to all human senses.



1. Max Taut, Utopian Architecture, drawing, 1921



2. Herman Finsterlin, Utopian Architecture; Casa Nova, Study (XI-5), watercolour, 1920



3. Walter Wurzbach and Rudolf Belling. 'Scala restaurant', Berlin, 1921.

1 Pehnt Wolfgang, *Expressionist Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London 1973.

2 Ibid, p.9.

3 Ibid, pp.7-8

3.6.2. Hans Poelzig

I found in the descriptions of Hans Poelzig's thoughts the most striking evidence about the German Expressionist inner conflicts during the 2nd decade of the 20th century. I assume his response was towards the ongoing arguments he was surrounded with, between the rationalists and the expressionists. As Pehnt further reveals:

“What distinguished Poelzig as a professional architect from the architecture-struck dilettante was his capacity for finding a common denominator between artistic and utilitarian demands.¹ The terraces of Salzburg Festspielhaus project, for example, were not only an artistic feature: they functioned as a promenade area and provided access to the tiers and boxes of the auditorium. In the Berlin Schauspielhaus the rings of the stalactites in the dome proved to have acoustic advantages: they had the effect of dispersing sound and shortening echo times. The stalactites motif could also be justified on constructional grounds as an echo of suspended dome, held up by an invisible framework.”

This example illustrates how the Expressionists saw that the relationship between form and function, static function, or non-function, merely provided the starting point for a *capriccio* of forms...

“it is still better to do violence to the purpose and create a true work of art than to let the purpose, i.e. cold reason, get the better of you” Hans Poelzig²

What was so unique and special at the turn of the century and during the early years of the 20th century was that artists and architects felt that being artistic was giving a good service to society.³

There was a conviction among the artists of Expressionism that there can be a social usefulness of art, and the architects shared this view: “The more individual and subjective the design, the firmer the architect's belief that he had acted on behalf of and indeed at the dictate of society.”⁴

Peter Behrens put it in 1900, as Pehnt informs us:

“The Theatre was the ‘highest symbol of civilization’. An estimate which was reflected in the figures: in 1896 there were 302 permanent theatre buildings in Europe, by 1926 there were 2,499.”⁵

When one reads Reyner Banham's enthusiastic description of the Expressionist's work in the early years of the 20th century, one can easily come to the conclusion that their perception of ‘architecture as art’ releases their thoughts and imagination into an exceptionally creative and original mode, in terms of language, use of materials, extending the architectural vocabulary of the time, and creating work which is not only original but also much ahead of its time. The examples he gives are: Max Berg's Jahrhunderthalle, at Breslau (1913), Bruno Taut's Glass Pavilion in Cologne (1914), Hans Poelzig's Water tower in Posen (1910), and his Chemical factory in Luban (1911), and as he articulates:

“[Taut's glass pavilion]... for the glass industry, the more original-structurally and visually-the most brilliant combination of steel & glass⁶; “produced in a moment of genius that Taut was unable to repeat”⁷

1 I find it fascinating that architects are still arguing about the issue of form and the formative impulse, though these days the view has changed, many of us do not see it as untruthful as Poelzig felt. However he still insisted on proceeding this way. These days many more architects find their personal ways of developing architecture through answering clients and external conditions that become internal conditions, and influence the form (as ever) along with their artistic preoccupation. (For example, Gaetano Pesce, Frank Gehry, Wolf Prix, Zaha Hadid, to mention a few).

2 Hans Poelzig, ‘Festspielhaus in Salzburg’, in *Das Kunstblatt*, V, (1921) no.3, p.79

3. An attitude that changed to its opposite since, as socialism developed, servicing society meant not being indulging in individualism. This is one of the cores of the troubled relationship architects had with treating architecture as one of the arts during the 20th century - such an incredible shift in the psychology of architects and of what others expect of them.

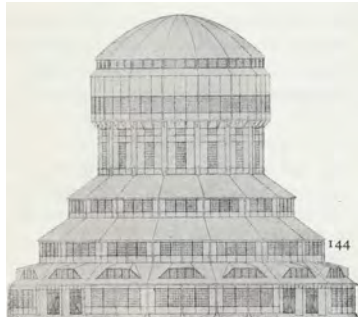
4. Pehnt Wolfgang, *Expressionist Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London 1973, p.16

5. *Ibid*, p.16

6. Banham meant here, ‘more’ than the pavilion in Leipzig he built a year earlier.

7. *Ibid*, p.81

1-4. Hans Poelzig, Water tower in Posen, photos & drawings, (1910)



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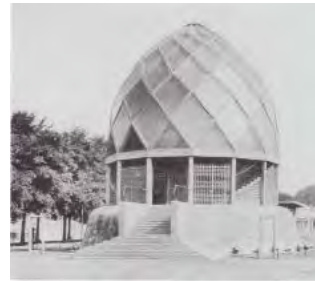


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5. Max Berg, Jahrhunderthalle, Photo, in Breslau (1913)

6-9. Bruno Taut, Glass Pavillion in Cologne, photos, (1914)



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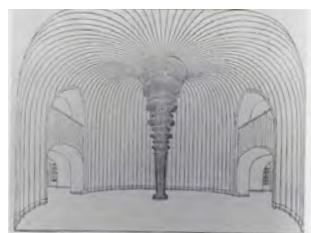


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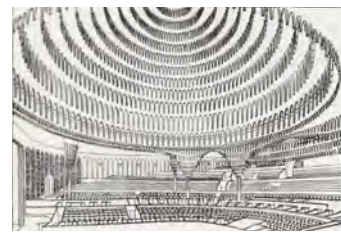
10-13. Hans Poelzig, Schauspielhaus, (the theatre house), Berlin (1919)



10



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12



13. Stree Facade, photo, 1919

And as he added:

“Same brilliancy was Max Berg’s Jahrhunderthalle at Breslau (1913), who was the city architect and an independent designer, but never repeated his success; a reinforced concrete Dome structure; the best of its kind in this period, in terms of scale, originality and material’s exploitation, but as Banham expands it was ignored in the 1920s because of “the power of conviction carried by the Abstract aesthetics of immediately post-War art movements.”¹

Banham emphasises that Poelzig, as we can see in his water tower in Posen and the chemical factory in Luban, “deviates from classicism of the other wing of the Werkbund.”

And he expands: “Poelzig, was one of the most consistently and persuasively inventive designers of his generation in Germany. His building for industry really did produce new forms for new needs...[the] Individualist wing in the Werkbund, and was the prime inspiration of the short lived Expressionist phase in German architecture after 1918.”²

Hans Poelzig’s most famous and original built work was the Schauspielhaus in Berlin (1919). It was very rare at the time to have an opportunity to execute such a highly personal piece of work.

Poelzig was eager to affect the spectator and give him the feel of ‘togetherness’ perceived as the role that the theatre could have and affecting the spectators’ senses so as to make them feel they are part of the theatrical spectacle. As Pehnt expands:

“A typical feature of this enveloping character of the interior was the fact that walls and ceiling were merged together to create a continuous form.”³

Poelzig and many other Expressionists tried to intensify the dramatic appearance of their buildings by making them look like extensions of nature rather than the artificial structures that they were.

“His Bismark monument and his daring plans for the Festspielhus in Salzburg, both schemes looked as if they were constructed from natural rock around them, it gave them a dramatic emphasis. In giving his building a cork-screw movement, Poelzig managed to combine upward thrust with the feeling of enclosure – the tower with the cave, two central themes of Expressionism.” (Both themes related to Nietzsche’s writings).

Interestingly, Pehnt emphasised that German Expressionism was aiming at addressing the people, whereas the Jugendstil was characterized by its supple forms and smooth transitions: “Expressionism addressed itself to the people and this called for a loud and violent language that couldn’t be ignored. It didn’t seek to improve taste but to alter society, and that called for aggressive methods.”⁴

1. Ibid, p.82.

2. Ibid, p.82

3. Pehnt Wolfgang, Expressionist Architecture, Thames and Hudson, London 1973, p.18

4. Ibid, p.54

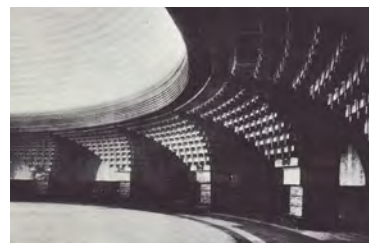
1-4. Hans Poelzig, Schauspielhaus, (the theatre house), photos, Berlin (1919) The building doesn't exist anymore.



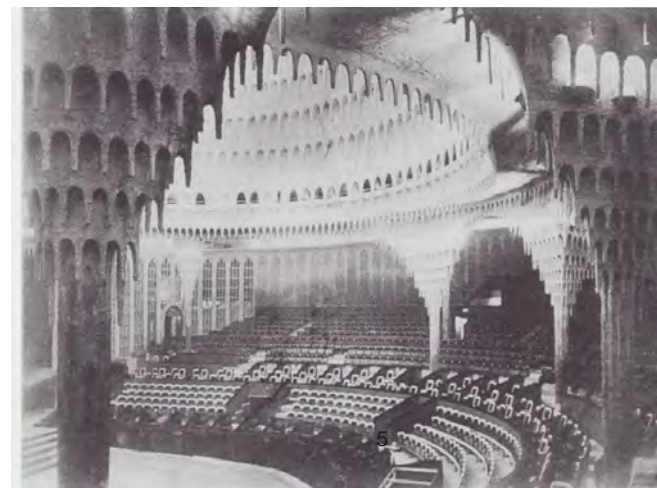
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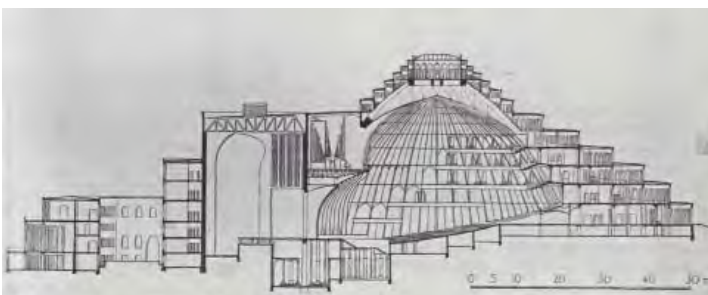
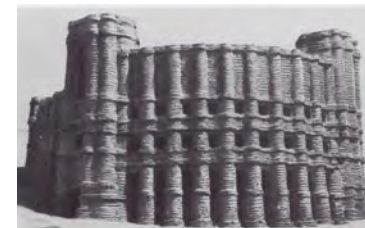


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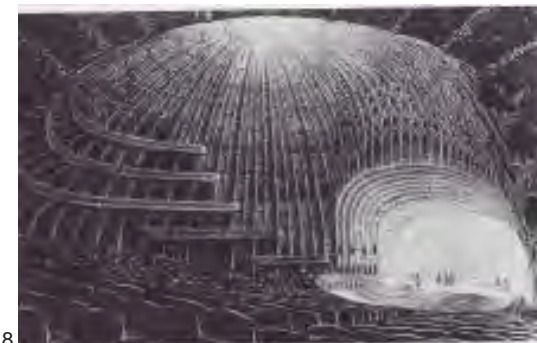
5. Hans Poelzig, Festspielhaus in Salzburg, Austria, (1920-22), not built.

6. Hans Poelzig, "Bismark Memorial" in Bingerbrück, 2nd schee, (1910), not built



7-8. Hans Poelzig, Festspielhaus in Salzburg, Austria, not Built

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8

3.7. Towards the end of the personal individualism in architecture, 1910-20

By the time de Stijl came to power in 1917, individualism was already considered in Europe to be part of the old world.

Seven years later, as a critique of the 1920s Expressionist artists, personal expression was increasingly seen as an unworthy pursuit and the inclusion of the self and any individualistic tone was avoided. As the Historian Wolfgang Pehnt suggests in quoting the zealous words of the artist and poet Uriel Birnbaum:

“the Messianic attitude of the Expressionists seemed like mischievous caprice, if not indeed inspired by the devil...”¹

This view was slowly diffused into the world of architecture (10 years after the first de Stijl manifesto in 1917) and Pehnt explains:

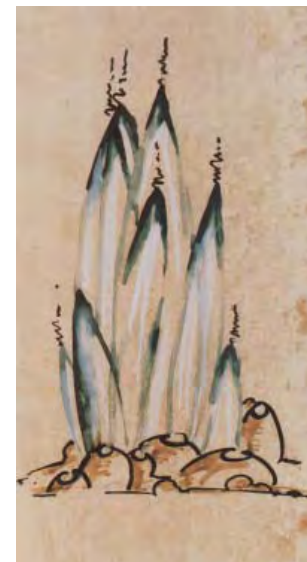
“Adolf Behne [in Berlin in 1927] was one of the first of the architects and architectural critics in Germany to sense the changing climate. Thinking of De Stijl group in Holland and the avant-garde in France he announced the rejection of crafts, the renunciation of sentimental enthusiasms, and the end of the rule of caprice.”²

Already in the mid-1920s, ‘subjectivity’, as exercised by architects at the first two decades of the 20th century, was considered ‘old fashioned’, especially the by German Expressionists such as Bruno Taut and Hans Poelzig who both believed in the individual’s intuitive call and expressionist approach.

1. “Written by the Austrian artist and poet Uriel Birnbaum in 1924 in his book *Der Kaiser und der Architekt*, Leipzig and Vienna, 1924. Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, 1973, p.194

2. Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, 1973, p.194.

Herman Finsterlin, pencil and watercolour drawings, 1918-1921
As Pehnt explains in his book Expressionist Architecture: "For Finsterlin the retreat into self was the very condition of his artistic existence" [pp.91-92]



4. Observations - Part II: The Myth of Objectivity and its Ramifications

4.1. The success of the apologists of Early Modernism in changing the content of the Modernist architectural discourse

1 "Alexander Baumgarten coined the term 'aesthetics' in 1735 to indicate a new kind of investigation of the 'sensual', showing that sensuality is not just – as rationalist philosophy had claimed – the source of 'obscure and unclear' ideas, inferior to and thus to be superseded by reason, but the 'analogon' to reason."

From *An Aesthetic Point Of View, Philosophy Art and Senses*, Edited by Peter Osborne, Serpent's Tail, London, 2000. Found in the chapter by Christoph Menke, 'Modernity, Subjectivity and Aesthetic Reflection' p.40. Interestingly, 'aesthetics' and 'subjectivity' were two terms that were inter-related within the same document written by Baumgarten. He coined the word aesthetics to mean taste or 'sense' of beauty, thereby inventing its modern usage that tied it with a personal attitude.

2 Banham, Reyner *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Architectural Press, Butterworth-Heinman, Oxford, (1960) 1997.

3 "De Stijl adopted Mondrian's abstract art since it reflected the 'de-personalisation of art' and symbolized a universal beauty. That symbolism appealed to the modernists Heroes" Ibid, p.240

4 Banham, Reyner, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Architectural Press, Butterworth-Heinman, Oxford, 1997, p.240

5 Most of those apologists came to it late, five years after it roughed out, and they were not from Holland, Germany, and France - the countries which had contributed most to creation of the new style. Sigfried Giedion, Swiss, only caught the tail end of this process, in 1923, while Sartoris, Italian, missed it almost completely. Lewis Mumford, American, was too remotely placed to have any real sense of the aesthetic issues involved." Ibid, p.320.

Some of the origins of the troubled relationship during the 20th century can be traced back to the beginnings of Functionalism where the Modernist ethos was embedded in Socialist ideologies. Since the 1930s architectural discourse has been dogged by the Modernist ambition not to be driven by aesthetics and, in turn, the desire not to involve the 'self' or 'subjectivity' during the design process.¹ Resistance towards an architecture generated through intuitive individual insight and emotions was a result of pressure from the Modernist apologists; they succeeded in creating an architectural discourse that distorted the Early Modernists' content, eliminating their aesthetic bias. Reyner Banham, the British architectural historian, explains in *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*² that the aesthetics of the early Modernists (such as Gerrit Rietveld, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier) carried the symbolism raised by de Stijl (influenced by Mondrian) accepted as the authentic reflection on time:

"Reinforced concrete was considered as a mechanical and impersonal tool too. Thus, creating the illusion of weightlessness, or of structural homogeneity..."³

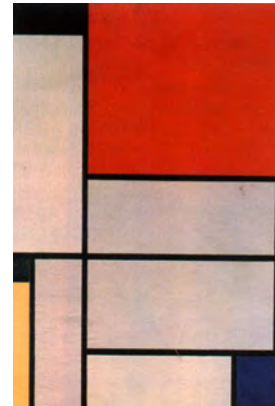
This symbolism was part and parcel of the aesthetics of their buildings in the 1920s:

"As we can see in the work of: De Stijl; Gerrit Rietveld, Schroeder House, Utrecht, 1925, Mies van der Rohe, project for a brick villa, 1923, Le Corbusier, the Pavilion de l'Esprit Nouveau, Paris, 1925, or Le Corbusier's Les Terrasses, Garches – the most complete demonstration of Le Corbusier's aesthetics of 1926."⁴

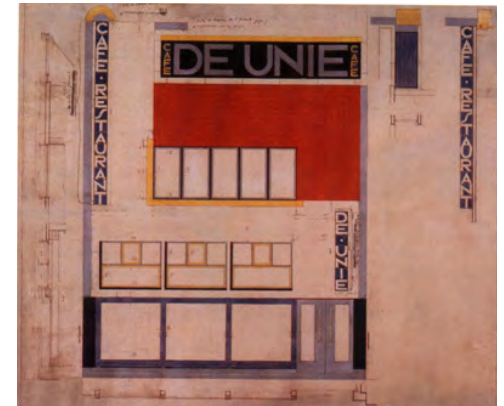
Thus we can see how still in the late 1920s architects understood their work as a work of art, tuned with its time and its symbolism, adopting abstraction as a sign for an approach that aimed at portraying the impersonal universal aesthetic. Nevertheless, that authenticity was discarded or ignored already in the 1930s by their 'apologists' - Sigfried Giedion, Alberto Sartoris, and Lewis Mumford:⁵



2. Piet Mondrian, composition with line (Pier and Ocean (1917)



3. Piet Mondrian, Tableau I, (1921)



4. J.J.P. Oud Cafe De Unie, (1925)

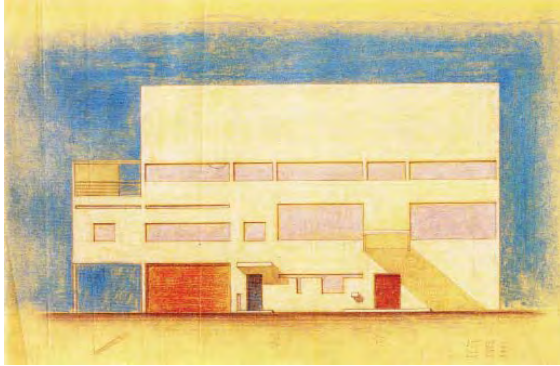
5. Gerrit Rietveld, prototype for the red and blue chair, (1917-18).



6-9. Gerrit Rietveld, Schroeder house, Utrecht, (1925)

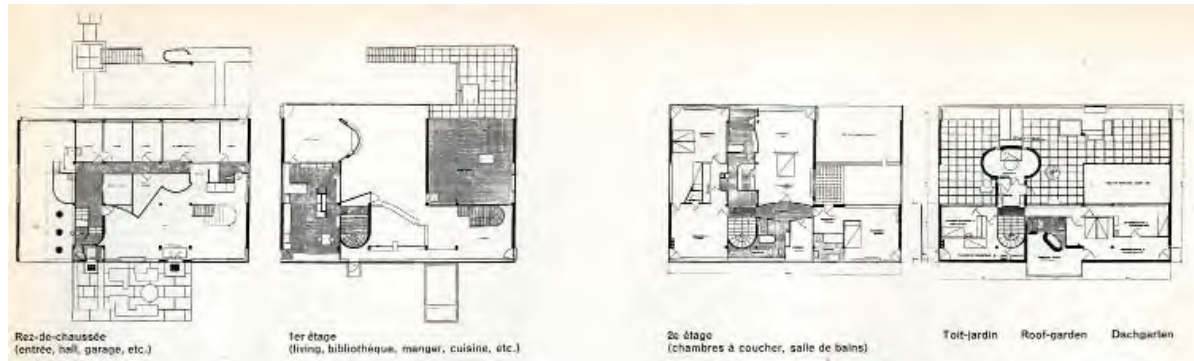


The Myth of Objectivity



Le Corbusier's Les Terrasses Garches 1926





The Myth of Objectivity



1. Le Corbusier, L'Unite d'habitation, roof terrace, Marseilles, (1947-52)

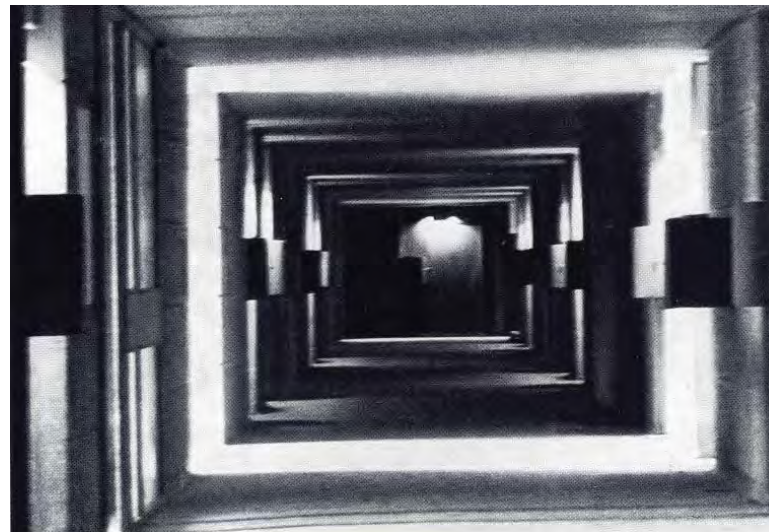


2. Le Corbusier, L'Unite d'habitation, piles of the dwelling unit, Marseilles, (1947-52)

Since the mid 1930s Le Corbusier's built work was expressive and atmospheric, leaving behind the Modernist code, as we can see in the projects shown in these two pages:



3. Le Corbusier, L'Unite d'habitation, piles of the dwelling unit, Marseilles, (1947-52)



4. Le Corbusier, L'Unite d'habitation, inner street of the dwelling unit, Marseilles, (1947-52)



1. Le Corbusier, the chapel of Ronchamp, inner view of the chapel. (1950-54)



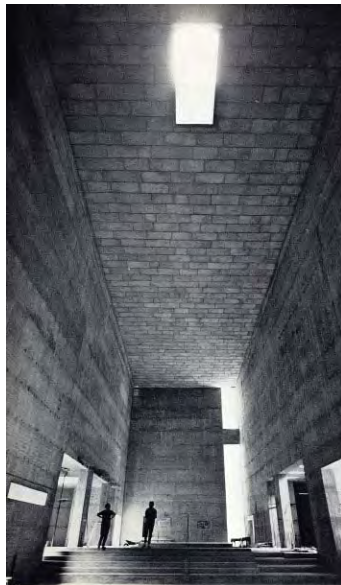
2. Le Corbusier, the chapel of Ronchamp, inner view of the south facade, (1950-54)



3. Le Corbusier, the chapel of Ronchamp, the north facade with the stairway leading to the sacristy, (1950-54)



4. Le Corbusier, the chapel of Ronchamp, the floor follows the natural slope, (1950-54)



5. Le Corbusier, the convent of La Tourette, the interior of the church, (1957-60)



6. Le Corbusier, the convent of La Tourette, the staircase in the library, (1957-60)



7. Le Corbusier, the convent of La Tourette, the dining-hall of the convent, (1957-60)

“who all believed that the cultural-political environment wouldn’t accept new aesthetics unless based on logical and economical grounds”.¹

As this quote suggests, rational logic such as Functionalism was seen to be more convincing in the apologists’ view. Thus, they interpreted the Modernist’s ethics dramatically differently from their intended, highly symbolised, aesthetical approach and explained it as architecture driven by functionality. Banham suggests: “Nowhere among the major figures of the 20’s will a pure functionalist be found.”² In 2008 we can conclude that the apologists succeeded in influencing the architectural discourse and pursued an agenda that aesthetics was not acceptable as a generator for architecture of the 20th century; the generating forces had to be related to the world of utility.

4.2. Utility, facts, data, analysis and program

Since the apologists’ major influence in the 1930s, architects have often resisted engagement with the imposition of will and personal values in their work beyond the required objectives. As one understands from the historian and urban theorist Colin Rowe,³ the emphasis on the notion of being objective, beyond the cerebral characteristics of generating the work, led many architects to generate their architectural design based on facts, data, analysis, program, function, etc. Rowe identifies the conflicting characteristics of the Modernist architects’ intention to manifest objective qualities in their work and simultaneously present an authentic reflection on the time in which they live. In his book *The Architecture of Good Intention* (1994), he writes:

“...From Mies [van der Rohe] there follows possibly the most succinct statement of what – until not very long ago – was to be considered modern architecture’s avowed aim: essentially our task is to free the practice of building from the control of aesthetic speculators and restore it to what it should exclusively be: building.”⁴

This statement captures the belief that architects have an obligation to advance the objective needs of society, and as Mies wrote in 1940:

“...We find the only solutions of that time to be...where objective limits were imposed and there was no opportunity for subjective license.”⁵

So emerges the two opposite notions of ‘objective limits’ and ‘subjective license’ informing of the psychology of the era; as Colin Rowe confirms:

“That opposition: ‘objective limits’ and ‘subjective license’, was a crucial component of the architecture thought of the time, and indicated that one is good and the other is highly dubious.”⁶

1 Ibid, p.321

2 Ibid, p.162

3 Colin Rowe was an architect, academic and the Andrew Dickson White Professor of Architecture at Cornell University, until his death in 1999.

4 Colin Rowe, *The Architecture of Good Intentions, Towards a Possible Retrospect*, Academy Editions, London, 1994, page p.24

5 Ibid, p.21 (A quote from Mies’ writings from 1940)

6 Ibid, p.21



1. Mies van der Rohe sitting on the chair designed by him.



2.-3. Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, Seagram Building, (1956-58)



3



4

4.-7. Alison and Peter Smithson: Hunstanton, Secondary School, 1949-54.



5



6



7

Form Follows Function

4.3. Zeitgeist vs. Facts

This explains the beginnings of the Modern architects' resistance to embrace a subjective will, or least admit to its role, in the creation of their architecture. Architects, as Colin Rowe continues, "expressed their excitement about 'function' and completely dissimulated their inherent excitement about 'style'." The popular mantra extracted from the European Functionalist ethos of 'form follows function' clearly reinforces the repression of individualistic expression and the utilitarian facet of modernism that became the dominant attitude. Surprisingly, as Colin Rowe points out, at the time no one actually admitted the incompatibility of the two concepts, yet simultaneously shifted between the architect as the servant of technology, the impersonal and important 'facts' and, as the executive of the Zeitgeist, responding to the unconscious demands of the day, interpreting his aesthetic preferences as prophetic intuitions.¹

4.4. The refusal to recognise intellectual depth in a visual image

The Modernist intellectualised approach is captured by the well known British social historian, Eric Hobsbawm, who wrote in the 1990s: "Films depended on books from the start..."² That is, the underlying message is the most significant value that comes with a film, though he clearly recognises the visual powers and importance of the cinema. In his book *Age of Extremes*, Hobsbawm reveals:

"One of the most obscure questions in history, and, for the historian of culture, one of the most central, is the very phenomenon that brilliant fashion designers,³ a notoriously non-analytic breed, sometime succeed in anticipating the shape of things to come better than professional predictors."⁴

This comment succinctly expresses the refusal to recognise the intellectual depth that can be captured in a visual image generated intuitively by an individual's insight. The image lacks respect unless it carries a strong social political content, or a 'utilitarian task'.

4.5. The Intellectualisation of the thought process in Western society

The intellectualisation of the thought process, or the attraction of any cerebral process, is prevalent in our culture in general. As Walter Ong explains in his book, *The Presence of the Word*, the development of abstraction in visualisation and its cerebral interpretation of what we see started with script and the alphabetic typography of the 15th century, leading to the invention of 'perspective' and later on to the increased use of maps.⁵

As architects, we witness how in the 20th century this attitude has further stimulated an intellectual affinity towards diagrams, informational data visualised in graphs, or the digitalised mathematical design methods all affecting architectural design.

1 In 2002, digital architect Mark Goulthorpe interestingly presented an argument related to this, albeit one related to the emphasis on computational design processes throughout the 1990s, where he revealed his doubts about the potential of many digital processes to be 'poetic' in a Bachelardian sense. Both arguments are similar in their doubts regarding what evolves with the removal of the self and its effect on the outcome of the design process.

2 Eric Hobsbawm, *Behind the Times, The Decline and Fall of the Twentieth Century Avant Gardes*, Thames and Hudson, 1998, p.12.

3 E.H related his argument to fashion only because it engages with the masses to begin with.

4 Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes;The short twentieth century,1914-1991*, Abacus,1994, p.178

5 Walter J. Ong, S.J. *The Presence of the Word*, Yale University Press, 1967.

The Historian Marvin Perry reinforces the observation that witnessing scientific revolutions since the 15th Century has encouraged a trust of the rational faculties more than any other amongst the Enlightenment philosophers.¹ As we can see in the 20th century, that inclination grew even further as mechanisms and processes in nature (as explained by scientists) were borrowed by many other disciplines, such as in the design process in architecture. To bring as an example John Frazer, as the forefather of the digital architecture.² .

All this has led to further support of the rational faculties³ and, as Walter J. Ong explains, Democracy's 'public opinion' took over individual taste and power. Taste and smell are personal and reflect on subjective feelings. As Ong explains:

“During the 18th century when individuals got free from the Feudal society they were forced to make decisions and develop their own attitude. That's why and how 'taste' became a new concept and 'subjectivity' was a new invented term at that time...but that “relationship of the human life - world to the complex of the senses changed once more.”⁴

With 20th century democracy the public's good turned individuality into a negative notion.

Since ancient times architecture was, more often than not, a result of a cerebral approach and abstracted expression, whereas sculptural content - most often located in space - could incorporate feelings.

1 Marvin Perry, An Intellectual History of Modern Europe, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993.

2. See page 190.

3 Since ancient times architecture was, more often than not, a result of a cerebral approach and abstracted expression, whereas sculptural content - most often located in space - could incorporate feelings.

4 Walter J. Ong, The Presence of the Word, Yale University Press, 1967, p.5.

5. Observations - Part III: 'Deconstructivist architecture' - The MoMA Show in 1988: A turning point in the architectural discourse

5.1. Architecture as one of the Visual Arts - new beginnings, 1977 -88

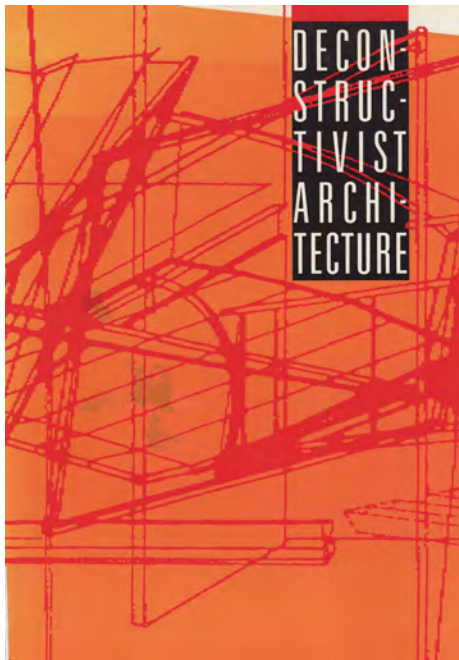
1 For the first time since German Expressionism in the 1920s.

2 James Wines, De-Architecture, Rizzoli, NY, 1987, p.118

It took until the late 1970s for emotional content to re-emerge¹ in architecture and for aesthetically driven design to achieve a positive status. In 1987 James Wines published a book entitled De-Architecture - the title he gave to that decade (1977 - 1987) when architecture opened itself to be freer in its very process and ambition. He wrote:

"De-architecture's basic premise is that art, not design, is the supreme mission of a building, and that the creative process must be revised to reflect this objective."²

That was the radical shift in attitude throughout this decade; treating architecture as art in the sense of being freer creatively; strict categories, such as design typographies, lost their significance. More importantly, the very aesthetical approach changed and architects often turned their back on impersonal aesthetics and tried, like artists, to bring in feelings to the very creation of architecture, as in Gehry or Coop-Himmelblau's architecture for example.,



1. Deconstructivist Architecture the MoMA show's catalogue cover.

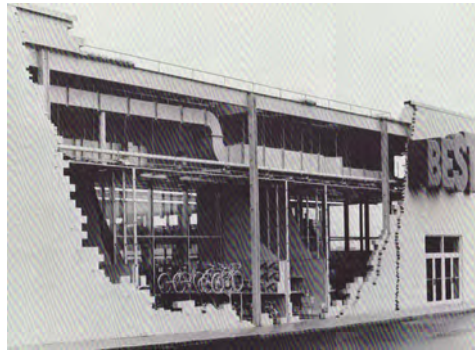
2a. Gordon Matta-Clark, Splitting, Englewood, New Jersey, 1974.



2b. Gordon Matta-Clark, Conical Intersect, Paris, 1975 (not in the catalogue)



3. James Wines, SITE, Indeterminate Facade, Houston, Texas, 1975

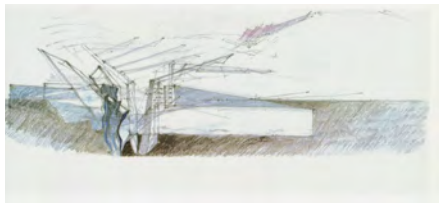


1. James Wines, SITE, Inside /Outside Building, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1984



2-3. Richter and Gerngross, Helmut Richter and Heidolf Gerngross, house for Dr. Konigseder, Baumgartenberg, Austria, 1983 (not in the catalogue.).

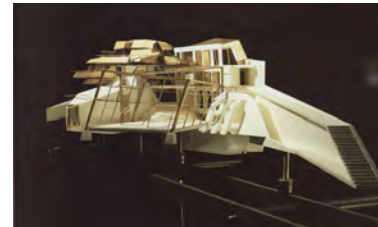
4-8. Gunter Domenig, the Stone house, 1986-89 (not in the catalogue.).



4



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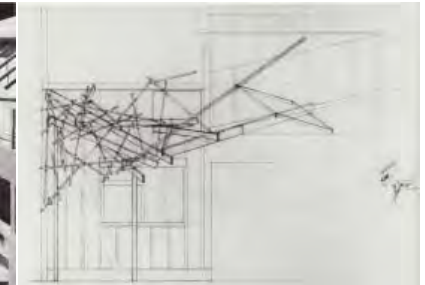
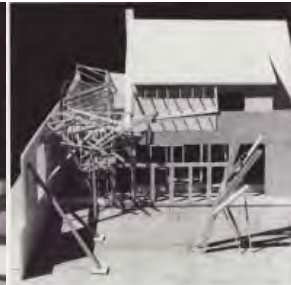


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9.-14. Frank Gehry, Gehry's Family House, Santa Monica, California, 1978.



9

As an insistent noise in the background during this decade, the myth of objectivity was still found attractive in some architectural circles even in times when subjectivity was slightly more trusted. Thus *A Pattern Language* by Christopher Alexander,¹ published early in that decade, was influential and exercised in many schools of architecture (including where I studied in Jerusalem) by applying the handbook's instructions to the design process.²

Nevertheless, at the Architectural Association in London, the avant-garde nature of that decade was evident and well respected already: Zaha Hadid, a unit master in the Diploma course, won the international competition 'the Peak' in Hong-Kong in 1982. Daniel Libeskind, Coop Himmelblau, Hans Hollein, Gunther Domenig, Richter and Gerngross, James Wines, Gaetano Pesce, Eric Moss and Morphosis all lectured there and exhibited their projects, while many others who belonged to this architectural current supported fresh thinking and challenged modern architecture. The new aesthetics was described by Robin Evans³ as "an ever more agitated gyration and dismantling of the architectural box"⁴ and by James Wines as:

"a way of dissecting, shattering, dissolving, inverting, and transforming certain fixed prejudices about buildings, in the interest of discovering revelations among the fragments."⁵

That new architectural spirit which was elevated during these years (1997-87) withdrew to an end in a moment of celebration with the seminal exhibition of Deconstructivist Architecture in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, curated by Mark Wigley with Philip Johnson in 1988. Seven architects were selected by the show: Frank Gehry, Coop-Himmelblau, Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas. This exhibition turned out to be a kiss of death to it and its emotional context due to, I believe, a clever slight and affective manipulation by the apologist Mark Wigley with the assistance of two of the seven protagonists, Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman.

5.2. The MoMA show and Derrida

The exhibition's enticing title - and its direct association to Derrida's philosophy alongside Wigley's texts in the exhibition's catalogue - distracted from the content of the architecture displayed, hijacked the architectural scene and ignited a fire among many architects. Their thirst was for Derrida, or for a body of objectifying knowledge, to lead their architecture rather than embracing an emotional and personal authorial voice. My interviewees Gehry, Pritz and Hadid said that they did indeed feel misappropriated.

Frank Gehry⁶ claimed:

"I actually met the French philosopher Jacques Derrida once and talked to him about

1 Christopher Alexander, *A Pattern Language; Towns, Buildings, Construction*, Oxford University Press, 1977. This book was written as a set of prescriptions for architects and non-architects; a set of rules that are invoked by circumstances based on classic patterns tested in the real world and reviewed by multiple architects for beauty and practicality. This approach had a tremendous impact and influence in schools of architecture, as well as on architects' approach, that brings the non-designer into the conversation and categorises architecture as a universal craft for every layman and architect.

2 It was Reyner Banham - in his book *A Critic Writes*, essays by Reyner Banham published in 1996 by University of California Press - who drew our attention to a report by Christopher Alexander: "Looking back on the early days of his [Alexander's] 'pattern language', he revealed one of its apparent failures to his biographer, Stephen Grabow: 'Bootleg copies of the pattern language were floating up and down the west coast, and people would come and show me the projects they had done, and I began to be more and more amazed that, although it worked, all these projects looked like any other buildings of our time...still belonged perfectly within the canons of mid-century architecture.'" p.296.

Thus the prescriptive method at the end reassured the architects or the laymen but didn't create its own distinctive language or any diverse languages; their architectural language was borrowed, inspired and inherited from what was around and popular.

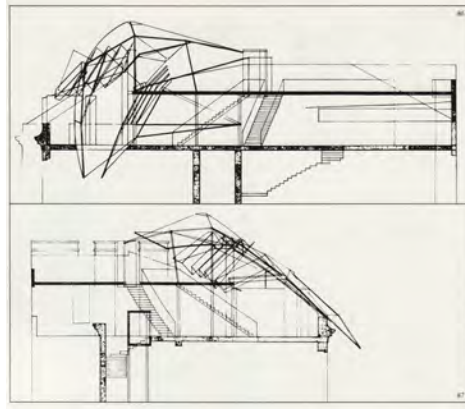
3 An architectural Historian who was teaching at the AA and with whom I share a similar memory of how the scene was understood at the time among the AA community, where all these architects exhibited and taught during the mid 1980s.

4 Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast, Architecture and its Three Geometries*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1995, p.83

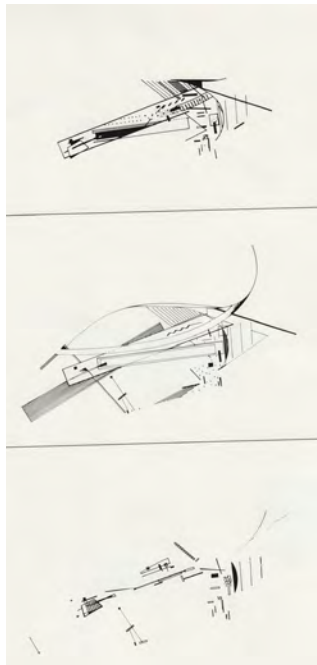
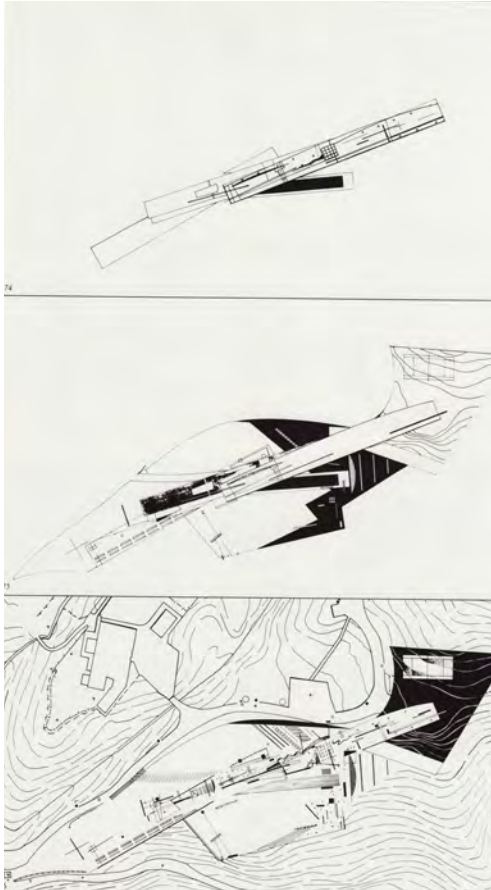
5 James Wines, *De-Architecture*, Rizzoli, NY, 1987, p.133

6 Frank Gehry, in conversation with Yael Reisner, Gehry's office, L.A. 2006

1-2 Coop-Himmelblau

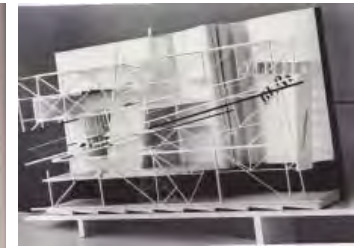


5-6 Zaha Hadid

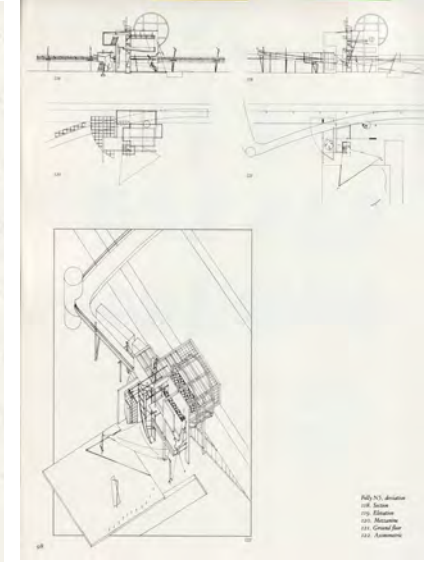


From the Exhibition's Catalogue

3-4 Daniel Libeskind



7-8 Bernard Tschumi



The Deacon Show

1-2 Peter Eisenman



Deconstruction as it related to architecture and he said that the way it was presented within the Museum of Modern Art's Deconstructivist architecture show wasn't his intent."

He continued:

"Personally, Derrida's philosophy didn't actually interest me so I felt it was opportunistic to use the word 'Deconstruction' for the purpose of the exhibition. As a consequence, when people looked at my house at that time, and simultaneously heard the word 'Deconstruction', they would say 'Oh that's it!' And as a result, I felt I'd been hijacked and misappropriated."

As Gehry recalls:

"I took part in the exhibition and I shut my mouth about how I felt – I didn't do anything. I don't think I even went to the conferences they had. I don't remember participating because I didn't know how to talk about Derrida. And in any case Derrida said they really misunderstood him."

Wolf Prix recalled:¹

"At that moment we were exhibiting in NY, in 1988. I liked to be with Zaha and all the other guys. It was very strange to see at the same time that we were working on the same thing without knowing the other people, yeah? It was a kind of a crucial experience that at the same time on different places on earth things happened similarly...all the different approaches had something similar...but the theory of Mark Wigley? As I said in the past, 'talk is cheap'.²

Zaha Hadid explained³ that the architects in the exhibition shared a historical impulse though their specific output reflected on a diversity of approach:

"What connected the work was a break from historicism...It was about collaging, collapsing things or crashing things into each other, or superimposition, and all these things were coming to all the same conclusions. Yet, the architects exhibiting were very different from each other. I think the layering side is when things are dropping into each other and breaking up was something that comes after the dogma of modernism and after historicism. It was inevitable in a way...I think everyone was trying to break away from the past and it was literally a physical break."

1 In conversation with Yael Reisner in Venice, September 2004.

2 A quotation that Wolf Prix mentioned often in the past: 'talk is cheap' – the title of a record by Keith Richards, one of Prix's heroes.

3 In conversation with Yael Reisner, December 2006.

Wigley's choices of who to include in the show and his description of the exhibits were both in tune with Derrida's texts on deconstruction and not with Hadid, Gehry, Coop-Himmelalu or Libeskind's agenda. For example, a paragraph from Wigley's description of Gehry's House:¹

"The Familian house is composed of a cube and a bar. Within the cube, a smaller cube twists and turns. As a result of this internal conflict, the smaller cube breaks up within the larger one, its bottom face remaining as a floor plane suspended within the larger cube while the rest corkscrews its way out through the roof and tilts back . This diagonal twisting within the cube also throws out a bridge, which leaps out horizontally, through the skin, and across the gap between the two forms, bonding them together."²

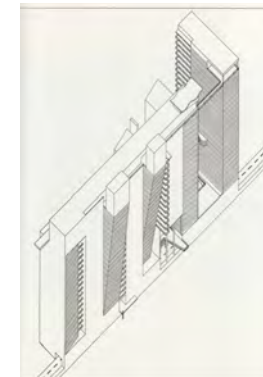
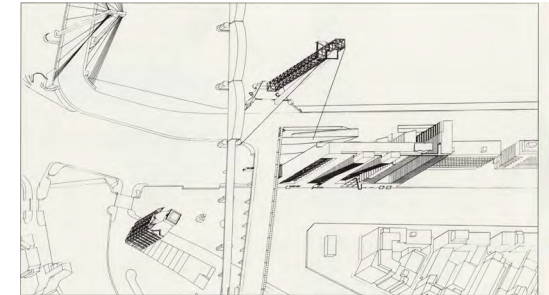
The text describing Gehry's house in the catalogue is six times longer but has a very similar manner, as well as his description of Eisenman's projects, for example the description of the Biocenter for the University of Frankfurt:

"...the distortion is effected by systematically adding further shapes in a way that clashes - new shapes that come out of the same system of four basic shapes that they distort. They are added to the basic form - both as solids in space and as voids cut into the ground... disturbing both forms..."³

On the other hand, as one can read through Gehry's office's released texts, one can find text with very different descriptions:

"I wanted to preserve the iconic quality of the existing house and I became obsessed with having it appear that the existing structure remained intact, captured inside the new structure and interacting with it. It was my idea that the old and new could read as distinct, strong, self-sufficient statements which could gain from each other without compromising themselves (an idea I continue to explore in collaborations with artists and other architects)...I wanted to explore an interaction with the rich heritage of my existing house interiors and to explore the difficult context where any out-of-the-ordinary move would be greeted with hostility. How to be extraordinarily ordinary? The idea that buildings under construction have more energy intrigued me...as I cut open the old house and built new sections. The toughness, the rawness, the immediacy of that language appealed to me, not only visually but sociologically...using the lack of craft as a visual strength, that lead to exposed pipes for plumbing and exposed conduit for electrical...The windows became the challenge. I wanted them to be separate sculptural entities...I even tried (but unsuccessfully) to change

1-3 Rem Koolhaas



1 Gehry House, Santa Monica, California, presented in its three built stages: 1978-first stage 1979-second stage, 1988-third stage.

2 Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, Deconstructivist Architecture, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. June 23-August 30, 1988. Exhibition Catalogue, p.22

3 Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, Deconstructivist Architecture, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. June 23-August 30, 1988. Exhibition Catalogue, p.56.

the language of each while using the same materials, as though a different mind had designed each window. The cube over the kitchen was to appear as though it was trying to escape the building - emerging. The corner window in the dining room was to appear to be shifting on its axis. A sense of movement was intended and was, for me, reasonably achieved. (I was thinking of movement as in Duchamp's 'Nude Descending the Staircase') The space between these two skylights from the roof deck became the trough in the ocean between waves (I sail boats and am fascinated with images of the sea). The building is warm and friendly, comfortable and forgiving."

Gehry was suspicious that the whole show was a result of Eisenman's manipulation behind the scenes. As he commented in the conversation I had with him in LA, in July 2007:

YR: Did you meet Derrida?

FG: Yes, through Peter Eisenman. And I talked to him about deconstruction as it related to architecture and he said it wasn't his intent. In fact he didn't know what Peter Eisenman was talking about.

YR: Was the show as you expected it to be at the time?

FG: I believe it was all engineered by Peter [Eisenman]. And I love Peter a lot, because I think in the end he's a real artist – he's a bit of a scam artist but I like that too.¹ Derrida didn't interest me. It came to our interest because of Peter. It's opportunistic to use the word 'deconstruction'...."²

1 FG: "...putting words together is also an art, putting thought together is also an art. And if there's a thought - used by putting words together - that you can create a thought that somebody hasn't thought about that does have a relevance to the time you're in...if I hear James Joyce reading his stuff I get excited by it, and it tells me something about a linear kind of progression of words in a magical way that conveys feeling, and I find that interesting. And it's reassuring because in a way that's what we're trying to do too. So I'm curious about it, reassured by it." In conversation with Yael Reisner, July 2007, Los Angeles.

2 Frank Gehry in Conversation with Yael Reisner, Los Angeles, July 2007.

3 in 1985 Bernard Tschumi asked Derrida to collaborate on the design of a section in 'Parc de la Villette' in Paris. By 1987 Derrida was collaborating with Peter Eisenman in a detailed design of a specific location in 'Parc de la Villette'.

4 Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction, Derrida's Haunt*, The MIT Press, London, 1993

5.3. Mark Wigley's viewpoint as curator

Apparently Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman had an interest in Derrida's writing and in collaborating with him before the exhibition took place.³ Similarly Mark Wigley, the curator, whose doctoral thesis was entitled: 'Jacques Derrida and architecture: the deconstructive possibilities of Architectural discourse', proudly stated in 1993 in his book *The architecture of Deconstruction; Derrida's Haunt*,⁴ that he had this interest in Deconstruction before most architects. His thesis was submitted in 1986 in Auckland New Zealand when Derrida just started to engage actively with architecture. He reminds us also that Derrida's interest in architecture didn't start the collaboration with Tschumi, since his (Derrida's) interest in architecture was expressed in his writing as it surfaces already in the word 'deconstruction'. But of course all that was not mentioned in the exhibition catalogues five years earlier. I will come back to that book, but in its conclusion Wigley summed up the tight relationship between Derrida and architecture while phrasing it in such a way that one is reminded of the reasoning he gave for his exhibitors' selection in the exhibition's catalogue; in 1993 he

the exhibition's catalogue; in 1993 he wrote :

“ the relationship between the tacit roles of architecture in Derrida's work and what it may say about architecture will always be complex, enigmatic, and structural....”¹

Whereas in the exhibition's catalogue, 1988, when explaining his reasoning for his architects' selection to the show, he wrote:

“Deconstruction is not demolition, or dissimulation.on the contrary, deconstruction gains all its force by challenging the very values of harmony, unity, stability...the flows ...cannot be removed without destroying it; they are, indeed, structural....”²

That's how Wigley explained why James Wines' SITE's projects were not part of this category, neither Gordon Matta-Clark's, and many others who he didn't bother with. Wigley didn't mention any relationship with Derrida, but it's quite transparent. In the exhibition's catalogue Wigley did not admit to having any personal long term interest in Derrida's writing as an architect. He made sure to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the exhibited projects had nothing to do with Derrida's Deconstruction. On the contrary, he wrote on the first page of his introductory essay that:

“the projects in this exhibition mark a different sensibility, one in which the dream of pure form has been disturbed...it is the ability to disturb our thinking about form that makes these projects deconstructive. It is not that they derive from the mode of contemporary philosophy known as 'deconstruction'. They are not an application of deconstructive theory. Rather, they emerge from within architectural tradition and happen to exhibit some deconstructive qualities.”³

All very true, but he didn't engage with anything that engaged Gehry, Coop-Himmelblau, Libeskind, and partially Hadid's, intentions. He also explained that the title Deconstructivist Architecture referred to 'de-Constructivism' as from Constructivism by the Russian avant-garde. He discussed at great length the revolutionary characteristic of the Russian Constructivists and asserted about the exhibitors:

“Each of the projects in this exhibition explores the relationship between the instability of the early Russian avant-garde and the stability of high modernism. Each project employs the aesthetic of high modernism but marries it to the radical geometry of the pre-revolutionary work...it is not necessarily that they consciously work from Constructivist sources. Rather, in dismantling the ongoing tradition, in which modernism participated, they find themselves inevitably employing strategies rehearsed by the avant garde...”⁴

1 Mark Wigley, *The architecture of Deconstruction; Derrida's Haunt*, The MIT Press, London,1993, p.211

2 Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. June 23-August 30, 1988. Exhibition Catalogue.p.11

3 *Ibid*, p.10

4 *Ibid*, p.16

The unusual emotional drive and input of Gehry, Hadid, Coop-Himmelblau or Libeskind was left unaddressed with and noticeably unmentioned, as if it was not of any significance. He didn't express any interest in the exhibitors' impulses, intentions and ambitions, but expressed his disregard for any self expression, individual approach, or reflection on time. He concluded:

“Yet this disturbance does not derive from, or result in, some fundamental shift in culture. The disquiet is not produced by some new spirit of the age; it is not an unsettled world produces an unsettled architecture. It is not even the personal angst of the architect; it is not a form of expressionism – the architect expresses nothing here...The nightmare of Deconstructivist architecture inhabits the unconscious of pure form rather than the unconscious of the architect...”¹

The catalogue was dryly written and mostly focused on description of the visual language of the new aesthetic he put on show, its Russian Constructivist origin and so on. The whole catalogue contained black and white models and drawings, with a lack of material's description or colour's expression and with no evidence of any built architecture by Gehry, for example. As a result, Wigley failed to reflect on any aspects besides immaterial philosophical thoughts and long verbal descriptions defining a visual language for Deconstructive architecture, trying to present it in such a way that reflected Derrida's perception of Deconstruction.

The exhibition's title, Deconstructivist Architecture – as with other titles throughout history that were controversial or unsuitable² – instantly became the description for that recognised aesthetic, but it brought with it a dramatic architectural shift. The generating forces of Deconstructivist architecture to come had been changed; the aesthetics was accepted but its content was high-jacked, misappropriated, and substituted with Derrida's philosophy. A similar thing had happened in the past, when the apologists of Early Modernism changed the content of the respective protagonists and the apologists' influence continued for years.

1 Ibid,p.20

2 As Gombrich wrote in a different context about titles of different aesthetics and styles: “It is well known that many of the stylistic terms with which the art historian operates began their career in the vocabulary of critical abuse. ‘Gothic’ once had the same connotation as our ‘vandalism’ as a mark of barbaric insensitivities to beauty, ‘Baroque’ still figures in the Pocket Oxford Dictionary of 1934 with the primary meaning of ‘grotesque, whimsical’, and even the word ‘impressionist’ was coined by a critic in derision...”

E.H.Gombrich, Norm and Form, Studies in the Art of the Renaissance I, Phaidon Press, London, 1966, p.81

Looking at the catalogue and reading through it made me feel for the first time that conversations about a visual language – something I had always yearned for – could become tiresome and empty, even for me, if they are purely cerebral; when the authorial voice is not personal, and in this case generated and authorised by a philosopher's thoughts, with no real designer's pleasure in discussing architectural appearance, form and aesthetics. I find that build-up of language based on logic and deprived of any poetic sensual surprise boring as well as empty. Wigley's tight match between the Constructivists' aesthetic and Derrida's texts lacks the enigmatic quality Wigley himself mentioned in his book...

However, Wigley's approach must have captured the imagination of many architects: Whilst resoundingly important and highly successful, the reality was that the Deconstructivist Architecture show indicated the end of a certain discussion and a beginning of another; the philosophy of Jacques Derrida¹ was strengthened as one of the primary authorities in architectural design process, following in the footsteps of Eisenman and Tschumi, the exhibitors, and Wigley's suggestive approach as a curator.²

¹ Deconstruction is a term used in philosophy, literary criticism and social sciences, popularised through its usage by Jacques Derrida in the 1960s. (Wikipedia) Eisenman, Tschumi and Wigley were interested in his texts and were influenced by him, while Gehry, Coop Himmelblau, Hadid and Libeskind never referred to Derrida's writing.

² Rem Koolhaas became an important influence on the architectural scene and continues to be so now, although with a more inclusive and ambiguous agenda, and with not much relation to Deconstructivist architecture.

6. Teaching Platform - Part I

6.1. Stage 1 - Teaching in Greenwich University, School of Architecture and Landscape Design, mid 1990s

In September 1992 I started teaching the Architecture and Landscape unit at Greenwich University,¹ which involved working with teachers and students from both architecture and landscape design. In 1995 I was asked to run the first year, alongside teaching a unit, which I enjoyed tremendously, for another four years.

My emphasis in teaching was from the very beginning on generating architectural design through aesthetics, in first year as in the master course, and then with Unit 11, with an emphasis on a search for a personal language. With first year it was the easier job to get them working out small scale projects. The fact that most of 1st year students know very little about architecture helped. They were quite open to explore. Usually, as in the early 1990s, model making was a great way to get into original work, when the students drew what they built first as models. I was never interested in students getting into the 'Master's architectural language', whoever the 'Master' was; I believed that there were ways of working with students to develop their own personal language.

The first year's tutors (there were seven tutors running seven units, with seven teaching groups each with fifteen or sixteen students) followed an umbrella theme which was devised at the end of each summer holiday. Each tutor had the freedom to lead their students along the theme in their own way. I organised the lecture series given by each tutor discussing their personal value system, thoughts and approach to architecture and landscape design. Design was the major focus, taught through the use of big scale models and group models, produced in the school workshop with helpful instructors. We had great results in each crit., and the tutors worked like peers, until the school structure was changed when the faculty became a more technical one, merging with construction. Architecture as based

¹ These days it is known as The School of Architecture & Construction, as the result of a merger between the former Schools of Architecture & Landscape and Land & Construction Management.

on technology was increasingly relied on, unlike in the Bartlett or RMIT, Melbourne. It was dreadful to watch the work changing, our teaching hours reducing, and the demand for rules and old-style Modernism creeping in; any approach with a personal orientation and search for originality was left behind, and, unfortunately, I had to leave the school. I continued teaching only at the Bartlett school of architecture, UCL, which was a completely different experience all around.

7. Observations - Part IV: The Growth of Intellectualising in the Design Process, late 1980's - early 1990's.

I still remember that when the exhibition was announced in 1987 the AA circles were suspicious of the title and its associations with Derrida. There was a sense of betrayal at the AA that seemed very involved in curbing and supporting that architectural pursuit through design and artistic orientation. I discussed this issue with Wolf Prix in September 2004, as someone who was part of the "AA family", attending our crits and our exhibits. He was also my external examiner¹ at the end of my fifth year and knew me well as a student.

My resentment of the philosophers' entry to the realm of architecture, and my frustration with architects who were absorbing this theorising culture so willingly, is apparent in my conversation with Wolf D. Prix:

Yael Reisner: "I had just finished my studies at the AA in July 1987, but there was a very strong feeling of resentment amongst the architects that were part of the scene at the AA during the early- and mid-1980's.² As far as I remember there was no term coined for that 'movement', for that architecture. It was reflected already in the students' body of work: dynamic, fragmented compositions often charged with tension. Some students' work was already mature and original in the mid 1980's; by 1987 it was already well disseminated and absorbed."

Wolf Prix: "The term 'Violated Perfection' was in fashion already. The book by Betsky³ came after, but the expression 'Violated Perfection' was published in a small booklet,⁴ yes, with all these guys talking about that point of departure."

When philosophy as a discipline penetrated quickly into the architectural discourse, it shook the architects' confidence in their personal authorial voice. It cut short a thriving moment at the time, swinging the scene back to searching for a reassuring voice of authority from outside - no problem with that for those who were genuinely inspired by it, but it diverted the

¹ In July 1987, the very year the Deconstructivism exhibition was announced.

² Post-Modernism as manifested in architecture in the late 1970s was generally very popular; at the AA it was despised and looked down on - it was Deconstructivist architecture which was exciting.

³ Aaron Betsky, *Violated Perfection, Architecture and the fragmentation of the modern*, Rizzoli, NY, 1990

⁴ I couldn't find any traces of this booklet mentioned by Prix.

diverted the architectural scene for quite a while, and in a big way. As an architect who is passionate about design and the necessary relationship between architectural design and personal experience, one was aware of witnessing the presence of philosophy as a discipline invading architecture, or, to be more precise - invading the architect's mind. This was felt to such an extent that in schools of architecture it became standard to take on board philosophical texts as a major generating source for many students and architects. The architects' feeble self-confidence and their inferiority complex regarding their own knowledge, meant that the amount of work generated intuitively deteriorated even further; it brought a digression from a position where the authority comes from within and is not derived from theoretical external authorial models. The tragedy was that more philosophers understood that architects were open to their ideas and influence, and I think that was the beginning of a slippery slope where architecture was further invaded by more philosophers and theoretical approaches, where rational thinking and process were elevated above architects' more natural design abilities.

This is how I felt at Greenwich University - criticised for the 'sculptural approach'. This was a familiar stance for some tutors in the school. A similar tone was used to accuse Gehry or Hadid for working like sculptors and not in the way it was perceived, by some, that architects should proceed. At the same time, diagrams became highly fashionable with some teaching colleagues at the degree units, especially informational diagrams, which I thought were banal (their terminology, not ours!) and as subjective as they claimed 'us', with the sculptural approach to architecture (where emphasising aesthetic makes architecture an art form in its own right), to be. In Greenwich there was only one tutor who wished to generate design through Derrida's writings, but in Tel-Aviv University school of architecture by the late 1990s it became an almost main stream approach to generate and discuss design in terms of Derridean approach, and philosophy generally entered the general studies curriculum. I never thought it was wrong as an educational approach to enlarge students' body of knowledge, but I was disturbed by this approach when it became too popular and kind of a new regime and, in some schools, turned to be the main way to discuss design; the cerebral rational mind set for all tutors and students. It became the yard stick for intelligent conversation in architecture, which was highly disconcerting.

To return to the conversation I had with Prix, I asked him how he felt at the time – in the early 1990s - about the role of theory as a design generator, and how it influenced the design process for many architects:

WP: “ I don’t know who said it, in the early 1990s, that there’s building architecture and there’s theoretical architecture and this is the death of architecture. It’s actually cutting off the head from the body; it is the guillotine.”

YR: “Architects work such as yours and Zaha’s was looked down at for a while in some schools of architecture in the early 90s, blaming your work for being merely sculptural, or too personal, with no ‘outside’ theory supporting your decisions.”

WP: “Ya, ya, ya, we had to prove [our sources]. Mondrian was a suppression of emotional reaction, which is a very authoritarian way of educating people. On the other hand, it’s very easy to understand and very, very powerful. So why were the Romans – actually a very stupid society – so successful? Because they had very good military moves. The Celtic Druids who had much more knowledge about other things were slaughtered because they had no military order; this is the development of our society. So, learning from history, to find a balance between these issues is, I think, a very important task. Architecture is a complex thing...to reduce complex things and to be clear so people can follow you is one of the great challenges in architecture.

I don’t know where the architects have their eyes – maybe on the computer screen too much – it makes them blind. Yael, how can an inventor try to get rid of his own feelings? I still think that if we have to talk about architecture, theory is very important; the notion of, the concept is very important, but the building decides whether it’s good or not, and a sketch could be much more influential than a big building; but, the experience of the three-dimensional thoughts – that is the importance of architecture.”¹

I was pleased to hear Prix’s view about expressing feeling through self expression as it is something in which I believed. I went to see Coop-Himmelblau’s architecture in the early days, in Vienna in 1980, while I was still studying architecture in Jerusalem;² I greatly admired their work.

Prix’s last message was about the importance of fighting for what we, as architects, believe in. For a veteran such as Prix, the chance of losing the battle is real and daunting, the popularity of taking design forward through mostly theory is in his opinion a phenomenon that can risk the architectural profession. He expands on this point in the full conversation we had.

¹ Wolf D. Prix in a conversation with Yael Reisner Venice, September, 2004.

² My source of information at that time (1978-1982) was the Domus Magazines we had in school, which was highly respected. (Alessandro Mendini was the editor at that time.) Thus I came to know about Coop-Himmelblau, Gehry, Richter and Gerngross, Gunther Domenig.

8. Observations – Part V: Sverre Fehn as a Counterpoint

As a counterpoint to my conversations about Deconstructivist Architecture, the MOMA show and its considerable international influence upon architectural discourse, my own private architectural discourse during the 1980s included the discovery of Sverre Fehn who was engaged with a different conversation. My developing admiration of his work especially affected my thinking as an architect. His architecture became progressively acknowledged by many others, and his place and influence in our domain achieved high significance.¹

One of the important aspects that were raised in the 1980s was that architecture is one of the visual arts; a position that often was pushed aside, but not by Sverre Fehn.

Fehn's work touched a nerve in me since the early 80's when I was a student at the AA, and I have continued to feel this way since then. Fehn's Museum for archeological remains in Hamar, Norway, was designed in the late 1960s and built by 1979, but actually was very much in spirit and form a part of the 80s conversation at the AA. The project was ahead of its time. It celebrated the incompleteness of the archeological remains in combination with the insertion of tough concrete ramps and the sympathetic nature of the wooden roof structure; It was poetic and artistically fascinating.

Fehn was referring in his writing to the important role that intuition and desire play in the making of architecture, or the need of the irrational thought as a source of inspiration and free-thinking:

“When thought turns towards great construction it always tends towards the irrational.”²

And as Fehn Expands:

“The use of a given material should never happen by choice or calculation, but only through intuition and desire. The construction accords the material in its opening towards light, a means of expressing its inherent color. However a material is never a color without construction... The problem never resides in the mass but only in the form. As in shipbuilding, the form is of the essence while water and air are nothing but presences.”³

“The architect's source brings forth the creative force of the spirit. Recording cannot give life to a new form. A structure arises from the inspiration of irrational thought.”⁴

Fehn was completely disinterested in framing views in the way that the Modernists enjoyed. He developed a whole notion of 'sense of place' through being engaged in a dialogue between the 'room' of the outside and the room of the inside, capturing that daily dialogue throughout the year and time of day was what brought spirit to the place. When that dialogue didn't exist between the two, then, he thought:

1 Sverre Fehn's most important and known works were the Norwegian Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Exhibition, the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (1962), and the Hedmark Museum in Hamar, Norway (1967–1979). He was awarded the Prizker Architecture Prize in 1997. (Fehn taught in Oslo's School of Architecture from 1971 to 1991 and was highly influential.)

2 Sverre Fehn, *The thought of Construction*, by Per Olaf Fjeld, Rizzoli, NY, 1983, p.27

3 Ibid, p.46

1-4. Sverre Fehn, the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (1962).



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5-6. Sverre Fehn, The Glacier Museum, Fjaerland, (1989-91).



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“Nature was reduced to visual beauty, to an aesthetic which could be seen from the window”¹

Fehn was taking part in the conversation with which Christian Norberg – Schultz was engaged, especially through his book published in 1980, *Genius Loci, Towards a phenomenology of Architecture*. They were both teaching in the same school of architecture in Oslo. Norberg-Schultz expressed his lack of satisfaction in the interpretation of the purpose of architecture through scientific understanding. He was looking for ways to keep and transmit meanings to places, and if we treat architecture analytically we will miss what brings distinct character and specific quality of identity.

Highly influenced by Heidegger’s ‘the things’(1950), the meaning of anything consists in what things gather.

“Genius Loci -‘spirit of place’, recognised as the concrete reality man has to face in his daily life. Architecture means to visualize that. The task of the architect is to create meaningful places”²

Placing architecture in nature was important for Fehn, as he said:

“...sight subtly acknowledged nature, for the eye recognized the landscape as the boundary of its life. Within this accuracy of place, a structure measured up to nature’s totality.”³

In an interview in 1993 he expressed his views on the importance to tell a story, preferably as part of nature:

“Modern literature often lacks a story. It’s a pity. You have to have a story to tell...Always try to create a tension between nature and your intervention. This is how architecture gains in readability and architects discover the story they have to tell.”⁴

Time as an important architectural feature was of significance to Fehn and he brought it in through the way he placed objects in his architecture and exposed them to the daily sun path in the sky, so on a sunny day there was always a dialogue between the outside world and the indoor space; it was Fehn’s unique spatial condition that he brought into his architecture, an active dialogue between light and objects - natural or artificial.⁵

Sverre Fehn’s architecture and its tight relationship with nature was of great importance to me and my development as a student, but also later on as a young architect, while starting my practice in Tel-Aviv, it became part of my intimate landscape and intimate set of references – I will return to this issue later on.

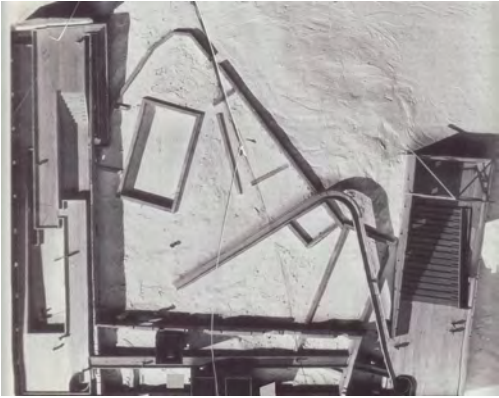
1 Ibid, p.24

2 Christian Norberg – Schultz, *Genius Loci, Towards a phenomenology of Architecture*, Rizzoli, N.Y. 1980, p.5

3 Sverre Fehn ,The thought of Construction, by Per Olaf Fjeld, Rizzoli, NY,1983, p.32

4 In an Interview with Armelle Lavalou – L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui 287-Juin 1993.

5 I planned Sverre Fehn to be my first interviewee, but there was a misunderstanding as he was waiting for me in his office on the 2nd January 2004 but I arrived in the afternoon when he had left the office already. I had to leave Oslo the next day.



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1-7. Sverre Fehn, The Hedmark Museum in Hamar, Norway, 1967–1979.



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9. Book Platform - Architecture and Beauty; Conversations with Architects about a Troubled Relationship

9.1. Introduction

The 1980s was a decade in which a lot of the architects I interviewed were very active and our conversations had a distinct relevance to what I have discussed so far.

For the book-writing platform, I felt it was critical to establish direct contact with the architectural elite and chose to interview architects who are or were highly influential to fellow architects and students of architecture; usually architects whose work I respect and find attractive as well, although I do not necessarily agree with their school of thought. There are sixteen profiles, which do not necessarily represent the wide range of views. They do represent a small sample of a potentially large number of architects that might have been included. I met most of them twice and some three times over a period of nearly three years (2004 - 2007). All sixteen interviewees have been involved in teaching: mavericks that have taken the course of architecture forward through talent, originality, integrity and individuality.

The questions prepared for each interview were first related to, and stemmed from, a study focused on each architect/interviewee's production and preoccupation, in general expressed through buildings, projects, drawings, design process, writings and websites. I framed the questions so as to understand their value system and architectural thinking, before adding more specific ones to sift their thoughts and beliefs through my filter for directing the conversation towards the subject of the troubled relationship.

The 'troubled relationship' lies, as I have argued, between architecture and beauty, architecture and aesthetics, architecture and its appearance, architecture and ones' visual thinking, architecture and personal input, architecture as an artistic activity, architecture and the role of intuition, architecture and lateral thinking, and architecture and individuality. I then asked: What is content in architecture and what is the most influential content on architectural form? Is content today an expression of the architect's preoccupation? Is the content of the architecture the architect's set of intentions? Should all other content (e.g. the site's topography, climate etc) be taken as 'matter of fact'¹ and therefore be seen as secondary? Following this, I would ask: If you are against style, why? Does style express culture?

If style and the signature of the architect are opposed to the ideal of 'neutral architecture, is neutral architecture a real possibility at all? If so what for? Do architects impose their

¹ Matter of fact content is often not as influential on the architectural language as the architect's preoccupation. Similarly in the fine arts: the painter or film director's special language evolve from their preoccupation, their idiosyncratic characteristics.

is neutral architecture a real possibility at all? If so what for? Do architects impose their architectures? Is 'impose' the right term? Do architects impose their will through design? Or is 'impose' a historical, inherited term that became a cliché? Signature architecture, why is it mostly a negative term? Zeitgeist and personal input: are they terms in conflict, or not necessarily? Free thinking; do free associations join the design process unexpectedly, do you allow lateral thinking to influence your design process? How do you see the role of metaphors? Do architects need a good eye¹ to design well? The good eye has been turned into a secret weapon; a lot of architects don't admit its role or its force, do you agree?

What is beauty today? Is attractive a better word? Is ugly included in that category of attraction? Is ugliness often turned to beauty? What kind of ugly can be seen as beautiful? Can we define that? Surely not everything ugly can be turned into something beautiful. Is there an aesthetical pursuit in your process? How about architectural vision? What does it mean to be visionary? Should all architects aspire to be visionary?

My questions were repeated in each interview although they weren't asked in the same order, but deployed at what felt an appropriate moment during each conversation. They were presented in different 'doses', different levels of intensity, depending on the interviewee's approach to architecture.

I split the book platform into six blocks and inserted them in six locations throughout my different discussions according to specific and intentional reasons, ensuring that they were always relevant to what was being discussed before and after. Hence the order of those sixteen chapters is not as will be in the coming book, where I just followed the interviewees' age – believing that a lot of the views are generational - from Frank Gehry, the oldest, through to Zvi Hecker and Peter Cook (the Sages), followed by Juhani Pallasma, Lebbeus Woods and Gaetano Pesce (the Moralists), Wolf Prix, Thom Mayne and Eric Moss (the Provocateurs), Will Alsop, Zaha Hadid and Odile Decq (the Generals), and the last four digital architects Mark Goulthorpe, Greg Lynn, Kol-Mac (Sulan Kolatan and Bill MacDonald) and Hernan Diaz-Alonso, whom I called the Heroes.

9.2. 1st Block: a Sage, a General and a Provocateur Conversations with: Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Wolf D. Prix

9.2.1. Frank O. Gehry A White Canvas Moment

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1991-1998) propelled architect Frank O. Gehry's work onto the world stage and cemented his status as one of the few architectural 'names' that instantly registers recognition within the collective public consciousness. The building's seductive expressive form, heroic interiors, glistening titanium-clad exterior and contextual, photogenic presence ensured that the project was widely celebrated and published through the mass media, becoming one of the most resonant buildings of the 20th century in contemporary culture.

Predating Bilbao by 20 years, Gehry's own house in Santa Monica (1978) Los Angeles had already established his reputation within the international architectural community. This richly layered, spatial composition employed construction techniques to create a visual toughness and rawness through its lack of craftsmanship. The strategy succeeded in capturing a sense of extraordinary derived from ordinary means and resulted in a poetic and innovative composition. Gehry's aspiration to create a new and expressive American architectural language that aligned itself with the LA art world rather than the LA architectural preoccupations of the day, were prophetic of his later work, significantly developed in the startling forms of the Vitra Museum (1987-1989), Weil am Rhein, near Basel and culminating with Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (1991-1997), the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles (1989-2003), the DZ Bank Building in Berlin (1995-2001), or the Hotel at Marques De Riscal Winery (1998-2006) in Elciego, (Alava) in Spain, among others.

Now 80 years old, Gehry remains a vital and integral presence in his large office, travelling often for his projects scattered throughout the USA, Europe and the Middle East, yet driving and directing the design process at both a micro and macro level. The latter indicates his strong work ethic and total commitment to his practice – released only his Sunday ritual of ocean sailing. Unassuming and quietly spoken, Gehry admits that his congenial personality masks an inquisitive and fiercely ambitious mind. Driven by his passion and expert knowledge of fine art, classical, contemporary music and literature¹, Gehry believes that the human condition should be the leading driver of the design process. His work transcends professional and public boundaries through its humanistic, expressive yet highly experimental form – all factors that resulted in Gehry being awarded architecture's highest honour, the Pritzker Prize in 1989.

¹ As Gehry states: "I'm pretty well educated... I've been involved with a lot of art and studied architectural history pretty damned thoroughly... I appreciate the interaction between architecture and great classical music and I understand the relationship between architecture, literature, art, painting and sculpture. I'm not a scholar but I do have some sense of it." Interview with Yael Reisner, July 2007

Fig.1 Gehry Residence, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, photo Grant Mudford,1978.



Fig.2 Gehry Residence, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, photo, Tim Street Porter,1978.



Frank O. Gehry A White Canvas Moment

Frank Gehry's career as an architect evolved from a childhood dominated by poverty but enriched by the embrace of culture: "My mother always took me to art museums and classical music concerts," he recalls. "My parents were very poor but my mother had studied violin as a child and so her belief was that I should be exposed to cultural things. My father – who was not educated at all – won awards for window dressing. He was this tough kind of guy who spoke street English¹ but he had a yearning to design and he used to talk about his window installations and show me pictures of the work." Continuing, he explains: "There was no sense of 'design' within our house yet when my mother could afford it, she bought beautiful objects that were different than any of our friends' interiors. I remember seeing and noting the difference in their character."

Encouraged by his family to pursue his ambitions, Gehry began his studies in fine arts and ceramics before studying architecture at the University of Southern California and Harvard's Graduate School of Design. Although he didn't draw naturally, Gehry quickly learnt to sketch and communicate his work with dexterity, partly influenced by his ongoing connection with the work of the University's art students: "I didn't draw very much as a child but I was very interested in art. When I was accepted into architecture after studying fine art I kept a relationship with the department and continued to be interested in the art student's work."

While studying at Harvard, Gehry was introduced by his tutor, Joseph Hudnut, to the notion of creating a new American architectural language appropriate for the time: "Joseph Hudnut would take us on long walks through Boston and talked about 'American ' architecture. That was when it really hit me... that an ambition to create an American architecture was something to strive for and that meant you had to find a new language because one didn't really exist yet. How do you do something when nobody is doing it yet? I felt optimistic about America and so it was all about finding new ways."²

Post graduation and after taking his first position with Victor Gruen Associates, Gehry began to realise that his architectural ambition differed starkly from those of his colleagues who were engaged with a Functionalist aesthetic and were disinterested in pursuing an engagement with art. As a result, Gehry gravitated to the graphic designers and artists within the office who supported his direction: "In Gruen's office, I became friends with the graphics staff rather than the other architects who were critical of my position. We used to go to all the galleries together so I knew a lot of LA artists³ and became very familiar with their work... I felt that they approved of me and encouraged me. In a sense they were my team."

1 Frank Gehry's father was born in New York before moving to Canada and his mother was born in Poland. Gehry was born in Toronto, Canada and, at the age of eighteen, moved to Los Angeles with his parents.

2 Frank O. Gehry, Kurt W. Forster, *Art and Architecture in Discussion, Series, Cantz, Germany, 1999*, conversation between Frank O. Gehry and Kurt W. Forster with Christina Bechtler. Santa Monica, California, Aug. 24, 1997, p.60

3 Gehry states: "I connected with the work of the LA artists because there was feeling in the work that I could respond to and have an emotional experience." Interview with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

Fig.3 Lewis Residence – GehryPartners,LLP,Lyndhurst,Ohio,
1985-1989

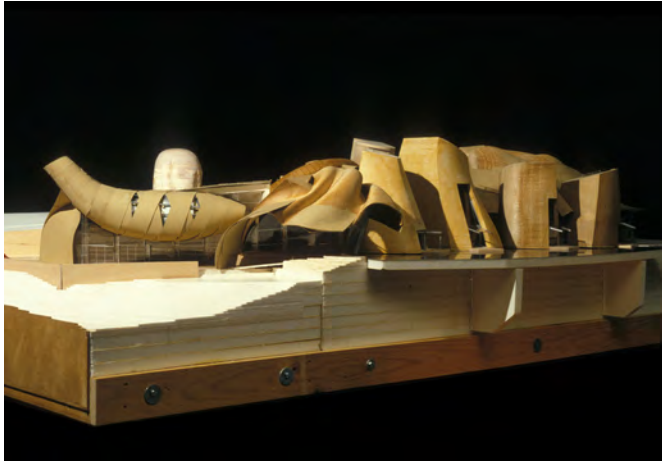


Fig.4 Lewis Residence – Gehry Partners, LLP, Lyndhurst,Ohio, 1985-
1989

Fig.5 Gehry's cardboard Armchair, photographer: Susan King.



Frank O. Gehry A White Canvas Moment

The decision to strike out on his own and establish his own practice in 1962¹ provided the opportunity for Gehry to pursue his interest in self-expression and explore the possibilities of bringing the qualities he admired within painting to architecture². He found the work of Giorgio Morandi – a well-known Italian painter from the 1970s³ - particularly resonant and was influenced by the artist's still life paintings derived from everyday sources and his compositional arrangements. Unable to find support or establish a discourse with the local architectural community, Gehry continued to consolidate his relationships with artists, relating more easily to the emotions expressed in the LA art world⁴ than in the local architectural establishment of the time⁵.

Gehry firmly rejects the notion that self-expression is a capricious act within the design process. Conversely, he believes that signature and democracy are integrally interlinked and, in fact, when an architect suppresses his emotions within the design process, it is an act that “talks down to people” and doesn't allow a full engagement with architecture. Certainly, the role of self-expression and its legitimacy in architecture is a familiar issue within architectural discourse⁶ and resurfaces with a sense of self-righteousness within the digital realm. As a result, Gehry's position is consolidated by years of battling criticism that his architecture is too derivative of the art world, too sculptural and self-expressive and his response to the critique is clear and direct: “To deny the validity of self-expression is akin to not believing in democracy – it's a basic value... If you believe in democracy then you must allow for personal expression.”⁷

Gehry references other creative disciplines as having a healthier relationship with the notion of an embodied signature within the work: “Any suggestion of an architect having a signature is a colossal put-down. Yet, it's not the same for any other discipline within the performing arts – cinema, music or art.” Continuing, he explains that his process is disconnected from critical discourse: “I just get on with the work and do it – it doesn't seem worth the discussion, or trying to convince people. I think there is a consistent denial as to what constitutes excellence and I'm very uncomfortable with the notion that you do one building and then suddenly there's an idea of being a 'star' architect – that's so deprecating.”

Despite the public accolades, Gehry found that success had a less positive effect on his practice: “I completed the Guggenheim Bilbao in 1997 and it was a big success, number one on the hit parade yet I didn't receive any more museum commissions yet Renzo Piano had many. And the Walt Disney Concert Hall was also number one on the hit parade – it works like a dream. Yet still no calls – Herzog & de Meuron and Jean Nouvel have all had commissions.” He continues: “When I finished Bilbao there was a museum conference in London with curators and directors such as Nicholas Serota of the Tate Modern and they all spoke against my design.”

1 As Gehry recalls: “The first person who recognised me was Esther McCoy the architectural historian, renowned for her specialised knowledge on RM Schindler and she wrote about the Danziger House for an international magazine and that was first time that I ever received any attention past the borders of California.” Interview with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

2 “I'm looking at painting all the time, so one part of architecture that I felt an interest in exploring was how to bring these ideas to buildings. The tradition of Mondrian's paintings affecting architecture is an old story. I wanted to see what else we could learn from paintings. In particular, how could a building be made to look its in process? And how can the expressive and compositional attitudes of painting be explored in a building?” Frank Gehry, *Buildings and Projects*, Frank O. Gehry and Peter Arnel: A Conversation. Rizzoli, 1985.

3 Many architects from 1960s and early 1970s also referenced the visual arts – albeit with different approaches – instigating a genuine spirit of change after two decades of design led by a utilitarian ethos. At the AA, the Archigram group looked at wide range of visual sources. There Russian Constructivists were re-visited by Eilija Zengelis, Rem Koolhaas and Zaha Hadid (Zenghelis and Koolhaas' student at the time). In New York, James Wines was also engaged with the issues arising from the art world. In Vienna, Coop Himmelb(l)au was influenced by the Viennese painter Arnulf Rainer, who was engaged with emotional paintings, while Tel Aviv-based architect Zvi Hecker was influenced by the artist Mario-Merz.

Frank O. Gehry A White Canvas Moment

Fig.6 Vitra international manufacturing facility and design museum, Weil am Rhein,Germany,photo by Richard Bryant with ARCAID,1987-1989.



4 Other artists Gehry met were: Robert Irwin, John Alton and his wife, Jasper Johns, Raushenberg, John Chamberlain Viva and Paul Morrissey, Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, Don Judd and Carl Andre. Frank O. Gehry, Kurt W. Forster, Art and Architecture in Discussion Series, Cantz, Germany, 1999, conversation between Frank O. Gehry and Kurt W. Forster with Christina Bechtler. Santa Monica, California, Aug. 24, 1997, pp.60-61.

5 "Who was doing Architecture in LA in the 1960s?...John Lautner... started to wane for me, Ray Kappe was friendly but rather distant, Bernard Zimmerman was cranky about my work...So the architectural milieu was not accessible to me. Schindler was gone, I met Neutra a few times, but didn't find him very exciting to be around." Ibid, p.63.

6 Since the fall of German Expressionism personal expression has been widely viewed by architectural critics as a capricious act. As Wolfgang Pehnt writes: "Adolf Behne was the first of the architects and architectural critics in Germany... to announce [in Berlin in 1927] ...[this is] the end of the rule of Caprice... an expression of a general will now appeared as pure subjectivity... 'the personal individualistic work will be more out of place... objectivity [is] the highest thing of which we are capable.'" Wolfgang Pehnt, Expressionist Architecture, Thames and Hudson, 1973, p.194.

7 As Gehry states: "Not imposing yourself means you have to modify your feelings to a lower level of expression and I believe that is 'talking down' to people... If you take an idealistic approach then it follows that if every human being delivers to the table their best efforts, then society is elevated because the individuals' efforts add up to a whole... Conversely if each individual within a society downplays their best efforts and modifies it to a lower level of expression then it's ultimately like self flagellation... they are beating themselves because they have to pay for their sins and sins of their forefathers." Interview with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

Fig.7 Vitra international manufacturing facility and design museum, Weil am Rhein,Germany, photo by Peter Mauss, 1987-1989.



Fig.8 DZ bank Building, Berlin , Germany,Photo by Thomas Mayer,1995-2001.



Frank O. Gehry
A White Canvas Moment

Despite this disparity between Gehry's perceived success and the translation to the reality of working commissions, he maintained his commitment to a personalised approach and has seen the critique come full-circle: "Now there's a backlash because the extension to MoMA¹ has totally failed. The neutral white cube ideology is turning and now I am beginning to get hired for museum projects again such the new Guggenheim Museum in Dubai."

¹ The expansion of New York's Museum of Modern Art was a competition designed and won by Yoshio Taniguchi in 1997 and completed in 2005.



Fig. 9 Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Exterior view from the street, – Gehry Partners, LLP, Bilbao, Spain, 1991-1997.



Fig.10 Guggenheim Museum Bilbao – Back broad exterior view photo, Thomas Mayer, Bilbao, Spain, 1991-1997.



Fig.11 Guggenheim Museum Bilbao - The big hall with Serra, Oldenburg, Judd – Photo, Thomas Mayer, Bilbao, Spain, 1991-1997.

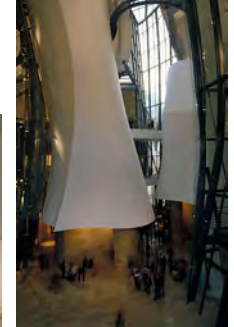


Fig.12 Guggenheim Museum Bilbao - The entrance hall, Bilbao, Spain, 1991-1997.

Fig.13 Marques de Riscal winery - interior view – Photo, Gehry Partners, LLP, Elciego, (Alava) Spain, 1998-2006



Fig.14 Marques de Riscal winery – Frank Gehry's sketch, 2000, Front View, Gehry Partners, LLP, Elciego, (Alava) Spain, 1998-2006



Frank O. Gehry A White Canvas Moment

1 Robert Wilson said: "Bauhaus was formful as functional. The outside revealed the inside. With a fish and an orange the skin is very different than the interior." Frank O. Gehry, Kurt W. Forster, *Art and Architecture in Discussion Series*, Cantz, Germany, 1999, conversation between Frank O. Gehry and Kurt W. Forster with Christina Bechtler. Santa Monica, California, Aug. 24, 1997, p. 85

2 "I wasn't the only one with that approach... Jim Stirling... Aldo Rossi... we went different ways... I think I related more to Stirling at the time, and probably also to Lou Kahn, who was interested in breaking down the building except that when Khan broke them down they kept their unity..." Ibid, p.29 -31.

3 Gehry describes the design process for the Wynton Guest house Wayzata, Minnesota (1982-87): "These are people who are very neat and clean... what they really wanted... was that it had to look like a sculpture... That's when I started thinking, well, if I made a still life... a Morandi 'three big bottles and three little bottles', in order for each piece to retain its 'objecthood', then the thing had to have the crack. It had to have the separation, it couldn't be a continuous structure." Ibid, P.25.

4 Gehry states: "I make lots of models and sketches – it just helps me to think and my team use them to make hundreds of models per project." Interview with Yael Reisner, July, 2007.

5 Gehry believes in a lateral, creative design process, explaining: "I just gave a talk in Atlanta to seven-thousand Neuro-scientists on the topic of 'creativity'. I explained that if I knew what I was going to do before I started the design process then I wouldn't do it... so it's a bit like the cat with the ball, you become opportunistic, you discover things and then you work with them and then it leads to another discovery and then it's a kind of growth. They loved it; that's the way they work, so I do believe that this is a good model." Interview with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

Gehry describes his design process as working from the 'inside out' and yet the exterior of his buildings often look very different than the interior. Gehry's friend and artist Robert Wilson¹ described this approach to an interior/exterior relationship by drawing an analogy to the way that an orange skin is very different from its interior. The architect also returns to the compositions of Morandi to inform his aspiration to create a better scale for an architectural experience, explaining: "I was looking at how to break down the monolithic modernist building into pieces that could break down the scale² and create a different urban model³ based on European references... I think it's intriguing that Rem Koolhaas seems to be doing large-scale work in the spirit of Le Corbusier – it's strange to me that the Modernist approach is coming back as a model."

For Gehry, Mies van der Rohe's renowned Barcelona Pavilion was the ultimate expression of 'form follows function' yet he points out the contradictions inherent in the ideology: "I think that the Barcelona Pavilion is the most successful Modernist example of the interior and exterior as one thing. Yet the connection between the walls and the ceiling and the engineering to achieve that effect is hidden from view. So the irony is that the small scale defies what they were aspiring to do."

Contrasting with the Modernist ideology, Gehry may begin his design process with functional requirements but the form won't necessarily be related directly to program. He explains: "I have always maintained that the building is a container or 'shell' and the interior has to be flexible and changeable as most buildings will change use over time. The separation between interior and exterior is also realistic for budgets and changing functions." He continues: "I don't, however, just build a container and then jam program in, I always work from the inside out but with flexibility and an 'open ended' system."

This 'inside out' strategy is supported by Gehry's technique of working with many physical models⁴ as preliminary 'sketches' in order to gain a strong sense of organisation and scale for each project: "I work with models to plan in a very conventional way and organise the building from the interior," he explains. "So before I draw I know the scale and the spatial proportions and I've got the design pretty well established in my brain. Continuing, he explains: "When I eventually sketch I'm pretty close to the reality and even though the drawings look 'squiggly', when you see them next to the finished building they look pretty close to the built form."

For Gehry thinking through making models and sketching is simply a method for unearthing ideas rather than any kind of objectification of the model itself. He eschews any preciousness about the process: "It's simply a method for intuitive expression – you find something and then you're opportunistic with that idea. It's like a pussy cat with the ball of thread – you start pushing and you don't know what's going to happen and then something falls and you chase after it – 'it' being the intellectual opportunity."⁵



Fig.14 Marques de Riscal winery, – Hotel's room interior, Photo, Thomas Mayer, Elciego, (Alava) Spain,1998-2006

However, Gehry tempers his passion for pursuing opportunity with each new project with an innate respect for site and cultural context¹ – a preoccupation he shares with other LA-based architects such as Thom Mayne and Eric Owen Moss.²

While all three architects acknowledge that this preoccupation is occasionally borne out of the pragmatics of budget where partly using conventional construction techniques can create freedom for experimentation, they also have individual concerns. Mayne's aspiration lies in the desire to imbue his work with memory while Moss' believes in a connection with a historic continuum drives his process. However, for Gehry it is a more personal agenda – the desire to be a self-described 'do gooder' borne from his Jewish upbringing. "The essence of the Jewish faith is: 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you'", he explains. "So if you take that ideology to architecture then you have to consider that a building is a neighbour to somebody or something. I think that the Guggenheim Bilbao was successful in creating a relationship with its neighbours and I feel that's the golden rule – be a good neighbour³.

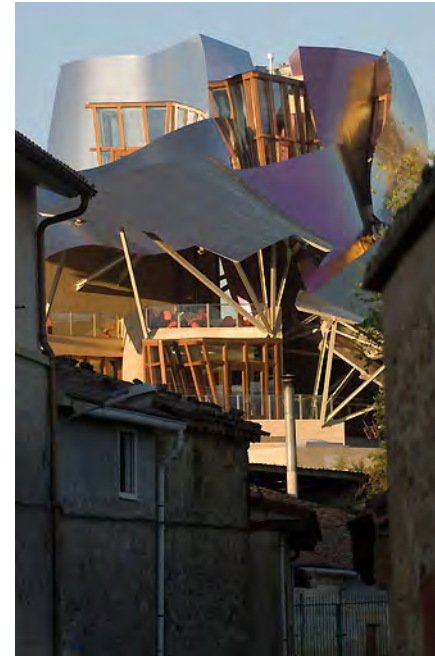


Fig.15 Marques de Riscal winery, Back view – Photo, Thomas Mayer, Elciego, (Alava) Spain,1998-2006.

1 Many of Gehry's buildings have a wing that is box-like and generic as seen in the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles or the Hotel at Marques De Riscal Winery in Elciego (Alava) Spain. Additionally, Morphosis' projects through the 1990s often utilised a rectangular plan with the new, innovative architectural parts expressed through the section. Eric Owen Moss also retains traces of existing structures and juxtaposes his dialectical expressions.

2 An approach that is distinctly different than their European counterparts such as Zaha Hadid, Coop-Himmelb(l)au, Hans Hollein, Jean Nouvel, Peter Cook and others. As Gehry explains: "I understand that if you are in Europe it's a different context and it can become oppressive." Interview with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

3 Gehry states: "I worry about mega-projects such as Rem Koolhaas's CCTV in China, which I like because they are Corbusian in scale and attitude. It's like brave new world or metropolis but very impersonal. I think you can go to that scale and invent a new world but you need to remember the individual." Gehry cites Archigram as having successfully expressed a vision for the future with an understanding of humanity: "It's clear to me that Archigram invented the language for the new world, ...and that's what we are doing now. Their models of the city are still relevant today. I don't think that anybody has come up with a better one for the future... They tapped electronics, robotics, everything. My only problem with their position at the time was that there wasn't the level of art content that I could relate to."

Frank O. Gehry A White Canvas Moment

Gehry's aspiration to be neighbourly, open and accessible is also reflected in his wariness of a forced connection between cultural theory and architectural practice, particularly where it has the potential to contribute to misleading or misappropriated meanings: "French philosophy and its relationship to architecture has lost me," he explains. "I actually met Jacques Derrida once and talked to him about 'Deconstruction' as it related to architecture and he said that the way it was presented within the Museum of Modern Art's 'Deconstructivist' architecture show¹ wasn't his intent." He continues: "Personally, Derrida's philosophy didn't actually interest me so I felt it was opportunistic to use the word 'deconstruction' for the purpose of the exhibition. As a consequence, when people looked at my house at that time, and heard the word 'deconstruction', they would say 'oh that's it!' And as a result, I felt I'd been hijacked and misappropriated."²

Gehry resists the word 'beauty' as being representative of values with which he struggles to find a connection: "The connotation of 'beauty' for me is that it represents pretty and, therefore, the association is 'soft' – I'm not interested in that in a building," he states. Undoubtedly, the term sits uncomfortably with Gehry's architectural language, which early on in his career pursued a rough, touch aesthetic. And while it has evolved into the refined and elegant collage within projects such as the Guggenheim Bilbao, his aesthetic continues to feel at odds with any traditional notion of beauty. Elaborating, Gehry explains: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder so I find that my understanding of what is beautiful and what's ugly is pretty wide and open compared to others. It's a visual thing and difficult to define. Artists talk about it being tough and there's a certain toughness to my aesthetic."

Despite Gehry's discomfort with the term beauty, he is much more at ease than the majority of his contemporaries with the expressive nature of his work – his architectural language is derived almost completely from the self and is completely fluid with no fixed preoccupation.³ His preoccupation with quality of light within his architecture is a direct result of living in Canada during his early adolescence coupled with his deep affinity with Nordic Architecture – particularly the work of Alvar Aalto whose studio he visited in 1972: "I feel that I relate to Aalto more than any other architect because of that experience. But nobody sees that in me for some reason."⁴

Gehry's engagement with his work is derived more from the process of his architecture rather than the end form or building – what he calls a 'white canvas' moment: "I feel a brotherhood with artists because they have a moment of truth when they face a white canvas. And I imagine that's a very threatening moment in one's life," he explains. "Here you are, you've got the canvas and the paint so what marks will you chose and why? What inspires you to start and what makes you decide on your approach?"

1 Deconstructivist Architecture, Museum of Modern Art, NY, 1988, curated by Mark Wigley and Philip Johnson. The work of seven architects was exhibited in his seminal exhibition: Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Coop-Himmelb(l)au, Daniel Libeskind, and Rem Koolhaas.

2 As Gehry recalls: "I took part in the exhibition and I shut my mouth about how I felt – I didn't do anything. I don't think I even went to the conferences they had. I don't remember participating because I didn't know how to talk about Derrida. And in any case Derrida said they really misunderstood him." Interview with Yael Reisner, July 2007.

3 Gehry has often stated: "I think my ideas are derived more from paintings than sculptures but I'm all over the place [with my influences]. Whenever I go to a museum I fall in love with something...yet each time I see it differently from the last time...I am interested in [all of] the arts [such as] music and literature. I would never be just monochromatic, I [always] take a broad outlook." Interview with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

4 While architectural critics may not be attuned to Gehry's Nordic sensibilities, Peter Cook has for many years drawn his students' attention to Gehry's affinity with the manner in which Nordic architects handle natural light such as Sigurd Lewerentz's Klippan Church, Klippan, Sweden.

Fig.17 (RED) POP-UP STORE - Gehry Partners, LLP, New York,NY,2007-TBD.



Fig.18 Guggenheim Museum Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates,2007-TBD



Holding a deeply felt kinship with the artists' intuitive process, Gehry reflects on his own architectural methodology: "Every artist I know just starts working, they don't have any preconceived ideas. They might be informed by their personal history or by their knowledge of art history but then they bring to the work their own particular time. It's just intuitive, it happens, it informs itself as it goes along," he explains. "I always look back at buildings when they've finished and say: 'How the hell did that happen?' I never record my process and so I don't know and I don't want to know... that would tighten up the process so I couldn't do anything."

Characteristically, Gehry returns to an art reference point to succinctly sum up his position: "Within the architectural process the critical point comes when you've solved the project and the site, you've established the building's budget, timescale, technical issues and organisation¹ and now you're ready to make it into something. Then you have the same 'moment of truth' as an artist where you have to decide on form, composition, colour, texture and you make a deeply personal commitment to a building or project. Ultimately, my moment of truth is just as threatening for me as it must be for the guy with the white canvas."

1st interview –Gehry's Office, LA, Dec. 2006

2nd interview – Gehry's office, LA, Dec. 2006

3rd interview – Marina Del Rey's yacht club, LA, July 2007

¹ Gehry states: "As architects we have plumbing and building departments and clients and so it's presumed that these elements eclipse and neutralise the moment of truth but I don't believe that's true." Interview with Yael Reisner, July, 2007.

9.2.2. Zaha Hadid Planetary Architecture

A truly visionary architect has many converging, complimentary yet, at times, conflicting characteristics – they must be intellectually sharp, original and highly imaginative, with a strong sense of history and high level of critique. They must be independent and tough, stubbornly refusing to accept impossibilities yet diplomatic and optimistic in the face of adversity. Most importantly they must have an unshakable confidence in their talent and ability. Iraqi-born, British architect Zaha Hadid embodies all these characteristics and more.

Professionally uncompromising and rigorous when dealing with clients, collaborators and the media yet fiercely protective of her dedicated staff, Hadid is one of the most recognised and powerful characters within international architecture. Her larger-than-life persona also translates into the private realm where she is paradoxically impatient, loud, affectionate, chatty, humorous and nostalgic – generously cooking and sharing traditional Iraqi food with her friends at home.

Hadid's personality infiltrates every part of her working and personal life from her extensive collection of garments such the Issey Miyake-designed pieces that she famously layers and appropriates to her own interpretation, often wearing upside them down. Hadid's East London loft is filled with pieces of her own design including a large-scale, Aqua dining table¹ and a tea and coffee set designed for Alessi. Providing a dramatic backdrop to the space is a large-scale painting an enlarged version of her infamous 'Malevich's Tektonik' bridge' over the Thames river produced for her diploma thesis project, in 1976-77, while at London's Architectural Association. Despite the avant-garde overtones, Hadid's home environment remains one for comfort and relaxation with personal touches such as an extensive collection of glass art including, curvaceous Murano pieces that reflect her love for colour, form and elegant exuberance.

¹ Limited-edition Aqua dining table for London manufacturers Established & Sons

Fig.1 The peak , Architectural painting; night view, Hong Kong, 1982-83.



Fig.2 Victoria City Areal, Architectural painting; Architectural Painting,Aerial perspective , Berlin, 1988



Fig.2 Victoria City Areal, Architectural painting; Architectural Painting, the 'blue Beam', Berlin, 1988.



Zaha Hadid Planetary Architecture

Zaha Hadid won the Pritzker Prize, known as the ‘Nobel of Architecture’,¹ in 2004 when she was just 54 years old – the first woman and certainly one of the youngest to receive the ultimate accolade in her profession². The win was particularly significant because it recognised Hadid’s work beyond her few built projects at that time, acclaiming her drawings, large scale paintings, competition wins and publications for their outstanding clarity, presence, originality of approach and radically new spatial articulation. The attention generated by the Pritzker established a growing sense of trust and confidence in her compelling work and translated into a phenomenal period of commissions ensuring Hadid effortlessly transcended from the label of ‘paper architect’ to build her visionary projects.

After more than 30 years of practicing architecture, Hadid has unquestionably consolidated her position as a prolific, influential and powerful presence within the architectural landscape. After initially developing her architectural reputation through teaching and competition, it was almost twenty years before she built her first building³ at the invitation of Vitra Furniture chairman, Rolf Fehlbaum⁴ to design a fire station in the factory’s grounds – a site for a collection of innovative pieces of architecture.⁵

Born in 1950 in Baghdad, Iraq, Hadid went to school in Switzerland and England before studying a mathematics degree at the American University in Beirut. She recalls that her first contact with the architectural process was as a young girl when she became involved in the process of designing a new family house. On completion of her degree in Beirut, Hadid rejoined her family in London and embarked on her architectural studies at the Architectural Association in 1972. A committed and curious student, her work along with others at the time marked a critical and highly successful period in the school’s history where many of the alumni and tutors later emerged as architects of international influence.⁶

Through her student years Hadid’s affinity with Persian/Arabic calligraphy that provided early examples of abstract expression⁷ and were an inspiration for her evolving aesthetic: “In my third year I researched geometry, particularly the geometry of Islamic patterns and their connection to mathematics because I’d previously trained in the discipline,” she explains. “In the Arab world and especially Iraq, there are is a great culture of teaching algebra, trigonometry and geometry so the training was always very good. Abstraction was always a big part of that process and I was always interested in maths, logic and abstraction.” Hadid expands: “At the time, as a student of the AA you were exposed to many different agendas and not just with Modernist theories. There were many positions that were passionately pursued so when you put them together after three or four years of study they came into focus.”⁸

Her AA diploma project for a bridge over London’s Thames River became the catalyst

1 Her other completed projects in Europe include a fire station for the Vitra Furniture Company in Weil am Rhein, Germany (1990-94), LFone/Landesgartenschau, an exhibition building to mark the 1999 garden festival in that same city; a car park and terminus Hoenheim North, a ‘park and ride’ and tramway on the outskirts of Strasbourg, France; and a ski jump situated on the Bergisel Mountain overlooking Innsbruck, Austria. In that year Hadid had numerous other projects in various stages of development including a building for BMW in Leipzig, and a Science Center in Wolfsburg, both in Germany; a National Center of Contemporary Arts in Rome; a Master Plan for Bilbao, Spain; a Guggenheim Museum for Taichung, Taiwan; and a high speed train station outside Naples; and a new public archive, library and sport center in Montpellier, France.

2 The Pritzker Prize ceremony took place in St. Petersburg, Russia in 2004 – and by pure coincidence it was the city where Soviet artist Malevich lived and worked.

3 Hadid first built project was the restaurant Moonsoon in Sapporo, Japan, in 1990.

4 The chairman of the Vitra furniture company and architecture patron.

Fig.3 Moonsoon Restaurant, Lounge area, Photo, Shinkenchiu-Sha Co.and Paul Warchol, Sapporo, Japan, 1989-90,



5 The main Vitra factory building was designed by Nicholas Grimshaw (1954), the Design museum by Frank Gehry (1989) the Fire Station by Zaha (1993), a design shop and additional factor building with a passage by Alvaro Siza (1994), a conference pavilion by Tadao Ando (1993) and a Buckminster Fuller dome of 1978-79 and a Jean Prouvé petrol station of 1953 were also salvaged, restored and installed on the site.

6 Including: Peter Cook, Ron Heron, Jan Kaplicky, John Frazer, Peter Wilson, Peter Salter, Christine Hawley, Bernard Tschumi, Nigel Coates, Elia Zenghelis, Rem Koolhaas, Raoul Bunschoten, Don Bates

7 As a result of the Islamic tradition that forbids figurative drawings, Islamic calligraphy is an aspect of Islamic art that has co-evolved alongside the religion of Islam and the Arabic language.

8 There was a series of seminars and one of the seminars was done by Elia Zenghelis for first year students on Russian Constructivism and was very interesting for me.

Fig.4 Vitra Fire Station, photo, Helene Binet, Vitra, Weil um Rhein, 1990-94



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for Hadid's future direction. She recalls: "In fourth year with Elia and Rem¹ as my tutors everything kind of connected for me. Prior to that I was unfocused, there was some interest here and there but nothing completely connected so it was definitely through my diploma project *Malevich's Tectonik* that my influences all came together in terms of geometry, abstraction, organisation with an inherent Suprematist ideology.²

The project³ took its inspiration from the paintings of Suprematist Kazimir Malevich, and more specifically his Alpha Architecton models from 1920. As Hadid explains: "They weren't inspired by the painterly aspect of Malevich's work although I was interested in how to represent drawings through paintings, the idea of the form, repertoire and the image. But for me, the inspiration lay in looking at the Russian avant-garde movement as a whole and Constructivist art, architecture and photography, it seemed that everything had a trajectory that was connected... the functional and organizational diagrams were very interesting and radical, and I think what was missed historically is the radicalization of these ideas into architecture."

Upon graduation from the AA in 1978, Hadid joined the Office of Metropolitan Architecture as a partner at the invitation of her AA diploma tutors Koolhaas and Zenghelis. It was, however, a short-lived partnership with Koolhaas once affectionately describing Hadid's presence in the OMA office as "focussed on her own orbit." In 1979 she followed her mentors into an AA⁴ position and set up her fledgling practice. While teaching, Hadid continued to pursue her concepts through international competitions⁵ and in 1992 won an open architecture competition 'The Peak' for a leisure club on the top of the mountain overlooking Hong Kong Island. Her radically new approach to spatial design and sophisticated, original drawing technique were compelling, visually exciting and beautifully illustrated and the scheme won instant acclaim and, in turn, received the attention of avant garde architectural discourse and the international press propelling Hadid's work into public consciousness.

Although it was never realised as a building, the project presented Hadid's powerful conceptual manner of referencing Suprematist geometry with floating, horizontal planes to create a gravity-free illusion of form and space and represented through a dramatic large-scale painting that super-imposed plan, perspective and axonometric drawing. As Hadid describes the concept "A suprematist geology – materials that are impacted vertically and horizontally... like the mountain the building is stratified, with each layer defining a function... platforms are suspended like planets... the Peaks beams and voids are a gentle seismic shift on an immovable mass.⁶"

It is significant point of difference within the development of Hadid's career that while a lot of her contemporaries were looking back in history through the 1970s, Hadid referenced the Russian Constructivists but pursued a different agenda⁷ than historicism. Instead she

1 During the 70s, Rem Koolhaas and Eila Zenghelis were interested in extending the Modernist Project, looking at the Russian avant-garde. Zenghelis was Koolhaas' teacher and then they taught together when Hadid started 4th year.

2 Suprematism is an art movement, formed in Russia in 1913 by Kazimir Malevich. Malevich created a Suprematist 'grammar' based on fundamental geometric forms; the square and the circle that were introduced as superior forms. While not trained as an architect he engaged with architecture concerns through his Alpha Architecton (1920) paintings and models known as 'Malevich's Tectonik'.

3 She placed a hotel on the Hungerford Bridge on the River Thames, drawing from Suprematist forms to meet the demands of the program and the site (1976-77).

4 Hadid began teaching at the AA in 1980 and was a [Diploma] unit Master until 1987.

5 The Irish Prime Minister's Residence, Dublin (1979-80), Parc de la Villette, (Paris, 1982-83)

6 Hadid's description of the project in: *Zaha Hadid, The Complete Buildings and Projects*, Thames and Hudson, 1998.

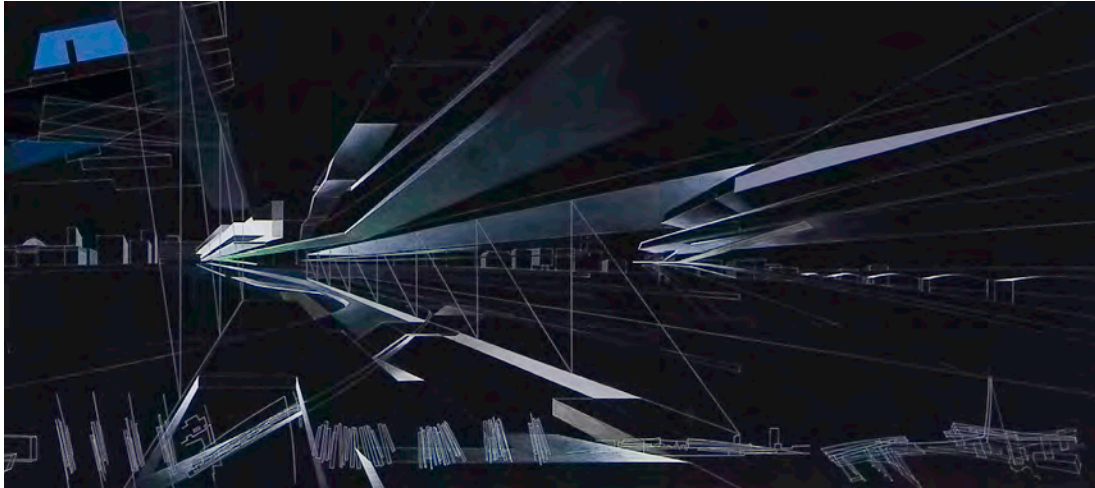


Fig.5 Habitable Bridge, architectural painting, interior perspective, London 1996



Fig.6 Museum for Islamic Arts, Sketch, ink on paper, Doha, Qatar, 1997

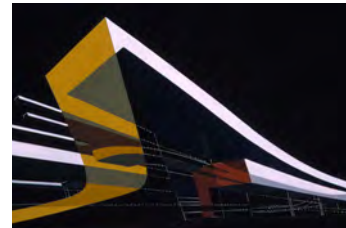


Fig.7 Landesgartenschau, Architectural Painting; worm's-eye view, Weil am Rhein, Germany, 1997-99



Fig.8 Landesgartenschau, Photo, Helen Binet., Weil am Rhein, Germany, 1997-99.

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suggested that the 'great Modern project' had been halted by the impact of two World Wars while still in the early days of the diverse experimental attitudes of De-stijl, Russian Constructivism and German Expressionism. As she described in interview with Alvin Boyarski, in 1983 "The experiment of the Modernist Project was never finished. There was no conclusion as they tried to stretch the limits. They were my point of departure. What interested me most about the Suprematists was that they painted things that were implied as architecture, but which were never injected into architecture, except perhaps in the work of Leonidov. He was really inventive programmatically and the most innovative of all the Russians. His work was very simple but he pushed the limits of all the things that the Constructivists and Suprematists had invented – how you actually correlate between the formed image, the presence on a particular site, its programmatic content, its assembly and so on. That was the principal lesson I learned from the avant-garde of Russia."²

Hadid was also committed to continuing and building upon an early Modernist line of enquiry: "I think the early Modernists were very connected to the idea of an intimate relationship between art and architecture in the sense that they were interested in similar things. The difference was that from a 'painterly' perspective they were simply beautiful compositions yet, I think in terms of organisation they pursued a similar investigation as in architecture. Expanding, Hadid states: "If you study the architectural plans of Leonidov³ although they were abstract they also included composition and that was the connection back to art. But they were radical beyond an aesthetic composition because as functional and organisational diagrams they were very interesting. I think what is still often misunderstood is the radicalisation of these ideas into architecture."⁴

With little opportunity to build in her early career, Hadid's large-scale architectural paintings drove her theoretical position, powerfully communicating her radical manifestations. Equally confronting for their layered and dense complexity, her dexterity in employing a multitude of drawing techniques – plan, section, isometric, axonometric, birds eye and worm eye perspective with multiple horizons and vanishing points to communicate alternative views – added to their enigmatic and visual appeal yet also attracted hostility from her peers as a pursuit of shallow, formal expressionism⁵.

Reflecting on the criticism, Hadid says: "I think there was a hostility⁶ about being engaged with a predictive life⁷ and about the way I communicated that element in my work because when I was a student, in the mid 1970s, the architectural discourse of the time was about the social project or alternative life. Besides the different agenda of my investigation, I think there were also many people who simply cannot read complex architectural drawings and the implication of navigating through a space, or inventing space; they don't understand

1 In her urban projects, Hadid attempts to intensify the urban density horizontally, suspending slabs above ground, often to open the podium under the horizontal slabs or the vertical shafts for the public of the street level.... It's a strategy that references the Suprematists but without their mysticism, fragmented spatial qualities, non-linear fields of forces, angular forms and fluid forms. Hadid's formal repertoire is still expanding in relation to the complexity of the programmes.

2 Zaha Hadid, interview by Alvin Boyarski, the head of the AA, published in her exhibition's catalogue-AA box; Folio 2 'Planetary Architecture', in 1983.

3 Ivan Leonidov [1920-1959] was part of the Suprematists and although he built very little was incredibly influential; his projects were regarded as some of the highest achievements of Suprematist architecture. His work extended the idea of an architecture composed of masses and lines into layers of spatial complexity in landscape, such as in The Lenin Institute of Leadership Moscow, 1927, or in his competition projects, the Sov-kino Film Production Complex, Moscow, 1927, or the Tsentrosoiuz Building 's competition, Moscow, 1928.



Fig.9 BMW plant, central building, Exterior with a view, Photo, Helene Binet, Leipzig, Germany, 2001-05

4 Hadid states: "In the early period the Russian avant-garde was more interested in composition. I think the idea of Modernism became more political and became more to do with generic modernist projects, functionalism and ideas of mass-production, repetition and exclusion. I think that these ideas became more clinical than in the early period with architects such as Mart Stam, Bruno Taut where the idea of colour and compositional value was very critical." Hadid in conversation with Yael Resiner, Dec.2006.

5 Most of Hadid's early architectural studies were done in acrylic colours on canvas mostly in a three-dimensional projective drawing techniques – axonometric, isometric, projections used by the Suprematists however Hadid's would alter the conventional manner by changing the projection angle), exploded axonometric, looking from below or from above, worm's-eye perspective views or bird's-eye's perspective views, with numerous horizon lines and vanishing points and with great level of abstractions; distorting perspective rather than a classic perspective giving one an illusion of a familiar reality.

6 "An atmosphere of total hostility, where looking forward has been, and still is, seen as almost criminal, makes one more adamant that there is only one way and that is to go forward along the path paved by the experiments of the early Modernists", Zaha Hadid, introduction to the AA Box, Folio 2, 1983.

7 Hadid uses this term relating to her visionary approach to architecture; as she envisages, contemplates and investigates future possibilities of new spatial organization, new program and new architectural language. All of which emanated from her unique sketches, models and captured in her architectural paintings that were presented in an utterly new and original way.

Fig. 10 BMW plant, central building, Interior, Photo, Roland Halbe, Leipzig, Germany, 2001-05,

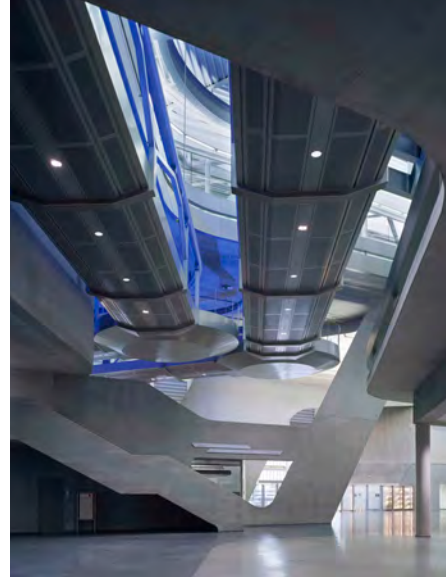


Fig.12 BMW plant, Central building, Leipzig, Photo, Helen Binet, Interior, Germany, 2001-05



Fig.11 BMW plant, central building, Exterior, Photo, Helene Binet, Leipzig, Germany, 2001-05



Fig.13 MAK Exhibition, Ice-Storm Installation, Exhibition Hall, Photo, Helen Binet, Vienna, 2003.



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when it appears on paper or canvas.¹ It's very bizarre and I think they can't comprehend my architecture so anything they don't understand they dismiss. So I think that there was a degree of kind of stubbornness in the early days to just push ahead and investigate aspects of work which were very important for me." And she suggests that a latent hostility towards her work remains within some quarters of the architectural community: "I think the hostility is still there because they simply can't read my work," she declares. "It became clear to me some critics just do not know how to read drawings and don't have any feeling for architecture. I think they undervalue architecture over what they think is urban design. I think that people misunderstand ideology. They think ideology only exists when it relates to some sort of existing theoretical framework.² But they don't understand that sometimes work that has a formal, organisational and functional aspect can also have a theoretical base and not an esoteric one."

It is perhaps the intensity and determination evident in Hadid's work that some commentators find confronting. The commitment to line and unconventional drawing projection is implicit in her design process and begins with sketching abstract, flat, two-dimensional line compositions that form the first external contours of a project's conception. She continues to develop the sketch as she interprets these early contours further into the program and layout and after hundreds of sketches, physical models and rigorous testing she begins to consolidate her vision for the architecture.³ Like her paintings, Hadid's compositional sketches are used as organizational tools that, in turn, assist in analysing the vision for the building – its layouts, plans and sections, program and practical aspects. "I think that the culture that was in place where we designed by doing many models and drawings led to a more rigorous re-investigation of the diagram," she suggests. "I think it's very different now where the current generation of young architects are into the computer and they don't really understand the implication of the sketch. They're not used to doing things by trial and error – like we used to do 10 or 15 years ago." Continuing, Hadid explains: "We'd do a project 100 times until it was right; now young architects are used to you handing over a diagram and they will go and do it on computer. They don't really understand the layering that is involved."

The experimental, rich use of colour⁴ and manipulations of light and shadow form an integral part of Hadid's architectural vision and within her intense coloured studies she depicts these qualities as envisaged within the completed buildings.⁵ Describing the process of discovering and working with a multitude of grey hues in the process of developing the Peak competition, she suggests that "...colour is not necessarily used as decoration. It shows the temper, in a way. It also unveils the quality of the architecture...and it can be muted...monochromatic... with the Peak we really had no idea about how it should be finished. By the use of drawings and painting slowly but surely we developed a confirmed opinion. The paintings were like tests."⁶ Light and shadow were also embraced in Hadid's

1 Generally non architects struggle to read architectural drawings, but in Hadid's case even some architects, urban designers or town planner's, find it difficult to follow because of its non-conventional and original technique.

2 During the 1970s the hostility came from those who believed in the 'social project' ideology as a source for generating projects. Later on in the 1990s hostility flowed from those who embraced Derrida's philosophy followed by Deleuze's where both considered a valuable authority for initiating and generating architectural thoughts.

3 Patrick Schumacher - Hadid's collaborator since 1988, a director of Zaha Hadid Architects since 1999 and a sole partner in the company since 2003 – in his essay 'Mechanism of Radical Innovation' in the catalogue for the MAK exhibition in 2003, argues that Hadid body of work on paper actually 'constitutes a form of research; an unorthodox research in as much as it's methods include intuitive groping, randomization Hadid reconstitutes the functions of territorialization, enclosure and interfacing etc. by means of boundaries, fields, planes, volumes, cuts, ribbons etc the open ended ness of the compositional configurations.' Zaha Hadid Architecture, MAK, Vienna 2003,pp.23-25



Fig.14 Phaeno Science Centre, Exterior, Photo, Werner Huthmacher, Wolfsburg, Germany, 1999-2005

4 Hadid recalls that as a young girl in Iraq she would watch local women walking in the marshlands wearing colourful dresses and attributes her love for using exotic colour in her work as influenced by this experience.

5 One can see the use of layered colour in the few built works of her early career her early such as her colourful six pieces of furniture for the 24 Cathcart Road Residence, London (1985-86) or bright, serpentine forms of the Moonsoon Restaurant in Sapporo, Japan (1989-90). A great example of Hadid's implementation of colour investigation was her Swoosh Sofa that was designed and produced for Cathcart Road. The woven upholstery material was white with black and green dots that gave an expression of diggused colours; expression of colour was a direct output of Hadid's experimentation with colour in her elaborate studies and tests for her paintings.

6 From the Interview with Alvin Boyarski in 1983.

Fig.15 Phaeno Science Centre, Interior, Photo, Helene Binet Wolfsburg, Germany, 1999-2005



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overall coloured studies, and depicted as envisaged within the completed buildings.¹

Hadid's visual sense and good 'eye' are undisputable along with her sharp analytical and original intellectual position, however, she refutes a particular aesthetic aligned with a particular school of thought, explaining that her training at the AA opened up enormous possibilities: "The aesthetics of the work produced at the AA was very disconnected. I think it was a very exciting to be there because through the early 1980s there was such an energy and buzz that it felt as though everybody was on the verge of discovering something individual and new."²

Hadid's rise to prominence took on an added dimension with her inclusion in the seminal 1988 exhibition 'Deconstructivism' at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curated by Mark Wigley and Philip Johnson, however she resents the drawn association between Derrida's philosophy and the architecture of Deconstruction. Nevertheless she explains that the architects in the exhibition shared a historical impulse though their specific output and a diversity of approach: "What connected the work was a break from historicism... It was about collaging, collapsing things or crashing things into each other, or superimposition, and all these things were coming to all the same conclusion. Yet, the architects exhibiting were very different from each other. I think the layering side is when things are dropping into each other and breaking up was something that comes after the dogma of modernism and after historicism. It was inevitable in a way... I think everyone was trying to break away from the past and it was literally a physical break."

1 A good demonstration of Hadid's consideration of light in her architectural studies manifest in built work can be seen in the Landesgartenschau project, Weil am Rhein (1997-99), where the photographs of the building bear an uncanny resemblance her perspective paintings. Hadid enjoys telling the anecdotes of audiences in her lectures thinking that the paintings she shows are actually are the photos of her buildings; a little satisfaction after years of being misunderstood.

2 Hadid expands: "At the time, as a student of the AA you were exposed to many different agendas – not just with Modernist theories although there were lectures on Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. There were many positions that were passionately pursued and apparent for students so when you put them together after three or four years of study they came into focus."

3 Hadid has developed her own unique language to describe her radicalisation of early Modernism such as: 'program mutations', structures as large scale landscape relief, mirroring and settling into the land's contours', 'intensify the urban density horizontally', 'suspending tension', 'fluidity of space', 'emancipating the wall from the floor', 'turning conceivable constraints into new possibilities for space', 'creating new metropolitan scenarios', 'celebrating dynamic possibilities of urban landscape by extending the public realm', 'displaying new Suprematist geology'. A collection of quotes from Zaha Hadid's book: Zaha Hadid, The Complete Buildings and Projects, Thames and Hudson, 1988

Hadid's architectural agenda remains committed to challenging convention in pursuit of an exuberant and sensual architectural landscape. The dynamic lightness of her work tears away the tradition of the heavy building that is dumbly grounded to the street and searches for a sense of democracy in the way architecture might hover and open the ground floor for public activities in the spirit of the great early Modernists, yet more radical³– the result being a panorama of spaces that are exuberant, beautiful, elegant, generous and accessible for all.

Hadid's celebration of colour, rich materiality and dexterity of form attracts intense media attention and she seems to understand and accept the inevitability of her work being oversimplified by the press: "There are journalists who want to describe my aesthetic by imposing an easily identifiable and recognizable image and I feel that can work either way for my architecture," she explains. "I can't change their views and I think it has its pros and cons in terms of clients. The pros are that they understand a little of what you do, the cons are that they will want you to repeat yourself." She continues: "Right now, it seems there's a worldwide shift where most clients think that when they commission a piece of architecture what they buy is the right to the architect's image and aesthetic." Pausing to give a characteristically dry smile, Hadid concludes: "Although the architect might think otherwise and pursue something completely brave and new."

Interview at Zaha Hadid's studio, East London, Dec. 2006.

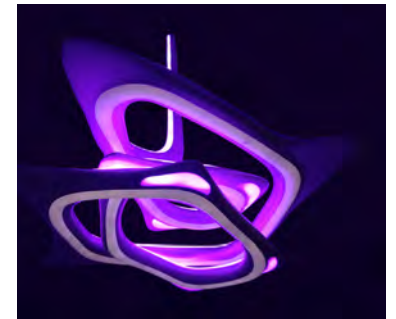


Fig.16 Phaeno Science Centre, Exterior though an open walkways under the 1st Floor, Photo, Werner Huthmacher, Wolfsburg, Germany, 1999-2005

Fig.17 Phaeno Science Centre, Exterior, Night view, Photo, Werner Huthmacher, Wolfsburg, Germany, 1999-2005.



Fig.18 Vortexx Chandelier, photo, Zumtobel Lighting.



Wolf Prix Self Confident Forms

9.2.3. Wolf Prix Self Confident Forms

The provocative, emotionally charged drawings and models produced by Coop Himmelb(l)au founders¹ Wolf D. Prix, Helmut Swiczinsky and Michael Holzer during the late 1970s through to the early 1980s inspired a generation of young architects all over the world to experiment with form and space through intuitive and spontaneous processes. Yet, Coop Himmelb(l)au's visionary architecture² was always conceived with the intention of transcending beyond speculative fantasy to large-scale built form and, following forty years of rigorous conceptual development and a series of powerful yet smaller built works, the practice's most recent projects are being realised and completed at an increasing rate and dramatically evolving scale.

The close of 2007 saw the opening of two major Coop Himmelb(l)au buildings to global acclaim: The bold design of the Akron Art Museum of Art in Ohio, USA in July, closely followed in October by the dynamic 'BMW Welt' in Munich, Germany. Moreover, in 2011 the intriguing 'Musée des Confluences' will open in Lyon, France, followed by the Busan Cinema Complex in South Korea in 2011. This culmination of built work moves the influence of the practice – and in particular it's remaining founding member Wolf D. Prix – into a global context and in doing so, encourages the next generation of architects to pursue their architectural dreams and resist conforming to a capitalistic world.

1 Wolf Prix was responsible for the practice's early sketches and Helmut Swiczinsky is attributed as doing the early interpretational models.

2 "Coop Himmelblau is not a colour but an idea, of creating architecture with fantasy, as buoyant and variable as clouds." Wolf D. Prix, "Get Off of My Cloud", Texts, 1968-2005. Edited by Martina Kandeler-Fritsch and Thomas Kramer, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany, 2005, p. 24
As evidenced by the above quote, Prix and Swiczinsky have described their architecture as "with fantasy" since 1968. It is an architecture that approaches architecture as art; encompassing visually wild dreams and streams of innovative ideas captured by a new aesthetic.

3 Prix states that Coop Himmelb(l)au battled for years to gain their clients' trust to build larger-scale and more ambitious projects that would introduce a new intense and authentic aesthetic, and not to conform [to convention] and it took them a long time to gain that trust. As Prix explains: "[There were times] when we experienced a chain of arguments such as: 'OK, this is your design, this is your project. It cannot be built.' Then we'd say: OK, we can prove it can be built'. Then, 'OK, it can be built, but it's too expensive'. Then we would prove that it's not expensive, it's in the budget. But then the client's argument would suddenly change direction to be: 'But I don't like it'. So for us this meant, and it continues to mean, that by pushing the envelope and inventing a new aesthetic, it becomes a political issue because at first sight it will [mostly] be rejected. So innovation is always on the edge of being highly appreciated or rejected." Wolf D. Prix in conversation with Yael Reisner, 2007.

Sitting in his busy studio in Vienna, surrounded by a collection of young architects working within an intense yet friendly atmosphere, Prix appears youthful and full of enthusiasm despite his career spanning over 40 years. Still very much the Viennese man, Prix is well dressed in dark stylish suits, often smoking cigars, and speaking animatedly in a trans-continental English with a strong Austrian accent. He belongs to a generation that fought intensely for their architectural ideology, and he remains a fighter and a non-conformist even as he moves into the latter stages of his career where he is afforded the luxury of being viewed as an elder statesman. However, he remains engaged with current architectural debate and discourse, the importance of sophisticated architectural forms, the movement of a body in space and what he describes as an "emotionally intense architecture."

Prix's enthusiasm for the Coop Himmelb(l)au's relatively recent transition from a prolific, powerful practice at the forefront of the architectural vanguard to its more recent incarnation as a competition-winning global entity is engagingly exuberant and youthful. "I'm happy, I'm really happy!" he exclaims with a smile, "Now we are able to build what we dreamed of when we were 26 years old. So I have to [admit that I now realise] we had to learn. I'm personally very impatient but I think a young architect has to learn how to be patient, because it takes a long time until you get where you want to be³. This is life experience." He continues: "However, I'm happy that we have now built such large-scale projects because it's [no longer valid for people dismiss our work as] 'not possible'." Yet, despite the fact that building at a significant scale has cemented the practice's reputation amongst the great architects of our age, the reality is that Coop Himmelb(l)au hasn't changed its intentions or pursuits; it's focus is still about creating form and space that draws on emotion and aims at an architecture that is intense and authentic to its time.

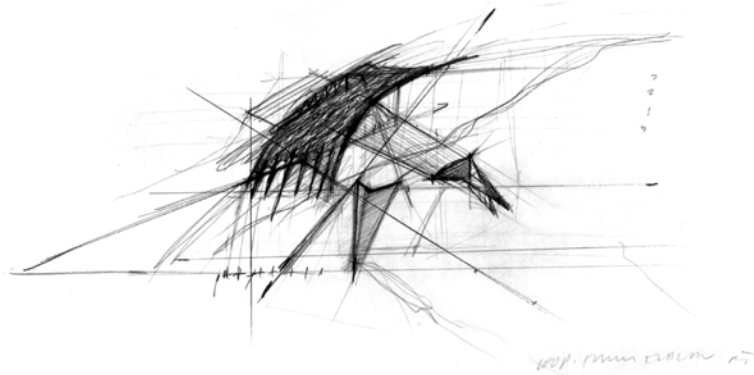


Fig. 1 Architecture is Now, 'The Panther in the cage', Early sketch, COOP HIMMELB(L)AU, Stuttgart, Germany, 1982



Fig. 2 Architecture is Now, 'The Panther in the Cage', Installation, photo, Gerald Zugmann, Stuttgart, Germany, 1982

Fig.3 Rooftop remodelling Falkestraße, Early sketch, COOP HIMMELB(L)AU, Vienna, Austria, 1983/87-88

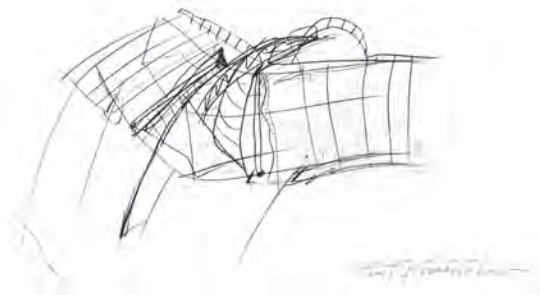


Fig.4 Rooftop remodelling Falkestraße, Model, photo, Gerald Zugmann, Vienna, Austria, 1983/87-88

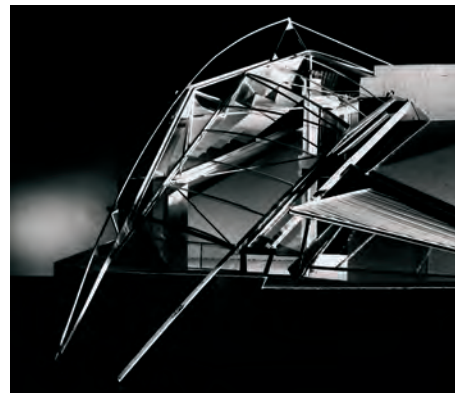


Fig.5 Rooftop remodelling Falkestraße, Interior, photo, Gerald Zugmann, Vienna, Austria, 1983/87-88



Wolf Prix Self Confident Forms

Founded in Vienna in 1968, Coop Himmelb(l)au came to international prominence during the late seventies and early eighties through their avant-garde design process of drawing with their eyes shut and building models as interpretations of the early sketch¹ to express the generating forces of each project and capture their emotional input. As Prix describes it: “I could literally feel the building by using this technique. I used my hand as the seismograph for detecting my feeling² and from this drawing we made the model and developed the project.³ We wanted to change architecture immediately and we were looking for the greatest and best way we could do that.”

He continues: “We asked ourselves ‘What’s the most vulnerable point in the architectural process?’ So we pinpointed the moment of beginning a drawing as the start of designing the building and we thought that if we want to create a new language in architecture we have to focus on this moment, because this is when the building is decided. This time is very vulnerable and influential, because, within this moment, the architect decides by the subconscious. Our thought was in order to liberate space we have to liberate the moment of conceiving the space.”

1 Usually the process was that Prix drew the first sketches and Scwizinsky built the 3-D models.

2 “Our architecture has no physical ground plan, but a psychic one.” 1968, Wolf D. Prix, *Get Off My Cloud, Texts, 1968-2005*. Edited by Martina Kandeler-Fritsch and Thomas Kramer, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany, 2005, p. 25.

3 Coop Himmelb(l)au was influenced by the Viennese art scene of the time which was concerned with emotional painting, especially works by Arnulf Rainer.

4 Wolf D. Prix explains that the design process was one that focussed on “...complex, spatially entangled volumes, transitions, situations, and their possible transformation. As if one could see the building with X-ray eyes, we begin to draw our views and sections on top of one another.” Wolf D. Prix, *Get Off My Cloud, Texts, 1968-2005*. Edited by Martina Kandeler-Fritsch and Thomas Kramer, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany, 2005, p.47.

5 “There is the expression that I’ve heard used in the past that ‘there’s building architecture and there’s theoretical architecture. [However, I believe that] this sentiment is the death of architecture. It’s actually cutting off the head from the body; it is the guillotine [of architecture].” Wolf D. Prix in conversation with Yael Reisner, 2007.

6 Examples such as the small yet iconic Red Angel Bar (Vienna, 1980-81), the Merz School (Stuttgart, 1981) the ‘Architecture is Now’ installation (Stuttgart, 1982), the ‘Open House’ project (Malibu, California 1983/ 1988-89), the infamous Rooftop Remodelling Falkestrasse, (Vienna, 1983/1987-1988), the competition-winning scheme for the Ronacher Theatre, (Vienna, 1987) and the Funder Factory 3 (Veit/Glan, Austria, 1988-89).

The action of release from the limits of the conscious mind allowed the young architects to focus on the rapid act of producing architecture, placing a priority on the ability to act spontaneously on their intuition as a leading step within their design process. “The sketch gave us the possibility by doing it in a very explosive and condensed moment, to create the complexity which you never get if you put one part next to the other⁴” Prix confirms. “It’s kind of a black hole of the moment of designing it. We have to introduce another language into architecture in order to create a new aesthetic which is much more advanced than aesthetics at the time; it is an intellectual point of view – understanding ahead of the time and seeing into the coming future - in the moment you are designing it.”

Himmelb(l)au’s international profile grew through inclusion in critical exhibitions such as the ‘Deconstructivist Architecture Exhibition’ at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 1988 as well as a long-term investment as part of the influential architectural avant-garde. Prix, in particular, realised the crucial need to resist separating theory from built work and invested much of his time in teaching, writing, working and lecturing both in Europe and America.⁵ Widely-published built projects coupled with original and innovative conceptual schemes initiated and consolidated the practice’s profile and avant-garde reputation across the western world. Their built work between 1980 and 1989⁶ provided a wealth of material for international design journals who embraced and celebrated their anti-establishment values.

Fig.6 UFA Cinema Centre, Exterior, Photo,
Gerald Zugmann, Dresden, Germany, 1993-98



Fig.7 UFA Cinema Centre, Cafe, Photo,Gerald Zugmann
Dresden, Germany, 1993-98



Fig.8 UfA Cinema Centre, Interior,
Photo,Gerald Zugmann, Dresden, Germany,
1993-8



Wolf Prix Self Confident Forms

1 "Open System" is a term for complex, spatially entangled volumes, transitions, situations, and their possible transformation... In the design description for the Merz School (1981) we used the concept 'Open System' for the first time". Wolf D. Prix, *Get Off of My Cloud*, Texts, 1968-2005. Edited by Martina Kandeler-Fritsch and Thomas Kramer, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany, 2005 p.47. A year later the Open System was further defined as the following: "It would be ideal to build architecture without objectives and then release it for free use. There are no longer any enclosed spaces in these interlacing, opening buildings: only vaguely designated areas. Divided and developed, however, the occupants choose. The differentiated spatial situations no longer – at most, they present the challenge of taking possession of the space..." Ibid, p.49 .

2 "The drawing is important to us. It is, actually, often forced to replace the building. But we never make a drawing for its own sake. It is much more a 'building' of ideas on paper. The first, emotional confrontation with the psychic spaces of the project." Ibid, p.48.

3 Coop Himmelb(l)au's first flying roof was a hovering helium balloon (House with a Flying Roof, 1973), London (1973). The preoccupation with roof structures can be also seen in the Merz School (1981), the Open House, (Malibu, California, 1983), the Rooftop Remodelling project, (Vienna, 1984) and continuing through their projects to the present day.

4 Coop Himmelb(l)au were primarily influenced by Le Corbusier and Brancusi and Prix suggests that Le Corbusier's 'flying roof' concept coupled with Brancusi's 'open system' approach to design provided the most influential seeds for Coop Himmelblau's architectural thinking. Le Corbusier's floating roof, as seen in projects such as La Chapelle de Ronchamp, 1950-54, appears as if detached from the walls it sits on and not following the pattern of the ground floor plan and proved a seminal influence. Additionally the ability to capture an emotional impact within a 3-dimensional architectural form was a quality they observed in Le Corbusier's work, most resonantly with the monastery 'La Tourette', Eveux-sur-l'Abresle, near Lyons, France. As Prix recalls: "[It] was my first experience of Le Corbusier ... He had the talent to shape space and create an atmosphere which you cannot find in Mies van der Rohe's work. Prix in conversation with Yael Reisner, Vienna, 2007.

5 Prix enjoys referencing Le Corbusier, using the analogy of the Corbusian roof terrace when describing the BMW Welt roof. He says: "When I saw the L'Unite d'habitation in Marseille [1947-1952] I saw it was basically an inverse and converse roof landscape and the BMW roof is just the reverse. Corbusier did it this way, and we did it this way." [Prix gestures with an inverted hand].

6 It's approximately the same size as the Piazza San Marco in Venice.

Throughout the 1990s, Coop Himmelb(l)au consolidated their international reputation by building increasingly large-scale projects such as the East Pavilion for the Groninger Museum in the Netherlands (1993-94), three significant housing projects in Vienna and the internationally renowned UFA Cinema Center in Dresden, Germany (1993-1998). Finally, a string of competition wins in 2000 and 2001 firmly propelled the practice into 'star-architect' status and provided the opportunity for the office's expansion to facilitate the process of building increasingly complex and cutting-edge architecture for corporate giants such as BMW and the European Central Bank.

Tracing the practice's evolution, one can clearly map Coop Himmelb(l)au's emerging development and consolidation in what they refer to as an 'Open System' approach to architectural design.¹ Prix suggests the 'open' strategy creates a framework for design freedom with an emphasis on imagination rather than the limitation of pre-conceived objectives and facilitates the architect's artistic authority to create space and take responsibility for design. There is a strong affinity between Coop Himmelb(l)au's use of spontaneous sketches and the later spatial strategy of the 'Open System'. For example, the strategy of using the first sketch as a design generator captured an emotional impact,² inviting an artistic act and a new aesthetic while also freeing the spatial conditions from any constraints of circumstantial needs or causality. A new language of form emerged that was not dependent on the brief but nevertheless related to it: Form didn't follow function any more. Therefore, it enabled other spaces to emerge and developed into what became the spatial condition of their projects: the Open System. Another striking factor that can be traced through early projects, such as the Open House (1983) to the most recently completed work such as BMW Welt (2007), is the practice's preoccupation with the roof.³ As Prix declares: "A roof is an expression... a gesture, a symbol for things going on beneath..." As such, the roof has evolved over 40 years of collective work to become the most distinctive visual feature of their architecture.⁴

As the practice continues to complete increasingly complex and large-scale projects it also strives to create a relationship between the desire for form and the necessity of function. "We now use the term 'synergy'", Prix explains, "we don't say 'form follows function' or 'function follows form'. We're designing synergy between both, so the function becomes a hybrid element of the form." He expands: "For example in our recently completed project BMW Welt the roof starts to differentiate the space.⁵ It doesn't dictate it but issues an invitation to do things under it... This is the most important element and when you step into the building – which is absolutely enormous⁶ – it feels differentiated." Prix insists that this differentiation is determined almost entirely by the roof form which controls not only the activities within the space but also the vignettes, the light, the atmosphere etc, marking a starkly opposing strategy to functionally-driven design where the plan drives the process. He also acknowledges, within this process, the increasing impact of sophisticated computer software as a tool that influences and affects the resultant aesthetic. The BMW Welt project,

Fig.9. JVC, Guadalajara, Mexico , Render, Armin Hess 1998-



Fig.10. Akron Art Museum, Photo, Roland Halbe, Ohio, USA, 2001-2007



Fig.11 Akron Art Museum, Photo, Roland Halbe Ohio, USA, 2001-2007



for example, extended their early approach of producing a ‘first hand sketch’ by substituting computer-generated wind simulations as ‘energy input’. The simulation models were then shaped and recorded under Prix’s direction and interpretations produced in the form of physical models; allowing a further pursuit of spatial and visual relationships.¹

Refreshingly, Coop Himmelb(l)au continue to push their innovative and speculative principles in built form within the reality of an increasingly commercial environment where the role of the architect is constantly under debate and scrutiny. Prix wholeheartedly believes in the idea of the architect as the visionary and that every good architect should aspire build extraordinary architecture. “This is a must! The vision is to finish the Tower of Babel” he exclaims, “It is the duty of every architect. If they are not thinking about their vision, then they are a builder, not an architect.” Consequently Coop Himmelb(l)au’s buildings are dominated by a strong aesthetic that pursues engaging forms and spatial qualities to create a personal architectural language. Their built architecture is equally as challenging as their convention-defying drawings and models with a dynamic sense of composition that continues to be experimental, fresh and bold. Prix delights in describing the aesthetic of the most recently completed work as “self confident forms”² that have evolved through the practice’s long commitment to pursuing a spontaneous and artistic design process. He continues: “I want to see what I imagined built and have the opportunity to step into your own brain, so to speak... This is my interpretation of ‘beauty-ness’... the aesthetic value may change very fast, but the beauty is not one hundred percent an aesthetic issue... it is in being authentic at the moment of making it. Intensity and authenticity – these are the issues of architecture.”

¹ Coop Himmelb(l)au often quote a line from Herman Melville’s Moby Dick: “Would now the wind but had a body”, in conversation with Gerfried Sperl, in 2000. Wolf D. Prix, Get Off of My Cloud, Texts, 1968-2005. Edited by Martina Kandeler-Fritsch and Thomas Kramer, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany, 2005 p.280. More recently, Prix extends the metaphor of the dynamic power of a tornado into space. Wolf D. Prix in conversation with Yael Reisner, Vienna, 2007.

² This is also a term Coop Himmelb(l)au used in one of its statements on the idea of the ‘Open System’ in 1982, “... We can’t prove it, but we strongly surmise that self-confident forms, made available to use and shape freely – not repressively administered, but run in a friendly way – must have consequences for an occupant’s development of a creative self-concept.” Ibid. p.49.

Wolf Prix Self Confident Forms

When pressed on the role of aesthetics within the formal language of his architecture Prix declares: “Architects are always denying the place of aesthetics in design and this is because of the notion of the ‘eye’,” he proclaims. “Those who don’t have ‘an eye’ are not concerned with forms, and when you look at the work of many contemporaries who propose to be architects you can see that there is actually no quality at all in the concept itself. In fact, they are not looking for quality – they are talking about numbers, diagrams and statistics.”

Prix is refreshingly direct in his engagement with aesthetics, describing Coop Himmelb(l)au’s work as “about form and the changing value of beauty. For me, the three-dimensional language of architecture is form and architecture will always be judged on its initial appearance.” He continues, “Of course, if you know the concept, you have a better understanding of what’s going on. But, it’s not necessary to explain every thing in architecture. As the director Roman Polanski said: ‘If I can tell you the movie, it is not necessary to make it’ – and it’s the same with architecture. At the moment it becomes three-dimensional, the power that is given to the shape and the form will speak by itself – it’s in the subconscious. In stark contrast to a purely computational preoccupation, Prix expands on the emotional aspect of the subconscious mind and with a reference to existentialism adds: “There is something in space which touches your body from behind. It’s not only what you see, but also what you feel as your body is walking through time – time and emotion are very important for experiencing space.”

A tireless promoter of the importance of a holistic investment in an architectural culture, Prix is adamant that good architecture can only succeed when the architect remains in complete control through the design and building process of a project. He is critical of the manner that other professions such as project managers and engineers are usurping the architect’s responsibilities. “The power of architecture is fading and this is because architects are giving it away,” he complains. “They easily accept and say to themselves: ‘I’m doing the function and the diagram but I don’t care what it looks like.’ The result is that the architect is suppressed or is pushed to the background for nothing more than atmospheric renderings. I believe that if we continue and step over this point in the next couple of years, we will risk losing everything.”

However, Prix acknowledges the power of architecture has limitations and is realistic in his aspirations suggesting, “architecture alone can’t effect changes in society’s values but it can encourage and support an appreciation of culture. Using a simple example to illustrate his point, he suggests: “If you give an untalented painter a beautiful studio he will not be able to paint better, but give a talented painter a studio without light and he will still be able to paint.” In context of Coop Himmelb(l)au’s own body of work, Prix states: “Our architecture embodies dynamic shapes and forms and it’s because this gives you multiple choice.

This is something that we try to 'give' to our clients in the process of working through our projects. Of course, it's always a fight to get through planning codes, rules and maintain the relationship with a client because this is an accepted and 'normal' process of our society. Everyone wants to have control over everything, and people are afraid of our architecture because it can appear uncontrolled – which is not true– but it can be perceived that way.”

Prix advocates that architects must engage with architectural discourse to break down the division between architectural academia and practitioners working on built form. To this end, he believes it is only through the ability for architects to 'test' theory through built form that the success of a project can be judged. “I think that talking about architecture theory is very important,” he says. “The notion of the concept is vital, but, in the end, the building itself is judged on whether it's good or not. A sketch has the power to be much more influential than a big building, but the experience of realising a three-dimensional thought by moving through a constructed space – that is the essential importance of architecture.” Prix firmly believes that practice of architecture moves beyond the basic notion of a 'profession' to align itself with art; acting as a vital register of culture. As a result, the actions of the architect are deeply personal. “I have a theory,” he begins, “that the background of the architect determines the way he practices... Architecture is not coming from architecture alone but is influenced by the cultural connection of where the architect is working and where he grew up.”



Fig.12 BMW Welt, Exterior photo, Thomas Mayer, Munich, Germany, 2001-2007 set for 2010.



Fig.13 BMW Welt, BMW Delivery Centre, Munich, Germany, Exterior photo, Thomas Mayer, 2001-2007

Fig.14 “Musée des Confluences, Exterior, a model photo, Gerald Zugmann, Lyon, France, 2001-opening



Wolf Prix Self Confident Forms

1 From a conversation of Wolf D. Prix with Jaques Derrida.

2 At the time of the MoMA exhibition only Eisenman and Tschumi acknowledged their work's connection to the theoretical position of Derrida and only Hadid to that of Constructivism – in contrast to the more collective interpretation by curator Mark Wigley. However, as we witness here, Prix eventually embraced the interpretation of his work with a connection to Derrida's writings.

Prix has described feeling honoured and flattered when asked to take part in the MoMA 'Deconstructivist Architecture' exhibition in 1988 in New York. The curator, Mark Wigley, chose the work of seven architects to exhibit: Frank Gehry, Coop Himmelb(l)au, Zaha, Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, Bernard Tschumi, and Peter Eisenman. At the time, Coop Himmelb(l)au's had no objection to their architecture being identified with the Deconstructivist movement or with the theories of Jacques Derrida. Nevertheless, Prix didn't agree with the theoretical angle of Mark Wigley's collective curatorial strategy or with what he describes as "the intellectual way Eisenman or Tschumi tried to interpret [it]." Instead, Prix felt Coop Himmelb(l)au's work shared more in common with the work of Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid.

3 "[Within the work of the] Viennese and the Austrian architects in general... I can see a big interest in creating space sequences and also with a surrealist approach to architecture. So I discovered that the religious background of the [Austrian] Baroque approach to life is transplanted in our hearts. For example let's look at it this way: From Fischer von Erlach, [I can trace a connection to the work of] Schindler, then Kiesler, Hollein, Abraham, Pichler, Domenig, and finally, to our own work. All are concerned with forms, shapes, space [and sequences] and so, from my point of view, architecture is a very specific language of culture." Prix in conversation with Yael Reischer, Venice, Sep. 2004.

4 Prix is referring to Jewish architects Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind. He adds his interpretation that "Daniel Libeskind plays with words and creates shapes that would crumble without words."

5 Prix is referring here to his experience when visiting Le Corbusier's La Tourette Monastery.

6 'Schein und Sein' is a German saying used to express the appearance of an object/situation when, at first glance, it is different from the actual physical reality. ('Schein: approximate translation: 'appearance'; 'Sein' approximate translation: 'to be')

He expands: "For example I was born in Vienna – the city of Freud and Schönberg – and their seminal work was very important to us in order to develop a new architectural language. This initial interest in Freud and the notion of subconscious routes, personally connected me to Jacques Derrida¹, who said that in every piece of poetry there is a line, a word, a paragraph, which is written by the poet's subconscious and this subconscious rules the whole opus. It's a very private interpretation. The concept resonated with me particularly after the MoMA exhibition because it recalls the moment of designing, of perception and the attempt to erase all circumstantial pressure in order to liberate space. In every work there is a moment of subconscious influence."²

Prix's interest in cultural context and its place within contemporary architecture is not limited to his own work. He maintains an outward vision and doesn't disguise or mediate his position on the state of European architecture or the work of his contemporaries: "Architecture is, in my point of view, a very specific language of culture... For example, there is a big difference between a Jewish architect – such as Peter Eisenman, a Calvinist architect like Rem Koolhaas and, a Austrian Baroque architect – such as Günther Domenig or ourselves – who have a Catholic influence on the one hand but are not Jesuit like the Spanish architects." He continues "The Austrian Baroque architects are celebrating space as an experience of the human mind and body³, Calvinistic architects appreciate diagrams and are 'space secretaries' while Jewish architects are ambivalent and less easy to categorise. Many of them reject imagery because of their long tradition of thinking and, therefore, creating intellectual space.⁴ Yet on the other hand, some other Jewish architects are very emotional, such as Frank Gehry or Eric Owen Moss, and engage with aesthetics and form over programmatic constraints... I think it's interesting to note that Freud invented psychoanalysis in Vienna – that comes out of a historical cultural connection and certainly there is a lot of Jewish influence in our culture – so I feel that ultimately our work is much more related to that of Moss and Gehry because of this tradition."

Arguably, a commitment to communicating cultural context, subconscious experience and a celebration of emotion and beauty within architectural practice is a challenging agenda to pursue. The constraints that define contemporary architectural language are often overwhelmingly influenced by the complexities of program, building regulations, construction systems and servicing, yet Wolf D. Prix is not daunted by these realities, believing that the emotive qualities of space will always overcome. "There is a statement from our collective work at Coop Himmelb(l)au that expresses my position clearly: 'The feeling of the inside makes the form of the outside'." He continues, declaring: "It has absolutely nothing to do with content as a response to functional requirements. The content is more than function. The content is the emotion of the space. If you step into a church or a monastery, it's important that you receive an immediate impact, it's not direct experience like in music but you get the feeling that comes with the fact that you know you are in an extremely important space⁵. You are tense and relaxed at the same time, which, I believe, is a very important quality of good architecture. In German, we say 'Schein und Sein'⁶... which means ugliness is the next step in the pursuit of beauty."

Fig.15 BMW Welt, Exterior, Photo, Ari Marcopoulos, Munich, Germany, 2001-2007



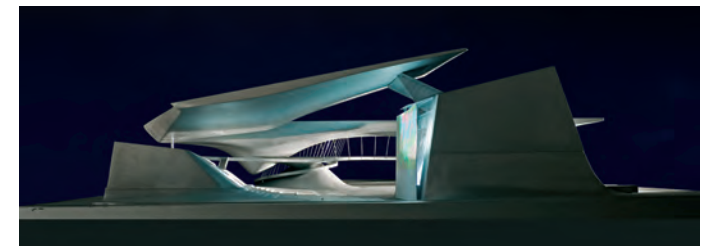
Fig.16 BMW Welt, interior of the double cone element, Photo, Helene Binet, Munich, Germany, 2001-2007.



Fig 17 BMW Welt, BMW Delivery Centre, Interior photo, Richard Walch, Munich, Germany, 2001-2007



Fig. 18 Busan Cinema complex, Busan, South Korea, Render, Markus Pillhofer, 2005- completion set for 2011.



9.3. 2nd Block - The Moralists Conversations with Lebbeus Woods, Gaetano Pesce and Zvi Hecker

9.3.1. Lebbeus Woods Heroic Imperfection

The powerful and evocative drawings and texts of the American architect, Lebbeus Woods are equally engaged with the realms of quantum mechanics, relativity, cybernetics, existentialism, notions of freedom and aspirations for a non-hierarchical society as they are with the practice and discourse of architecture. While Woods' prose is the product of an abstract mind, his poetry and drawings are derived from a sense of creative spontaneity with intuitive drawing at its epicentre¹.

Talking about his process, Woods emphasizes that it is only as he draws the physical worlds he aspires to that the distinctive qualities of his visual ideas start to formalise and pour through his pen. Through Woods' texts the reader gains an intimate view of his intentions, ambitions and ideas. For the architect, the opportunity to connect to the reader within an intellectual framework is vitally important and facilitates his desire to share his vision for a new kind of physical world for inhabitation.

Woods' is a vision of a radically new world from both an ethical and aesthetic perspective. Woods' architectural spaces provide a world of heterarchy consisting of a spontaneous lateral network of autonomous individuals². His work embraces an inevitable sense of angst and anxiety, where individuals take the responsibility to construct their own interpretation of an authentic world of freedom. It is a perceptive and radical proposition that provokes and influences architects, filmmakers and directors from around the world – all whom take inspiration from the visionary world that Woods creates.

1 Brown, Olive. "The Mind of Lebbeus Woods" (Introductory Essay), AA Publication Mega II- Origins, 1985.

2 Lebbeus Woods' Glossary, AD, Architectural Monograph, no.22, 1992.

Fig. 1 Stations project, drawing, exterior perspective, Graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 1989.

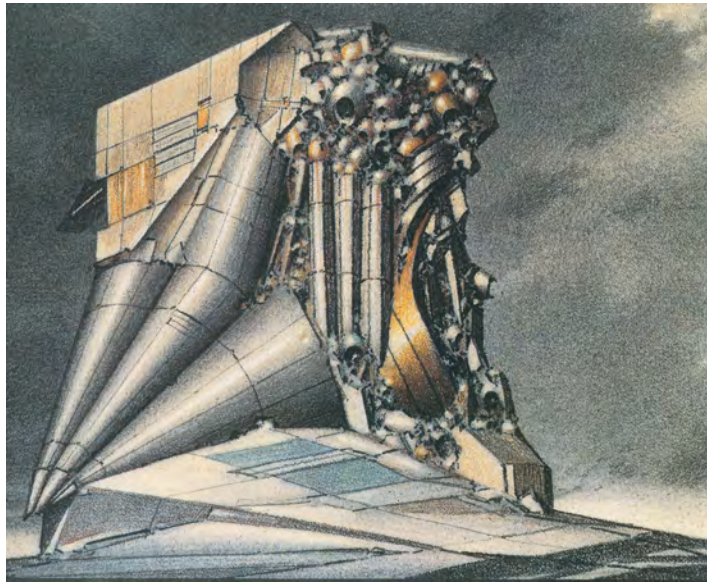
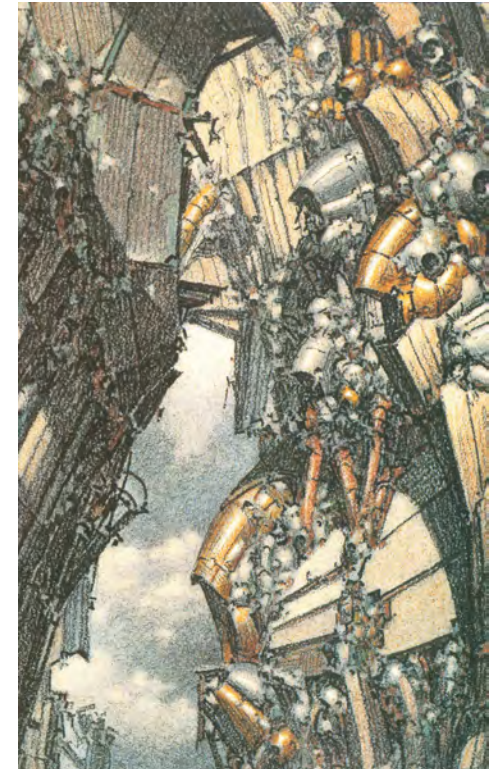


Fig. 2 Stations project, drawing, exterior perspective, Graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 1989.



Fig. 3 Stations project, drawing, exterior perspective, Graphite and colored pencil on paper, 1989.



Lebbeus Woods Heroic Imperfection

Lebbeus Woods initially studied engineering at Purdue University although he explains that he “always wanted to be an architect.” After enrolling in the architecture program at the University of Illinois in 1960, it became increasingly clear that his interest in architecture was from an intellectual rather than design-based perspective. As Woods recalls: “I think what attracted me to architecture was the idea that the discipline could be a comprehensive field of knowledge so that all my interests, whether they lay in engineering or literature could come together. In this respect it wasn’t so much the look of things that I was attracted to as much as the realm of ideas.”

Early on in his student life a chance meeting with the Viennese-born cybernetician Heinz von Foerster proved to have a lasting and influential impact on the young architect. As Woods remembers: “I met Heinz at the University of Illinois. He wasn’t teaching in my field but his son, Andreas, was studying with me. Heinz asked me to illustrate some of his papers because he saw that I could draw and that’s how I became involved with his world of cybernetics. He was dealing with the theory of how the brain works through nerve nets, cognition, perception and concepts and questioning: ‘What is thinking? What is memory?’ I realised later that he was considered one of the world’s top researchers in this field and his work appealed to my philosophical sensibilities.”

As a European intellectual of Jewish origin who had survived the war and been lured to teach and research in America, von Foerster proved an influential mentor, exposing the young architect to a culture beyond his own experience. As he recalls, “Heinz would have champagne soirées at his house and I was always the kid hanging around and listening to the conversations taking place. It was an extraordinary experience that introduced me to a new cultural world so it wasn’t just being exposed to data. I was very fortunate, to encounter him and that whole world and I think of it as a lucky break in my life.”

Despite the lasting influence of these early experiences, it wasn’t clear until many years later – during the 70s and 80s – that the serendipity of this chance meeting became clear to Woods “My work eventually revealed itself as coming from a particularly Heinzian perspective. I continuously questioned throughout my projects ‘What is thinking?’ What is architecture?’ Cybernetics was an extension of all this particularly because Heinz’s version was called ‘Radical Constructivism’ that suggests that we are in control of constructing our reality...The other element that appealed to me about Heinz’s work was the multi-disciplinary aspect. I was attracted to architecture for the same reasons as it wasn’t a rigidly defined field. Cybernetics brought many people together from different fields.”

As Woods continued to rigorously question and test his ideology through his drawings and texts, his relationship with the output of his student work became increasingly difficult.

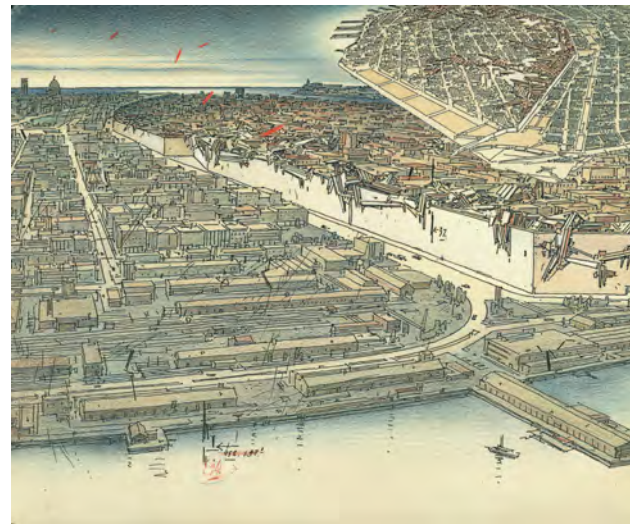
His early work was conflicted by his deep admiration of Modernist, clear, planar geometric architecture and the forms emerging from his own hand. As he recalls: “My student work is all sort of Miesien, De-Stijlien and planar but, at some point, something else began to emerge and I would see what I was drawing and I really didn’t like it. So then I would go back and try and do drawings that I liked, but they seemed predictable. Eventually, I reached a point in my mid-thirties when I had to say to myself: ‘ This is what emerging; this work is me. So, whether I like it or not is irrelevant.” From that point on I was free of the feeling that I had to like what I was doing.”

From these crucial early influences Woods’ position consolidated to be one that continually questioned and reframed the traditional notion of the ‘master architect’. He asserts: “Architects aren’t neutral; they’re trying to promote something to the world. In my case, I’ve experienced serious doubts about perceived ideas of what architecture ought to be so I think a lot of my work has been about exploring content... I am asking questions rather than trying to take an established idea of architecture as a particular way of making buildings in the landscape and improving it or evolving it. I want people coming away from my work and asking: ‘Is that really architecture?’... I’ve never had a preacher-like attitude because I also like other types of architectural approaches than my own. So I’ve never been able to say definitively: ‘This is the way to make architecture’.

Fig. 4 Zagreb Free-Zone project, drawing, suspended ‘freespace’ structure, Coloured pencil on electrostatic print on paper, 1991.



Fig. 5 Havana Reconstruction projects, drawing, aerial views, reconstruction of La Habana Vieja, Colored pencil on electrostatic print on paper, 1995.



1 Lebbeus Woods was a student from 1958 to 1964.

Lebbeus Woods Heroic Imperfection

While Woods' architecture is heroic in form and meaning, this sensibility is not necessarily expressed through the project's size or materials. In fact, his work suggests a less materialistic world through the utilisation of 'poor' materials such as crude wood and metal sheets that are imbued with a 'found' or recycled sensibility – an architecture of imperfection yet nevertheless grand in its composition. Unlike the Modernists who believed their vision for a progressive society should be expressed through new technologies, radical materials and construction, Woods develops his notion of a new world with 'low-tech'; where grandness is achieved by composition and form, and constructed with everyday materials that are imbued with a dark, brooding and slightly decayed aesthetic, in stark contrast to the Modernist's brightly-coloured, shiny new forms.

As Woods explains: "In my work, I've had a kind of Art Povera attitude where I'm not driven by hi-tech, therefore highly capitalized forces¹. I'd rather see what I have offered in my drawings as a kind of hand-made architecture for people who don't have factories driven by computers at their disposal. It's about putting things together in a more primitive or low-tech way." Woods developed this aesthetic into a form of societal critique manifested in his early work such as the Geomechanical Tower (1987), Solohouse project (1988), Stations (1989), or his projects for Berlin Free Zone (1990) and Zagreb Free-Zone project (1991). Ultimately, his position and imagery progressed further to become clear political dialogue through the *War and Architecture* series (1993), Sarajevo Reconstruction projects (1995) and the Havana Reconstruction projects (1995).

Woods' natural ability to draw prescribed his chosen medium and provided an early forum to develop his ideas as he learnt to manipulate his natural abilities in a very clear and decisive way: "When you draw with ink you put down an ink line and you can't erase it. That decisiveness means that you can't go back in a process where you are inventing, he explains. So when I started to look at the limits of the Cartesian, then I knew the basic geometry and I could see how far one can structure it. I like the idea of taking limitations and seeing how far you can push them. That's an architect's mentality not an artist's. The artist feels freer, I believe. I want to take the limitations and see what I can do to maintain some kind of discipline."

¹ A similarity to Gaetano Pesce's ideological position, although the output of their work is varies greatly.

² Lebbeus Woods' Glossary AD, Architectural Monograph, no.22, 1992.

Heterarchy: A spontaneous lateral network of autonomous individuals; a system of authority based on the evolving performances of individuals, eg. A cybernetic circus. Individual: Human embodiment of autonomous being; inventor of the world. Ontogenetics: the study of becoming, dynamic and heterarchical. Freespace: A construction free of pre-conceived value, use or meaning; an element in a heterarchy. Free-Zone: heterarchy of freespaces; pattern of urban order based on knowledge and performance; a system opposing mass culture; a subversion of hierarchies.

This major shift in Woods' work derived through this new restrictive methodology was documented in his 2004 publication 'The Storm and the Fall' The title for the book is derived primarily from two earlier installations, 'The Storm' at the Cooper Union in New York (December, 2001) and 'The Fall' at the Cartier Foundation Gallery in Paris (November, 2002) that captured the changes evident from Woods' 1999 'Terrain' series to the present day. While the installations are still related to Wood's notion of Heterarchical Space², the

Fig. 6 War and Architecture series, drawing, exterior perspective of 'Scar' Construction, Graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 1993.

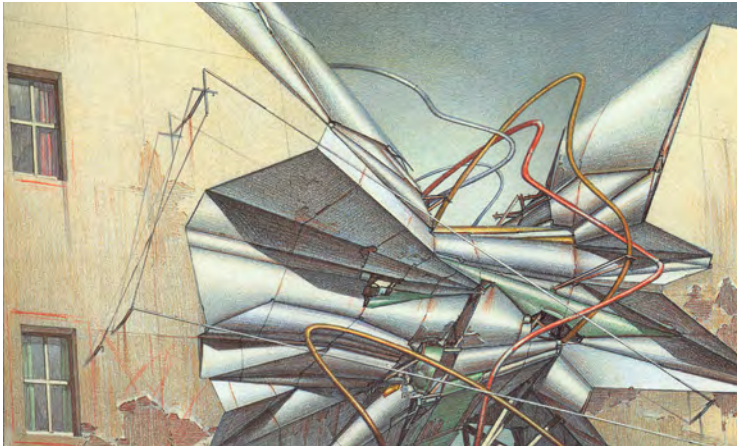
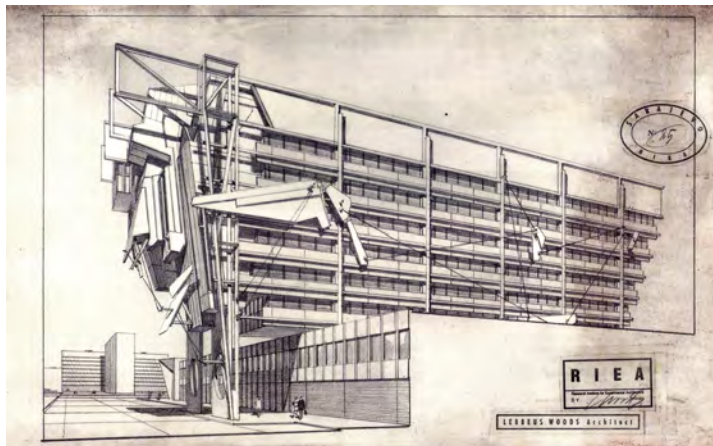


Fig. 7 War and Architecture series, drawing, 'Meditation', Graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 1993.



Fig. 8 Sarajevo Reconstruction projects, drawing, exterior perspective, reconstruction of the Electrical, Management Building, Graphite pencil and pastel on vellum, mounted on board, 1995.



Lebbeus Woods Heroic Imperfection

surprising aspect is the limitation the architect has chosen to impose on his natural drawing ability¹ by using mostly straight lines to describe and express the spatial fields, and in effect, design with the purpose of leaving behind the 'tyranny of the object'².

Wood's extends the discussion, describing his shift from drawing forms to investigating spatial fields as one that is intrinsically engaged with an exploration of contemporary society: "It is also looking at what is the most effective means of organising the elements of thought or structure in our society. Obviously the hierarchy is still operating but, the heterarchy, or this field condition is vibrating and bubbling and the question is: How does anything emerge from that? If we ask where the authorship and meaning comes from I think that the principal authority is emerging from a broad field, rather than from a single force. That is the difference from previous historical efforts. So I believe that this is a condition that needs to be addressed in architecture. Where do forms arise from? I propose they emerge from a broad field... rather from the head of Zeus, so to speak."³

He continues: "We obviously live in volumetric and planar field, however, we also live within other frameworks such as a sociological field of different cultures, different genders, etc. Each generates a particular kind of field and, as an architect, I am interested in the structure of that space. I have discovered that this is a really unique discussion. I realised that most architects have not talked much about space in the past despite there being great discourse about form... For example when I did the Berlin Free Zone project in 1990, it was entirely an interior space and there was no exterior form. So I could show it architecturally in section lines, but otherwise it did not have a form, it was only interior space. So that was so much more interesting than external form - the spatial conditions, and how we occupy that space and what meaning we are able to give it by our occupation, by our habitation, by our living. It gives it another dimension."

While many of his admirers mourned the loss of richness within his earlier drawings, for Woods the restricted framework provided a set of constraints to work within: "It's a bit like Haiku poetry⁴, where you only have seventeen Japanese count sounds that you can use to construct the poem. What can you do with seventeen count sounds?" Woods explains: "I like that approach and I think of all the possibilities. As architects, we have to deal with increasingly restricted means and at the same time we need to extend those further. So it's a kind of duality there - the limit, and how far can you push the limit." When pressed if he felt any sense of loss at restricting his drawing palette to a language of straight lines in space he admits: "I felt it was a wonderful thing to be able to express an idea that was grand and beautiful by an image and something that was your own creation. So that was an important feature of my work and I always attempted to give form to an idea." However,

1 Woods' architectural language changed completely; an aesthetical shift that still hold a similar ethics.

2 "The shift of focus I have made from objects to fields has not been made simply as a rejection of typological thinking, which dominates the design of buildings; nor simply as a rejection of the politics of identity that buildings inevitably work to sustain; nor simply as a rejection of the illusions of authority conjured by buildings- especially innovative buildings, designed and built in the service of private or institutional power how can I advocate the revelation latent in the process of making things? Without freedom from the tyranny of the object. If I cannot free myself, how can I advocate the freedom of others, in whichever terms they might choose?" Woods, Lebbeus. *The Storm and The Fall*, 2004, p.37.

3 Wood's intellectual exploration requires that he restrict his hand as a designer as part of the consistent drive to lead to a non-deterministic design.

4 Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry with a 17-count sound verse form.

Fig. 9 Turbulence project, drawing, Ink and electrostatic print on paper, 1988.

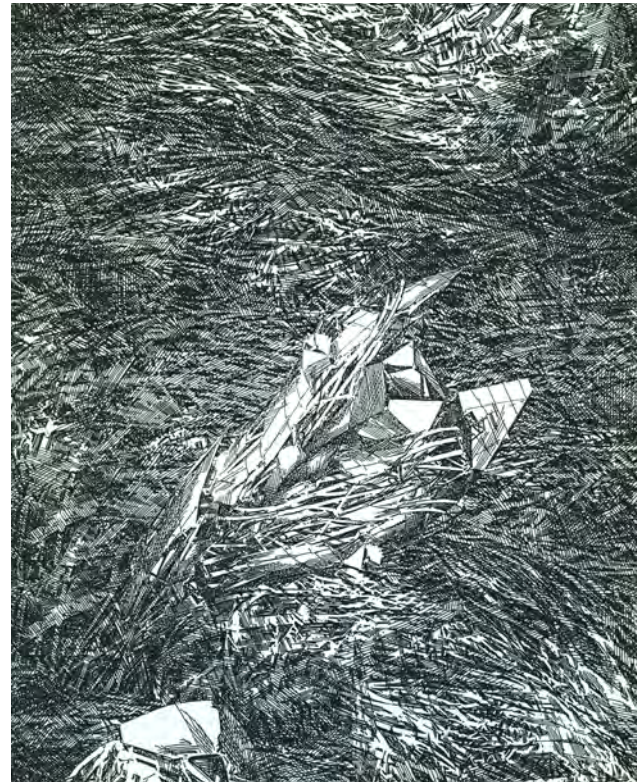
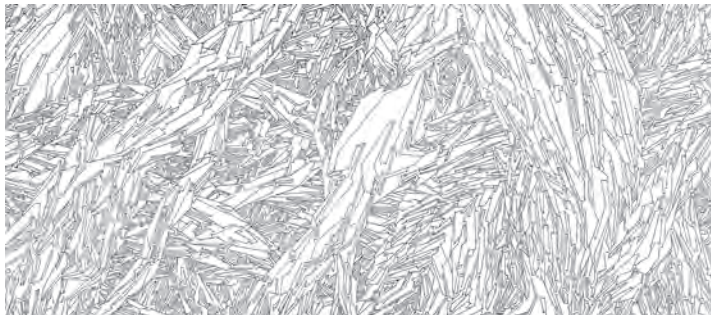


Fig. 10 Terrain project, drawing, Ink and electrostatic print on paper, 1999.



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he refutes any notion of his drawing ability being valuable within itself: “I don’t draw unless I’ve got some reason to draw and then I just use it as a tool. Drawing is not an end in itself – it’s just a device I use to think things through... You have got to have the idea. And if you don’t have an idea, I don’t care what you can do visually; it just doesn’t matter. If you are just producing graphics, that’s not good enough.”

Woods returns to one of his great philosophical references – existentialism – to describe his desire to create meaning within his work, saying: “We actually inhabit space, not volume; we inhabit the void and emptiness. The existentialism point of view is that this sense of emptiness that we are given needs to be filled. So, in my work, I am exploring the spatial field that is also an empty field in an ontological sense. We have to create meaning and this is an old philosophical problem. Unfortunately within our present culture it is common to believe that we fill the emptiness simply with a lot of activity and energy and it will automatically be filled with meaning. However, in fact, it doesn’t work that way. So I think the test for architects is to somehow imagine space as something that is occupied, filled with ideas and concepts.”

This quest for meaning and the notion of the ethical within Woods’ work permeates his aesthetic within an inseparable duality. However, the architect makes it clear that his work does not aspire to expressing idealised notions of liberty and freedom. In its autonomy¹, it is implicitly an architecture of freedom; creating a physical world where individuals can live an authentic life in spaces that enable and symbolize freedom through non-deterministic organization. Woods’ expands: “The ethical is the aesthetic and vice versa; you can’t separate them. What concerns me in my work is both, because I think the aesthetic carries an ethic: ‘How are things made?’ ‘For what purpose are they made?’ ‘Who’s going to see them and who’s going to use them?’ ‘How are they going to be used?’ These are all things that one must take into account when one makes something; you can’t just send it off into the world and say ‘I don’t care’. I think that my work tries to frame the answer to these questions: ‘Why am I doing this work?’ ‘What is this work?’ and so on.”

¹ Woods, Lebbeus. “I need to believe, rightly or wrongly, that my work manifests something autonomous. They’re ideas and not expressions or an extension of something else.” Interview with Yael Reisner, New-York, November, 2004.

“The role of architecture on this landscape is instrumental, not expressive... Expression is possession, the manifestation of a lust for domination. Any attempt to express in a form an idea external to it is an attempt to arrest the idea in time, to control it beyond its life. I despise all such ‘expressionism, and none more than that which appropriate ineffable symbols, archetype-in fact types of any kind. These are the most vain and tyrannical attempts to eternalise the ephemeral.”

Woods, Lebbeus: *Anarchitecture: Architecture Is A Political Act*, Architectural Monograph No. 22, Academy Editions, London, 1992. p.11.

This continual rigorous questioning and setting of boundaries is a self-imposed constraint that the architect feels is integral to the process of his practice. “When I work I always try to make my task difficult. I think the notion of ‘ethical’ has to do with a certain kind of difficulty with a certain problematic. The ethical is not about some easy flaw; it always involves decisions and taking a position. You are not just drawing. So, for me, this means making the work difficult and somehow problematic.”

Yet in setting these self-imposed boundaries and restrictions, is it possible that Woods’

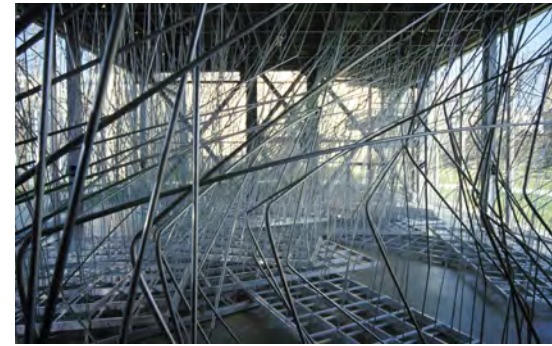
Fig. 11 The Fall, drawing, installation (first version), White crayon on black acrylic ground on board. 2002.



Fig. 12 The Fall, installation; view at night, Aluminum tubes and frames, in collaboration with Alexis Rochas, Photo, Alexis Rochas, Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, Paris, 2002.



Fig. 13 The Fall, photograph, installation view, in collaboration with Alexis Rochas, Aluminum tubes and frames, Photo, Andreas Greber, Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, Paris, 2002.



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has lost something of the natural dexterity and evocative aesthetic of his earlier concepts? “Looking back and reflecting on my own work, I think my earlier projects were very colourful and had recognisable elements but once you got into it you felt what the hell is it?” he responds. “So I think the ethical element was the real difficulty. I have termed it what I call the theory of “indigestibility” which means that my work should be hard to digest; you should have a hard time swallowing it. The reason I make it difficult is to leave you with the hard choices... I like to follow the German philosopher Schopenhauer’s point of view. He spoke about the idea of ‘the beautiful’, which he called ‘knowledge which is pleasurable,’ then ‘the Sublime’, which is the notion that knowledge also comes from pain. I always feel that that’s neglected in the field of architecture... we are more interested in the pleasure process and what we can consume with our eyes.”

Pressed on the question of his level of comfort with his drawings being referenced purely as architectural images, Woods responds: “I gradually came to understand my drawings as imagery but I applied to it a fancy term – ‘heuristic’ images – meaning that they teach you something, and that ‘something’ may be able to apply towards the design of a building or not. There were exceptions, of course, where I was designing something that was going to be built, but even then, I don’t think that I try to copy my drawings in building – I think that’s a mistake. The drawing is one thing and the building is something else. And I know that there are architects who feel differently but for me the drawing is autonomous in the sense that it is an image.”

However, while Woods is comfortable with an interpretation of drawing as image and encourages a crossover of his work from the architectural community to the public realm, he draws the line at his work being referenced without an appropriate credit. A famous example of this conundrum is the powerful interrogation room scene in the 1995 film ‘Twelve Monkeys’ directed by Terry Gilliam, where the interrogation room was a direct carbon of one of Woods’ evocative drawings from 1988¹ with no acknowledgement to the architect. As Woods’ recalls: “In 12 Monkeys my work was stolen by the production designer. They simply copied my drawings to make the movie. In particular the chair and the scenes when they’re walking through a space that looks like the Underground Berlin project.”

The controversy and court case erupted into mainstream culture and catapulted Woods visionary architecture into a greater public awareness, resulting in an invitation to collaborate within the film making process – a proposition he found attractive yet ultimately unsatisfying. As Woods’ recalls: “After the controversy of 12 Monkeys² I was contracted to work on the film, Aliens 3 and I was actually involved in the production process. However,

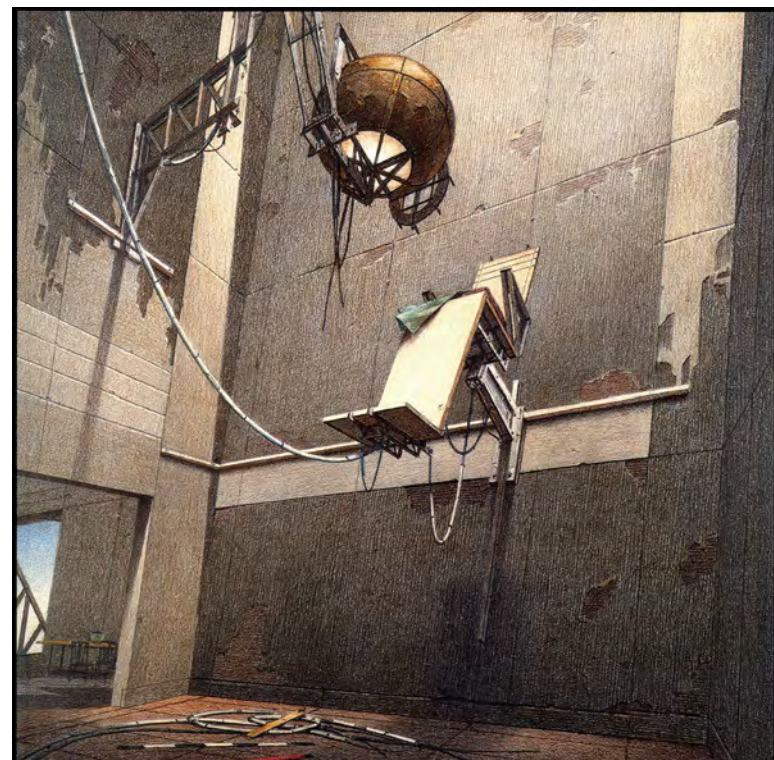
1. Centricity project (1987), Geomechanical Tower, Upper Chamber.

2. Woods’ injunction alleged that the set mirrored an architectural sketch he created in 1987 and that Universal Studios did not ask his permission to use it, thereby making it a copyright infringement.

Fig. 14 Centricity project, Geomechanical Tower drawing, exterior perspective, Graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 1987.



Fig. 15 Centricity project, Geomechanical Tower, upper chamber, drawing, interior perspective, Graphite and colored pencil on paper, 1987.



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my experience was that Hollywood grinds everything up into a soup of images. So I decided from that point on I didn't want to be involved in movies."

Despite his disappointing filmic experience, Woods' agrees that the image is a powerful and valuable tool for the architectural community to communicate architectural ideas and discourse to other disciplines and convey the contribution that architecture can make to contemporary society. He advocates harnessing the opportunity to communicate through imagery yet acknowledges that any discussion of image or aesthetics continues to be a taboo topic for many architects to address within contemporary discourse, reflecting: "I think we have difficulties discussing aesthetics because looking back through the history of architecture and the tradition of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, it was very much about the way things looked prior to the advent of Modernism. If you examine the evolution of Mies van der Rohe 's drawings over the years, you can see that he started with this incredible, romantic, charcoal rhetoric that later became simply minimal." He expands: "Before Modernism architects were just decorators with ornaments on buildings and for the Modernists that was not 'real' architecture; real architecture is structure, space and form." Even within his own teaching curriculum at The Cooper Union School of Architecture, Woods admits that the relationship of aesthetics within architectural discourse is also rarely debated with his students. "I do think it's still a legacy of, we might say, a Judeo-Christian, Jewish-Protestant ethic, because you know the Protestants are equally anti-aesthetic. I mean you can take Calvinism as an extreme example but generally all Protestant religions are very anti-visual and anti-aesthetic."

Musing on the future of aesthetics and its enduring yet difficult relationship within an architectural framework, Woods references one of his very early experiences as an eighteen year-old student in 1958, working in an old and established architectural office. He recalls coming across the archival drawings of the practice dating back to the mid-19th century: "In 1850 there were no methods of reproducing architectural drawings and so the architect made one set of drawings... But these drawings were for the purposes of construction; they were instructing crafts people who knew how to build in brick, and wood, and so on. The craftsmen knew how to do the work, so the architect was there to say: 'Just make it look like this'. I thought that was a fantastic concept and the ideal scenario. I realize that sounds crazy today and yet, on the other hand, with computer technology I think architects will get back to a point where they'll make a drawing and say: "Make it look like this."

Summing up, Woods expands on the theme: “So, in a sense, the way the thing looks is the real domain of the architect because it’s about visual sensibility and culture. It’s been around through the centuries, and it’s still here although it’s treated differently – we have different technology and ways of communicating and developing that culture – but there is an intelligence in the way things look. Whether it’s the way a plant or flower or the sky looks, there is something we need to analyze about it and understand rationally. It’s not just emotion; the way things look is actually deeply intellectual.”



Fig. 16 System Wien project, drawing, transformation vectors in a street, Ink on paper, 2005.

Fig. 17 System Wien project, installation view, Aluminum tubes, steel cables, crayon drawings on acrylic ground on walls, Photo, Reiner Zettl, MAK Museum, Vienna, 2005.



9.3.2. Gaetano Pesce Unfettered Maverick

Standing in his Manhattan-based studio, Italian architect Gaetano Pesce cuts a striking presence amongst the studio's accumulated and colourful debris of lamp, chair and table prototypes amid colourful exhibition posters, all haphazardly displayed as if an illustration of his enduring and influential forty-odd year career.

Still handsome, well dressed in comfortable clothing and speaking in a distinctive Italian accent with great clarity, Pesce extends a warmth and generosity with his time and conversation that is rare amongst high-profile architects. At the age of 68, Pesce is as productive now as he was during his emergence in the late 1960s as a provocative architect who embraced new technologies and synthetic materials to express socio-political and cultural references through his innovative product designs.

Like many of his contemporaries, Pesce is suspicious of aesthetic values and advocates curbing the instinctive visual ability for design. He delights in the self-described 'badly done' object where a product's individual flaws or inconsistencies in the manufacturing process are accepted and embraced, believing this illustrates his commitment to the importance of individuality and a liberal society. However, while he adamantly rejects the role of 'eye judgment' or the notion of a formal aesthetic within his design process, he does reluctantly concede that without natural intuition or a 'good eye' there is little chance for a designer to develop a valuable product.

Pesce's distinctive body of work is ultimately driven by material and technological experimentation layered with cultural metaphors bound by principles yet without the limitations of rules. The wonderfully whimsical qualities inherent in his objects are imbued with imperfection, softness, accessibility, colour and humour all layered with socio-political messages that include and respond to the cultural issues of the world we live within.



Fig. 1 I Feltri, Felt armchairs for Cassina, Wool-felt impregnated with polyester resin, 130 x 75, 153 x 70cm 1986-87.

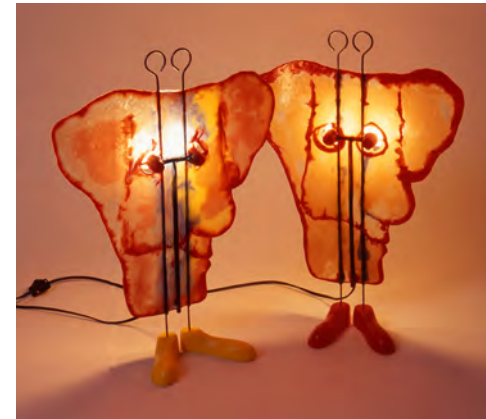


Fig. 2 Friends Lamp, open sky series, urethane, steel, electrical components, 49 x 35 x 13cm, 1995-99.

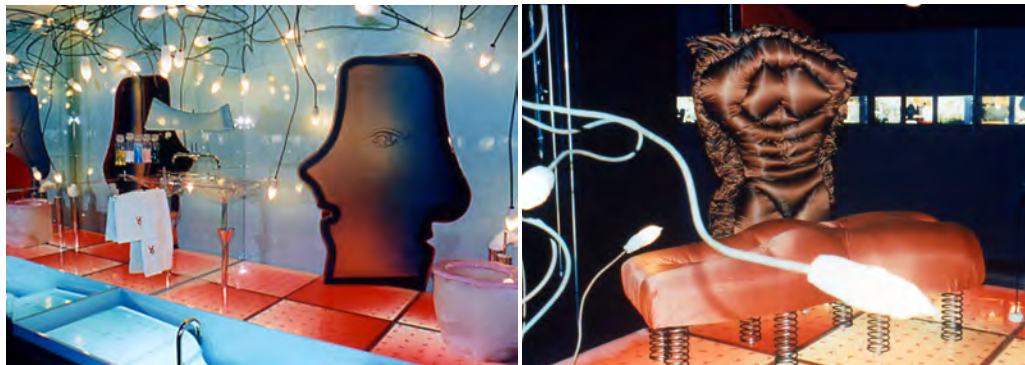


Fig. 3 GrandHotel Salone, -Interior of a hotel room, with Meritalia, Moscow, 2002.



Fig. 4 Alda lamp, polyurethane resin, metal – 25 x 70.61 cm - standard, 16 x 47.5cm – small, 2003.

Gaetano Pesce Unfettered Maverick

Despite living in New York for the past 27 years, Gaetano Pesce is inherently Italian in his sensibilities, describing his Manhattan base as a 'servicing' office and revealing that much of his work is still derived from his connections in Italy. The longevity of his working connection to his homeland is perhaps partly influenced by his mother – a strong, intelligent woman, who proved a pivotal influence on the beginnings of his creative career. As Pesce recalls: “My mother was a pianist and I have memories of her discussing important composers and why she preferred one artist to another. She was the one who introduced me to the concept of thinking creatively, explaining why Beethoven was innovative and impressing upon me the importance of being original and having a free mind.”

Growing up and playing in the streets of Florence near his grandmother's home, art was very much in the background of Pesce's early experience: “As children we were very much in contact with art just by being on the streets. For example, I remember playing soccer games in a Florentine portico done by Brunelleschi. We used to throw a ball against the column and the doorframes would get heavily kicked – it seems criminal today! Yet this physical engagement with the building was a way of understanding the art we were surrounded by. It was my milieu, if you like.”

While studying architecture in Venice, Pesce attributes the chance meeting of two influential figures in his life for his introduction and subsequent pursuit of industrial design. Cesare Cassina, an established industrialist whose family company was emerging as one of the world's most innovative furniture manufacturers, became a lifelong collaborator after initially visiting Pesce's studio with the intention of buying some drawings from the young designer. Secondly, a chance meeting with Milena Vettore, a young industrial design student studying at Venice's Institut Superiore di Disegno Industriale, evolved into a long-time collaboration and love affair until tragically, Milena, died as the result of an industrial accident at the height of their creative partnership. Recalling the importance of these relationships, Pesce describes the pair's influence on his subsequent rejection of the elitism of contemporary abstract art: “Milena and Cassina introduced me to the new world of the factory. I started to slowly realise that art should always be a product. As students we viewed art as a cultural phenomenon and I started to realise this was totally wrong... I came to the conclusion that my job was to be a designer, not an artist.’

The collaboration marked a pivotal point in Pesce's ideology and a commitment to pushing the boundaries of design within a social context. As he suggests: “Working with Milena and Cassina I came to understand that the revolution today is to accept the ideology of our times, and to transform it through expression. Unfortunately I feel that there are very few



Fig.5 Project for the Chicago Tribune, Competition for the Chicago Tribune, New York, USA, 1:50 scale model: soft urethane, 34 x 143 x 76cm; architectural skin. Non-homogeneous apartment block project, 1980.



Fig 6 Piece for an Execution by shooting, Multimedia performance for an actor (27 min.), Padua, Model: wood, PVC, metal sheet, red shellac, brass tubes- 60x75x140cm, 1967.



Fig 7 Samson table I, Model polyester resin, polychrome, 72 x 200 x 150cm. Delilah chair I, 53 x 61 x 71cm, Delilah chair II, moulded rigid polyurethane epoxy resin, 71 x 53 x 61, 1980.



Fig 8 Golgotha suit for Braccidiffero: table- prototype :glass bricks, foam, polyester resin – 300 x 100 x 72, chairs- fibreglass, polyester resin , 45 x 55 x 76cm, 100 x 45 x 55cm, 47 x 58 x 67cm, 1972-73.

Gaetano Pesce Unfettered Maverick

people engaged with this idea today. Most designers' work is superficial decoration and most architects simply remake what they know."

The relationship with Milena and Cassina coupled with Pesce's politically active environment at Venice's school of architecture provided a fertile ground for the young architect's developing social ideology. While still a student, he founded the collaborative Gruppo N – a group committed to the idea of exploring the concept of 'programmed art'.¹ Pesce explains: "We became very critical of the establishment and we realized that there was a lot of immorality in the art world."

Establishing a gallery, the group organised exhibitions that aspired to demystify art and communicate the idea that the artist's content is more important than the form. The exhibitions were groundbreaking for their conceptual approach and often used symbolic methodologies to express a simple message. As Pesce recalls: "I remember one exhibition that Milena curated with us in 1959 called *Il Pane*. We visited all the local shops collecting bread and then we exhibited all the different forms of bread we had found. It was a beautiful exhibition because of the simplicity, the smell and it was all so tasty! Yet, the show's message was that the form of the bread is of little importance; what is important is if the bread is good. This was the kind of conceptual approach that underpinned our work as Gruppo N."

The collaboration provided an important grounding for Pesce in conceptual expression² yet his growing political convictions were difficult to include within the limitations of a collective. At 33, the young architect made the difficult decision to leave the group and embark on a series of travels that he hoped would inspire and refine how he might express his political convictions through his creative work.

Communism had formed a fundamental underpinning to Gruppo N's theory and process yet Pesce came to suspect he had little understanding of the full implications of the political reality. As part of his quest for meaning it seemed apt to gravitate towards Russia – a country that the architect viewed idealistically as "the place of freedom." However, his direct exposure to the realities of Communism soon radically altered his views and manifested in a clearly defined personal strategy. Pesce remembers the definitive experience vividly: "I clearly understood that Communism in Russia was hell, a horrible place with a dictatorship that was very violent. The experience helped me to understand that it's much better to fight and to express your ideas as an individual and so I came to the self-realisation that this was not the time for uniform artistic movement; it was a time for 'solitary birds'."

1 The notion of 'programmatic art' for Gruppo N was a reaction against the expressive improvisation of Art Informel, the European equivalent of Abstract Expressionism in America.

2 Gaetano Pesce continued, throughout his career to criticise abstraction in art and architecture. He rejected the interest in the importance of form as a shallow, decorative act believing that art should tell meaningful stories and carry cultural messages to allow a direct dialogue with the public. This position is reflected in the metaphors and figurative elements demonstrated in his own work.

After returning to Italy in 1959 Pesce set up work as an individual practitioner with a renewed energy and commitment to expressing contemporary political themes through communicative and accessible artforms. The first of these works found form in the startling and provocative performance 'Piece for an Execution by Shooting' 1967. Recalling the seminal work, Pesce describes it as "an execution by gunshot. [The audience literally watches someone]... bleed to death and there is so much blood that it flows all around their feet so it's very dramatic. The work is communicating the idea that if a very traumatic event happens then the reality is that everybody is involved and [we are all] responsible and accountable for blame."

Broadly speaking, Gaetano's Pesce's work, particularly during the late-60s to late-80s, contains a series of highly recognisable elements – warm, primary colours, plastic or 'new' materials and feminine characteristics. Yet, despite Pesce's belief that "image, not writing, is the most important carrier of a culture",¹ the architect strongly refutes the notion that visual judgment or aesthetics has any part in his creative process. Pesce describes the Samson Table (1980), for example, as the result of the manufacturing process rather than any kind of pre-occupation with form: "I wanted to do a table using a process that was repeatable but that also allowed for differences with each individual object. I came up with a drawing to describe the technique of this table to the manufacturers in a very simple way. So instead of focussing on the form, I concentrated on the process – by carrying out the process, the table was realised."

¹ Marisa Bartolucci, Gaetano Pesce, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 2003, p.23.



Fig 9 La Mamma and the Ottoman ball : UP series, produced by B&B Italia, Novedrate / Como, Italy, an armchair and a footrest, 103x120x130cm, expanded polyurethane foam, synthetic jersey, new edition 2003, 1st edition 1969.



Fig 10 Poltrona Naso, wood, dacron, fabric and fibreglass, 140x90x90cm, 2006.

That's not to say that there's no kind of visual imagery at all - it's simply that Pesce doesn't accept the notion of the aesthetics being an inspiration of the eventual form. In fact, some of his work references religious iconography drawn from his Catholic upbringing that are then reinterpreted and imbued with a new meaning for a contemporary context. Pesce's Samson Table interprets the imagery of the final hours of the biblical Samson – the Israelite judge and warrior – who used his enormous strength to fight the Philistines until eventually betrayed by his mistress Delilah. Pesce re-contextualises the well-known legend by recalling the imagery of Samson's final hours¹ to provide a product that holds an easily accessible yet political message: "I thought of the beautiful image of Samson pushing in and collapsing the temple's columns and his strength in refusing the hypocrisy of the priests... Samson fought the rigidity of common thought and a scheme he didn't accept. In much the same way that, historically, there's rigidity in understanding what a table might be – it is usually a surface with four legs, very rigid and schematic.... So the table's legs are in that position in easy reference to the story."

Pesce's desire to communicate to a wide ranging public through narrative metaphors and without intellectual pretence naturally evolved to experimenting with other forms of 'carriers' for his socio-political messages. By utilising recognisable figurative elements coupled with manufacturing experiments using synthetic materials, his work aspired to trigger an emotional response in people generated by the contrast of a familiar form within the unexpected framework of a product.

Rather than attempting to create a distinct visual language for his products, the use of the figurative within Pesce's work was intended as a damning critique of the alienating effect of abstract art on society. Pesce believed the advent of abstraction had become 'dangerous territory' where creativity has the potential to become useless and uncommunicative to the wider community. He explains: "With the advent of abstraction the universal reach of traditional art forms was lost – nobody understood what the art was about... As an alternative to abstraction, I thought if I want to connect with and communicate to a wide range of people then I have to express myself through recognisable images. That's why I made a chair in the recognisable shape of a female body. The shape was supposed to represent the private side of expression... and the human condition of women."

The results of this metaphoric protest mark the beginning of a new kind of expression for Pesce's work and one that he fought hard to pursue within the conservative confines of the manufacturing industry. Many companies resisted making products that carried political meaning and it took courage and determination to convince them to extend their commitment. As the architect recalls: "Finally they trusted me and the Up 5, 6 series and the La Mama armchair mark the starting point of when I began using the recognisable form of a woman's body in my work. However, if you look at the ottoman ball I designed to connect with the La Mama chair, then I feel there is something interesting there: an image

1 The angle of the Samson Table's legs are positioned to recall the legend of Samson's final hours where, blinded by his captors, he collapsed the temple of the Philistine god Dagon upon himself and upon a crowd of the enemy who were taunting him .

of a prisoner with her ball and chain. Historically, today, and unfortunately possibly in the future, women are still prisoners of prejudice. To express this within an article would have been banal because it's been done so often before but to express this message with a chair that is supposed to simply sit in a living room seemed quite provocative. From this experience, I understood that a product could carry expression, content, function with a sense of joy in its use; this was the beginning of a lot of the ideas inherent in my work.”

In the early 1970s Pesce began to speak of the importance of the ‘Third Industrial Revolution’ – a concept borne from his frustration with the lingering influence of the International Style and its doctrine of a utopian ideal of mass produced architecture and design. While the architect acknowledged the movement’s revolutionary nature and its appropriateness for its time, he also harboured doubts about the influential movement’s validity for an increasingly complex society: “I realised that just as people have the right to think in a different way – address and express themselves in relation to their origin, territory, identity and religion – so did objects.”¹

His lingering doubts prompted his commitment to developing a manufacturing process that accepted flaws within mass-produced objects, allowing an embrace of similarity over equality. In pushing the boundaries of conventional manufacturing, Pesce describes his delight in discovering a new material language, one that was set free from the notion of perfection and continues to preoccupy his work today: “I discovered that perfection doesn’t exist; it is mistakes that characterises the human capacity. I allowed mistakes to be present in my work because they were capable of doing two things: Firstly, they express a human aspect to the work and secondly, the inherent nature of the mistake avoids repetition. So when I’m working on something, it is never the same because there are new mistakes. The work is ‘badly done’ in the sense that I’m incapable of doing something perfectly.”

Pesce is intensely suspicious of the notion of perfection and beauty and rejects wholeheartedly any suggestion of a recognisable aesthetic or visual language in his work. The balance between the power of the metaphorical techniques that Pesce employs to illustrate his commitment to the importance of individuality within his products and their ultimate perception as individual ‘beautiful objects’ by their users presents a difficult relationship for the architect to reconcile. However, regardless of this dilemma, Gaetano Pesce’s work is imbued with qualities that resonate with the human spirit – softness, accessibility, colour and humour – providing a stark contrast to a Modernist ideal of elegance, transparency, lightness and utopian perfection. As Pesce succinctly concludes: “The idea of the perfect detail frightens me. Personally I can’t accept the idea of beauty; I simply must not. Ugly may one day be seen as beautiful, however, it’s not yet the reality, so for the moment I have to fight for things in our society that are not established. The role of the intellectual is to fight!”



Fig.11 Pratt Chair no.3, polychrome urethane of different intensities, moulded by hand, 89.5x41.5x52cm, 1983.

¹ This notion of ‘mass production of originals’ precedes and predicts the ambition of ‘Non-standard Design’ developed many years later in digital design laboratories. For example, the seminal exhibition ‘Non-Standard Architectures’ at the Centre Pompidou, (December 2003) displayed the work of 12 selected digital design studios that engaged with the notion of the generalization of singularity in architecture. Pesce may or may not have been aware of the notion of ‘non standard’ in Mathematics, however, his approach was undoubtedly dictated by innovative technologies in manufacturing products from new synthetic materials and his vehement belief in the importance of individuality in a liberal society.

Zvi Hecker A Rare Achievement

9.3.3. Zvi Hecker A Rare Achievement

Born in Poland in 1931, architect Zvi Hecker grew up in Europe during the turbulent times of World War II and eventually fled Krakow in fear of the advancing German army. He spent much of his formative years in the city of Samarkand¹ before returning briefly to Poland, to face the increasing communist influence over his home city of Krakow. In rejection of another oppressive regime, Hecker and his family relocated to Israel in 1950, taking refuge in a temporary camp near Haifa in an ex-British military camp. Despite these difficult circumstances, Hecker settled and quickly enrolled to continue his architectural studies² at the Technion³ in Haifa.

Now at the age of 77 and in excellent health, Hecker is a humorous gentleman with a fondness for telling anecdotes about the various artists and writers that he admires rather than engaging in dry, academic discourse. Yet his calm and warm personality conceals a provocative mind that is quick to challenge the status quo and make an astute point with only a few well-chosen words – a characteristic that is also present in his dynamic architecture.⁴ Hecker gives great importance to the aesthetic decisions that underpin his architecture and is open and willing to discuss the influence of form, expression and style within his work – a fact that sets him apart from many architects who reject any role of aesthetics on the design process. It's a sentiment that Hecker finds bemusing, quoting the late modern master Alvar Aalto as saying, "to take the idea of form out of architecture is like taking the idea of heaven from religion!" Indeed, in stark contrast to his peers, Hecker's practice manifesto embraces esoteric values declaring: "architecture is an act of magic... it hides more than it reveals." To this end, he believes that architecture is a true art form and an expression of the human soul.

1 Samarkand is now the 2nd largest city of Uzbekistan. As Hecker recalls: "At the beginning of WW2, my family were picked up by the Russian army and under the order of Stalin transported first to Siberia at the very far east border with Japan. Then, following the agreement between Stalin and the Polish Government in exile in London, all the Jewish Pole prisoners in Siberia were released and were permitted to go to the South of Russia via Iran to Palestine to join the British Army. However, it didn't work out for us to follow this path and so we stayed in Samarkand until the end of the war.

2 Relocating meant that Hecker was required to master a third language Hebrew along with his native Polish and Russian in order to recommence his studies.

3 For many years, the 'Technion' or the 'Israel institute of Technology' in Haifa was the only institute in Israel to have a Faculty of Architecture.

4 Hecker recounts an anecdote to illustrate the provocative nature of his work: "Bruce Goff told me once, that when Frank Lloyd Wright came to Norman, Oklahoma for a lecture, Goff showed him his latest work. In response Frank Lloyd Wright asked: "Bruce, whom are you trying to scare?... In much the same way I have become used to similar reactions to my work." Zvi Hecker interview with Yael Reisner, Berlin, 2007



Fig.1 Bat-Yam City Hall built on the vacant land close to the seashore, Overview, Photo, in collaboration Eldar Scharon, Alfred Neumann, Bat-Yam, 1960-63



Fig.2 Bat-Yam CityHall interior view of the courtyard, Photo, in collaboration with Eldar Scharon and Alfred Neumann, Bat-Yam, 1960-63



Fig.3 Bat-Yam CityHall Wind tower above the reflecting pool on the roof, Photo, in collaboration Eldar Scharon and Alfred Neumann, Bat-Yam, 1960-63

Fig.4 Dubiner House Roof plan & shadows Ramat-Gan, 1961-63

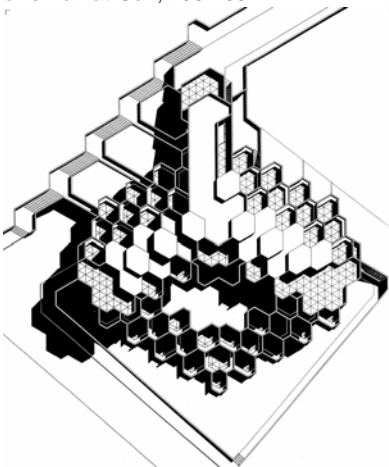
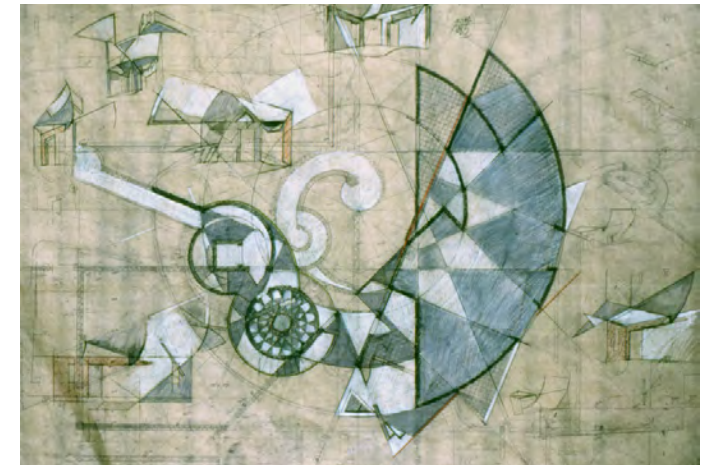


Fig.5 Dubiner House, Interior courtyard, Photo, Ramat-Gan, 1961-63



Fig.6 Spiral House, Coloured plan on the entrance plan with Sketches, Ramat-Gan



Zvi Hecker A Rare Achievement

1 Hecker studied under the mentorship of his drawing teacher, Izhak Palterer, who was unable to complete his own architectural studies due to the outbreak of WWII and shared a similar history to Hecker's family.

2 After returning in 1946 to Krakow from Samarkand, Hecker continued his schooling and enrolled into the School of Architecture of the Krakow Polytechnic, completing one semester. When the communists took over in Poland and having experienced the communist system in Russia, the family decided to move to Israel in 1950.

3 Neumann was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia. Before the outbreak of WWII he worked in South Africa, however returned to Prague with concern about the safety of his parents. He ended up in Teresienstadt concentration camp for the duration of the war.

4 The Dean was Yohanan Ratner, Israel's ex-chief of staff, and the first Israeli ambassador to Russia who gave Zvi Hecker a private tour in summer when all facilities were closed.

5 "Richard Kauffman came to Palestine from Germany in 1920. During the British mandate, Kauffman planned more than 150 settlements, kibbutz, neighborhoods and towns. The modernist approach of Kauffman and other contemporary architects in the 1930s created the typical Israeli aesthetic and especially Tel-Avivian architecture." Ran Shechori, *The State of the Arts: Architecture in Israel*, www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2002/7/Architecture, (text updated, 1998)

6 Eldar Sharon was the son of the influential Israeli architect Arie Sharon – a Bauhaus graduate from before WW2 – who was a partner in an established office in Tel-Aviv, Idelson Sharon. Eldar Sharon was working from a small space within his father's office.

7 A preoccupation not held by many young Israeli architects at the time.

8 A Biblical reference within a period when Israel was psychologically and culturally very modern. It was an unusual approach utilizing Biblical to western European references and evolving from the ambition to create a new local identity based on a historical framework.

Zvi Hecker recalls deciding that architecture was his vocation at the tender age of thirteen while attending school in Samarkand.¹ The young Hecker studied and drew the ruins of Muslim architecture, forming a deep connection with design practice. Recommencing his studies post-war and relocating from Krakow to Israel in 1950,² Hecker found a new and influential mentor within Haifa's Technion in the Faculty of Architecture in Alfred Neumann – a Czech architect from Brno³ who had studied under Peter Behrens in Vienna before working for Adolf Loos and Auguste Perret. As Hecker reflects, "We were still in a refugee camp after arriving in Israel but the first thing I did was go to the Technion... I was horrified! I had completed one semester in Krakow before leaving and the presentation of the projects and graphics were incredibly beautiful. On an introductory tour⁴ of the School of Architecture, I saw transparent pieces of paper with drawings, cut roughly in different sizes, drawn in hard pencil and very difficult to read. You could imagine my disappointment!" Explaining further, Hecker suggests: "I think the program was focused on strict utilitarianism. It was a transitional period and the great German architects like Kaufmann⁵, Krakauer and Rau had already left Technion. However, thank God, when I was in my 2nd year of studies Alfred Neumann joined the Faculty of Architecture."

After completing his architectural studies Hecker relocated to Tel Aviv and began a practice with another young, local architect Eldar Sharon.⁶ Together they enjoyed early success with their competition-winning scheme for a city hall for the new city of Bat-Yam, south of Tel-Aviv. Challenged and encouraged by the win, Hecker approached his long-time mentor Alfred Neumann to join the partnership – a move that would also facilitate Neumann to realize his first building within Israel. As Hecker explains: "I thought Neumann was simply a genius that should have the possibility to build. And for his part, he insisted that the work was to be wholly collaborative." He continues: "For Neumann, architecture was not about geometry but expression.⁷ He talked about Bat-Yam being the equivalent to Tel-Aviv as Pompeii was to Rome. He always looked for historical precedents and one can see that the project's main staircase was referenced from the city hall of Florence, the bench around the building from Palazzo Strozzi and the main interior hall from Tony Garnier's Hotel de Ville in Boi d'Boulogne."

The project effortlessly combined European references with Biblical ones: for example, the building's brightly coloured concrete panels in hues of blue, red and gold in reference to the colors of King David.⁸ Continuing, Hecker adds that the design was underpinned by a desire to create a sense of presence for the new building: "We really tried to elucidate the essence of the design... Neumann believed that even a small city like Bat-Yam should have its own character so we put the city hall in the most exposed position on the piazza that was rectangular in form, like the piazza of Pompeii. We enriched the program of what was a strict office building by the addition of public functions that could be used by the both the bureaucrats and the citizens of Bat-Yam including a reflecting pool, performing stage and small amphitheatre as well as ventilation towers located on the roof."



Fig.7 Spiral House, a view of the Spiral house, Photo, Ramat-Gan,1980



Fig.8 Spiral House, a view of the courtyard, Photo, Ramat-Gan,1980



Fig.9 Spiral House, a view of the Spiral house from North-West, Photo, Ramat-Gan,1980

Fig.10 Spiral House, B&W plan, Ramat-Gan,1980

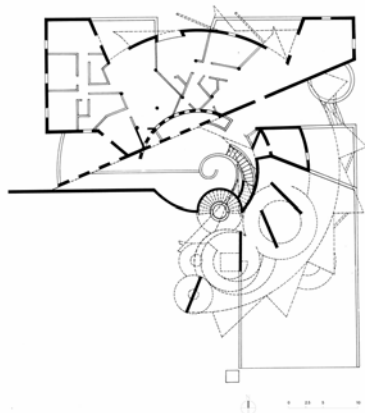


Fig.11 The Heinz Galinski Schule; Jewish Primary School. The transformation of the sun-flower geometry to fit a school program, Berlin,1990-95

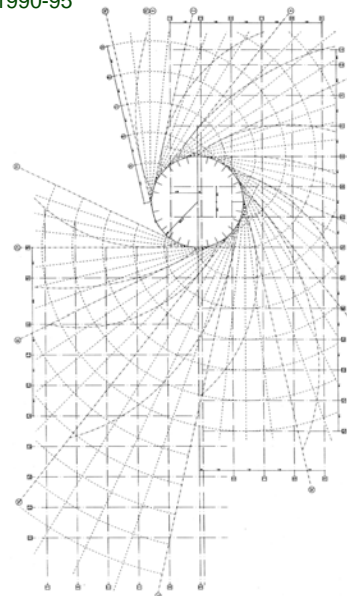


Fig.12 The Heinz Galinski Schule; Jewish Primary School. Preliminary drawings of the ground floor plan indicating the snake like corridors; Plan, section & sketches, Berlin, 1990-95



Zvi Hecker A Rare Achievement

Every part of the project referenced a historical and cultural context yet the building is as much a masterpiece of engineering¹ and geometry as it is a portrait of a new city inspired by cultural influences. Sadly the building has lapsed into a total state of disrepair² – a fact that Hecker finds overwhelming: “It’s still there but it is completely destroyed ...I never go there because I suffer when I see what has become of the building.”

While his architectural language has varied over the years Hecker’s core values can be traced back to the strategies that his mentor Neumann instilled within his student and partner – an inspiration that manifests itself in Hecker’s trademark courtyard strategy.³ The courtyard became Hecker’s over-arching design preoccupation and a testing ground for new concepts, contextual cultural critique, forms and ‘hidden’ geometries throughout his collective work. With each project the strategy became more dynamic with an emphasis on the journeys created around, through, inside and outside the varying courtyard configurations. “For me there are two kinds of architecture; one where you walk around the building in admiration, and the other where you walk into the building,” Hecker explains. “I prefer the latter. Such architecture demands forms that reveal simultaneously their internal and external lives. I would like people to feel like they are inside the building even if they are outside.” As a result, nearly all of Hecker’s projects⁴ explore the concept of what he describes as a ‘city walk’ employing the deliberate device of directing the visitor along a series of progressions and delays through the building – much like a journey through a city.

1 The complex structure of the Bat-Yam City Hall literally hangs from the roof.

2 Hecker is clearly very upset about the condition of the Bat-Yam city hall. When asked about its ability to be renovated, he kept quiet for a long while and then sighing said: “It’s not possible to renovate it. No, it’s destroyed. I never go there. I did all the working drawings personally and all the negotiations with the contactors so [for me it’s very sad]. Interview with Yael Reisner, Berlin, Feb 07.

3 Hecker recalls: “Neumann’s suggestion on how to make architecture was to ‘make a courtyard, and then to build around it’ and it seems that I still follow this advice.” Interview with YR, Berlin, Feb, 2007.

4 Hecker’s projects, as follows, all engage with and develop the city walk typology: Bat-Yam’s City Hall (1959-63), Dubiner’s House residential complex in Ramat Gan (1961-63), the Spiral House apartment complex, Ramat Gan (1986-90), the Heinz-Galinski Primary School, Berlin (1991-95), Palmach Museum in Tel Aviv (1993-96) and Hecker’s most recent project under construction, the Dutch Royal Police Headquarter at Schiphol International Airport, Amsterdam. Ramat Gan is the adjacent city to Tel-Aviv although it is often perceived as just a continuation of the urban sprawl of the latter.

Hecker’s extraordinary forms are generated by an intensive relationship with geometry within his design process in which he lays down what he describes as ‘line networks’ of a geometry that becomes ‘geometric scaffolding’. He references the strategy back to the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright, recalling: “It was Frank Lloyd Wright who first considered geometry as scaffolding, which is later taken off... And for me, geometry – or as I would prefer to call it mathematics – is a necessary logic, the foundation underlying my work.” As a result, the mathematical grid and geometry that underpins Hecker’s work is concealed whilst the cinematic unfolding of ‘happenings’ or ‘episodes’⁵ work against the scaffolding to give focus to his evocative architectural language and the unique aesthetic of his buildings.⁶

Hecker’s approach to geometry is a distinctly personal one that drives the narrative for each project. One can trace his geometric preoccupations through the early 1960’s with the square, developing through the 1970’s to static polyhedral geometries. In the early 1980’s he embarked on a series of projects that explored the dynamic ‘sunflower geometry’⁷



Fig.13 The Heinz Galinski Schule; Jewish Primary School, The courtyard traversed by the snake corridor. Photo, Berlin, 1990-1995

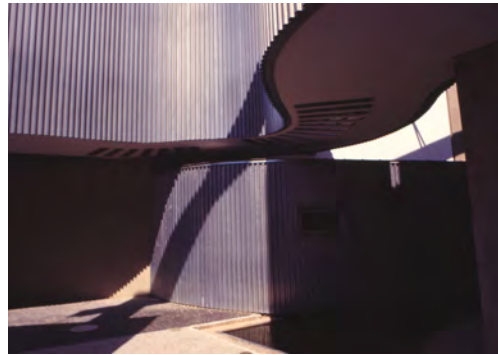


Fig.14 The Heinz Galinski Schule; Jewish Primary School, The courtyard traversed by the snake corridor. Photo, Berlin, 1990-1995



Fig.15 The Heinz Galinski Schule; Jewish Primary School, The water pool reflected in the mirrors of the snake corridors ceiling. Photo, Berlin, 1990-1995

Fig.16 The Heinz Galinski Schule; Jewish Primary School, Ground floor and first floor corridors overlapping each other. Photo, Berlin, 1990-1995



Zvi Hecker A Rare Achievement

with the intention of creating a sense of gravitated momentum within his work. Thus, the underlying geometry became increasingly difficult to detect within his projects and coupled with the contradictory qualities of added 'happenings' or 'episodes' resulted in increasingly charged, complex and exotic spatial experiences.

For example, within the celebrated Spiral House apartment complex in Tel Aviv, the spiral started with a geometry based on the sunflower, customized to lead upwards and further camouflaged by snake-like forms. Hecker describes these narrative elements as appearing "only when the geometry and the structure are very clear. Then one can camouflage this so-called precision. That is also how the snakes were introduced first to guard the paradise and then to frighten the neighbour who constantly complained about the Spiral House being built next to his lot." Hecker also introduces 'poor' materials to wrap the building's spiralling walls¹ recalling an arte povera² manner. He describes the strategy as "an attempt to express human thoughts and emotions using the most ordinary materials... it's a noble aim that I think sums up what architecture is about."

For the competition-winning Heinz-Galinski Jewish school in Berlin, Hecker created a journey that led the occupant to the courtyards and opened expansively to the sky. He suggests that despite the complexity of the design, he was surprised to hear the project being described as 'wild'.³ "I thought that the design was so mathematical and clear, how can it be wild? But then I understood that the geometry produced during design development became a kind of wild geometry; unique for the particular place and program and not translatable for any other projects in the future." While all of Hecker's projects employ a similar method of design process, they result in buildings that are imbued with a disparity of architectural language, materials, ideologies, contextual commentary and individual form.

"Architecture is an expression of the human soul in its ever-changing condition. It is a human art, never humane enough." Hecker states empathically. He considers himself as a 'professional architect' first and an artist second, suggesting that "if someone considers me an artist, than it probably means that they view my architecture as art, however it doesn't change the reality of my profession." He believes that regardless of one's status, the mark of any artistic value lies in the quality of workmanship and, as a result, he is quick to embrace visual language. "I have no problem using the words 'style' and 'expression' because, in my opinion, art is not a profession. It is a marker of quality work," he explains. "Everybody can be viewed as an artist if they produce work of the highest standard: "For example a brilliant chef or a talented fashion designer could be viewed as an artist. And, conversely, the kind of text that we read in the daily newspaper is not literature – we throw it away the next day. So, an artist is not recognized by their profession but by their achievements. Architecture is an incredibly rare human achievement and I would say that an architect is very seldom an artist."

1 The Spiral Houses' walls were wrapped provocatively with flat cheap stones. From an Israeli context, the use of this material references the cheap fences of the Arabic-Israeli villages where these stones are commonly used. The project is a resonant example of Hecker's battle with a disciplined geometrical system while adding 'episodes' through his architecture.

2 The Spiral House and the Palmach Museum are strong examples of the 'Arte Povera' movement within architecture. In Hebrew, the term translates to 'Dalut Hachomer' or 'Poor Materiality'. This movement had a local authenticity and was common among many Israeli artists during the 1970s and 80s although it didn't resonate in Israeli architecture.

3 Hecker recalls in conversation with Yael Reisner, Berlin, 2007: "I remember that when you visited me [in February 1990], you were the first to see the models of the Jewish School and you commented while looking at the model: 'What a wild project'. At the time, I was surprised by your comment and later I wrote a short article in the Aedes exhibition catalogue that mentioned your reaction, because I was surprised by your comment."

He also views the architect's role as a very difficult path to navigate between the expectations of professional practice and that of the avant-garde world of the artist: "In the end, I would like to consider myself a functionalist in my own way.¹ Function helps limit choices and to distinguish architects from those who build sculptures on an architectural scale. Function is also linked to human needs, movement, and eventually to human scale." He expands: "Yet an architect is always within a schizophrenic situation because, on one hand, he is a professional and on the other, he is within the creative process of searching and developing the design. The beginning of the process is an experiment— much like creating a dish that is not yet cooked and ready to be served. So the architect must admit that the design is still not perfect but within development."²

For Hecker, the role of ethics and aesthetics are intimately intertwined and his position is made clear through the disparate aesthetic that runs through his body of work. He suggests that architects have the ability to capture culture in form and material³ although he believes that architectural expression cannot be approached directly. Nevertheless, while Hecker refutes he thinks directly about encapsulating a project's ideals, many of his projects are resonant with cultural qualities. For example, the Palmach Museum successfully captures the building's cultural significance and creates a distinctive group 'portrait'⁴ through form, materiality and ultimately its aesthetic.

Hecker believes that beauty must originate and grow from a point of critique or generating source. Within his architecture this manifests itself in his endless preoccupation with the complex relationship between his chosen geometries and their camouflaged elements to create a meaningful journey through experience. In addition, Hecker suggests that a focus on function within the architectural process is characterless within itself and is analogous to the manner in which yeast gives bread more volume, refined taste and a beautiful form during its baking so too does the inclusion of clients' needs, movement, scale, and personality enrich the functionality of architecture and direct the aesthetic value.

Undoubtedly, Hecker's originality, sensitivity and refined aesthetic expressed through his architectural practice is integrally linked to his early experiences of political oppression and his belief in the power of art to transcend the human experience and find beauty in the most difficult of circumstances: "For me beauty means hope! The real hope for humanity lies in art... The mistake that communist regimes make lies in forbidding artists to make art... that's why communism inevitably collapses – it's not because of economic mismanagement, it's because people will always want to find ways to create art!" he declares. "Unfortunately in much of today's architectural discourse aesthetics are seen as a kind of substance that can be added to a building but I believe beauty must originate and grow from creative thinking. It's not an assortment of dry spices... nature does not distinguish between beauty and ugliness, it's pure human invention and that is why it changes constantly."

1 "James Stirling wrote in an introduction to his projects that the theory of functionalism is still the driving force for him. And I would agree with this sentiment." Zvi Hecker.

2 Zvi Hecker in conversation with Kristin Feireiss suggested that: "Forgetting and not knowing is not the same. A real artist produces new material; and he is expected to do [that] very precisely; dealing with things he didn't know from before..." Zvi Hecker, The Heinz-Galinski School in Berlin. Editor Kristin Feireiss, p.29.

3 He speaks of 'faith in how to make the materials speak' in the spirit of the artist and recalls a story he once heard that prior to beginning a painting Renoir kissed his canvas in anticipation.

4. The Palmach was the regular fighting force of the unofficial army of the Jewish community during the British Mandate in Palestine for 7 years. Its members contributed significantly to Israeli culture and ethos. Being a Palmach member was considered to be a way of life and held associations with notions of modesty, poverty and culture.

Interviews:

1st Interview: International Architecture Biennale, Venice, September 2004

2nd Interview: Zvi Hecker's office, Berlin, February 2007



Exhibition entitled: Extending Tel-Aviv's promenade into the sea. Coloured photo of a partial view looking at the promenade from the sea, Tel Aviv, 1991.

10. Practice Platform - Part III: 1990-1993

10.1. Back to London in 1990

There were three other projects I built in Israel in which I gathered more experience as an architect who builds. In spite of my encouraging start I left Israel for Britain, optimistically, perhaps, because of the confidence I had gained over those two and a half years, but mainly because I had fallen in love. Surprisingly (well, it was certainly a surprise to me), I fell in love with my ex-teacher, Peter Cook.¹ Despite already setting up my practice in Tel-Aviv, which was where I wished to live, I moved back to London in February 1990.

Four years after arriving in London, in 1994, a contractor I had built three projects with in Tel-Aviv approached me and asked me to design his new flat. That was my second beginning in Tel-Aviv architecturally. However, before then, in 1991, I exhibited a project in Tel-Aviv, one which turned out to be meaningful for me for some years to come.

10.2. One woman show in Ami Steinitz Contemporary Art Gallery, Tel-Aviv, 1991, titled: "Extending Tel-Aviv promenade into the sea"

1 I had the option not to mention this as I never worked with Peter Cook. Despite a good relationship, or because of it, I have always kept my track separate and independent, religiously so. Yet living with someone who is very famous in your own profession creates a problematic condition that I had never envisaged (being quite confident in my abilities as a designer), the shock of realizing how persistent is the attitude and high interest – from others - in what your famous husband is doing and no interest whatsoever in what you might have thought or suggested or produced. Or not even a slight trust that you might be able to suggest something of yourself. One's self confidence deteriorates when surrounded with all those who see you as a piece of decoration related to the architect Peter Cook.. Already I have said more than expected, but in nineteen years it became a sore point. More and more I have felt the need to express an independent voice. Or, to come back to the simpler point I wished to make - when you marry your mentor and you are part of the same community of knowledge he becomes your peer.

2 Leon van Schaik, Mastering Architecture, Becoming a Creative Innovator in Practice, Wiley-Academy, Great Britain, 2005.

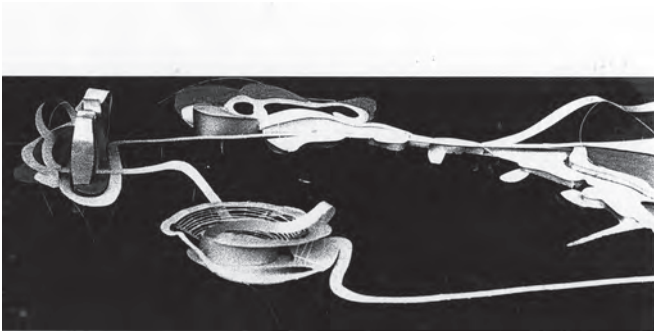
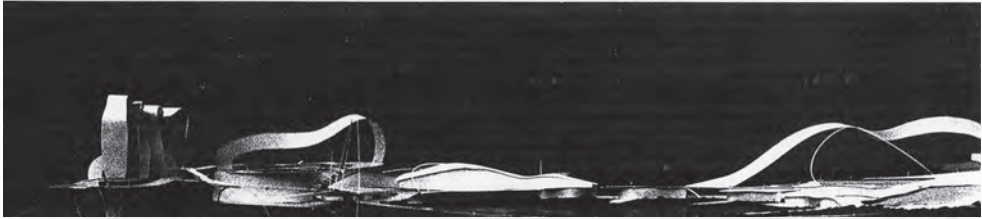
3 "Ha'ta'ye'let" - "The Promenade" in Hebrew.

As previously mentioned, I was invited to exhibit as an architect for a one-woman-show, in the Ami Steinitz Gallery of Contemporary Art in Tel-Aviv, in January 1991. I decided to exhibit a suggestion for the city of Tel-Aviv; a vision involved with the People's Sea Promenade. It was at this moment in my career, in choosing this theme and content and that site, all revolving around my passion with the open horizon, when I decided on which body of knowledge to nurture as in Leon van Schaik's understanding of our profession² (as quoted here earlier and later on as well). That was the moment when I started to understand the nature of my mastery, my own preoccupation expressed in my architecture, a personal content that becomes the content of the project. I'll explain later how that mastery and body of knowledge was developed further.

The Tel-Avivian Sea Promenade,³ as it exists, is a place for pedestrians to stroll, enjoy meeting people, sit on free chairs along the beach and watch the shore, the people, and, in the evening, the sunset. It is sunny and nicely warm in winter and catches the evening breeze in the sweaty summers. The sea-front promenade stretches from the northern part of Tel Aviv, where Gordon Street meets Hayarkon Street, and ends at the 'Dolphinarium', to continue again through the Clore Park and finally reaching its destination in Old Jaffa Port.

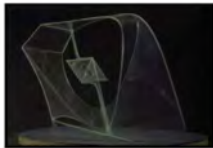


Exhibition entitled: Extending Tel-Aviv's promenade into the sea. B&W zeroxes of photos of a model taken from different angles, Tel Aviv, 1991.



6

1- 4. Nahum Gabo; references to surface and line.



The Dolphinarium was originally a place for running entertaining performances focused on the dolphins' pool, but over the years has changed roles many times. There is no pool anymore and it is used mostly as a place for parties and weddings. It is an eye-sore and an unpleasant territory for pedestrians to walk through; it tends to be bypassed by detour when continuing to walk towards the port of Jaffa. The Dolphinarium sits on a privately-owned piece of land, which is an unusual situation along the Israeli coastline, and therefore in spite of all the problems it brings, it is still there.

My plan was to exchange that piece of land with another in the sea, so as to clear the park from the Dolphinarium (the owner would be receiving an equivalent size of territory on a little island in the sea, still looking west, in exchange), thus removing its long-standing ugly, depressing presence and opening the way for a continuing promenade all the way to Jaffa. That suggested small islet in the sea would have the four 'Boutique Hotels' (as they called them today) and a garden in front with cafes looking all around. The extended promenade into the sea reflected the three areas that the promenade led to. Firstly, its southern part: this is the pier which was sitting heavily in the water with cafes and restaurants all along the stretch, with a swimming pool and aquarium underneath. The second part included the four hotels¹ on pilotis in the sea and a garden (also on pilotis) facing west into the open sea. The promenade then took you further to an open-air theatre as the third northern part, looking towards the Old City of Jaffa above the port, in the south.

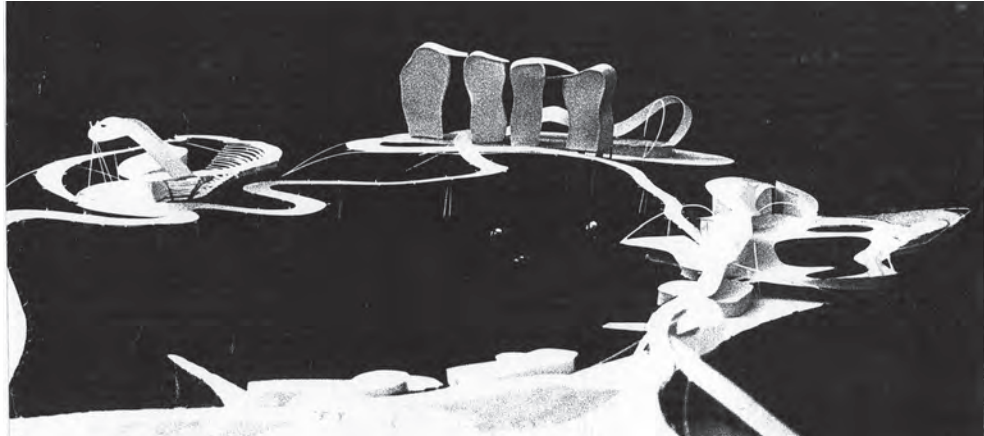
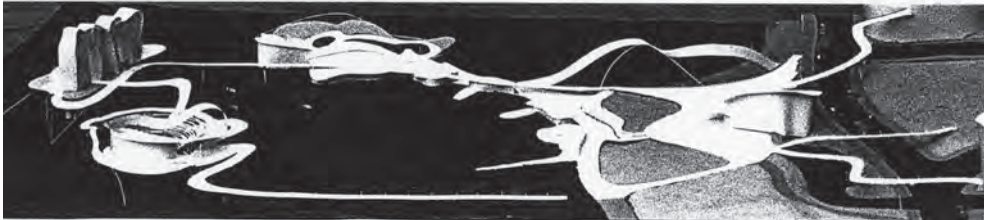
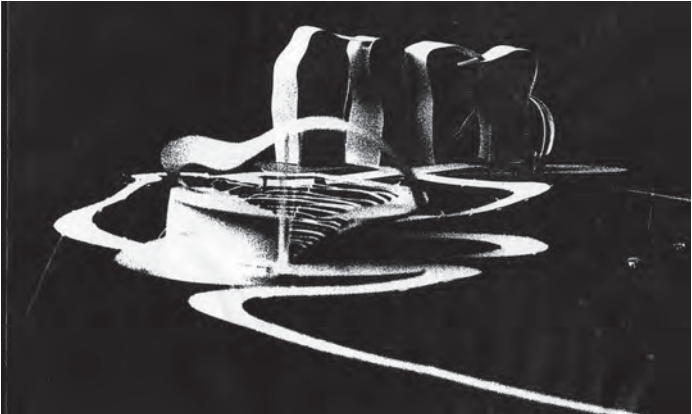
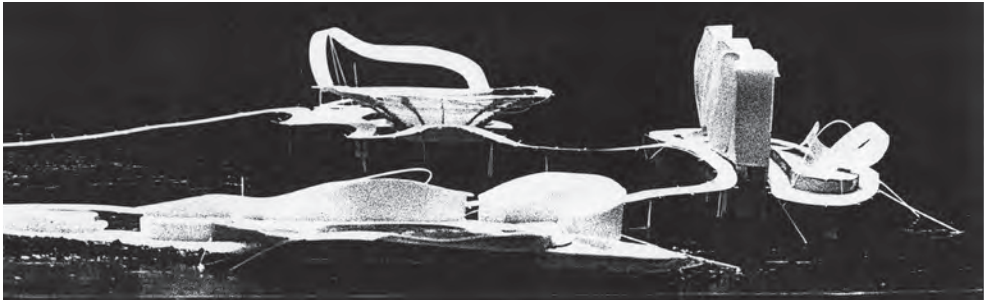
The extension of the seafront promenade into the sea territory is one of the projects where I treated the design as an integral part of the landscape, where its environment became part of the architecture: observed from it, framed by it, lived with and through it. One is looking for the intensity of the wholeness of a site that includes whatever the eye can see and the soul can feel. I wrote in January 1998 for an entry in the June issue of *Fisuras*:

"The extension of the seafront promenade into sea territory is where I treat the landscape, or the Environment, as Total Architecture, and when I say that, I transfer a common expression from the art world to that of architecture. To be more explicit I will say that Environment as Total-Architecture refers to architecture that fills, or relates to, the entire room, or to the entire view of the given territory; this could be an architectural work within an open landscape or within an urban context, like in Las Vegas 3 or the old Pakistani village, Hyderabad Bind.....the vast open landscape of the sea and its infiniteness are very seductive to interfere with. Rising above the horizon are dramatic lines, curved strips and undulating surfaces enhancing the sense of movement, sometimes slow, calm and lazy, other times, light, quick and dynamic, introducing constant change."

The slow, constant change of the environment I created in the extended promenade will be observed, sensed and interacted with by the people, while walking through and moving

¹ 'Three star' hotels - what I meant in 1991 - were unlike the Hiltons and Sheratons located nearby for the very rich tourists. Tel-Aviv always lacked the more modest hotels, which are neither ostentatious or unpleasant, but civilized and attractive. Today they are known as boutique hotels.

1.



around and along the extended promenade into the sea. As they move, their viewpoint will change slightly and forms and spaces would constantly alter in shape. By day, sunlight would reveal a texture of light and shadow. Light surfaces will alternate with dark surfaces, creating a vibrant, ever-changing condition. The curved elements are all soft and continuous in order to complement the relaxation and calmness of the Mediterranean beach-goers. At night, some lines and surfaces are strips of artificial light, throwing light onto the sea; light is projected onto the sea as in full-moon-lit nights, or by the intermittent pulses of light from airplanes arriving and descending into Tel Aviv (all flights to Israel arrive from the west: the only 'free' frontier) that reveal the sea in the darkness. These lights transform the beach and the promenade into a place of intensified pleasure. Every day during the sunset the new extended promenade will become a set of silhouettes. For some people, these will be the most intense moments of the day, when the dynamic change in its visual qualities over the space of each 24 hours make these moments even more exciting.

The notion of 'the space in between', an old favourite of mine, is a domineering one, created by different strips that 'capture the empty air'. The Smithsons, in 1974, phrased this in poetic terms:

"The most mysterious, the most charged with architectural forms are those which capture the empty air...such forms are double acting, concentrating inwards, radiating buoyancy outwards..."

A hundred years earlier, it was Alphand,¹ in his proposals for the 'Parc des Buttes-Chaumont', who laid out in an abandoned quarry where, along the ridge of a mountain, he planted trees with gaps between them. Its plan and elevations were published in Paris in 1869,² in a widely circulated magazine 'les Promenades de Paris'. The first time I saw the 'Comb of the Wind' in San Sebastian, Spain, by Eduardo Chillida, I knew there was someone else at the time who was enjoying playing with the same theme.

It is clear to me that this project was a conscious and meaningful move on my part as an architect, with a passion of mine consciously becoming my architectural preoccupation which in turn became my architecture's content.

10.3. Tracing a change in My Architectural Aesthetic - Stage 2, 1991

In 1987, one could already notice a change of aesthetic in my last project at the AA, the birds' observatory bridge, from the fragmented diagonal lines and surfaces to the curvature of the main bridge arch (though unsymmetrical), to the undulating serpentine part of the bridge and its cubicles –the birds' watching hiding shelters were curvy as well. The vertical library situated two thirds of the way across the bridge had soft contours as the cubicles. Even the net which dropped along the pathway of the bridge was thin and soft as it hung

1 Jean-Charles-Adolphe Alphand, who helped transform the Bois de Boulogne and other parks for Baron Haussmann in the middle of the 19th century.

2 William Howard Adams, Roberto Burle Marx, 'The Un-natural Art of the Garden', The museum of modern art, New York, 1991

there. This contrasted with the much simpler geometry of my very first job: the vaulted cladding attached to the vaulted structure on the roof-top.

However, it is the extension of the Tel-Aviv's promenade into the sea where I asserted my confidence in bringing in my new aesthetic. I was determined in my preoccupation with the low horizon and my aesthetic was fluid, dynamic, soft and calm; curved, flat surfaces flowed along curved strings and rods. I loved Ron Arad's pieces of furniture,¹ who, at that time, was already a close friend; we were both interested in Carlo Molino's first ever monograph in English that had just come out in 1987. I was also inspired by the Japanese sculptor Aiko Miyawaki (the wife of the Japanese architect Arata Isozaki) and Nahum Gabo's Perspex original and beautiful models/art work that I saw in a retrospective exhibition of his in London, at what was then the Tate Museum in Pimlico. I felt I created something new: in this project I suggested the city of Tel-Aviv.

To explore the interventions on the horizon I made a big model from white, flat, very thin plastic sheets that I loved working with because I could cut the surfaces very easily - no force was necessary - and I could glue the parts very rapidly with a chemical that dried in no time. The material helped with the language I wished to express as it was a flat surface which was easy to bend or curve.² However, I remember that I chose the material to suit my intention, as opposed to moulding my intention to fit with the easy-to-work-with material. Another very interesting aspect of this project was that I noticed, for the first time as an active architect, how my language had changing since my time at School. Even though my preoccupation was the same and the content was the same, it now belonged to an entirely different form. I will return to that observation again later.

10.4. The Holy Island Monastery,³ Scotland, 1993

In 1993 I decided to enter a competition for the first time. It was a competition for a project intended to be built and I was very interested in bringing my work to London, searching for projects in London or in the UK in general. The competition was a popular one amongst young architects and was run by the RIAS (the Scottish equivalent of the RIBA).

I worked on this competition in collaboration with the structural engineer Niel Thomas, founder of Atelier One, and the environmental engineer Patrick Bellew, the founder of Atelier Ten; at the time we worked together on many projects. I invited them to work with me on this occasion by sending them a black and white postcard of my Tel-Aviv promenade asking if they were interested in collaborating with me; they agreed.

The Holy Island is a 4 km long by less than a kilometre wide mountainous island, located off the coast of Arran in the Firth of Clyde (not very far from Glasgow). The island has a long spiritual history: it is endowed with an ancient healing spring, the hermit-cave of a

1 An example of Ron Arad's influence by Gianni Colombo is 'Strutturazione Fluida', 1960-69 and 'Spazio Curvio', 1991

2 I had worked with this material already, three and five years before then, but in a very different manner. I used a much thicker type of plastic sheet and kept it flat. At the time I didn't like the white, so I developed a technique to colour it so that it resembled a powdery corten steel sheet.

3 An international competition run by the RIAS, called 'The Holy Island Competition'. I won fourth place and a commendation.

6th Century monk, St Molaise, and evidence of a 13th Century Christian monastery. The Tibetan Buddhist centre from Samye Ling was presented this island in 1992 as a gift from a private owner, in order to build a centre for the public and a monastery for the coming millennium. Lama¹ Yeshe was the executive director of The Holy Island Project. Part of the program was to design a monastery for the 21st century as a spiritual place with an ecologically sustainable attitude.

There were three major parts to the complex: a residential territory for the spiritual teacher Lama Yeshe² and for his guests who often come with an entourage, and two monasteries, one for monks and one for nuns. Each must include private single rooms - where they would spend their long hours - communal showers and toilets, a praying room, a yoga room, a dining room with a kitchen next to it, washing room and a workshop.

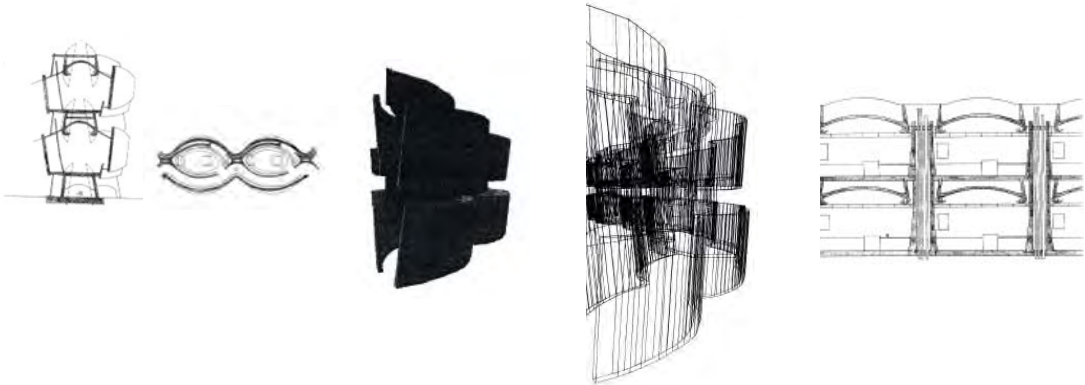
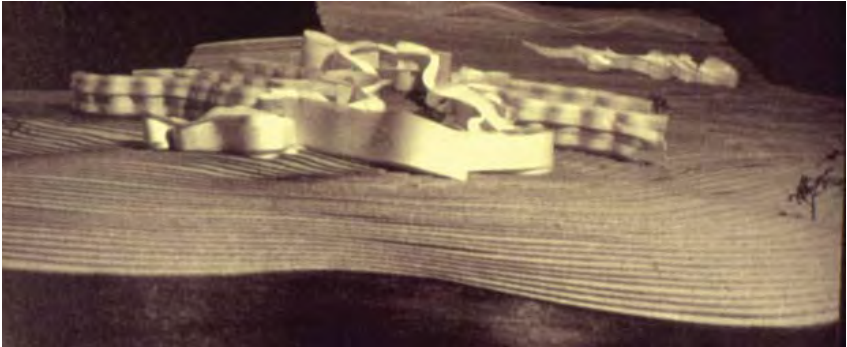
I worked out the project with the aid of a big model (approximately 2 x 2m) by myself, for three months. I made the topography from flat, flexible cork sheets and the buildings from the same white plastic sheets I worked with in the Tel-Aviv promenade project.

I designed all these facilities around a courtyard, lying along the mountain slopes where the main entrance led to the courtyard in its lower part, not very far from the sea shore, with the kitchen and dining room facing south and the sea. The workshop was the same, including the lower part next to the entrance where the goods arrive from. The room layout looked in plan like many hands stretching into the landscape with each 'hand' layered in two floors. The monks are there to be in solitude while they spend long hours in a specific 'sit-box' in the middle of the room. When they are out of their rooms it is for a scheduled activity within their community and they gather in the bigger communal rooms. Therefore, in each room, the box they would sit in was surrounded by walls with no interruptions, while the openings were continuous windows skirting the point where the walls meet the ceiling, looking on to the sky.

The praying room and the yoga room were located in the upper part of the courtyard, looking onto breathtaking views: down through the open courtyard, into the island and the sea and up toward the peak of the rocky mountain which was covered with pink heather in summer and low shrubs all year long (there were hardly any trees on this island). The same distinctive walls continued from the monasteries' courtyards leading towards a gazebo further up on the mountain, towards its peak and distanced from the monastery's complex. All along the walls, in the courtyard and all the way up to the gazebos, there were cylinders spinning as part of the design of the walls, using the prevalent strong winds to create the energy source for that complex. These were inspired by a common sight in Buddhist monasteries in Tibet, where spinning cylinders were spread as symbols of the scrolls of prayers - a reminder of the prayers for those who never learned how to read.

¹ 'Lama' means 'spiritual teacher' in Tibetan

Holy Island Monastery
Holy Island competition entry, Scotland, 1993



In terms of aesthetics, I continued with my soft language of flat, long, undisturbed, dynamic white concrete strips. The buildings were designed in such a way that light would come in from between light concrete strips, or between a strip and ceiling or between a strip and the floor. The sky had a big presence in this scheme, with views revealed in between the wall strips with which I framed the sky, the only nature present in the monks' and nuns' private rooms, where they spend most of their time. I was looking at Georgia O'Keefe's paintings, specifically those cited here.¹

10.5. My intimate landscape - Part III: continuing to develop from childhood

In 1993, three years after my return to London, I decided to send a list - which I had been writing for a long time and contained odd things which I liked for their appearance - as a pre-tutorial draft to Robin Evans - Bob Evans, as we all called him - an architect who became in time an architectural historian. He was teaching at the AA at the time and had been for as long as I had been a student there. He was a brilliant teacher who always presented you with a wide range of different references, covering many periods of history. I aimed to write about what I'm most attracted to and I found that it was very closely related to my architectural output. As mentioned earlier, it was four years later when Mark Cousins made me think that what I hated might also have triggered my architectural orientation, but in 1993 I hadn't thought about that yet.

¹ We won a commendation and fourth place after the three winning schemes and my reward, besides the fact that my project was appreciated, was the experience of listening to the comedian Billy Connolly and his hilarious anecdotes about the Tibetan Buddhists and having him present me with the award and shake my hand. The Holy Island monastery was never built.

² To do with the notorious essay for the AA, that no one completed on time.

³ Osborne's black bull in Spain is a silhouetted image of a bull in semi-profile, and has been regarded for quite a while as the unofficial national symbol of Spain. Osborne's black bull was a commercial trade mark of Osborne (producers of sherry and other spirits) but the wide presence of huge advertisements showing the bull all across Spanish roads made it a very popular symbol in the Spanish countryside. Luckily, when Spain outlawed billboards on national roads in the early 1990s and the black bulls were to be taken down, the Spaniards protested, highlighting the lone bull's role as a national symbol. The compromise was that the black bulls could remain, but with no words on them.

One of the items on the draft given to Evans was the Spanish Black Bull that 'stands' on the horizon as you drive through the Spanish highways,² which I had adored since my first trip to Spain in 1977. Another item on the list was a sculpture by Edward Chillida, located in St. Sebastian, Spain (again), entitled 'The Comb of the Wind', built in 1977. A view of a specific group of trees which you can see above the mountains from one of the roads between Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, which has the folkloric name of 'The Comb'. A collection of paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, which I was attracted to after a seminar I took when I was an art history student for a year before embarking on my architectural studies, was also on the list, as well as Mary Miss whose work I knew from the AA days, David Smith, who I became interested in after seeing an exhibition, at the Whitechapel gallery in London, of his sculptures and videos situated in the land around his house in upstate New York before it was all dismantled and sold following his death, and finally, Georgia O'Keefe's paintings.

Robin Evans sent me to look for further references which he thought might give me some more thoughts and further understanding: James Turrell's project for the Roden crater, Greek Temples and their placing in nature, the English landscape designer/gardener Repton and a fresh draft chapter written by Beatriz Colomina, writing about framing views as if photographic and by Le Corbusier (which later became part of her book *Privacy and Publicity*). Evans must have shared some elements of my drive.

My Intimate Landscape - Part III



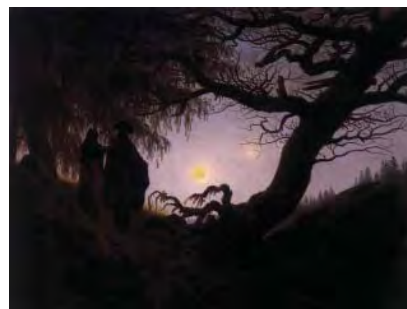
1-2. The Spanish Bull along the highways in Spain.



4. Dark Mesa and Pink Sky, 1930



9. Caspar David Friedrich, Evening Landscape with Two Men, 1830-35



10. Caspar David Friedrich, Two Men Contemplating the Moon, 1819

3-8. Georgia O'Keefe



3. Green-Grey, 1931



5. Pelvis I (Pelvis with Blue). 1944



6-7. Pelvis with Moon, 1943 [Two details]



7



8. Abstraction, 1926



11-12. Paintings by Karl Friedrich Schinkel



Greek Temples and their placing in nature, the English landscape designer/gardener Repton and a fresh draft chapter written by Beatriz Colomina, writing about framing views as if photographic and by Le Corbusier (which later became part of her book *Privacy and Publicity*). Evans must have shared some elements of my drive.

It became clear to me by this time that everything which compelled me was related to the desert's impact on me or the sea front in Tel Aviv: strong memories from my youth. I went to find out more about Turrell, Repton and the Greek temples, but a few weeks later Bob Evans suddenly died, so I left the essay in progress.

10.6. My Intimate Landscape - Part IV: more definitions

I came back to this essay for the AA in 1998, by which point I had included all the childhood memories of the physical world around me, as well as of my perceptive doubts about content versus form triggered at home, as elements of my black box. The black box feeds my architectural world, a private well that actually grows as we do, joined by new features but retaining its direction of interest and curiosity formed in childhood. When new pictures join they are somehow related to the original ones. 'Black box' is Banham's terminology – I call it my 'intimate landscape'. Since my obsession and my passion architecturally tend to be evolve from my 'intimate landscape', I decided to nurture this – my 'knowledge base', in Leon van Schaik's terminology - as an architect.

It is clear to me today that, originating in the late 1990s and continuing today, many architects still don't seek that kind of knowledge as the knowledge base for their architecture, preferring not to deal with a black box of any kind. I'll come back to this subject a bit later, but first I will present some personal evidence for this view, from 1998.

10.7. The Fisuras magazine's Anecdote

I completed that essay I 'owed' the AA in 1998, the one revolving around my 'indoor debate' from my childhood and its relevance to my decision to become an architect. But there was another relevant anecdote that was related to that childhood story of mine about the indoor debate; a week or so before I met Mark Cousins, who asked me if there was anything I really hate and how that would relate to my architectural output, I was asked to send images of my work, with text, to the editors of *Fisuras* magazine. This was following a conference in Madrid¹ where I talked about my teaching approach and showed the work of my first year students at Greenwich University's school of architecture. I was told the issue in which they would publish my work would be dedicated to female architects. I never spent time thinking if, and how, my work is affected by my gender, but by the end of December

¹ The conference 'Transformation and Architecture' took place in Madrid 1997



1. J.C.A. Alphand, A Park design drawing taking delight having trees on an artificial hill creating the 'Comb' effect as a silhouette. 19th Century.



2. The 'comb' effect in Nature, photographed by Yael Reisner in Guilin, China.



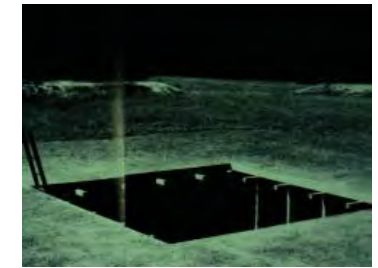
3. A still from the German Expressionist film 'The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari'



4-5. James Turrell, 'Skyspaces' series; 1975-present, Space that Sees, 1993



6. Eduardo Chillida, the 'Comb of the Wind', San Sebastian, Spain, 1977



7-8. Mary Miss, Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys, 1977-8



9. David Smith, 'Australia', Steel sculpture, USA, 1951.



10. David Smith, 'Voltron XXV', Steel Sculpture, 1963.



11-12. Humphry Repton's picturesque gardens. As seen here, his ideas were expressed in his colour drawings (as appear in his 'Red Books') to show the clients the view - before and after - like a movable slide, demonstrating the improved landscape.

Rafi and Susan Dadush Residence, 1994

that year, I thought I had an idea, or at list some preliminary thoughts, about how to relate to the subject. I sent my material to the editors in January 1998, including photos of the 'Tel-Aviv extended promenade into the Sea' that I exhibited in 1991 and that new text I wrote about the 'indoor debates' which I extended here as part of the context that influenced my architectural work.

I thought that gender might have thrown some light on some of my motives as expressed in my architecture, with particular relevance to this issue because of the connection made at home between gender and my shallow pleasure in the look of things. The editor - a man - thanked me for the material I sent without any comment and published my Tel-Aviv Promenade, with some of my strait-forward descriptions of what the project was about. A poem about the sea, written by someone else, was inserted alongside my project, whereas the rest of the text which I had written especially for the magazine, and which I thought was much more meaningful, was not there at all. I was furious that the editors haven't briefed me about their intentions regarding what to publish and what to delete.¹

I believe my intimate landscape was not of interest to Fisuras' editors since, I believe, they couldn't see any relationship between this report and its relevance to architecture; as a result they were obviously not interested in my inner thoughts, or those of anyone else.

11. Practice Platform - Part IV: 1993-1998

11.1. Continuing projects in Tel-Aviv

After submitting my Holy Island competition entry, something interesting happened in my practice. I got a phone call from a contractor I worked with on two architectural projects of mine in Tel Aviv and he asked me to design the flat he had just bought in the southern part of the city next to the shore. That phone call took me back to Tel-Aviv and I was thrilled to be building yet again in Israel.²

11.2. Rafi and Susan Dadush residence, Tel-Aviv, 1993 - 1994

Rafi Dadush was a contractor with whom I built my second and fourth architectural jobs (Meiberg–Amir's roof flat and a bigger, four-floor one family residential complex in Jaffa). Rafi's flat was for his family (his wife Susan and two children in primary school). It was on the third floor of a modern apartment block in the southern part of Tel-Aviv. It was a 90m² flat; we started with keeping only the enveloping walls, and aimed at a fairly basic, modern family residential space layout, with an open kitchen/living area. It was designed in such a way that when somebody is at the entrance door he won't see into the living room, the kitchen, or into any of the other rooms, despite the open plan.

¹ Fisuras, Contemporary Architectural Magazine, Spain, June 1998. 'Extending TA Promenade into the Sea', pp.154-157.

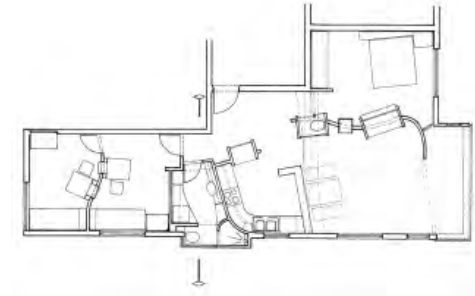
² Until that point after giving birth in 1990 the Tel-Aviv promenade's exhibition of mine and the Holy Island competition entry were the only two architectural activities in my practice, that I worked on completely by myself with no assistance or peers to talk to. I was taking care of a toddler, my son, who was three years old. I had the promenade exhibition in 1991, when he was less than a year old, and I started teaching in 1992, twice a week, when he was two years old, and then tried my luck with the competition in Scotland.

Rafi and Susan Dadush Residence, 1994

1.-2. Dadush residence, looking at the sea, Tel-Aviv, 1994,



3. Dadush residence, plan, 90 Sq.m, 1994



4. Dadush residence, curved wall with holes and cantilevers to become: the toilet room, shelves systems and sofa as a nook looking at the sea, under construction, 1994.



5. Dadush residence, under construction, Tel-Aviv, 1994



Rafi and Susan Dadush Residence, 1994

The apartment block was in Zrubavel Street, which is perpendicular to the sea. It was the third building away from the sea shore. Therefore, you could see the sea from the balcony and certain windows. This was the starting point of the project: enable the great views from the sofa in the living room or from the bedroom while lying in bed.

The special features in this flat were that the long dividing curved wall had holes left open in it in which we built a toilet room, sofa, shelf systems, fridge and a bathroom. These holes were designed and located in different heights depending on their function. Some of them felt as if they were hovering lightly above the floor, while others, such as the ones with the fridge and the main bathroom, were grounded more firmly. The southern balcony was left in its original place because by adding new glass doors it could be separated from the living room or made into one space.

One of the main reasons that the clients liked this overall concept was to do with the fact that each insert – whether it was the sofa nook or the extra toilet room – was located halfway into the living room and bedroom, therefore only having half of their space in each room. This resulted in the main room feeling larger and more spacious. In addition to this, most of the flat was built by the client and so cheaper in the long run. The apartment's colour scheme was inspired by a traditional Armenian tile - the clients' choice - that had been used in the bathroom: there was white, ochre and deep blue.

It was a pleasure to work with clients who basically let me do the design work, as I understood how to best fit - functionally and aesthetically - their brief. The contractor would measure the design's success through its functionality and efficiency, though he reminded me often to contribute my architectural thinking to his brief. I had to rationalise my aesthetically-driven attitude through what was considered good in the client's mind: an efficient use of space. For example, having the sofa built into a hole with only half of its width present in each room would save space but also money as he would not have to buy a new sofa. Of course, the aesthetic reason for installing these 'functional boxes' into the wall was no less important: the different heights made the wall feel lighter and look more interesting. The 'toilet box'¹ was particularly successful: most people were taken by surprise to find an extra toilet in a public space. It was 'hanging' on the wall (by cantilever) and was not at all overt about its function.

The most frustrating aspect of this job was the fact that on site the work was being done in such a primitive manner. We were not in a remote or poor place: we were in Tel-Aviv, a very dynamic city with a modern, sophisticated culture. I decided that on my next project I would look for an alternative way of realising my plans with the minimum involvement of unskilled work on site and I felt lucky that the conditions of the next project allowed me to fulfil that ambition.

¹ There was another hovering box at the beginning: the 'shower box', but it was never built due to the client's worries that it would take up too much space.

1. A cantilevered toilet room and a cantilevered shelves system (at the deep end of the photo) are 'suspended' both sides of the curved wall which divides between the living room and the bedroom.



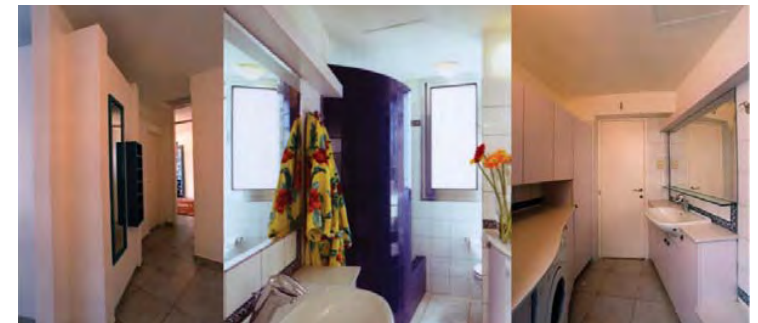
2. Parents' bedroom - a view from the bed through the window into the sea. The cantilevered shelves system is at the back of the built nook in the living room.



3. Living room, looking at the cantilevered nook built in the curved wall.



4. The cantilevered nook to sit in and look into the sea.



11.3. Gadi and Nava Dagon residence, Jaffa, 1994-95

Gadi Dagon is a sport and dance photographer and his wife is a broker; when I worked with them they had a little baby. They bought a flat in Jaffa, south of Tel-Aviv, in a building which was originally built in the days of the British mandate and was designed to become an hotel, although probably not finished as one, because besides a grand first floor with an entrance to the garden, the building's ground floor entrance opens directly on the street. The flat did not need any structural support, so I could have opened it up completely if I chose.

The ceiling had deep beams - 80 cm deep, 110 cm apart – all the way along. This is an unusual sight in Israeli apartment blocks. I was immediately drawn to work with an open-minded and informed carpenter who was skilful and knowledgeable and could cut plywood with a computerised saw. This provided me with more design freedom. The craftsman was able to make and build everything in his workshop and deliver it to the site when ready, as if a dream had come true. It was in 1994, the very early days of CAD – CAM, and actually my ink drawings were transformed and read by the computerised saw.

This craftsman could also work with resin, fibreglass and wooden moulds to create thin, beautiful, curved surfaces that looked like smooth thin marble but could be curved and made in any shape or colour. I focused on this in my designs, working with glued layered plywood and thin plastic sheets. I also layered resin with fibreglass mats embedded in it as the structural element. The result was thin, smooth, translucent white matte and curvy reinforced resin. I designed curvy, rigid, reinforced-resin moving curtains and fixed curvy plywood walls to divide the large space we had. The main idea was to use these curvy dividing surfaces by hanging them from between the existing beams and the ceiling. In the plan it looked like perpendicular lines dictated by the beams in the ceiling, but in practice the space was defined by dynamic partitions.

Aesthetically it was very interesting for me to explore a simple rectangular plan, as I thought it was best to keep the big presence of the existing beams. It was the vertical elements of the flat which were dynamic: a vertical choreography from floor to ceiling, complementing the regimented presence of the ceiling as in the plan. In addition to this, in two prominent locations within the flat, I hung long light installations along and in between the beams, made of the same resin as the rigid curvy curtains that defined the entrance.

In terms of logistics, we divided the big space into two bedrooms and two bathrooms,¹ and

¹ One small bathroom for the guests and child, with washing and drying machine. The other, the parents bathroom, was large and spacious, elegant and beautiful, where the rhythm flowed along the beams and the light came in through milky glass panes each under each beam, in between the curvy plywood surfaces (covered in tiles on the bathroom side and coloured white on the other side), while perpendicular upright plywood profiles (see images) held all these curved surfaces.

kept the rest as an open space, while the entrance was defined by four moveable rigid curtains which blocked the views into the rooms from the front door. You could move the curtains to one side and then move straight from the door to the kitchen, unobstructed. Again, as before, I was never really interested in revolutionising arrangement and layout of the small family house. I was comfortable with a fairly popular layout: open plan for the public part of the house, but with a comfortable living space. The photographer would mention to me that my task was only done well if I enjoyed my time working on the job, as he believed that my task was to be creative during the process in the same way that his job of taking photographs was. Unfortunately, the couple divorced once we were on site. This was unfortunate for me as I was interested in this project, but they briefed me on their decision and after the design and working drawings were almost complete, after the dividing walls were demolished, and once we were starting to get the site ready for the work, the job was cancelled. It was an exceptionally sad moment in my career; the property was sold to a developer, who, not surprisingly, was not interested in my architectural ideas.



1.-2. Dadush residence, Tel-Aviv, under construction,1994.

The work process on site was so primitive that it urged me to find ways to produce the interiors's built work by expertise and mostly out of site, as I made it happened in the next job.

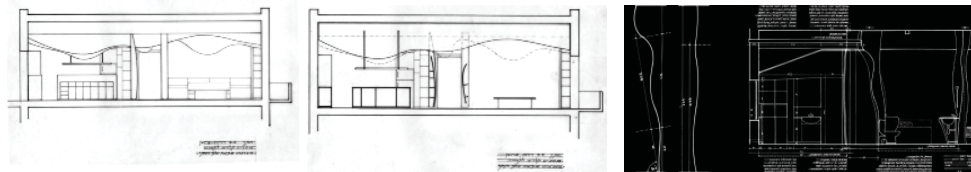
3. Dagon residence, Jaffa, an apartment. The building's exterior view, 1994. (It was built as an hotel in Dagon residence,



Dagon residence - two views after interior walls' demolition,1994



5.-7. Dagon residence, Sections, 1995



8. Dagon residence, 3D-render & Plan, 1995



9. Dagon residence, entrance,3D-render & line drawings,1995



10.-11. Dagon residence, entrance screens,laminated plywood and reinforced resin, 3D-renders, 1995



12. Dagon residence, dinning area,3D-render,1995



12. Observations – Part VI: Curvilinearity, Folding and Digital architecture, 1991- 1998

12.1. Curvilinearity, 1990s

As I finished my studies at the AA (1987) I continued with considering the value system of my architecture, regarding the content of my work. However, my aesthetic pursuit was already changing (as discussed earlier when describing the Tel-Aviv promenade's extension into the sea).

I was engaged with curvilinearity achieved by undulating surfaces, creating softer and more elegant forms. I wanted it to be dynamic and beautiful; I thought of beauty as white, as intervening in an open landscape while the white curves capture light - artificial or natural, direct or reflected (from the water for example) - and create dynamic shadows of one surface on another. I also was interested in the silhouettes created when the sun is behind the surfaces.

Tel-Avivians are used to, and like, the bright and the white (Tel Aviv's best feature is the white architecture). I wanted to bring this whiteness to the Holy Island in Scotland, as the white concrete would capture all the available light and contrast with the green mountainous landscape and the very dark, deep water surrounding it. In 1994-5 I was designing - for the Dagon family – an apartment based on curved surfaces dividing screens and walls, as well as the horizontal light features between the existing beams.

12.2. Greg Lynn and Folding, 1993

I think it was in 1995, when I started reading into the texts published in the AD magazine 'Folding in Architecture' edited by Greg Lynn (1993), that I realised how Lynn was curbing two big authorities in producing his architecture: Deleuze's Philosophy and Leibniz's Calculus. Philosophy and Maths are the most powerful authorities for objectifying architectural ambition, work and design process (I cover this area in my conversation with Lynn later on). At this time Lynn's aesthetic discourse was mainly developed in text where he discusses intellectually the role of calculus in digital design, interpreting Deleuze's 'Le Pli' in architecture.

At the time, I thought to myself:



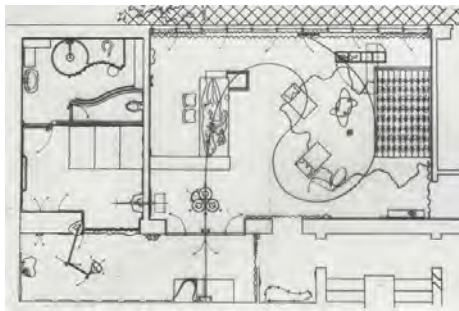
1. Carlo Molino's monograph that was published in 1987 had an impact in London in the late 80s.



2. Carlo Molino, "Arabesque" table made out of moulded and perforated plywood designed for Orengo House, Turin, 1949.



3-5. Carlo Molino, Chairs for Gio Ponti, Milan, 1940



6.-8. Carlo Molino, Miller House, Turin, 1937.



9. Onyema Amadi, 'Beelejuice', the designer was inspired by the vulnerability of the beetle's body with its hard wing-case. [material: car tire inner tubing]. 1996



10. Maria Blaisse, 'Moving Back' and 'Black circles', 1996

“Yes, another twist, as in the Decon show in the MoMA NY: folding was already in the air; Ron Arad is fluent in it¹ and Gehry is working with it.² So Lynn is theorising, but producing a very premature design output, while the rest of the world is into curvilinear folding surfaces.”

The rest of the world's projects - earlier examples as well as contemporary ones - were all dismissed in Lynn's essay: 'Architectural Curvilinearity'; The Folded, the Pliant, and the Supple':

“Akin to the Vitra Museum, the curvilinear roof forms of the Bilbao Guggenheim integrate the large rectilinear masses of gallery and supple space with the scale of the pedestrian and automotive contexts...Presently, numerous architects are involving the heterogeneities, discontinuities and differences inherent within any cultural and physical context by aligning formal flexibility with economic, programmatic and structural compliancy”³

And Lynn re-emphasised the importance of continuity, obviously as he worked with Calculus:

“the loss of the module in favour of the infinitesimal component...and pointed to several directions along the calculus path of research into continuity, subdivision, and more generalised mathematics of curvature.”⁴

'Topology' was evolved out of this, which, probably, in the eyes of the digital architects is the most significant aspect of the research on folding in the early 1990s. Though one must remember that 'topology' is a geometry that can be developed as curvilinear surfaces or as angular ones, and folding was the starting point most probably because it was more prevalent in the early 1990s.

1 His Studio in Chalk-Farm, London, and a lot of his furniture, are examples of this.

2 Gehry developed for Knoll The Bentwood chairs, between 1989-1992.

3 AD, 'Folding in Architecture', edited by Greg Lynn, (1993) re-edited version from 2004. p.27 (a quote from Lynn essay).

4 Ibid p.11 [AD folding]

5 Ibid, p. 31

And as Lynn suggested at the very end of his essay:

“Rather than speak of the forms of folding autonomously, it is important to maintain a logic rather than a style of curvilinearity...”⁵

To sum up my view point regarding Lynn's theory in 1993, his criticism of the heterogeneity and discontinuity is a stylistic decision along his enthusiasm for forms of curvatures (see in our conversation later on), and his preference towards the continuous and homogenous language that suits the calculus logic (as he used to call it, later on, his 'calculus sensibility'



1-2. Enric Miralles, Meditation pavilion in Unazuki, early 1990s



4. Enric Miralles, New entrance to Takaoka station, Japan, early 1990s



5.-7. Ron Arad, Studio, Chalk Farm, London, 1991



3. Gianni Colombo, Spazio Curvio, 1991



he developed in time. But his logic or his sensibility are all stylistic choices in my opinion. I had been interested in curvilinear architectural language since 1990 and I had my own references, influences and taste. I was not convinced or impressed with Lynn's Sears Towers project as his version of a proper 'folding' project for the time. (In 1993).

However, since most of the digital projects in that issue on folding looked to me to be in a premature, or primitive, state and exceptionally undeveloped architecturally, I didn't see an attraction, or a threat, regarding my own architectural standpoint or production.

The two books Lynn published, *Folds, Bodies & Blobs, Collected essays*,¹ in 1998 and *Animate Form*,² in 1999, I believe, reflect a tremendous self-confidence; however his confidence in theorising and its ability to influence architectural discourse was surely fed by the great popularity of philosophy and theory gathered by architects since the Decon Show in 1988. But that always brought me to the same question of why we need a theory to lead us to where we are architecturally: if the theory (or any distinctive approach) brings us no evolution of new forms architecturally it is, I believed, obsolete .

12.3. John Frazer, 'Evolutionary Architecture', 1995

1 "Folds, Bodies & Blobs, Collected essays", Series: Books by Architects, La letter Volee, Belgium, 1998.

2 "Animate Form", Princeton Architectural Press, NY, in 1999.

3 Stephen Gage in the Bartlett continued, in his unit with Pete Silver - who used to teach with Frazer at the AA - with fascinating interactive electronic models.

4 With some similarity in approach to dECOi's 'Aegis Hyposurface', which was published first time in the AD magazine issue on 'Hypersurface architecture II' edited by Stephen Perrella, in Sep. - Oct. 1999. It felt like one of Frazer's interactive electronic designs, but in Mark Goulthorpe's case it was not physical yet, only a suggestion. It became a physical model and was presented very publicly in 2000 at the Venice Architectural Biennale, which I'll talk about later on.

5 John Frazer, *An Evolutionary Architecture*, Architectural Association, London. 1995

At home in London in 1995, John Frazer's *Evolutionary Architecture* book was published. It had been well known for some time that Frazer was the forefather of the digital architects, and his *Evolutionary Architecture* theory gathered even more significance because of that.

I was familiar with Frazer's Unit's production at the AA since his first year there, in 1990, as I saw his Diploma Unit's fascinating output at the each end of year exhibition, and I developed an ambivalent attitude towards his Unit's pursuit; the work I was most attracted to was the electronic design, electronic environment³ and electronic projects,⁴ being most interested in the interactive, electronic and physical models his students produced (these are shown in the book).⁵

However, the digital rendering line of production (which was the influential part on the digital architects), with its output defined as 'datastructures', was problematic for me. I had issues with its content as well as its forms; these renders were generated through his 'evolutionary architecture' theory. This theory investigates fundamental form-generating processes in architecture. The rules are described in a genetic language which produces code-script instructions for form generating. Mathematical algorithms were part of the procedure.

1-2. Lynn, Stranded Sears tower, Chicago, 1993



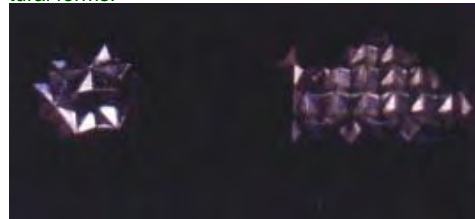
3. Jeffrey Kipnis, 'new architecture', 1993



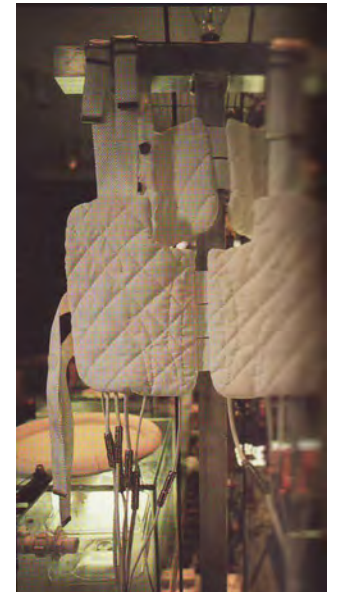
4. John Frazer's Book cover.



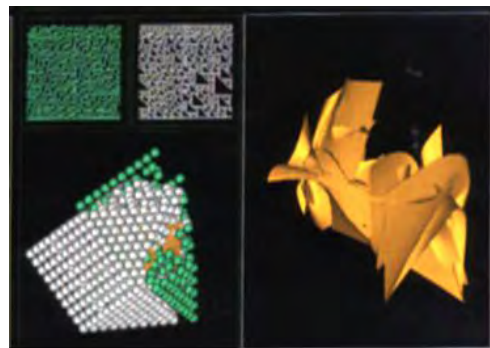
5. Reptile structural system, structural models, John Frazer, 1968. This structural system consists of two units based on an octahedral/tetrahedral geometry. It has a folded-plate mechanism which enables it to create large-span enclosures of complex forms. The 'seeds' are minimal configurations of the units which form a genetic code that can be developed in the computer to create complex structural forms.



8. Interactive body suits: Swee Tiing Chua and Nicola Lefever, 1992.



6. Hierarchical cellular automata, Manit Rastogi, 1994. The two-dimensional cellular automata are used to drive two three-dimensional cellular automata. One controls the evolving structure, the other the environment. The interaction between the two produces the surface forms.



7. Cultural antennae: Sophie Hicks, 1992. Infra red sensors which only detect movement or change are used as a form of cultural antennae.



architecture. The rules are described in a genetic language which produces code-script instructions for form-generating. Mathematical algorithms were part of the procedure.

Frazer explained that in his case natural science was dealt with as a source of inspiration and as a take-off point for thought experiments. As he explained: “ours is not a theory of explanation, but a theory of generation.”¹ That is very important to remember, and even more so when one comes from a scientific background, including genetics.

For Frazer, self organisation (as well as metabolism and the operation of the laws of thermodynamics) was an aspect borrowed from nature which is “central to our enquiry”,² as he emphasized, probably even more important than the aspect of evolution (such as development through natural selection). All these qualities led to the non-individual approach, which I, expectedly, found hard to accept. His approach was directly and clearly stated by him:

“The design responsibility changes to one of overall concept and embedded detail, but not individual manifestation. Overall the role of the architect is enhanced rather than diminished, as it becomes possible to seed far more generations of new designs than could be individually supervised, and to achieve a level of sophistication and complexity far beyond the economics of normal office practice. The obvious corollary of this is a diminished need for architects in the process of initial generation. While there would still need to be enough architects to guarantee a rich genetic pool of ideas, the role of the mass of imitators would be more efficiently accomplished by the machine...I thus suggest the designation ‘extended architect.’³

Diversity was part of the promise, and hence my next criticism is that I never saw any new form that was not actually popular at the time, from Frazer’s ‘Reptile Structural System, Structural Models’ (1968) which was influenced by Buckminster Fuller, to, in the 90s, his students’ work, which contained the formal appearances with which we were familiar at that time.⁴ It was somehow obvious that Frazer was dealing with important issues, but form-wise, at that stage of development, they were not new or unfamiliar. Unlike Lynn, Frazer never claimed that his research produced architecture: he carefully called the generated rendered forms ‘datastructures’, not architecture, but he strongly believed that his research would promote, in the future, a complex architecture. Today we can see he was right about computers and the tremendous enhancement of complexity.

My main criticism of Frazer was that Evolutionary Architecture was purposely proposed as a non-individual approach to design. He wrote:

1 Ibid, p.12

2 Ibid, p.13. He adds there: “as are the general principles of morphology, morphogenetics and symmetry-breaking, which are introduced in the next section.”

3 Ibid, p.100

4 This might be due to the choice of ‘the seed’: the minimal configurations of the units which were forming the genetic code that was developed in the computer to create complex structural forms. If the seed had a language that we were familiar with, as they chose in the very beginning, the manipulations were not deforming enough to make them look like new forms. However, it might not only be as a result of the seeds’ choices, or the manipulations - these might have become more sophisticated with computational development - but maybe it was also due to the ‘selectors’ who acted on the ‘natural selection’ that caused part of the problems. I seem to remember in a lecture that Frazer gave in the Bartlett, around 2004, he showed datastructures produced in China, where lots of pagoda-like forms were created. In any case, I’m not the right person to point out the weak points in the theory and the production line, I just didn’t see convincing results form-wise.

“The design responsibility changes to one of overall concept and embedded detail, but not individual manifestation.”¹

12.4. NOX, Lars Spuybroek, 1993 - 1998

The Dutch digital architects NOX: Lars Spuybroek and co-founder Kas Oosterhuis (who separated later on) were much more interesting for me, in terms of their output, than the American East Coast digital architects at the time, not least because they didn't theorise their digital stance, at least in the early days, as the others did.

NOX's water pavilion on the island of Neeltje Jans (1993-1997) was getting a lot of attention and when it was published it led them into more pioneering work in the digital realm. Their design output, I thought, was more advanced at that time than the output of the American academia in that territory (mostly coming from Columbia University, school of architecture) with architects such as Greg Lynn and Stan Allen.

In 1998, NOX (at this point Lars Spuybroek was the only director) published their second project - very much to my taste - the V2 Lab in Rotterdam. I thought it was a very beautiful space as well as an original design in terms of form and use of materials. The digital approach was being used as a collaborative tool, alongside a more conventional analogue design thinking. As far as I understood this was a technique less radical in terms of the digital approach, but one which led to a very interesting design as the end result, or, at least more to my taste.

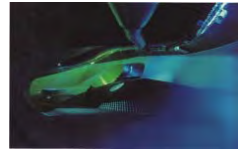
13. Community of Learning

I belonged, in terms of the architectural value system, to an enemy camp, or to a different 'community of learning' which vehemently believed in self expression. I still included in my community of learning Peter Cook, Ron Arad, Gaetano Pesce, Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, Coop-Himmelblau, Gunther Domenig, and Helmut Richter.

13.1. Land Art - The 1960s revisited in the 1990s

In addition, American Land Art (which had been given a new life thanks to a series of new books published in the late 1990s) had obviously appealed to me, with my inclination

1.-2. NOX, Water pavilion, the island of Neeltje Jans, 1993-1997.



3.-5. NOX, the V2 Lab, Rotterdam, 1998

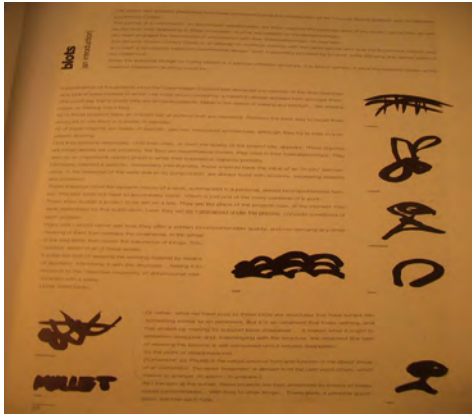


¹ John Frazer, *An Evolutionary Architecture*, Architectural Association, London, 1995, p.100

Enric Miralles & Benedetta Tagliabue

towards environmental projects, in the open cosmic landscape, usually environmental art, and its milieu. Land art, Earthworks, or Earth art, are all titles for that art movement I was influenced by, which emerged in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many of the first works¹ were created in the deserts of Nevada, New Mexico, Utah or Arizona, and these days mostly exist in photographic documentations only. For example, James Turrell's Roden Crater project, where he bought an extinct volcano, in the early 1970s, in the Painted Desert of northern Arizona, northeast of Flagstaff. It is Turrell's most ambitious project. The project only got published in the late 1980s and 1990s; to date, it still under construction, although nearly finished.

Enric Miralles; Represented projects by 'blots'



Books that influenced me were: John Beardsley's *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape* (New York 1998) and Andy Goldsworthy's *A Collaboration with Nature*, New York, H.N. Abrams, 1990)

13.2. Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue, 1990s

During these years I developed an admiration for Enric Miralles, whose architecture I started visiting and becoming familiar with by experience combined with what I saw in publications. With his second wife, Benedetta Tagliabue, as EMBT their architecture continued to be magical. I admired their projects designed during the period of 1995 to 2000² for their exceptional free thinking three-dimensionally and the way they approached and initiated projects in their early design stages, freeing their thought through associative and lateral thinking. For example, the early montages made by them for the Chemnitz Sport Stadium competition (Chemnitz, Germany, 1995) are imbued with their confidence, unique freethinking process and use of associative metaphors.

In a similar manner, when they designed the Scottish Parliament, the early thoughts were initiated:

"From our recollection of Scotland we find these image that stick in our minds...the boats offered by the land. We like these boats not only because of their construction, but also in their delicate presence in a place. Something about their form floating in the landscape

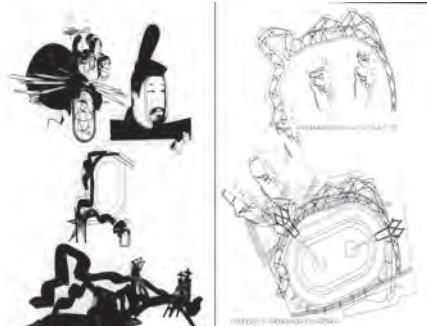
1 The artists included in the Earth Art that became a movement in 1960s were: Jan Dibbets, Michael Heizer, Richard Long, Walter De Maria, Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt, to mention a few.

2 Enric Miralles died tragically in 2000. He was a young promising architect and a wonderful, energetic and inspiring man in his 40s. Benedetta Tagliabue continued running their studio and finished about 10 projects which were in their making process, while continuing with the office producing new work.

should be part of our project.”¹

And so it happened, the power of a memory of an image is of a great communicative value.

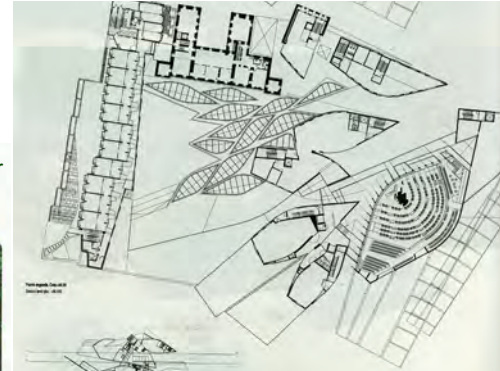
1-2 EMBT, Chemnitz Sport Stadium competition (Chemnitz, Germany, 1995)



3. EMBT, Boats as metaphor for Scottish Parliament



4. EMBT, Scottish Parliament, second level plan.



6. Oscar Niemeyer, Project for a Theatre for the Ministry of Education and Health Building, Rio de Janeiro, 1948, photomontage and section. [un-built project.] The theatre's contour is recalling Niemeyer's numerous sketches of Brazilian women. As David Underwood, confirms this association in his book, Oscar Niemeyer and the architecture of Brazil: "Typical of Niemeyer's formal inversions and interest in sensual, even sexual imagery is his proposal that we approach the very erect, rigid, even masculine ,ministry building from such a view."p.41. The reason I brought this description here is to point out the comfort Niemeyer had in using metaphors and associations to generate his architectural forms, and the immediacy of sketching an idea and drawing it as a project. A lot of architects these days won't opt for such direct fast process to generate a project; the prevalent critic would be that it is relying too much on sight, personal visual comment; too deterministic, etc



5. Oscar Niemeyer, drawing for "poem of the curve", ink and watercolour. 1940s. Niemeyer's comment was: "... What attracts me is the free and sensual curve, the curve that I find in the mountains of my country, in the sinuous course of its rivers, in the body of the beloved woman. The entire universe is made of curves, the curved Universe of Einstein. [Underwood, David, Oscar Niemeyer and the Architecture of Brazil, Rizzoli, New York,1994, p.41.]

14. Tracing my architectural Aesthetic – Stage 3: A conscious consolidation of the affinity between The Self and one's Aesthetic Discourse, 1998

14.1. An Aesthetic ambition

At the end of the 20th century contemporary visual art stood on the ruins of beauty. Miraculously, architecture is still mostly being judged by its capacity to produce an aesthetic experience, and that is still the case because of the very nature of architecture which results in it being a physical presence. If the appearance is not positively attractive or exciting then it is just a building and not architecture.

Here is the base of my argument: in spite of the 'form follow function' attitude and the more

¹ El Croquis Magazine, 100-101, Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue, year 2000, Madrid, Spain, p.176.

inclusive, anti-ocular culture of the 20th century, architecture has to result in an attractive physical presence. The aim of the architect is to ensure that we end up with architecture and not just with buildings, as happens so often during the second half of the 20th century.

My personal ambition as an architect was already clear to me in 1998 and became more so through my teaching at the Bartlett, where I aimed to search for the poetic in architecture - the spirited, the new, the rare, the surprising; all that will have the capacity to touch our senses so as to bring a better, more exciting, environment for living into our everyday lives. I never found delight in the 'ordinary' as we know some others do. The 'ordinary', as was celebrated for some years, leaves us indifferent: it contains social classification, boredom, suffering, fear and life hardship. I feel that an ordinary space makes the life inside it, often, meaningless.

For me it lacks relevance in our time right now. I don't believe in the righteousness of facts, data, and objective analysis since any truth could be manipulated into any set of 'objectives': I place personal experience of how we interpret the world at the root of the creative process, producing work that would be the closest to my genuine judgments.

14.2. Personal expression and visual perception in architecture

Contemporary architectural discourses and processes of practice are widely anchored in some, if not all, of the following conditions: climate, location, client, program, energy-economizing, functional considerations, purpose, statistics, commerce, principles of structure, materials, building technology...and probably others besides. Each of these discourses is considered (together and separately) by many as the sum content of architectural practice; in my opinion, this is not the case.

Architecture often falls into the trap of focusing solely on content, while in matters of the visual expression of such content the conversation remains meagre and simplistic. Susan Sontag explains in her book *Against Interpretation*, as part of the discussion of abstract art in the sixties, that ever since Ancient Greece, when Plato and Aristotle discussed theories of art as imitation - 'mimesis' - and representation, art has been perceived as verbal, discourse-based content rather than its form, out of an assumption that the work of art is its content and form is only a side-effect.

All the accompanying contents I have just listed probably constitute an integral part of the architectural act, and they most probably affect the architectural practice, but they do not

necessarily testify to the nature of a specific architect or to his/her architectural language. That tendency goes hand-in-hand with the architects' reluctance, which we often witness, to admit any genuine involvement with aesthetic considerations. Architectural design is an act of bringing together rational and irrational, objective and subjective, components.

As summarised and clarified by Mordechai Goldman, regarding the world of art, in his book *Dark Mirror*:

“In any case, clearly there is an Otherness – both actual and potential, nesting beyond the images of the self that are created by powerful social conditionings, seeking to dominate the subject's body and soul. In the absence of any contact with this Otherness, the personality dies behind a forced mask, it becomes a mechanical-robotic shell, reciting collective texts and seeing only what it is ordered to see”.¹

As long as we do not adopt personal expression into the world of the architectural entity, we will continue to recite collective texts.

In the course of the twentieth century, with regularity, in cycles of interest that recur with vigour (though each time slightly differently), deep and fundamental hostility manifests itself towards anything that bears any sign of 'subjective' elements in architecture, as I discussed already in the different chapters. Architects, more often than not, are paradoxically living in conflict with the world around them; we live in a world that strives to become more pluralistic and tolerant than ever before, where the individual has the possibility of personal expression and the right to 'Otherness'. The architect's complex (i.e. fear of engaging with the personal) leads to confusion and to a distortion of the essence of architecture. Recognition of this conflict, its sources and implications, sheds light, among other things, on the way in which we must train new generations to this activity.

One way to attain culture diversity in architecture and to develop authentic and unique local culture, is by nurturing and preserving the variance between architects and encouraging them to assimilate the various shades of their personality and culture in their design work, consistently and continuously. Their personal touch has to be manifested in their work. In the various visual qualities of every work of design we must discern personal language and line, from the very first sketches. This approach will enable the uniqueness of each architect to develop and to express itself, and through it the character of the community or the society in which he/she works will also be manifested, since the individual does not live in a social-cultural vacuum.

It is of great importance to be in control of two aspects: to create an affinity between the

¹ Mordechai Goldman, *A Dark Mirror*, Essays, Hakibbutz Hameuchad, Publishing House, 1995. (published in Hebrew).

visual expression of the material that describes our design work and the conceptual content, and to provide a personal line that is manifested in the design product. These elements of the architect's work are not 'graphic fashions', which they are often underestimated as, but rather, they are an expression of a professional ability, which leads to a deepening of the architectural design. In London, in particular, the tradition of architectural communication culture has developed for decades, alongside the development of the documents through which architecture is lived, breathed and built.

Many architects have the ability to think laterally, to relate between various disciplines, worlds that seem to be unconnected, distant practice ends, and to attain a deep understanding of different phenomena or events. This requires a wide education, culture, an understanding of the details and of the society in which we live, intuition and talent.

Our general education and knowledge is topped up by our understanding of what our domain is about and further more what our personal exclusive areas of knowledge are; our cultural capital. It is then that the most important aspect of the architect springs into action – his ability to react with an architectural design and event in a manner that summarises his cultural entity and enfolds within it his complex architectural activity: here we have to be the experts.

15. Teaching Platform – Part II: Personal Expression and the Early Buds of a New Aesthetic.

15.1. Teaching the MArch course at the Bartlett school of architecture, UCL, 1995 – 2002

Teaching the MArch was a fascinating experience because the students were mature: they had already received their Diploma and had come to the Bartlett to learn more, bringing with them a keen, positive attitude. From the best ones, two or three in a group of eight to ten students, we saw an original output which was very exciting to observe.

The emphasis on individual approach came from the school, it was part of the school culture, which was helpful when leading towards a goal of originality, as it was at the AA when I was a student. The emphasis on generating the design through aesthetic considerations was my focus, and it took place along with many of the architectural issues that were dealt with throughout, such as good organisation, response to site, social or sustainable issues. Often issues that were of great interest to the student. In addition to this I was

encouraging self-expression and dealing with themes that were of special interest to each student, the results of which were often very exciting. I bring here three examples of that approach of mine, with students who happened to study in the same year, 1998-1999 (the course was for a full 12 months).

15.2. Case studies:

15.2.1. On Personal Expression

15.2.1.1. Eran Binderman

Eran Binderman was the first Israeli student I had in London, and can be regarded as “a momentary visitor with a quick eye”. First, he diagnosed a phenomenon which any intelligent observer, even one who is not an architect, can diagnose: the London “sandwich” culture: an everyday act, a hurried routine, often accompanied by a search for an available bench in an overcrowded city. His project was planned and designed for a concrete square, blighted, boring and lifeless, in the City of London (London’s financial centre). This square was replaced by a colourful and refreshing square for a moment of rest. You would have grass strips at your feet, a sandwich held in one hand and a drink in the other; there would be more sandwiches above your head which you could walk along and sit under, raise your hand, pick one, pay for it, eat with pleasure and catch yourself a moment of tranquillity. Through all these, Eran infused new life into the square, changed and improved its appearance and outlined a new expression in the service of the short lunch-break culture.

The observation and the idea were only the beginning, but from that moment on, the architect in Eran sprang into action, ideas began to flow through his hand onto the sketchbook, and from there to the computer, adding visual and technical expression to the local culture.

Gradually, the course of action was refined, from the way in which the sandwiches were loaded and presented to the way they were ‘picked’ and paid for. Physical models were constructed, and these were photographed, combined with electronic simulation and added to a linear sketch, countless times, until the final product was attained. Simultaneously, the chain of thoughts that led to pragmatic solutions as well as to visual expressions was detailed and documented meticulously and elegantly for purposes of follow-up, regulation and further refinement, in a portfolio that concentrates the impressive collection of the total architectural process.



Students' work "Spatial-Depth" - Part I



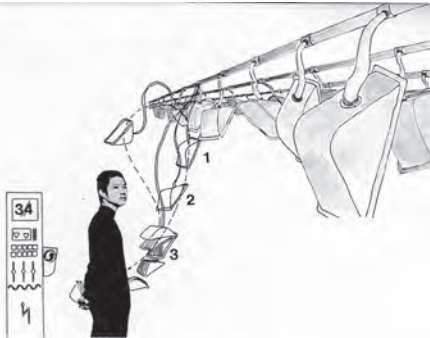
Everything Eran had done that year was subject to his personal choice (selecting his favourite from a wide range of popular subjects in society), the basis for his objective interference and his subjective expression. Among the social contents he addressed were consumer society, life in a marketed world and handling locality as well as the everyday routine. Other subjects were added to these relating to Binderman's visual perception, such as natural versus artificial, reflection, transparency, colour and movement. In the work process, new combinations of electronic mechanisation and robotics were created, interactive architecture (rather than merely a passive expression of a dynamic position) that encourages spontaneous behavior, visual richness and abundance and turn routine from boredom into an experience. Binderman understood the group's approach of challenging modernism in architecture – challenging its orderly, clean, passive, abstract, severe and disciplined character. Although modernism acted through faith in a social mission, its design was elegant but often severe, elitist and rigid.

In Binderman's work I see a fascinating expression of visual vision, of life today in a London square; a vision which is the product of integrating the general and visual culture together. In his work there is no mere structural and marginal occupation or a simplistic realisation of a social idea, but, rather, a declaration, the result of social-cultural contents that have received a developed visual expression.

It was important to discuss the language aspect regarding the plastic wrapping as a stylistic or aesthetic choice Binderman dealt with from day one through his design of the emotional suite, his first short project, and all those comments related to his appearance decision.

15.2.2. "Spatial-Depth" - Part I: Early buds of a new aesthetic

My spatial depth concept became clear in my work in my PhD test bed project, although I can identify its premature version with the qualities I was looking for in 1998 with students of mine like Aniko Meszaros, Marjan Colletti and Eran Binderman. There was an ambition to go beyond the Modern planar aesthetic and get into spaces such as the middle of a thick wood or in a flower bed surrounded with soft multiplied growth, or in an underwater life. When focusing on surfaces' ornamentation¹ became popular in the second half of the 1990s and in the early years of the 21st century, it further enhanced my ambition to explore the three-dimensional spatial condition of depth - such as we can see further in Esteban Botero's work [2000] - as a response to the unsatisfying culture of flat surfaces in architecture.



1 Bernard Cache's Semper pavilion (2001) or Herzog and de Meuron's Library of the Eberswalde Technical School, Eberswalde, Germany (1994-99), where concrete and glass panels were imprinted with flat images. The simple building volume is 'tattooed' with images cut out of newspapers by the artist Thomas Ruff.

15.2.2.1. Marjan Colletti - A Desk and A House, 1999

Before joining the Bartlett MArch Course in 1998-1999, Marjan Colletti finished his architectural Diploma studies in Innsbruck University in Austria.

Medusa, like the Greek mythological figure, tends to freeze observers. It introduces soft toys, their cuteness and softness, as part of an architectural thesis and conviction, resulting in 'the computer as soft toy' analogy at the core of the thesis.

A soft blanket, provided with a grid of Velcro tape, can be folded in all possible ways to house several soft toys simultaneously. The blanket itself can be velcroed onto the architect's shaved head, resulting in an exuberant Baroque-style wig, introducing the notion of ornament, theatricality and fiction into the work.

The blurring of the line into a soft boundary described by written text comments on the hard-line attitude of diagram, folds and triangulation in recent digital architecture.

Programme: 'Housing' several soft toys in a portable 'dwelling'.

The *Besking* project looks in more detail at the furniture inside the Besking. Again, the project develops, on 2D-software, complex organic - structural and functional - relations between rational elements, which yet present a 'double personality': moody water-carrying pipes are held together by the endless wrapping, unbalanced legs are stabilised by the messy carpet, the inflatable blanket is soft but shy, the architect's seat is adaptable yet unmovable while the guest's seat is funny but naughty; the Easter garden has carnivorous plants, and an irregular pump allows water to run through the pipes, creating divergent zones of different temperatures and random movements of the different elements.

The general curvilinearity of the design hints at research into the splinear fabric of convoluted fields, playing with ornamented CAD lines, some of them resulting from interfering with software commands.

Furthermore, the project includes two different scales, the 1:1 human scale and the 1:10 soft toy scale. In fact, in all the drawings – plans, sections, elevations, details – friendly soft toys and 'splinimals' (spline/animals) reappear in the organic shapes of the design: there are polar bears, seals, whales, elephants, huskies in the section; lions, whales, seals and myself, in the plans and sections.

Programme: 1 bed, 1 desk, 1 seat for the architect, 1 seat for guests, flower pot, lamp, trash bin, drawers, plan holders etc.

1-3. *Medusa*, A Blanket for the soft toys, 1998.



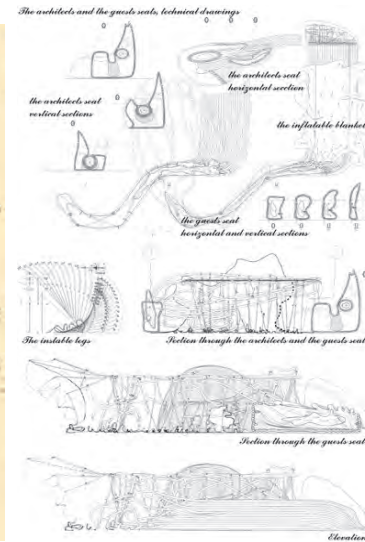
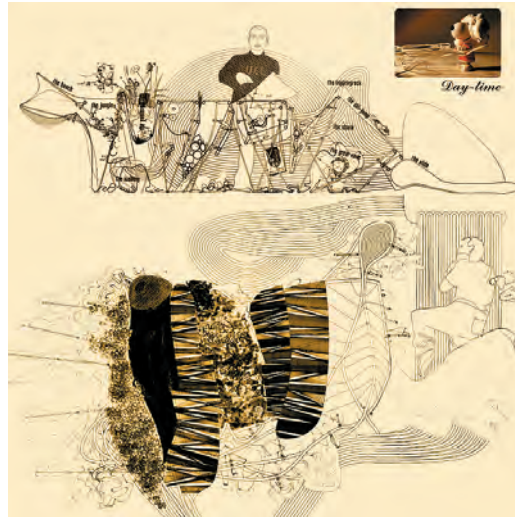
Colletti's third project was entitled 'Basking'¹ (1999) and was a house in Hampstead, London. The program was to develop a bus station, private dwelling, terrace, garden with pond and waterfall, exhibition space and a swimming pool. The project, fully developed in a 2D CAD software package, addresses the nature of organic architecture in CAD. Rather than scripting 'pure' organic forms by simulating growth, the proposal constructs a convoluted field of digital tectonics, vegetation, and interactable entities. The digital spline, as the only design element, follows the logical and structural thoughts of the designer, considering the habitation, function and presence of the building. The proposal employs experimental technological and structural solutions, yet the focus is on the design of an entirely digital proposal not based on the common aesthetic of NURBS surfaces, abstract scapes, or parametric skins.

Situated next to London's Hampstead Heath park, the house basks, relaxed in its own garden, enjoying the admiration of passers-by. All over the site an artificial meadow – a water-filled rubber mattress which keeps a 'memory' of people's footsteps – tells the public that they stand on private property. The boundaries between the inside and the outside of the building are blurred by soft walls, inflatable doors, vegetation and waterfalls and a series of footpaths. In the garden, a floating swimming pool, like a humungous flower, grows out of the pond and blossoms regularly, changing its shape depending on the season. Water can be pumped through its double-layered skin in order to calibrate the pool's shape - from open in the summer to enclosed in the winter.

Often planted close to private villas in northern Italy, plants grow out of highly light-reflecting, earth-filled fabric bags, which act as columns for the translucent roof.

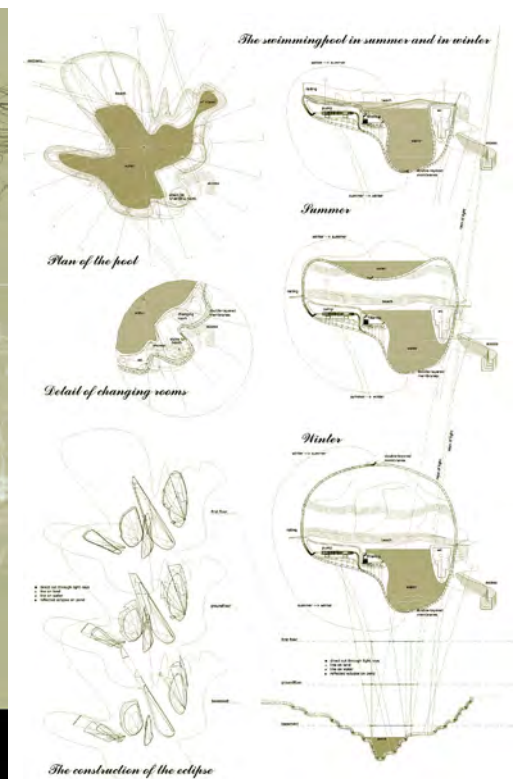
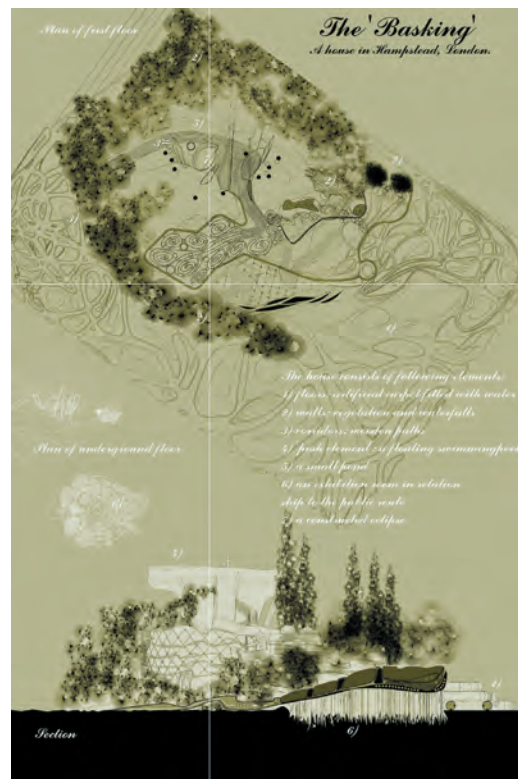
¹ To bask: lie around, laze around, stretch out, relax; to enjoy sitting or lying in the heat or light of something, especially the sun; to enjoy the good feeling that you have when other people praise or admire you, or when they give you a lot of attention.

1-2. *BESKING ; A Hybrid between a BEd+deSK+thing*, 1999.



5-11 Plant Ahima, Venice Lagoon, 1999

3-5. *BASKING ; A House in Hampstead in London*, 1999.



15.2.3. Aniko Meszaros – Plant Anima, 1999

Plant Anima is a project which transforms the tools of biotechnology into devices of architecture. Meszaros chose it partly because of an obsession with deep water and previous experience with under water projects in Montreal, Canada. One of these projects was a special dress that wraps around you and begins to inflate as you enter deep water and it inflates when in water. Plant Anima, started as an idea for a geotextile that will clean the Venetian Lagoon, developed into a new inhabitable environment that can be generated through the invention of unique plant organisms that are wired yet vegetable, responsive yet independent, artificial and alive. It is a biotechnology infrastructure. These single-celled organisms are genetically combined with DNA characteristics of both local and foreign land and marine plants and organisms to invent new species with engineered site-specific behaviours and responses.

The project started with iconic imagery but while Meszaros kept creating and exploring new images for new inhabitable territories, it was developed through unconventional mixed media: digital, physical models, unusual drawings borrowed from books of botany, or physical models that were manipulated in Photoshop and Animation.

Bachelard wrote about "Animus and Anima", borrowed from the 'psychology of the depths', that Karl .G.Jung dealt with and where he has shown the existence of this as a profound duality in the human psyche. Bachelard was apologetic about the idea he developed since he said it's an adventurous one. In general the dream issues come from the *animus*, and reverie from the *anima*, which is the one I'll focus on as a reflection on Meszaros' project.

"Reverie without drama, without event or history gives us true repose, the repose of the feminine. There we gain gentleness of living. Gentleness, slowness, peace, such is the motto of reverie in anima...our reveries, which lead us back to our childhood, gravitate toward the pole of the anima.."¹

When this reverie of remembering becomes the germ of a poetic work, the complex of memory and imagination becomes more tightly meshed; it has multiple and reciprocal actions which deceive the sincerity of the poet."²

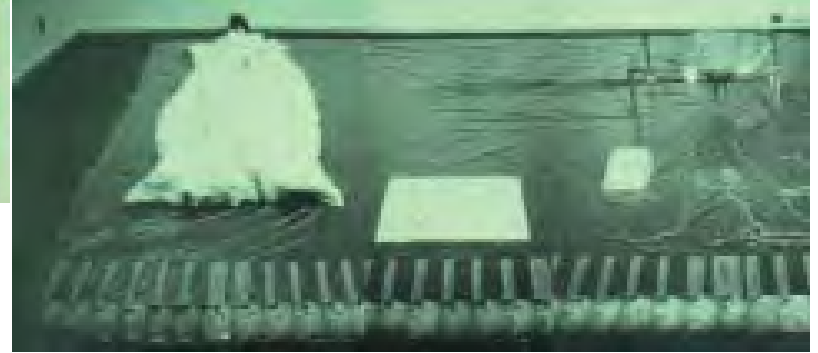
"Childhood lasts all through life...Poets will help us find this living childhood within us, this permanent, durable immobile world...we maintain ourselves in a reverie and in an anima meditation."³

1 Bachelard, Reverie, Ibid, pp.19-20

2 Ibid, p.20

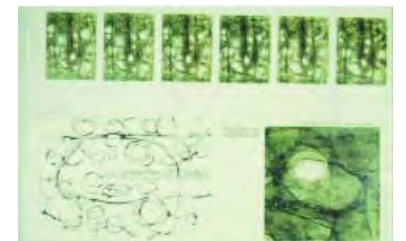
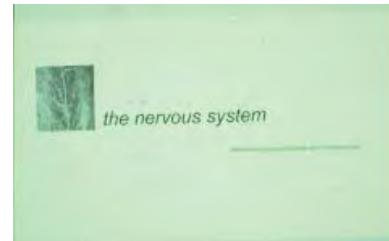
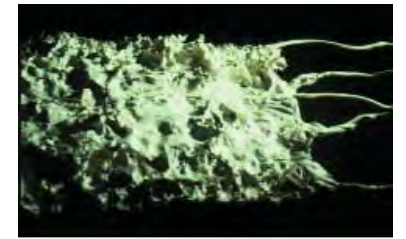
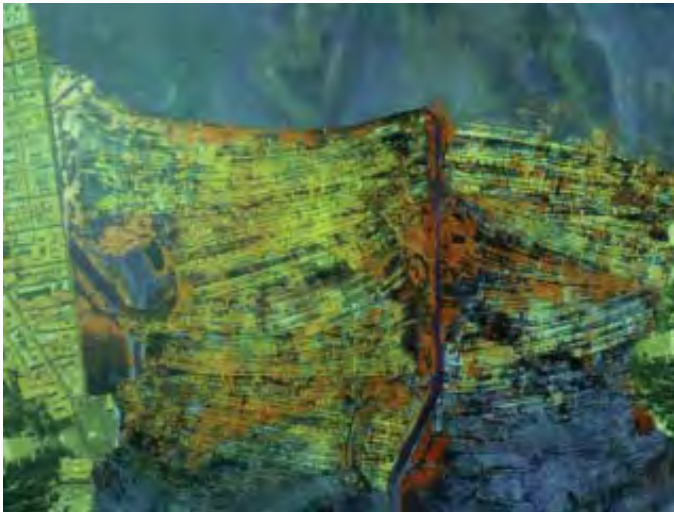
3 Ibid, pp.20-21

1-4. A bed floating on water, October 1998; a preliminary project.



5-11 Plant Ahima, Venice Lagoon, 1998-99

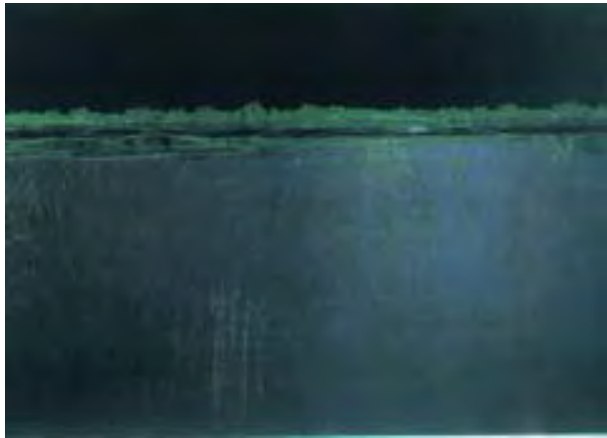
5. Plant Ahima - 1st image



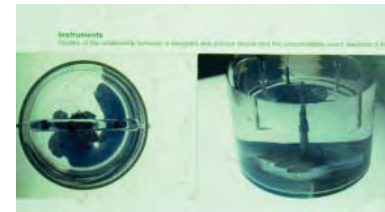
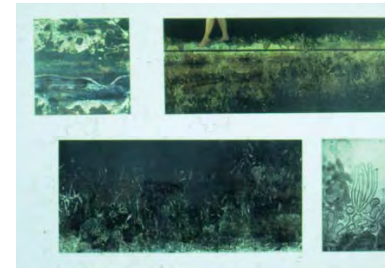
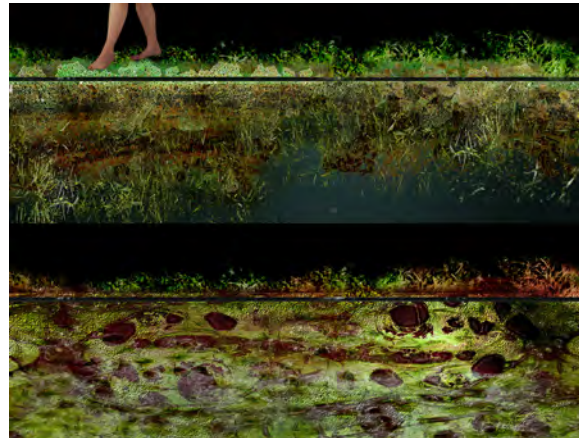
Students' work "Spatial-Depth" - Part I

1-6. Plant Ahima, A Living artificial landscape. Venetian Lagoon, 1998-99

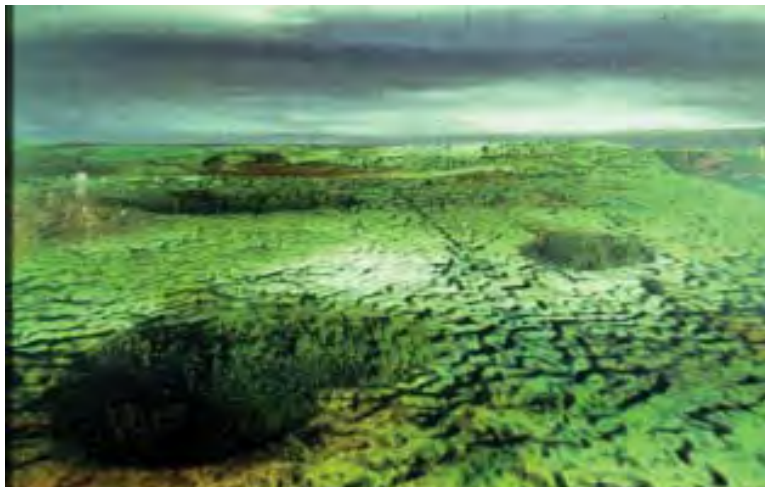
Initial network



After one year development. Below - completely established.



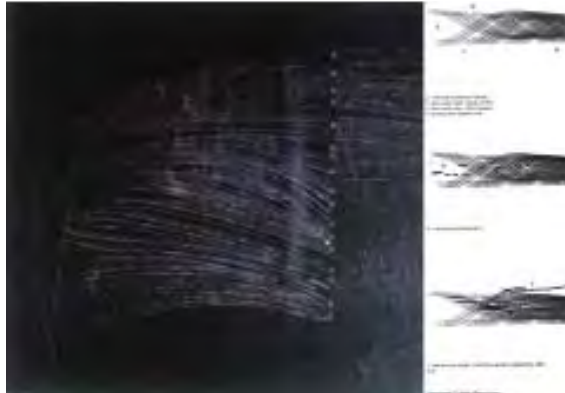
Still from Animation - visualising the new landscape in the Venetian Lagoon.



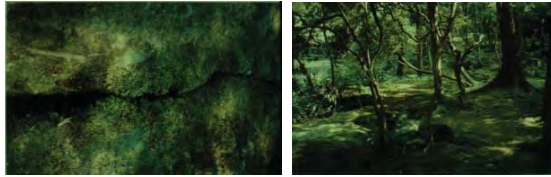
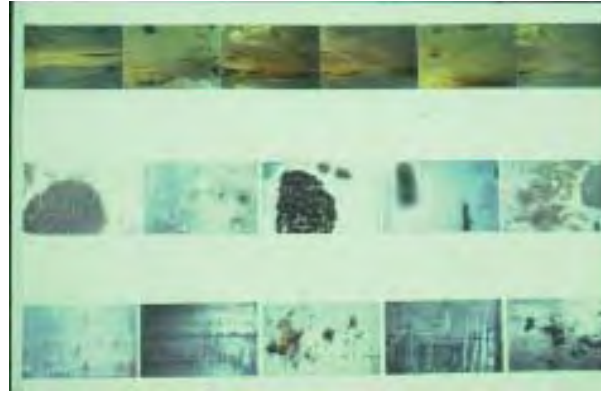
Agar plates - Meszaros learns how to control colour in baterias' growth.



Fibre-optic network serves as the infrastructure

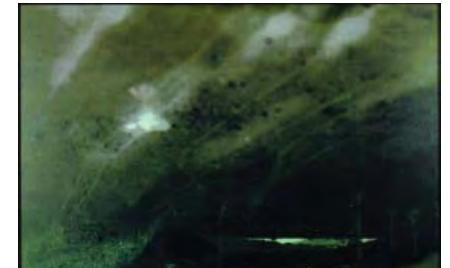


Imagery evolved from physical model



Two photos taken by Meszaros in Japan after finishing the project 'Plant Anima'; A remarkable spatial likeness.

Cavity space - an interior space - Early imagery portraying 'Spatial-Depth'.



16. 3rd Block – The Generals

Conversations with Will Alsop and Odile Decq

16.1. Will Alsop Pursuit of Pleasure

‘Architecture is Art!’ exclaims British architect Will Alsop; ‘It is the most public of arts’. Educated at the renowned Architectural Association during the late 1960s and imbued with the school’s commitment to creative process, Alsop is disparaging of the notion of ‘objectivism’ within architecture. As he suggests: ‘The only thing we have is our individuality. That’s what we have to give to the world.’¹

Alsop also believes a fundamental aspect of the architect’s role is to improve the quality of people’s lives. He explains that the content of his work is embedded in a process of speculation that aspires to create spaces of delight and beauty for the ‘man on the street’. To this end, Alsop actively engages the community in the design process for his public projects, inviting them to share their thoughts and desires for the kind of spaces that they’d like to inhabit.

At the age of 61, Alsop is a jovial, relaxed Englishman who loves his garden and a glass of good wine, is comfortable in his own skin and open to discussing a wide range of topics and ideas. Despite this generosity of spirit, Alsop is also a man with strong convictions and is prepared to fight arduous battles for the acceptance of his architecture. He embodies a strong sense of justice and is not afraid to confront his contemporaries if he feels they are politically conservative and in breach of their positions of power – such is his passion for a diverse and inspiring architectural culture.

¹ Interview, ‘The Guardian’, December 8, 2003.

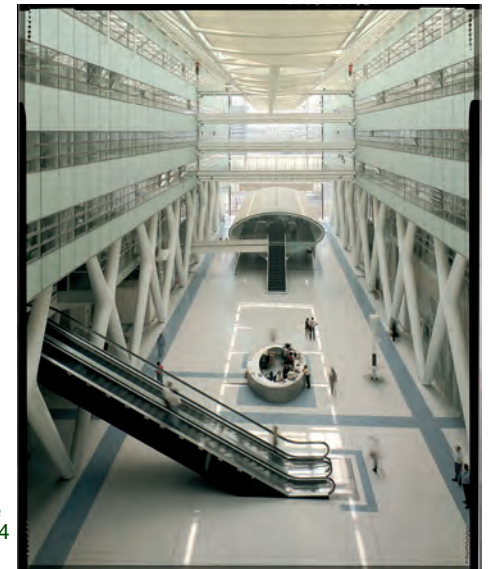
Fig. 1 Hotel Du Department des Bouches-du-Rhone , Will Alsop early Painting, Marseille, France, 1990-1994



Fig.2 Hotel Du Department des Bouches-du-Rhone , overall view, Photo, Marseille, France, 1990-1994



Fig.3 Hotel Du Department des Bouches-du-Rhone interior atrium, Photo, Marseille, France, 1990-1994



Will Alsop Pursuit of Pleasure

Will Alsop knew from a very young age that he wanted to become an architect. While still at school, he began working for a local firm and balanced this practical experience by attending art school to gain inspiration, creative skills, and even considered painting as an alternative career. “I went to art school because I felt I needed ‘deprogramming’ from my early pragmatic architectural experience and so I could begin to put myself somewhere else creatively,” Alsop explains. The experience proved an extremely positive one and propelled him to apply to study at London’s prestigious Architectural Association: “I only wanted to go to the AA so I never applied for anywhere else... I began studying there in 1968 and, at that time, it was almost completely dominated by Archigram members,” he recalls, “I’d seen the absurd magazines Archigram produced which genuinely excited me and it was one of the reasons I wanted to go to there... there was a genuine sense that you could do anything.”

Through the 60s and 70s, initially under the direction of John Lloyd and then Alvin Boyarsky, the AA encouraged students to pursue their individual talents and take time to pursue a personalised expression through their studies. As Alsop recalls: “There was a genuine feeling that as an architect you could change the way people lived, or more importantly, that you could change the way people thought about how they could live... that was interesting to me and it still is today.”

After graduating, Alsop went to work for Cedric Price – an experience that he remembers as concurrently bewildering and rewarding:¹ “I found Cedric very confusing and it became clear to me early on that he wasn’t interested in buildings at all,” Alsop recalls. “He was much more engaged in projects that he had invented and so I spent a long time researching such things as how to provide a truck park with security, facilities for the drivers to have a decent night’s sleep, and where they could wash and have a good breakfast. But if you were in the right mood you could make a very beautiful truck park!” he exclaims. While Alsop appreciated Prices’ ethical approach, he felt he lacked a direct engagement with designing buildings and looked to his other great passion of art to fill the void – teaching sculpture after hours at St Martins College. Eventually, however, it became clear to Alsop that his desire to build architecture meant he needed to move on: “There was a lot going on in Price’s office at the time but I became frustrated because although the work was interesting I knew that, within myself, there was something deeply missing.”

1 Will Alsop worked for Cedric Price for three and a half years, immediately after graduating from the AA (1973-1977).

2 Alsops’ first partnership was founded as **Alsop, Barnett & Lyall** in 1981 and in 1991, the practice was re-named **Alsop & Störmer** after Lyall’s departure.

After establishing his own practice in 1981², Alsop discovered that – like many emerging architects from the UK – it was much easier to gain commissions to build his architecture abroad and over time he gained a reputation as an internationally significant architect for his vibrant and expressive buildings constructed all over the world. Examples include



Fig.4 Peckham Library , Exterior, Photo, Roderick Coyne, London, 1999



Fig. 5 Peckham Library , under the pod, Photo, Roderick Coyne, London 1999

Fig.6 Sharp Centre for design, Ontario College for art and design, Exterior view, Photo, Richard Johnson, Toronto , Canada, 2004



Fig.7 Sharp Centre for design, Ontario College for Art and Design, Interior, Photo, Richard Johnson, Toronto , Canada, 2004



Will Alsop Pursuit of Pleasure

Alsop's first major international commission, 'Le Grand Bleu', the headquarters for the Department of the Bouches-du-Rhone' (1990-1994) in Marseille; the 'Cardiff Visitor Centre' (1990) in Wales; the Peckham Library (1999), in London; the 'Almere Urban Entertainment Centre' (2003) in Amsterdam; West Side Sale Centre (2006), Toronto; the 'Zhang Jia Bang: Street of Culture', (2006), Shanghai and the 'Trubnaya' office building (2007) in Moscow, amongst a long list of diverse projects with many others soon to be completed.

Although Alsop embraces technology, he departs from his 'High-Tech' contemporaries¹ with his belief that technology "helps to get things done" rather than generating the design itself, stating: "I'm a big fan of the computer, of course, but I think it has its place. I think that what can be explored with the computer is a limited dialogue." Instead his architectural process is embedded in the immediacy of a 'hand-eye' conversation: "Sketches make things immediately evident and that gives me the confidence that I can draw anything," he explains. "In my studio cupboard I have a load of sketchbooks. I know that if I'm trying to discover what something might be, it's quicker in a sketchbook than on the computer. And it's not about the expression, it's about moving very quickly through a number of ideas. So if you have a nice quiet hour and you're in the right mood, you can arrive at somewhere that you could never have predicted. An hour on the laptop won't give you the same result because you get locked into the system of the computer."

The role of beauty² within architecture is also not a topic that Alsop shies away from – once again marking out a stark point of difference to many of his contemporaries: "Is it possible to take things to an extreme and to make something extremely beautiful that has no function at all, but actually has an effect on people?" Alsop ponders. "After all we're talking about making life better for people - that's our job - whichever direction you come at – so what is the role of the idea of beauty within that? He continues: "We know from experience that people do respond to beauty. For example, if I think of the River Ouse, running through Bedfordshire in May - it's delightful and secure. There are church bells on a Sunday evening echoing down the valley – all is well with the world. Those moments exist but how could you design those moments? Could you create those moments somewhere else where you weren't expecting them? That interests me a lot."

It's a thought process that Alsop regularly puts into practice within his public projects such as the master plan for the rejuvenation of the centre Bradford, Barnsley in Yorkshire and New Islington in Manchester. As he explains: "We have a lot of public clients and that means that we need to engage with the wider community... For example when you're dealing with the centre of Bradford then essentially all the people who live there are also clients. I'm very interested in tapping into their imagination. Therefore, I don't talk with

1 'High-Tech' embraces industrialised systems to create a pragmatic and aesthetic language within architecture. Examples of architects who made their name during the 'High Tech' movement are UK-based architects Richard Rogers, Norman Foster, Richard Horden.

2 "My studio has a motto which is 'no style, no beauty', which doesn't prevent the production being either stylish or beautiful but recognises that these are values imposed on the project by others. The real purpose of such a dictum is to prevent the architect being seduced by beauty, or indeed encouraging others to fall in love with a drawing through some aesthetic deceit." Will Alsop, column for Architects Journal, 6 November, 2003.

Fig.8 New Barnsley , South Yorkshire, Master plan, a Model's photograph, Photo, SMC ALSOP ,2002.



Fig.10 Fourth Grace, Liverpool, Render, SMC ALSOP ,2002.

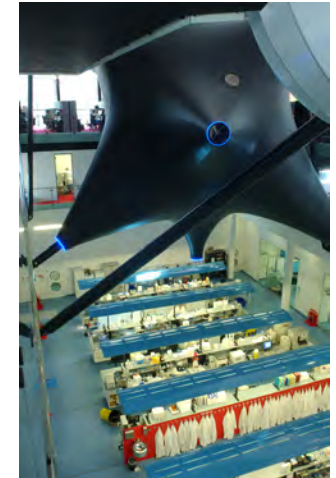


Fig.9 Blizzard Building , School of Medicine and Dentistry for Queen Mary, University of London, Whitechapel campus, interior, Photo, Roderick Coyne, London, 2005

Fig.11 Thames Watergate Masterplan, Photo of the Squares' paintings by Will Alsop, 2003.



Will Alsop Pursuit of Pleasure

them about design; I speak about discovering what it could be. If you talk about a voyage of discovery then that automatically allows other people to contribute.” He expands: “So it’s about how to disrupt what we’ve been taught in the past by putting noise into the system. And I’ve found that if ‘the man in the street’ is given half a chance, he is actually quite imaginative.” While advocating that this collaborative strategy removes the process from a singular personal vision, he also acknowledges that it is a journey that evolves from a macro to micro scale and is consequently richer for it: “If I want to broaden the conversation then I actually make more noise by talking to more people and then bring it back to the studio, look at it and think about what I can do with that information. So it goes from the very public to the very personal.”

‘Deprogramming’ the obvious line of enquiry is a strategy that can be traced back to the beginning of Alsop’s career when he enrolled in art studies to challenge his practical training and it is a technique that he now passes on to his students at Vienna’s Technical University and at London’s Royal College of Art. He explains: “I do this exercise with my students, often in collaboration with Nigel Coates, where you give them a beautiful, large piece of paper and any materials they want and say that by end of the day they must have drawn a really ugly building. I say, ‘don’t try to be too clever – the objective is to make it really ugly. At first they think it’s easy, but it’s really difficult and at the end of the day most of them produce something really beautiful rather than ugly as a speculative building... I think that’s intriguing.”

Alsop rejects the idea that he has a signature style and states that he finds it hard to understand the need for a manifesto, as each project requires its own frame of reference and investigation. He claims that technology now affords the possibility to design anything – it’s only a question of budget that restricts the process. However, he does acknowledge there is a characteristic thread through his work: “I can see that there is something that could be described as ‘Alsopesque’. But if I said ‘draw me an Alsop building’, you couldn’t really do it. You could draw a building I’ve done, but you couldn’t draw my next building. I like that because I don’t know what my next building will be and it continues to challenge me.”¹

Alsop’s architecture is colourful with a great diversity of materials, and a rich pallet of forms yet he resists any notion of an underlying conceptual ideology apart from a desire to do things differently with each new project. “Why do architects or artists want to write a manifesto?² I think there’s only one answer to that question – they believe they are right and they want everyone else to do it the same way. I don’t want to do that and it is evident in the difference between the way that I teach and difference between an architect like

1 “The quality of surprise is often underestimated. The strength of Pollock or Rauschenberg came from the peculiarity of their product initially.” Will Alsop, column in the Architects’ Journal, 2 October, 2003.

2. Pamela Jameson, Programmes and Manifestos of the 20th century’.



Fig.12 Vertical Cutlery, Alessi, Photo, SMC ALSOP , 2004.

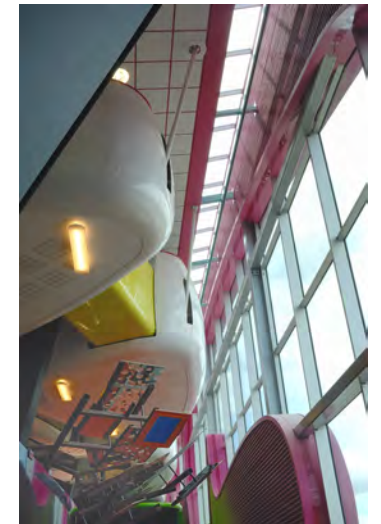


Fig.13 City Road, exterior view, Render, Hayes Davidson, London,2007.

Fig.15 The Public, [location] , Photo, Roderick Coyne, 2003-2008



Fig.14 The Public, [location], Photo, Roderick Coyne, 2003-2008



Will Alsop Pursuit of Pleasure

David Chipperfield... if you see the work of his students at Dusseldorf, there are 30 David Chipperfield clones – it's like chip shops! That's not very interesting - why would you do that as a teacher?" he exclaims, "In Vienna at TU I receive a lot of bad work from the students, but I think that's great because while they might be failing, at least they're trying something new."

A legacy of being a graduate of the AA lies in the philosophy that architectural design evolves through freethinking with no need for rules or rigid frameworks. Alsop is also quick to reject the need to establish an over-riding set of 'rules' within his architecture, explaining that "the parameters of a project are very ill-defined at the beginning and they become more established as you work through the process and you involve more people in the conversation and, eventually, it develops its own sort of sensibility." He continues: "I think an architect has to have the courage to go with wherever it seems to be going – rather than trying to put it back to something familiar. So I always return to this notion that the unfamiliar¹ is more interesting to me than the familiar. I feel happy not knowing quite where a project is heading."

Art also continues to provide an important framework for Alsop and the architect is well known for the large-scale paintings that inform his work. However, he is adamant that they are not an integral part of his process, instead influencing his work in a more oblique way. "Painting is a release," he explains. "I'm actually making marks on a piece of paper or a canvas in order to take myself somewhere new. I'm not trying to confirm anything; I'm trying to open the situation up." Alsop suggests that rather than a methodology, his painting allows him to gain a new perspective and to include other creative influences in his process such as his ongoing collaboration with artist Bruce MacLean.² "In the case of working with Bruce on large paintings such as 'Malagarba Works'³ we're not thinking about a project at all, we're just working on the painting and that process can feed elements of the architecture. We might have done something for one reason but then say to each other: 'See the way that shadow falls? Now that's interesting'... and then translate that into the architectural work."

¹ Alsop on 'No man's land' situation during the design process "An architect free of the necessity to produce beauty or fashion is able to see things in a different way-which will always result in a sense of solitude. Although lonely, it is the only tenable position to take on." The Architects' Journal, UK, 6 November 2003.

² Alsop has collaborated with artist Bruce MacLean on large-scale paintings within his architecture such as the railway station: Tottenham Hale, railway station, London, 1991.

³ 'Malagarba Works', Menorca, Spain, (2002-2007) is an intermittent and accidental series of forms, paintings and ephemeral environments undertaken by Alsop and MacLean. At other times, their collaborative work might take place within a studio environment

Alsop gestures to a series of large paintings hanging in his studio as an example of how his artwork can inform a project – in this case his scheme for the Thames Gateway master plan project (2004). He explains: "It's another form of sketching, to see things in another way. By simply saying, 'OK to try and work out what Thames Gateway could be, let's give ourselves 10 days to think about 14 square kilometres and each square kilometre should be different'. It's an absurd thing to set yourself as a task yet wonderful! And out of it we discovered some things which allowed us to tell a different story about that part of London."

From large public projects such as the Thames Gateway or the Bradford master plan to commissions for small objects such as Alessi's tea set, Alsop finds little difficulty in adjusting his process for dramatic changes of scale. "To me it's all the same work. I didn't design the table in my studio but I'd be very happy to design a place to sit because I think you need the right things to support the act of talking. Conversely, a beautiful spoon that's very nice to use isn't an aide to conversation. You might notice the spoon but you don't have to say anything... it's there nonetheless and it makes you feel comfortable or excited or calm. And I think buildings are formed the same way so it doesn't matter what the scale of the project is."

Although Alsop easily embraces the notion of beauty within his work he is less comfortable with the proposition that the development of his ideas might evolve directly from a consideration of aesthetics. He believes that the content and form of his projects are embedded in a process of speculation rather than visual considerations, stating: "Whatever the project, I like to start off from somewhere else rather than it being generated by what it looks like. For example, I've recently designed a set of cutlery for Alessi called 'vertical cutlery' but the idea started with my observation that people in London live in increasingly smaller apartments. So if you have guests for supper then you don't want all this crap on the table, you want to make it simple so that you've got some space to sit and have a drink and the cutlery can be easily added when its time to eat... So it was an idea derived from my observations and not generated from an idea about what it should look like."

Summing up, Alsop credits his inherent curiosity and willingness to collaborate with others as the major driver for the nexus between content, form and aesthetics within his architecture. "I think that the content of my work is intrinsically linked to the idea of speculation.¹ When you allow other people into the process and they ask difficult questions then you can learn something... So I believe that if you always employ that sort of openness then everything that you do will be beautiful. How could you disagree with that!" he exclaims. "If you take a fairly prosaic building like the Peckham Library (1999), for example, then the interesting thing is that three times as many people use the building than it was designed for. It's not conventionally beautiful but it must have some quality that attracts people... they enjoy it, they find it comfortable and agreeable. I'm not sure that I really want to understand the essence of why that's the case but I'm happy to know I can do it. The building is successful because it captures people's imagination and that sounds like such a simple thing to say, but if you can achieve this then you've done the job!"

¹ "The word 'speculation' implies that [the process of architecture is] sort of a game and also accepts that no one is right. On the other hand, no one is wrong, either." Will Alsop in conversation with Yael Reisner, Battersea, London, 2007.

Will Alsop's studio, Battersea, London, April 2004.

Restaurant, Battersea, London, April 2007.

16.2. Odile Decq Black as a Counterpoint

Renowned for their punk aesthetic and their innovative ‘diagonostic’ approach to design, French architects Odile Decq and Benoit Cornette imprinted their position in the late 1980s as an influential part of the international architectural avant guard. After meeting at the ages of 18 and 20 respectively, Decq studied architecture and urban design before establishing her own studio in 1980, while Cornette completed his medical degree before retraining as an architect. Together, they made a formidable team – one that resulted in early success when they won a national competition for their administrative and social buildings for the ‘Banque Populaire de l’Ouest’, Rennes, France, in 1990 – five years after establishing their collaborative studio.

The Banque Populaire de l’Ouest won ten major awards, nationally and internationally, generating worldwide interest in their work. They continued to build at a great pace, with projects such as their social housing schemes for Paris (1995), a master plan for Paris’ Port de Gennevilliers industrial harbour and docks (1995-ongoing), a motorway operation centre and motorway bridge for Nanterre (1996) and culminating in their 1996 commission for the French pavilion at the Venice International Architecture Biennale where they were also awarded a Golden Lion for their collective architectural projects¹.

Tragically, Cornette was killed in a car accident in 1998. Decq survived and continues the couple’s visionary approach to architecture, expanding on their desire to reject the notion of neutrality in architecture and engage with the human and social context of design – a preoccupation that continues to drive her to the present day. Working out of her studio in central Paris, Decq balances a busy practice with being Head of the Ecole Speciale d’Architecture². Current projects in progress include a contemporary art museum in Rome and an urban housing scheme in Florence, Italy; the ‘Rolling Stones’ Houses in Nanjing, China; office headquarters and a ‘floating’ restaurant for Archipel in Lyon, France; a sea passengers terminal in Tangier and offices in Rabat, Morocco; a large resort in Istanbul, Turkey and various exhibitions of her architectural and enigmatic ‘black’ art work.

¹ Decq and Cornette were also committed teachers both in Paris and at architectural schools internationally. They were both awarded the French Chevalier de l’Order des Arts et Letters and Odile Decq is a Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur.

² Odile Decq has been a Professor at the School of Architecture in Paris since 1992.



Fig.1 Hyper-Tension, Installation, "Le Magasin", centre of Contemporary Arts, Grenoble, France, 1989



Fig.2 Banque Populaire de l'ouest, administrative and social centre, Photo, Stéphane Couturier, Rennes, France, 1990



Fig.3. Banque Populaire de l'ouest, administrative and social centre, Photo, Stéphane Couturier, Rennes, France, 1990



Fig.4 Motorway operations centre and motorway bridge, Nanterre, 1996

Odile Decq Black as a Counterpoint

Odile Decq and Benoit Cornette possessed a rebellious attitude to the inherent conservatism in French architectural, social and political circles. Beyond their architecture and conceptual framework, the couple expressed their radicalism through their personal appearance, engaging with a punk aesthetic and dressed continually in top-to-toe black. Decq appeared as the more radical of the pair, maintaining over-scaled black lioness locks with vibrant extension pieces in red and blue hues, portraying a dramatic and intense energy. In recent year's Decq's expression has evolved to take on 'gothic' overtones with black lips, nails, hair and black, layered, garments.

Decq describes this outward aesthetic expression through clothes and appearance as a rejection of her oppressive Catholic heritage "Catholicism prohibited an emphasis on making things beautiful because beauty was seen as something superficial and not important. What was important was content." She continues, "Yet, I was always interested in the question of appearance. So when I was only eight I learnt to sew and I was very good at it. It was during the time of the optical art movement and I would make something [outrageous] to wear to school and my parents were always reproaching me and saying that I was pushing things too far. So, I think these early battles marked the beginning of my fight for the appearance of things, and for the aesthetical way."

While Decq rallied against her parents as a young woman, Benoit Cornette¹ also battled a conservative family context. After meeting as 18 and 20 year olds respectively, Cornette initially wanted to join Decq in studying architecture at the Ecole de Beaux Arts but bowed to his father's pressure to study a more traditional profession. As Decq recalls: "Benoit's father wanted to protect him from the unpredictability of the arts and so he compromised and agreed to do medicine. After passing his exams he did one year within a hospital and then decided 'this is not my life. This is not what I want.'"

After returning to study and completing his training in architecture, Cornette joined Decq in her Parisian studio and their combined expertise – Decq from a literary influence borne out of her initial studies and Cornette from a scientific perspective – proved a potent combination and one that continued to drive their unique diagnostic approach to design process.

While Decq is practice, she maintains that process drives the work rather than form: "The form was the last question that we considered – it was always the result of the design process². However, sometimes my first idea was the form. We would still go through our process and, as a result, we usually ended up with a different form than the one I first envisaged. So even if it started with a notion of form, the idea always evolved, changed and be open to experimentation."

1 Benoit Cornette was Odile Decq's partner in work and life. He was killed in a car accident in 1998 at the age of 45 years old while driving home from their house in Brittany. Decq was also in the car but was only slightly injured

2 '...Space is no longer defined in terms of a laid-out plan, an elevation, or something that exists in parts; it is instead a coextension to elements which find an organization of their own, hence 'form' in Decq and Cornette's terms is substituted by an extensive series of links... Architecture becomes an act, creating and unfolding itself in the process of its use... Using the form of a 'diagnosis' which the architects arrive at after cutting into the meaning of the work and which exposes the decision-making behind the project ...a long process in order... to radically displace the question of functionalism and arrive at a redefinition of elements that can articulate afresh all the traditional relations of architecture.' Clare Melhuish, 'Odile Decq, Benoit Cornette'. Preface by Frederic Migayrou, 1996, pp.4-5.

Fig.5 Exhibition Scenography for the French Pavilion of architecture, photo, Georges Fessy, Biennale, Venice, 1996



Fig. 6 Design and development for a boat Wally 143, Fano, Italy, 2006



Fig. 7 Zenith Saint Etienne, city of Saint Etienne, France, 2005



Odile Decq Black as a Counterpoint

Decq and Cornette believed in an open process of arriving at architecture through explorative research. They marked the starting point of their creative journey with a 'diagnosis' – a term from Cornette's medical background – that considered meaning within a particular context. Decq references her upbringing in Brittany to describe this constant search for meaning and compares it to sailing in the waters of Northern France: "When I'm sailing, I can see that the horizon is far ahead and even though you're moving forward, it always lies in front of you. Of course, you can't move straight towards the horizon because of the wind so you have to negotiate and navigate through the sea... So there are different conditions and a process that you must manage to reach something, which is clearly seen, but which you never actually reach." She continues: "Benoit and I were always experiencing this [notion] of having a perspective and a focus but not moving directly toward it... we always followed an objective to keep moving... And to this day, my design process is about going somewhere, creating movement and never being static."

This fundamental engagement with concept of constant movement within space extended to studying the human body – a factor that played a crucial design generator in their award-winning Banque Populaire de l'Ouest in Rennes. "When Benoit and I designed the main hall of the bank we started to think about dynamic space and the way the body moves through it. Entering the building, the main wall confronts the visitor and forces the body to turn and start to move along the curve. So the space is organized to create an awareness of the body's movements."

Although the project was immensely successful, Decq and Cornette's discussion of the body seemed out of step with their contemporaries of the time. Decq recalls: "We were surrounded by architects who were concerned by intellectual discourse and any discussion of the body was not considered to be the purpose of architecture. Architecture was supposedly a question of abstraction, conceptual ideas and intellectual systems." She continues: "Benoit was a doctor so we were really interested in the relationship of the body and architecture. Our projects investigated questions relating to the body; the broken arm, the skin, the flesh and the muscles. Although we were discussing this aspect, we were also reserved because it was too much for many people, and not the official language of architect at the time."

1 The 'Model is the Message' provided provocative commentary within the architectural discourse at the time. However, it has since been supported through the research of A. I. Miller, a Professor of History and Philosophy of Science at University College London. Miller's research investigates scientific imagery and portrays how creative thinkers – particularly scientists and artists – see visual images first during the creative process prior to putting their concepts into writing or equations. For Miller cites, Albert Einstein sketched diagrams prior to his scientific breakthrough: "This masterstroke led to one of the most beautiful theories ever conceived of – the general theory of relativity, which Einstein completed in 1915." Arthur I. Miller, 'Insights of Genius, Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art', MIT Press, 2000, p.314.

In 1989, Decq and Cornette exhibited a series of coloured models at Artemide's Parisian showroom entitled 'The Model is the Message' with the intention of expressing their discontentment with architectural discourse in Paris at the time, which revolved around intellectualized systems, abstraction and conceptual ideas.¹ As Decq explains: "We felt that if we reduced a model to express only one main idea, then it would force us to try to express the idea within a simpler framework – they were models without an intellectual explanation."

Fig.10 'Red Lace', Apartments and commerce building, Florence, Italy, 2004-



Fig.11 'Red Lace', Apartments and commerce building, Florence, Italy, 2004-

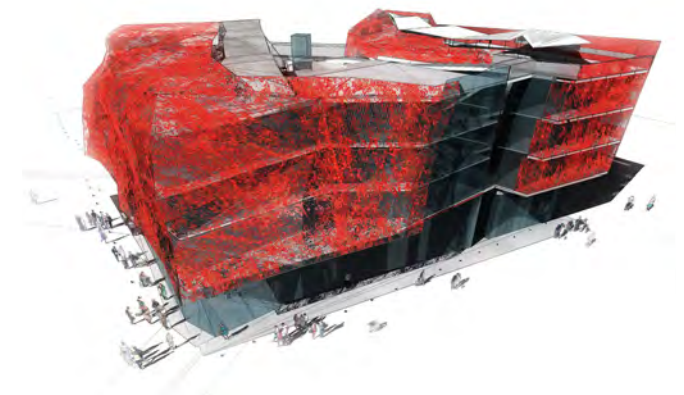


Fig. 8 MACRO, Museum for Contemporary Art in Rome, Entrance, Italy, 2001

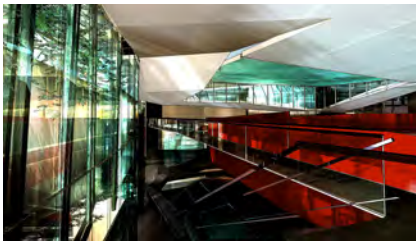
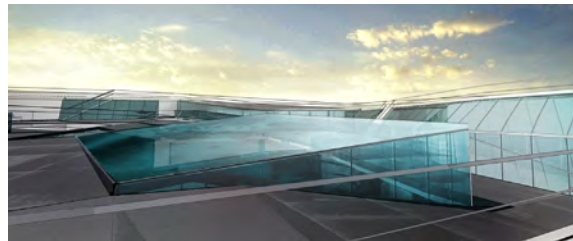


Fig.9. MACRO, Museum for Contemporary Art in Rome, Roof top piazza, Italy, 2001-



Odile Decq Black as a Counterpoint

The models expressed the couples' preoccupation with the body and questioned functionalism in France's architectural culture. Instead they introduced the concept of functional performance, creating spatial tension by introducing new ways of moving through their buildings, while creating ambiguous boundaries between exterior and interior.

Decq's interest in the relationship between body, space and time was further encouraged by her friend and academic colleague Paul Virillio – an influential French philosopher – who acted as provocateur for many of their discussions on a wide range of subjects. Decq recalls Virillio's comments just prior to the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2000 where she was preparing the exhibition design for the French pavilion: "Virillio suggested that question of the human body was disappearing for two main reasons. The first was because of social conditions – when people become increasingly poor they don't care about their body because their ambition is just to survive. And, conversely in the affluent world, where people are obsessed with technology, they don't care about their body either because they are immersed in a virtual world. So, he suggested that the body is in danger and the architects role must be to take care of the body."

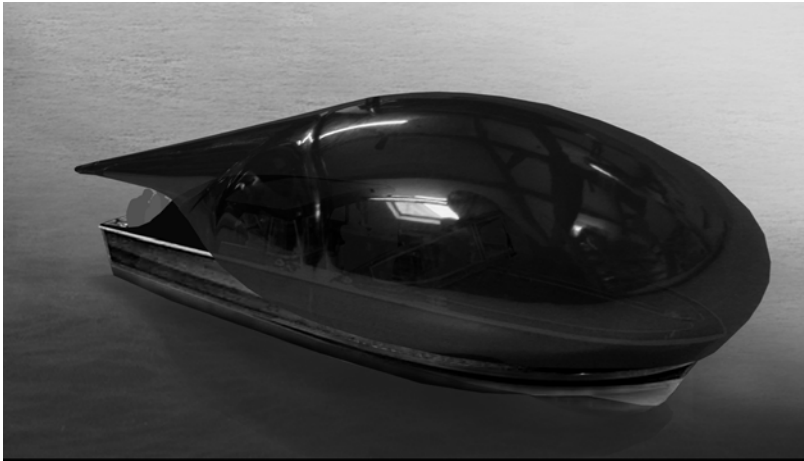
Decq uses everyday yet evocative analogies to describe the kinds of spaces she strives for within her work – she takes a sensorial rather than cerebral approach and likens the question of ambiguity within her architecture to the pleasures of drinking whiskey. "I like it when you have to spend time to understand something – it's a question of ambiguity... It's the same as Scotch whiskey for example... I prefer the one where you smell it first and your imagination starts to work. Then you put the whiskey in your mouth and the first shock on your tongue is spicy and strong – a little bit like an explosion with volume. After that you swallow it and the sensation reveals an experience of many layers."

Decq extends her analogies to cinematic references, drawing parallels between architecture and the moving image. She explains: When Benoit and I first saw Pulp Fiction we understood that it was a strategy that could be applied to architecture so it could be broken and much more informal." She continues: "The younger generation of architecture students are completely comfortable with moving images and non-linear narratives. When they think about the space within a film and the way that characters move between a series of changing spaces – jump, cut etc – they understand that the construction is a series of non-linear operations and try to re-interpret these operations in their architecture. The traditional way of viewing architecture can change dramatically because we know if it's possible in a movie, than why is it not possible in the reality?"

Fig. 12. Information center, photo, Shanghai,China, 2007



Fig. 13. A taxi boat for Lyon,render, 2008 & A Dog's house, Paris,photos, 2008



Odile Decq Black as a Counterpoint

While film references influenced Decq and Cornette, they also looked to contemporary art as an avenue of provocation. “We were very impressed and touched by Richard Serra’s work and the elements of tension that he managed to organize as you pass inside his steel structures. Simply standing in front of his sculptures, we felt a great attraction.” Decq credits Serra’s Clara-Clara¹ work (1988) as a pivotal influence for their seminal Banque Populaire de l’Ouest.² “The main hall of that project was absolutely in reference to that sculpture... We thought that if we played with creating tension between the two main walls and had a very high, narrow passage then we could induce people to experience the space differently.”

The strategy was one the pair also employed for their renowned Hyper-Tension installation in Grenoble (1993), which further explored the question of creating tension between two walls within their work. “Hyper-Tension allowed us to further explore this idea. The tension is created by the space between two walls, the composition of the compression of the space and the movement in-between. This is as in the electricity between two opposite poles - fields of forces are created in between the two.”

This desire to create spatial tension is a thematic that Decq continues to explore in her current work such as the ‘Sensual Hyper-Tension’ installation In New York (2004)³, which builds upon the ideas ‘Hyper-Tension by introducing a sensorial preoccupation. Decq describes the experience as one where “feel you are organized to move through the space in a similar way to Hyper-tension but you can fill your body with the different senses, so that the experience is sensual rather than extreme. Most recently these qualities of displacement, movement and tension have been explored with Decq’ MACRO Contemporary Art Museum in Rome (2001-present) where the design is generated by the perception of the body through motion.

1 Clara-Clara by Richard Serra, 1983, Cor-Ten Steel. Exhibited in Paris at the Square.de Choisy, 1988.

2 Benoit and Cornette were inspired by the work of Richard Serra who dealt with tension vs. balance in his sculptural work during the late 1980s.

3 ‘Sensual Hyper-tension’ installation, Artist Space Gallery, New York, 2004.

Decq doesn’t believe in cultivating an expertise for a specific building type, preferring the architects’ great tradition of working in any scale that is required: urban planning, commercial or civic buildings, housing, furniture, boats, or objects, stating, “I don’t want to be an expert in only one area such as designing museums or schools or restaurants; my expertise is architecture, that’s all! I don’t like to be overly influenced by a specific pole in architecture or it’s you risk restraining your field of work.”

Fig. 14. 'Javelot' and 'Ma Lampe', Render, 2003



Fig.15 . Blak Art – 'Homeostasis'_Polaris presents Odile Decq presents Polaris, Installation at Polaris Gallery,Photo,Paris, 2008



Odile Decq Black as a Counterpoint

Fighting against ‘neutrality’ in architecture continues to be a passionate battle for Decq who aligns the notion with the French values of morality, Catholicism and socialism. As Decq declares: “There is no neutral architecture,”¹ insisting that form and aesthetics are an integral part of the architectural process. She expands: “During the late 1990s, architects in France such as Lacaton and Vassal, were advocating the notion of neutrality claiming they were not interested in aesthetics or form. I remember a discussion with Anne Lacaton who suggested that the main difference between our approaches to architecture was that she didn’t care about the form. I responded very strongly, saying ‘No! Because even if you simply draw a square or a rectangle, you still take care about the proportions and, therefore, you are still mindful of the aesthetic.’

“I think that the discussion of aesthetics within architecture is often equated with a question of moralization. So if you want to escape this oppressive doctrine of moralization then you have to be brave.” Decq recalls a discussion with Massimiliano Fuksas prior to his curation of the Venice Biennale in 2000 that challenged the notion that aesthetics and ethics could not co-exist, “I said to him that he couldn’t set the theme of ‘Less Aesthetics More Ethics’² because you can’t disregard aesthetic completely. It’s just not possible because all human beings appreciate beauty – we are used to admiring, caring and being engaged by aesthetics in nature.” Expanding Decq suggests that architects are often in denial of this basic reality of human nature. “It’s very strange the way that architects talk about beauty or aesthetics and I feel that it is an attitude of pretense – they pretend not to care. Yet as soon as they regulate proportions, then they are dealing with aesthetics.”

In recent years Decq has returned to art within her own work and as a passionate collector. She describes the thematic of ‘black’ as the collection’s over-arching provocation: “When I began I decided to collect only black art. As I went on collecting I discovered that an artwork that falls within my ‘black’ categorisation does not necessarily mean that it’s all black in colour. It’s something that evokes ‘black’ – a subject, environment or a feeling. It is dark, strong and often violent in terms of its impact and never neutral.” She continues: “I feel I have a dual aspiration within my work to create tension and violence and yet, at the same time, imbues spaces with a sense of kindness for the people using them.” The ‘black’ strategy helps Decq to reduce her process to its essence and eliminate any distraction: “When you add colour to this dark environment, the colour is actually intensified and is seen at its maximum brightness; equally the addition of light or form becomes very intense and expresses strength. This is the sense of violence that I’m striving for.”

1 Decq has spoken out in various interviews against the notion of neutrality. She also references a meeting with city planners during the process of working on a small housing scheme in Paris: “The planners asked me to design the building so that it was passed in the street, it would not be perceived as being designed by an architect. It was the worst requirement I have ever received.” Odile Decq in conversation with Yael Reisman, Paris, 2005.

2 “Less Aesthetics, more Ethics” was the title theme of the Venice International Architecture Biennale in 2000 curated by Massimiliano Fuksas. In his introduction to the Exhibition’s catalogue, Fuksas references the theme to Bruno Zevi, the Italian architectural historian.

Returning to an pivotal influence Decq is also an great admirer of Richard Serra's asphalt paintings: "They are just geometrical two-dimensional form on paper, but because the material is asphalt it's never dry so the painting is in a process of very slow movement all the time. The tension is not within space in this instance but within the material itself and the paper actually changes form because it contracts and retracts – they're incredibly beautiful!"

The ability to revel in the aesthetic value of art is clearly a freedom that Decq relishes, asking: "What is beauty? It's subjective, personal and impossible to explain. So it's a very frightening notion for people who need to rationalize every part of their design process." She remains unwavering in her belief in the aesthetical capacity of architecture and in the power of the architect to add value to people's everyday lives: "Personally, I feel this is the role of an architect. So even if it's a very minimal project, then the architect has a duty to ensure it is well designed, organized and has an aesthetic value. I think we must offer people the opportunity to think beyond their current context and to be uplifted by something beautiful because without this, we are not really architects."

Reflecting on her collective body of work – with Cornette and with her own practice – Decq is animated with her plans for the future: "When I look back at the work Benoit and I did together, I feel that sometimes there were restrictions that we placed upon our work. And now, for the first time since I lost Benoit, I have started to discover that I am absolutely free... Because I don't have anything or anyone else, I've realized it's ok to push harder and explore the darker, more sensorial aspects of my work – the violence, seduction and beauty. So now I am [committed to an exploration of this notion of 'black' – it's what I feel is important to express and it holds many possibilities for the future."

1st Interview: Odile Decq's office (ODBC), Paris, October, 2005, Paris.

2nd conversation – Design Conference, Oslo University, December, 2005.

Digital Architects

1-2. NOX, 'Vision Machine', models, the Musee des Beaux Arts, Nantes, France, 1999-2000



1 One must add that the leading architectural research in digital architecture was either in American Universities or in a few architectural practices in the Netherlands, supported by the Dutch government, where NOX was one of those. Leading digital design was involved with new software and computers that were very costly.

17. Observations - Part VII: Individuality Under Threat, 1999 - 2003

17.1. Digital Architects

During the second half of the 1990s, but definitely before 2000, the use of computers became a prevalent phenomenon in architectural schools and offices and influenced the design process tremendously by enabling more complexity in terms of architectural organisation, three dimensional forms and structure along virtual representation and simulations. That process is still developing.

However, the radical shift that brought new arguments, taking architecture by storm, arrived with the first wave of the influential leading figures among the 'digital architects' such as Greg Lynn, Lars Spuybroek, Marcos Novak, Mark Goulthorpe/dECOi, Mark Burry/SIAL, to mention few, and took the discourse much further while mathematicians became involved along with computer programmers and so on. They often took part in the design process as, more traditionally, structural engineers were involved in the architectural design.

The term 'digital architects' embraces a complete and solely computational design process where a project is produced using the computer as a design tool from early sketches, developed drawings, drawn models and working drawings, through to the final product manufactured by rapid prototyping machines. It is about the CAD-CAM path of design and production. Every stage is done computationally. That full description has become the definition since the mid 1990s and has already been quite elaborated on through the early years of the 21st century.

This process is different to how other architects, myself included, use computers alongside a variety of other tools and methods of design, resulting in a design process with a different agenda, conceptual thinking, psychology, and so on. The dividing line became more pronounced from the mid 1990s towards 2000, and even further defined in terms of design process until the end of 2003, with a peak time when the 'Non-Standard' exhibition opened in Centre Pompidou in Paris, curated by Frédéric Migayrou and Zeynep Mennan.

I remember when Spuybroek gave a lecture at the Bartlett in 1999 - one could feel the shift in his thinking already, compared to 1995, as he was more engulfed in the digital process, leaving behind for a while (though not for long) his other, analogue, stages of the design process. However, in spite of an attitude which was never really impure, as Lynn's, for example, was, he was one of the most influential figures in the architectural digital discourse at that time.¹

17.2. Non - Individual Approach and the anti-ocular attitude

Spuybroek was among those who claimed that the aesthetic was not in their interest. That was clearly seen through his new projects: the Exhibition design 'Vision Machine',¹ built by the client, the Musee des Beaux Arts, Nantes, France, in 1999-2000, as was his Prefab Housing scheme, an output from the same time, 1999 - 2000.

In the architectural digital conversation since 1996 increasingly frequently the architect's 'eye' and self expression were removed from the design process, since it was in conflict with the belief in the purity of the computational process at the time (as it was for a lot of the digital architects until today).

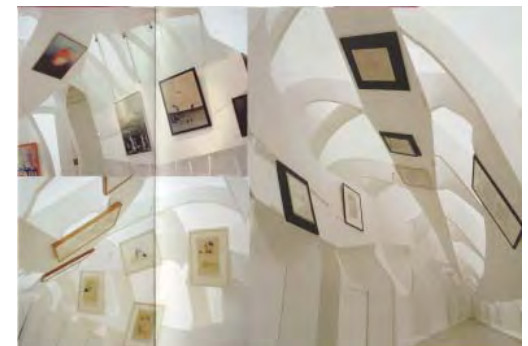
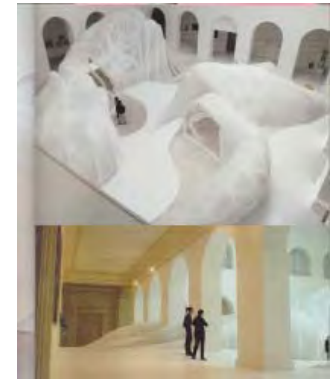
John Frazer opted for the computational process and electronic environment, fascinated at the end of the 1960s with scientific progress in general, and genetics in particular, as well as with cybernetics, where there was a lot of conversation on self-organization, entropy, etc. Hence, self-expression was not really an agenda for him. He developed his concept of 'Evolutionary Architecture'. Greg Lynn studied philosophy before architecture, and, as he confessed in my conversation with him, had no intuitive eye, so he saw the right moment to develop his way into architecture through calculus and philosophy.

I believe that when digital architecture gathered - by 2000 – an effective presence and collection of achievements in the architectural discourse, more architects became attracted to this trendy method of being, what was considered by some, progressive; surely in terms of technology, but I'm not so sure how progressive it was culturally.

By 2002 Greg Lynn's, and other digital architects', position became clearer to me and, as is to be expected, I couldn't agree with their moral statements and sense of righteousness about non-deterministic design. To mention a few who stood firmly along this train of thought: Mark Goulthorpe, Ali Rahim, Bernard Cache and Foreign Office architects.

Form, per-se, was in the lead;² computational procedural design processes and techniques for arriving at forms became the rationale for the new, objectified, architecture - a cerebral aesthetics yet again. In many cases not only was 'subjectivity' rejected, but psychological intuition was substituted with Bergson's intuition,³ in spite of the fact that there was growing evidence, published during the same decade, that there is a direct connection between visualisation and free intuition or between personal insight and the creative act in science as well as in art:

1-2. NOX, 'Vision Machine', the Musee des Beaux Arts, Nantes, France, 1999-2000



1 Lars Spuybroek, Nox, Thames and Hudson, 2004, p.138-157.

2 Meanwhile, content (in the form of what we traditionally refer to as content in architecture: site, functional requirements, client's brief, etc.) was claimed to have become fused with Form.

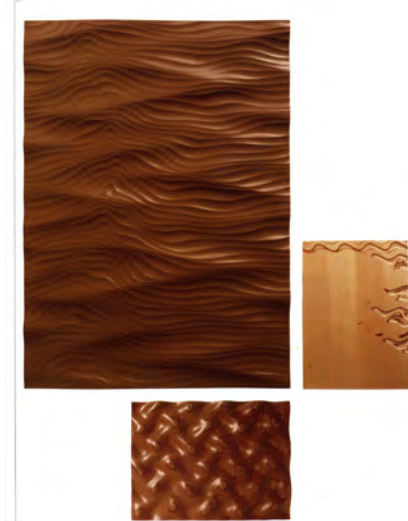
3 From an extract of a conversation between Yael Reiser and Greg Lynn in Sep. 2004: '[Bergson] basically says, 'intuition is when you have a technique and you can envision the evolution of that technique at another level, and intuition is seeing that kind of extrapolation of something into the future before you've mastered it.'

Digital Architects

1-2. NOX, 'Prefab Housing scheme, an output from the same years: 1999 - 2000



Bernard Cache, CAD-CAM pattern in wood



“Art and science at their most fundamental are adventures into the unknown...Intuition was revealed to be synonymous with visualisation... The power of unconscious parallel processing of information (and that) emerged as a central part of creative thought... some artist or scientist realizes a new aesthetic. ...Reflecting on his creative thinking, Einstein wrote that visual imagery occurred first and words followed...Joan Miro described his creative thinking thus: I begin painting and as I paint the picture begins to assert itself, or suggest itself, under my brush...The first stage is free, unconscious...the second stage is carefully calculated.”¹

Nevertheless, it seems that the purity of the computational procedures and their rational strict logic were so attractive to digital architectural designers that other kinds of information, evolved from both the artistic or the scientific creative act and procedures, were ignored. We witness a cultural argument about the status of the architect regarding the very design process. The digital circle in the late 1990s was strongly represented by Bernard Cache, an industrial designer and influential figure within digital architecture, who asserted his view:

“The architect is an intellectual worker whose mode of production is increasingly governed by digital technologies...[which are] hostile to random, fluid, moving or virtual architecture, and to all approaches that perpetuate the age-old myth of the capricious architect-artist.”²

I felt that the architectural discourse missed further developments of the recognition of self expression in architecture, not only that the architects' intellectual authority was questioned, but the design process was focused on the new 3D printing technologies so as to be able to go CAD-CAM, keeping the process intrinsic, fusing Content into Form, and losing many other architectural qualities by focusing on form-making only, neglecting many other possible architectural facets.

I'm fully aware of other conversations, such as 'social aesthetic' discussed by Vattimo, or the anti-ocular culture as portrayed by Martin Jay in his book *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*. The list is actually much longer, but observing life around me, living in London and, for example, watching the very many comedians who are in great demand, entertaining audiences through their self-expression and idiosyncratic manner, I can't be convinced about the ethic the digital architects opted for during the last fifteen years or so. In any case, I am trying to cover this issue in my book platform, so there is more on this subject in those chapters.

1 Arthur Miller, 'Insights of Genius, Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art, (MIT Press, 1996

2 L'architecture d'aujourd'hui, 349, Nov.-Dec 2003, pp.96-7.

17.3. Design output was always my yardstick

Design output was always my yardstick in judging work in architectural context. In January 2002, the AD Magazine 'Contemporary Techniques in Architecture' was one of the most beautiful issues for a long time, and surely it was all about digital architecture and about the digital architects and their productions, including their ethical debates. The best projects to my taste were by Kolatan–MacDonald, O/K Apartment, Greg Lynn - indeed, along with his Predator installation, in collaboration with the digital painter Fabian Marcaccio, Preston Scot Cohen was, in my view, his most original and beautiful work: 'the eyebeam' Atelier for the proposed museum of Art and Technology, NY, exploring his own geometric techniques and what he called, 'Toroidal Architecture'.

I discuss Lynn's Predator Installation and Kolatan-MacDonald's OK Apartment in my conversations with them. The reason for my enthusiasm when seeing the 'Predator' Installation for the first time was that it looked (in the images published by the AD Magazine) like something that I would wish to produce myself. However, few years later when I saw it in the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt, as an art installation, I realised it was more to do with the actual unique curved and textured surface and not really deeper insertions into the void the surface enclosed as I expected. It was basically a unique CAD CAM painting. Thus I suspect that the attraction to the piece was the 'wildness' of its imagery - which may, of course, be much to do with the input of Marcaccio with whom Lynn had collaborated.



Fig. 1 Alvar Aalto, Villa Mairea, Noor-markku. Entrance hall, living room and main staircase. Photo, Rauno Träskelin, 1938-39.

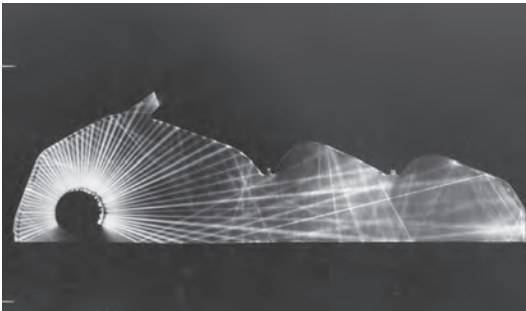


Fig. 2 Alvar Aalto - Church of the Three Crosses, Photographs of a model built to test the acoustic qualities inside the church ,Photo,Eino Makinen, Vuoksenniska, 1955-58.

1 Books and writings by Juhani Pallasmaa include: The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses, London, 1996 and 2006. The Architecture of Image, Existential Space in Cinema, Helsinki, 2001. Encounters, Architectural Essays, edited by Peter MacKeith, Helsinki, 2005.

18. 4th Block - Two more Sages

18.1. Juhani Pallasmaa Beauty is Anchored in Human Life

Finnish architect and academic Juhani Pallasmaa explains in a calm and gentle voice that he feels a sublime sense of order and destiny in nature. Residing in Helsinki for over half a century where craftsmanship and design remain an integral part of the national culture, Pallasmaa is currently looking to relocate permanently to Lapland and experience the challenges of living within an extreme environment. He describes a deep-seated desire to experience the strong causalities and primitiveness in nature, as opposed to modern urban life where things just appear and disappear, without a sense of where they came from or why they appeared.

Pallasmaa's conversation reveals his conviction that beauty is fundamentally rooted in human experience, and his belief that when a culture loses its sense and desire for beauty it is a decaying culture. His texts¹ explore the importance of image in architecture and discern between the notion of the historical 'primal image' derived from our collective memory and the liberating 'poetic image' that opens new horizons to personal experience. He believes that when images effectively communicate their authentic history they echo with memory and meaning.

Pallasmaa views architecture within an existential framework, stating his belief that architecture resides in how one understands one's own life. He advocates that art and architecture should be anchored in our biological past based on the fact that we are biological beings and our collective genetic pool controls human behaviour, metabolic processes and feelings of desire, fear and safety. Therefore when Pallasmaa talks about tradition, historicity or meaning, he means they all evolve from our biological past and a collective memory that extends back millions of years. He cites Nobel Prize Laureate, Josef Brodsky, as an influential mentor, often quoting the poet's belief that "the purpose of evolution is beauty" within his texts and lectures.

Pallasmaa clearly describes his position on why he believes the topic of aesthetics within architectural discourse is so troubled, stating: "One part of architecture wants to advance along with scientific thought and technological development, while the other desires to focus on the eternal enigma of human existence." He explains further: "The discipline of architecture is 'impure' in the sense that it fuses utility and poetics, function and image, rationality and metaphysics, technology and art, economy and symbolization. Architecture is a muddle of irreconcilable things and categories."

Like his American contemporary Lebbeus Woods, Pallasmaa is preoccupied with promise of a better world, although his writings differ from Woods' preoccupation of ethics over aesthetics. Instead Pallasmaa focuses on the potential for architectural space to affect and evoke the inhabitants through images and emotions. He declares: "Real architecture can only affect our soul if it can touch the stratum of forgotten memories and feelings."¹ He suggests that; "the primary criteria of architectural quality is existential sincerity. However in this age of the commercialised and mass-produced image, there is so much architecture that is not based on any existential or personal experience. Rather, it is a manipulation of images on a level of aestheticisation."

Interestingly, Pallasmaa talks about image manipulation in the height of the 'digital age' where form generating in the computational architectural design process is seen to be threatening the status of the designer's internal imagination and the fluidity of lateral thinking. The mathematical input and accompanying rules of procedure are often more valued than the human mental processes. In stark contrast to this approach, Pallasmaa believes that architects should rely on their encounters with the world, trust their subjective intuition², create from their personal imagination and dwell on mental, emotional and emphatic capacities.

Pallasmaa grounds his criticism in a wider cultural perspective, firmly rooting the notion of aestheticisation through architectural manipulation within the wider social and the political realm: "The Gulf War was an aestheticised war; personal and intimate lives as well as politics are being aestheticised, everything is turning into a manipulation, including human life itself – the kind of lifestyle that the media seems to support today is an aestheticised lifestyle, which is severely detached from existential grounds and personal experience. I support an architecture that seeks to be rooted in tradition and culture." His texts also explore the importance of the mind-body relationship, the collaboration between the eye, the hand, the body at large, and the mind. We participate in the creative endeavour through our whole embodied being. All our senses "think" in terms of unconsciously processing information, contextual situations, and hidden memories into spontaneous physical reactions. As a consequence, he questions the ability to design meaningful and experiential architecture through a 'mind- mouse' relationship.

The relationship between mind, body and design is an area of research that Pallasmaa believes is crucial to architectural and psychological discourse: "These are not just my prejudices, these are real issues that are yet to be sufficiently discussed. In any creative effort the whole body along with one's sense of being and historicity combine to constitute the site of the work. He refutes the notion that he is simply of a different school of architectural thought and therefore unable to engage with the digital perspective, and points to the



Fig.3 Alvar Aalto, Church of the Three Crosses, Photo, Jussi Tiaine, Vuokseneniska, 1955-58.

Fig. 4 Juhani Pallasmaa, Fireplace, The architect's attic flat, Photo, Rauno Träskelin, Helsinki, 1993



1 Juhani Pallasmaa, The Architecture of Image, Existential Space in Cinema, Helsinki, 2001.

2 "I do believe in one's subjective insight, but it is an existential judgement, not an intellectual one." Juhani Pallasmaa, First interview with Yael Reisner, Helsinki, December 2004.

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missing presence of 'self' in today's intellectualized design processes declaring: "The essence of architecture resides in how you understand your own life: Everything that one does profoundly is one's self portrait, whether he intends it or not".

Pallasmaa's sense of aesthetic values is tradition-bound, contextual, and strongly aligned with ethical concerns. He strives to fuse the aesthetic and the ethical attitude embedded within a deep understanding of our collective culture's historical framework. When this fusion is broken or misrepresented, the result is confronting. For example, Pallasmaa recalls travelling to the Soviet Union by train from Finland in early 1960 and seeing a series of trash cans at the railway station, cast in concrete in the form of a Corinthian column. From his Finnish modernist sensibilities, the architect felt confronted and shocked with what he saw as a misrepresentation of symbolic language and an alienation from authentic values of culture. He recalls: "The idea hit me that a society that has lost its judgment in the aesthetic realm is not going to last and, in fact, that's what happened forty years later in the USSR. He expands: "Beauty is not an aesthetic or sentimental matter. There is an established interest among philosophers and writers in a dialectic interaction of aesthetics and ethics. The notion of beauty for me is close to the notion of being just and justice and in that sense the loss of beauty in ordinary landscapes has a rather important message."

Pallasmaa is resolute in his belief that memory – both the personal and the collective– must form the basis of any meaningful awareness and sensitivity to beauty and aesthetics. He insists "In my view, any image that is generated solely by either geometry, a preconceived idea, a theory, or a computational process is bound to be existentially empty, because an existentially meaningful image always echoes with memory and pre-existing meaning. It must always have its ontology in human experience because as individuals and as a species, we are historical beings. My position is to defend the historicity of the human being and advocate that artistic images need to grasp and communicate this historicity. Today's obsession with novelty is based on a shallow understanding of artistic phenomena.

To illustrate his point, Pallasmaa uses simple yet resonant examples of human connection to a deeper, unified memory: "Most people enjoy looking at and being next to an open fire; for the reason that mankind has been enjoying the heat and benefits of fire for a couple of million years. The force of that experience comes through a collective memory. That's also why most people want to have an open fire in their house, although it has no real function any longer beyond being a reminder of our forgotten past." Adding another layer of depth to his discussion, Pallasmaa expands with the words of philosopher Gaston Bachelard and poet Paul Valéry: "As Bachelard declared, 'My oldest memories are a hundred years old' whereas Valéry said, 'An artist is worth thousands of years', but I would say, that our biological memory extends back millions old. We have even preserved physiological remnants of our early aquatic life in our bodies."

Fig 5. Zumthor, Kolumba art museum of the archbishopric of Cologne entrance to the church within the Museum complex, Photo, Helene Binet,, Germany, 2007



Fig. 6. Zumthor, Kolumba Art museum of the archbishopric of Cologne , Interior, Photo, Helene Binet,Germany, 2007

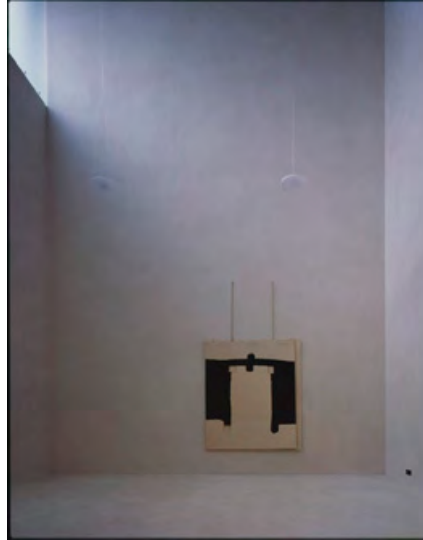


Fig.7 Juhani Pallasmaa, Arrival Plaza, Cranbrook, Collaboration with Dan Hoffman and the Cranbrook Architecture Studio, Cranbrook Academy, Photo, Balthazar Korab Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, 1994



Fig.8 Sigurd Lewerentz, St.Mark Church, Photo,Helene Binet, Biorkhagen, Sweden,1960



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However, Pallasmaa quickly rejects the suggestion that his position is one of a retrospective nature and points to the importance of image as a reflection of our society: “I’m not saying that art and architecture should not be interested in human future, but I think the soil, the ontological ground is our historical nature and the image that represents our cultural and biological history is one of the most complicated notions there is.

“In my opinion there are at least two fundamentally different concepts of the image: the first is the ‘manipulative image’ used in advertising and political propaganda, for instance, that aims to catch immediate attention and to seduce, focus, close and fully manipulate arising associations. The second type of image is the ‘poetic image’ that is more layered and slow, and it liberates and emancipates, opening new horizons for personal experience. A special category of the ‘poetic image’ is the ‘primal image’ –Bachelard’s notion – that resonates with the deepest collective and unconscious memories of the human mind. Poetic images usually awaken the archaic layers of the mind.”

When questioned about the notion of the ‘Zeitgeist’ and whether the phenomenon holds any value in representing collective human experience, Pallasmaa explains: “My understanding is that all of our work is existential, and as historical beings we produce the work at a given moment, and what is included in the mental agglomerate is beyond our choice.”

He continues: “As biological beings we survive because we intensely react to what is around us. It is very interesting, and little studied, why certain things emerge simultaneously in various parts of the world, in different disciplines. I think it is simply creative chemistry or as Gaston Bachelard describes it, a product of ‘poetic chemistry’, which is a nice way of saying that in poetry unexpected compounds appear... Not simply the use of the words, but arriving at novel conceptual and verbal compounds altogether.”

Returning to reference his mentor, Pallasmaa reveals a deep distrust of the notion of ‘currency’, quoting Joseph Brodsky’s famous quip ‘ No real writer ever wanted to be contemporary’. He expands: “I have never wanted the Zeitgeist to be consciously thematised as a motive of creative work. A collective body of work can be thematised afterwards, but not in advance or in the present time... I am against any kind of thematisation of creative work, because the process of categorisation tends to make it sentimental and formalist, or simply naïve.”

Pallasmaa’s writings on topics such as “the architecture of the forest”, and “the geometry of the forest” reference the Finnish attitude to aesthetic objects and architecture. His belief is that our connection to landscape has a vital influence on how we see, think and act and he cites anthropological studies that reveal the impact of landscape on human conceptual and perceptual functions: “Our Finnish sensibilities are strongly conditioned by the forest condition and that is obviously different from Holland or the urbanized Mediterranean areas. These mental differences are very difficult to verbalise – what is the difference

Fig. 9 Sverre Fehn , Art Gallery, Verdens Ende,Photo, S. Noren Jensen
Norway,(not built), 1988.



Fig. 10: existential poetry in architecture. Sverre Fehn, Norwegian Glacier Museum, Photo, Jiri Havran, Fjaerland, 1989-91, extended , 2001-2007



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between Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish architectures for example – however if you show me images of Nordic architecture I can immediately say from which country they are. Perhaps one of the differences is that the Swedish and the Norwegian architectures look at nature, whereas in Finnish architecture you are inside nature.

Citing Villa Mairea by Alvar Aalto as an example, Pallasmaa explains: You are not looking at nature as a view – you are inside nature. And I think that's a historical, cultural thing, that we are the last one of the Nordic peoples to come out of the forest – our soul is still there.” Described as an *opus con amore* by Aalto himself, Villa Mairea is imbued with a combination of intimacy, tactility and a kind of benevolence that feels as though the building comes and takes care of you in a wonderful manner. Pallasmaa expands: “The combination of intimacy and monumentality is one of the most difficult things to achieve, but it's also one of the finest things to experience in architecture; intimate monumentality or monumental intimacy. A work has its outer face that addresses the world at large with a sense of authority and dignity, but it also has its intimate core, *Weltinnenraum*, to use a wonderful notion of Rilke, that entices and comforts our souls.”

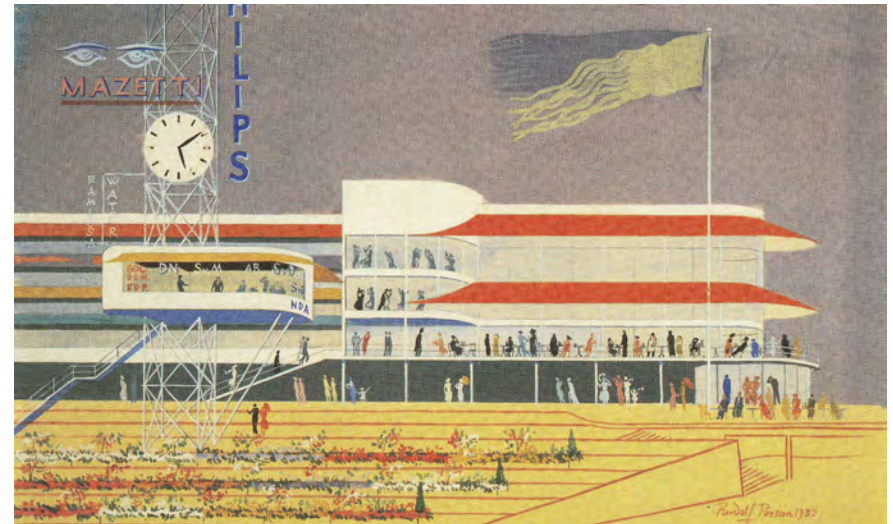
This thematic of identity, resonance and continuity has recently formed the basis of several of the architect's essays that aspire to discuss and dissect this intimacy with the landscape and fusion of the 'outer' and 'inner' worlds or as Pallasmaa describes it, “As I inhabit a landscape, it inhabits me... Space and mind form a chiasmatic continuum”. He describes the emotions of nostalgia or melancholia as an essential part of the Finnish mentality as nature and light, and laments the lack of depth in emotional representation in contemporary architecture. “For me melancholia is a very fine and deep emotion, and I'm impressed by architects who are able to express melancholy, solitude, and silence. Today's architectural ideas and values tend to evoke only one part of the spectrum of emotions as appropriate for architectural expression. It's the same spectrum of emotions that our society adores in terms of human character: well built, beautiful, energetic, youthful and, this, of course, is a distortion of human reality.”

Summing up and looking towards the future, Pallasmaa suggests that education is the key to empowering a more authentic engagement with our physical, sensorial and emotional environments: “We no longer trust our senses, emotions or our own sense of being. When I use the word 'emotion' I feel a bit uneasy myself because we confront the world as total human beings; we measure the world by being in the world, and the emotional realm is just one aspect of that unity. But we tend not to trust this encounter; we need to analyze it, learn from it and feel we know it before we trust ourselves. As far as I'm concerned, education should be as much about teaching young people to trust their own embodied choices and have full confidence in their aesthetic, emotional and sensorial judgments... Beauty is also the promise of a better world, and that is why beauty is such an important element in human experience. It maintains optimism, and that also creates the authentic ground for an interest in the future.”

Fig. 11 the city of sensory engagement. Peter Bruegel, the Elder, Children's Games, 1560.
Kunsthistorisches Museum mit MVK und ÖTM, Vienna.
Gregory Martin, Bruegel. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1978



Fig. 12 Gunnar Asplund 1885-1940: The Dilemma of Classicism.
Erik Gunnar Asplund, The Stockholm exhibition, 1930.
Perspective sketch. Architectural Association, London, 1988



18.2. Peter Cook

Architecture as Layered Theatre

Peter Cook is a warm, energetic and passionate Englishman – always impatient to do something new and catch, enjoy, gossip or revel in another creative day. His architectural frame of reference is wide, democratic and imbued with an inherent curiosity to learn and discover new ideas, expressions or emerging practice – what he calls his ‘sniff’ for talent. He has a naturally inquisitive personality, honed by years of practice and experience into a highly tuned, discerning ‘eye’. Cook’s sensibility is essentially English¹ and evolves from the regional characteristics that he is most comfortable with – the seaside ‘tack’ that hugs the coastline and the minor towns dotted through the countryside with their expansive gardens layered with sequential, polite procedures and rituals that reveal hidden secrets.

As a member of the maverick and culturally incisive architectural collective, ‘Archigram’,² Cook found international fame early in his career yet it is, arguably, his long standing commitment to teaching architecture that has cemented his reputation as an innovative thinker and inspirational educator.³ As a result, he was awarded a Knighthood in 2007 – the first to be bestowed upon an architect for services to architecture and education. Post Archigram, Cook’s architectural practice took many forms of metamorphosis⁴ and produced mainly speculative projects, drawings and books over an intensely productive 30 years. Now in his early 70s, Cook is relishing the long-awaited opportunity to consistently build through his most recent collaborative, Studio CRAB.⁵ The practice currently has several projects under construction including a theatre in Verbania, Italy and a social housing project in Madrid. The upcoming projects cement Cook’s transition from paper architecture to built form along with the widely published ‘Friendly Alien’ art gallery in Graz.⁶

A self-described ‘journalist’ by nature, Cook has been an architectural commentator and critic over the past 50 years, with a regular column in the Architectural Review UK and most recently as the curator of his architectural ‘Store Street chat-show’ series held at the Building Centre in London’s west end each month. Well known as an articulate and theatrical orator, Cook is the consummate conversationalist – a master of the English language both verbally and in text. His self-described ‘elliptical method of conversation’ allows a freeform discussion where one begins with a topic and talks around the subject, never engaging directly yet exploring and extrapolating in order to return to the original point.⁷ Indeed, Cook’s personality is imbued with juxtapositions and contradictions, a position that he openly embraces, suggesting that his preference is for “considering a number of positions and possibilities and retaining the right to harden up the definitions at the least likely moment; to scramble the sets of values; to introduce totally non-architectural anecdotes and to hold an ambiguous position that is not necessarily disclosed, but perhaps unearthed by one’s friends, bit by bit.” It is a revealing anecdote that also serves to aptly sum up Cook’s architecture – a magical, layered and theatrical world where ambiguity is an asset and all is not what it seems.

1 Cook refers to his sensibility as ‘Northern European’, interview with Yael Reisner, Sept. 2008.

2 Archigram was founded in 1961 with the total group formed in 1963, comprising of Peter Cook with Warren Chalk, Ron Heron, David Green, Denis Crompton and Mike Webb. The highly experimental architectural collective transformed the way architecture was viewed both in the UK and internationally and they were awarded the RIBA Gold Medal for Architecture in 2003.

3 Currently he is the Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy of Art in London, Emeritus Professor of University College London - the Bartlett School of Architecture and of the Stedelschule Art Academy in Frankfurt. He also holds teaching positions at the Ecole Speciale, Paris and the Technical University of Lund.

4 Archigram (1961-1975); Cook in collaboration with Christine Hawley (1975 – 1997); Spacelab with Colin Fournier (1997-2004), Cook in collaboration with Salvador Perez-Aroyo and Eva Houtado for Pinto’s masterplan and urban design study, Spain (2003-2005); most recently as a partner in CRAB with Gavin Rowbotham, Salvador Perez- Arroyo and Juan Barrado (2005 – ongoing).

5 CRAB Studio was established in 2005 and consists of four partners: Peter Cook, Gavin Robothom, Salvador Perezarroyo and Juan Barrado.

6 Graz Kunsthhaus, completed in collaboration with Colin Fournier in 2003.

7 It is a strategy that Cook puts into practice within his legendary critiques where the ideas within a student presentation will be thoroughly discussed, explored and expanded upon without the need for a direct assessment of success or failure – a value judgement seemingly too crude for Cook’s teaching approach.

8 Graz Kunsthhaus, completed in collaboration with Colin Fournier in 2003.

Fig.1 Plug-in City, axonometric, 1964

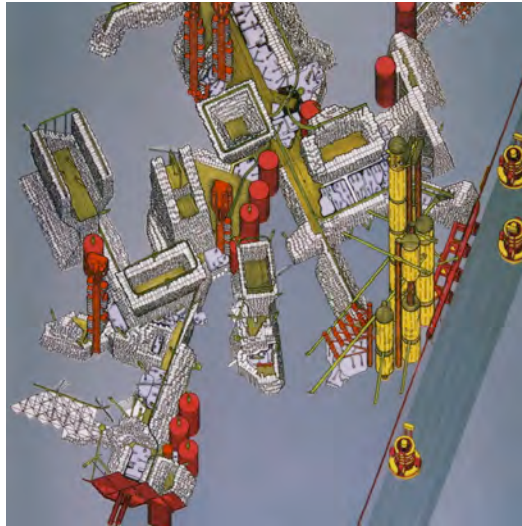


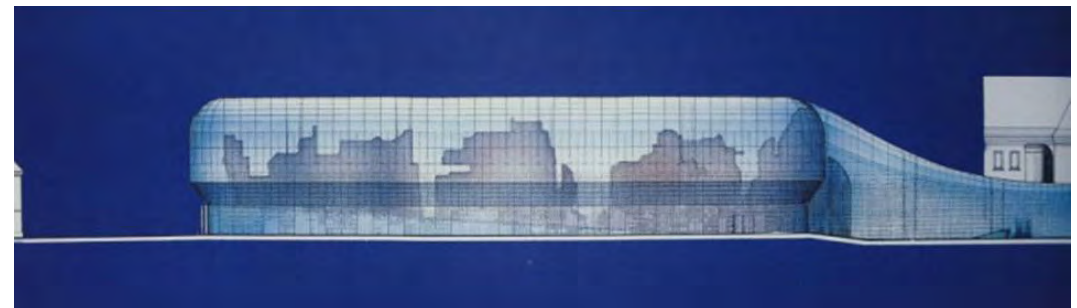
Fig.2 Room of 1000 Delights, 1970



Fig.3 Sponge project, 'Gunge', Central segment of drawing: total size 70 x 50 cm. Watercolour and coloured pencil on 'Velograph' print (printers' ink: green). Original line drawing, ink on tracing paper, 1975.



Fig.4 Trondheim Library, Elevation, (with C. Hawley) 70 x 50 cm, Airbrushed coloured ink and watercolour on photocopy. Original line drawing: ink on tracing paper. Trondheim, Norway, 1977.



Architecture as Layered Theatre

Peter Cook admits he has little time or patience for most other subjects besides architecture – yet the sphere of what he feels is relevant to architecture is broad and inclusive.¹ Once within it, diversions are welcomed, discussed at length and, most often, embraced. Whilst Cook's usual mode of operation is in collaboration with others, he also enjoys time alone to think, draw, write, manipulate and transform his thoughts and observations to ideas. An independent thinker and prolific designer, Cook is also a 'maker and shaper' of schools of architecture, books, magazines, events, exhibitions and art institutions – in short, the 'stuff' that keeps him interested and motivated to pursue a wider appreciation of architecture.²

1 Cook quotes a military analogy to describe the notion that architecture is a difficult combination of utility, technology and artistic response: "It's like saying that military history is a tricky combination between generals' intentions, economic pressures and whether the soldiers had enough sleep. It's a tricky combination because it's complex, not because it's inherently tricky... Architecture involves almost anything and you steer your way between whatever fascinates you." Peter Cook in conversation with Yael Reisner, September, 2008.

2 Cook's father was responsible for providing accommodation for allied troops and foreign prisoners of war during the Second World War – a role that had an impact on his young son. As he recalls: "Why architecture for me? Maps I think... I wanted to make towns and I still like making towns... My dad was Quarters Commandant and I used to go to his office in Leicester and there were all these maps with pins on them. I was fascinated by them and I started drawing maps almost immediately myself from the age of four to my teens. I would be in the car with him and he had to go and visit all sorts of big mansions all over the Midlands. On one occasion I went with him to a field near Leicester and he said: 'We'll put it there'. A few months later we went to the same field and there were 2000 Italian prisoners of war in a compound with huts and watchtowers. What a great game this was." Peter Cook in conversation with Yael Reisner, September, 2008.

3 As Cook recalls, he moved many times across country England as a young child: "From the age of 3, I was in Northumberland, then County Durham, before that I was in Cardiff. The first place I consciously recall was Leicester, but I vaguely remember Whitley Bay, near Newcastle. Then Darlington where I went to kindergarten, Leicester until I was 10, half a year in Norwich, Ipswich for two and a half years continuously, then Letchworth when I think I was about 13 years old (which is in Hertfordshire, a famous garden city), then Colchester, back to Ipswich and Southend-on-Sea, where I was actually born, and then Bournemouth." Peter Cook interview with Yael Reisner, September 2008.

Cook is an acute observer of architecture and its relationship to contemporary culture and a prolific collector of ideas and propositions. As such he is in constant engagement with the world that surrounds him – a skill he attributes to his itinerant childhood: "My dad was Quarters Commandant in the British Army," he explains. "We moved about 13 times from when I was 3 to 15³ and so I became adept at a kind of pictorial recognition of my environment. In a sense, I was trained to absorb towns, because I lived in and visited so many... So I built up a vocabulary to recognize and describe different town layouts and I became fascinated in them in much the same way that people might collect stamps or fossils. I collected castles and I bought books so I could tick them off as I saw them and I remember 'collecting' about 20 castles in all before I moved onto become more interested in the positioning of Roman cities."

Cook's transient upbringing exposed him to a diversity of experience that, in turn, fed his emerging passion for the culture of architecture: "I became fascinated with architecture very early on in life", he confirms. "Personally, I think architecture's an enormously broad church... It's such a rich culture and there are so many strands that lie within it." His colourful, dramatic and layered drawings are highly regarded internationally⁴ and continue to hold great influence within architectural education and discourse. He insists, however, that he didn't hold a natural talent for drawing,⁵ recalling: "I never felt that I was a good artist, although culturally I had strong ideas. I was also not sufficiently good as a gadget sort of a person... so I forced myself to be able to communicate by drawing."⁶ He insists that his distinctive technique was a result of his early architectural education at Bournemouth College of Art rather than through his subsequent graduate studies at the Architectural Association⁷ in London: "We were brought up on a Beaux-Arts curriculum at Bournemouth – in fact, it was the last architecture school in England still doing it. We had to send what were called 'testimonies of study' to the RIBA in London for assessment and there were very specific demands ... for example submitting coloured elevations was mandatory.⁸ So I was taught to draw with much more intensity than many architects."



Fig.5 Lantern towers for Oslo, Daytime & Nighttime, 85 x 65 cm, Watercolour on photocopy. Original line drawing, ink on tracing paper. 1984.

4. Peter Cook's drawings are held in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt; FRAC, Orleans; the V&A Museum, London and the 'Japan Architect' collection, Tokyo; and also in many private collections.

5. All the people I have and currently collaborate with draw naturally: David Greene and Ron Herron, Christine Hawley, C.J.Lim, Colin Fournier, and Gavin Rowbotham and Salvaor Perez-Arroyo of CRAB. We communicate more quickly because we draw. Also, drawing enables you to jump from device to mannerism to reference. Model making is too consistent and slow. If you can draw you can invent anything and twiddle the pencil as you talk... the drawing soon looks like something – even something that the model maker wouldn't easily be able to fashion and the developer wouldn't even grasp." Peter Cook interview with Yael Reisner, September 2008.

6. Cook has recently published a book about drawing as communicating entitled "Drawing – The Motive Force of Architecture", John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

7. Cook recalls: "At the AA, the drawing style was about imitating Le Corbusier with little spots of colour; like a Corb drawing. As a student, I hit the Corb lot as my teachers; like the famous quote from Peter Smithson: 'Mies is great but Corb can communicate'. Well, I hit the Corb lot and they were more expressive and more interesting to me. Mies and this rational thing – I've never got it. I think it was with me once you were released from the school and being very opinionated, I could do individual work – I used what I knew or what I liked to use. And Bournemouth was much more influential in some ways than the AA." Peter Cook interview with Yael Reisner, September 2008.

8. Around the third year the Bournemouth College as a whole, the art school had a competition. You could compete for prizes. I did the unthinkable - I put in a drawing in the stage design section ... I won the prize for stage design and I did it with a very spooky funny design which was a bit architectural but was done in gouache... I was well taught in terms of drawing... more than most architects." Peter Cook interview with Yael Reisner, September 2008

Fig.6 'Way Out West', 'Local Corner', stage D, 60 x 60 cm, watercolour and coloured pencil on photocopy. Original line drawing, ink on tracing paper, Berlin, 1988.



Architecture as Layered Theatre

1 “The German Expressionists magically extended the vocabulary of architecture, the range of forms, shapes, organizations and fantastic range of ideas and arrangements... For me the exoticness of encompassed space appealed; not just the surface and only occasionally the shadow...” Peter Cook interview with Yael Reisner, September 2008.

2 “It’s a way of organising your thoughts. It’s what it was about. You’re doing architecture, which is ‘stuff.’ There’s a thing and you use paper because it’s quick and there it is, so you draw it. Now whether you call that image, I can’t say. It’s rather the same with language; to me language is a means of communication and image is a means of putting on paper what you’re trying to do... I wanted to have more techniques to make it look good than I initially had.” Peter Cook interview with Yael Reisner, September 2008.

3 Cook was influenced by the artists Richard Hamilton and Eduardo Paolozzi whom he thought of as observers and consummate ‘scramblers’ of cultural and commonplace material and references – of particular note were Paolozzi’s combinations of airplanes/toys/graphics/robots.

4 Colin Rowe discusses the notion of the binary relationship – or as he describes it, infinite ‘two way commerce’ – between the ‘interdependent activities’ such as ‘establishment attitudes’ and ‘revolutionary principles’; dogma versus aspects of liberalism; English empiricism, utilitarianism and French Positivism; modern and tradition; ‘ordered guarantee’ versus ‘spontaneity’... Does it mean that the normative has a kind of use as a surface or background for the display of the deviant? I think it means that amongst other things. Does it mean that the typical is useful as validating the exceptions? I think it also means that the Ground – if we’re talking Gestalt stuff – stimulates the intimate apprehension of the Figure... which is also the balance between Scaffolding and Happening and Grid and Episode.” Colin Rowe, (Edited by Alexander Caragonne), *As I Was Saying, Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays*, volume.2: Cornelliana, The MIT Press, 1996, pp.67-71.

5 Cook’s sensibility distinctly departs from the Modernists’ pursuit of a metaphor-free architectural language with the exception of “those drawn from language, and those drawn from science... a marked tendency to turn particulars into abstract generalities... a path become ‘the route’, a house ‘the dwelling’...” Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings, A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, The Language of Modernism, 2000, p. 22.

6 Cook illustrates his metaphorical strategy with a social analogy: “It’s like meeting somebody at a party and if I’m describing him later as ‘the funny guy with the stomach’ rather than the more cumbersome ‘It was Professor so-and-so and he’s married to so-and-so’ – then you quickly know who I mean. It helps you work ideas around it and keep the narrative moving.”

Cook passionately believes in the power of drawing to create memorable, dramatic imagery¹ – what he terms the ‘theatre’ of architecture – and is an expert in communicating ideas quickly through pictures.² His early Archigram drawings were highly experimental, producing powerful commentary on how buildings, towns and cities might evolve. As an example, Cook cites his famous drawing ‘Room of 1000 Delights’ (1970): “The drawing captures a sense of release and I was trying to say that architecture should parallel a sense of release from gravity or from the rational – that’s why a key element is the person on the surfboard because I imagined that you might feel released from gravity when surfing. So I was trying to communicate that feeling through a picture.” He continues: “As I remember it, the image is mostly drawn and painted but it’s also partly collage which gives you a level of image you can’t get by hand – so it’s a sort of pictorial use of collage.”³

Insisting that an architect’s natural process is to use images to work through ideas, Cook declares: “How would you do it any other way? As an architect you use observation and pictures as a way of organizing your thoughts... If you take one of my most famous schemes such as ‘Plug-In City’ (1964) I didn’t do the axonometric and the elevation without having done a plan first. But the plan hasn’t I think ever been published, and it hardly exists; only on graph paper. The axonometric was immediately made by overlaying the plan in the traditional way and the interesting bits were worked up in the extrusion. The sequence of drawings such as plans and sections might be in existence but the key thing to communicate the idea was the image of what it actually looked like!”

He explains that he often commences a drawing by using a conventional grid in order to set up a tangible framework to react against: “It’s a compositional thing. It gives one scale, rhythm and something to bounce off; it’s like having a site. I think it must be similar to the way that composer’s move onto a key or a play-write has planned that the play is going to be for four persons, six persons, in three acts etc. You can’t just ‘float’ so you decide that you’re going to jettison the grid... but I’d be at sea without the grid because it gives you something to bounce against.”⁴ Elaborating, Cook suggests that the metaphorical image is equally as important for his process: “I need it in the same way that I like the figurative metaphor.⁵ It’s difficult not to come up with metaphors because it’s generative and helps to kick you off. The metaphor comes early in the design process and as soon as you’re getting a ‘sniff’ for the building and the metaphor then you you’re up and away.”⁶

Cook’s architectural language is imbued with a sense of delight and exuberance that is reflected in his choice of metaphorical references and reinforces his position that “being ‘po-faced’ is the worst thing for me.” He explains that the imagery is always consciously – and occasionally sub-consciously – associative or even as a quotation: “It helps to evoke imagery through association such as ‘plug-in’, ‘animal’, ‘hulk’, ‘bird’, ‘vessel’, ‘Arcadia’, ‘field’, ‘spooky’, ‘like a ‘bat’, ‘beaver’ and ‘fried egg’. It’s a quality that you can trace through the work of various English architects who enjoy the strategy such as Alison Smithson’s ‘mat’ and ‘clusters’, Cedric Price titles such as the ‘Architect as Fat Man’; James Stirling projects and so on.”



Fig.7 Rotating housing and vertical gardens Tower, plan & elevation, 25 x 80 cm, watercolour and coloured pencil on photocopy. Original line drawing, ink on tracing paper, Paris, 1989.

Fig. 8 Veg. House, drawing, stage 1 & stage 2, 70 x 50 cm, watercolour on photocopy. Original line drawing: ink on tracing paper. Montreal, 1996.

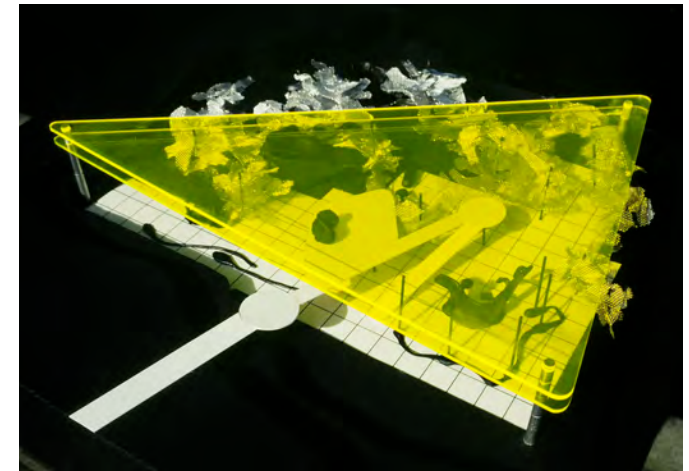
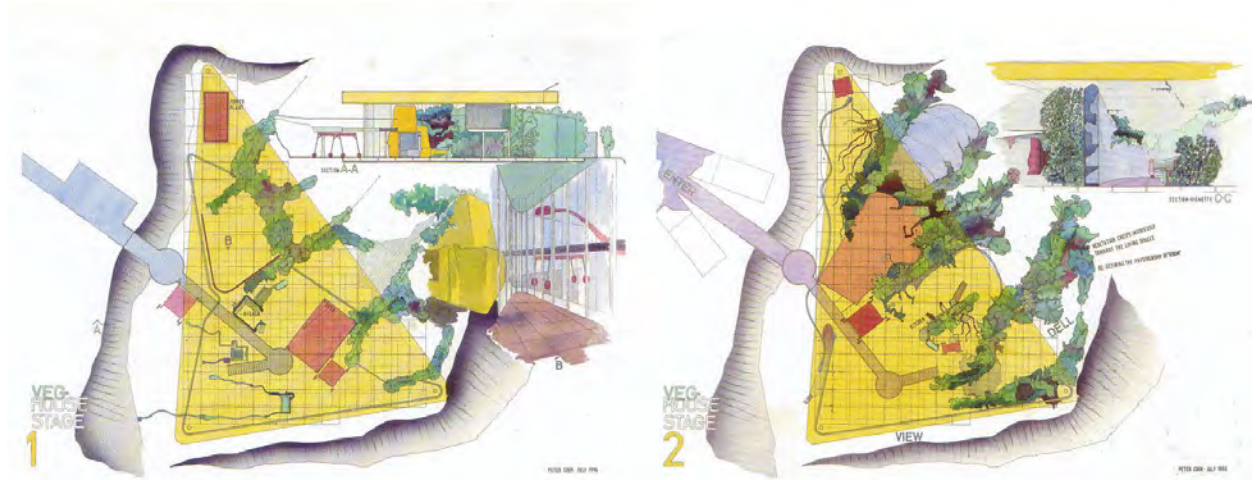


Fig.9 Veg. House, model, 60 x 60 cm x 30 cm. 'Perspex' and aluminum mesh with 'Flymo' elements, Montreal, 1996.

Architecture as Layered Theatre

1 Sketching episodic observations as the English comedians – its all very quaint combination of irony.

2 “We were brought up as Modernists and the Victorians were considered too fiddly but now I’ve started to realise that the high point of English architecture was the Victorian period. It was highly inventive and imitated by everybody... It was a brilliant period if you think of the range of ideas, invention, and the degree of pictorialisation but also the technical aspect was brilliant. If you think of St Pancras, Paddington Station and the gothic revival churches – they’re extraordinary yet we didn’t look at these buildings at the time.”

3 That phrase was popular in the 19th century to describe architecture though it originates from Vitruvius, the Roman architect (c.80 BC – c.15 BC) who is famous for asserting in his book *De architectura* that a structure must exhibit the three qualities of *firmitas*, *utilitas*, *venustas* — that is, it must be strong or durable, useful, and beautiful. As we witness here the meaning was slightly changed in translation to English.

4 He’s also unconvinced about a direct impact of his Englishness’ on the aesthetic of his work, explaining: “Perhaps aesthetics could be part of my attitude but they don’t drive it. You make an aesthetic out of your position in the same way you might make a character in a play, or a magazine or a drawing out of it. In this way I’m a natural collagist or collector so anything is potential material. Anything might be relevant and the aesthetic of architecture to me is a way of interestingly and actively combining. It’s much more the collagist’s view than the compositionist’s view.”

5 Characteristically, Cook uses an evocative yet accessible example to illustrate his point: “You could say: ‘A hat is a hat, is a hat. Some hats are meant to keep the sun off or the rain or conceal bald heads while some hats are for making short people look taller or are for ceremonial purposes. As long as it sits on the head – and even that is questionable – a hat is a hat, is a hat. It all depends what you want to call attention to, so for example, in Venice one wants to keep the sun off yet at the races at Ascot one’s attention is drawn to whom has the most expensive designer hat.”

Certainly, Cook’s ability to generate architecture from lateral observations, second-hand anecdotes and the oddness of daily life share a commonality with the traditions of English observational newspaper columnists, cartoonists and comedians.¹ He has a natural curiosity in human behaviour, acknowledging: “I’m interested in funny phenomena that I can connect with my architectural process and that’s because I’m a creative magpie, picking from here and there... I have a typically English, quizzical, slightly jokey, ‘Isn’t that funny? Put that in my back pocket for another day’ viewpoint rather than a dogmatic attitude about architectural culture.” His particular ‘brand’ of Englishness advocates the expression of delight in architecture and questions the pursuit of “puritan, rational, meek and aesthetic” values. As he explains: “There’s always been a flamboyant wing of English culture that likes fun and games,² amusement and a ‘look, here’s a funny thing in the corner’ attitude and I’m definitely from that perspective... There’s a famous quotation that suggests that good architecture should have ‘firmness, commodity and delight’;³ ‘Firmness – it must stand up; Commodity – it must be able to deal with activity; and Delight... three elements together. While many other cultures only aspire to firmness and commodity, the English also want Delight!” Cook is, however, resistant to the idea that his inherent ‘English-ness’⁴ is in some way anti-modernist: “I was full on into modernism,” he exclaims. “My natural inclination is towards the pictorial but I think Modernism was a very useful cult... Essentially I’d describe myself as an English theatrical pictorialist and so my architecture uses a modernist ethic to sustain part of it while also enjoying a pictorial ethos to sustain the balance.”

The laboured relationship between content and form within architectural discourse is a source of frustration for Cook, who exclaims: “Content-scmontent!... I think that the ‘tight’ attitude towards typologies or ‘types of activity’ is no longer of any interest. It depends upon your attitude towards activity, so for example, when you give a lecture in a school then you are being, to some extent, an actor or if you’re shopping, then you’re strategising in terms of time or resources in a similar way to a military general.” He concedes that his position takes a contradictory line to many of his colleagues: “I’m quite willing to believe that the hierarchy of importance that I place upon things will be different from another architects. If you choose to articulate the movement system, or the skyline then that’s your choice. Form is part of that⁵ and it comes out of articulation so if you’re a visual person you articulate visually.”

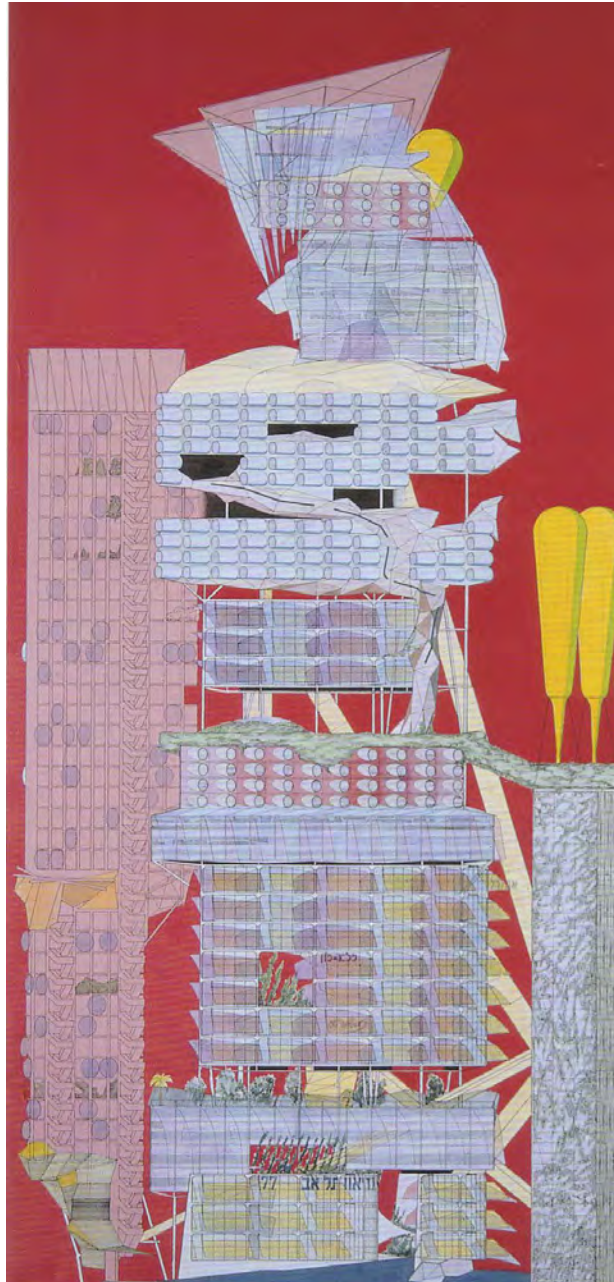


Fig.10 Tower for Medina Circle (Ki'kar-Ha'medina), 60 x 135 cm. Watercolour, coloured pencil and 'Pantone' on photocopy. Original line drawing: ink on tracing paper. Tel-Aviv, 1997

Fig.11 Kunsthaus Graz, (Project with C.Fournier) Photo, Graz,2003



Fig.12 Kunsthaus Graz, (Project with C.Fournier) Photo, Graz,2003



Architecture as Layered Theatre

1 The Kunsthau Graz was designed by Peter Cook with Colin Fournier (Spacelab) and completed in 2003.

2 Archigram won a major international competition in 1969 to redesign the Entertainments Centre on the waterfront at Monte Carlo the project received enormous attention and speculation but did not proceed to built reality. Taking the analogy further, Cook aligns his architectural aesthetic with the sequential process of writing a play: "As one begins to develop a language for the building in order to play the theatre, so one develops the 'look' and 'shape' of things. If you take the Archigram Monte Carlo competition project, the proposition plays with theatrical sequence in much the same way that the Graz Kunsthau does at a much later date. There is a sense of secrecy in both projects so in Graz you go up, into a hole, towards the roof while in the Monte Carlo you go into a hole, in the ground. In both cases you move into the unknown... It's exactly the same gambit."

3 Artists can interact with the building's skin by downloading a piece of software from www.bix.at to dry-run animations on the computer before they are sent to the façade of the building itself. The Kunsthau façade becomes a screen that artists can employ as a carrier of art – without commercials – and interact with the building. Moreover, to date artists have programmed applications for the façade that allow 'live' interactivity between viewer and building, i.e. the images react to people/situations in real time.

4 Peter Cook's projects such as the Kawasaki project (1987), Trondheim Library (1977), the Veg. house, (1996) and Super-Houston (2000) all engage with the relationship between vegetation and landscape: "I mean vegetation as an architectural artefact and landscape as urbanism... I have to state that my own fascination with vegetation and landscape is a love of that vegetation and landscape with which I am comfortable." Peter Cook, *Six Conversations, Monograph*, 1992. p.30.

5 Machines include: pumps, motors, bicycles, playground apparatus, old-time cash transporters in drapers' shops, oil refineries, etc.

6 The Archigram project 'Arcadia City Tower' was metamorphic and cyclic. Cook's projects 'Addhox Sequence, 1971; Way Out West, 1988, Berlin, Germany; the Veg. House, 1996 Montreal, Canada.

For Cook the connection is much more aligned with the pursuit of theatre than that of program: "In my view, there's no 'divine right' that a building should be one thing or another. For example, if you go into a Town Hall then it's very much like going into a college or a block of flats. So if you want to articulate the business of 'going in' or if you want to articulate the significance of the courtyard then that becomes form... I simply don't honour content as much as many architects. It all depends what you want it to be and the content in architecture is theatre. I think architecture is theatre and I think buildings – if they're interesting – have theatre in them."

The notion of 'architecture as theatre' is an essential element of Cook's collective work, providing the conceptual framework that drives many of his projects. Recalling the widely published Kunsthau in Graz completed in collaboration with Colin Fournier in 2003, he explains: "The Kunsthau¹ has a definite sense of theatre. The two key rooms are intentionally hidden and the ground floor is an enclosed continuation of the street. When you enter there is a 'mouth' and 'tongue' that invites you to go up into the 'unknown'; you can't actually see what's up there so the 'tongue' licks you up and you glide up into what is being exhibited. Then you repeat the process as you move through the levels."

Enjoying the description, he continues: "There's one place where you can be released – the 'naughty nozzle' – and finally you are rewarded with the view. Yet even then, it's not actually related to everyday life because the view is from the top of this special object in the town and of a special object – the 'castle'. It's an episodic journey where the city is revealed to you in the same way as a stage in the theatre and it's this theatrical process that then provides the form."² The theatrical aspect of the interiors was further enhanced in the museum's exterior street elevation through collaboration with Berlin-based architects John Dekron and Carsten Nikolai of Realities:United who designed an innovative communicative display skin for the building. The concept and application consisted of a 'BIX' permanent light and media installation where artists can interact with and receive a live response with people on site.³

It's not a singular concept, however, as Cook's description of the Kunsthau's generative and sequential theatrics also feeds into many of his other longstanding preoccupations: "It relates to my interest in a vocabulary or 'palette' to describe form and I borrow ideas from vegetation,⁴ machines⁵ and many other things to extend architecture beyond the Classical or Modernist vocabulary," he explains. "I'm interested in palette in response to theatre. First I give an idea theatre, then decide on the palette and then I break the rules of the palette but bounce off a grid." Cook's longstanding explorations of the qualities of metamorphosis and cyclical change also continue to form a cornerstone of his practice through a long list of individual and collaborative projects:⁶ "As I was brought up by the seaside my natural response to the idea of metamorphosis is simply that an English coastal town has to absorb

Fig.14 Kunsthaus Graz, (Project with C. Fournier) Roofs in Graz, Photo,2003



Fig.15 Kunsthaus Graz, (Project with C.Fournier) Front facade, Photo, 2003



Architecture as Layered Theatre

many more people in the summer and, as a result, its elements must metamorphose.” Musing on the topic, he asks: “One of my favourite metamorphic conditions is found in coastal marshland where the water will insidiously creep amongst the mud and the growths and then go again. Is it land or is it sea?”¹

Undoubtedly, Cook has produced projects and buildings that are striking and provocative yet it is difficult to claim that his work – whilst pictorial – has ever engaged with a concern for conventional aesthetics. “The concept of aesthetics is a construct and a way of manipulating forces. For example, you can have an aesthetic of a conversation by introducing different subtopics such as balance, surprise and intrigue,” he declares. “The Modernist aesthetic was a specific language and much of Modernism is linked to Socialism and indirectly to a form of ascetic Puritanism. You only have to read the text of someone like Hannes Meyer² to feel the moral insistence.” Cook advocates an engagement with delight and holds an inherent mistrust of the overly righteous values: “I was always irritated by piety: I’m too much of a natural hedonist. Yet I still proceed in a design with a mental checklist that involves ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ decisions, ‘rules’, ‘sequences of action’ that have been trained into me from the Modernist ethic.³ As a direct reaction to this heritage, Cook’s architecture eschews the dogmatic and pursues an inclusive and often irreverent agenda: “Pictorialism inevitably involves delight – the same delight that enjoys of ice cream, bright colours and ‘fruitiness’. It can be quite useful for a designer to bounce aspects of a scheme back-and-forth between the ‘procedural’ and the ‘delightful’.”

He also rejects the notion that architecture is most rigorous when produced within strict constraint or a dogmatic approach, viewing such rules as representative of an oppressive and stale attitude to architectural design. Conversely, he admires the individualistic approach of 19th century architects who actively worked in competition with each other to promote their differing values architectural styles and values. “The battle of the styles’ in England in the 19th century is a fascinating era for me... Essentially the period was about a conflict of ideas and a battle between groups of people who were vehemently opposed to each other... I think I respond to the extremism and the passion of these people.⁴ Undoubtedly, my motivation in Archigram largely came through reading about the ‘Fru-licht’⁵ people in Berlin in 1917 and the battle of the styles in England in the 19th century - that architecture could raise passion and I find that absolutely fascinating.”⁶

1 Peter Cook, *Six Conversations*, Architectural monograph No.28, Academy Editions, 1993, p.15.

2 Hannes Meyer was the Director of the Bauhaus (1928-1930) between Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe.

3 Cook states: “I didn’t believe in the prevalent phrase through the 20th century of ‘ethic is embedded in aesthetics’. When I eat calves liver and two veg, I leave the best part of the tender calves liver to the end – I want the delight of the flavour to last beyond the end of the meal; to stay with me, and that flavor is our aesthetic pleasure. Because from the point of view of just filling myself the order of what I eat doesn’t matter. Is it a moral construct? Yes, it’s related to guilt.” Peter Cook in conversation with Yael Reisner, September, 2008.

4 HS Goodheart-Rendell, ‘English Architecture Since the Regency’, 1953

5 The Fru-licht group, Bruno Taut. Berlin 1917 (included work by Karl Kraysl, Paul Scheerbart, Mies van der Rohe etc.)

6 As Cook states: “It’s that your chosen area of interest could arouse in recent history such passion... Not only is the stuff interesting but my God there were gangs of people and I’m sure that motivated Archigram, the notion of having a rhetorical positional thing... My motivation in Archigram largely came through reading about the ‘Fru-licht’ group in Berlin in 1917 and the battle of the styles in England in the 19th century – [the idea] that architecture could raise passion... I find that absolutely fascinating

Fig.17 Vallecas Housing,
(Project with Salvador Perez
Arroyo and Gavin Robotham)
Ground Floor and Roof Plans
& Elevation, combined drawing,
65 x 15 cm, digitally 'mas-
saged' watercolour and ink on
photocopy. Original and su-
perimposed line drawings on
watercolour paper.
Madrid, 2005.

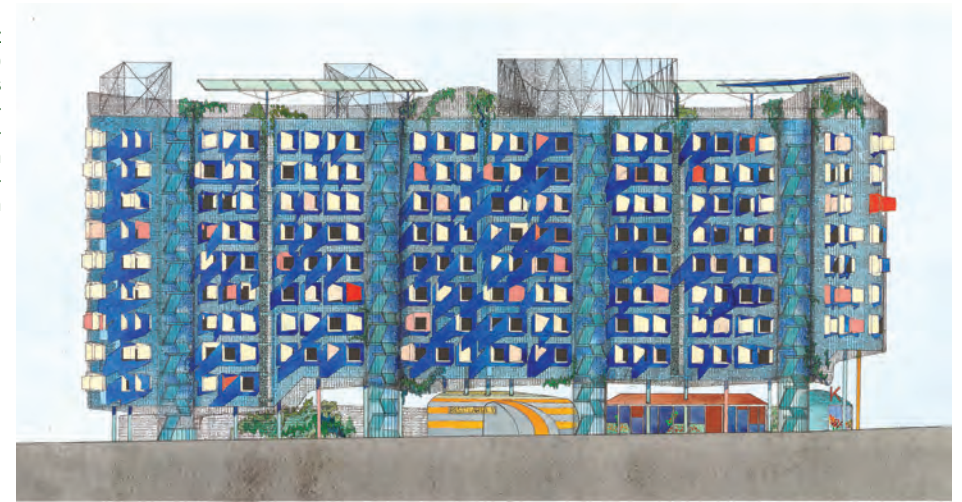
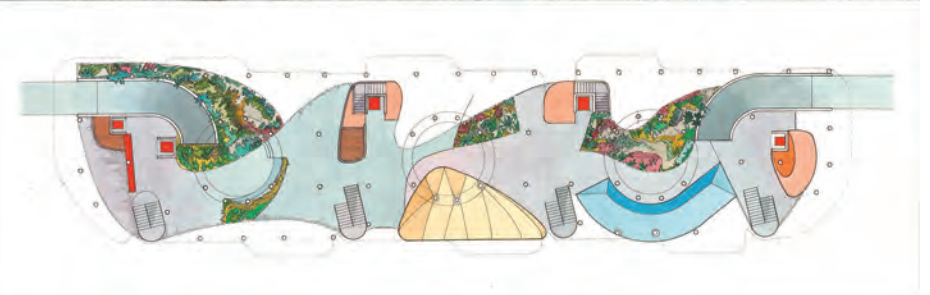


Fig.16: Pinto Millennium Master Plan and Urban study: photo of central area model, 80 x 65 x 30 cm, Urban study model made by Peter Cook. Pinto, Spain, 2001



On the topic of beauty, Cook is equally eclectic and inclusive in his tastes: “I like the very ‘sleek’ and I like the very ‘crumbly’. What I find irritating and rather boring are the buildings that use normal classical procedures to enforce architectural conventions such as ‘the windows have to be mathematically placed and the door must have a certain amount of articulation... I’m completely bored by that.” Instead, Cook believes surprise and intrigue are most resonant to the concept of beauty: “I like a lot of ugly buildings, but they’re original. I’m more interested in ideas and originality than I’m interested in something that is beautiful: not that I’m anti-beauty but I can’t single it out¹. I’m interested in originality and specialness, so something might look fuck-ugly but interesting, and something might look very beautiful but if it doesn’t do something that you didn’t expect then it doesn’t interest me. He continues: “When you’ve been involved in architecture for over 60 years as I have, then you can feel as if you’ve seen it all before. So when you land in a place and suddenly you see something intriguing and say ‘Ah that’s an odd thing – that’s interesting, because it articulates in a different way.”

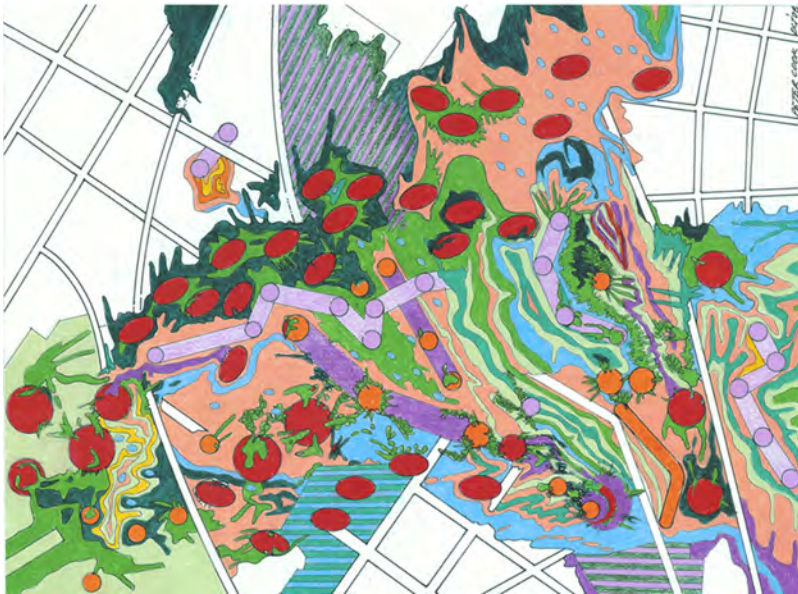
¹ On the topic of beauty, Cook muses: “I would say the interior of Asplund’s Gothenburg law courts is both beautiful and interesting but it’s both of these things together because he understood how to develop some very interesting conditions. But is it beautiful? I think it’s beautiful, but I wouldn’t say another building using the same parti would necessarily be beautiful at all even with the same composition. It’s a combination of certain phenomena – it happens just to hit the ‘combo’... I’m always on about Clorindo Testa’s bank in Buenos Aires... I think that’s beautiful but some people might find it ugly. It’s full of ideas and it’s an interesting, quirky building but whether you could quantify its assets, I’m not sure – it’s just bloody good.”

Characteristically, Cook concludes his position with clarity yet great optimism, declaring: “I want to enjoy architecture and enjoy doing it. I take the view that if it gives me a buzz, then that buzz might just transmit across to the observer or dweller. Being ‘po-faced’ about architecture is the worst possibility for me. I’m more intrigued by something being interesting than beautiful. I suppose that I’m a child of one’s time in that I’m a bit suspicious of something that tries to be beautiful. What I’m really saying is that while I don’t mind beauty, I want it to emanate from ideas!”

Interview: International Architecture Biennale, Venice, September 2008



Fig.18 'City as Living Jungle',
Masterplan & Elevation, Ink and coloured
pencil drawing, directly on paper.
(Cover drawing for Wallpaper* magazine
subscribers' edition, August 2008), 2008.



19. Teaching Platform – Part III: The Self in Affinity with Aesthetic Discourse; Preludes to Emotional Beauty, 2002 – 2003

19.1. The Self

Beyond the impulse against the over-popular ornamental-surface culture, there had already been a long period of impatience with the prevailing 20th century architectural cultural pursuit of the impersonal qualities depriving people of an emotional environment. These 'impersonal' qualities returned when the digital architects opted for an impersonal architecture on behalf of the non-deterministic approach to design. Architects had been worrying for so long about imposing themselves that for years there had been a prevailing attitude of distancing the Self from design.

I am interested in expression that comes from within: expressing ourselves, relying on our subjective insight so as to create an emotional space, a search for space that will affect the users, and involve their senses. Andrei Tarkovski emphasises the importance of personal experience in art:

'In the course of my work I have noticed, time and time again, that if the external emotional structure of a film is based on the author's memory, when the impression of his personal life has been transmuted into screen images, then the film will have the power to move those who see it.'¹

19.2. Emotive architecture

In my practice as an architect, as in my work with the students, I am interested in producing architecture where an emotive aesthetic is its aspiration, its generating force and the carriers of the process and not only existing as a by-product. I believe that creating an emotive aesthetic experience is dealing with a product of an emotional input that will lead up to an emotional environment, while during the design process the architects' eye is constantly judging, sifting and selecting the material in progress. It is about a constant flow of rational and irrational thinking, with no set of rules as to what comes first or next.

The aim is to become involved with cultural preferences, a personal insight, an individual articulation, and to affect the onlooker, the beholder, the participant, or the inhabitant - those it was designed for - in a very similar manner as in music, fashion, or film. We, as architects, need to avoid holding back or denying lateral thinking, intuition, speculation, irrational associations, memories and personal projections while producing poetic and mental images along with, and as part of, anything else in the complex process of making Architecture. This is a vital decision if one is eager to get involved intentionally with

Lars Spuybroek, NOX, D-tower, interactive tower reflecting on the public mood by changing color. A public artwork that report visually and interactively on collected data, the Netherlands, 1998-2004

Spuybroek is interested in reporting on people's emotions whereas I try to invoke emotions.



¹ Andrei Tarkovski, sculpting in time-reflections on the cinema. *The Bodley Head*, London, 1986, p.110.

aesthetics that are intended to affect.

Therefore, the enunciation of one's individual authorial voice, origination and the interpretation of personal expression – allowing subjectivity¹ - and the production of work that comes the closest to one's genuine judgment are all crucial ingredients for arriving at emotive aesthetics in architecture.²

I thought of an emotional environment as a contemporary concept; a physical three-dimensional world designed to be consumed by one's senses, where the emotions will be touched by, engulfed by, mesmerised. My aim is to make it possible for the inhabitant to get emotionally involved in myriad ways.

The task of architecture as a resonator or amplifier of mental impact is clearly reflected in the cinematic architectures:

“Cinematic architecture evokes and sustains specific mental states; the architecture of film is an architecture of terror, anguish, suspense, boredom, alienation, melancholy, happiness or ecstasy, depending on the essence of a particular cinematic narrative and the director's intention. Space and architectural imagery are the amplifiers of specific emotions.”³

Juhani Pallasmaa writes about it in his fascinating book ‘The Architecture of Image, Existential Space in Cinema’:

“Cinema has other tools to turn on people's emotions than architecture, but certain films are reminders of how an architectural image is playing a part in the arousal of emotions and we can learn from those.”

I take a great interest in the poetic image in architecture. I see in it a prelude to architecture. Architecture is obviously far more complex than the image itself. An image is a preliminary stage of design; it might not be a form yet, it might only be a picture that slowly and with more work will be developed into a form with specific atmospheric qualities⁴ and hopefully will trigger one's emotions. But it might be an image placed in a form already, or in a fragment of architecture.

John Frazer's datastructures that we were looking at were not considered architecture or buildings by Frazer. He called them 'datastructures', a term that works for the computational automotive kind of a process, but I look at them as images that had the potential to lead to architecture - as I think Frazer believed to be true - but in my opinion they are emotionless forms - forms that were manipulated by an emotionless machine in collaboration with architectural students who selected images unemotionally, but following a current trend. The nature of Frazer 'datastructure' images has a similarity with Lynn's forms: they are forms that lack emotional appeal.

The darkness and shadows of the Finnish peasant's house. Light amplifies a sense of intimacy and silence.



1 Donald E. Hall, Subjectivity, Routledge, NY and London, 2004, p.5:

“...the issue [of subjectivity]...is that of 'agency', a controversial topic that has been at the centre of discussions of subjectivity for centuries...in personal action, in aesthetic creation, in interpersonal norms and social valuations...for theoreticians of subjectivity, especially those of late [twentieth century], a central concern is how we should - and to what extent we have an ability to - change our society through concerted individual action, and the ways that cultural representation can, does, or does not abet those changes.”

2 This process feels, to me, so natural and implicit in design, even though it was, and still is, frequently questioned.

3 Juhani Pallasmaa, The Architecture of Image, Existential Space in Cinema, Helsinki 2001. p.7

4 Specific mood or tone: a prevailing emotional tone or attitude.

Emotive Architecture

A.Tarkovsky, still from the film *Nostalgia*



On the other hand, I agree with Juhani Pallasmaa that the role of architecture is to evoke emotions, and it can do that in the cinema:

“Cinema and architecture, as all art, function as alluring projection screens for our emotions... The artistic value of great architecture is not in its material existence but the images and emotions that it evokes in the observer.”¹

In architecture, in a process involved with a series of poetic images, architectural fragments and territories it will deliver association and affect. As Juhani Pallasmaa reminds us:

“Construction in our time has normalized emotions into the service of the social situations of life and has, at the same time, censored the extremes of the scale of human emotions; darkness and fear, dreams and reverie, elation and ecstasy...”²

I think that materials can help with the image evoking, but a lot of the time form and materials are not enough to evoke emotions. Pallasmaa believes that:

“Real architecture can affect our soul only if it can touch the stratum of forgotten memories and feelings”³

I see the Architectural Image – as a fragment of architecture to come, or, in other cases as territories of architectural space – involved with the architectural appearance that will trigger our feelings, that will activate some emotional response. Rainer Maria Rilke describes vividly the fusion of the fragments of his childhood house:

‘... I never again saw that remarkable house, which at my grandfather’s death passed into strange hands. As I recover it in recalling my child-wrought memories, it is no complete building; it is all broken up inside me; here a room, there a room, and here a piece of hallway that does not connect these two rooms but is preserved, as a fragment, by itself...’⁴

As we remember experiences from the past as fragments we should be able to describe spaces we create as fragments of the coming future. These fragments are the poetic images we work on. As Arthur I. Miller wrote:

‘Only a fraction of images received by our nervous system and having an influence on our behaviour and emotional states find a verbal correspondence in our consciousness. We react to images before we understand them.’⁵

1 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Architecture of Image, Existential Space in Cinema*, Rakennustieto Oy, Helsinki 2001, p.22-3

2 Ibid, p.33.

3 Ibid, p.32

4 Rainer Maria Rilke, *the Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, (trans. M.D. Herter Norton), W.W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 1992, pp.30-31.

5 Arthur I. Miller, *Insights of Genius, Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art*, MIT Press pbk.ed. 1996. Chapter 10.

We feel them before we know how to analyse them, that's where the role of intuition comes in. It is known today in Art as in Science.¹

Ovid 2000 years ago said: 'What was once impulsive, becomes method.'² It is of no surprise that the notion Ovid asserted 2000 years ago in Rome is still valid.

As one experience at work, an impulse³ reaction is usually one resulting in an introduction of a new angle of perceiving or thinking of things, and, often, creatively taking a discourse forward. When I recognise or identify a new expression, new original image or a new idea – in my work or among my students' production - the next step would be comprehending it, trying to name it if it's a visual new image, and, frequently, developing a process to extract more imagery.

An impulse mostly acts as a critique of things or thoughts around us, while one tries to suggest a change to an existing situation. Thus impulse is triggered by our critique and leads thereafter to a creation and to a process that takes it into more creation through being studied and further understood.

In the BIG BANG exhibition catalogue (Big Bang; Creation and Destruction in the 20th Century, Centre Pompidou, 2005), Catherine Grenier wrote about the impulse in modern time in her essay 'The Modern Big Bang'.⁴

"...we actually realize that if there is a common denominator for the work of 20th century artists and of our contemporaries alike, it is an impulse rather than a character."

This basic impulse, the one used by artists to define themselves in relation to their predecessors, the one which authorises and guides the emergence of a new form, and the one which determines the identity of the work, is a paradoxical impulse which closely associates two words: destruction and creation."⁵

And as Grenier expands:

"...the artist is the exclusive referee. In order to be asserted as such, all creation is summoned to destroy a norm, to hijack or transgress a rule, to confront tradition, in order to include the work within the status of originality⁶ ...[the artist] He sets in motion a twofold movement: re -creating the origin, and creating the original."⁷

It is interesting to observe how the impulse notion is not only accepted in the art world but is very much recognised as part of the creative process, while in the architectural discourse the impulse notion is still often denied as being part of the design process.

1 '...Intuition was revealed to be synonymous with visualization... The power of unconscious parallel processing of information, emerged as a central part of creative thought. Reflecting on his creative thinking, Einstein wrote that visual imagery occurred first and words followed...Joan Miro described his creative thinking thus: I begin painting and as I paint the picture begins to assert itself, or suggest itself, under my brush...The first stage is free, unconscious...the second stage is carefully calculated.' As in Arthur I. Miller, Insights of Genius, Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art, MIT Press pbk.ed. 1996 , p.382

2 Eric Moss in an introduction to Aron Betsky as appear in: Eric Moss, 'Who Says What Architecture Is?' SCI Arc Press, LA, 2008. A great reminder of how we are the same people with very similar thoughts to those who lived hundreds of years before us, yet our Zeitgeist inherently is different.

3 Impulse - n.1. An impelling force or motion; thrust; impetus. 2. A sudden desire, whim, or inclination. 3. An instinctive drive; urge. 4. Tendency; current; trend. 5. On impulse. Spontaneously or impulsively. [C17: from Latin 'impulsus' a pushing against, incitement, from 'impellere' to strike against.]

4 It was interesting to observe through the exhibition itself how the French curators displayed art and architecture alongside each other quite naturally. For them art and architecture belong equally to the visual cultural debate and production process. Not a common view in the architectural discourse.

5 Exhibition catalogue: Big Bang, Creation and Destruction in the 20th Century, Centre Pompidou, 2005, p.13

6 "...the idea of creativity lies at the centre... and is imposed in every discipline, be it architecture, design, or the graphic arts...The approaches which we nowadays call 'interactive' or 'relational', and which require the participation of the public, and even reduce the art object to the sole exercise of this participation, are the contemporary expression of this desire to assimilate the work to the experience which it offers us." Exhibition catalogue: Big Bang, Creation and Destruction in the 20th Century, Centre Pompidou, 2005, p.19 Donald Kuspit claims that this pursuit brought to the end of art, losing the form, the object., but in architecture, where we can't lose the physical presence of our buildings, we have to have them out there, and not only that but in the last decade there was a further twist, and we find even more dealings with forms and treating architecture as an object (sometimes interactive object).

7 Exhibition catalogue: Big Bang, Creation and Destruction in the 20th Century, Centre Pompidou, 2005

Visual thinking

In the preface to his book, *Visual Thinking*, Rudolf Arnheim states: “A person who writes, composes, dances, I felt compelled to say, thinks with his senses. This union of perception and thought turned out to be not merely a specialty of the arts... there was much evidence that truly productive thinking in whatever area of cognition takes place in the realm of imagery.”¹

Arnheim further confirmed that: “The real problem was a split between sense and thought, which caused various deficiency diseases in modern man.”²

Most architects, I think, would agree with being familiar with the kind of statement we often hear: “Oh, that comes from a gut feeling” (and not evolved from reason, or confirmed knowledge). As architects we know too well about this split, and obviously it has its effect on how many architects proceed. Arnheim’s book was dedicated to the sense of sight, that as he adds: “The most efficient organ of human cognition...”³

Arnheim explains that when Alexander Baumgarten, who gave the new discipline of aesthetics its name, still continued the tradition of describing perception as the inferior of the two, since it lacked the distinctness of the superior faculty of reasoning.

If architects needed more information to understand where some of their ambition to intellectualise the design process came from then Arnheim supplies us with more regarding the visual arts in general: “[The separation between perception and thought] had application and support in the traditional exclusion of the fine arts from the Liberal Arts. The Liberal Arts, so named because they were the only ones worthy of being practiced by free man, dealt with language and mathematics. Specially, Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric were the arts of words; Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music were based on mathematics. Painting and sculpture were among the Mechanical Arts, which required labor and craftsmanship...the disdain of the fine arts, derived, of course, from Plato...arts, particularly painting, were to be treated with caution because they strengthened man’s dependence on illusory images.”

However, when it comes to images and our senses, there are always paradoxes that come in parallel, since the days of the influential Greek philosophers: the Greeks learned to distrust the senses, but they never forgot that direct vision is the first and final source of wisdom...in the words of Aristotle: “the soul never thinks without an image.”⁴

Arnheim emphasises that visual perception is visual thinking and as he explains: “There are good reasons for the traditional split between seeing and thinking. In the interest of a tidy theoretical model it is natural to distinguish clearly between the information a man or animal receives through his eyes and the treatment to which such information is subjected.”⁵

“Vision, in particular, is as Hans Jonas has pointed out, the prototype and perhaps the origin of *teoria*...”⁶ As confirmed earlier in my text by Arthur I. Miller. (See p.232, 1st paragraph.)

1 Arnheim Rudolf, *Visual Thinking*, University of California Press, London, 1969, p.v.

2 Ibid, p.v.

3 Ibid, p.vi.

4 Ibid, p.12.

5 Ibid, p.14.

6 Ibid, p.17.

19.3. The Bartlett, Diploma Unit 11 - 2002-03

Programme 2002-03: Universality is thriving; Individuals are the makers

I quote here the text I wrote for the catalogue of the Bartlett's summer exhibition in 2003, which was focused on Unit 11's approach to architectural aesthetics and cultural identity.

'The world is now full of people who belong to more than one world, speak more than one language, inhabit more than one identity, have more than one home.'

Today, 130 million people live outside the country of their birth. In this context, culture becomes not a static, fixed entity, but a fluctuating, dispersed condition. This year, Unit 11 took interest in conditions that are in flux, in the slippages between things - between form and content; appearance and operation; long-term memory and short-term reality; the objective and the subjective... We were looking for an architecture that responds to the human condition in each of us, wherever we are from, wherever we are going. We are looking for an architecture that recognises and restores dignity, an architecture that embraces change, respects tradition, that welcomes the foreign in each of us, in all places, all conditions.

That was part of our brief at the beginning of the year...

Half way through Lesley Lokko left for Africa and Malca Mizrahi joined us instead.

One could say, in June, that the subjective input, the unconscious processing of information (as a central part of the creative thought) led us, among other things, into a greater diversity of projects.

I strongly believe that in nurturing students to find out and recognise their own cultural identity, references, mysterious attractions and personal affinities, we empower and enable them to arrive at and express their own architectural signature.

'Art and science at their most fundamental are adventures into the unknown...Intuition was revealed to be synonymous with visualization... some artist or scientist realizes a new aesthetic.'

Teaching talented young architects from nearly 50 different cities worldwide during the last ten years confirms and strengthens my perception that universality is thriving and the individuals are the makers. Nevertheless, the openly reflecting upon one's cultural bag is a daring act within the architectural discourse, as it has been since the beginning of the 20th century.

The application of design that is less hierarchical and softer at the edges went well with the use of composite materials, which we anyhow found intriguing for structural reasoning and aesthetic potentialities. They enabled us to morph from hard to soft, from flat to volumetric, slipping from one to the other seamlessly in space and time.

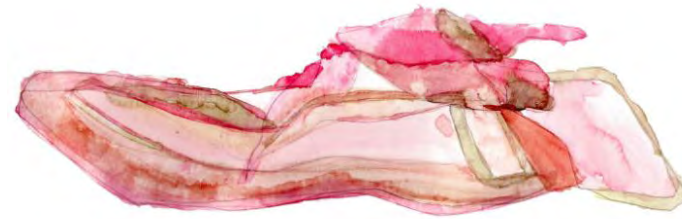
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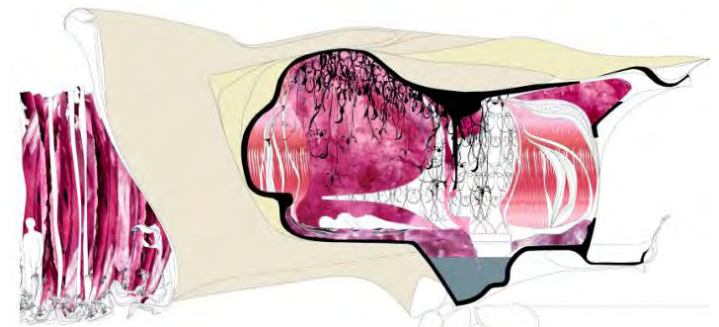
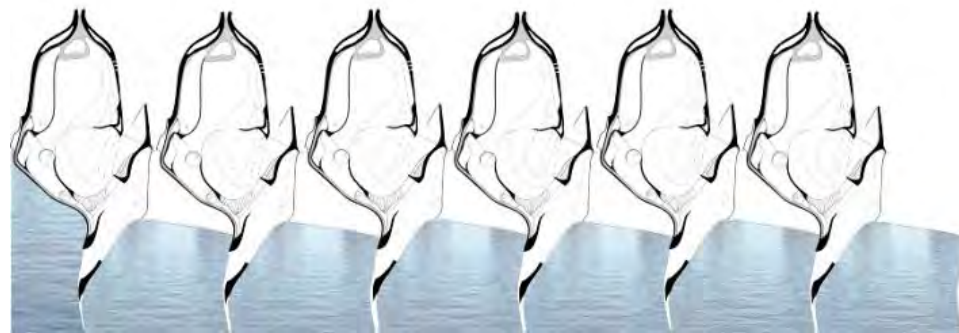
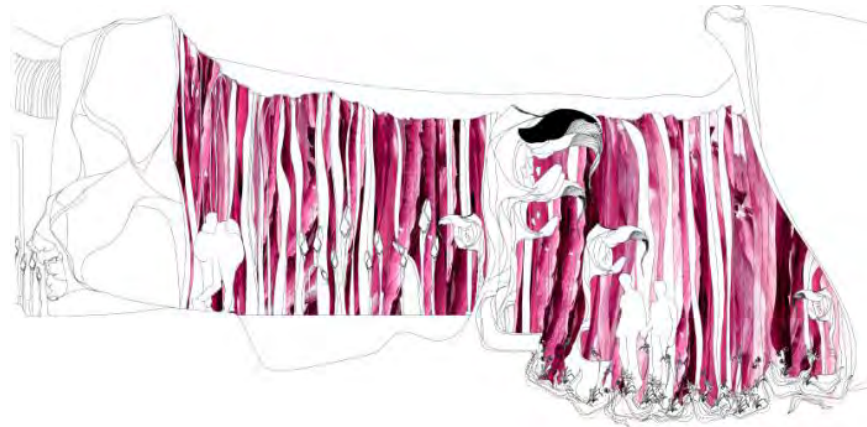
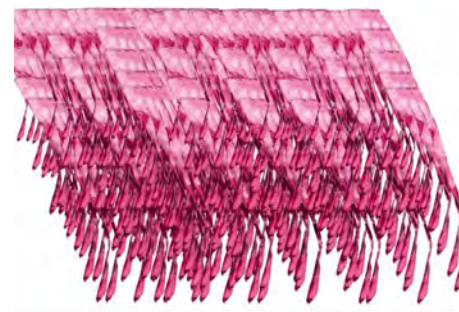
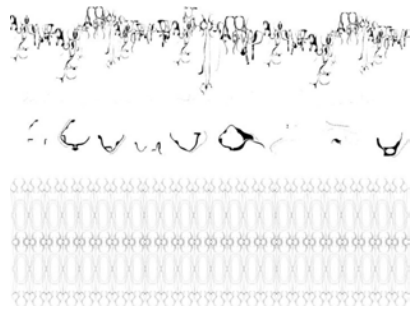
Students' work
Spatial-Depth - Part II

19.4. Spatial-Depth - Part II: Continuing developing that aesthetic attitude

19.4.1. Poetic images as Architectural Fragments leading to Architecture.

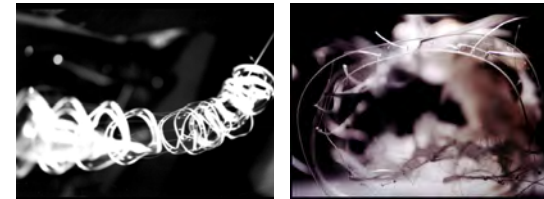
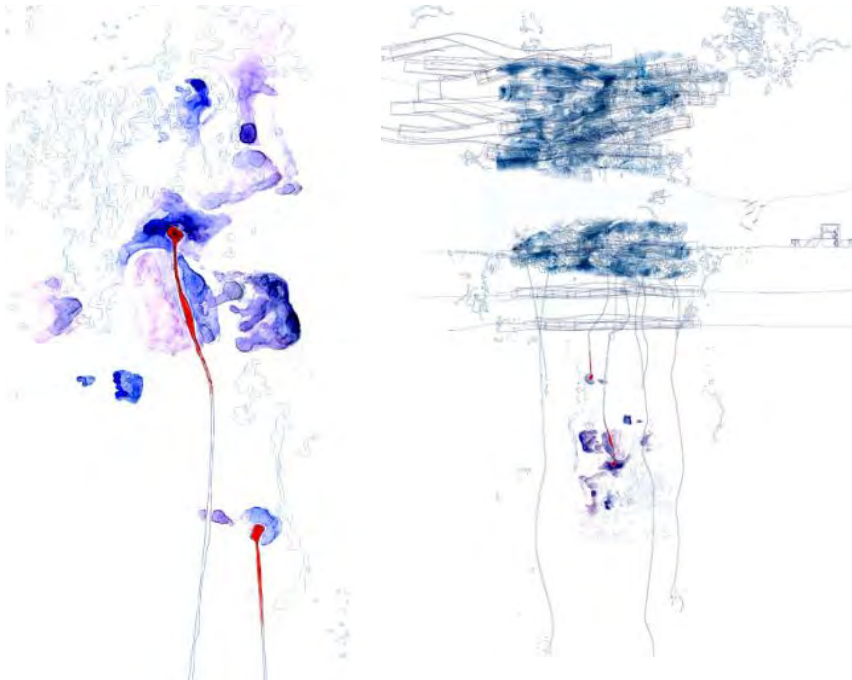
19.4.1.2. Paz Horn - Diploma 5th year - "Love Hotel" Port of Algeciras, Spain, 2003

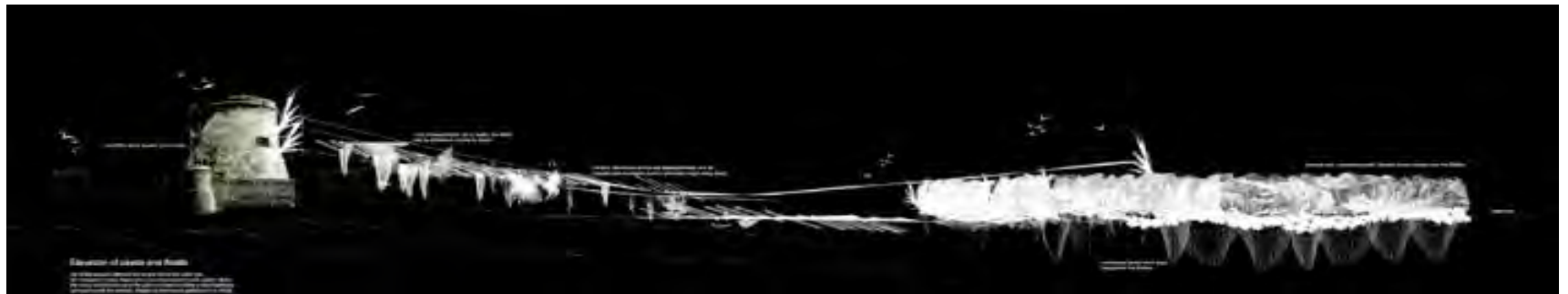
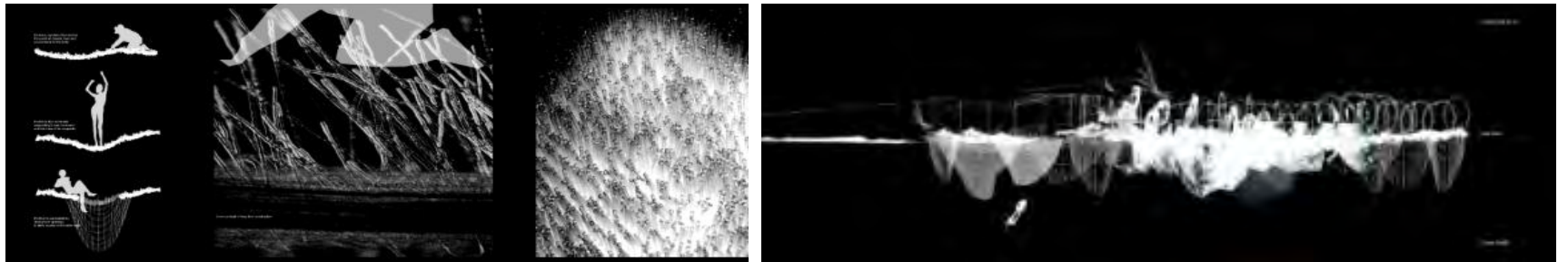
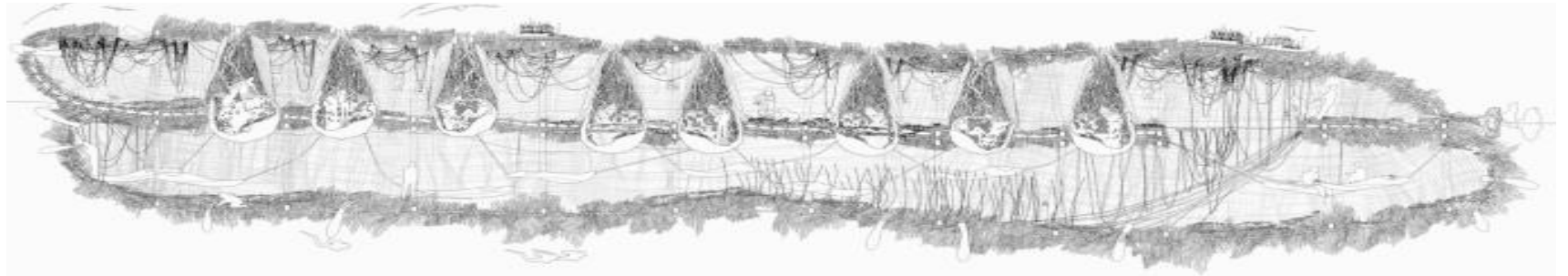




Students' work
Spatial-Depth - Part II

19.4.1.3. David Head - Diploma 4th year - Flotilla - Birds' Watching, Southern Spain, 2003





20. Teaching Platform - Part IV: The Bartlett Diploma Unit 11, 2003-2004

[Teaching while working on my PhD]

20.1. The Bartlett, Diploma U.11 - Program 2003-04 : Brazilian Tropicalia

This is the text I wrote for Unit 11's program for the academic year 2003-04:

"In Images...beauty was the agency that caused visual pleasure in the beholder ...I direct your attention to the language of visual affect-to the rhetoric of how things look-to the iconography of desire- in a word, to beauty"
- Dave Hickey

"Facts, then, are like sacks. They won't stand unless you put something in them". -Luigi Pirandello

Unit 11 field trip to Brazil focused on two amazing cities: Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia. Brazil's culture and races are mixed, coalescing to form that which is ultimately and authentically Brazilian. Like the Brazilian cuisine that has a delicious variety of tropical, exotic, hearty and spicy flavours, reflecting its African, European and Indian racial mix, its music culture, dance culture, and visual culture have a rich, exotic and colourful mixture that is infused with optimism. That is Brazilian 'tropicalia' and (interestingly) it is not intimidated by itself.

In shedding the 20th century mythical role of objectivity in architecture and its ways of ruling out any traces of subjectivity, we won't take much interest in statistics, but in the liberation of our profession from years of having a conscience concerning aesthetics.

Surely aesthetics can go well with ethics, contrary to the modernist propaganda.

It's about time architects caught up with artists, writers, film makers, or scientists, following the subjective insight and thinking independently of authority, arriving at an architectural vision.

"Art and Science at their most fundamental are adventures into the unknown...intuition was revealed to be synonymous with visualization...The power of unconscious parallel processing of information, (and that) emerged as a central part of creative thought.....some artist or scientist realizes a new aesthetic... Reflecting on his creative thinking, Einstein wrote that visual imagery occurred first and words followed... Joan Miro described his creative thinking thus: I begin painting and as I paint the picture begins to assert itself, or suggest itself, under my brush...The first stage is free, unconscious...the second stage is carefully calculated."

-Arthur I. Miller, "Insights of Genius, Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art", (MIT Press, 1996).

Unit 11 is interested in a contemporary architecture that is exuberant and intensive. We are interested in hyper-visual imagery, multi-layered depth-where the edges are soft.

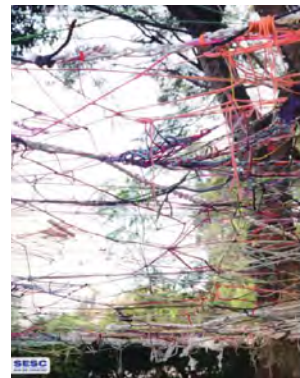
We are occupied with depicting and arousing emotion.

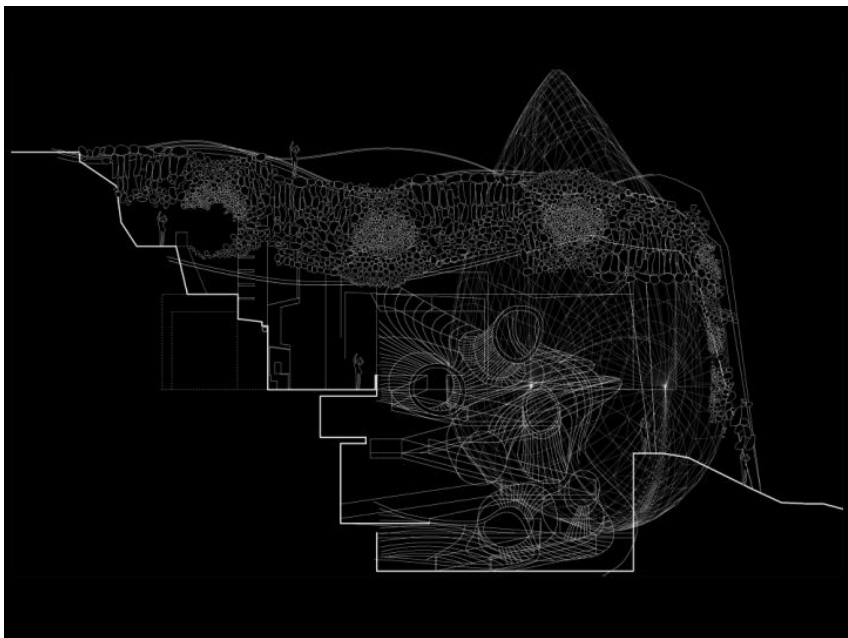
20.2. Spatial-Depth - Part III: Continue developing the aesthetic of 'multilayered depth'

20.2.1. Case study: David Head, Diploma 5th year, "Brutality Garden", Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, 2004

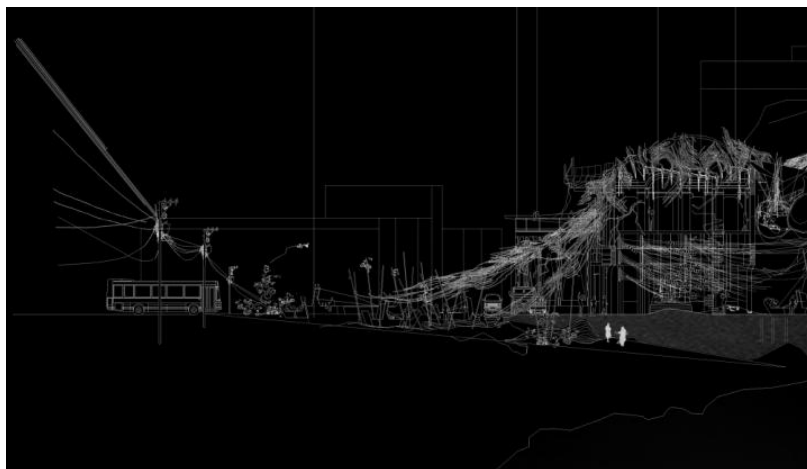


Students' work
Spatial-Depth - Part III , David Head





Students' work
Spatial-Depth - Part III





Thom Mayne; Morphosis Exquisite Complexity

21. 5th Block - The Provocateurs; Thom Mayne and Eric Owen Moss.

21.1. Thom Mayne; Morphosis Exquisite Complexity

Architect Thom Mayne is an inherently intense person. Although exceptionally tall and commanding, Mayne's intensity is not borne from his physical presence but through the complexity of his conversation. He is surprisingly candid for an internationally respected architect, continually exchanging ideas, questioning, assessing and then reassessing his concepts rather than attempting to smooth his opinions into a marketable 'position'. Although not arrogant, Mayne is certainly not humble and strives to be as transparent as possible about his ideologies while exposing the uncertainties and tensions that underpin his work. His relentless process of inquisition is actively pursued through his public lectures and teaching activity and legendary amongst his architectural colleagues. As Lebbeus Woods once remarked: "A major feature of Mayne's creative trajectory is his scepticism, his incessant questioning of everything, including himself. Anyone who has heard him speak in public knows that he is filled with doubts and uncertainties... candid, questioning lectures."

Mayne founded Morphosis¹ with Jim Stafford in Los Angeles in 1972. Shortly afterwards, Michael Rotondi joined the firm and together, they produced a collection of incredibly complex, small projects in the local area, notably the 2-4-6-8 House (1978-79), 72 Market Street restaurant (1983) and Venice III (1982-1986). Through the mid-eighties, the practice received international acclaim through the wide publication of their beautifully crafted drawings and exceptional sectional models. Larger projects followed with schemes such as the Cedars-Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Centre (1986-90) and the enigmatic Kate Mantilini restaurant (1985-86) continually to receive the attention of the international press. Yet despite their early success, the realities of the economic downturn during the late eighties hit Los Angeles hard and the practice stagnated. Rotondi decided to leave in 1991 to pursue other interests; Mayne retained the Morphosis moniker, continued to evolve his practice and focused on his role as a founding director and board member at the renowned architectural school SCI-Arc.²

The advent of the new millennium however, provided great opportunity for Morphosis with the completion of a number of significant projects including an elementary school in Long Beach, California, a high school in Pomona, California, the University of Toronto graduate student housing project and two elegant and dramatic restaurants in Las Vegas.³ From 1999 to 2001, the practice also won a series of prestigious competitions⁴ that propelled the practice into a new phase of large projects with greater layers of complexity. Far from struggling with the rapid transition, Mayne embraced the opportunity to build at a greater scale – an attitude that has resulted in a successful and diverse range of projects that reflect his intense approach to architecture and to life.⁵ In recognition of his outstanding contribution to architecture and education Thom Mayne received the Pritzker Prize in March 2005. He continues to work from his office in Santa Monica and recently expanded operations to New York City. He has remained committed to education, and currently holds a tenured professorship at the School of Arts and Architecture at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA).

1 The name Morphosis is derived from the Greek term meaning to be in constant formation or in a state of continual evolution-the constant sequence or manner of development or change in an organism or any of its parts.

2 Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) where Rotondi also held a founding position.

3 Tsunami Asian Grill and Lutece, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1998-99. In addition, they also produced the powerful retrospective exhibition 'Silent Collisions' at the Nai, Rotterdam that contained a major installation piece defining a new spatial condition – a moving structural angular form that marked an evolution of the practice's work rather than a reflective position.

4 Including the United State Courthouse in Eugene, Oregon; the San Francisco Federal Building; the NOAA Satellite Operation Control Facility in Suitland, Maryland and the Caltrans District 7 Headquarters in LA.

5 Many of Mayne's colleagues as well as the architectural press have also suggested that the intensity of Mayne's work has more power within larger-scale projects

Fig.1 Kate Mantillini Restaurant, Beverly Hills, Photo, Tim Street Porter , LA,1985-86



Fig.2 Cedars Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Centre, Photo, Grant Mudford, Los Angeles, 1986-88



Fig.3 Cedars Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Centre, Photo, Grant Mudford, Los Angeles, 1986-88



Thom Mayne; Morphosis Exquisite Complexity

Thom Mayne's intense, complex architecture is reflected in his adept ability to carry several conversations simultaneously; pursuing a trajectory of thought and arriving at a point with insight and clarity only to quickly question his position and shift to a parallel discussion. His conversation is at once questioning, explorative, conflicting and contradictory, all values that co-exist within the complexity of his architectural process. He is quick to acknowledge the disparate nature of his conversation, explaining, "I do have this odd kind of wiring that dissects the world in a certain way although I think that's because I'm also a bit dyslexic. It's always been a joke between my wife and my friends that when I see films or read a book I internalize them completely. When I'm dealing with a particular set of architectural problems, everything around me becomes a resource for that and becomes a component of the strategy to decode the problem and ultimately find a solution. Everything I'm looking at now is working on resolving a particular problem."

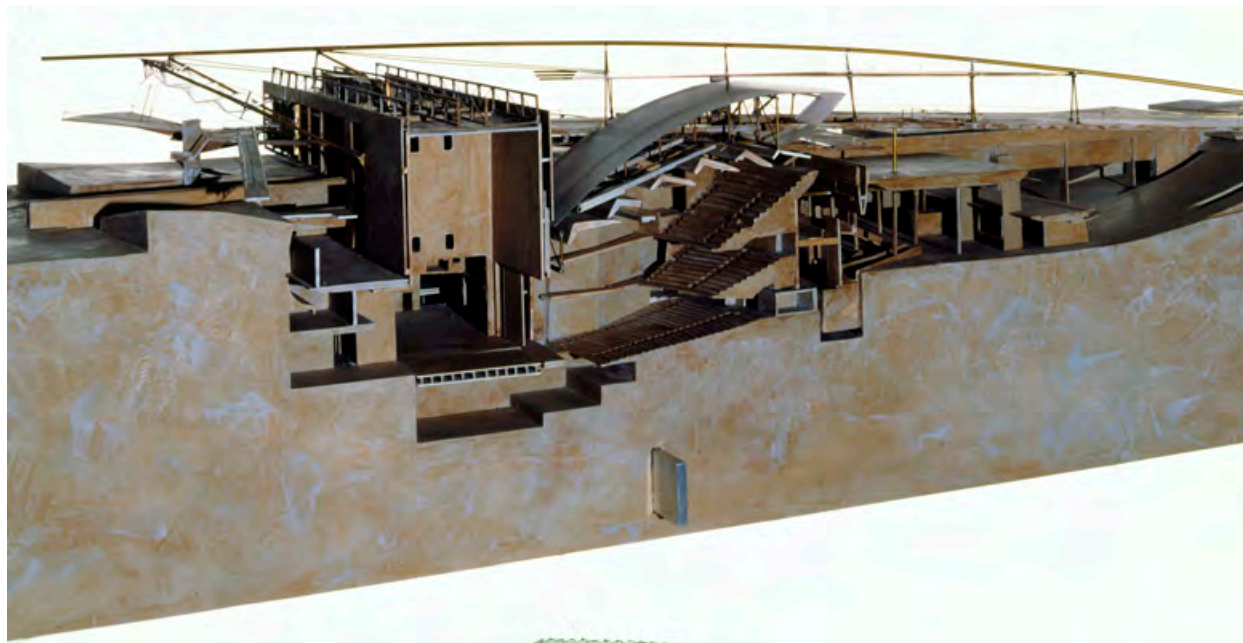
Uncomfortable with being asked to explain generative process behind his work, Mayne suggests that "talking about your work is secondary really... it's a precision that does not take place in your visual world." As a result, he is not interested in the pursuit of a traditional academic rigor but aspires to 'probe in a speculative manner' – a characteristic that is reflected in his value system. "Architecture is, in that sense, a metaphor for life." He argues that it is difficult to identify the specificity of the conditions that provide the influence or inform the complexity of his architecture: "You start this process and its immensely organic and extremely nuanced to every condition that forms the idea."

Certainly, Mayne has spent many years articulating and refining his position. For many years, the work produced by Morphosis in collaboration with his partner Michael Rotondi was celebrated internationally yet the architects still struggled to make a living. As a result Mayne has no issues with the notion of the architect as artist: "I totally accept architects as artists... I'm an architect that survived for fifteen years by selling my drawings before having the opportunity to build. Literally that's how I had to finance myself. The drawings were different forms of my work from the buildings... I'm comfortable with the boundary between architecture and art – or lack thereof. In both disciplines you are dealing with essentially more or less the same issues.¹

Mayne's opportunity to build changed with the turn of the century as Morphosis won a number of large-scale and high profile commissions including the United State Courthouse in Eugene, Oregon (1999-2006); the San Francisco Federal Building (2000-2006); the NOAA Satellite Operation Control Facility in Suitland, Maryland (2005) and the Caltrans District 7 Headquarters in LA (2001-2004). The dramatic change in scale within such a concentrated time frame brought with it some concerns, particularly from his architectural colleagues. He recalls: "Within a period of two years, I suddenly had more work in my

¹ Mayne refers: "If you look at the major period of the 20th century architects such as Alvar Aalto and Le Corbusier painted objects of all types so clearly there are parallels with the universal characteristics of an artist... In the late 60's, 70's and 80's where all art was becoming more hybridized and the boundaries were totally breaking down there were artists and architects working across art and architecture practice such as Michael Heizer and Robert Smithson."

Fig.4 Los Angeles Artspark Performing Arts Pavilion, Model – modeling paste, museum board, bass wood, metal frame , Plexiglass,
Photo, Tom Bonner , 1989



Thom Mayne; Morphosis
Exquisite Complexity

Fig.5 Diamond Ranch High School , Photo, Brandon Welling, Pomona, California, 1996-2000

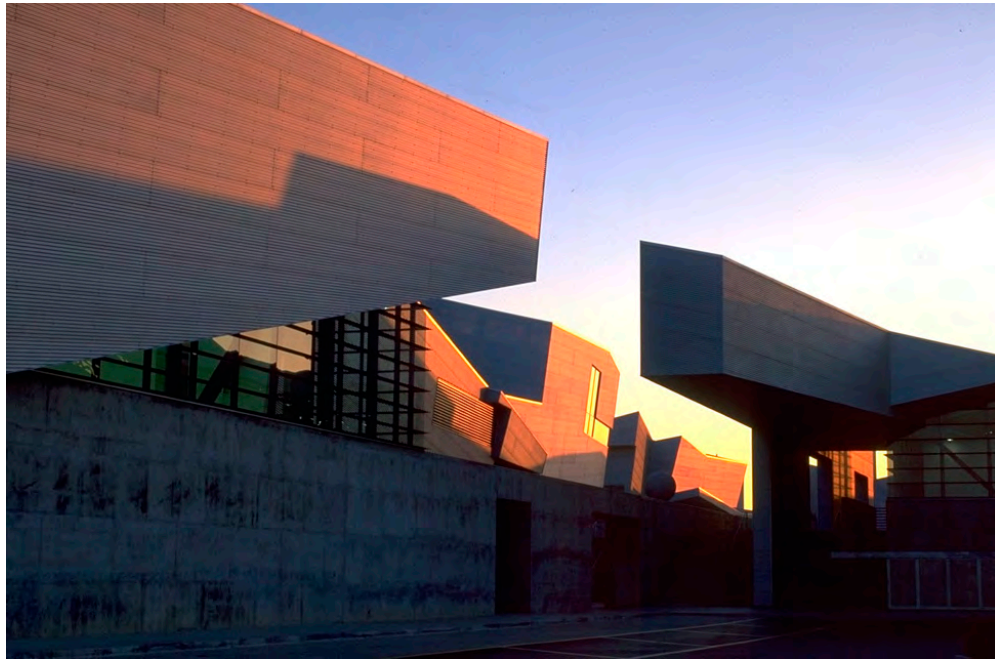


Fig.6 Tsunami Asian Grill, Photo, Farshid Assassi,
Las Vegas, Nevada, 1998-99



Fig.7 Silent Collisions – NAI exhibit, Rotterdam,Photo, Kim
Zwarts, Netherlands, 1999



Thom Mayne; Morphosis Exquisite Complexity

me a series of questions because he was worried that my work would lose intensity when it increased in scale.” Mayne accepts Woods’ concern explaining, “I do see that the element of intensity is a key aspect of my work. The difficulty with practicing today is that you don’t get any serious commissions until you are 55 or 60 and then, all of a sudden, you are offered a huge amount of work and somehow you have to prepare yourself to withstand these new pressures and the radically increased amount of time required for your creative energy.” He expands: “That concentration in energy absolutely plays a major contributing role within my work and if it starts dissipating, its part of the process of my obsolescence or conversely the beginning of a more vibrant career so it is really critical. I’m thinking about these issues now in terms of where I’m going and what I’m doing. How do you translate that intensity into your creative world so you evolve as an architect?”¹

In the spirit of this evolution, Mayne embraces the opportunity of computational processes suggesting that Morphosis’ beautifully layered drawings and models were part of a different era for the practice: “I was always aware of the isolation and autonomy of the drawings and models and, because I was building so little, it became apparent that the models and drawings themselves were the output of my architecture,” he explains. “The initial physical models were never interested in the materiality of the constructed building; they had their own world; they were a form of painting.” He continues, “I have always been focused on the organizational matrix of buildings so it was very clear early on that the computer is the obvious tool to facilitate our work, I accepted that completely, and so it was just about transition. So in 1996, when we started working with computers we made a very conscious decision to change the way that we were working with physical models.” For Mayne, one of the key advantages in an engagement with the computer was the release from the objectification of physical drawings and models: “We thought we would look to more advanced tools that could take us some place that was really about the architecture and where the models don’t have an aesthetic sense... Now instead of an aesthetic object, there is just ‘stuff’ so in a way it’s like looking at a chemist’s lab or something. You’re just going through the process but the focus now is the end result that leads to architecture.”

While Mayne is an advocate for the computer, he maintains an open process that allows for personal involvement and intuition, a preoccupation revealed by his admiration for the work of the late Spanish architect Enric Miralles: “I have always thought of my work as somewhere between the work of Peter Eisenman and Miralles². I’m involved in something closer to the behaviour of genetics so I set up organisations like Eisenman but they are not static. They are open and allow personal involvement as they develop. I can have a position but my team knows that we can have a discussion on differences in interpretation... The system simply allows me to deal with complicated problems and gives me some sense of coherency.”

1 Mayne explains: “That intensity represents a sort of Gestalt that, in turn, brings an enormously focused energy to a singular problem... ‘singular’ meaning that you focus those multiplicities into something that is coherent and able to absorb huge amounts of contingent information. That level of concentration can take a long period of time; possibly two, three or four years on a project. When you are working on something so intensely that you can’t sleep and at night when you dream, at some point you can’t distinguish your dream and real life because you are completely focused and captivated in certain aspects of this problem. Some architects are just not interested or capable of doing that in their practice.”

2 As Mayne recalls: “I was a huge fan of Enric Miralles and I remember talking with him years ago before he died. I admired him because what I recognised was his sense of relaxation and ease... I think you have to learn how to be at ease sometimes. I had to unlearn my past and my upbringing because my mother was a Christian intellectual and I just said what I read and not what I thought. The consideration of culture within her value system didn’t include any of the territory that comes with pleasure, aesthetic or a broader kind of human interest.”



Fig.8 Caltrans District 7 Headquarters, Photo, Roland Halbe
LA, 2001-2004



Fig.9 Caltrans District 7 Headquarters, Photo, Tim Griffith, LA, 2001-2004



Fig.10 Caltrans District 7 Headquarters, Photo, Roland Halbe,
LA, 2001-2004

Thom Mayne; Morphosis Exquisite Complexity

Mayne acknowledges the presence of certain consistencies in his work but refutes the notion that they hold any notion of signature form – conversely, he believes that consistencies are the result of an engagement with personal preoccupations: “If I think about certain consistencies in my work, I am interested in a certain type of conflict and so that conflict may show up in dark and light, large and small, opaque and clear, etc. I am interested in complex relationships. So the focus is always on the inventions, the potentialities and new possibilities as elements interact and I have been involved with this preoccupation literally from the beginning of my career.” He expands: “So if there is consistency in the work then it has to do with an attitude or with first principle ideas, they are not located in form yet... Form exists because I am bringing the unique, the contingent, the specific and the idiosyncratic to each project but the consistency lies in the nature of the dialogue.”

The creation of a resonant “value system” forms a vitally important element to Mayne’s process, creating layers with distinctive characteristics – a form of DNA that creates a complex, connectivity between references: “For anybody that is interested in creativity – and certainly architects – it’s not an academic or more formalized idea of critique that is important, it is your own ability to extract something that’s useful to you and somehow unlocks, encodes, expands or opens up potentials through an analogy, association or conflict”, he explains. “As you get older I think the associations – or connective tissue – become much more complicated and less literal so you don’t have to be able to identify those relationships in an academic, overt or discursive way. What’s important is that they are useful in propelling your own creative energy.”

Mayne’s rigorous design process screens out what he views as impurities or contaminating elements: “When I start working on something and focus on the specifics as distinct from any other project, I become focused on this world that surrounds and is connected with the project: site, program, etc. I shut off everything else. As far as I know, I am not consciously aware of anything extraneous to the project. Information that creeps in is unconscious and I’m trying to escape so in times of intense design activity, I stop reading and I don’t look at anything. I am completely disinterested because external information moves me away from my task and it worries me, it represents contamination... I exclusively and completely focus on what it is, and I work on it as material and it’s completely real to me and it’s physical.”¹

Effectively working on two levels, Mayne’s process constantly shifts; reassessing and recontextualising as the proposition develops from concept into architecture: “I am using and relying on a consistency of a methodology or a system to literally keeping me from getting lost because on a complex project you can lose yourself. And two things are happening: there is a sense of order outside of myself and that today would be described as ‘immersion behavior’. This is outside of my control and remains coherent because

¹ “The relationship of content is directly connected to the relationship with intensity and complexity... the first order is the conceptually structured content but then one can read multiple levels of content at a pragmatic, social, cultural, historical, and urbanistic level and finally the work is always loaded and layered with multiple readings.

The uniqueness of architecture allows it to operate in so many modes, including the pragmatic, which is also one of the richest and most complicated precisely because it has to contain so many contents. Architecture is so incredibly rich and so broad that it requires the ability to absorb the intensity - or the ability to handle a large amount of content in a single frame within the artist.

Fig.11 Federal Office Building, Photo, Nic Lehoux, San Francisco, California, 2000-2006



Thom Mayne; Morphosis Exquisite Complexity

the pieces act predictably in a way that parallels natural systems”, he explains. “On the other hand, the architecture is much more purposeful and has very specific requirements so I have to negotiate and make discretionary decisions in the system that will give me a basketball court, or a soccer field, or a theatre, or whatever. Personally, it’s this continual shift between these two worlds that interests me.”¹

Sectional studies and vertical articulations have formed a cornerstone of Morphosis’ architectural language for nearly 30 years, while a plan is often treated in a conventional manner: “I was fascinated with the section as the primary drawing and not the plan,” Mayne states. “My preoccupations seemed to preference section over plan, and that led me some place without me even knowing it.” Certainly, the dominance of section has traditionally determined the spatial dynamic of Morphosis’ work and the developmental lineage of this aspect can be traced from their early buildings such as the Kate Mantilini restaurant in LA where elaborate mechanisms and devices became part of the architecture, exploring the vertical space.² In their large-scale projects, a new kind of verticality appears using the complex program and increased scale to create an even greater contrast, increased drama in the volume and a development of the formal language of the vertical as seen in recent projects such as the San Francisco Federal Office Building and the New Academic Building for the Cooper Union in New York City.³

The architectural sensitivity and dexterity evidenced through Morphosis’ ability to integrate its avant-garde insertions with conventional built form marks Mayne’s point of difference to his European counterparts while echoing the preoccupations of his fellow Californian architects, Eric Owen Moss and Frank Gehry. Mayne views this approach as essentially humanistic, allowing contingencies between the old and the new: “You can locate history within my work and it seems to be one of the values that separates me from my peers. There is always a vestige of convention and of tradition within the work. There is always a seed of the beginning of a typological structure and it completely separates me from Wolf Prix, Peter Cook, Bernard Tschumi or Daniel Libeskind...The idea is to leave some vestige of DNA matter where I can ground a project mentally and psychologically.”⁴

Expanding, Mayne suggests: “It seems that architecture requires more connectivity than most of the arts. When a project removes the position of entry for the human being they have no way of accessing the work because there is nothing left that represents any type of connection. We operate from memory and so if we completely radicalise the process and leave nothing of the ‘found’ history then it is an attack on memory. That’s a very brutal attack and an approach that I am clearly not totally comfortable with. So in most of my

1 Peter Eisenman references a scientific metaphor when suggesting to Mayne that his design process is a parallel one to ‘interference’ as in physics, a process where waves are superimposed in such a way that they produce higher peaks, lower troughs, or a new wave pattern. The analogy references Mayne’s methodology of working with many design processes simultaneously, feeding from each other or cancelling out each other to result in a new idea.

2 Another example can be seen in the Tsunami restaurant, where the vertical object becomes a ‘frozen moment’ that emphasizes a vertical shaft directing the way into the restaurant.

3 **Mayne makes references to the British architect James Stirling** who along with partner James Gowan and the British Architectural Association established during the late 1950s and early 60s believed that a good building should have an interesting and original section. Thus, one can trace the investigation and development of the use of vertical shafts, cuts and voids in Morphosis’ collective body of work along with other influences and contemporary references culminating in a highly original result.

4 Frank Gehry, Eric Owen Moss and Thom Mayne all use the strategy of including a trace or conventional part of a building within their experimental work – a shared characteristic yet one individually developed for disparate reasons.



Fig.12 Federal Office Building, Render, San Francisco, California, 2000-2006

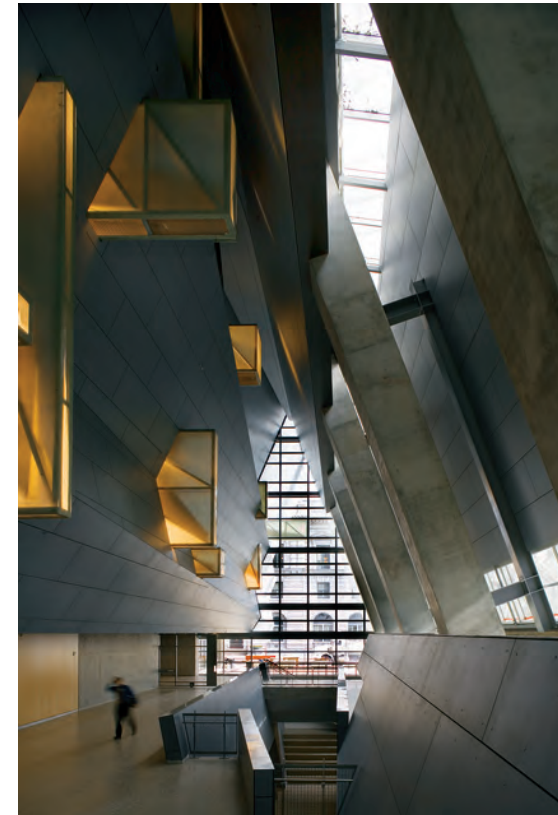


Fig.13 Federal Office Building, Photo, Nic Lehoux, San Francisco, California, 2000-2006

Thom Mayne; Morphosis Exquisite Complexity

work I leave pieces where people can enter and all kinds of elements that are absolutely conventional.¹

The strategy also reflects Mayne's ideology and commentary on the LA condition: "From the very beginning of Morphosis, we were building our own context within projects from the Venice III House (1982-1986) onwards. We literally established our own context so that we operated on the ground through the landscaping and the new built form and tried to find a broader urban connective tissue. A sense of 'broader connectivity' doesn't exist in LA; there's no physical public space because it simply doesn't exist as an aspiration. So the fact that there's no desire for public space in the city also makes it interesting in a way." Continuing, Mayne explains: "With this lack of broader connectivity comes also a lack of history and building is seen as an augmented landscape. But these kinds of conflicts and contrasts have been absolutely consistent throughout my life. For example, in the Diamond Ranch High School, we were leaving, or creating, little fragments of history that were also rhythmic events that connected with a more traditional architectural sensibility. The fragments also connected to an economic strategy: we could build incrementally rather than all at once in response to economic realities... So, for me, there is always the connective tissue of a project and an economics strategy that allows you to decide where you put your muscle and resources."

Mayne is uncomfortable with any attribution of a distinct language within his work, stating: "I don't worry about the intuitive process, it's the part that I am the most comfortable with. I can draw the line without a lot of discussion; it appears and is a part of me. I don't have to work on that, it just takes place." Elaborating, he suggests: "There is leadership within the collective bodalues and represent some sort of consistency—not a fixed term but simply a trajectory of values over a long period of time." Mayne is also quick to refute any suggestion of singular authorship and is quick to point out the collaborative nature of his studio: "I am not the singular character, the work is not about me finally," he says, "in fact it's quite the opposite. The work is about others.² I am the thought leader; I am the one that organises the process. It absolutely has traces of me as navigate through these processes, but it's produced through a much more complex fabric of circumstances, and personalities and characters and conditions."³

Mayne maintains that he doesn't see it as his role as an architect to be interested in beauty, stating: "I am somewhat ambiguous about the look of something. I really never spend time on what something looks like or what it connects to... In fact, if anything, I am quite antagonistic to fixing meanings to things." Yet when reminded of a personal anecdote⁴ where he recalls a car conversation with one of his young sons regarding the attractiveness of an unusually white splatter of mud on a neighbouring car's wheel, he acknowledges: "So much of our work is derived from this type of spontaneous, nonlinear, seemingly non-

1 Mayne comments: "if you actually look at Frank Gehry's own Santa Monica house, it's an amazing atmosphere – my grandmother would have been comfortable in his house which I think is fascinating."

2 "So if I choose Andrew instead of Chandler and if I have two young people building the model I could never recreate what would have taken place if I had chosen Chandler instead of Andrew with another team, or if I was not working parallel..." Thom Mayne in conversation with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

3 Mayne reacts warmly to a reference to contemporary cinema as a metaphor for the architectural process, suggesting: "A postmodern filmmaker like Robert Altman... gives the actors the most minimal kind of directions and just lets it happen... it's a way of continually revitalizing his work because he is allowing for contingencies and using matter that has the potential for certain types of synthesis and combustion... I'm not quite as free as Altman but I like his sense of spontaneous combustion and I find it offers a way to continually revitalize architecture." Thom Mayne in conversation with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

4 Mayne describes the car journey anecdote with his son in *Morphosis, Buildings and Projects, 1993-1997*, Rizzoli, NY, 1999.

Fig.14 PhareTower , façade, Render, Paris, 2006-

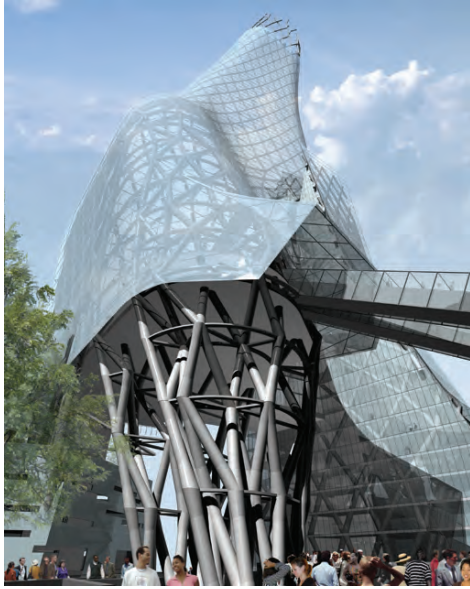


Fig.15 PhareTower , façade, Render, Paris, 2006-



Fig.16 PhareTower,Model , powder-based 3dprinted model with acrylic, birch plywood, stainless steel woven mesh, Photo, Michael Powers , Paris, 2006-



Thom Mayne; Morphosis Exquisite Complexity

sequential musing.”¹ Despite the evocative memory, Mayne declares: “I’m suspicious of the ‘eye’ and over investing in personality and character. I’m not interested in the philosophical question of beauty. It is the word itself that I find difficult.”

Clearly Mayne is more comfortable with a more oblique interpretation of beauty where – much like his complex architecture, the notion is open for investigation and reinterpretation: “When I was a young architect, one of the most influential people on my perception of aesthetics within the design process was James Stirling. He was an odd kind of an architect but I thought of him as a hero and I particularly related to his early work,” he recalls. “It was later in life when I met him that I realized that one of the reasons I had appreciated the work was that it was not fussy – in fact, it was clumsy.” Continuing, Mayne explains: “I hadn’t really understood this distinction when I was younger... and now, I always use this as an example for my students. Stirling’s work does not just come from the eye – it’s more complicated... and the inherent clumsiness is actually an important part of the essence of the work.” After a long and reflective investigation, Mayne concludes: “What I consider to be beautiful would be a sense of ‘compelling-ness’; what is it that compels you about a particular type of work and where does it take you? It’s about a very particular type of intelligence that takes you some place and allows you to see the world and experience it in an alternative way. Beauty is a by-product of an idea that is under continual evolution.”

¹ Mayne recalled a resonant example of an influential ‘contingent’ idea during the design process of the competition-winning scheme for the Phare Tower in Paris (2006). As Mayne describes: “I wanted to end the tower in a certain way with the frame of this kind of disappearance into the sky and at the same time we were looking at a more functional idea of a series of turbines that were going to serve the building... When we were looking at the top, I started realizing we really wanted to fashion our own turbines ... and all of a sudden an image of Moholy Nagy’s ‘Light Modulator’ [1937] came into my head... Then thinking of this modulator made me realize that it started developing the terms by which I was going to develop this part of the project – the tower and the beacon... it’s going to become extremely ephemeral... chrome or stainless steel... to bounce light amongst each other.” This anecdote is a clear example of how contingent, associative and referential notions can become those that determine the very idiosyncratic characteristics and language of one’s architecture. Thom Mayne in conversation with Yael Reisner, December, 2006.

1st interview: Centre Pompidou, Paris, March 2006

2nd interview: Morphosis office, Santa Monica, December 2006

3rd interview: Morphosis office, Santa Monica, December 2006

Fig.17a Tea Pot ,Photo, Carlo Lavatori, Alessi, 2000



Fig.17b Tea Pot ,Photo, Carlo Lavatori, Alessi, 2000



21.2. Eric Owen Moss The Gnostic Voice

Renowned as one of America's most experimental and thought-provoking architects Eric Owen Moss rigorously pursues and communicates his 'Penelope' theory of architecture¹ through his innovative architectural practice, provocative teaching and prolific collection of essays and publications.² He discusses his work sharply and logically, often through complicated arguments weighing one idea against the other in a Talmudic manner³ that strives for authenticity and truth. Moss cherishes individuality⁴ and rejects the notion of a 'school of thought' instead embracing and supporting a diversity of approaches to the creation of architecture. His practice has taken him all over the world – most recently to Russia and Kazakhstan – however, his core focus remains the sprawling city of Los Angeles – an environment that continues to provide the stimulus to his thought and drives the character of his innovative architecture.

Born in Los Angeles in 1943, Moss received an Arts degree from the University of California, LA in 1965 before continuing on to complete a Master of Architecture at UC College of Environmental Design, Berkeley in 1968. He subsequently completed a post-professional Masters of Architecture at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design in 1972 and, returning to Los Angeles a year later, established Eric Owen Moss Architects. During his career Moss has accumulated an outstanding and diverse body architectural projects – both built and theoretical – continually testing his methodology and position to allow space for the unexpected. He has won numerous competitions and awards that recognise his eminent status including the Academy Award in Architecture (1999) from the American Academy of Arts and Letters for "recognizing an American architect whose work is characterized by a strong personal direction", and the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize (2007) awarded "to an architect of any nationality who has made a contribution to architecture as an art".⁵ Additionally, as the Director of the influential architecture school the Southern Californian Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc)⁶ Moss continues to reinforce his reputation as a formidable critic and educator.

Moss runs his office from Culver City in central LA, adjacent to a cluster of warehouses in a former manufacturing zone known as the Hayden Tract. Working with visionary developers Frederick and Laurie Samiteur-Smith,⁷ Moss saw the potential for a precinct of creative industries and together they transformed the formerly disused industrial landscape, providing a catalyst for the area's growth and rejuvenation and an opportunity for Moss to design site specific and highly experimental architecture. The result is a collaborative piece of urban renewal with a campus-like cluster of iconic buildings including film production and post-production facilities over 300, 000 square feet. This unique context and patronage allowed Moss to test and build his ambitious ideas within a concentrated environment for over a decade and, as such, documents the evolution Moss' ideological and practice-driven development.

1 Moss' 'Penelope' theory of architecture takes its name from the legend of the wife of the King of Ithaca, Odysseus who – while waiting for her husbands' return over twenty years – weaves a shroud to distract her suitors, only to undo her work at night. As Moss suggests: "We pull together; we coalesce; we pull apart-and this metaphysical assembly/disassembly manifests itself daily in lectures, exhibits, building, publishing, teaching and debate." Eric O. Moss, *Who Says What Architecture Is?*, SCI-Arc Press, LA, California, 2008.

2 Eric O. Moss, *Who Says What Architecture Is?*, SCI-Arc Press, LA, California, 2008. *Eric Owen Moss. Buildings and Projects 3*, Rizzoli, New York 2002. Eric Owen Moss, *Gnostic Architecture*, Monacelli, New York 1999. *Eric Owen Moss. Buildings and Projects 2*, Rizzoli, New York 1995. *Eric Owen Moss. Architectural monographs*, no. 29, Academy Editions, London 1993. *Eric Owen Moss. Buildings and Projects*, Rizzoli, New York 1991.

3 Moss' dialectical discussion may have evolved equally in reference to a 'Talmudic', 'Socratic', or 'Hegelian' manner as they all share the common characteristic of a dialectical discussion that constantly searches for truth. Moss seems familiar with each approach.

4As Moss suggests in *Gnostic Architecture*, "...a phonetic or notational language – a form, a way of understanding and communicating – is taught or learned, inherited or internalized by students... that form of language communication is generic and extrinsic when it's inherited. It becomes specific and intrinsic to its user as it becomes personalized." Eric Owen Moss, *Gnostic Architecture*, Monacelli, New York 1999, p.3.16.

5Moss has received many accolades which also include the AIA/LA Medal in 1998, and the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of California at Berkeley in 2003

6 Moss has been involved with SCI-Arc since it's foundation in 1972 and was appointed Director in 2002.

7Collaborators Frederick and Laurie Samiteur-Smith transcend traditional developer values with their passionate belief in the transforming power of good architectural design and planning.

Fig.1 Fun House,
graphite drawing,
Los Angeles, California, 1980.



Fig.2 Samitaur complex phase one,
Photo, Tom Bonner, Los Angeles,
California, 1989-1996.

Fig.3 Samitaur, complex phase one, view from
roof looking down into the top outdoor space,
Photo, Tom Bonner, Los Angeles,
California, 1989-1996



Eric Owen Moss The Gnostic Voice

The architecture of Eric Owen Moss came to prominence in the early 1980s through the dissemination of his original drawings, awkward forms, experimental use of material and intellectual approach that engaged with cultural and artistic reference points. Unlike his European counterparts, Moss – along with other Los Angeles-based contemporaries such as Morphosis, Franklin D. Israel and Frank Gehry – was able to build his designs and, over time, gained recognition through the wide publication of his projects within an international platform.

Moss believes that distinctive architecture is created by individuals who are driven by their personal insights and the manner that they understand the world around them, rather than being part of a collective trend. He explains: “For example, I think that Peter Cook is a kind of architect’s architect and Lebbeus Woods could be characterised in that way also but with a different emphasis, however I am not.” He continues: “Over the past few generations I think the people who have managed to be successful in terms of implementing their ideas as large-scale manifestations have found an individual approach. It might be ‘charming/disarming’ or ‘aggressive bad girl/bad boy’ or whatever it is doesn’t really matter. It’s always personal to exchange discourse with people who are fundamentally quite different and have diverse interests and somehow you have to find a way to make what seems to be disparate interests coalesce.”

1 As Moss writes: “What was once fresh becomes as tedious method, no longer an instinct and the light goes out.” Eric Owen Moss, *Gnostic Architecture*, Monacelli, New York 1999, p.36

2 Moss references Coop Himmelb(l)au’s BMW Welt, as an example, suggesting that: “...you could look at Wolf [D. Prix’s work] through years and say that their repertoire explores similar parts that [re-investigated] within different projects. I am not interested in that kind of pursuit. Eric. O. Moss in conversation with Yael Reisner, Dec., 2006.

3 Moss’ intention is to create a tension between things which are known and those which are unknown and outside one’s memory: “This effort to create outside the limits of memory is the criterion for the colour at Samitaur, as well as for the nature of the spatial experience, which has the higher priority. The aspiration is always that the building be both known and unknown - that it suggest the world is as it is, and that it suggest the world might be something other than it is.” Eric Owen Moss, *Gnostic Architecture*, Monacelli, New York 1999, p.5.4.

Although Moss advocates individualism, he is unconvinced about the value of a defined aesthetic or signature within his own body of work. “I think an architect can make a case for almost any position so one can say: ‘I am going to be about today so to hell with yesterday’ or ‘I am going to be about tomorrow,’” he exclaims. “I just don’t design like that, I work on things and I am convinced that I don’t know what’s coming out of the other end of the process. And I am very conscious of resisting producing work which is recognisable or repeatable – a kind of one of fifteen, one of twenty series.” It is a sentiment that underpins Moss’ work throughout his career. He strives for movement and progression to ensure that his architectural language is new and unrecognizable from memory¹ although he does admit that there is “a kind of admirable dexterity in developing a repertoire and, not so much enlarging it, but increasingly re-associating the pieces.² He continues: “I think that the intellectual process within the design process has to do with an uncertainty principal... and I think it’s useful when conceptual thinking keeps moving. If you look at our Mariinsky Cultural Centre in Russia, the Smithsonian Institution offices in Washington, the Guangdong Museum in China, the José Vasconcelos Library in Mexico or Republic Square in Kazakhstan then I think you will see my intention and effort not to develop a repeatable repertoire. It’s important for me intellectually to keep digging around and explore new ways.”³



Fig.4 'Stealth', Exterior, Photo, Tom Bonner, Culver City, California, 1993-2001.

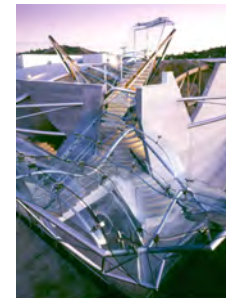


Fig.5 'Stealth', Interior, Photo, Tom Bonner, Culver City, California, 1993-2001.



Fig.6: Umbrella, Exterior, Photo, Tom Bonne, Culver City, California, 1996-1999.

Fig.7 'Umbrella', Exterior; top view, Photo, Tom Bonner, Culver City, California, 1996-1999



Moss is also a vocal critic of the 'non-deterministic' culture within digital architecture and rejects the notion that computational technologies and techniques are anything more than tools for implementing ideas: "I don't understand the tendency of some digital architects to resist being deterministic or put themselves within the project," he declares. "I think it's complete crap and in fact, the digital process is one of the most deterministic and imposing ways to create architecture, despite their claims. One of the durable constants of architecture is that it is absolutely and consciously deterministic."¹ He continues: "To have the attitude that 'the machine will do it for me' is pointless. What machine ever did anything for anyone? Auschwitz? The technology is always in the service of the ideas that drive it. So to turn architecture over to software is complete idiocy... There is a kind of adolescent arrogance that software or the latest [technology] is the key to something. It is not the key to anything actually and it has nothing to do with conservatism or radicalism."²

1 Moss questions the 'generic' and advocates a design process that is embedded in specific life experience that is intrinsic and personalized: "...I'm not interested in the idea that the] 'masses' need this and 'the people' need that. I want to understand life lived singly, one person at a time. Life is personal and private, and not always exchangeable. Yacking about the interest of 'the masses' would destroy life, as it's lived, life-by-life. Each person has a story." Ibid, p.3.6.

2 Rejecting the notion that the scientific progress is the most durable for our time, Moss argues: "In the search for paradigms, it seems to me that the most durable laws involve human behaviour – what you'll do to me, and what I'll do to you, and why. Those patterns seem the most predictable, though not free of exceptions. The least durable models are the so called scientific laws that, at first glance, seem to the empirical culture to be the most durable, notwithstanding the fact that the scientific priesthood periodically decrees and updates and sometimes inverts the doctrine." Ibid, p.5.7

3 This is an example of the typical suspicion that arises when an architect's personalised 'black box' is revealed. It is a conservative view within architectural discourse that continues to advocate an impersonal attitude to design – an approach that resurfaced in the late 1990s with a sense of self-righteousness within the digital realm. The debate originated in the early 1930s when a personal expression was regarded as capricious (refer: Wolfgang Pehnt, "Expressionist Architecture", Thames and Hudson, 1973, p.194) and continued to strengthen as widespread 20th century democracy raised the importance of 'public opinion' as opposed to the individual (refer: Walter J. Ong S.J. "The Presence of the Word", Yale University Press, 1967,P.5.]

Moss' 1999 publication, 'Gnostic Architecture', marked his significance as a thought-provoking architect unafraid of challenging conventions with new ways of engaging in architectural discourse. The publication eloquently described Moss' distinct value system and offered an intriguing insight into his diversity of influences from broad literary references to a wide engagement with visual culture. The material presented in the book, however, was widely criticised by the architectural press as being too "private" and "inaccessible"³ – a response that clearly frustrates Moss: "The response was difficult for me, because it was criticised as not being sufficiently accessible, while Rem Koolhaas' 'Small, Medium, Large, X-Large' was seen as more engaging."⁴ He expands: I feel this attitude limits society as a consequence. And I think that if you view the book as a teaching tool or a discussion piece – which I absolutely think it is – then you have to work on it and care about what's in it and make a decision about what part of it you choose to care about. I don't think contemporary culture is particularly insistent on working very hard on anything other than the idea of 'yourself'."

The book is a fascinating composite full of historical anecdotes – or 'cases' as Moss describes them. Pursuing a trajectory through key moments in history, Moss recounts examples of personalised concepts that have contributed greatly to society such as the theories of Marx and Freud, the words of T.S. Eliot and Joyce, the paintings of Mark Rothko through to Biblical moral anecdotes, Greek mythological legends, Pythagoras' rational thinking, Kant's analogy of human mentality⁵ and back to the work of Japanese filmmaker Kurasawa.⁶ The core message of the text is that extraordinary things emerge from many points of circumstance and reference, revealing what Moss calls the "introverted compass"⁷

4 S,M,L,XL, Office for Metropolitan Architecture (O.M.A.), Monacelli Press, New York, 1995.

5 Commenting on the notion of human mentality Moss notes: "There is a line from Kant 'from the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing could ever be made'... Finally you etch a path even in the biggest swamp, you are already lost in a way and you have forgotten what it was like to make a path... It's like Columbus getting in his boat and sailing to India and Cuba... so you get everything right and the work is not wrong exactly but different than you envisaged. I think the only way you can genuinely do that is to continue to try and take apart what you do, and to redo... it is the best way to capture the uncertainty principle and its result." Eric O. Moss in conversation with Yael Reisner, Dec. 2006.

6 As Moss writes: '...this relative vantage point is famously portrayed in Akira Kurosawa's Rashomon. I know that some conceptual overlook contributes to the understanding of both 'Borodino' (the discussion in Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' of the Battle of Borodino - 'What's real for Tolstoy is what runs through the life of an infinite number of people, person by person) and the 'Triumph of Death' (A Brueghel painting)... where the subject of death is not a general matter but specific to each individual. But it would be a mistake to ignore Tolstoy's perception that the history of an event can be told only person by person. Including that Hypothesis tends to mitigate the single conclusions requisite to a larger vision.' Ibid, p.3.32.

7 Moss describes his concept of 'the glue': "The glue is a cerebral underground from which specific conceptual undertakings are generated. The glue is a caricature psyche. It designates a crisscross of emotions and ideas, piled up over many years... on which the architecture sits... Over the years, as I continue to look and draw and travel, and read, numerous disparate items have stuck in my head. Some enter and stay for a while. Some enter and transform..." Ibid, p. 3.1.

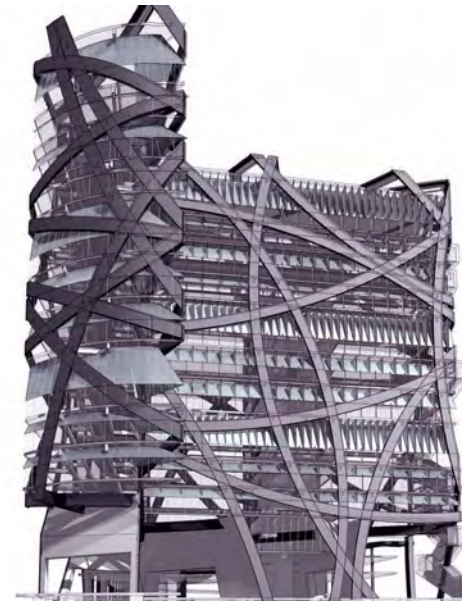


Fig.8 Jeff Jeff, Los Angeles, California, 1997-



Fig.9 Parking Garage (built) and Pterodactyl (unbuilt) Render, Culver City, California, 1999 -

Eric Owen Moss
'The Gnostic Voice'

that he believes is the foundation for an architect's integrity. As he describes: "There is an effort to say that architecture is 'everything' in the sense that it folds into itself a colossal amount of experience connected with art, history, prosaic, pragmatics etc. So it's possible to look at the book as infinitely ambitious and its aspiration – at least in my view – is infinite in that sense."

Embedded in Moss' pluralist approach is the notion that all architecture is part of a historic continuum, although not necessarily a linear one. His projects in LA, in particular, strive to retain a connection with their existing fabric to provide a response and counterpoint to the new architecture: "This is my sense of what architecture means" he explains, "it actually has something to do with a historic continuum, not because it's comforting or reassuring but because I think re-using means that at some level what preceded you is legible as you go forward in time – although it doesn't always mean 'better.'" He continues: "So it's kind of a chronology that exists at least in your head or in a history book and that is expressed in a conception in the architecture. This is really the record of people on the planet¹, so there is a kind of continuum, and there is both behind you and in front of you."²

Moss attributes his personalised and inclusive architectural process as being influenced by his father, who encouraged him to look at and understand the world in a non-conventional way: "Before I ever built anything, my dad who was a poet and a thinker encouraged me to look at the world and try to understand from a different perspective," he explains. "He was a New Yorker and a writer, he wrote for a newspaper but also wrote a series of books – one of which is a little book that is kind of like a poem called Holy Holocaust discussing the relationship over many years, between the Christians and the Jews." Seeing the instinct that his father had for his subject, influenced Moss' intellectual position: "Watching my dad's process confirmed for me that you can have an instinct for certain subjects and over a period of time you get to be a little bit more articulate in expressing those instincts. As a result I think I am interested in both the differences between people and the continuities, and the differences in the periods of time, and the continuum over a long period of time."

¹ "There is something about the history of the Jewish people, both their durability over thousands of years, and the difficulties they had... So I think I am interested both in the differences between people and the continuities, and the differences in the periods of time, and the continuum over a long period of time." Interview with Yael Resiner, Dec. 2006.

² In *Gnostic Architecture*, Moss writes that: "A building should give back its own history... the psychological construction of a human being, and the collective ethos of a culture, run in both directions: back into memory and forward toward what might reshape memory... Hagia Sphia is a church that becomes a mosque that becomes a church..." *Gnostic Architecture*, The Monacelli Press, 1999, p. 1.6.

³ Ibid, p.1.5.

⁴ Ibid, p.5.2

Through his non-linear design process, Moss extends his preoccupation with continuum by employing a dialectic tension where, beyond incorporating a tension between the old and the new, he also confronts two forms that don't conform to each other but "share enough of the congruent aspect to be read as both reinforcing and contradictory. Fit and misfit," he explains.³ This potent combination captures a tension between opposing ideas that are presented as a unified whole in order to create an equilibrium of tension. As he describes further in *Gnostic Architecture*: "The dialectic is, or can be, subsumed by the poetry. That is, the work can contain the dialectic intellectually, and overcome it lyrically. I call this the dialectical lyric."⁴ Elaborating, he explains: "Questions are rolling through time, from the



Fig.10 Mariinsky Cultural Center, New Mariinsky Theater, Render, St Peterburg, Russia , 2001-03.



Fig.11 Mariinsky Cultural Center, New Mariinsky Theater, Render St Peterburg, Russia, 2001-03.



Fig.12 Mariinsky Cultural Center, New Mariinsky Theater, Render, St Peterburg, Russia, 2001-03.

Fig.13 Mariinsky Cultural Center, New Holland, Render, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2001 – 2003.

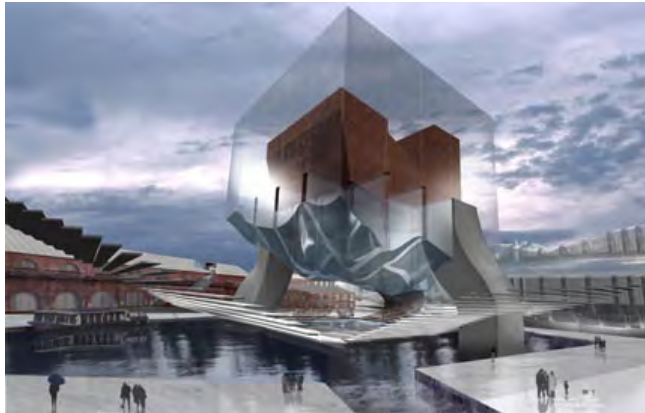
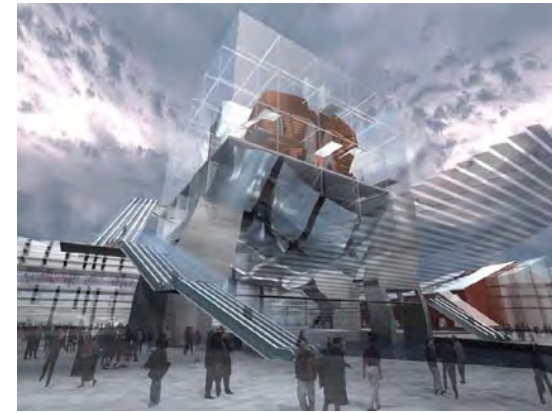


Fig.14 Mariinsky Cultural Center, New Holland, Render, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2001 – 2003.



past, to the present and into the future. And what interests me is not so much the answer, but the emotional or the intellectual, and the tension between possible answers.”¹

While Moss strives to ensure his architectural language is in a constant state of change and movement, he is conscious of an aesthetic value to his work: “Of course I absolutely care how my architecture looks. I am actually quite fascinated by that,” he exclaims. “It needs to look like something but the problem is that I don’t have any criteria except my own instinct, in order to say, a little higher, a little thinner...” He continues: “I think the term ‘ugly’ is a little bit disingenuous. In a literal sense, I don’t think anybody wants to make a project that is a kind of architectural Frankenstein. I remember how I used to call up Wolf Prix on the phone and we’d say to each other about our work, ‘it’s getting ugly, but it’s not ugly enough.’ And, I think our comments were made within the context of denying history and the fact that beauty is already a historic prejudice. In some way we were trying to averse the historic prejudice by prioritising something that used to be a negation of architecture and now has become a positive.”

Ultimately, Moss is ambivalent about the aesthetic communication of his work – at once delighted when his projects are described as ‘awkward’ and recalling his early position of ‘the uglier, the better’. However, in keeping with inclusive approach, he declares: “The reality is that I am actually very interested in making my work beautiful but my primary interest lies with trying to stretch out what I know. What I am sure about is that I really don’t know anything... It’s an intellectual process between ‘I don’t know and I know’. I think from a personal perspective I could say ‘OK I am going to learn, work on and master this and it will be Eric Moss architecture’. So my idea is that being paradoxically comfortable with comfort and with the tension between possible ideas is ultimately always more interesting to me than the resolution of the work. And, therefore the space, the configuration and the form seem to be, in a sense, ambivalent and never reaches a sort of equilibrium that results in something that I would define as beauty.”

¹ As Moss writes: ‘... the Gnostic voice, require both an intellectual dialectic and a lyrical resolution. The dialectic locates the tension. The lyric subsumes it. The process of making the building is the process of making that cerebral subject tangible as the experience of the building.’ Ibid, p.1.4.

Interview, Eric Owen Moss’ office, Culver City, December, 2006.

Eric Owen Moss
The Gnostic Voice



Fig.15 Republic Square, Render, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 2006.

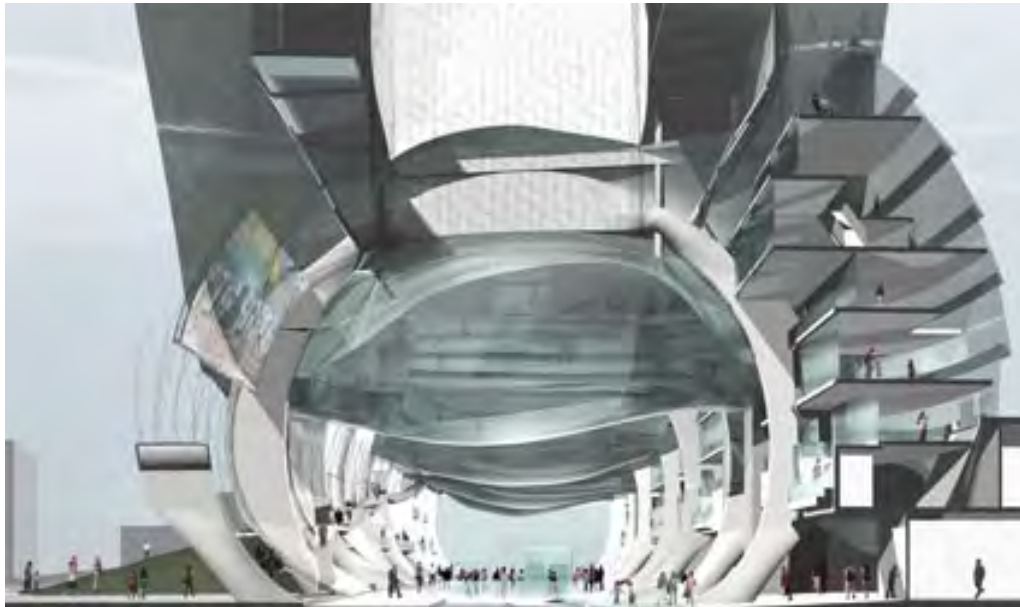


Fig.16 Republic Square, Render, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 2006.

22. Practice Platform - Part V: 2004-2005

22.1. My Peers

Between 2000-2005 my list of peers changed: firstly, from the Bartlett's culture it included Peter Cook - though not in my age, position, or status, he became a peer because of our architectural discussions; Marcos Cruz and Marjan Colletti, from the days when they were students of mine in the Bartlett's MArch, became peers when they began to teach at the Bartlett. We would discuss each other's work, compare notes in students' portfolio reviews, as well as sitting on crits and taking part in architectural discussions, such as in the symposium in Oslo University school of architecture, in December 2005.

As an onlooker from a peripheral position (looking at other 'communities of learning') I looked at different architects, in comparison to earlier times, such as: Will Alsop, Greg Lynn (as an irritation to begin with), Mark Goulthorpe (I was attracted to some of his projects but was often daunted by his approach to architecture: his hard, cold intellect) and Kol-Mac, whose work I had already looked at with envy for some time (since 2002). Gradually I developed more respect for Eric O. Moss, and started developing great respect and appreciation for Morphosis' work ever since the scale of their projects grew up dramatically and gathered a fantastic new quality.

I still kept looking at the architecture produced by Gehry, Coop-Himmelblau, and Zaha, and the product/furniture produced by Ron Arad and Gaetano Pesce: I still feel I do enjoy their work and have things to learn from it.

22.2 Gilli's family house and music pavilion; Phase 1, February 2004 –

February 2005

22.2.1. Gilli - The client

Gilli was recently divorced with one child aged thirteen. She had bought a plot in the high-heeled villa neighbourhood Kfar-Shmaryahoo, a place which used to be an agricultural village, established in 1937 mostly by German Jews who had left Germany following the rise of Nazism: professionals, doctors, lawyers and professors from Germany who bought the land and decided to make a living through agriculture. During the 1930s Kfar-Shmaryahoo was quite remote from Tel-Aviv, but these days it is officially included in the northern parts of the Tel Aviv district. It is only ten minutes drive from the sea, it is slightly inland and directly east from the active Marina in Herzelia where Gilli had a yacht anchored. She bought the yacht at the same time she bought the empty large plot, for building up a new life and to compensate for the grief and sadness that suddenly struck her. She is a very active lady, always at something, every hour of the day. Her wealth was new due to her husband's brilliance and huge success in hi-tech research. They had never owned a property before, besides an intellectual one.

Gilli bought an exceptionally big rectangular plot - 5000 m² (roughly 125m.x 40m) - where she was legally allowed to build three villas. The rectangular plot's short sides were east and west, which meant that one of the long sides was south-facing and perfect for living in.

22.2.2. Gilli's Brief - end of February 2004

Gilli's brief was basic: she wished to have a big house - 800 to 1000 m² - possibly divided into two units. She wanted to have a clear central space for socialising, with more than one sitting area, a grand piano, a fire place, and a good relationship with the garden. It should have six separate extra spaces to enable different kinds of socialising:

1. Library/family study and reading/learning room,
2. Art-making room
3. Dance room
4. Music and performance room to hold up to 180-200 people. This might function as a lecture room as well as for DJ parties, with a big viewing window into the garden where people might dance as well.
5. Cinema room (must be a dark room)
6. A spa for up to 6 people next door to a gym and a therapy room.

She also required a main kitchen for cooking and dining, as well as an extra service kitchen, where a caterer could prepare for special events. There must be two master bedrooms, for her and her son Julian, which must be distanced from each other and each have en-suite bathrooms and walk-in closets or wardrobes. In addition to this there would be two bedrooms for guests, an office space to accommodate a secretary and guests, and a shaded outdoor seating area.

Continuing outside, Gilli wanted a large swimming pool not far from the dining area or from the kitchen (eating next to the swimming pool seemed attractive for Gilli). The garden would be filled with spices and fragrant plants as well as citrus and other fruit trees, with a long walking track and meditation area. A covered parking area for two cars was also required.

Things that Gilli didn't want were: mezzanine levels (being popular in modern villas in Israel) and metallic features, balconies, and there was to be no living space on the roof. All the rooms should be next to, and open on to, the garden.

Julian wanted his bedroom to be located such that he could look at the sky every night and count the stars. He also wanted an area for playing games with his friends, an area to store computers (more than one), and space to house friends who were staying the night.

Between the original briefing and meeting Gilli the next time - a month later in my office in London - we exchanged information, plans, sections and images via weekly e-mails and phone calls. We worked with engineers from Atelier One, in whose office basement I rent two desks used as my office. Gilli wished me to help her develop the brief further than she had done herself. I was asked to design the interiors and work with a specialist gardener – under my instruction – for the surrounding gardens.

22.2.3. Gilli's project - stage I - Early Design concepts along the Design Process

The minute I saw the site, which can be approached from a street in the eastern part of the plot and a street from the west, with about five metres of height difference between them, I knew that I was going to move some earth in order to create a hill. This would create the silhouette of the hill during the sunset. I also knew very quickly that I wanted to have a lot of the garden in the long, sunny, southern parts and keep the northern parts of the plot for the building. I had one assistant in the office, Maro Kallimani, a young architect who had just finished the MArch course at the Bartlett.¹

¹ I was at that time already a diploma unit master. I didn't know her from the MArch course, but I liked Peter Cook's description of hers, besides he thought we'd be a good match (He was absolutely right; we had a great time working together for nearly 3 years).

In order to understand the relationship between the built part of the plot and the garden, I began to sketch: fairly quickly since I felt I knew how I wished to connect the building and the landscape. I built plasticine models on landscapes made of cardboard, to a scale of 1:200, followed by 1:100. They expressed the overall form of the built parts, responding to my understanding of the organisation of the brief.

I made the models after sketching for a short while, and after building the models we drew the more decisive plans and sections. I decided on how to shape the 3D models, knowing already the organisational layout, what might happen in each space and how they relate to each other. As we progressed with the models we simultaneously charted the progression of the overall three-dimensional appearance on computer - plans, sections, elevations - and further experimented with 3-D expressions on the screen (at that time mostly in 'Form Z').

As there was to be no life on the roof, no balconies and no first floors (in most of the house), I proposed rounded spaces with asymmetrical vaulting under an undulating roof.

It became clear to me that Julian would have his bedroom in a floor above the living space for him and his friends, with a direct connection to the garden (guests would also be housed on an upper floor, as presumably their bedrooms would be of a lower priority in the house and that more time would be spent in the public areas of the house). Julian would be able to access his bedroom from the playroom, but also directly from the kitchen/ dining area, thus developing a secondary circulation space which could be used as a kind of attic. Julian's bedroom, the guest room and this secondary smaller space would all have an interesting curved ceiling which would turn these rooms into cosy spaces, with a heightened sense of interiority.

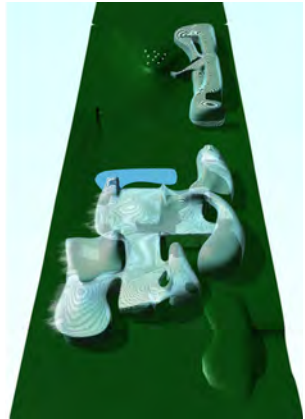
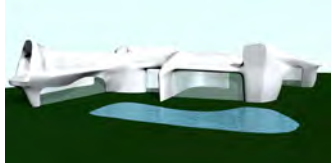
22.2.4. Organization and space layout

22.2.3.1. Unit 1 –the Family House.

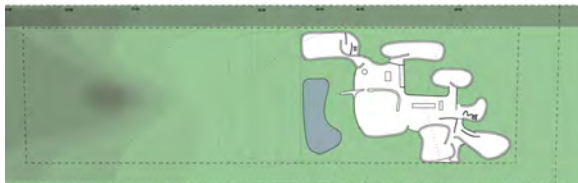
Unit 1 included the two master bedrooms, main kitchen, service kitchen, dining room, spacious living room, reading room and cinema room. All the public spaces in the house would surround and enclose an outdoor courtyard. Gilli wanted visitors to see the kitchen from the front door so that they would feel immediately welcomed and be led to living room where there would be a view straight into the garden (the main part of the living room would remain hidden by a low wall). Because of the Israeli climate, the courtyard would be in use most of the year, with a few stormy days in winter to be avoided. However, even in winter, if the sun is out in Tel Aviv, the weather is comparable to a fresh and inviting English summer day.

Gilli's project

1.- 3. Early 3D computer model - based on the 1st step plasticine models and 2D drawings, March 2004



4. Early plan, March 2004



A simple basement was designed in order to include a one bedroom flat for the housekeeper, a bomb shelter (every house has to have one by law) and a machine plant for the air-conditioning system and floor heating for the winter nights. The basement would be lit by what is known in Israel as a 'British court' - a courtyard dug next to the basement enabling natural light to enter the rooms technically below ground.

22.2.4.2. Unit 2 – the Music pavilion

We called Unit 2 'The Music Pavilion', since the music room was the largest and most dominant room, located in the eastern part of the Unit. Gilli liked to organise charity, as well as private events, and would often hold them in her house. Because of this the music hall would need to have a large entrance so that people inside could connect with those outside.

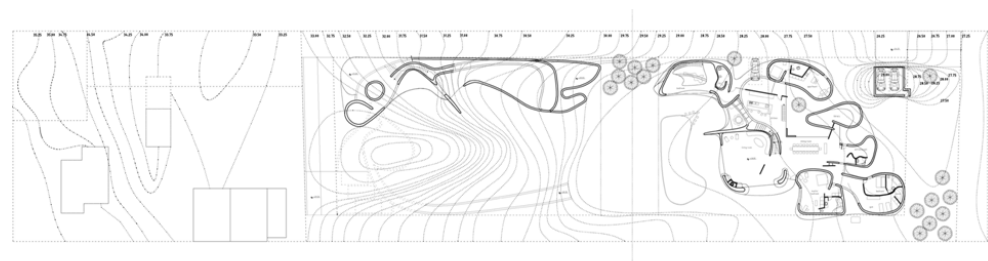
However, this unit would also house Gilli's office and an extra large room with an ensuite bathroom. The elaborate basement would have an entrance on the western side which would lead to a swimming pool area and then into a gym, past the art room, the bomb shelter, and the spa. The spa became an important part of the unit, under the hill, with a special sense of interiority, skylights and a direct route to the garden via a cut-out section which would 'hug' the hill along its southern slope.

5.- 10. First step, working with plasticine models; sketching in materials, layout organisation and early forms responding to the first brief given by the client.

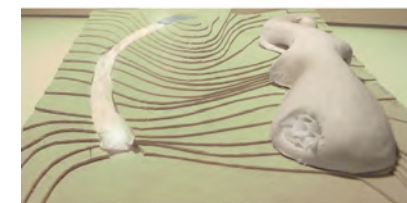
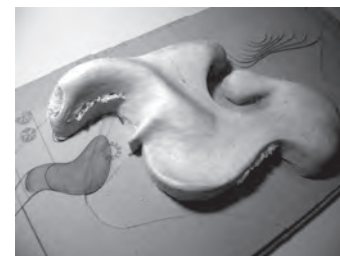
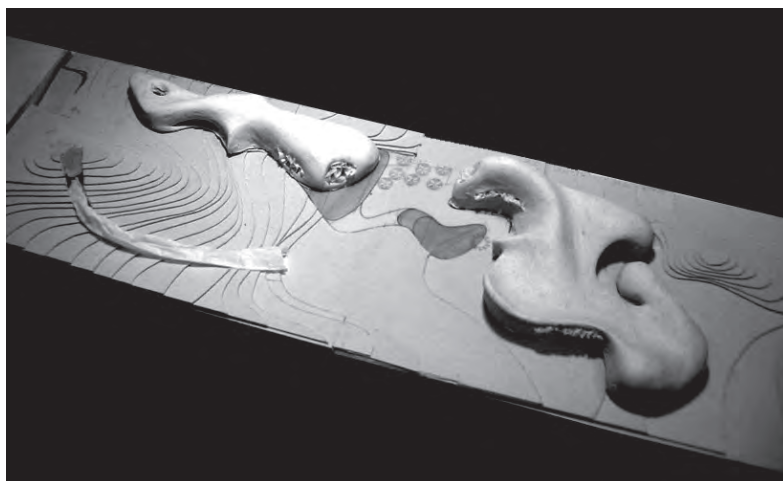




11. Early plan, March 2004



12.-15 second major step, design development, more models;



22.2.5. Gilli's project - Stage II

22.2.5.2. Design concept - Spatial-Depth - Part IV: Winter 2004

1. Organic Spatial-depth analogy, photo, Michel Francois



2. Organic Spatial-depth - Craft art, Porcelain object



When the organisation was roughly planned out along with the general line of appearance, I started to understand how I'd introduce the experience I wanted to create in these spaces: I wanted part of the skin, the shell of the house, to be perforated so that in day time some of these areas (those with less light in the day time) would, due to the strong, penetrating light from outside, resemble a dark, perforated shell; a silhouette. At night-time the effect could be controlled even further by projecting artificial light through the perforations into the house. The holes would be of different lengths, or depths, and mostly with glass closing them off lining with the top roof contour.

I wanted an organic kind of perforation, organic in terms of its wild look, with no other attributes coming from its organic shape. I say organic because I didn't wish it to have latticed geometry, but rather more like cavities in a bone structure, and again not because of its relation to nature structurally or logically, or because of its biomorphic characteristics. The aim was not to intentionally create a biomorphic shape or an organic biological reference, as one might infer from the organic undulation. Instead, the aim was to create an elegant randomness throughout the varying-thickness of the continuously undulated layer, as one often sees in nature, and most importantly through the silhouette effect in the right level of light in specific times through the day/night cycle.

The perforated zone was to trail along the leading space into the main living room and along the stairs, making the journey between the floors more dramatic – an old technique whereby the stairs are used as a dramatic focus of the house. Following this approach instinctively, we thought we might continue the theme and perforate the interior public room alongside the southern glass-pane of the inner courtyard. Thus it became clear how light - natural or artificial - would play an important role in the design of these two buildings, these two units, as they were evolving: it will penetrate or emit, dramatically or softly, in or out; direct and indirect light filtered, reflected or, amplified.

22.2.5.2. Design Process

The overall set of drawings was improved and tweaked while we were trying to check how small the perforated zone could be along the public spaces in the house (not bedrooms of course), without losing the silhouette's effect, in order to reduce cost. Meanwhile we also discussed the practicalities of building these holes (how to stop water from coming in and so on) with Niel Thomas of Atelier One, our leading structural engineers.

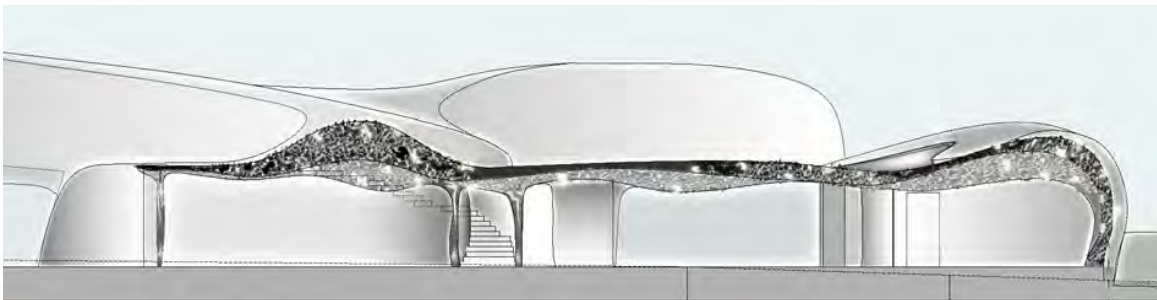
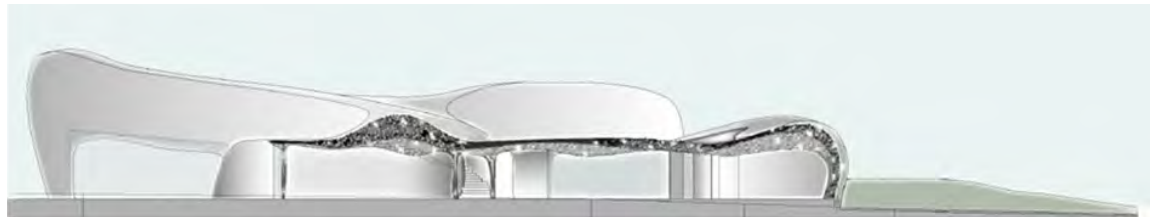
While in the process of designing the villa, I came across the work of a ceramicist who worked with porcelain, pouring it over crumpled paper. When put in the kiln the paper burned, leaving a wild skeleton of porcelain. This inspired me, and I tried something similar:

I shaped special soft wax into a branched, tree-like structure, put it into a cardboard box and poured plaster over it. When the plaster had hardened we poured boiling water over it in order to melt the wax: the light streamed through the resulting holes in a beautiful way. I thought that we might be able to create holes in a similar way in concrete, on a bigger scale. We had numerous conversations with ceramicists and concrete contractors and we came up with many encouraging ideas about how to make it happen. When the design was developed, we produced a new set of smooth plasticine models.

In the model, unit one was the family house, unit two became the music pavilion - the brief we had been presented with was to do with these two buildings - and unit three (legally) became the hill and the spa beneath it (connected to unit 2 in its basement level).

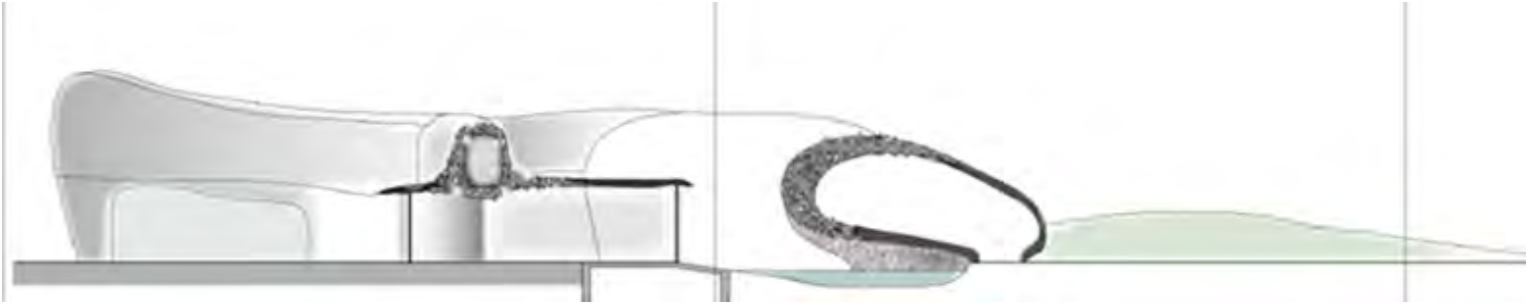
We had conversations with the local authority and they were enthusiastic and supportive, coming up with formal terminology to turn the hill into a legal third unit, since the earth on top of the spa worked as a green architectural solution. We had to make sure that the height along the plot's borders would be the same height topographically as those in the next door gardens. We would need to build the landscape accurately, and progressed with the two units and a hill version.

1.-3. Sections that portrayed the early version of the depth-scape notion explored in this project.



Gilli's project; Spatial-Depth Part IV

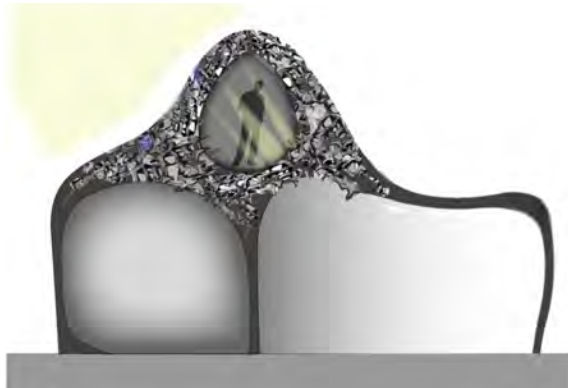
3. Section through the attic and the home cinema



4. Bone structure, A Spatial-depth structure analogy



5. Section through the attic, kitchen and dining room



6. Caspar David Friedrich, 'Hill and Ploughed Field near Dresden, 1824



8. First photoshop Collage - Looking at the Hill and the Music pavilion., March 2004



7. Asplund & Lewerenz, Stockholm, The Woodland Cemetery, 1915-1940. The Hill as a place for contemplation was inspired by CD.Friedrich's painting above.



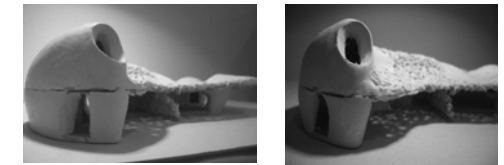
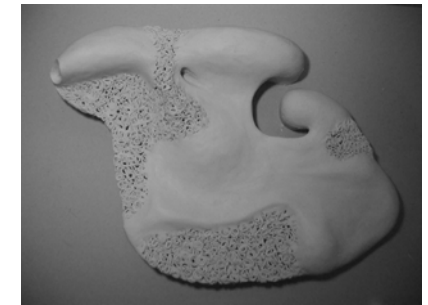
22.2.6. Gilli's project - stage III: Summer 2004

22.2.6.1. Design concept

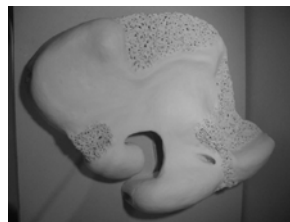
As we grew up in scale, exploring physical models in 1:50, we tried to capture an idea that settled already in the drawings and was in my mind from early on: how to avoid the 'heavy laying' of the building on to the ground, which contradicted its roundedness. I knew this was an expensive ambition, but so crucial visually that I had to think where are the most important locations for that, and where would be the best opportunities for these plastic dynamic and where it would work best with the interior space and organisation. I decided on the two most effective and relevant locations for trying to fulfil this aesthetic ambition: in Unit 1 (the family house), in the front of the house and as part of Gilli's bedroom's wing, and in Unit 2 (the music pavilion) under the music room/hall and rising above the newly located swimming pool.

Along the ideas of the perforated layers, we came to the obvious idea, in a way, of extending this effect to concrete perforated pergolas (until then the pergolas were textile which was stretched over in summer only). We developed the perforated concrete pergolas, along the southern façade so that in the winter the low sun would penetrate the house while in the summer the high sun would be deflected so that the rays would not enter the house.

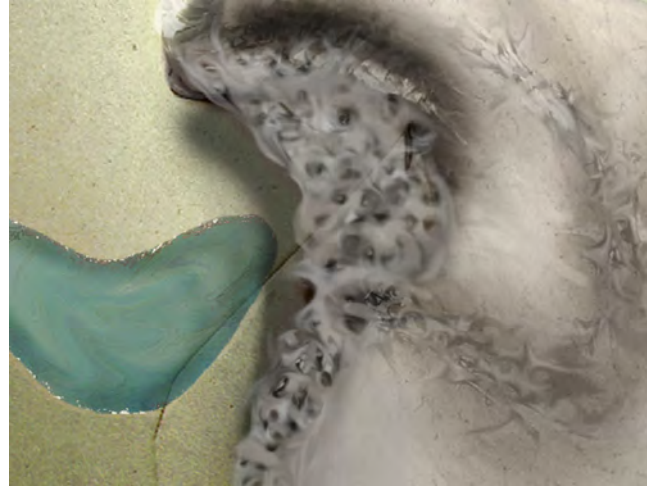
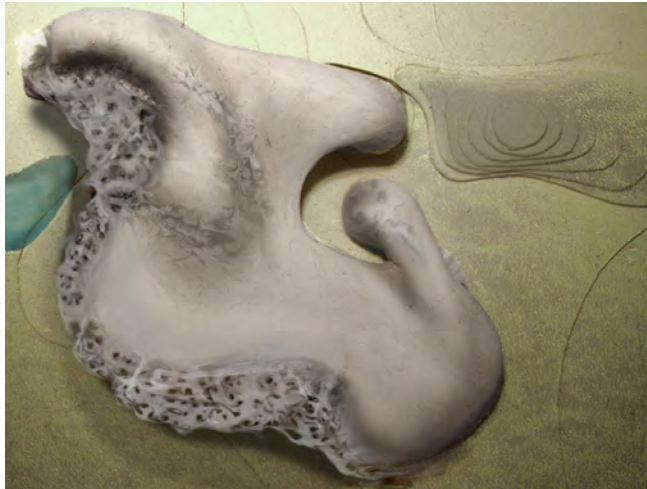
The deep cantilevered pergolas were along the western and eastern façades mostly, above sitting-out areas so as to keep them in the shade and to reduce the sun glare effect, which is disturbing even when one is sitting indoors. We developed and tweaked the plans and sections to make it fluid and suitable to Gilli's briefing requirements.



1.-.10. The Family House: Third set of physical model made of Plasticine and cardboard, scale 1:50.



Gilli's project; Spatial-Depth Part IV

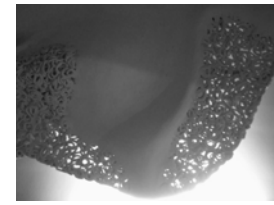


1.-2. Exploring the concrete pergola in photoshop sketches.

3.-7. We got cardboard box, soft wax and plaster to explore how to control the making the holes within the concrete pergola - A tree like wax was built within the box, liquid plaster poured into the box and after it got hard we pour boiled water on top which melted the wax. Thus we got organically shaped holes maze where the light penetrated beautifully as can be seen in photo 5.

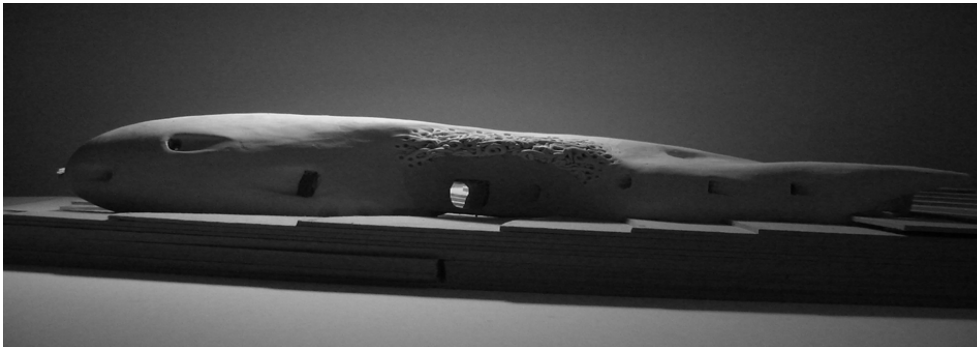


8.-11. A plasticine model exploring the perforated concrete that will enable light to filter through.



Gilli's project; Spatial-Depth Part IV

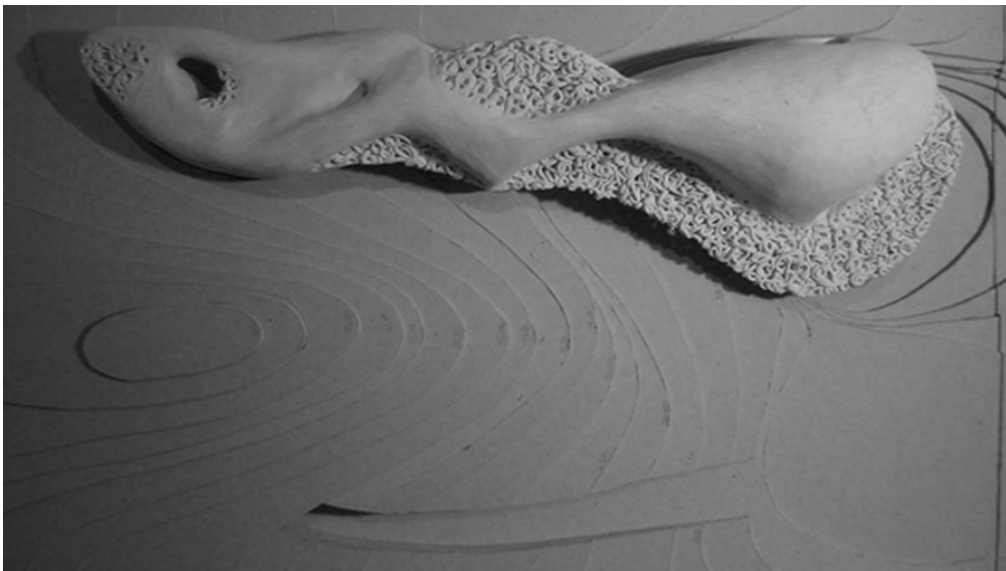
12. The Music pavilion. view from the North, Plasticine and cardboard model, scale: 1:50.



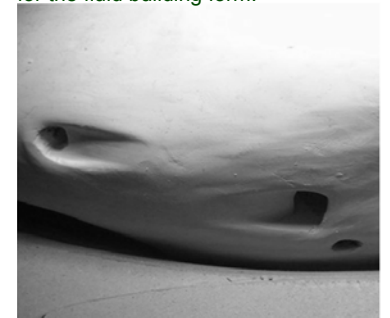
13. The Music Pavilion and the Hill, View from the East, from the Family House, Plasticine and cardboard model, Scale: 1:50



14. The Music Pavilion alongside the Hill, View from above, Plasticine and cardboard model, Scale: 1:50

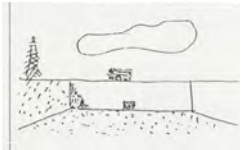


15. Investigating the facade's openings, searching for a suitable language for the fluid building form.

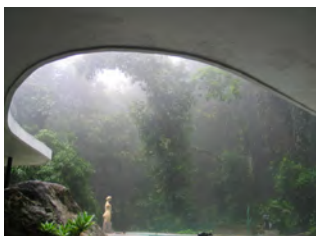
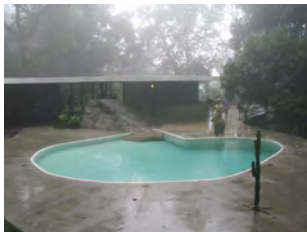


Gathering more knowledge Aesthetics, Nature, Emotions

1.-2. Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, a Sketch and Roof terrace photo



3.-4. Oscar Niemeyer was framing nature with extended flat roofs, as in his own private house in Rio de Janeiro.



1 In Greek - ieditikos - being used for a beautiful view that will trigger a pleasant daydream.

2 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetic of Space*, Beacon press, Boston (1958...translated to English in 1964) edition 1994, p. xv introduction.

22.3. Gathering more Knowledge of Poetic image, Reverie, Wonder and Beauty

22.3.1. Aesthetics, Nature, Emotions

My aim was to continue with my long-term approach of giving importance to the place of aesthetics within my architectural discourse and its relevance to my design process from the early design stages. But a no less burning ambition of mine at this time was to explore how one can evoke people's emotions through memories of beauty derived from nature, a condition that can give them a visual pleasure. My main intention was not to depict or describe Nature, but to evoke human emotions, as nature does, through the architectural spaces that I design, and it would be my first trial in a domestic architectural context.

Le Corbusier was framing nature, as in a photographic frame, as we see in Villa Savoye's big rectangular glazed window frames and the roof terrace with rectangular openings in the enclosing wall to frame the views around. Oscar Niemeyer was also framing nature with extended flat roofs, as in his own private house in Rio de Janeiro. John Lautner's extended relationship with nature by bringing nature into the house (for example, covering the roof with flower beds) turned the house into an extension of nature; however, I wished to add to these techniques and affect the interior of the house with effects found in nature.

As happens in nature, when, for example, a sunset evokes people's emotions, my ambition was to focus on the part of the architectural process that makes a space effective, where an emotional interaction is taking place between the inhabitant (client and other participants) and the architectural space. Thus the design process would involve a series of poetic images, architectural fragments or territories that deliver association and affect.

22.3.3. Poetic Images

Gaston Bachelard's exposition of issues contained within poetry teaches us that, as in poetry, visual poetic images might release people into reverie, the state of mind in which the eidetic¹ memory is accessed; the poetic image will trigger pleasant daydreams.

As Bachelard explains:

"The poetic image is a sudden salient on the surface of the psyche..."²

Thus, in order to explain the poetic image we have to resort to a phenomenology of the imagination, therefore, as he expands:

"By this should be understood a study of the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of man,

apprehend in his actuality.”¹

The big question was how, with no preparation, an appearance of an unusual poetic image would react on other minds and hearts?

“The poet does not confer the past of his image upon me, and yet his image immediately takes root in me.”²

“Only Phenomenology – that is to say, consideration of the onset of the image in an individual consciousness – can help us to restore the subjectivity of images and to measure their fullness, their strength and their trans-subjectivity.”³

Therefore, as when one reads poetry and is touched by it emotionally, the same occurs with observers of visual poetry. It becomes trans-subjective.

“The image, in its simplicity, has no need of scholarship, in its expression...image comes before thought.”⁴

As Bachelard expands:

“The idea of principle or “basis” in this would be disastrous, for it would interfere with the essential psychic actuality, the essential novelty of the poem....the poetic act has no past,⁵ at least no recent past, in which its preparation and appearance could be followed.”⁶

That’s why any procedural design process or fixed set of rules defies the possibility of a poetic effect. Similarly, there is a difference between working out the organisation of a project and working on poetic images; with conceptualising the mind is occupied while coming up with a poetic image - it’s one’s soul:

“To compose a finished, well-constructed poem, the mind is obliged to make projects that prefigure it. But for a simple poetic image, there is no project; a flicker of the soul is all that is needed.”⁷

For the philosophy of poetry, mind and soul are not synonymous. The word ‘soul’ is born of our breath; as reported by Bachelard this word for almost all peoples (as indeed in old and new Hebrew) is an onomatopoeic expression of breathing.⁸

Poetic images awaken new depths in the observer of a visual poetic image, as in the reader of a poem:

“The exuberance and depth of a poem are always phenomena of the resonance-reverberation doublet. It is as though the poem, through its exuberance, awakened new depths in us...After the original reverberation, we are able to experience resonance,

John Lautner’s extended relationship with nature by bringing nature into the house, or over the roof keeping a continuity.



1 Ibid, p.xviii introduction

2 Ibid, p.xvii introduction

3 Ibid, p.xix introduction

4 Ibid, p.xx introduction

5 This is why Frazer’s evolutionary architecture’s ‘datastructures’ as output or end products, were rehearsing what already exists (they start with seeds – forms with which we are familiar) and therefore couldn’t produce fresh, original, poetic results. I often find this with the parametric designs of the digital architects; they evolve forms in a procedural manner.

6 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetic of Space*, Beacon press, Boston (1958...translated to English in 1964) edition 1994, p. xv introduction.

7 Ibid, pp. xxi-xxii introduction

8 And as Bachelard says: “A conscious associated with the soul is more relaxed, less intentionalized than a consciousness associated with the phenomena of the mind.” p.xxi, introduction.

Gathering more knowledge Beauty

“The exuberance and depth of a poem are always phenomena of the resonance-reverberation doublet. It is as though the poem, through its exuberance, awakened new depths in us...After the original reverberation, we are able to experience resonance, sentimental repercussions, reminders of our past. But the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface.”¹

These thoughts bring me to Bachelard’s later book, published in French in 1960,² *The Poetics of Reverie, Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*³ where Bachelard considers the absolute origins of the poetic imagery. In its introduction Bachelard commented beautifully on the poet’s reverie:

“In times of great discoveries, a poetic image can be the seed of a world, the seed of a universe imagined out of a poet’s reverie. The consciousness of wonder blossoms forth in all innocence before this world which has been created by the poet.”

Apropos my descriptions of my early intimate landscape, when Bachelard articulates why, as a phenomenologist, he tries to explain such an unstable subject as imagery, he says:

“...I have chosen phenomenology in hopes of re-examining in a new light the faithfully beloved images which are so solidly fixed in my memory that I no longer know whether I am remembering or imagining them when I come across them in my reveries.”⁴

The image was present, present in us and separated from all that past which might have prepared it in the soul of the poet.”⁵

The poetic image is a spontaneous creation that fills the white canvas:

“[The poetic reverie] is a reverie which poetry puts on the right track, the track an expanding consciousness follows. This reverie is written, or, at least, promises to be written. It is already facing the great universe of the blank page. Then images begin to compose and fall into place. The dreamer is already hearing the sounds of written words.”⁶

22.3.3. Beauty I

While teaching my students or working on my own projects the creation of poetic images as part of the design process is highly important in leading us towards beauty in architecture.

It was **Dave Hickey** who wrote about images and beauty as a critic on the art scene in the

1 Ibid, p.xxiii, introduction

2 Translated to English in 1969.

3 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie, Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, Beacon press, Boston, 1971. Published first in French in 1960, translated to English in 1969

4 Ibid, p.2

5 Ibid, P.4

6 Ibid p.6

It was Dave Hickey who wrote about images and beauty as a critic on the art scene in the 1990s, but his words suited my feelings and thoughts about beauty and the lack of it in visual arts, including architecture. Beauty - as defined by Dave Hickey - touched a nerve in me - I guess because there was a note of complaint as he was leading us towards his definition of it:

“...I realized I was being addressed from the audience. A lanky graduate student had risen to his feet and was soliciting my opinion as to what “the issue of the nineties” would be. Snatched from my reverie, I said, “Beauty” and then, more firmly, “The issue of the nineties will be beauty” – a total improvisatory goof – an off-the-wall, jump-start, free association that rose to my lips God knows where. Or perhaps I was being ironic, wishing it so but not believing it likely? ...I resolved to follow beauty where it led into the silence....”¹

Hickey admitted he was wishing it to become the issue of the 1990s but doubted if it would be. He was not the only one and I was not the only one: there were certainly many others. First I'll continue with his thoughts and critique:

“In images, I intoned, beauty was the agency that caused visual pleasure in the beholder and any theory of images that was not grounded in the pleasure of the beholder begged the question of their efficacy and doomed itself to inconsequence. This sounded provocative to me, but the audience continued to sit there, unprovoked, and ‘beauty’ just hovered there, as well, a word without language, quiet, amazing and alien in that sleek, institutional space - like a Pre-Raphaelite dragon aloft on its leather wings.

If images don't do anything in this culture...if they haven't done anything, then why are we sitting here in the twilight of the twentieth century talking about them? And if they only do things after we have talked about them, then they aren't doing them, we are. Therefore, if our criticism aspires to anything beyond soft-science, the efficacy of images must be the cause of criticism, and not its consequence – the subject of criticism and not its object.”²

As he proceeded, he devised a way to reach beauty which I very much agree with:

“And this is “I concluded rather grandly,” why I direct your attention to the language of visual affect – to the rhetoric of how things look – to the iconography of desire – in a word, to beauty!”³

I believe that Beauty, Wonder and the Poetic are three important notions for me. I have been trying to refer, adhere, and aspire to them in my designs for years now, and I'm always trying to gather more knowledge about each of these notions so as to find new ways of being inspired by wonder and engaging with creating poetic images while always aiming to create architecture that will be distinguished by its beauty.

¹ Bill Beckley with David Shapiro, *Uncontrollable Beauty, Towards New Aesthetics*. Allworth Press, NY, 1988.p.15. (I read it first in Dave Hickey's *The Invisible Dragon, Four essays on Beauty*. Art issues. Press Los Angeles. California. However, I lost this book)

² Ibid, p.16

³ Ibid, p.16

22.3.4. Wonder in Nature

Wonder, as defined by Philip Fisher in his book *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of rare Experiences*,¹ is a condition that architects of our time are familiar with: the shock of the new, a pleasure that comes from a radical surprise, as in modern architecture:

“The materials as well as the size in which building was now possible with reinforced concrete, steel beam structure, and lightweight outer surfaces set up the physical premise for an aesthetics of wonder”²

And as he expands on the arts, he explained that further:

“The address to the viewer of these great and often oversized works of the last century has been an address to the aesthetics of Wonder; that is to the feeling of radical singularity of means and purposes, to the idea of incomparable experiences...But with wonder, above all else, there is the address to delight, to the bold youthful stroke, to pleasure in the unexpected....”³

But Fisher’s definition of wonder as in nature was the reason I was drawn to this book:

“The experience of wonder no less than of the sublime makes a part of the aesthetics of rare experiences...Both wonder and the sublime are also categories within aesthetics of surprise and the sudden, as is that favourite modern aesthetic category, shock. Finally, they are both experiences tied to the visual taken in a deeply intellectual way; they both lead us back to reflection on ourselves and on our human powers....”⁴

Wonder and sublimity are both of significance to me regarding my specific learning from nature, but absorbing Fisher’s next definition worried me for a while regarding the characteristics of memory, since as he explains:

“... memory and narrative are antagonistic to an aesthetics of wonder will be one of the unexpected aesthetic discoveries of the pages to follow...”⁵

In creating an emotional image one relies on memory as the trigger for the onlooker’s emotional response, but Fisher adds a bit further:

“...rare experiences and unexpectedness are very important, but when we talk about “the sun, fire, and snow are also part of the realm of expected, or regularly recurrent experiences...but...Even more important is the fact that our first experiences, our first sight of the sun, snow, fire, the stars at night took place in infancy or early childhood ...the wonder depends on first sight and first experience...”⁶

1 Philip Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of rare Experiences*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England 1998.

2 Ibid, p.4

3 Ibid, p.5-6

4 Ibid, p.1

5 Ibid, p.4

6 Ibid, p.19

Gathering more knowledge Wonder In Nature

The poetic images are great triggers for deep memories of childhood experiences and thus poetic images connect people by triggering shared emotions. However, the last issue that interested me regarding relevance to the architectural design process is the parallel that Fisher draws between wonder, as experienced in nature, and wonder, as experienced in architecture:

“...from the start wonder was recognized as a philosophical experience...Wonder and learning are tied by three things: by suddenness, by the moment of first seeing, and by the visual presence of the whole state or object.”¹

That’s why Fisher draws our attention to the idea that music cannot be included in the philosophical experience - nor, indeed, can anything that needs time to experience it fully. This observation confirms why I have been interested in wonder and nature since childhood, as they have an ‘attachment’, a strong affinity to beauty. As Fisher confirms:

“Wonder binds the mind to visual experience that has called attention to itself by its beauty, its strangeness, and its order.”²

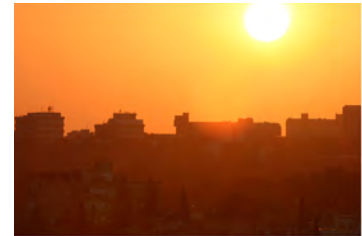
I was especially encouraged by reading through ‘The Poetics of Space’,³ and ‘The Poetics of Reverie; Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos’,⁴ by Gaston Bachelard, as well as Philip Fisher’s ‘Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of rare Experiences’,⁵ Dave Hickey’s criticisms and writings on beauty,⁶ and Robert Rosenblum’s ‘Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, Friedrich to Rothko’,⁷ on the sublime, which was actually the first I got familiar with among these books; they all helped in shaping and sharpening my approach to my design process, that was already instinctively orientated towards arriving at beauty and the poetry in architecture, learning from wonder and the sublime as experienced first in nature at a young age and later through the arts.

Focusing on these notions for some time helped strengthen my orientation and clarified my methods of design, as well as providing the pleasure of being engaged with a subject I am so passionate about.

3. The Tel-Aviv Extended Promenade into the Sea, 1991. The Promenade’s beauty is enhanced by the compositions that will interact with the sun’s low light in sunset time, The Model’s photo was arranged in photoshop in 2004 to portray the idea.



1.-2. Framing Silhouettes by the camera in Tel-Aviv.



1 Ibid, p.21

2 Ibid, p.121

3 Gaston Bachelard, The Poetic of Space, Beacon press, Boston(1958, translated to English in 1964)

4 Gaston Bachelard, The poetics of Reverie, childhood, language, and the cosmos, Beacon press, Boston, 1971. Published first in French in 1960, translated to English in 1969

5 Philip Fisher, Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of rare Experiences. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England 1998.

6 Dave Hickey, The invisible Dragon, Four essays. Art issues. Press Los Angeles. California. & Peter E.Pool., The altered landscape, , Essays by Patricia Nelson Limerick, Dave Hickey, & Thomas W. Southhall. Published by the Nevada Museum of Art in association with University of Nevada Press. Las - Vegas. 1999, & Bill Beckley with David Shapiro, Uncontrollable Beauty, Towards New Aesthetics. Allworth Press, NY, 1988.

7 Robert Rosenblum, Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, Friedrich to Rothko, Thames and Hudson, (1978 first ed.) 1994.

22.3.5. Experience through appearances

Since I'm interested in the poetic image, in fragments that capture architecture, in character, spatial qualities, or atmosphere it seems to me that the word 'form' is not inclusive enough.

Adrian Forty explains us in his book 'Words and Building, A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture' the difference between form and gestalt:

"The German language [which is where the modern concept of form was principally developed] has a slight advantage over English for thinking about this problem, for where English has only the single word, 'form', German has two, 'Gestalt' and 'form': Gestalt generally refers to objects as they are perceived by the senses, whereas form usually implies some degree of abstraction from the concrete particular."

"Throughout the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, and indeed until the 20th century, except in German-speaking countries, when architects and critics talked about 'form', they almost invariably meant only 'shape'."¹

Today, the word 'appearance' is by far more satisfying or relevant than gestalt for my design process emphasising imagery in parallel to form; it is more inclusive, it could relate to the performance of the building, or to the appearance of an image, it includes the colour, the effect of light and shadow; it's the way the building appears, and how the onlooker sees it.

22.3.6. Character

The relative decline of 'character', in all its senses, in the early 20th century would appear to have been primarily due to the influence of structural rationalism. Wherever structural rationalism took hold, character was ridiculed.²

'Character' came to conversation 'as a product of the 18th century separation of aesthetic and scientific knowledge of the world, induced 'a tendency to move towards the surface of a building, an interior or a garden, towards the experience of appearances...'³

1 Adrian Forty, p.153

2 Adrian forty Ibid,p.130

3 pp.120-21

It is interesting to realise that also historically when there was an ambition to affect architectural space emotionally, character and nature appeared together supporting the ambition to create an ‘affecting space’.

The architect J.D. Le Roy, who suggested that the themes expressed by architecture might instead be drawn from the experience of nature, said: ‘all grand spectacles impose on man: the immensity of the sky, the vast extent of the earth or of the sea, which we discover from the tops of the mountains or from the middle of the ocean, seem to raise our minds and to enlarge our ideas...’¹

This theme was introduced first in two British books on aesthetics, Lord Kames’s *Elements of Criticism* (1762), and Thomas Whately’s *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770), both of which were translated shortly after publication, the former into German, the latter into French, and had considerable influence on continental thought.

Kames’s was the first English use of character in relation to architecture in the new sense introduced in France by Boffrand: ‘Every building ought to have a character or expression suited to its destination.’²

It was this idea, that architecture might achieve a direct appeal to the spirit without mental reflection, that fascinated late 18th century French architects, in particular Le Camus de Mezieres, Boullée, and Ledoux, and which dominated discussion of character in the latter part of the century.

Boullée described character in terms of the moods of the seasons - each of which could be expressed in architecture by means of their particular qualities of light and shade. ‘This type of architecture based on shadows’ he claimed, ‘is my own artistic discovery.’³

The other generic theory of character developed in the 18th century – that of the German Romantics, including Goethe. They argued that the truth of all art and architecture lay in the degree to which it expressed the character of its maker. This notion of character as the outward expression “This notion of ‘character’ as the outward expression of an inner force, whether of the individuality of the artist, or of his culture, places art in correspondence to nature.”⁴

In the 1980’s, character came back to the architectural conversation.

1. Sir John Soane’s Museum, in Soane’s own house, London 1811. Soane described character in terms of the mood created by light.



1. J.D. Le Roy, 1764, *Ibid*, p.122

2 *ibid*, p.123

3 *Ibid*, p.124

4 *Ibid*, p.125

Atmosphere

1-2, Peter Zumthor, Material and Light enhance character and atmosphere.



Christian Norberg-Schultz in his book 'Genius Loci', Towards a phenomenology of Architecture (Rizzoli, N.Y. 1980), expresses his lack of satisfaction in understanding the purpose of architecture or architecture through scientific understanding. Genius Loci - 'spirit of place' - is recognised as the concrete reality man has to face in his daily life. Architecture is meant to visualise that; the task of the architect is to create meaningful places.

"'Character' denotes the general 'atmosphere' which is the most comprehensive property of any place."¹

"A place is not just a location, but a totality made up of concrete things having material substance, shape, texture and colour. Together they determine an 'environmental character.'²

"Being qualitative totalities of a complex nature, places cannot be described by means of analytic, 'scientific' concepts. As a matter of principles, science abstracts from the given, to arrive at neutral, 'objective' knowledge."³

22.3.7. Beauty II

I feel I need to clarify my attitude to the definition of the word beauty in my context of work and pursuit.

Beauty, as a word, already captures an emotional quality. It suggests an optimism, an uplift, and obviously an attraction.

Each period has its own definitions of beauty. By now, it has become clear, I think, that I am a Romanticist, with a contemporary romantic taste - if that helps to define my kind of beauty. Some parts of my intimate landscape describe my kind of beauty.

To add to that, I should say that it is not about a perfect form or composition, or mathematically harmonious balance, indeed it is often asymmetrical – with a combination of smooth and incomplete: imperfect, as we ourselves are.

Beauty, as defined in the 18th century by Burke and Hogarth⁴ had already lost all the classical ideal aspects and was no longer bound to any type of perfection; they both talked of imperfection but naturally their imperfection is not exactly what I myself feel when I talk of imperfection, (nor Gaetano Pesce, or Lebbeus Woods, as you will read through my conversations with them).

1 Ibid p. 6

2 Ibid p.7

3 Ibid p.11

4 William Hogarth, The analysis of Beauty, 1753

Umberto Eco, in the book he edited 'On Beauty; A history of a Western idea', brings a quote from Edmund Burke's 'A philosophical inquiry into the origin of our Ideas of the sublime and Beautiful' III, 9, 1756, where he discusses how perfection is not the constitute cause of Beauty, portraying how distress brings beauty with it:

"Beauty in distress is much the most affecting beauty. Blushing has little less power, and modesty in general, which is a tacit allowance of imperfection, is itself considered as an amiable quality, and certainly heightens every other that is so"¹

Edmund Burke's 'Philosophical Enquiry into the origins of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful'(1756), as Robert Rosenblum explains:

"was to become a major aesthetic source for the first generation of Romantic artists in search of overwhelming and fear –inspiring experiences".²

Each generation had its influential texts.

Surely beauty comes with taste and as in the business of teaching, for example, we, as the teachers, often agree with each other, (in students portfolio reviews for example) upon students who have a good 'eye'... so what does that mean? It is possible to agree within a collective culture, as in schools that have evolved their own set of values and tastes, on what is beautiful.

1 Edmund Burke, 'A philosophical inquiry into the origin of our Ideas of the sublime and Beautiful' , 1756, III, 9.

2 Robert Rosenblum, Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, Friedrich to Rothko, Thames and Hudson, (1978 first ed.) 1994, p.17

23. Teaching Platform - Part V: The Bartlett, Diploma Unit 11, 2004-2005

23.1. Annual Program - *Hi Fidelity: Aesthetics-Ethics-Poetics*

I wrote this text in September 2004:

This is the text I wrote for Unit 11's program for the academic year 2004-05:

If we are sincere, we take responsibility for what we are aiming for, reducing (as much as possible) the unavoidable gap between our good intentions and their application, making sure that we mean what we say, making sure that we don't rehearse comfortable old texts, the familiar, or, what becomes- if one is not careful - a cliché.

We place the personal experience of how we interpret the world at the very root of the creative process. Thus it is important to realise the powers of our subjective insight - often referred to as 'talent', or by others as 'design intelligence'.

As Colin Rowe wrote - "...It may have served to advertise the very obvious ; that neither the presence of talent nor the presence of ideas is a necessary guarantee of quality... one should be compelled to recognise that, quite often, 'talent' is a vivacious employment of knowledge and education." Although that was his response in 1987 to early signs of the architects' oddities, it is even more relevant at the present.

What we do is the product of our individual culture and it's our ambition to produce work that comes the closest to our genuine judgements; we don't believe in the righteousness of facts, data and objective analysis; any truth could be manipulated into any such set of 'objectives'.

There is no place for cynicism in that world of architecture. Optimism is a necessity and part of the pleasure.

Being subjective is being emotional, discussing aesthetic is being emotional too.

These were suppressed issues during much of the 20th century and during that time the architectural world felt ill at ease with such a frame of mind - unlike other arts. Socialism was one of the forces that messed around with the architect's conscience; pontificating in favour of the removal of any pleasure that architects might take in 'appearance' - in the look of things. Hence the knee jerk response against the architects as the icon makers, and our immediate response in trying to convince the world that we had little interest in, or any dealing with, 'aesthetics' through the process of making architecture: the 20th century culture of 'white lies' . Trying to understand the history of architecture (of at least the last hundred and fifty years), would make one a better more confident architect.

This year Unit 11's field trip will be to Stockholm, Helsinki and Lofoten Islands. This journey will expose us to a Nordic Nature and Mentality, after last year's Southern experience in Brazil. There are similarities we find in both locations of the two cities, Rio de Janeiro and Stockholm; Rio is known for its cultural mix, Stockholm is surprisingly so. Rio is draped over its many mountains, and Stockholm infests its thousands islands.

Cultural issues will be part of our palette as much as issues of 'Nature'. The first term's major project will be sited in the Norfolk Broads, infiltrating nature with 'out of town' city territories. (in the world of marshes, fens, rivers and lakes which lie in East Anglia), exploring the urban islets in Nature; fixed in water or floating on it. Second and third terms will be dedicated to Islets in cities that are next to water, or cities that might be flooded with water.

As most of us are city dwellers, running an intense urban life, surrounded by digital technologies, wishing for the smart house, plasma screens, multiple images running simultaneously - all observed at the same time. Virtual life is happening already and surfing the web is a common experience. At the same time real nature, as the very opposite of the virtual, excites us no less.

The desert, rainforest, northern lights or deep oceans are all territories of attraction. Wonder and beauty that we find in nature are a reminder of the possible and of their relevance to architecture.

One can take pleasure in the magical power of nature that is out there, bringing drama and wonder into the home. This time, not by way of the screen, but physically creating it within an inhabited urban territory.

Our intention is not to depict or describe nature, but to evoke and convey sensual impressions while creating an emotional environment as an integral part of the physical world, with no attempt to appease reason, but to appeal to the senses through such effects as in musical rhythm, suggestive associations etc.

We crave for bodily engagement with the real three-dimensional world, a hyper-visual one with multi layered depth, where one could see simultaneously many spatial territories; a non directional network.

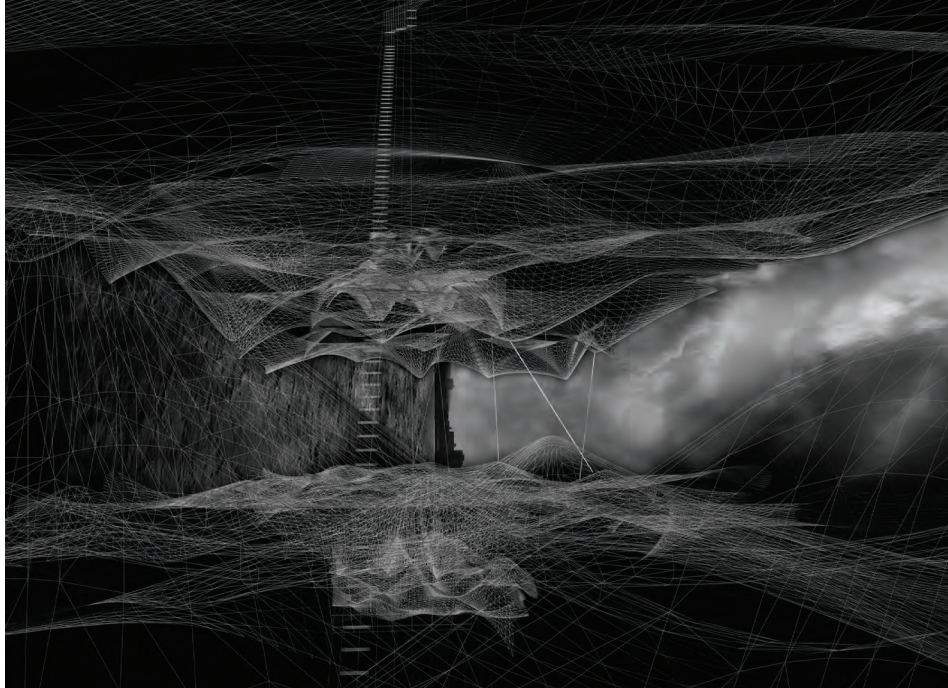
We are consistently intrigued by 'soft depth' and interested in exploring its infinite possibilities, as far as our imagination can go.

Not an optical illusion as in Baroque painting but a real space charged with light and sensuality.

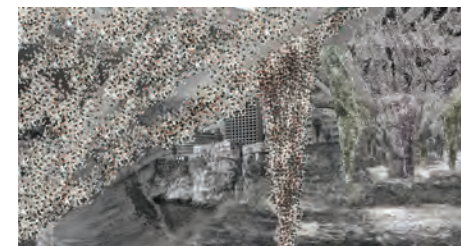
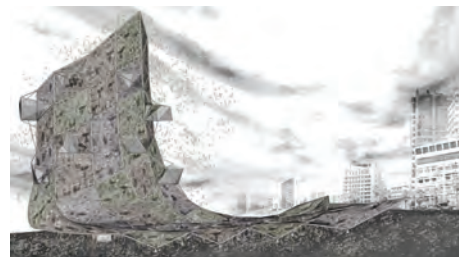
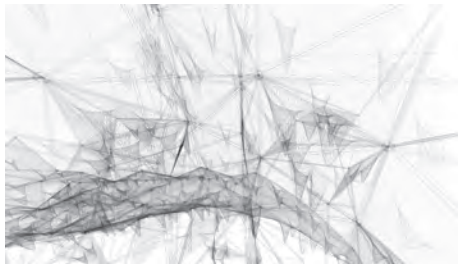
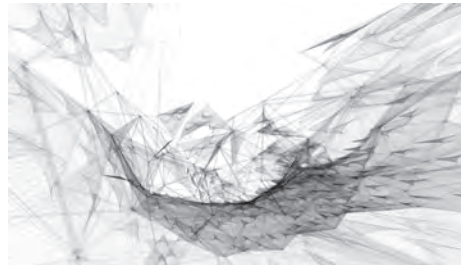
23.2. Case Studies:

23.2.1. Jessica Lawrence – Diploma 5th year- The Noise Garden- North Woolwich

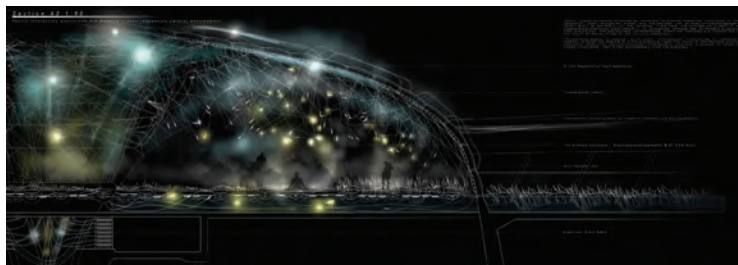
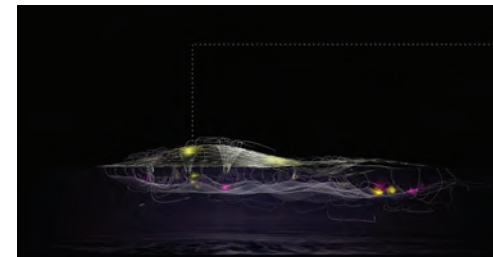
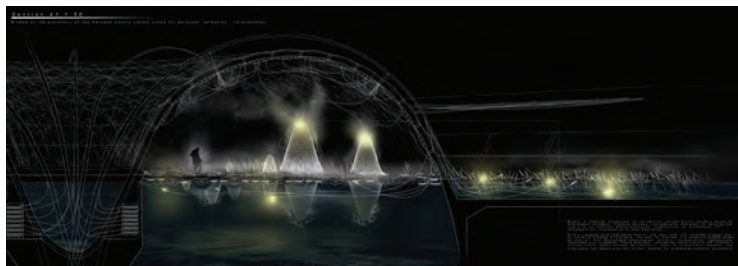
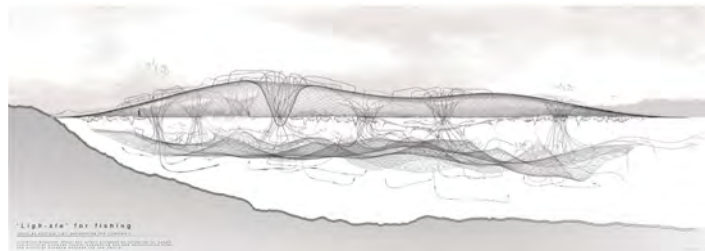




23.2.2. Nesrine Ahmad
Diploma 5th year - The flying Garden; Residential high-rise tower, Beirut,
2005



23.2.3. Moyez Alwani – Diploma 5th year fishing park , Norfolk Broads. 2005



The Romantic Tradition

1. Caspar David Friedrich, The Wanderer above a sea of Mists, 1818 Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.



2. Caspar David Friedrich, Evening Landscape with Two Men, 1830-35.



3. Philip Hunter, Line in the Dirt, 2007



1 Robert Rosenblum, Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, from Friedrich to Rothko, Thames and Hudson,(1978...)1994.

24. Gathering more knowledge about my Intimate Landscape

24.1. Introduction

When I decided to look again at the list of images that I had gathered in the chapter titled 'my Intimate Landscape part III' - I realised that all those images I was attracted to and collected for years with great affection for their appearance were tightly related to each other. Not only in their forms and appearances but also in their content and the artists' ambition, intention, or pursuit.

Surely some of us are touched by nature more than others; especially when that nature around us is typified by extreme characteristics, such like the Nordic light, fjords and mountains, or the desert - the American, Egyptian or Israeli.

Nature takes a big role in my own work. As an architect, I always relate to the horizon; through my life the sun was always setting into the big sea that ends up in the horizon, and anything which is between oneself and the low sun becomes a dark silhouette. This theme recurs over and over in my work. For similar reasons I feel close to, and inspired by, the work of the sculptor David Smith: much of it being concerned with the relation of the silhouette of the pieces against the sky, though in his case evolving from a complete different set of reasons, as I will explain later. For the same reason I feel great affinity with Georgia O'Keefe's paintings; many of them have a dialogue with different sky, a southern one, in the Western American Desert. That brings me to Asplund and Lewerentz's Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm; the outdoor rooms...the Hill with the trees on top of it, and the sky as the background...An interesting reference actually to Caspar David Friedrich, the first Western Romanticist that first ever expressed his culture through his private/personal interpretation of nature, looking into the Baltic sea, or the next door mountains.

All these artists I have included instinctively in my longer list of those whose works helped to generate my intimate landscape. Learning more about their work and engagement, I realised that it is tied together by their relationship to the artistic search for a portrayal of the overpowering qualities in nature; a search that is part of the Romantic tradition that started with Caspar David Friedrich.

24.2. Caspar David Friedrich

Caspar David Friedrich is an artist whose work I've admired since I took a seminar on German Romanticism as a student.

I learnt a lot more about him and the Northern Romantic tradition that I was attracted to from Robert Rosenblum's book: 'Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, from Friedrich to Rothko'¹.

In my work, I'm interested in the luminary opposition of light and dark.

I'm interested in getting a sense of the dome of the sky with restless thrust so as to create a tension, with combined qualities; simple and complex.

I learned about the powerful switch from material to immaterial; from bodiless at times to full physical presence.

I learned how to improve these qualities by looking more carefully at C.D Friedrich's paintings and at the work of other artists who were inclined to follow in this stream of the Romantic tradition - one which remains until today (as in the already cited examples of the Israeli painter Larry Abramson, from Jerusalem, and the Australian artist Philip Hunter, from Melbourne).

As I learned from Rosenblum,

"The core of the Romantic artists was the dilemma of how to express experiences of the spiritual, of the transcendental, without having recourse to such traditional theme as the Adoration, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and so on."¹

Caspar David Friedrich could be considered a pivotal figure in translation of sacred experience to secular domains.²

Feeling and images first defined in the mid-18th century. Goethe, in his novel 'Young Werther's heartfelt', tells us just what sensation such landscape might arouse:

"I felt myself exalted by this overflowing fullness to the perception of the Godhead, and glorious forms of the infinite universe stirred within my soul"³

What makes it even more significant for me is that this perception paralleled Goethe's other notion that science and philosophy had separated man from his real assets:

"Science and philosophy had separated him [man] from a deeper wisdom that is the source and sustainer of life...they must be emancipated from the tyranny of excessive intellectualizing"⁴

"It was actually common to the romantic period to fuse the two polar worlds of the abstract and the empirical, the universal and the specific."⁵

"That peculiar Romantic duality ...where the extremes of the most close-eyed perceptions of nature and the most visionary, abstract forms and systems are juxtaposed and at times, combined."⁶

In the 'Two men by the sea'(c.1817), at sunset, or in 'Sea and Sunrise', 1826, the compositions are elementary as the subject- constructed on axes of both vertical and horizontal symmetry.

1. Larry Abramson, Nevo, 1984.



1 Ibid, p.16

2 Ibid, p.15

3 Ibid, p.18

4 Perry Marvin, *An Intellectual History of Modern Europe*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993. pp.174-5

5 Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition, from Friedrich to Rothko*, Thames and Hudson, (1978...)1994. p.46

6 Ibid, p.46

Georgia O'Keefe, Asplund and Lewerenz

1.-2. Georgia O'Keefe



3. Asplund, Stockholm Public Library, 1918-27. The children's Story-Time-Room.



1 pp.19-24

2 Ibid p.62

3 Ibid, p.197

4 Ibid, p.201

5 Claes Caldenby and Olof Hultin, Asplund, Arkitektur Farlag, Stockholm, Sweden, 1995.p.41

“By distilling natural phenomena to so primal a condition that mythic experiences can be evoked, Friedrich expressed an ambition that would recur, as we shall see, throughout the later history of modern painting.”¹

“It is very much in character of the Romantics to express through their paintings intense contrast of the near and the far of the imminent and the distant...where our eye must suddenly leap from the close confrontation of nature's forces on the near side of painting, to a remote vista ...Such a polarity in Romantic art between the finite and the infinite, the microcosm and the macrocosm, might perhaps be considered a reflection of the period's restless and disturbing awareness of the individual pitted against the universe, whether in terms of a single human spirit that searches for its place in a mysterious totality, of a single manifestation of nature that can offer a key to unblocking of a cosmic whole.”²

As Rosenblum explains in his book, from Friedrich and Turner, Van Gogh and Munch, Kandinsky and Mondrian, through to Still, Pollock, Rothko, and Newman: in retrospect we can see how they all share the characteristics of the Romantic tradition: all sharing a similar goal of searching for an art that could convey sensations of overpowering mystery, blurring distinctions between landscape and religious paintings, between the natural and the supernatural:

“artists like Still, Pollock, Rothko and Newman, persuaded many spectators that their forms and emotions were unprecedented in the history of Western painting, in retrospect their art often reveals not only deep roots in Romantic traditions in general, but in American tradition in particular.”³

24.3. Georgia O'Keefe

Georgia O'Keefe was one who often painted the sublime sites such as Tack in the American West :

“describing those breathtaking infinities of unspoiled nature where the absence of human beings prevents us from determining whether we are looking at mountains or mole hills.”⁴

Thus her animal skeletons or fragments like a metaphoric landscape in ambiguous scale; a Romantic characteristic of leaps from microcosm to macrocosm, from infinitely large to small.

24.4. Asplund and Lewerenz

Landscape was not part of the Modernist agenda besides as a recreational concern, but, Asplund and Lewerenz's approach was to revive landscape traditions, where they looked at Romantic naturalism. As Stuart Wrede in his essay: 'Classical and Vernacular by Asplund'⁵ explained how they turned the untouched Nordic forest on site into a dominant experience influenced by ancient Nordic burial introduced within a new context.

Wrede writes about the influential writer and poet Werner von Heidenstam and the Swedish culture.

“Heidenstam, who saw the intimate and inseparable connection between building and landscape, also spoke of the soul of, and the emotional content of landscape and building”¹

Artists such as Munch, wrote Wrede :

“seem as a revitalization of the Northern Romantic tradition painting which had an important source in the work of CD Friedrich ...”²

And as Wrede expands:

“While Friedrich was not rediscovered in Germany until 1906, he as apparently rediscovered for Scandinavian artists much earlier, through the writings of Norwegian art critic and historian Andreas Aubert, who discuss Friedrich extensively in two articles on J.C. Dahl in 1893-1984.”³

I visited the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm the first time in the mid 1990s, and loved it from first sight. I found it fascinating or even astonishing to discover later on, when reading about it and its development, that Friedrich’s paintings were part of the references for that project. Everything I get emotional about or attracted by, takes me back to the Romantic tradition. The trees on the hill as a meditation grove were a clear and direct reference to a specific painting by Friedrich: ‘Mound and field near Dresden’, (c.1824), as Wrede pointed out.

Elias Cornell in another essay: ‘the sky as a vault’, about the Woodland chapel,(completed in 1920), describes how the white dome hovers one’s head weightlessly. All ceilings were treated as the sky.

He added that Asplund worked like a stage director, when designing the Woodland Cemetery, designing the people’s experiences for when they attend funerals or visits.

In another project, the Library in Stockholm, (1918-1927), Asplund exaggerated purposely the dimensions of the different domes; always referring to the dome of the sky.

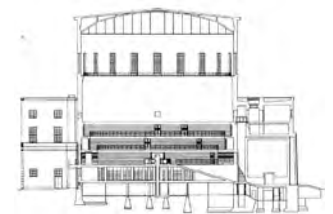
The main central drum in the library, the books height took less than one third of drum’s height, and he designed for the drum’s wall white clouds in plaster all around. In the children library section there was another smaller dome above the story-telling wing.

So wherever one looked at Asplund’s work the Romantic tradition played a significant role.

1. Asplund, Stockholm Public Library, 1918-27. Ascending towards the Lending Hall: the big room unfolds. Under the windows along the high drum, there is a three dimensional depiction in white plaster of clouds, as the drum symbolises the sky.



2. Asplund, Stockholm Public Library, 1918-27. Section through main staircase and lending Hall. One can see in the section how high the drum is above the Lending Hall.



3. Asplund and Lewerenz, The Woodland Cemetery, Stockholm, The Woodland Chapel’s interior, The dome with its top lighting gathers the room. The dome ceiling is an Asplund’s theme of the sky as a vault, 1918-1920.



1 Ibid, p.42

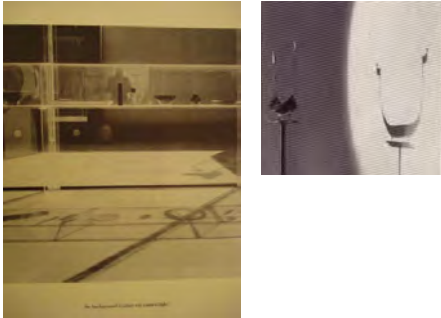
2 Ibid, p.42

3 Ibid, p.43

Sverre Fehn

Sverre Fehn: four examples of the shadows' choreography as a reoccurring feature in Fehn's work:

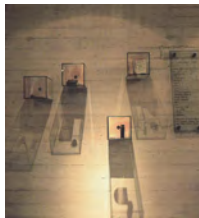
1-2. The Norwegian Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Exhibition, the natural light as the cause of the shadows; a shadow choreography created by the sun's movement in the sky.



3. The Norwegian National Museum of Photography, Horten, south of Oslo, Norway, 2003. The reoccurring theme in Sverre Fehn's Work, where the shadows' choreography becomes a distinctive feature of Fehn's architecture, while often created by artificial light.



4. Ivar Aasen Centre, Norway, 2000



1 First work of this kind produced in 1966-76 by Michael Heizer, Robert Smithson, Walter De Maria, Robert Morris, Nancy Holt, Carl Andre.

2 John Beardsley, *Earthwork and Beyond; Contemporary Art in the Landscape*, Abbeville Press, NY, 1989,

3 Ibid, p.13.

4 Ibid, p.19.

5 It was built on an exhausted sand quarry that was found for him.

6 John Beardsley, *Earthwork and Beyond; Contemporary Art in the Landscape*, Abbeville Press, NY, 1989, p.23

24.5. Sverre Fehn

I find it so very inspiring that in his later work - the National Museum of Photography at Horten, south of Oslo (built in 2003) - the beautiful shadows that are cast by the different exhibits upon the different adjacent surfaces all around - walls, panels, floors. The dark silhouettes join the physical presence of all the rest in the most inspiring way; no detail of the objects, no repeat, but just the choreography of these shadows. (it is a shame that I don't have any good photographic evidence of that). These are elements that Fehn obviously enjoyed working with since his Norwegian Pavilion in Brussels - even though each time it is differently handled. One could say that it is Fehn's Iconography: the bringing-in of dialogues between light and objects within the different exhibitions and different museums that he has created.

24.6. Land Art

American Land Artists¹ left a deep mark on my consciousness, augmenting the memories of the Israeli desert annually experienced in childhood.

It is interesting that actually they chose the American desert because of a wish, as Michael Heizer claimed, to get out of the galleries. As John Beardsley, in his book 'Earthworks and beyond; Contemporary art in the landscape',² explained:

"Artworks were valued only as commodities, and as Heizer said: "The position of art as malleable barter-exchange item falters as the cumulative economic structure gluts"³

Heizer insists:

"It's about art, not about landscape. The work was not done to make any comment about the landscape."⁴

But it seems as they were active in the desert they were slowly influenced by the grand landscape and its great capacity to touch our feelings. If in the early years Robert Smithson claimed that human interventions in the landscape are just like earthquakes and typhoons, and no more unnatural, he later changed his mind after his 'Spiral Hill'⁵ in the Netherlands, when it became a location for his first effort to reclaim an industrially devastated landscape through art. As Beardsley wrote:

"[Smithson] blamed the industrialists of total lack of sensitivity to the visual values of the landscape."⁶

Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* is located in the Great Basin Desert, outside of the town of Lucin in Utah. Holt was interested in the great variation of intensity of the sun in the desert compared to the sun in the city. It is interesting to observe that when you see the overall project from the air it has a very basic composition and rough concrete tunnels, but when you stand there, your experience is totally different:

The work consists of four massive concrete tunnels which are arranged in an "X" configuration. Each tunnel reacts differently to the sun, aligned with the sunrise, sunset, or the summer or winter solstice. Someone visiting the site would see the tunnels immediately with their contrast to the fairly undifferentiated desert landscape. Approaching the work, which can be seen one to one-and-a-half miles away, the viewer's perception of space is questioned as the tunnels change views as a product of their landscape.¹

The top of each tunnel has small holes forming on each the constellations of Draco, Perseus, Columba, and Capricorn respectively. The diameters of the holes differ in relation to the magnitude of the stars represented. These holes cast spots of daylight in the dark interiors of the tunnels, which appear almost like stars. Holt has said of the tunnels, "It's an inversion of the sky/ground relationship - bringing the sky down to the earth". This is a common theme in Holt's work.²

It seems at the end that with Nancy Holt as with her husband Robert Smithson, art in the landscape was based at the end on its cosmic grandiose characteristics.

1 Beebe, Mary Livingston. "Tell Me, Is It Flat or Is It Round?" *Art Journal* 41, no. 2 (1981): 169.

2 Saad-Cook, Janet, Charles Ross, Nancy Holt, James Turrell. "Touching the Sky: Artworks Using Natural Phenomena, Earth, Sky and Connections to Astronomy" *Leonardo* 21, no. 2 (1988): 123.[both footnotes 107, and 108 were information sourced at wikipedia under 'Nancy Holt'.]

1-2, Nancy Holt, Sun Tunnels, Utah.



3, Nancy Holt, Sun Tunnels, Utah. Summer Solstice time



James Turrell



1. James Turrell, A set for a dance company.

24.7. James Turrell

Turrell is interested in sculpting light. He is not interested in making sculptures per-se, he is interested in capturing light and its character. For him any light, natural or artificial becomes the same material since light can be only natural. As he has said:

“I use light in the medium of perception...perception is the object, and so is image...I am interested in the thingness of light, the object quality of perception, I want the actual act of seeing to be the object of attention.”¹

And I was interested in his further description:

“We have a strong primal relationship to light, when you stare into fire, for example, you enter into kind of non-thinking state, or, at least, a non- thinking-in- words state.”²

And he expands:

“Only when light is reduced considerably, can feeling move out of the eyes into space. My work is about reducing the loudness of light so that we feel its presence.”³

One of his earliest apertures that allowed light into an interior space was a small sky window in his first studio space, where the edges of the cut wedged down to a sharp border, so as not to see the thickness of the walls. Turrell explained:

“The apparent surface was read as being at the inside boundary of a room and thus enclosing the space, rather than opening out from it.

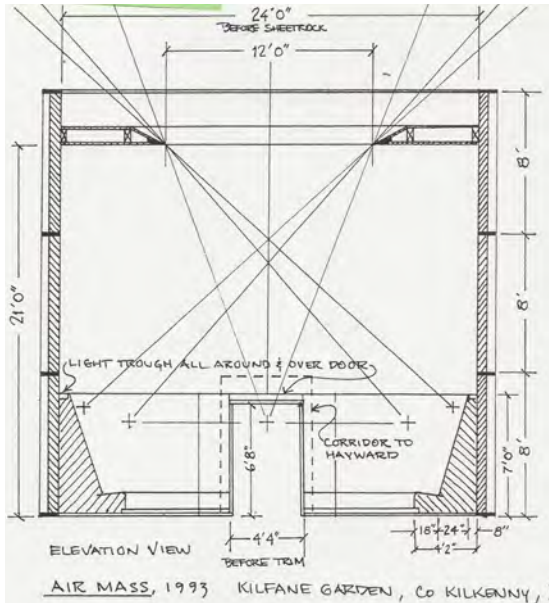
By focusing on the window itself as a work, we could look directly “out” into the empty sky – or more accurately “at the sky” as pure colour.”⁴

These were principles that led Turrell through many of the ‘skyspaces’ that he has built around the world. To experience the light one must sit in a skyspace for at least two hours at sunrise or sunset and interact with the atmosphere.

James Turrell, in the Roden Crater project, and from the early 70’s, was keen on constructing a large outdoor sculpture that would shape the visual phenomena of celestial vaulting and the related concave earth illusion. As he comments:

“these interior spaces will house light sculptures engendered by natural illumination.”⁵

2. James Turrell, A principle section through a skyspace.



1 AD, Installation Art, an interview with James Turrell : 'painting with light and space', Interview by Clare Farrow, p.45

2 Ibid, p.46

3 Ibid p.46

4 James Turrell, Exhibition catalogue, p.31 [catalogue is lost and all the rest of the details.]

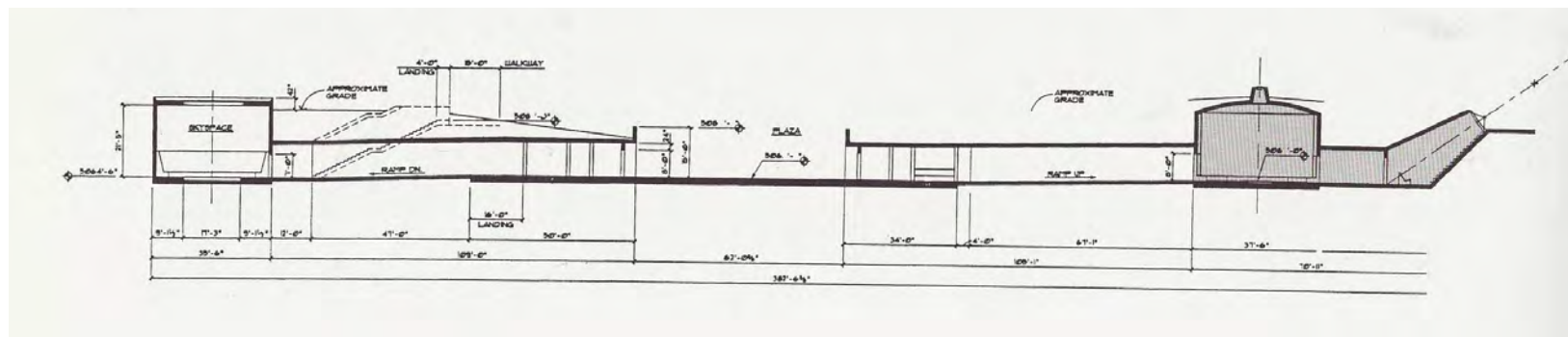
5 Ibid p.55

These perceptual impressions are explained in a book by Marcel Minnaert – that Turrell admires – and it is revealing to discover Minnaert’s explanation about the dome of the sky, speculating on its ‘reassuring effect’ and the reasons he gives us as to why it feels so:

‘When we survey the sky from the open fields, the space above us does not generally give us the impression of being infinite, nor of being a hollow hemisphere spanning the earth. It resembles, rather, a vault whose altitude above our heads is less than the distance from us to the horizon. It is an impression and not more than that, but for most of us a very convincing one, so that its explanation must be psychological and not physical.’¹

¹ Marcel Minnaert, *The Nature of light and colour in the open air*. (translation) NY, Dover, 1954, pp.153-4

1-3. James Turrell, Roden Crater.



24.8 Olafur Eliasson

Olafur Eliasson is a Danish/Icelandic artist who creates installations and sculptures using natural materials such as light, steam, water, ice and wind.

In the 'The weather project' at the Tate Modern, in autumn 2003, he used artificial light to create the effect of a big low sun. He covered the Turbine Hall ceiling with mirrors so the people who walked in could see themselves. The power of show lay in the visual transformation by which they saw themselves (and each other) primarily as silhouettes in the mirrored ceiling, or just from a certain distance.

Only three months later it was reported that the show attracted over million visitors and in the Tate Modern press release it was written:

"Eliasson's cosmic sorcery of lights and mirrors not only seems to double the scale of the hall, but inspires everyone present to feel as if they're walking blindly off the planet into the setting sun."

24.9 Cosmic reveries

It was Gaston Bachelard, in his book on reverie, who wrote about the ability of cosmic reveries to help us 'inhabit' the happiness of the world:

"Cosmic reveries...they situate us in a world and not in society. The cosmic reverie possesses a sort of stability or tranquility...It is a state of mind (literally: "state of soul")... poetry supplies us with documents for the phenomenology of the soul. The entire soul is presented in the poetic universe of the poet."¹

"Cosmic images are sometimes so majestic that philosophers take them for thoughts. By doing our best to relive them, we have tried to show that they are relaxations of reverie. Reverie helps us inhabit the world, inhabit the happiness of the world."²

"The soul doesn't live on the edge of time. It finds its rest in the universe imagined by reverie."³

24.10 Mary Miss

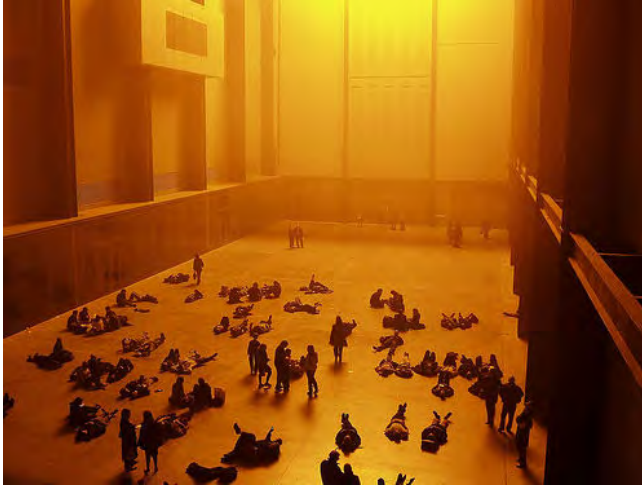
I found Mary Miss's view interesting and very informing, for she is not interested in form for art's sake, but in how forms shape our physical emotional experience:

"I think there is experience inherent in the physicality of structures, even without supporting belief systems. For example the Baroque churches of Mexico, are compelling even for

1 Gaston Bachelard, *The poetics of Reverie, childhood, language, and the cosmos*, Beacon press, Boston, 1971. p.14

2 Bachelard, *Reverie*, Ibid,p.22

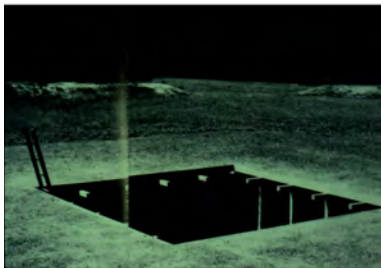
3 Ibid, p.15



1.-4. Olafur Eliasson, the 'The weather project' in Tate Modern, autumn 2003.



5.-6. Mary Miss, Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys, 1977



7. Ceremonial cave and kiva, Frijoles Canyon, New Mexico



8-9. the charged moments of the daily low light and the silhouettes it provokes, are very much part of the Chinese and Japanese old traditions as well as in Western culture. In China, the Yellow Mountain, as seen here, are often depicted by Chinese painters, and in Japan, Kumamoto castle, in Kumamoto, is designed with low light in mind enhancing playful and enjoyable moments as seen here in the picture I shot there.



David Smith

people not involved with mythology of Catholicism.¹ A Baroque church or, an ancient ceremonial cave dug in the ground and opened to the sky - Miss believed they all captured an emotional experience in their very form.

Her work portrays a phenomenon that dwells on polarity between light and dark, heaven and earth, framing sky, and qualities we also find in Turrell's and Holt's work.

It is interesting that their generation was not interested in the look of objects, or even - sometimes - their own object, but they framed the beauty in nature for the benefit of the spectator.

24.11 David Smith

My attraction to David Smith's sculptures from the 1950s and early 60s evolved from a similar engagement with silhouettes, but the actual reason for their appearance was Smith's ambition to create flat sculptures - and silhouettes are naturally considered flat. When I read about Smith's work I realised it reflected the compositional principles that characterise his paintings and drawings, and nothing to do with mysterious cosmic powers.

Smith arranged plane, colour, and gesture non-referentially and non-descriptively in space as easily as on canvas or paper. Because image took precedence over structure, the placement of forms was more important for him than shaping them three dimensionally. Thus they were flat as a sketch, as a drawing, since Smith's intention at that time was to create two dimensional sculptures.

So, I realised that the silhouette effect was tangential to his ambition of creating sculptures as flat sketches on the sky.

24.12 Anish Kapoor

I have been touched by Anish Kapoor's work for years; primarily by the invitingness of its depth and its ambiguous characteristics, while he deals with worlds of interiority in an original and intriguing way.

Kapoor has produced a number of large works, including *Taratantara* (1999), a 35 metre-tall piece was installed for eight weeks in the Baltic Flour Mills (a building that had stood for nearly two decades as a derelict structure on the Gatehead side of the Tyne river, facing Newcastle, England), and *Marsyas* (2002), a large work of steel and PVC that was installed in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern.

I felt with both works that if people could walk into them they would have experienced a wonderful architectural moment.

As Sune Nordgren (the Baltic director) described '*Taratantara*':



2. David Smith, 'Australia', Steel sculpture, USA, 1951.

1. David Smith, 'Voltron XXV', Steel Sculpture, 1963.



1 Mary Miss, *Projects, 1966-1987*. Mega 7, Architectural Association, London, 1987, p.97

1-5. Anish Kapoor, exhibition, Art Museum Munich, 2008.



“in a sense formally non-assertive yet emphatic.”

I quite like the term ‘emphatic interiority’ and in 2002-2003 in my teaching I introduced it as a notion to explore in the Bartlett, Diploma Unit 11. I feel I was still engaged with it as a notion of exploration while working on Gilli’s project, and I will return to that.

Most often, Kapoor’s intention is to engage the viewer, evoking mystery through the dark cavities of the works, awe through their size and simple beauty, tactility through their inviting surfaces and fascination through their reflective facades.

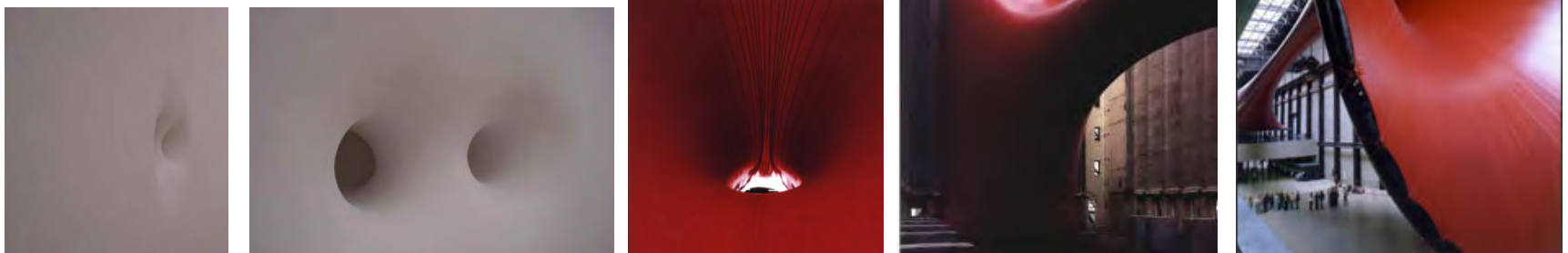
Some of his sculptures are made of solid, quarried stone, many have carved apertures and cavities often alluding to, and playing with, dualities (earth-sky, matter-spirit, lightness-darkness, visible-invisible, conscious-unconscious, male-female and body-mind).

What I like most in Kapoor’s work I show here is the aesthetic of a tremendous sense of beauty. beautiful composition, exciting scale, its bigness being part of its power and strength, a frequent seductiveness of the colours and an overriding feel of mysteriousness .

10, *Marsyas*. A large work of steel and PVC that was installed in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern, London, 2002

8-9, *Taratantara* (1999), a 35 metre-tall piece was installed for eight weeks in the Baltic Flour Mills; a derelict structure on the Gatehead side of the Tyne river, facing Newcastle, England.

6-7. Anish Kapoor, Exhibition, Art Museum Munich, 2008.



25. 6th Block - The Heroes Conversations with Mark Goulthorpe, Greg Lynn, Kolatan - MacDonald, and Hernan Diaz Alonso

25.1. Mark Goulthorpe Indifferent Beauty

The rise of a computational culture within architecture and the diverse range of rapid prototyping technologies have enabled a prolific accumulation of projects created directly from computer models and translated into 3D physical products. Simultaneously, this culture has resourced a sophisticated exploration of formal and industrial applications that are both economic, evocative and of increasing public fascination through the dissemination of powerful and seductive architectural imagery produced by computer technologies.

The evolution of Digital Architecture gathered pace through the late nineties and is now in a period of consolidation, firmly embraced by the architectural community and now emerging beyond pure speculation as built reality all over the world. Further driven into mainstream consciousness by Frederic Migarou's seminal exhibition 'Non-Standard Architecture'¹ at the Pompidou Center in Paris in 2003, the much lauded survey marked and highlighted the work of leading 'digital' protagonists such as Mark Goulthorpe of dECOi architects.

Goulthorpe, an Englishman in his early 40s, has worked and lived in London, New York, Malaysia, Paris and is currently based in Boston, at MIT.² On first meeting, Goulthorpe appears bright, sharp, and extremely well read, speaking quickly and almost whispering throughout conversations while maintaining a controlled and measured tone during his public lectures. He routinely uses evocative language when discussing his architecture³ and borrows terminology from the disciplines of philosophy, sociology, psychology and art history, which he creatively manipulates to explain his designs.

Goulthorpe initially came to international prominence through the beguiling imagery of the Pallas House project in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (1997), produced in collaboration with fellow architect, programmer and mathematician Bernard Cache⁴. Since this high-profile, collaborative project, Goulthorpe's methodology has evolved and defined from 'non-deterministic' to what he describes as a 'precisely indeterminate' process of working. Yet he doesn't merely engage with the semantics of these other disciplines to create his architecture, he genuinely collaborates with programmers, roboticists, mathematicians, architects and clients through an intense and rich generative computerized process that absorbs multiple influences and traces different threads throughout the work. The result is an unpredictable outcome that attempts to transcend any notion of 'signatory architecture', while still providing the architect with the opportunity to "edit the output along the design process". As Goulthorpe explains: "The methodology for the Pallas House lay outside of any kind of determinate image-making and worked within the interior of architectural form and representation, emerging as a mathematical manner rather than through deployment of lines and points."

1 Non standard architectures, International exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, December 10, 2003 – March 1, 2004.

The exhibition "Non standard architectures" questioned a new typology of industrialization within architecture based in non standard procedures and tools , which allowed for serial and singular production. The exhibition took its name from non standard mathematics and advocated a re-engagement with material and industrial logics of production that accompany and redefine form-making processes... The exhibition confronted non-standardization to the modernist notions of type and standard in order to place contemporary digital production in an historical continuity. [www.cnac-gp.fr]

2 Mark Goulthorpe is an Associate Professor in Advanced Digital Design

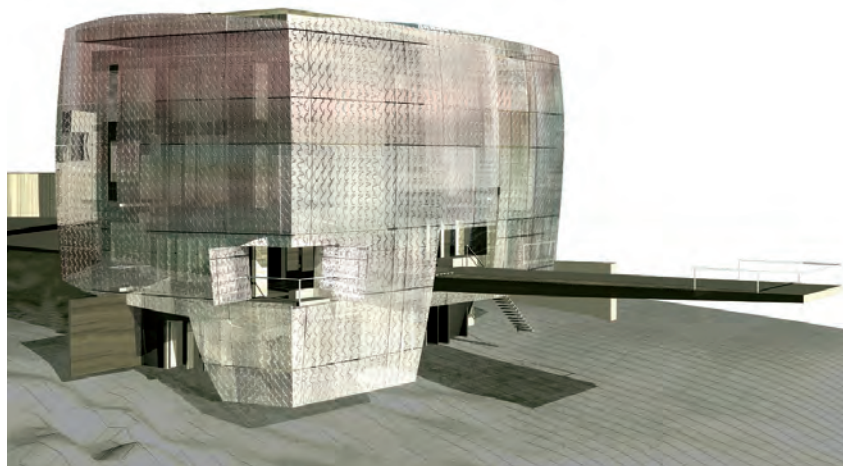
3 Examples of Goulthorpe's evocative language include: 'Voluptuous inscrutability', 'imaginary dementia', 'indifferent beauty', or phrases like: 'emergent forms that slide expansively in/out of the curvaceous yet inexpressive void', AD; Poetics in Architecture, March 2002. Mark Goulthorpe, 'Notes on Digital Nesting: A Poetics of Evolutionary Form', p.19.

4 Bernard Cache and Patrick Beauce [Objectile] fight against an author's status for architects. Their position is that the architect is an intellectual worker whose mode of production is increasingly governed by digital technologies. Objectile to random, fluid, moving or virtual architecture, and to all approaches that perpetuate the age-old myth of the architect-artist. L'architecture d'aujourd'hui, 349 , Nov - Dec 2003, p.96.

Fig. 1 Bankside Tower, London, Model,,
2004



Fig. 2 Pallas House, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, collaboration with Bernard Cache, render,
1996.



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There is no doubt in the creative and original nature of the research and subsequent projects produced by many leading architectural studios that employ digital processes and techniques. However, Goulthorpe's engagement, as expressed in his article¹ on poetics in 'Evolutionary Architecture'², tests the notion of yielding 'poetic images'³ within a procedural and rationalistic design process, but also exposes his doubts⁴ about the potential of many digital processes to be 'poetic' in a Bachelardian sense⁵. As he succinctly sums up: "dECOi deliberately develops multiple creative threads that weave into a final architectural form, frequently allowing the process to lead where it will, and to exceed, in some manner, our rational preconception... such images are then seemingly legitimised by Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*"⁶.

1 AD; Poetics in Architecture, March 2002. Mark Goulthorpe, Notes on Digital Nesting: A Poetics of evolutionary Form.

2 'Evolutionary architecture' is a term coined by John Frazer, the forefather of the Evolutionary design process. who was research active at the Architectural Association in London from the early 1970s to the mid 1990s. Frazer applied the computerized simulation of the evolutionary process to the architectural design process – a well established technique in biology - using computer programme known as 'genetic algorithms'.

3 "The poetic image is a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche". Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston (1958, Translated in English, 1964) Edition, 1994. Introduction, p.xv.

4 It reminds one of the historical 'perception' battles between the Romantics and the Enlightenment Philosophers in the 18th century. The Enlightenment philosophers and the Romantics believed in the individual's personal significance. However, the Romantics blamed the Philosophers for separating people from their feelings, and crushing their spontaneity and individuality in order to fit all life into a mechanical framework.

Marvin Pery, *An Intellectual history of Modern Europe*,

Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993, p.174

5 Goulthorpe's interpretation of Bachelard's poetics, as discussed in interview with Yael Reisner, London, September 2005, wrote: "...If we were to follow Bachelard precisely, we would talk not of forms but of images, the Poetics focusing on the effect of a poem rather than its specific form, for which he uses, carefully, the term 'image'. It is not just the emergence of an image, but its capacity to exert an influence on other minds, that captivates Bachelard as the essential cultural moment." AD ; Poetics in Architecture, March 2002. Mark Goulthorpe, Notes on Digital Nesting: A Poetics of evolutionary Form, p.19.

6 *ibid* p.20.



Fig. 3 Bankside Tower, London, Original Sketch,
Render, 2004

Mark Goulthorpe Indifferent Beauty

Since the 1950's architects seem to have struggled with the relationship of beauty and aesthetics to architectural discourse and the generating of ideas and Mark Goulthorpe is no exception. "The word 'beauty' is a very difficult term to handle," he says, "Personally, the notion of beauty has resonated with me through the writings of philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, who's book *The Birth of Tragedy* really moved me as a student for its breaching of formal aesthetics. Most recently, I've read Gianni Vattimo's *The Transparent Society* that describes the need for a new social aesthetic rather than a formal one, perhaps marking a closure of the breach."

The terms 'social' and 'aesthetic' may sound contradictory but Goulthorpe elaborates on the theme: "Aesthetics has been a dirty word throughout the 20th century for architects, but in other fields – such as philosophy – Jurgen Habermas and Herbert Marcuse have continued the tradition by reframing aesthetics as a socially formative notion – as an act or an event that allows people to identify within a group rather than as simply the formal quality of something. A good example is the Paris Music Festival, where musicians are allowed to set up in the street for one night. Then the moment that the band begins to play, there is a flicker of judgement that goes round the ring, a momentary social cohesion. It seems like a trivial case study but it's one where a group of people are clearly brought into a social collective by an artistic act. Evidently most aesthetics operate less explicitly, particularly within the 'slow' realm of architecture, yet it's that social identity that seems the lure in a digital age."

Returning to Vattimo's *The Transparent Society*, Goulthorpe suggests that the book describes and speculates what might constitute "a contemporary social aesthetic that articulates the social cohesion offered by objects, clothes and images to create multiple identity within a digital global condition; an aesthetic not based on formal beauty." He expands: "How such social aesthetic translates into architecture is a difficult question given architecture's 'formal' presence. To a certain extent, every town has a Frank Gehry or Norman Foster building, but I think architecture has the potential to create identity in a far subtler and complex way than the obvious representative bravado of these projects. The identity that develops in and around an architecture of process would unfold differently - it's slower."

The notion of aesthetics being integrally linked with identity and architecture's role within a cultural collective identity intrigues Goulthorpe, who finds the architect's role within society increasingly difficult to reconcile: "The other day someone said to me that the reason architects are under appreciated and are paid poorly is because of the fact that there's no proximity of the process of architecture to the consumption of the end result - the closer the process and consumption relationship, then the more immediate the result." Recalling the devastation of 9/11 and the collapse of the World Trade Towers, he continues: "Nobody



Fig. 4 In the Shadow of Ledoux, installation, wood,
Grenoble, 1993.

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realised the Towers were important until they were destroyed. In fact, they were grudgingly tolerated, yet once they were destroyed it's amazing how powerful the sentiment is. I believe this is a fundamental form of identity. When the attack was described as 'the greatest artwork of the 20th century', it was no glib commentary – it was an attack on the base cultural psyche.”

The pursuit of an internal, interrogational generative process and an exploration of mathematically driven design through interdisciplinary collaborations informs the output of Goulthorpe's work which essentially strives for no 'style' and no characteristic form. In this respect, Goulthorpe's introduction to, and subsequent collaboration with Bernard Cache on the Pallas House in Malaysia (1997), provided an essential underpinning to his creative conceptual framework: "I'd been trying to create architecture through a process that somehow detached itself from any sense of style. Even though Western culture has drawn on construed known forms and images throughout history, it seemed insufficient to the complexity of our current cognition. When I met Cache I saw that he was creating architecture that was entirely implicit through a mathematical process, all the way from inception to manufacture and I found his approach aesthetically resonant and conceptually sufficient to our time.”

However, while working together on the project, Goulthorpe found himself confronted by his own sensitivity to resolution in spite of Cache's rejection of any discussion of 'eye judgement' or aesthetic value: "We managed to tease out a very beautiful form for the Pallas House despite the fact that Cache doesn't have a sensibility for scale and nuance. He's a mathematician-programmer and he hesitates to make aesthetic judgements. Yet, his system certainly woke me up to the fact that generative systems exceed my own ability and hold an incredible potential.”

Despite Goulthorpe's developing personal commitment to generative methodologies, The Pallas House challenged the architects' process when the aesthetic interpretation of the client was introduced into the equation. As he recalls: "The Pallas House was a mathematically driven design that we worked through to give multiple formal options for the decorative screen. The client was Chinese, and the first time he saw the work, his reaction was: 'I'm not going to live in the Koran! He saw it as a form of Arabic calligraphy; more culturally specific than the abstract 'arabesque' we'd imagined it as! So we reworked the mathematics and the motifs as several different 'glyphics', to the point where he finally said: "Oh they're dragons!" The client's instinctive reaction reminded the architects of a description by Viennese-born Ernst Gombrich of the 'dragon force'¹ – a term used by Swedish Sinologist Bernhard Kalgren to describe the numinous power of ancient Chinese vessels and their elaborate surfaces, in which hundreds of motifs engender a vertiginous

1 Ernest Gombrich, *The Sense of Order, A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, 1979. Phaidon, 1984, 2nd edition. Chapter 10, 'The Edge of Chaos', p.262. On Animation, and on 'A Great Dragon Force'.

Fig. 5 Aegis Hyposurface wall installation, Parametric design, 2000



Fig. 6 Aegis Installation, Parametric design, 2000

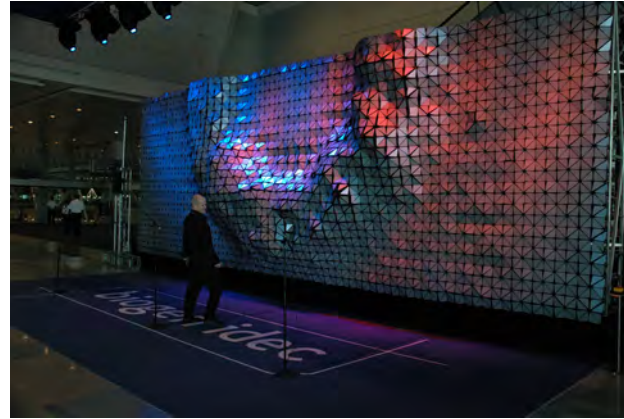
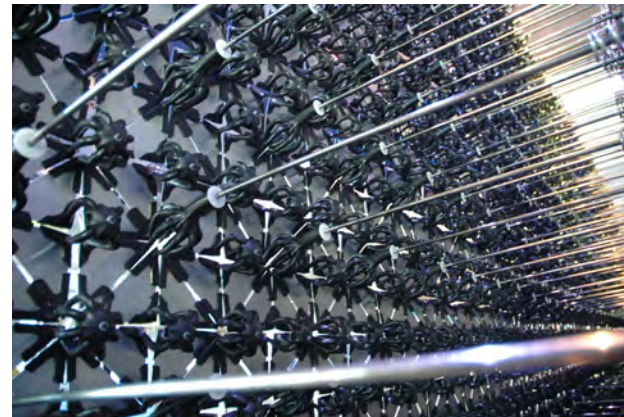


Fig. 7 Aegis Installation, Hypo Interior, Parametric design, 2000.



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effect. “The client loved the reference and it became very personal, consolidating his minority identity in Malaysia”, Goulthorpe explains. “The analogy was suggestive of the possibility of non-representative yet associative cultural memory – a kind of algorithmic equivalent notion to the search for the emperor’s new clothes.”

Since the Pallas House’s completion, Goulthorpe’s position has consolidated to pursue a line of research that he describes as “investigating how one creates a form with sufficient internal intensity that is left in space with cultural resonance.” He explains further: “It’s certainly not in the image of previous architecture; it’s an interrogation and re-interrogation of itself, its internal logic, and you look to put it out in space with the hope that it attains a charged material intensity. It doesn’t attempt to communicate in any way beyond a fascination with and in itself – and one hopes that, in its moment, this may produce identity, if not a sense of community... It’s not a formal beauty that I’m particularly looking for, although we work very hard to achieve a certain level of formal resolution, to attain a conviction of form. Indeed, I’m convinced that many people would look at certain of our ‘art’ objects and say they’re ugly. Yet, most interesting is the fact that beauty is ugly – the first moment of the beautiful.”

While the singular pursuit of beauty or formal aestheticism holds no interest for Goulthorpe, he agrees that the advent of computer technology has allowed spatial complexity to become increasingly economical, however, he doesn’t seek to exploit this potential per se, except through challenging the existing systems of construction as an industrial collage to further examine the relationship between form and content. Instead his strategy is to challenge existing systems of construction as an industrial collage to further examine the relationship between form and content. He explains: “A drastic separation of things from each other has occurred in the Modern era, sponsored by the ‘specialism’ of industrial processes, like the separation of structure and surface. So, for example, you separate columns from cladding, mullion from wall, railing from stair. Architecture is separated into its industrially-produced components, as a literal collage of pre-made things, and I think that has probably instigated notions of separation within architecture.” Warming to the topic Goulthorpe describes the rationale for what he terms a ‘new Minimalism’ within his work: “As you begin to deploy these digital, seamless, technologies, what seems to be happening is a fusion of things like structure and surface. Certainly all of our work refolds one thing back within another – the surface becomes the structure, which becomes the formal expression, which becomes the aesthetic. Form and content seem to be fused once again.”

Intriguingly, Goulthorpe peppers his discussion with references to other creative disciplines rather than embedding his references firmly within an architectural framework. However, unlike many of his contemporaries, he deflects a direct analogy between architects and film directors, stating his distrust of the ‘director’ as someone who’s all-powerful and directive, who determines form.” He expands: “I don’t think it’s an accident that I’m looking at people

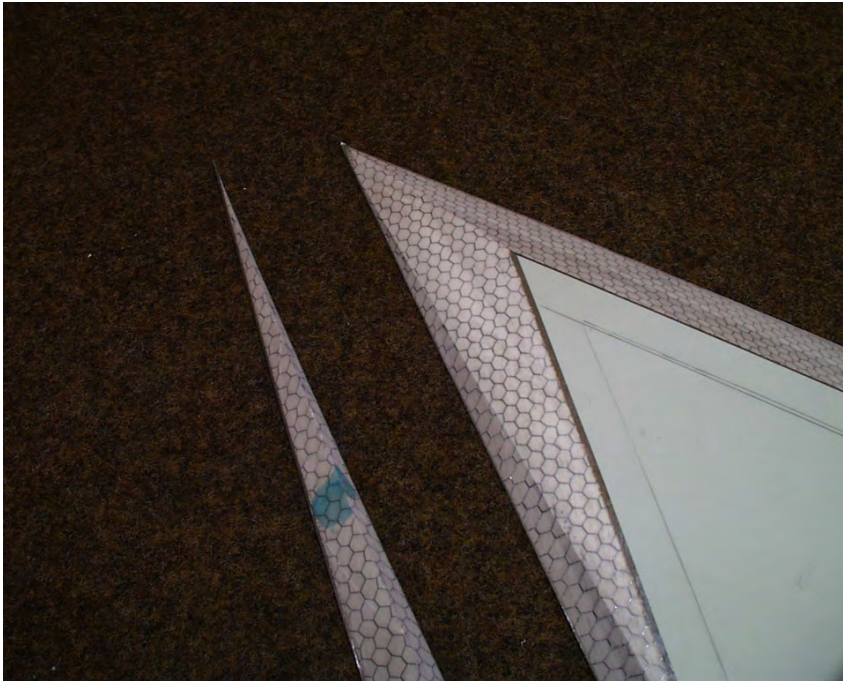


Fig. 8 Bankside Tower, London, Aluminium Honeycomb,
CNC cut, prototype, 2004

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practicing in the kinetic arts – ballet and music for example. I think that they're ahead of architecture in terms of using and understanding current 'technology'. In the early 90's a few composers and choreographers were quick to thoroughly explore what the notion of computation could do for music, and now you're beginning to see the first really profound works from that generation. Within architecture, I think we're still exploring what can be done in a very limited way."

In context of dECOi's work, Goulthorpe believes that most of the projects are singular experiments in design-fabrication; for example the Miran Galerie (Paris, 2003) – a singular process of milling plywood and the Glaphyros House (Paris, 2003) – an experiment in plastically redefining elements. He expands: "I'm looking forward to the moment when one can deploy a compounded range of techniques that makes it possible to create an architecture that is equivalent to the 'traumatic' complexity of the art forms emerging in other domains." Goulthorpe credits American dancer and choreographer Bill Forsythe¹ as one the most resonant and recurring influences on his work, explaining: "Forsythe's no longer the person that controls movement... He's instigated the intellectual environment, the generative rules, on which the performance is based, with the dancers bodies algorithmically calculating real-time on stage, the result is a bewildering intensity often exquisitely beautiful in its breaching of an art-form. I feel that dECOi's work is striving to work in a similar way, via the expanded formal possibilities of generative rule-sets."

1 American William Forsythe is recognized as one of the world's foremost choreographers. His reputation was developed through his work with the Frankfurt Ballet, which closed in 2004. Since then he has established an independent ensemble The Forsythe Company, based in Dresden and Frankfurt am Main.

2 Goulthorpe's design preoccupation includes the ambition to get an immediate response to architecture; speeding up the collective social identity that develops around architecture which has to date has been a relatively slow process.

3 Aegis in Greek mythology, the shield of Zeus or Athena.

4 The Aegis installation was exhibited in the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2000.

5 "For technological change becomes interesting only insofar as it infiltrates cultural psychology and suggests new patterns of behaviour and expectation." AD magazine, vol.71, no 2, April 2001, 'Misericord to a Grotesque Reification' by dECOi, p.57.

6. As with many digital architects, Mark Goulthorpe's work also takes inspiration in the precedent set by the architect John Frazier. See footnote no.6.

7. Mark Burry, Innovation Professor at SIAL (Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory) at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. He has published internationally on two main themes: the life and work of the architect Antonio Gaudi, and putting design theory into practice, especially on construction and the use of computers.

Goulthorpe's credits Forsythe² as a significant influence dECOi's most high-profile and acclaimed project to date – the Aegis³ Hyposurface interactive wall installation⁴ (2000) where a mechanical surface is activated by the presence of human movement via parametric software: "Forsythe is working parametrically by setting processes in motion and inviting the company to rearticulate them... The Hyposurface is the extension of that ideology, unfolding continually as and in an aesthetic, a social 'aegis'" he explains, "Personally, following this project through has been fascinating for a glimpse of social mirroring. Mechanically, it's a grotesque machine, but that's what I love about it. It's so visceral and dumb physically, but the fascination was putting its mechanical power out in the public arena." He continues: "To hope for a literally malleable or 'alloplastic' reciprocity of people and form was really quite a daunting thing. Yet I imagine that there are few architects who have ever witnessed such an immediate engagement and interactive response with their work, literally a real-time mirror for people... Here, the public 'were' the work. The experience took me right back to thinking about the early relationships I had with clients that motivated my desire for a parametric search."⁵

Undoubtedly, Goulthorpe's parametric methodology developed over time through the pivotal influences⁶ of Cache, Burry⁷ and Forsythe in addition to the recognition that the position of the architect is politically unpalatable to most clients. "It seems to me that everybody is so well informed in a digital age that most clients feel they are aesthetic experts. So if you



Fig. 9 Miran Gallery, parametric design, a sectional wood CNC model, Paris, 2003.

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presume to determine their environment they'll tolerate the process for the first few weeks of sketch design but inevitably you get into a debate and struggle," he explains, " I could recognise the vulgarity of the architect's position and yet I couldn't escape it because I was within it. That discomfort was the first motivation to try to generate things through parameters that explained and allowed some client involvement in the generative process, with flexibility in the shared aesthetic output."

To illustrate his methodology, Goulthorpe recalls an experience with a particularly difficult yet architecturally literate client, and the successful deployment of a parametric generative strategy. "We created a rule-based distorted box and we embedded parameters to allow it to be differentially distorted. It offered the potential for a plastic definition of space where the client felt part of the emergent aesthetic. It seemed a significant shift to a rule-based generative process that could be shared yet it breached the inherited assumptions of architect as simple form-giver. It was remarkable to witness the client's softening attitude, and it told me that if the aesthetic is imposed, then it is resisted, but if people are participating in the formative process, then the result might be quite different."

Goulthorpe adamantly refutes the notion that his parametric methodology could be viewed as manipulating the client to believe they have an engagement with the design when in reality they have little control through the process. He argues: "The twentieth-century example of the egotistical, precocious, client-architect relationship is a very curious one and a reality that I find unhealthy. If you look back through all the canonical modernists houses there's a kind of acid capriciousness that's embedded in the notion of the signatory architect. One of my students, Brenda Galvez, said that you couldn't make love in Le Corbusier's Heidi Weber House because it's an icon to a man's intellect! I thought that was just a fantastic and insightful comment."

Returning to the difficult topic of aesthetics, Goulthorpe declares: "I really don't give a damn about look of the thing itself, but I think there's a beauty that comes from a coherence found in an internal system which you recognise as it emerges. That's what I find interesting." Yet he does concede that he hopes that his architecture "is an expression of its moment and the processes of 'now ' and that it creates some kind of identity through a community of people who find the result aesthetically current... I'm not trying to surrender the notion of 'aesthetic'¹, but, in fact, I'm actively pursuing it through setting up a generative system that is sufficiently rich that it can absorb multiple influences. It's definitely my goal to involve a wider 'community' in the aesthetic act, such as client, engineers and fabricators in each project. I love getting a mathematician or a programmer involved in the development of an aesthetic because it exceeds my own ability."

¹ You set up a system of rules that are highly tuned but do not determine the form. I'm not sitting, drawing it and fixing it. I'm letting the system run, I'm watching it and then I'm inviting the client to participate in that process so that between the mathematician, the client and myself we select something." Mark Goulthorpe, Interview with Yael Reisner (2nd), London, September, 2005

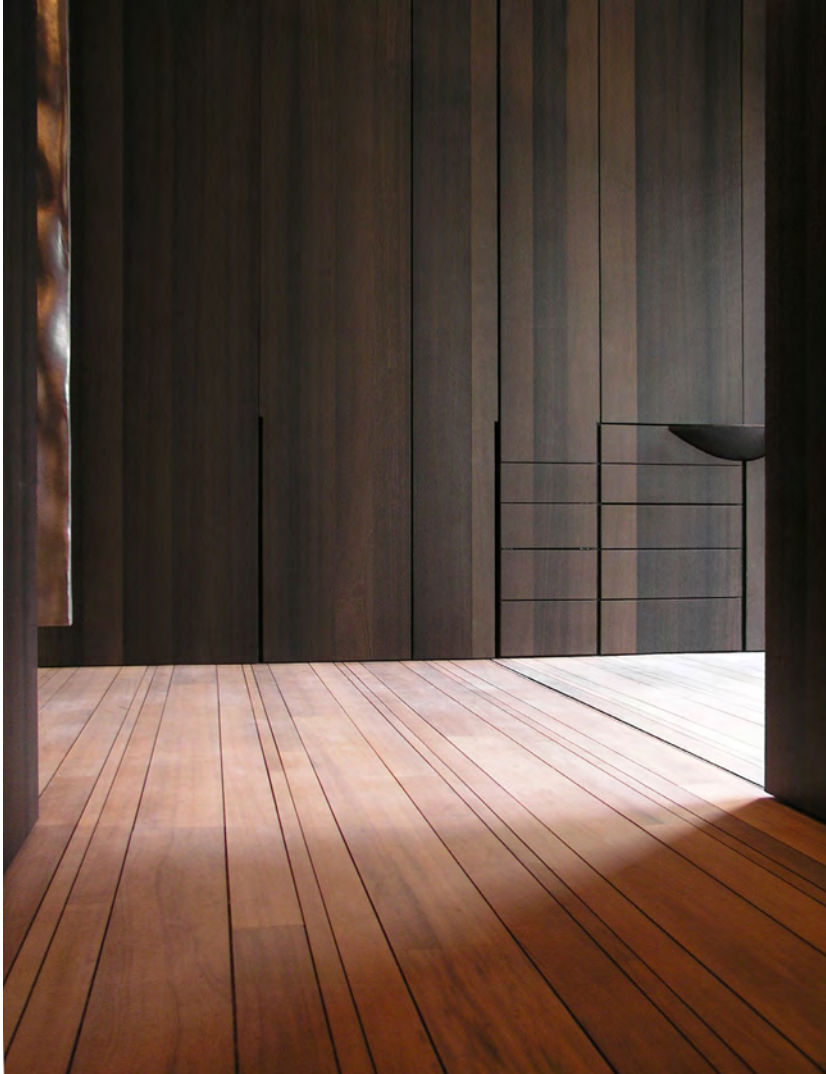


Fig. 10 Glaphyros Apartment, wooden floor and walls,
Chene du Marais, Paris, 2003.

Mark Goulthorpe
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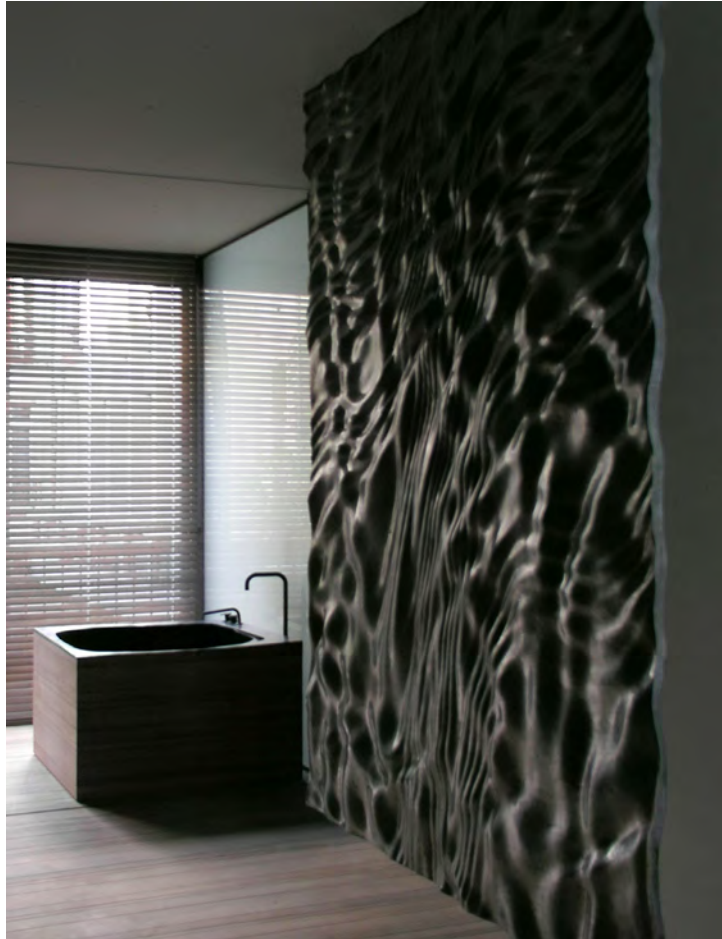


Fig. 11 Glaphyros Apartment, Bronze Bath and Aluminium screen, parametric design, Paris, 2003



Fig. 12 Glaphyros Apartment, Salon, fireplace,
parametric design, Paris, 2003.

25.2. Greg Lynn Technique Language and Form

Transcending the boundaries of architecture, philosophy and mathematics American architect Greg Lynn is one of the pioneers in computational technique to generate form. He expertly combines the fundamental principles of calculus with the intellectual philosophical theories of Gilles Deleuze, Gottfried Leibniz and Henri Bergson. By referencing philosophical and mathematical terminology Lynn has developed a unique architectural vocabulary¹ that describes his aesthetic ambitions and rejects any notion that his design process is generated by 'lateral thinking' or the quality of the architects 'eye'.

A friendly and patient persona, Lynn articulates his intellectual approach to design and architecture with depth while simultaneously using clear and accessible language. It is this investment in generative ideas and language that Lynn has pursued through his work as a respected writer and educator at Columbia University in New York City and currently at UCLA, Los Angeles and the University of Applied Arts, Vienna.² His texts include his first book "Folds, Bodies & Blobs: Collected Essays" (1998) and "Animate Form" (1999) and a commissioned issue of AD magazine: "Folding in Architecture" (1993, 2004).³

The wide publication and success of Lynn's writings coupled with his early competition entries and speculative projects rapidly propelled him to prominence within the international design community. He was also one of the first architects to invest in his own CNC (computer numerically controlled) routers and laser cutters as well as rapid prototyping technology and 3D printers that allowed him to continuously experiment with software that could translate complex computer drawings into manufactured models. This progressive strategy fuelled Lynn's ambition to move beyond abstraction and grasp the opportunity of digital material production that quickly marked his importance as an architectural visionary.

1 Lynn's aesthetic language marks a distinct shift from the forefather of the digital architecture movement John Frazer who borrowed terminology and referenced ideologies from the field of genetics. Many digital architects are still using the language Frazer introduced in the 1970s while teaching at the AA in London, and as described in his book 'Evolutionary Architecture'.

2 University of Illinois at Chicago 1991-92, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture 1992-1999, Ohio State University 1995-96, UCLA 1998-present, ETH Zürich 1999-2003, Yale University 2002-present and University of Applied Arts (angewandte) Vienna 2003-present.

3 AD magazine: "Folding in Architecture", Greg Lynn (Ed.), 1993. (revised issue, 2004). "Folds, Bodies & Blobs, Collected essays", Series: Books by Architects, La letter Volee, Belgium, 1998. "Animate Form", Princeton Architectural Press, NY, in 1999.

Fig.1 Predator, collaboration with the painter Fabian Marcaccio, Wexner Center for the Arts, Render, Columbus, Ohio, 1999



Fig.2 Predator, collaboration with the painter Fabian Marcaccio, Wexner Center for the Arts, Installation, Photo, Columbus, Ohio, 1999



Fig.3 Predator, collaboration with the painter Fabian Marcaccio, Wexner Center for the Arts, Installation, Photo, Columbus, Ohio, 1999



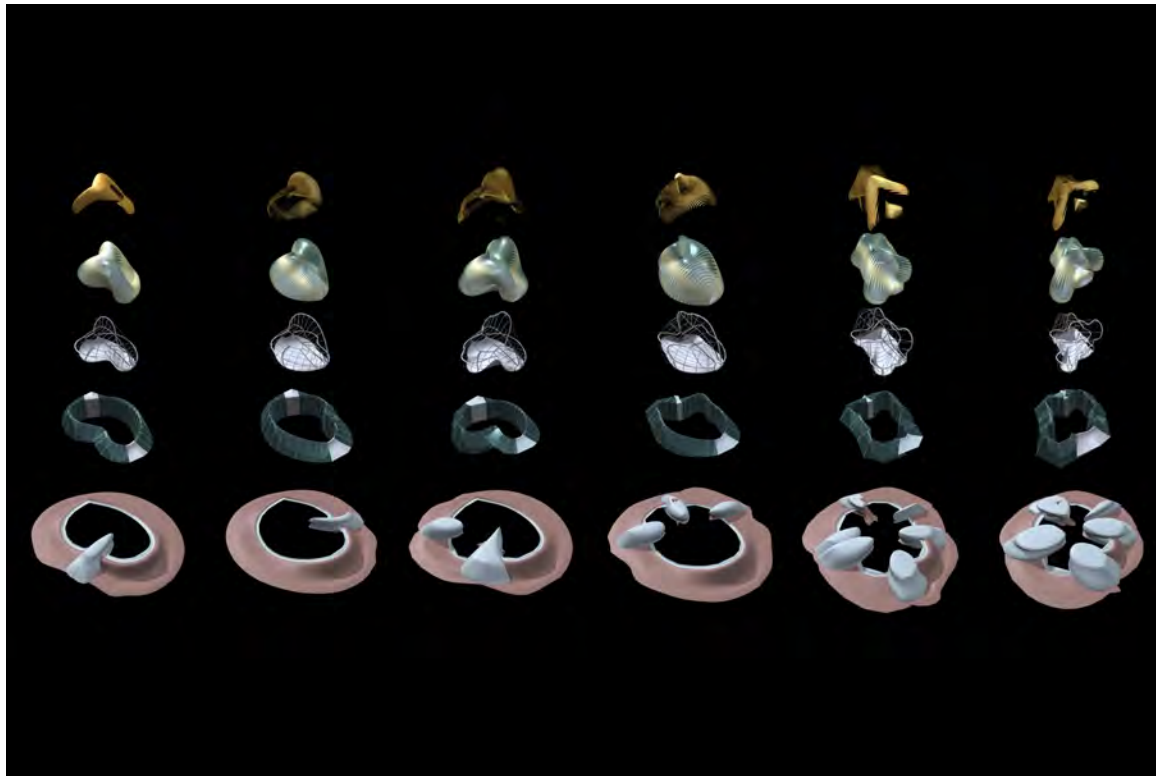


Fig.4. Embryological House ©™ ,Render, 2000



Fig.4 Embryological House ©™
,installation, 2000

Greg Lynn Technique Language and Form

After studying philosophy and architecture concurrently at Miami University in Ohio, Greg Lynn¹ graduated with honours before pursuing a Masters of Architecture at Princeton University. On completion in 1988, Lynn went to work for Peter Eisenman in New York City and recalls being attracted by the luminary architect's cerebral approach and lack of reliance on intuition within the design process: "I went to work for Eisenman because I believed that I'd finally found someone who was using systems to generate architecture and not being subjective." It was also within Eisenman's office – the most influential practice in New York at the time – that the young architect extended his knowledge of the theories of French philosopher Deleuze and mastered their application within an architectural context.

Much like the relationship between father and son, Lynn initially shared many of Eisenman's opinions but quickly grew to aspire to a different architectural agenda. Striking out on his own, as 'Greg Lynn Form', in 1992 marked Lynn's deliberate attempt to delineate his work from his mentor and to develop his own conceptual and aesthetic language, as he explains: "Eisenman has a problem with aesthetics – you can see it in how he dresses and how he builds – he doesn't indulge his aesthetic sensibilities. He's uncomfortable with anything except abstraction so he builds out of cardboard." However, while Lynn has gone on to pursue a starkly different agenda, the architects maintain a close and mutually respectful relationship with Lynn quick to credit Eisenman as an important influence on shaping his theoretical position: "In terms of form, Eisenman's desire to produce a new kind of expression by looking at new ways of designing and new tools is something I have always found inspiring."

Lynn's progression through Eisenman's office exposed him to new ways of expressing architectural ideas and clearly influenced the development of his cross-disciplinary terminology – derived, in Lynn's case, from the fundamental principles of differential geometry and topology² with customized philosophical references for design strategies³ – creating a resonant language to describe his computational preferences for continuity as expressed in his form-making. As Lynn expands: "For example the notion of 'intricacy'⁴ is ultimately just like 'folding' or any of these other terms I've been interested in for some time – it's a philosophical result of the invention of calculus, it comes out of physical tools and models⁵ and from a three hundred year-old tradition of thinking about the relationship of things in a calculus world rather than in a reducible world of pure forms... Aesthetically, the language also hooks up with all these predilections I've had for curvaceous forms since I was a student."

Indeed, Lynn recalls being engaged by spatial soft curvatures early on in his student days: "One of the reasons that I went to Princeton to study architecture is that I been inspired by

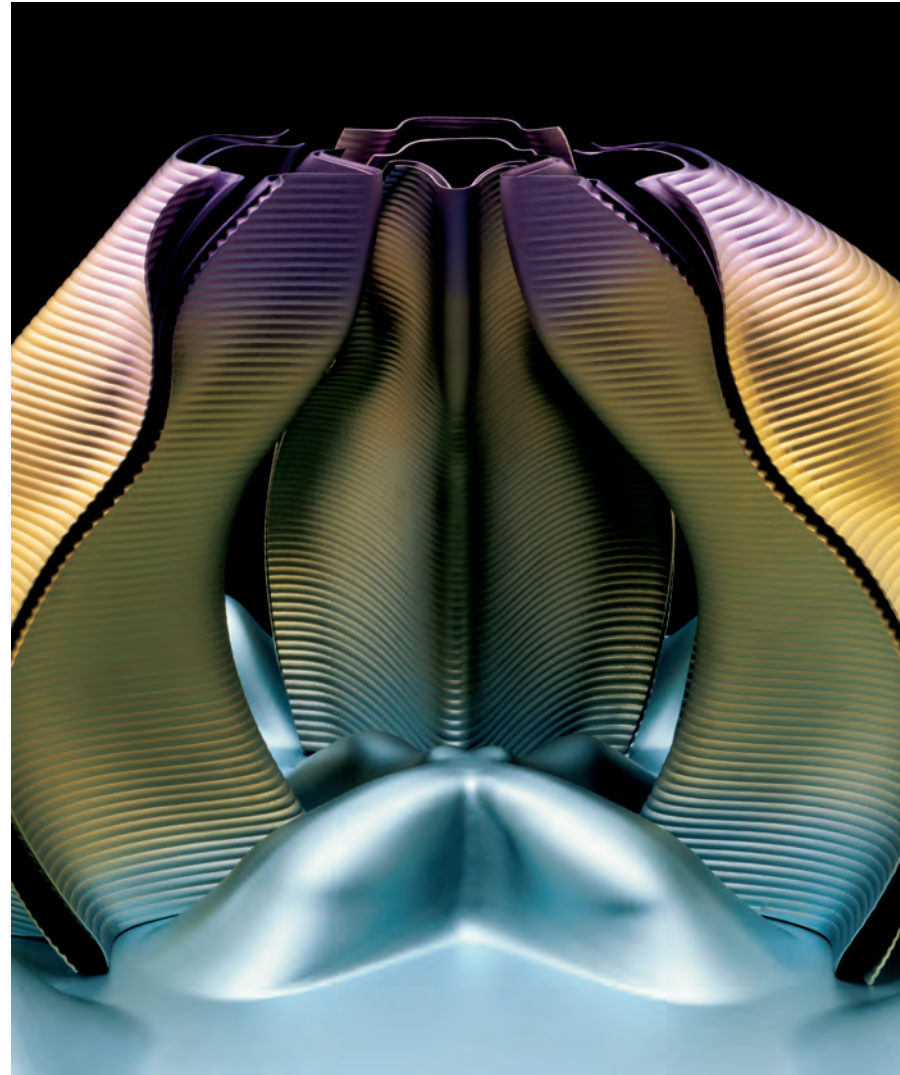
1 Greg Lynn graduated from Miami University, Ohio in 1986

2 Differential geometry is a mathematical discipline that uses the methods of differential and integral calculus to study problems in geometry. The theory of plane and space curves and of surfaces in the three-dimensional space... formed the basis for its initial development in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Since the late nineteenth century, differential geometry has grown into a field concerned more generally with geometric structures. It is closely related with differential topology, and together they make up the geometric theory of differentiable manifolds.

3 Terms such as folding, intricacy, supple, pliancy et al.

4 "...an intricate structure... is a collection of components that communicate with each other and all change simultaneously... the aim is to produce an intricacy... if I change one thing that would have been a second or third level decision it can ripple through the entire structure and changed every aspects of the building including the controlling geometry..." L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 349, Nov - Dec 2003 p.108.

5 A spline is a drafting tool consisting of a flexible rubber or leather strip to which is attached a series of evenly spaced disks with coordinates for reproducing curves at a variety of scales with precision based on the continuous interpolation of a curve through fixed points.



Alessi Tea and Coffee Piazza,
photo, 2000.

the publication of the work of the NY Five Architects.¹ I took Michael Graves' studio just so that I could ask him to describe to me how to build these compound curves... He looked at how I was trying to draw the complex geometries and said: 'This is ridiculous... but if you're going to do it, let me show you how to do it rigorously' and I vividly remember him describing his technique over the afternoon."

While Lynn felt he lacked an intuitive ability to draw the forms he desired by hand, the increasing sophistication of computer technologies enabled the young architect to move beyond a dependency on an expressionist sensibility and develop his trademark 'calculus sensibility'.² As he recalls: "I just gravitated towards the computer because it gave me the power to have an intuitive understanding of calculus which I didn't have without it, and therefore enabled me to work with curves as a completely rigorous³ ordering system." He continues: "The more I understood the principles of the mathematics – the calculus behind these complex curved shapes – the more I understood the medium of the computer," he explains, "Then I began to understand how you could make the shapes and produce them through the medium of a mill or a stereolithography machine and, therefore, translate the mathematics into construction. So through this process I could see that I was drawing a line and anticipating the consequences in a way that I felt was intuitive in the Bergson's sense."⁴

Lynn references the English philosopher Henry Bergson's definition of 'intuition' as a seminal text in refining his pursuit of technique within his work, explaining: "The students I respected when I was in college were the ones with the best technique. So, I would always gravitate towards the student who could draw beautifully, rather than a student that didn't have skills, but had strong opinions. I wanted to be skilled and to have technique first, believing that through technique I could progress." He expands: "I also studied philosophy and I recall reading Bergson's text which basically says, 'intuition is when you have a technique and you can envision the evolution of that technique at another level, and intuition is seeing that kind of extrapolation of something into the future before you've mastered it.' This seemed to say it all and greatly resonated for me."

Lynn's Predator Installation⁵ – a three-dimensional physically spatial painting - first exhibited in Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, in 1999, was a significant project that was an important prelude to Lynn's following body of work. As he describes: "My research of decoration, detail and surface were all really launched in the Predator... The project's surface texture,⁶ the relationship of the image mapping the shapes, the way that it supports itself as a shell and the sculptural quality of it as a surface were all ideas first explored in this project."

1 'The New York Five' refers to a group of five New York City architects who emerged in the late 1960s: Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathamy, John Hejduk and Richard Meier. Their work was exhibited in MoMA in New York, 1967.

2 Intuition derived from a calculus-based technique.

3 The word 'rigor' is constantly peppered throughout Lynn's conversation, recalling its origin within mathematics where the term describes the process of mathematical proof by means of systematic reasoning; it's where language meets logic – a great pursuit of Greg Lynn through his thinking process as well as through his pure computational formal design process.

4 Gilles Deleuze's discussion of Henry Bergson in the chapter 'Intuition as Method', *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, N.Y., Zone Books, 1991.

5 The Predator Installation was done in collaboration between Greg Lynn and Fabian Marcaccio. The three-dimensional painting substituted a standard canvas was substituted with clear formed plastic and paint was laid down with a new technique Lynn and Marcaccio had collaboratively developed over three years.

6 The Predator Installation was the origin for Lynn's articulation of the term 'skin'; a key project in upgrading the notion of surface to the modulated skin as a relief surface; like an animal's skin where the pattern and relief are intricate with the form.

Fig.6a Invisible Chess Set, 2001



Fig.6b Invisible Chess Set, 2001



Greg Lynn Technique Language and Form

1 “My Embryological House research or any number of recent projects ceased to be about an animation or digital design process and they become about putting tens of thousands of parts into communication so as that when you change one part it distributes the effect across all the other parts... the aim is produce a intricacy... All mathematics for this is over 300 years old. It is calculus, but architects have never been able to design as calculus. They have been able to analyse it for structure or so, but never intuitively design the things [along calculus.]” *L’architecture d’Aujoud’hui*, 349, Nov.- Dec. 2003 p.108.

2 *Intricacy*, edited by Greg Lynn & Claudia Gould, ICA, Philadelphia, 2003.

3 Office dA is a Boston-based architecture firm whose principal partners are Monica Ponce de Leon and Nader Tehrani.

4 Bernard Cache of ‘the studio entitled ‘Objectile’ based in Paris was one of the influential pioneers in production methods based on software and technological tools.

5 Terms such as ‘shred’, ‘bleb’ and ‘teeth’, for example, are related to techniques for placing openings, volumetric pocket making and connecting between corresponding surfaces. All three terms are related to ‘skin’. Skin is an elaboration of a surface where pattern and relief are intricate in their relationship with form [like animal skin]. ‘Lattice’ is the major structural articulation of surface et al. Within different projects Lynn combines techniques to pursue his visual concepts. For example, Lynn describes the Ark of the World as being a combination of three techniques together: skins, lattice and flowers. The Embryological House employed three techniques: ‘blob’, ‘bleb’ and ‘shred’; the Sociopolis Residential project: ‘teeth’, ‘flowers’, ‘strand’; the Slavin House: ‘bleb’ and ‘blob’ and so on.

6 The ‘Predator’, ‘Blob-Blob Wall’ and the Slavin House’s ‘bleb’ columns all evoke accessible connotations and imagery. The origins are varied; ‘bleb’ is a term derived originally from digital software, as is the ‘blob’, although ‘blob’ is an English metaphor for shapeless form or a soft lump.

The project instigated Lynn’s research around the notion of intricacy that shaped and influenced his design process and aesthetic discourse: “We bought this mill to make the Predator which was noisy and dusty”, he explains. “It was going from modelling on a computer, tooling it, physically painting it, then digitising the result... a continual process of back and forth, and that’s how we figured out the concept... It was after working on Predator that I started to write the *Intricacy* text.”¹²

Along with his eloquent words, the imagery Lynn produces to describe his work are provocative and seductive, however, unlike many of his digital contemporaries, he resists a preoccupation with image making: “I was never interested in using the computer to make pictures. I was more interested in its mathematics and form... I could see that architects such as ‘Office dA’³ and Bernard Cache⁴ were all producing decorative or tectonic effects with computational processes and so – although influenced by their work – I decided to take a different perspective and think about the problem of the detail and the surface with the details integral to the surface such as windows and apertures.”

Lynn expands: “I decided that if the details were derived from outside the logic of the geometry, it had the potential to be a problem and so I felt it was important to have all of the parts in communication with one another – as a kind of biological model of holism.” While Lynn continued to refine his ideas, he became increasingly frustrated with his inability to find an appropriate language that described the architectural qualities of the synthesised environments that he was pursuing: “This was before I had developed the term intricacy but as I started to think about how could you describe these qualities, I began to develop a new language, to describe my process.”

Certainly, Lynn’s natural inclination is to conceptualize and make rigorous and reproducible his design concepts via language in order to evolve and expand the influence of his design techniques. A glance at Lynn’s 2006-2008 website reveals that his projects are categorized in terms of their formal, architectural characteristics or embodied technique: Lattice, branch, strand, skin, shred, fold, blob, bleb, flower, et al⁵ are all figurative metaphors that are descriptive, accessible and evoke powerful, imagery and associations – a strategy that supports Lynn’s ambition to communicate beyond the design community to a wider public arena⁶.

As also evidenced in the Predator project, Lynn’s work includes mainstream references

Fig.7 Ark of the World, View from above of physical model, Photo, Unbuilt, San Jose, Costa Rica, 2002



Fig.8 Ark of the World, Site Plan line drawing, Unbuilt, San Jose, Costa Rica, 2002

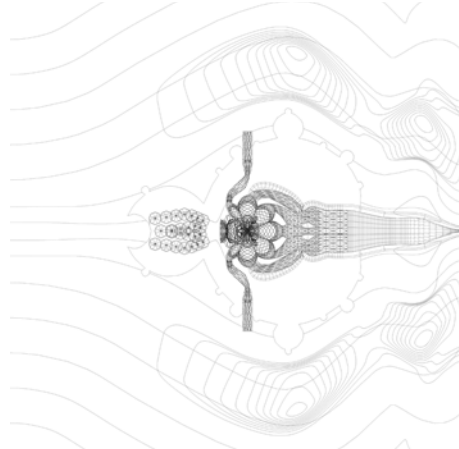


Fig.8 Ark of the World, Side Elevation of Physical Model, Photo, Unbuilt, San Jose, Costa Rica, 2002



Greg Lynn Technique Language and Form

along with more complex ideologies and a high-end aesthetic discourse in order to reach the wider community: “I would never start the design process from popular culture but the fact that you can start from these authority disciplines, like philosophy and geometry, which have a special place in architecture but then lead them, through to a popular audience basically so that someone can connect with the idea is very appealing. Personally, I feel or me, it’s all one thing; I really don’t make those distinctions.”

Lynn’s desire to identify with local, popular culture is underwritten by his engagement with the California’s preoccupation with the ocean: “Where I live all my friends and their kids surf. So I decided: ‘OK, I can ride a skateboard and ski so I can learn how to surf. But after I’d been doing it for a while, I was still really struggling. An architect friend, who works in Gehry’s office, explained to me that the hardest part was mastering the paddling technique so that you can actually catch the waves. So he described the wave to me in terms of architectural spline modelling and once I had that concept, I was suddenly surfing. It was a great joke but the reality was that once I had connected with surfing as a surface-modelling problem, then I could do it.”

The notion of ‘symmetry’ also forms a cornerstone of Lynn’s research – a preoccupation that was initially borne out of a rebellion against the unspoken taboo among avant-garde architects in using symmetrical forms and then further expanded with reference to Deleuzian theory and his burgeoning interest in the work of geneticist William Bateson¹ through the development of the Embryological Houses (1989-1999). As Lynn recalls: “I showed the Embryological project at a conference and explained Bateson’s theory of symmetry with variations. I said that even though it might seem scandalous, it’s important to see that they all start out symmetrical and they follow the rules of symmetry breaking. Yet for me what was beautiful about them is that some had a quality of being nearly symmetrical – where you would look at them and they’d look symmetrical, but then you’d look at them more and you’d see that they weren’t really symmetrical – and so I was convinced that this was a quality that I wanted to flirt with.”²

Responding to the relationship between aesthetics, form and content within his work, Lynn declares: “Aesthetics are not an over-arching preoccupation within my work but integral to the concept of ‘intricacy’ is the relationship between detail and surface. It’s a relationship made up of parts and a whole, where you see an array of parts that make a volume so that you get this kind of hierarchy of scale that merges a geometry – I feel that the combination of these things produce beautiful work.”

¹ “William Bateson invented the term genetics [and described it as follows]: ‘If all you have is random mutation and external selection, if an environment is based on gradients like temperature you would expect that all individuals would be continuous gradients. So you would just go from one species to another continuously where individuals would be unique for their environment. Instead you get these groups and you get jumps from group to group, and Bateson called this ‘discontinuous variation’”. Greg Lynn conversation with Yael Reisner,

² It’s a position that continues to confront many of his contemporaries as well as his mentor, Peter Eisenman: “I remember showing the Embryological Houses at an earlier conference and Eisenman stood up, and said, ‘Greg, you’ve lost it’

Fig.9 Ark of the world museum, Rendered Perspective side View, Unbuilt, San Jose, Costa Rica, 2002

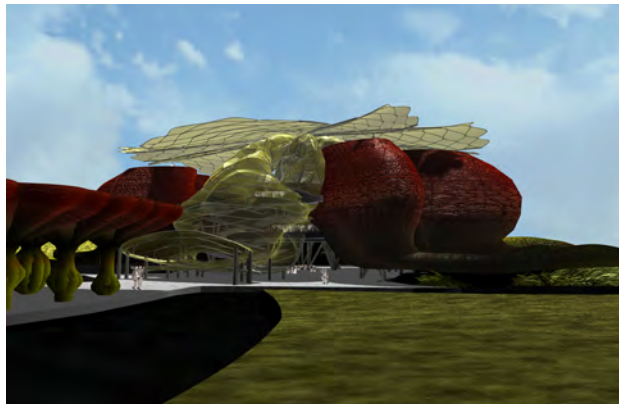
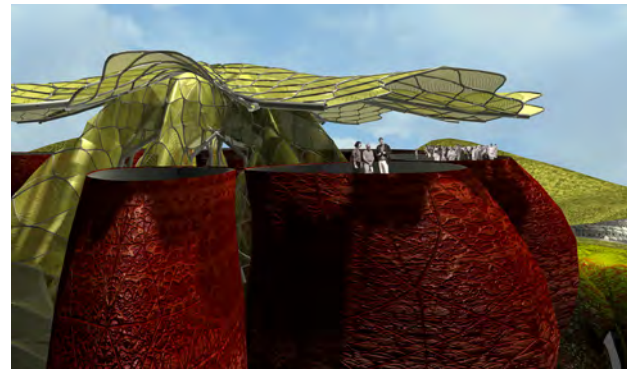


Fig.10 Ark of the world museum, Rendered Perspective View of the roof balcony, Unbuilt, San Jose, Costa Rica, 2002



Characteristically Lynn becomes more animated as he describes a personalised strategy: “I could also take a more systematic approach and outline the ten things you need for beauty and, in my opinion, they are pretty consistent: voluptuous curvature and surface, modulation of detail and components across the surface, a scale shift of a large interior out of components, or a large scheme out of components or gradient colour. I can see these elements in many disciplines such as architecture, automobile design and others. However, they are all qualitative effects that make things beautiful and I don’t think it’s totally subjective – I believe there is an inherent aesthetic that an audience understands.”

Lynn also takes a different point of view from the inherent ‘anti-subjectivity’ within digital discourse,¹ believing that computational processes offer more than simply a logical, rational procedure: “I see computer aided design tools as well as digital fabrication techniques as a medium rather than as a pseudo-scientific method of optimization of material or structure or as a proof of some optimal functional or contextual solution,” Expanding, he explains:² “Now I understand that there is a new medium, not for expression per se, but for design. I feel that the digital tools are an extension of design thinking in the same way that I thought and still think of drafting tools and hand built models. It is not a set of tools or proofs but a design medium that has changed and expanded in the last couple of decades to include new media as well as new thoughts about context, form, repetition and structure to name a few architectural issues.”

While resisting the idea of an overarching ‘style’, Lynn does accept that there is an inherent signature that marks his work: “Now that I’m 15 or 20 years out of school, I can for the first time start to imagine having a signature. That doesn’t mean that I’m not working on the same things I was doing back then, however, I think that expression comes out of a deep engagement with a discipline.” And when pressed about self-expression Lynn declares:³ “Anything I do is self-expressive but I do always try to begin with the extension of some previous architectural arc or trajectory. I like to look at the history of our discipline and try to locate the contemporary and future issues that are most poignant... I am interested in my expression as a designer but I am more interested in how this connects and extends the discipline of architecture.”

His collection of high-profile projects such as the Embryological House (1998-1999), the Alessi coffee and tea piazza (2000), the Ark of the World Museum and Visitors Centre (2002), and the Sociopolis Apartments project (2004) and are all imbued with Lynn’s commitment to design process regardless of their scale or context: “When it comes to doing a church, or a single family house for an art collector, or a public housing project for 500 people,” he explains, “there is another layer of stuff which is this institutional content of what the architect needs to communicate about its contents, and conversely about architecture;

1 However, Lynn’s early texts have sometimes caused him concern. He explains: “Every day, I regret the discourse I introduced in Animate FORM and the related projects in it as it had too much the apologetic scientific tone of an amateur looking for justification of [their] design decisions.” Greg Lynn, email to Yael Reisner, July, 2008.

2 Greg Lynn, email to Yael Reisner, July 2008.

3 Greg Lynn, email to Yael Reisner, July 2008.

Fig.11 Sociopolis Model, Early version, photo, Valencia, Spain ,2004



Fig.12 Slavin House, Model, Venice, CA, Unbuilt , 2004

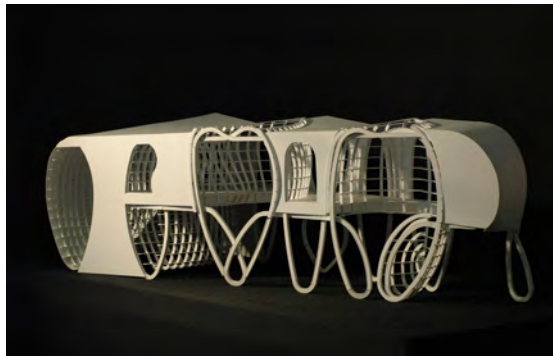


Fig.13 Slavin House, Model, Venice, CA, Unbuilt 2004



Fig.14 Slavin House, Model, Venice, CA, Unbuilt 2004



they're two independent issues which coincide over the top of each other and that's always really tricky to reconcile."¹

However, it is Lynn's philosophical and mathematical underpinning that is reflected in his relationship with aesthetics: "My geometric predilections lead me towards totally monolithic, organic, synthesised things, and so my aesthetic is not an aesthetic of collage or composition... For me the notion of beauty is very connected to both history and rigor. Near symmetry is more beautiful than perfect symmetry so I try to achieve near symmetry using massing and composition. Assembly of elements in rhythms of variation an undulation is beautiful so I try to incorporate this as well rather than slick unarticulated surfaces. I do not believe beauty is subjective, it is aesthetic and I have an aesthetic discourse that drives my work. It is certainly not by happy accident as it might have been two decades ago." Ultimately, Lynn returns to a refinement of technique to describe own experience of beauty, exclaiming: "I still love it when the mastery of the medium comes in contact with the expression of the artist. Every day I try to view my work from that point of view, but when I actually witness it in painting or architecture, it's just transcendent for me."

¹ Lynn uses the word 'tricky' to describe his belief that the unity of content and form must be kept intact and yet any external consideration to his computational design process creates difficulty for his design system.

1st interview in Venice, Italy, September, 2004
2nd interview, Los Angeles, USA, December, 2006

Fig15 Blobwall at the MOCA, Los Angeles, CA, 2004

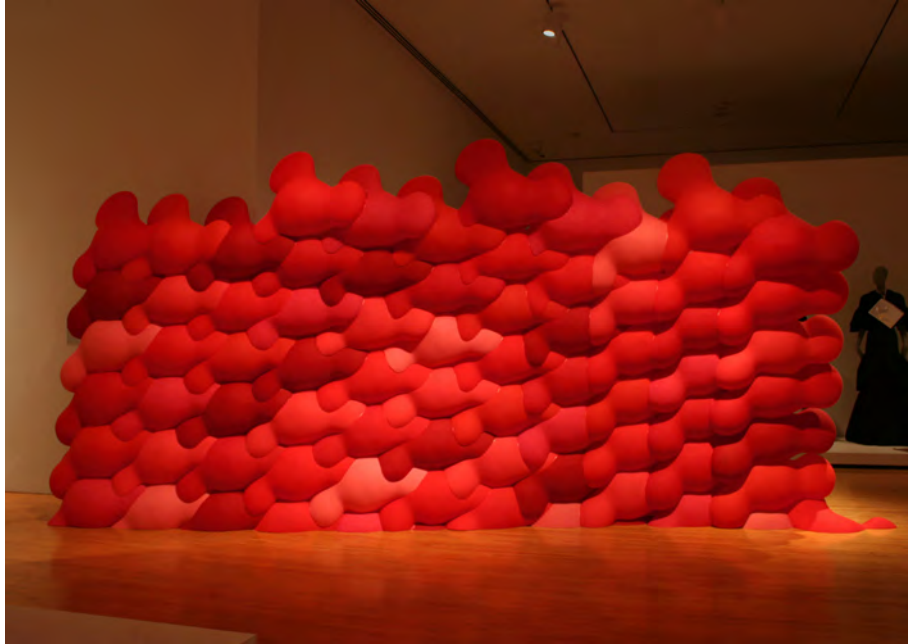


Fig16 Flatware, Spoon Set, photo, 2005



Fig17 Dog shelf, photo, part of the Toy Furniture collection 2008



25.3. Kol/Mac LLC [Sulan Kolatan & William MacDonald Studio] Creative Impurities

Kol/Mac LLC, the New York-based architectural studio of Sulan Kolatan and William MacDonald, engages in highly inventive, speculative work inspired by the intersection of contemporary culture and scientific discourse. Their practice embraces a complete computational process where a project's production – from early sketches, working drawings and the final product – is designed solely on computer, allowing a smooth interface for their strategy of working with key collaborators across the digital realm.

In juxtaposition to the majority of their digital peers who value consistency and 'purity'¹ through design methodologies derived from mathematically based processes, Kol/Mac prefer to categorise themselves as 'lumpers' – a term they discovered in the science section of the New York Times and re-appropriated to describe their work which "looks for correspondences between seemingly unrelated things and phenomena."² The strategy marks a significant departure from the current digital landscape by embracing the notion of 'impurity' by relying on lateral and intuitive thinking within a wholly computational framework. Kol/Mac also engage directly with scientific applications through their growing interest in the relationship between network theories and computer software.³ Most recently, they have been investigating biotechnological ecologies and conducting research projects with the ambition to move beyond conventional sustainable technologies towards cutting-edge ecological solutions.

MacDonald is American-born and educated internationally while Kolatan originates from Turkey, qualifying as an architect in Aachen, before moving to New York to pursue post-graduate studies. This cultural diversity is also reflected in their physical appearance: MacDonald is a calm, large presence in a black suit, talking with great clarity while the elegantly dressed Kolatan speaks more animatedly with the air of an intellectual and youthful European woman. The couple continue to balance their practice and research with teaching positions at Columbia University⁴ and various invited international professorships. In addition, MacDonald holds the position of Graduate Chair of Architecture and Urban Design at New York's Pratt Institute.

1 Kol/Mac's approach is provocative particularly in the early period of digital discourse from 2001 and onwards when practitioners such as Bernard Cache were promoting a pure and logical digital process that rejected any notion of 'fluid thinking'. Later, Greg Lynn referenced ideologies such as 'Bergson's intuition' that advocated following procedural performance related to technique rather than relying on lateral thinking.

2 AD, 'Contemporary Techniques in Architecture', vol. 72, no 1, Jan 2002, p.77.

3 Marking a significant factor that moves their work beyond the quasi-scientific methodologies of their computational peers.

4 MacDonald and Kolatan met while completing Masters qualifications at Columbia University in 1988.



Fig.1 OK Apartments View of bath "domesticscape" and integral aluminum and stainless steel wardrobe/counter/sink, Photo, Michael Moran, NY USA, 1995-97

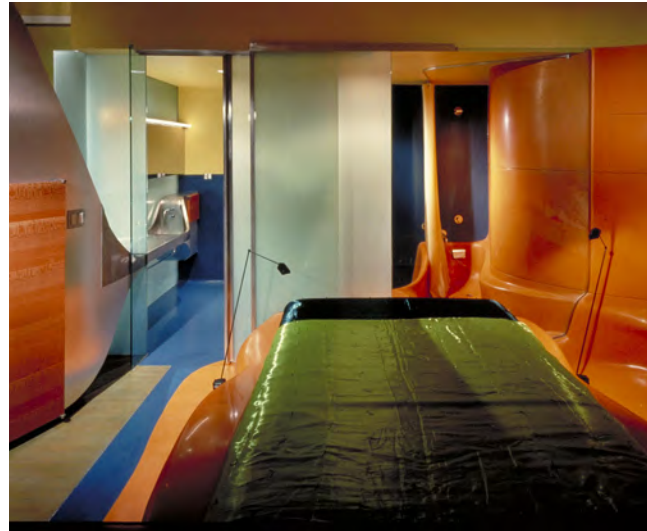


Fig.2 OK Apartments, interior view, Photo, Michael Moran, NY USA, 1995-97

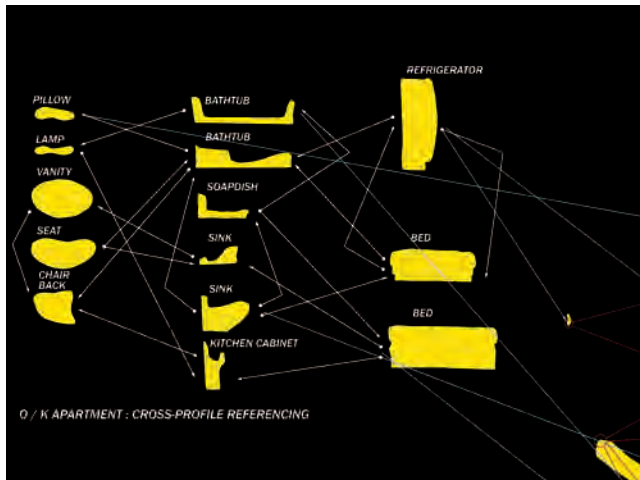


Fig.3 OK Apartments 'Cross-profiling' concept diagram, NY USA, 1995-97



Fig.4 OK Apartments, Showing sectional adjacencies of integral bath and bed surfaces, NY USA, 1995-97

1 The term 'lumpers' references a technique used in scientific practice where researchers look for correspondences between seemingly unrelated things and phenomena. This is characteristic of lateral thinking in science, art or any creative activity.

2 Kol/Mac seek to clarify the enduring misperception that digital processes are intrinsically linked with the 'blob'. As Sulan Kolatan describes: "If one were to describe it in terms of geometry, it's really about topology and topology and doesn't actually differentiate whether a surface is curved or angular... the continuities implied are of a different sort than at the level of the curvilinear or angular." Interview with Yael Reisner.

3 A mature system could be a 'target' or 'base' chosen by the architects. For instance, a target could be a form that is curved and when blended within the computational process some parts of it will disappear within the manipulation and other features will remain.

4 The ingredients of the 'genetic pool' are called 'base' (old houses) and 'targets' (forms of existing objects) and are part of mature systems. A digital blending is a blending between already matured systems across different categories. The relationship between the system and its potentiality... is the object of mental speculation." Kol/Mac, AD magazine: 'Contemporary Techniques in Architecture', vol. 72, no. 1, Jan 2002, p.77.

5 The 'targets' they blend into their process could be forms or data (multi-indexing) related to a range of programmes (functionality), allowing the architects to include their intuition within the design process. Therefore, forms and programme are blended continuously and within the architects' control allowing a sense of ambiguity within their design. This strategy allows for an open and speculative system for content and form making.

After founding their practice in 1988, Sulan Kolatan and Bill MacDonald refined their 'lumping' design strategy¹ while teaching at Columbia University during the 1990s. Their research developed a unique system that enables them to utilize a richer computational language to create form that moves beyond the usual digital preference for thin, refined surface and flat ornamentation and embraces volumetric compositions - curved or angular - within individual projects.²

As Bill MacDonald explains: "Lumping proliferates horizontally, by blending between already 'matured systems'³ across different categories⁴... it opens this field of synthetically generated material to intuition, interpretation and evaluation as architecture. Excess, in this instance, means ambiguity. Significant lumping affords productive leaps – it has rules and consequent yields."⁵ To this end, Kol-Mac reintroduce elements of 'pre-digital architecture' in their work – engaging the speculative operations of lateral thinking and the subjective nature of reliance on the architect's 'eye' – while utilising a computational framework to give their design process rigor and definition.

Certainly, MacDonald responds to the notion of intuition with great enthusiasm: "I think it's impossible to argue that any creative process occurs without the input of intuition." Kolatan agrees but places it within context: "Our work is very process-based in order to make the work rigorous because if it's purely based on intuition it becomes too subjective." This approach positions the architects within the role of 'author/editor' as well as designer: "We prepare the 'ground'⁶ in which to work... Then we select the relationships between things in a manner that yields the best architectural and aesthetic outcome," Kolatan explains. "This process of evaluation is consistent all the way through so we're constantly valuing and editing... For us the computation and the software provides the opportunity to extend that 'prepared ground' all the way into the construction phase which is a great advantage for the way we work... So the the design sensibility or design intelligence⁷ carries throughout."

MacDonald concurs: "For us it's very important that the process isn't about translating an idea into an architectural form but that the idea itself is transformed; that is, the process of transformation⁸ begins and ends in architecture. I think is a radical shift in thinking!⁹ I'm not sure if it's a causal relationship to using software but I do think it's a type of intelligence which is specific to contemporary conditions today." MacDonald's position is strengthened by his reference to the belief held within scientific practice that breaking down a consistency often creates the best platform for ingenuity. As he suggests, "you have certain intentions in terms of the speculation or experimentation, and then you set up the groundwork to test further."

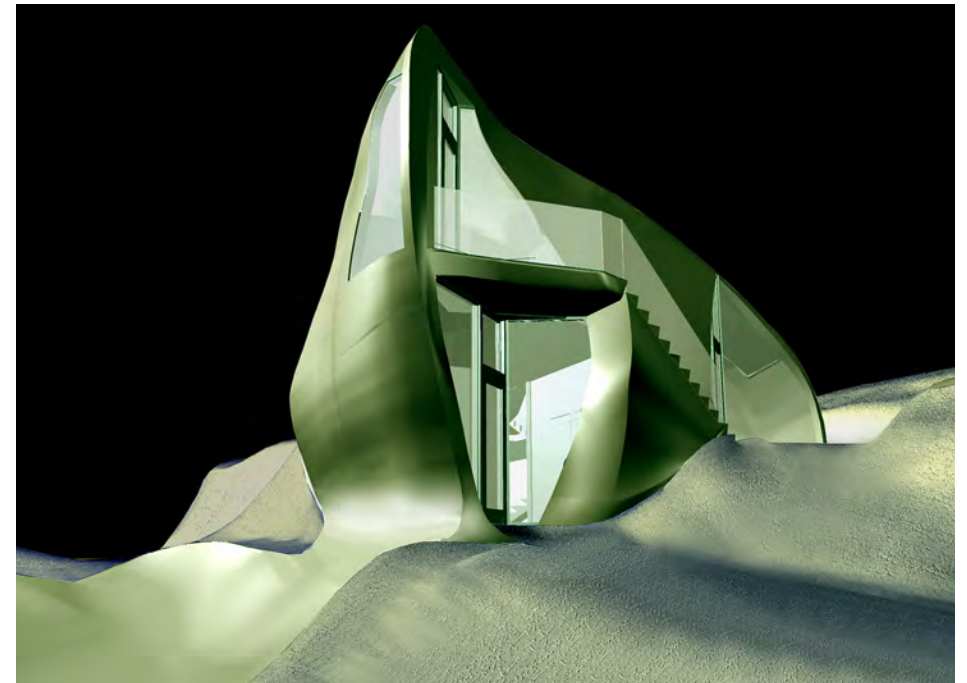
6 McDonald and Kolatan prepare the ground throughout their entire design process effectively enlarging the 'genetic pool'.

7 "[The term] 'design intelligence' is the design sensibility of an architect – the acquired taste that one develops in an intuitive, subjective and ultimately personal way." William MacDonald in conversation with Yael Reisner, 2004.

8 All of the digital studios seek to 'transform' rather than 'translate' – a notion they see as belonging to the past. Kol-Mac's technique of transforming ideas is their 'lumping technique'.

9 Prior to the digital era architects often expressed a formal idea directly into architecture. However, digital architects transform an idea through a rigorous computational process. A resonant example of the pre-digital approach can be seen with Oscar Niemeyer's scheme for a theatre exterior (1948), an extension for the Ministry of Education and Health Building, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Niemeyer's sketch of a woman's body was translated directly onto a building's silhouette. Although not built, the project was published as a photomontage: David Underwood, "Oscar Niemeyer and the Architecture of Brazil", Rizzoli, NY, 1994.

Fig.5 Raybould House, Render, overview perspective of sleeping wing in relation to terrace and landscape, CT, USA, 1998-2001



Creative Impurities

Whilst this process may facilitate a rigorous investigation, Kol/Mac are also conscious that their methodology should aspire to engage with current preoccupations: “There’s an emergence of a type of ‘pop science’ that affects almost every branch of our culture... and for us engaging with the current cultural context is far more important than being ‘digital’. We try to be very aware of cultural discourses and analyse where we are at this moment, where we are going as a society and how that affects architectural practice,” explains MacDonald.

Kolatan acknowledges that their practice is continually influenced by cutting-edge scientific theories that capture the imagination of a wider public audience: “While we don’t have any particular interest in being purely scientific we are intrigued with the issues that engage our general community,” she explains. “One such issue is ‘network theory’ because we think that there is a direct influence between network theories and computer software. Understanding the pragmatic and performance aspects of networks interested us because of how it effects the way we think of our working process, as well as how we think about the position of architecture within society... I think that in the future there will be the ability for clients or end users to take part in the process much more actively through these kinds of interfaces.”

Kolatan and MacDonald are also preoccupied with new ways of using biological technologies in the structural, operational systems and physical presence of a building to investigate how architecture can become responsive within an environmental agenda. Their ‘high performance’ Metabolic Wall (2005-current) recalls ideas first explored in the Resi(dential) Rise (1999-2004) apartment tower project, initially exhibited at the Pompidou Centre’s Non-Standard exhibition in Paris (2003-2004). Kolatan recalls: “In the Resi(dential) Rise project, we planned to use the excessiveness of the project’s skin by turning it into some kind of metabolistic element, where it would store energy and recycle energy and deal with water and air circulation both inside and outside. This would not only produce a beneficial effect on the interior units, but also on the exterior and one could start to conceive that buildings could have a positive effect on the city.”

The idea was never completely resolved within the Resi-Rise project but provided the background to Kolatan and MacDonald’s pursuit of the creation of a new kind of ‘high performance’ building skin or wall that engages directly with biotechnologies. Kolatan expands on the concept: “We are thinking that the topological surface of the ‘wall’ would become a substrate for biological matter, such as micro organisms, which have the capacity to do a number of things ecologically. For example they clean, and because of their cleaning

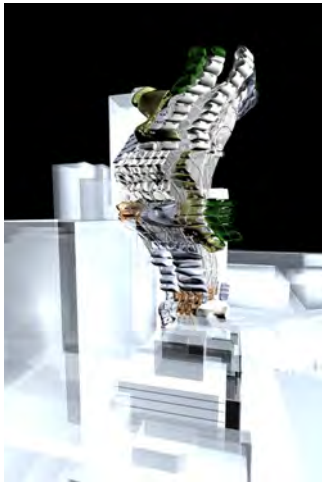


Fig.6 Resi-Rise, Overall aerial view looking south view along Central Park South,Render, NY, USA,1999-2004

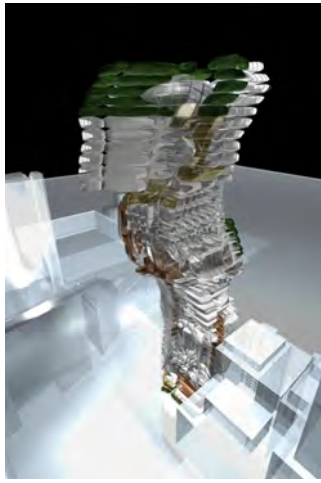


Fig.6 Resi-Rise, Overall aerial view looking East view along Central Park South,Render, NY, USA,1999-2004

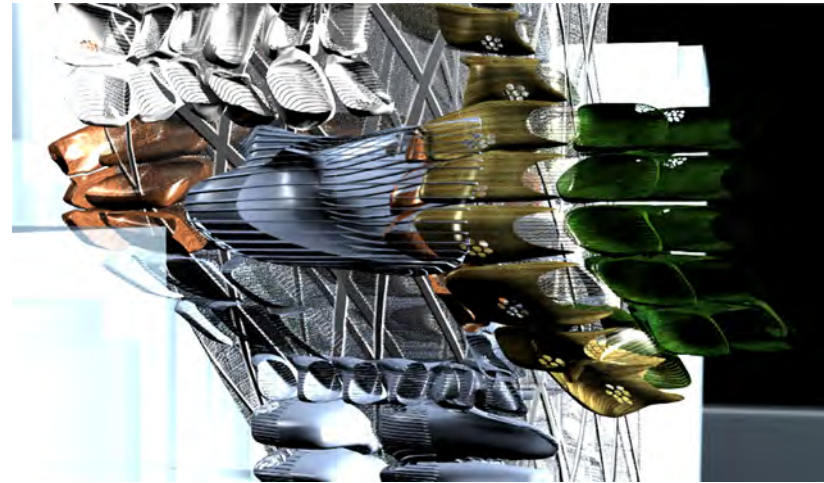


Fig.7 Resi-Rise Mid-level region with residential and public amenities including a cinema. All units rest on a carbon-fiber/resin structural sock, Render, NY, USA, 1999-2004

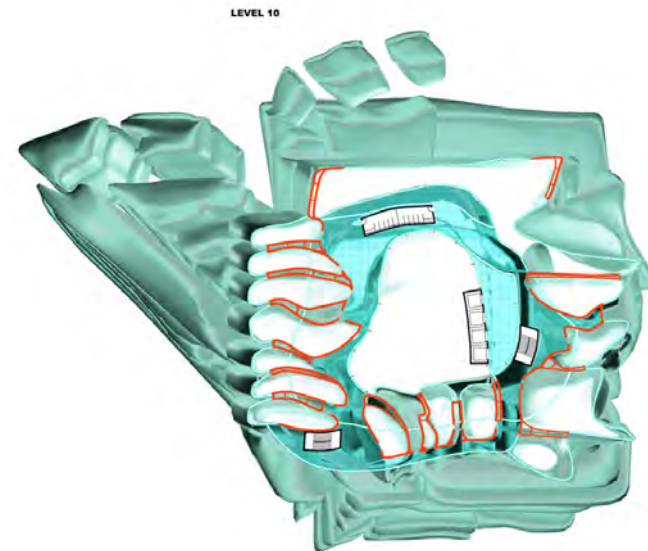


Fig.8 Resi-Rise, 10th floor plan with residential and public amenities All units rest on a carbon-fiber/resin structural sock. Render, NY, USA, 1999-2004

Creative Impurities

activity they produce energy. It's really interesting to think about how the energy that those micro organisms create could be used within a building's surface. So, in the long term, it may be possible to view a structural wall less in technological terms and more from a biological perspective."

The concept is clearly one that resonates with MacDonald who animatedly describes the system's potential: "One of the aspects of the exterior cladding material we are using is that it is anti-septic so, for example you could actually encourage the growth of photosynthetic materials rather than photovoltaic, which would actually absorb light and then produce it directly, in terms of energy. It is also completely waterproof, so this is actually a huge vessel for containing grey water for the systems of the building...So, the concept provides the basis for a high performance ecological system and rather than just using 'green' materials, we decided to try and see what we could do with a very proactive attitude towards the environment."

MacDonald and Kolatan's inclusive attitude towards the notion of impurity – including biotechnologies – marks a stark departure from the position of their digital design colleagues such as Bernard Cache, Mark Goulthorpe or Greg Lynn¹ although they do share one major preoccupation: an outright rejection of any suggestion of deterministic formalism within their body of work. Like their peers, Kol/Mac utilise computational processes to find a diverse range of strategies to arrive at architecture rather than through a deterministic process where the work directly reflects one's will.² As MacDonald suggests: "I think that working in a very methodological way creates a liberating condition... and allows for a sensitive relationship to architecture as a cultural practice. Of course, architecture is still a constructional practice as well, but non-deterministic processes push architecture towards a kind of betterment of the environment. It's done within such complex terms these days that I think it is very difficult to continually impose one's sole will. In the end, the question must be is that approach really bettering the environment for those that participate in it?"

Kol-Mac take is a flexible and inclusive approach by rejecting a pursuit of deterministic design, and characteristically they ground themselves in a progressive tradition. As MacDonald articulates: "Ultimately our most important responsibility is to speculate. So once you put yourself in that role of speculation – with a sense of responsibility to your profession – then I think you get closer to the idea of how you should operate in the world. Suddenly, this becomes the most important thing and speculation becomes a necessity rather than just a desire... and a responsibility to progress." However, MacDonald concedes that this position is not completely detached from aesthetic values: "The rigour is also, without question, to produce something that is interesting and worthwhile in terms of an aesthetic position and we are very conscious of the way we make things and how they look".

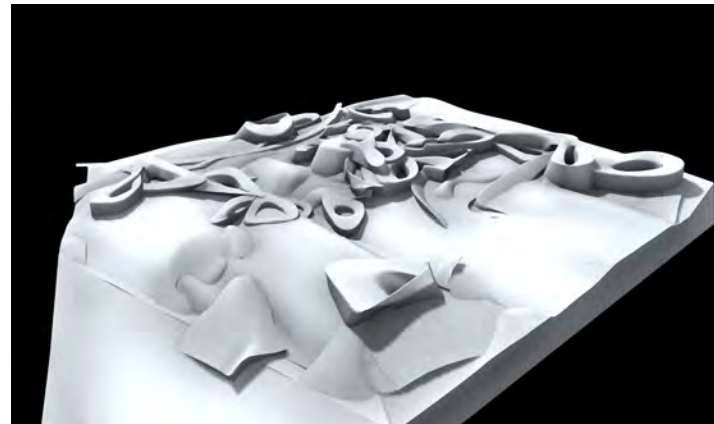
1 The difference to Cache, Goulthorpe and Lynn's work is marked by Kol/Mac's engagement with lateral thinking and active manipulation within their digital process as well as their engagement with scientific applications such as biotechnologies.

2 Advocating a 'non-deterministic' approach is an attitude that can be traced back to the 'downfall' of German Expressionism in the 1920s and continued to be influential through the second half of the 20th century. John Fraser – known as the forefather of digital architecture – imbued his students at London's Architecture Association with non-deterministic values through his agenda of 'Evolutionary Architecture' through the 1970-90s. It is an attitude that continues amongst digital architects of the early 21st century.

Fig.9 Grand Egyptian Museum , Perspective view of the galleries, Render, Cairo, Egypt, 2004-05



Fig.10 Grand Egyptian Museum, Render, Overall aerial view of GEM campus, including research facilities, museum/exhibition, business center, athletic parks and productive gardens, Cairo, Egypt, 2004-05



Creative Impurities

Kolatan extends the aesthetic discussion to include ‘ambience’ suggesting the term as a useful framework for further debate: “I think the notion of ambience is a much broader issue than just a visual one. Creating ambience includes emotional, sensory, tactile and haptic space that goes beyond the physical aspects of architecture. It also includes temperature, lighting and everything that contributes to making a sensory environment... The particularity or signature of ambience is crucial to a concept and you can’t think of that in a generalised way.” Specific titles for each project and the use of vibrant colour also contribute to the ambience of each project. “We always name our work,” Kolatan says with a smile. “There is the Tub House, for instance, and the Malibu, Shingle and Golf Course house. By naming them we try to establish particular qualities, whether casual or formal... It also underwrites our desire not to be neutral but to make a conscious choice that includes the colour range, and, of course, that has an effect on a project’s ambience.”

Interestingly, Kol/Mac’s notion of ambience brings with it a clear signature that opposes the preference of the digital parametric architects – such as Goulthorpe for example – who advocates that the parametric design process abolishes the architect’s identity. However, as Kolatan states: “The particularity or signature of ambience is crucial to a concept and you can’t think of that in a generalised way.” She expands: “For example, if digital discourse equates topology or topological architecture with the use of the computer then we feel it’s also important to establish the relationship between colour and RGB world of the computer. How can the designer materialise that kind of RGB thinking within their work? The fact that one can expertly blend and intensify colour is very much part and parcel of the medium of the computer.”

Certainly, Kol/Mac’s innovative lumping design methodology continues to provoke the core digital fraternity who remain suspicious of any ‘impurity’ within the design process. Yet Kolatan is adamant that the inclusion of intuitive elements¹ within their practice does not result in a dilution of the work: “In terms of political correctness there is always this puritan idea that you can’t combine serious intellectual pursuit together with sensory aspects within the design process – it’s seen as indulgent. They are considered mutually exclusive, and that’s the problem!” she exclaims. “So, as an author, you find yourself pegged in one camp or the other. However, we are optimistic that we are moving beyond this deeply ingrained aversion because we realise that it’s not very smart to work within those kinds of restrictive categorisations.” MacDonald concurs and neatly captures the pervading uneasiness with acknowledging lateral thinking and aesthetics within architectural discourse: “It is a kind of erotic taboo amongst architects. It’s too sensual and, therefore, people feel that it should be kept behind closed doors, they don’t want to actually talk about it or confront it.”

Interviews with Sulan Kolatan & William MacDonald:

1. Bartlett, School of Architecture, University College London, 2004.
2. Kol-Mac studio/apartment, New York, 2006

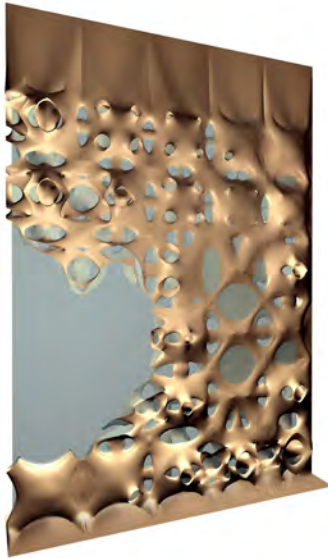


Fig.11 Inversabrane high-performance ecological building membrane , Render, Detail elevation, 2005

Fig.12 FRAC, Render, Aerial plan/oblique overall view of model showing existing military buildings and proposed installation, Orleans, Fr, 2006-2007



Fig.13 FRAC, Render, Courtyard view towards temporary exhibition galleries and entry ,Orleans,Fr. 2006-2007



Digital Virtuosity

25.2. Hernan Diaz Alonso Xefirotarch studio

Digital Virtuosity

Argentinean architect Hernan Diaz Alonso enjoys playing the role of the archetypal South American male striking a memorable figure with a strong physique, black moustache and small beard, wearing heavy silver rings and bracelets and often photographed holding or smoking a large cigar. Despite his image, Diaz Alonso proves a direct and straightforward conversationalist revealing a routine of rising early to work in quiet solitude and a modest approach to living – drinking little and eating mainly traditional Argentinean food.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1969, Diaz Alonso graduated from the National University of Rosario with a degree in architecture although he is quick to suggest that his architectural career happened more by lack of opportunity to pursue his boyhood passion for film making rather than a call to an architectural vocation. Despite his early ambivalence, Diaz Alonso went onto to complete the Advanced Architecture Design Program at Columbia University as a student of Greg Lynn and Jeffery Kipnis. Proving a gifted student, he graduated from the prestigious course with honors and was awarded the Excellence of Design Prize and the SOM Travel Fellowship selection.

As a 2nd generation maverick amongst the fast moving digital culture pioneered at Columbia University¹ through the 1990s, Diaz Alonso developed his unique computational design approach with the use of computer animation software² combined with his passion for cinematics. His revolutionary approach of combining cutting-edge computational processes with an engagement with form, image and expressive authorship is undoubtedly due to the influence of working with two influential yet disparate mentors – as a student with Greg Lynn (1999) and in the late Enric Miralles' office (1996) – coupled with his innate belief in the importance of the architect's intuitive contribution. He also worked as a Senior Design at Peter Eisenman's (2000-2001) before opening his own office, Xefirotarch, in Los Angeles³ in 2001. Diaz Alonso is revered as a brilliant virtuoso by his staff and students who admire him for his ability to engage with the latest animation software with a fresh and innovative approach, unencumbered by non-deterministic processes or notions of morality.

1 Particularly associated with the pioneering use of computer animation software

2 Alias Studio and Maya

3 Currently Diaz Alonso also holds the position of Design Studio and Visual Studies Professor at SCI – Arc and coordinates the Graduate Thesis. He is also a Design Studio Professor at the GSAPP Columbia University and a Visiting Professor the University of Angewandekunst in Vienna.

Fig. 1 Busan Multipurpose Concert Hall Arena, Digital Render
International Architectural Competition, Busan Metropolitan City , Korea, 2004

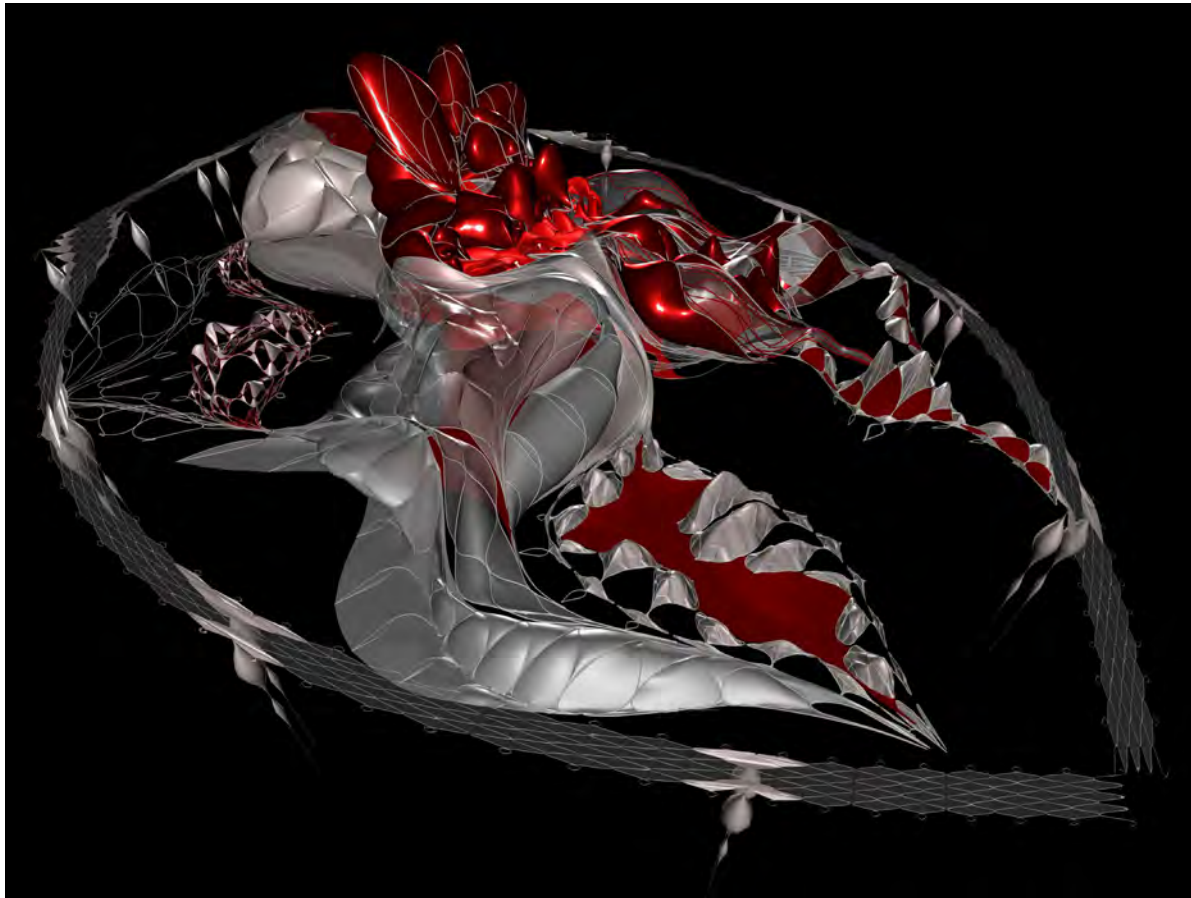


Fig.2 Busan Multipurpose Concert Hall Arena Stereolithography model, Photograph,
International Architectural Competition,
Busan Metropolitan City , Korea, 2004



Digital Virtuosity

Hernan Diaz Alonso's ability to fuse complex ideologies and cutting-edge computational processes with a sense of irreverence and play is perhaps best illustrated in the choice of naming his own practice. He recalls a casual conversation with friends about one of Umberto Eco's novels, 'Foucault's Pendulum' and its theme of intellectual games and fun: "I wanted more like a name of a rock band or something that doesn't mean anything", he explains. "So I remembered the conversation on Eco's book and the reference to the term 'sefirot' within the text and I liked it because it wasn't English or Spanish and it didn't mean anything in particular." Distorting the term to become 'Xefirot-Arch', Diaz Alonso freely admits that he neglected make the connection of Sefirot¹ to Jewish mysticism or mathematics, explaining "A couple of years ago an interview asked me why I chose to name the practice with a religious meaning of mathematical numbers but actually... the absolute truth was that I just liked how it sounded and that nobody would be able to pronounce it correctly!"

This sense of youthful irreverence permeates Diaz Alonso's body of work and he is quick to defend the importance of play within his architectural process: "Architecture for me is sort of a game... I don't vindicate the notion of fun and play. I think that kind of a childish attitude towards working is important," he declares. A self-described 'Romanticist', Diaz Alonso embraces the notions of intuition, self-expression and emotion within his computational process: "Intuition is also an important element within my work and it's a form of intelligence that I am interested in.... How can architecture be a vehicle to express emotions for the author; how do you introduce the conditions to do that? So this idea of playing, games and a romantic sense of expression is something that I really enjoy. I think that architecture is extremely personal so I don't try to hide my personal qualities... I believe in a highly individual approach and not in the detachment of the outdoor script."

Diaz Alonso's path to an architectural career was an indirect one, beginning with a boyhood passion for film and eventually culminating in an awakening of his architectural vision. As he recalls: "I never actually wanted to be an architect; I wanted to be a film director when I was eighteen years old. At the time all the universities were publicly funded in Argentina and so many of the private film schools had closed. So I agreed to do a year of architecture before I applied to start film school and my interest evolved from there." As a nineteen-year-old student he was shown the catalogue of the Deconstructivist exhibition at MoMA, where he saw the work Zaha Hadid and Coop Himmelb(l)au for the first time. "I remember thinking 'Wow there's something else to architecture!' Soon afterwards somebody brought me a book about Archigram's projects... at the time I didn't really understand the significance of the work but I was completely seduced by the images so I became excited about architecture and forgot about film school."

Diaz Alonso attributes his individualistic approach to the influence of working with the late

¹ The novel 'Foucault's Pendulum' by Umberto Eco, published in 1988, is divided into ten segments represented by the ten Sephiroth. The novel is full of esoteric references to the Kabbalah, Alchemy and Conspiracy theory. Sephiroth, Sefirot singular: Sephirah- means "enumeration" in Hebrew. The Sephirot in the Kabbalah of Judaism (Jewish mysticism) are the 10 attributes that God created through which he can manifest not only the physical but the metaphysical universe. The mystical state of the 10 Sephiroth also has significance in a numerological sense. Between the 10 Sephiroth run 22 channels or paths which connect them, and when combined make the number 32 which makes reference to the 32 Qabbalistic Paths of Wisdom and also the 32 degrees of Freemasonry.

**Fig.4 PS1 MoMA NY, Opening Party, "SUR" ,
Built Installation, Photo, Robert Mezquiti, New York, 2005**



**Fig.3 PS1 MoMA NY, Warm Up,
"SUR" , Built Installation,
Photo, Robert Mezquiti,
New York, 2005**



Digital Virtuosity

1 Diaz Alonso credits Lynn as the most interesting 'digital architect' but suggests that even though his was influenced by Lynn, "I also always made a conscious effort to create my own formula. So although Greg and Peter Eisenman advocate extreme, hardcore methodological process within their work, it was never actually in my nature. So it took me some time to make peace with those two worlds and that's where my 'romantic' sensibility comes to the fore. The only thing I'm interested in and obsessed with is to make a difference; where my work is different from the others. It has nothing to do with tools because we use the same tools.

2 As Diaz Alonso recalls: "Working with Enric Miralles helped me to understand that you could be a fairly normal guy in your personal life and still do extreme and radical work... It took me a while to make peace with that because I am a totally boring and normal guy in my personal life and I put all my energy into my work. On a personal level this was one of the most important lessons learnt from Enric." Interview with Yael Reisner. Diaz Alonso recalls an anecdote while working in Miralles' office: "One Saturday morning, Enric showed up super well dressed and smoking a great cigar. So one of the guys asks 'Hey, Enric, are you going to a party or something?' And he replied 'No... Today I'm going to do a beautiful drawing.' That simple statement for me is the essence of Enric's joy of life and a lesson about a way of thinking."

3 Greg Lynn and Mark Goulthorpe both represent the pure computational approach amongst digital architects to the arrival of forms. As Ali Rahim confirmed in his introduction to AD magazine's 'Contemporary Processes in Architecture': "Experimental designers [among the digital architects] capitalized on this accretive learning, which develops through a project, suspending the reflection of concept/image-object/image relationships. "Vol 7 ,No. 3, June 2000, p.7 . Thus, this prevalent suspension of the image was released by Diaz Alonso through his work.

Enric Miralles and the pure computational logic introduced to him by Greg Lynn at Columbia University's Advanced Architecture Design Program¹: "I've been lucky to work and study with amazing people. Enric was my hero and the architect who I admire the most. I've always tried to incorporate many of the things I've learnt from them... Greg and Jeffrey Kipnis were my teachers and I worked for Enric² and Peter Eisenman after graduation so these four amazing guys influenced me early on in my career.

It was not easy, however, for the young architect to break away from Columbia's emphasis on pure computational processes and intellectual discourse to find a method of working that suited his natural inclinations. He recalls: "The whole year at Columbia was fantastic, the studio seminars and it was the pinnacle of the Deleuze and Guattari discussion and so on. I read and talked about them but I never felt quite comfortable because I always understood myself more as a designer rather than an intellectual." It wasn't until he completed the U2 Tower competition (2002) that Diaz Alonso found the confidence and clarity to break away from a purity of process and completely embrace his interest in the image: "When we did the project the U2 tower competition in Dublin everyone started to talk about the picturesque and the figurative that was present in my work. So it was the first time I realized that I could liberate myself from the intellectual process with my interest in cinematic behaviour and the way that image could produce form.

As a result, Diaz Alonso's work has created a new approach to design process within architectural digital culture, where the image was embraced as a primary generator for the work. As he explains: "I'm absolutely shameless about the heavy use of rendering within our work and the fact that we use shadow, reflection and so on as a vehicle for the direction of form. We work with computer renders in a generative way from the very beginning of a project where we will start to speculate with colour, reflection and so on. This starts to dictate the manipulation of the geometry and the form according to the effect that we are trying to produce through the image." Continuing, he suggests: "The difference between my work and the way that other people who work with these tools is that the image is something that is produced at the end of the process³ and we will start to speculate from the very beginning so that the image becomes the genetic code. So we start to define⁵: 'Ok this is going to be a shiny material or opaque or we're going to have colour or no colour, what kind of shadow is produced, how much articulation are we going to produce and so on.⁶ Now the challenge is how do you translate that in the real world?' ⁷

Diaz Alonso believes that we are witnessing a changing of the guard within the contemporary architectural condition of which his generation has identified and embraced: "I think there are

4 That is one of the aspects that differentiate Diaz Alonso's work from most of the digital architects. His cinematic imagery has a character, rhetoric and an individual touch – all qualities that the Modernists rejected for years, as have most contemporary digital architects.

5 In a brief to his students for his Vertical Studio in the fall semester (2006) at SCI- Arc, Diaz Diaz Alonso writes: "Design always concerns a translation between forms and formats of image. More than 'textuality' or even 'iconography', its very form is a secondary function of how it perform as an image..."

6 Diaz Alonso suggests he lost interest in CAD- CAM's direct production process that most digital architects employ. He aspired to develop cinematic sequences, which led to the creation of affective cinematic imagery – amongst other preoccupations – as a significant part of the design process. Thus, he embraced associative thinking, memory, illusions, moods – all familiar elements of the cinema.

7 Diaz Alonso recalls: "So when we worked on the PS1 project for MoMA we were obsessed that the project will capture certain conditions and the image will produce it so how we can achieve those levels or conditions?... I was absolutely obsessed that the final object would will look as close as possible to the renders rendered and, as a matter of fact, when I started to send to friends images of the project everybody said 'Wow! Nice photomontage!'" Interview with Yael Reisner.

Fig.5 Cell Phone Company, Commission, Prototypes, Headphone set , Digital Render, 2005

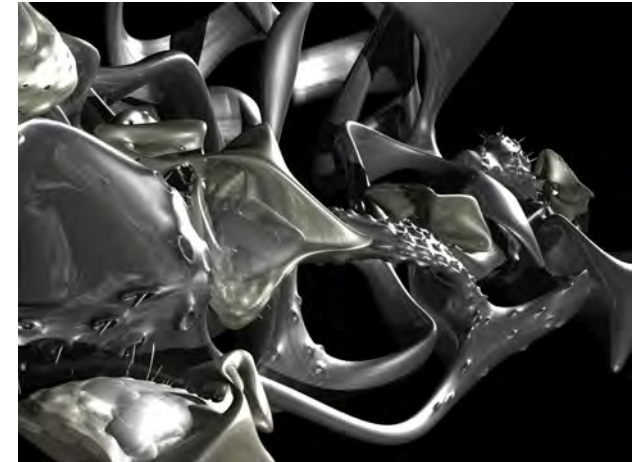


Fig.6 Cell Phone Company, Commission, Cell concept, Digital Render, 2005



Digital Virtuosity

three critical shifts that have developed over the last fifteen years that I'm most interested in. The first is the shift from representation to simulation. The second is the move to a kind of generative internal logic that grows into the form. And the third is the transfer of power from the generation of architects who have viewed computers with the attitude of 'OK what can this software do for me?' to younger architects such as myself who view it as 'What can I do for the software'.¹

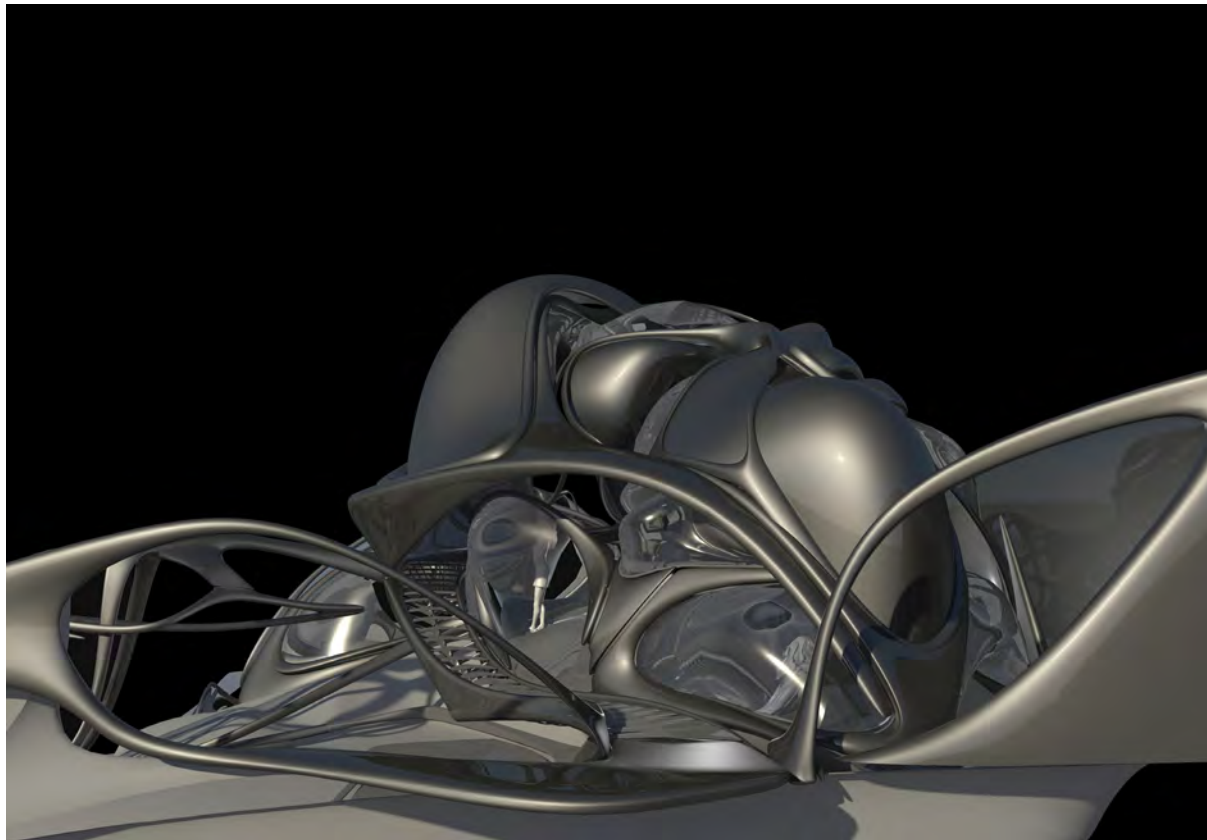
Characteristically, he turns to a pop cultural reference to illustrate his point: "Jimmy Hendrix, for example, didn't invent his famous guitar sound simply because it was a pedal system. Now, I have a lot of friends that have an electric guitar with a pedal but they don't play like Jimmy Hendrix. So there is a sensibility that comes with the ability of how to use the equipment. And I think this illustrates the mental change in the way that my generation approaches work. I think that we have absorbed the technology and the technique to a degree that we can keep shifting the sensibility."

Continuing the music analogy, Diaz Alonso suggests: "In the development of digital culture, I think Greg is more like Charlie Parker or Dizzy Gillespie in the way that they broke a whole new genre of jazz – new sound, new things. I think the work of my generation is more like John Coltrane or Miles Davies in that we're not inventing a whole new genre but taking certain factors of the genre and corrupting it to make it faster, more disturbed and incorporate other sounds. So it's not so much an obsession for innovation, it's much more an obsession for variation or an obsession to create different roles."

Diaz Alonso's commitment to creating a dynamic, non-static, cinematic experience within his architecture is all consuming, suppressing the conventional concerns of the architect to play a very minor role within his process. He declares: "I don't actually have any interest whatsoever in the material aspect of architecture. When we build then we deal with that aspect but it's not something that interests me for investigation... As a result we have been avoiding doing any physical models in the office... I think it has to do with my ambition to keep everything in a kind of dynamic and cinematic logic. Every time you make a model you produce a frozen condition." He recognizes the contradiction suggesting, "I know it's kind of a paradox for an architect and I want to build my projects, yet at the same time the built reality can also produce a huge amount of disappointment. It seems to me that the forms that I want to pursue are almost impossible to achieve through physical investigation. I think you can get the complexity of the form but I don't think you can get the complexity of the image-driven logic of the form that I'm interested in." As a result, Diaz Alonso recognises

¹ As Diaz Alonso explains: "There is transfer of the power in terms of the permanence so a lot of how the work progresses is revolutionary in technique and relation with what technology allows you... So there is a kind of interaction, and of course there is a sensibility that comes with it."

Fig.7 Seroussi pavilion, Maison Seroussi "seingemer", Exterior, main entrance, digital render, Paris,2007



Digital Virtuosity

that he's much more obsessed with image than the physicality of form. At the opening of his pavilion at MoMA's PS1 (2005), he recalls: "I saw the opening, took a picture and never came back. I didn't have any interest whatsoever to see it again... I like seeing the pictures more than seeing the object in reality."

Unlike his digital predecessors Diaz Alonso completely rejects the inherent morality attached to the purity of computational processes where one's artistic inclination is repressed. As such, he is unapologetic in using his taste and aesthetic to corrupt the logical processes: "I am not interested in reinventing the genre, I just want to work faster, more aggressively to create more complexity and beauty. It is a sense of irresponsibility as well; it can't be highly ethical or absolutely moral. I think being socially responsible is not only through action does the architecture directly affect human behavior. It can also be about proving that the nature of the work that you produce can communicate to people in a different way. So I think there is more than one way to contribute to working with a social attitude."

Certainly, Diaz Alonso is ultimately interested in the resultant form and image of that form rather than discourse regarding process. As a consequence he is critical of the self-righteous nature of many architects in the manner they claim the importance of process to their work. "The purity of the work lies in the final effect... As architects, we hold this idea that the coherence of the process provides a sense of morality and that idea is something that doesn't interest me whatsoever. This is not to say that the work doesn't have a very precise technique process but the quality of work we produce has nothing to do with the process; it's not good simply because of the process. I think my work holds an obsession with the production of the image and the final aesthetic that is produced.

Intriguingly he also draws an analogy with Abstract Expressionist painting¹ to explain his manipulation and mastery of technique. "It's not a lack of authorship," he states, "it's more about the ability to surprise myself and keep it playful. So in the same way that Jackson Pollock when painting held control but also allowed a margin of unpredictability. So that interests me a lot because I've always wanted to keep that killer spirit within the work and surprise myself." Diaz Alonso has developed access to layers of randomness within an inherent system, embracing the tremendous freedom facilitated within the computational process, while benefiting from the new sensibilities that grow with new software, new technologies and refined technique.

Describing what he terms an 'excessive virtuosity' Diaz Alonso embraces the quality of 'awkwardness' within his work and introduces what he considers a sense of 'harmony'. He claims the meaning and logic of his architecture are an afterthought and certainly not predetermined. This attitude, unlike many of his peers, liberates his architecture from the heavy processes and the overworked reasoning that underpin the methods of others. As

¹ Frank Gehry also references abstract painting within his work.

Fig.10 Stockholm City Library, Digital Render
,Competition entry, 2007

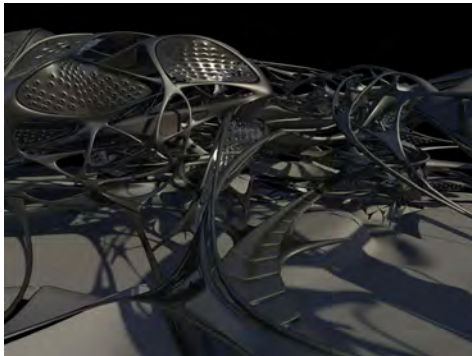


Fig.8 Stockholm City Library,
Digital Render , Competition entry, 2007

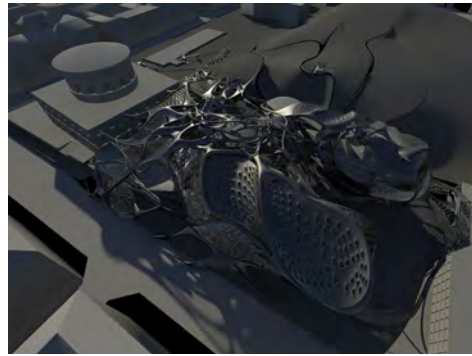
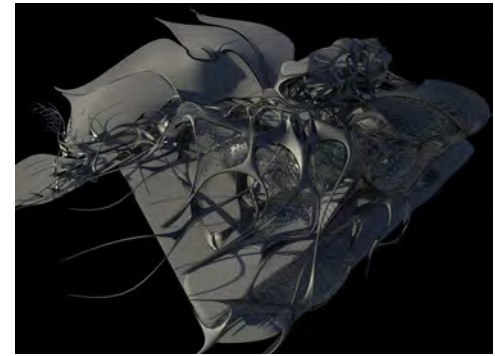


Fig.9 Stockholm City Library,
Digital Render ,Competition entry, 2007



Digital Virtuosity

he explains: “I don’t need to define the rules for my working process. I am interested in total liberation. For me it’s more like a wild horse, you get on and see where it takes you.” Of course, you still have your technique to ride the horse. And in the Romantic tradition, Diaz Alonso prefers not to dissect his work: “I always try to refuse to talk about the processes behind the work because I like the notion of separating the ‘magic from the magician’... I always think that the trick is more interesting than the method.” He agrees to be drawn a little further on his process: “We always work with two or three typologies at the same time and the corruption or contamination of these typologies is a technique which we use all the time. They produce a kind of awkwardness because there are certain aspects of the work that can seem out of place and out of proportion.”

Undoubtedly Diaz Alonso has produced some of the most compelling architectural imagery of recent years and when pushed to discuss the aesthetic qualities of what is obviously tremendously dexterous form making he responds in a manner typical of his persona: “I think that my work can be defined in two categories – some projects are grotesque¹ while some of them are horrific and I think they represent different problems. My view of the grotesque doesn’t have an aesthetic value per se – it’s more about a place in time in the same way that the work of painter Francisco Goya was described as grotesque simply because the work didn’t fall under a known aesthetic of the time.” Elaborating, he continues, “So the grotesque is more about an emergence of a new form – for example with the U2 tower (2002), I can clearly see the grotesque because it wasn’t something I was looking for – it just happened and can’t be quickly defined; it’s like the opposite of cute. It’s something else – it’s not beautiful, it’s not ugly yet there’s other qualities that are difficult to describe so for me grotesque falls into that condition.”

Characteristically Diaz Alonso returns to a cinematic analogy to continue his explanation, “For me the notion of the ‘horrific’ describes the opposite of elegant or precise – it’s the idea that you can choreograph, orchestrate and organise the sensibility so it’s playful in that sense. For example when Alfred Hitchcock was putting together the shower scene in the movie Psycho, I think he was having fun with it... there is something horrific and scary but at the same time a kind of adventure and playfulness comes into it... So ultimately there is a kind of a condition that makes us want to see horror movies or take a ride on a rollercoaster.” He concludes: “For me this is an aesthetic problem... I don’t aspire to inflicting a horrific feeling in people through my architecture but what’s really interesting for me is the possibility of something horrific and grotesque revealing a different kind of beauty and create a different kind of an effect and condition on the people that experience my work.”

1st interview, Xefirotarch Studio, Los Angeles, December 2006

2nd interview, Central London, January 2007

1 Mark Goulthorpe wrote about the grotesque in AD, Architecture & Animation, vol.71, no 2, April 2001; ‘Misericord to a Grotesque Reification’, p.57. In his essay, Goulthorpe reintroduces the notion of the ‘grotesque’ as an animation phenomena and its popularity amongst digital architects who used software designed for animation. Goulthorpe quotes Ernest Gombrich who suggests that animation produces an effect in us, as a psychological rather than a simply physical manifestation. As Gombrich explains: “... Animation... in design... imbues the shape with life and therefore with movement and expression... animation not only uses monsters, it generates them... the principle of animation rules in the world of the grotesque...” Ernest Gombrich, The Sense of Order, A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art, 1979. Phaidon, 1984, 2nd edition. pp.261 – 262

Fig.11 "Fideos Brillantes", pedestrian bridge, Frontal View, Digital Render, San Juan Puerto Rico, 2007 – 2010



Fig.12 "Fideos Brillantes", pedestrian bridge, View from Above, Digital Render, San Juan Puerto Rico, 2007 - 2010

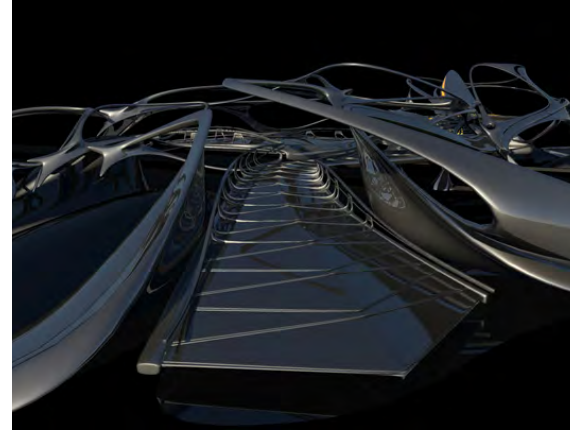


Fig.13 Tabakalera, Competition Entry for the New Media Museum in San Sebastian, overall view , Digital Render, Spain 2008

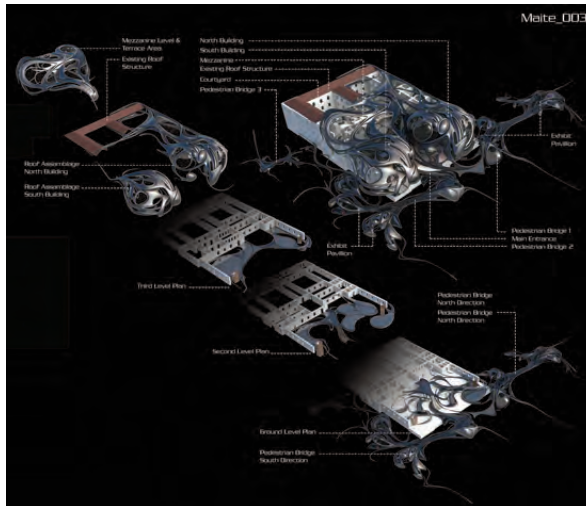
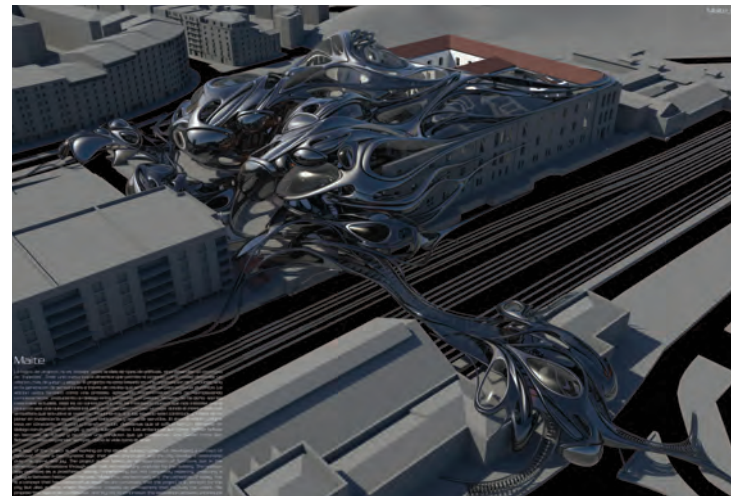


Fig.14 Tabakalera, Competition Entry for the New Media Museum in San Sebastian, overall view , Digital Render, Spain 2008



Hernan Diaz Alonso Xefirotarch studio
Digital Virtuosity



Fig.15 "Pitch Black" Exhibition, MAK Center Exhibition, Photograph, Vienna, 2007

26. Practice Platform: Gilli's project, Phase 2, March–November 2005

26.1. Spatial-Depth Part V - Family house: Design concept evolving

Following a meeting with the structural engineers and the quantity surveyor we were asked by the client – despite being within budget – to reduce the cost of the project. We took a decision to reduce some curved surfaces while keeping the curved vaulted Western wing of the family house, the curved Eastern wing of the Music Pavilion and the curved spa space under the hill.

To reduce the cost further we had to relocate our 'spatial depth' concept. Everyone wanted to keep the pergola, made from a thirty centimetre-thick perforated light concrete, and so we substituted the perforated parts of the roof/ceiling layer with other interior parts so as to keep the effect but reduce the cost.

These decisions brought a major design change, as one can see in the next stage models, but after a short while I felt that we were coming up with a much stronger aesthetic and with better, more explored and solved solutions leading to the special effect I wished to introduce.

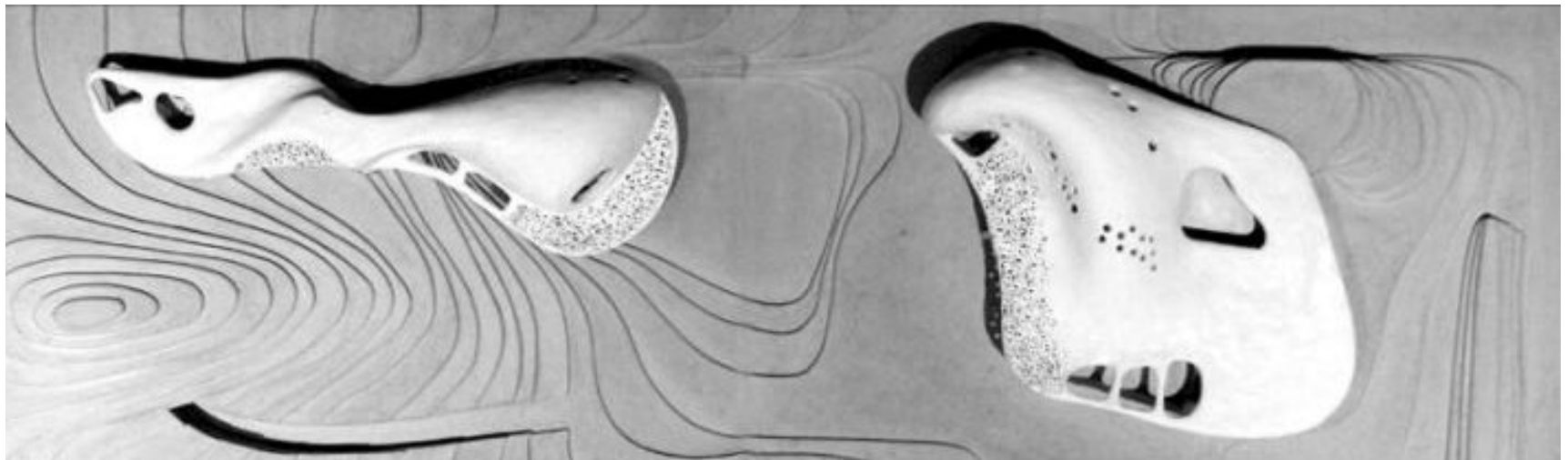
1. Gilli's house – early image of the family house area as viewed from the street, where Gilli asked for a modest appearance. This suggestion went well in-keeping with the prevalent Modernist architecture around. There is only a hint of its special fluid organic attic as it rises at the back part of the house.



2. The spa under the hill, in the Western part of the plot. An early interior image.

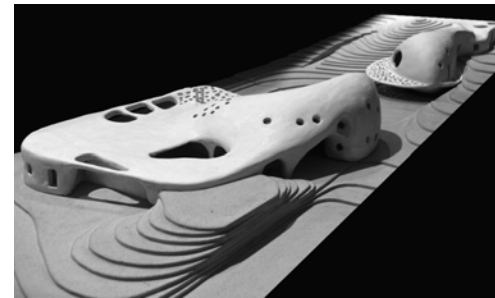
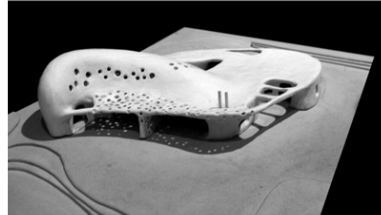
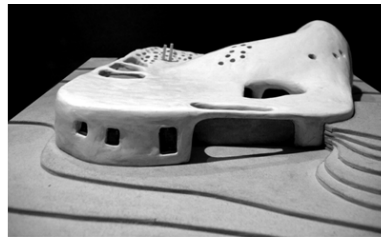
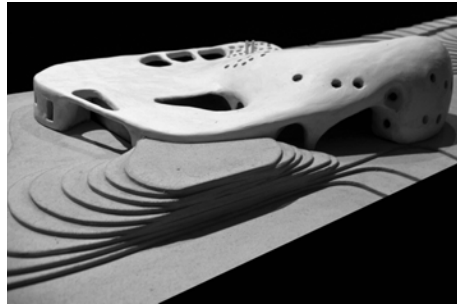
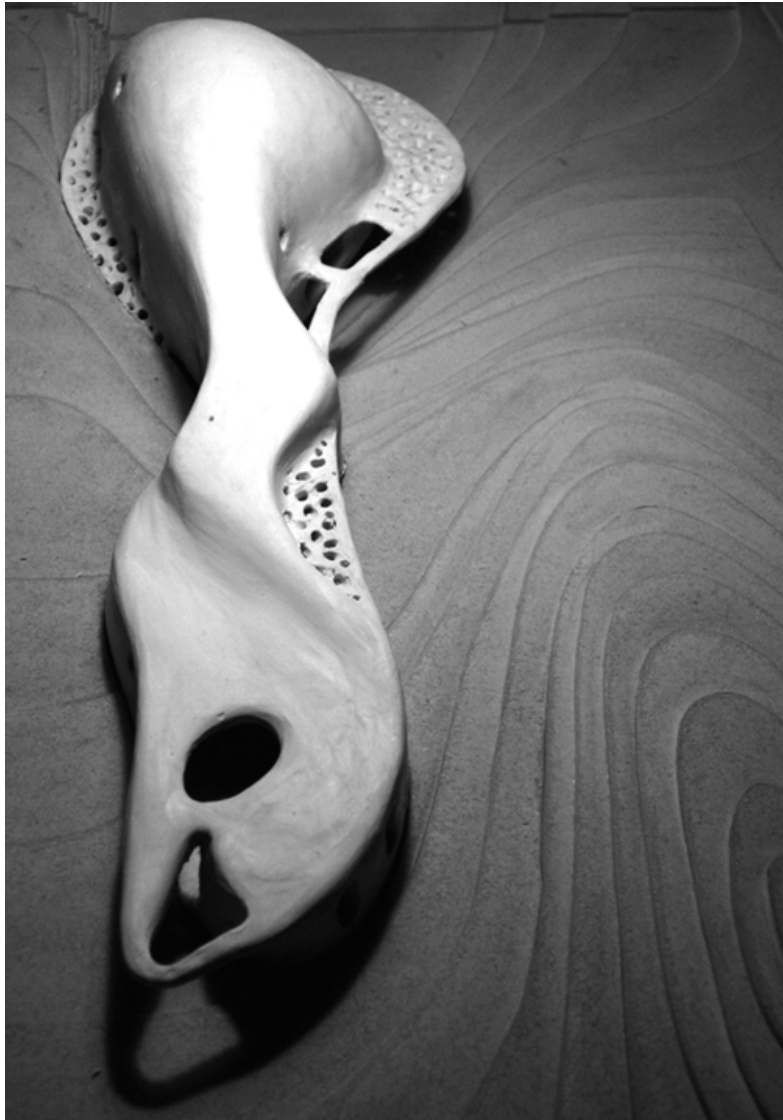


3. West-East 5000 Sq.m. plot, A family house, a music pavilion and a constructed hill with a spa under it.

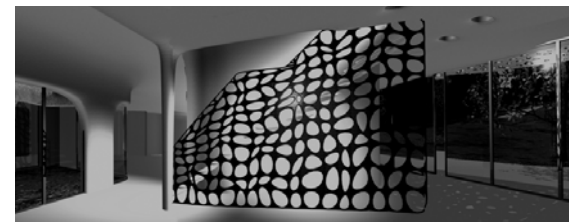


Gilli's House, Phase 2

1-7. Gilli's House phase 2, Plasticine models, scale: 1:50



8. 3D-computer model, interior view from the kitchen area.



1-4. Gilli's House phase 2, stills from a 3D-computer model, interior views



26.1.1 The silhouette with the celestial sphere in its background

I realised I could create a great spatial condition if I made the light well – the area dividing the kitchen/dining area and the living room – the focus (and locus) of my passion, the site in which to express what I had learnt from nature about how to evoke emotions. The concept of the 'celestial sphere' is, for me, the most reassuring effect in nature¹ and when combined with the effect of the 'dark silhouette' it becomes a fantastically charged image, whether it is seen in the Mediterranean desert or in the Nordic mountains. I wished to introduce it to the family house in the imperfect vaulted ceiling above the living room. Treating this ceiling as an artificial sky I could create dark silhouettes and place them within its void and recreate the effect I found charging.

In early 2005, while preparing my paper for the 'INSIDEOUT' Symposium in Melbourne - organised by a collaboration between RMIT Interior Design and Landscape Architecture, School of Design, Queensland University of Technology, that took place in Melbourne in April 2005 – I wished to further define spatially what I had called until then 'a multi-layered depth'. I felt I was more eager than ever to turn some surfaces inside-out in my artificial celestial vault, creating different possibilities for a continuous depth so as to be able to walk into that incredible matrix; or, up on the sprawling stairs, through a substance full of cavities - that might seem chaotically spread - some to inhabit, others to let in indirect light.

I wished the walls to burst inside out and join that very airy matrix that 'drops' from the ceiling towards the floor seducing us in. I wanted to use the concave ceiling as a kind of a dome, an artificial dome of the sky where the growth-like elements would become like layered silhouettes with the light coming from the 'sky'. I was thinking of Georgia O'Keefe's paintings, her pink flowers. Aesthetically it all connects to the Romantic Tradition, but not less to the ceiling of the church of St. Ignatius in Rome - 'the Glory of St. Ignatius' painted by Padre Andrea Pozzo - which created the illusion of the place opening to the sky (1691-4), a space that was particularly Baroque in spirit.²

I felt the organic kind of depth I was looking for had an incomplete quality about it, like the soft curls of hair in contrast to the smooth neck and shoulder. I was interested in this contrast, as we can see in the images and pictures I brought together.

Umberto Eco, when he talks about 18th century attraction for the ruins, confirms that beauty is found also in the incompleteness: 'in the incompleteness, for the marks that inexorable time had left upon them, for the cracks and the moss...'³

Incompleteness is an interesting notion, and for me it relates to a less formal attitude to life, more casual, communicating relaxed attitude by having incomplete parts, thus informing the place is less uptight, a more suitable attitude to life today; inviting a relaxed attitude to life.

I gave a presentation to the structural engineers from Atelier One so as to discuss my new architectural ideas and new set of interpretations of the 'Spatial depth' concept we dealt with earlier, before the major change.

1 This reassuring effect was explained by Marcel Minnaret's observation which I quoted earlier in page 333.

2 Bazin, Germain, Baroque & Rococo, Thames & Hudson, London, 1964. P.39.

3 Eco, Umberto, On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea, Secker & Warburg, London, 2004, p. 285.

Gilli's House; Spatial-Depth Part V
First sketch for Light & Acoustic application

1. Photoshop First Sketch - Capturing the notion of *Spatial Depth in its first application* as a concept for light and acoustic installation



Spatial-Depth Part V; Visual References

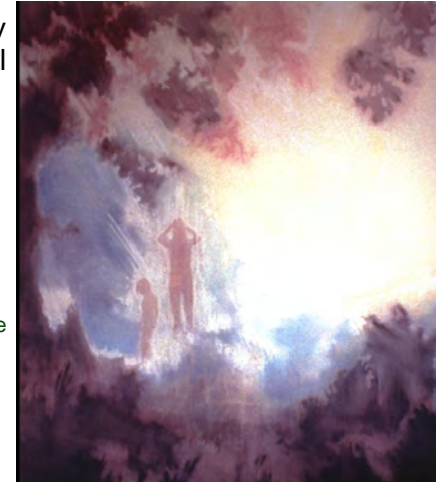
26.1.2 My Visual References and Sketch Design

As I worked in Photoshop exploring my sketch design for that spatial depth effect invigorated by the silhouette effect, I gathered images that supported how I felt about it, so as to clarify my visual intentions.

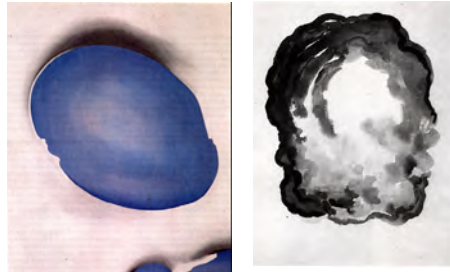
2. Padre Andrea Pozzo, The Glory of Saint Ignatius, on the ceiling of the church of St Ignatius, Rome, 1691-1694. Especially Baroque in spirit, The masterpiece of the illusionist style, to give the spectator a feeling of being overhung by a whole world of flying figures, that hover and soar in an imaginary palace, or through the open sky.



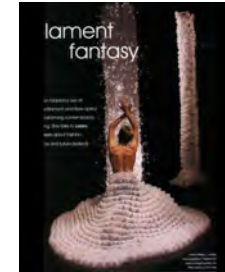
1. Dee Ferris, 'Hayzee Fantayzee', London, 2004; soft dream-worlds and uber-nice nightmares. Dee Ferris is fascinated with Arcadian promises that are plastered over our billboards and tv screens; she reorganise those and produce paradoxical visions.



3.-4. Georgia O'keefe, the dome of the sky.



5. Sharon Marston, a textile-light artist, London.



6. Jackson Pollock.



7. Tree roots, Brazil.



1. Seaweeds, the Isle of Wight. England.



2-4. Lebbeus Woods, Stations, early 1990s.



5. Dale Chihuly, Blown Glass installation, Venice, Italy.



6. Niki de Saint Phalle,



7. Fashion photography

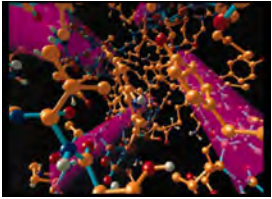


8-9. Textile world.

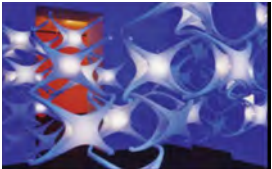


Spatial-Depth Part V; Visual References

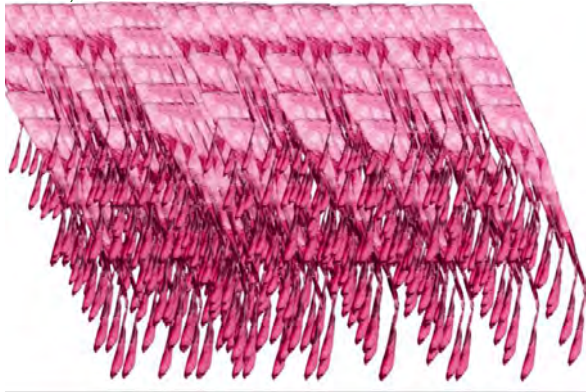
1. protein molecule



4. Tobi Schneider , 'Lattice Archipelogs' Graz (2002)



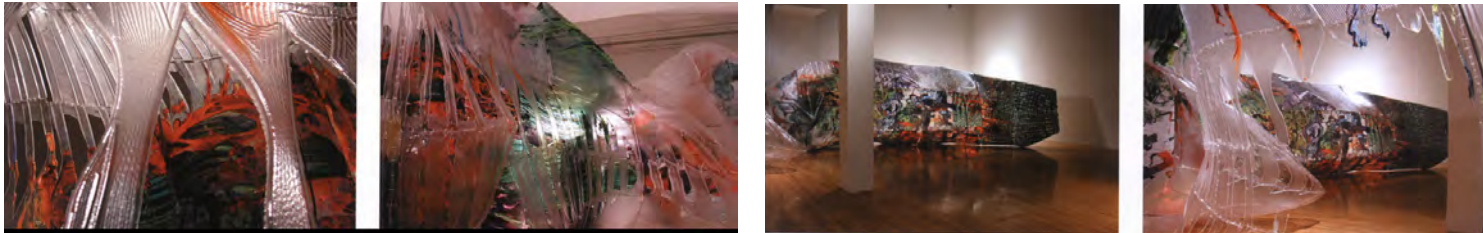
2. Paz Horn, Spatial-Depth, The Bartlett, Diploma, Unit 11, 2003.



3. Aniko Meszaros, Plant Anima, An underwater cavity space; Spatial-depth in its earlier expressions, before the term was thought about, but the visual 'groping for meaning' was there already. 1998-99



5.-8. Greg Lynn Predator Installation.



9. Fashion, transformation from surface to depth



10. Curls juxtaposed with smooth jaw and neck.



11. photographer: Michel Francois' Exhibition 'La plante en nous', Brussels. 2001



12. photographer: Michel Francois' Exhibition 'La plante en nous', Brussels. 2001



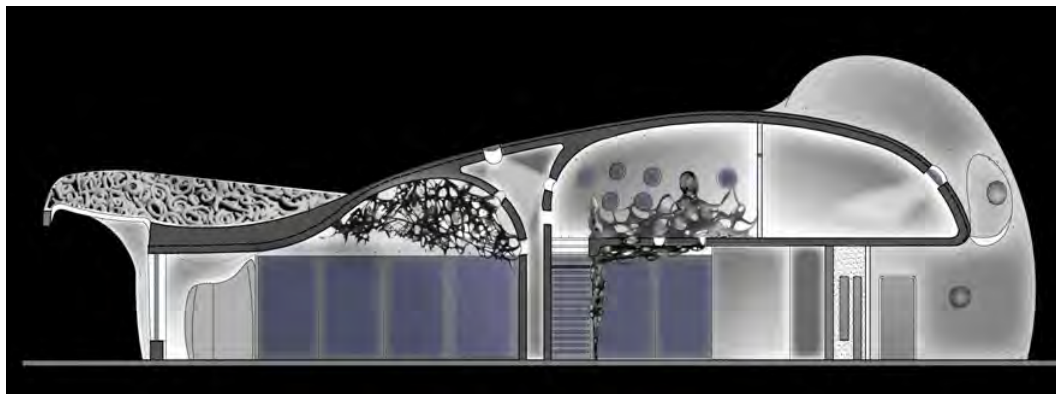
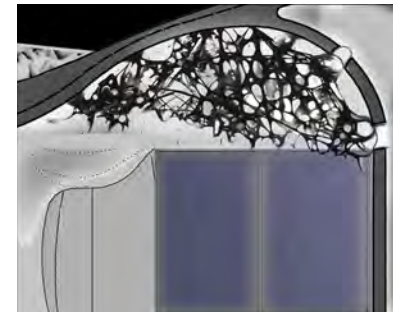
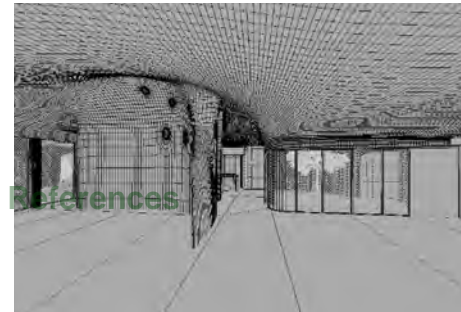
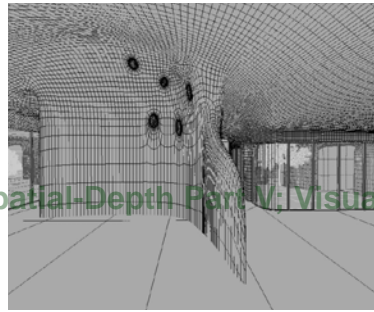
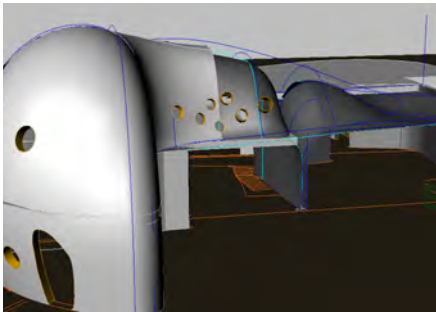
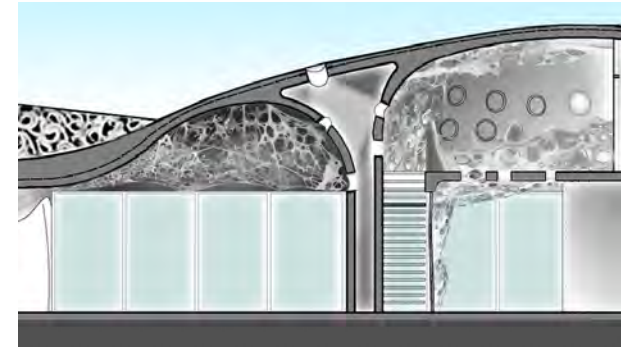
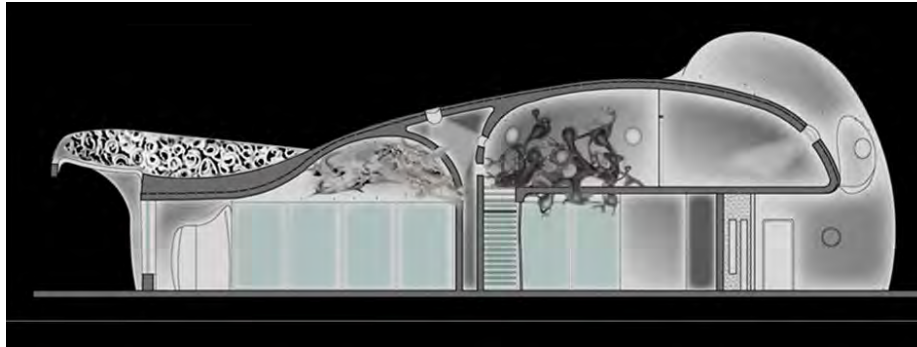
13. Porcelain craft art, 2004.



14. A big Glass object full of holes under its smooth surface; a mysterious craft technique. I was very surprised to see this object in the summer of 2004 – perfectly fitting my architectural ambition at the time.



Gilli's Family House - Spatial-Depth Part V; Design Process



8. Paul Hankar, Bartholome's house, Dining room, Art Nouveau, Brussels, 1898. The cast-iron as the structural element - shooting out of the ceiling as columns that add elegance and beauty to the room.

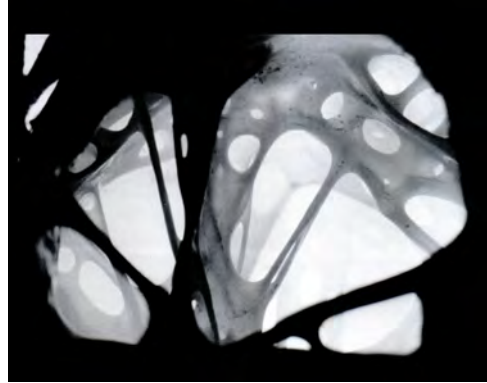


Gilli's Family house and Music pavilion - Spatial-Depth Part V - Design Process

1. First physical model I built to depict the structure that will supply light and better acoustic for the music room in the music pavilion.



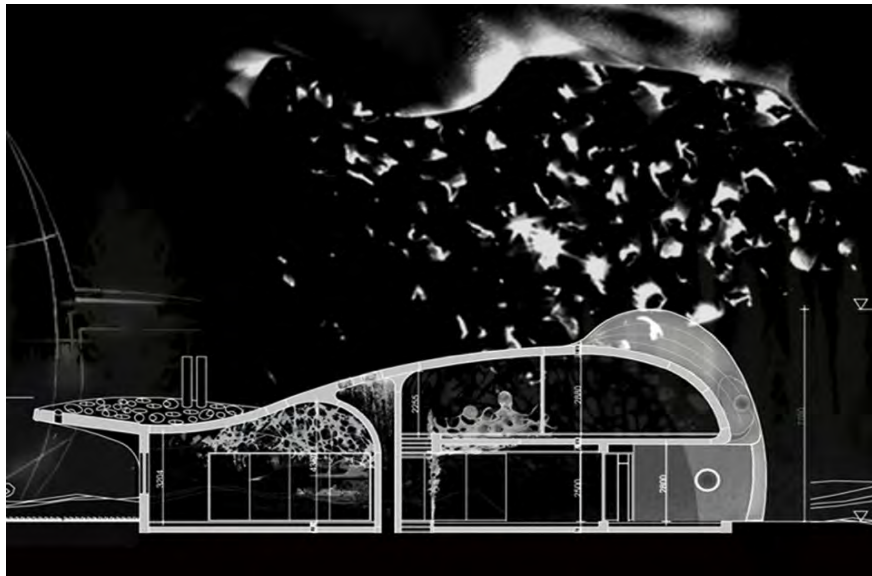
2. Frei, Otto a model of growth in nature manipulated by us to manifold silhouettes



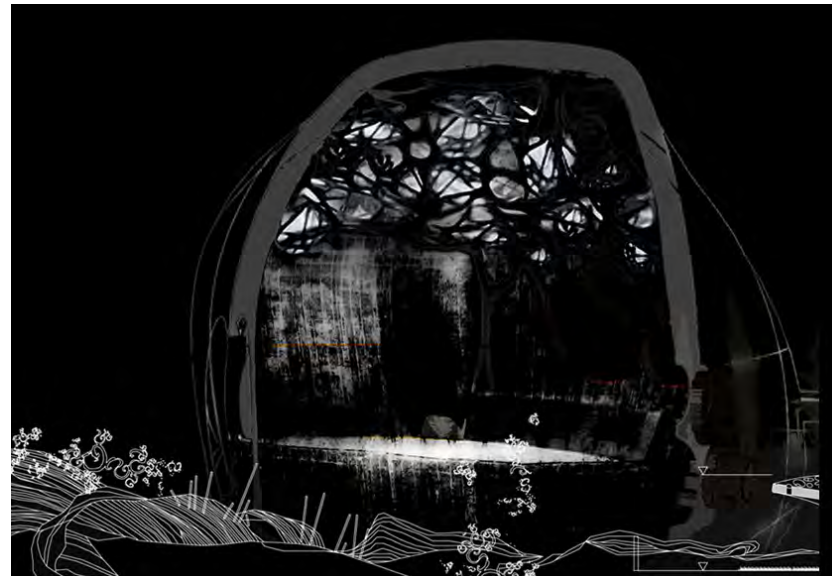
3. The music room in the Music Pavilion – day time.

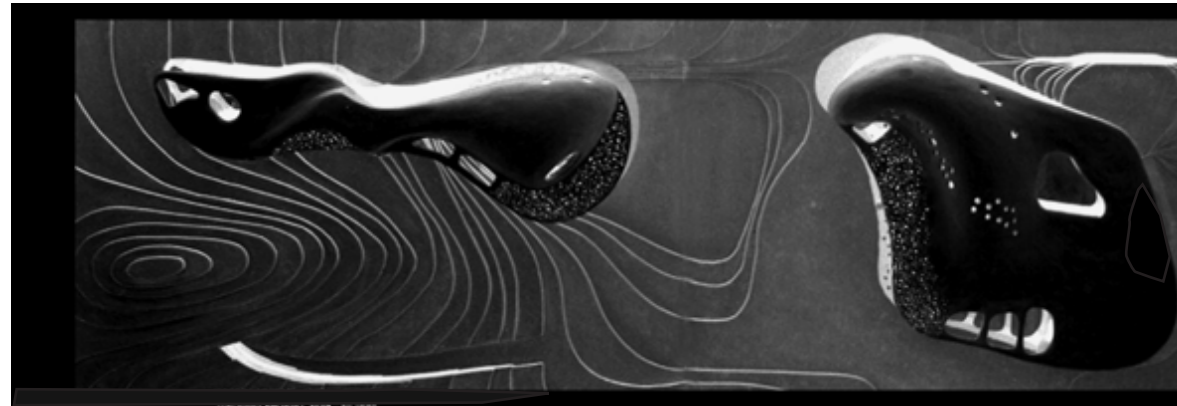


4. Section through the family house



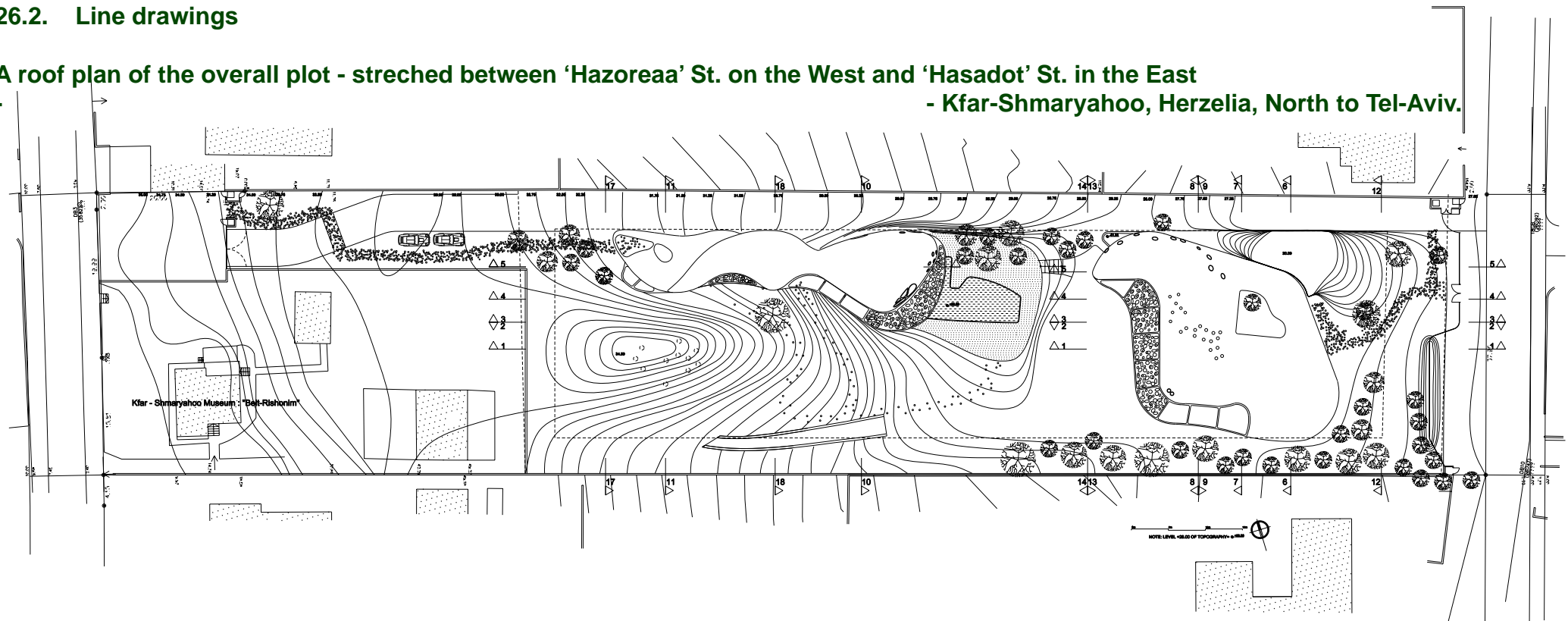
4. Sectional perspective of the music room, music pavilion, concert time



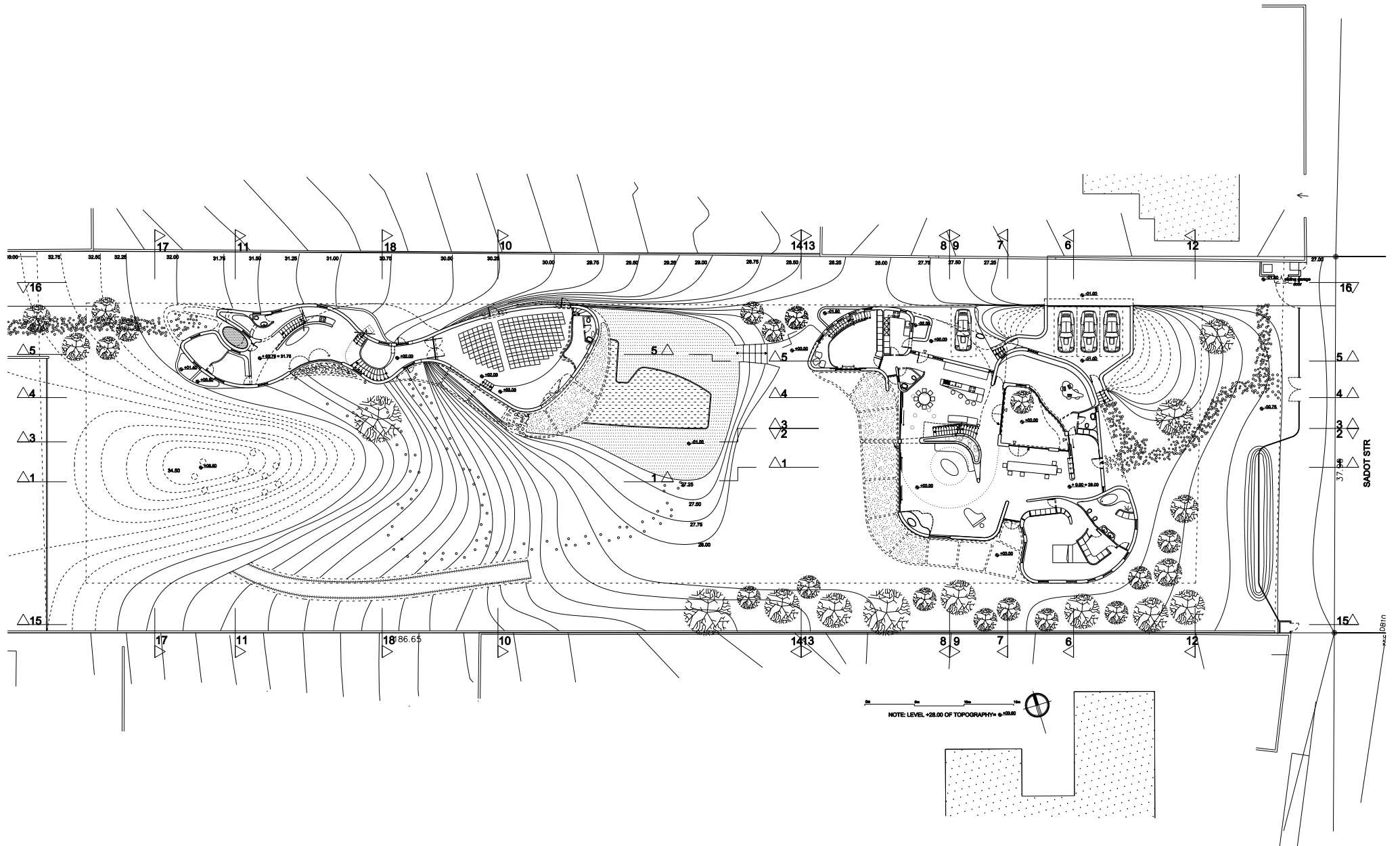


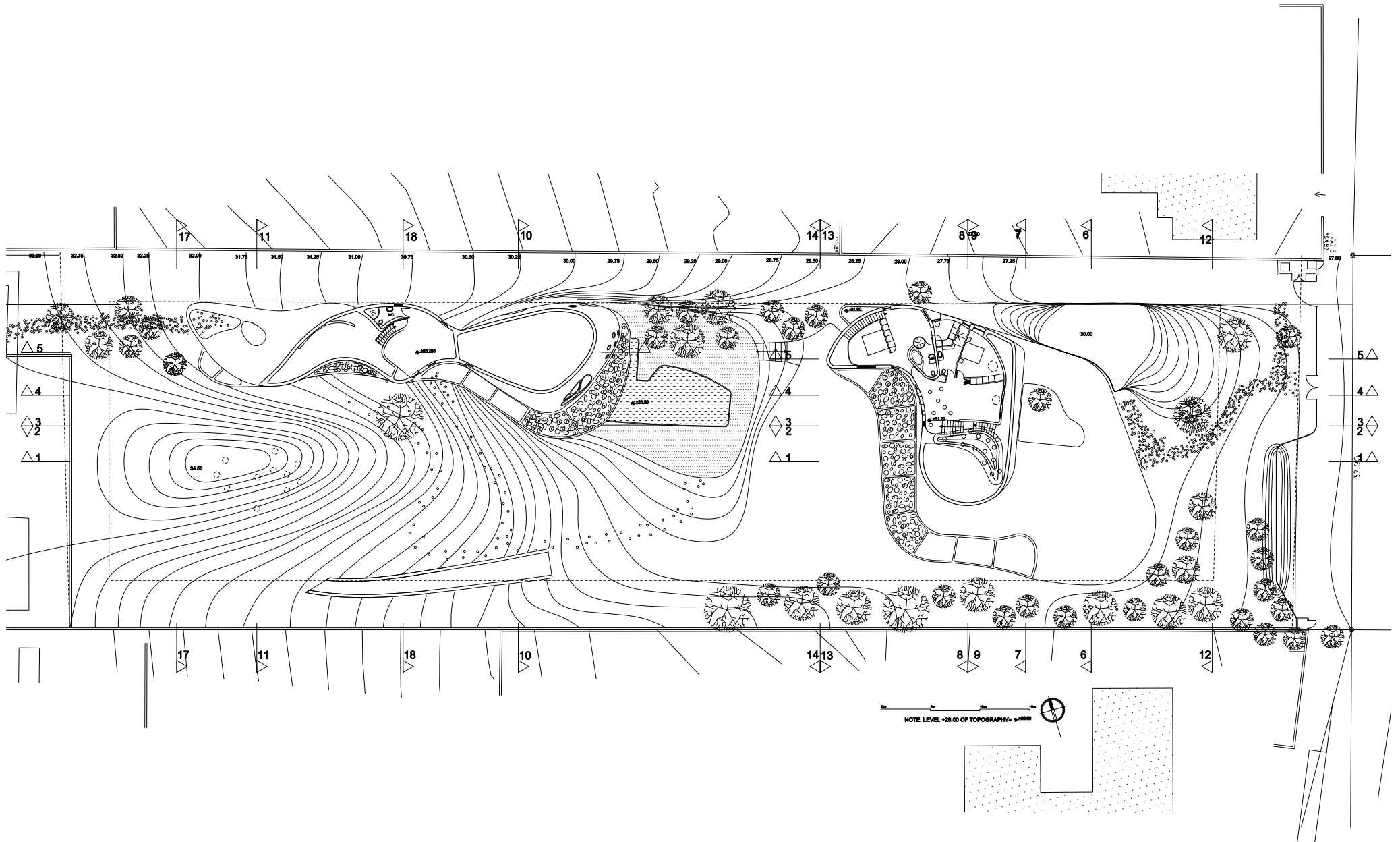
26.2. Line drawings

A roof plan of the overall plot - stretched between 'Hazoreaa' St. on the West and 'Hasadot' St. in the East
- Kfar-Shmaryahoo, Herzelia, North to Tel-Aviv.

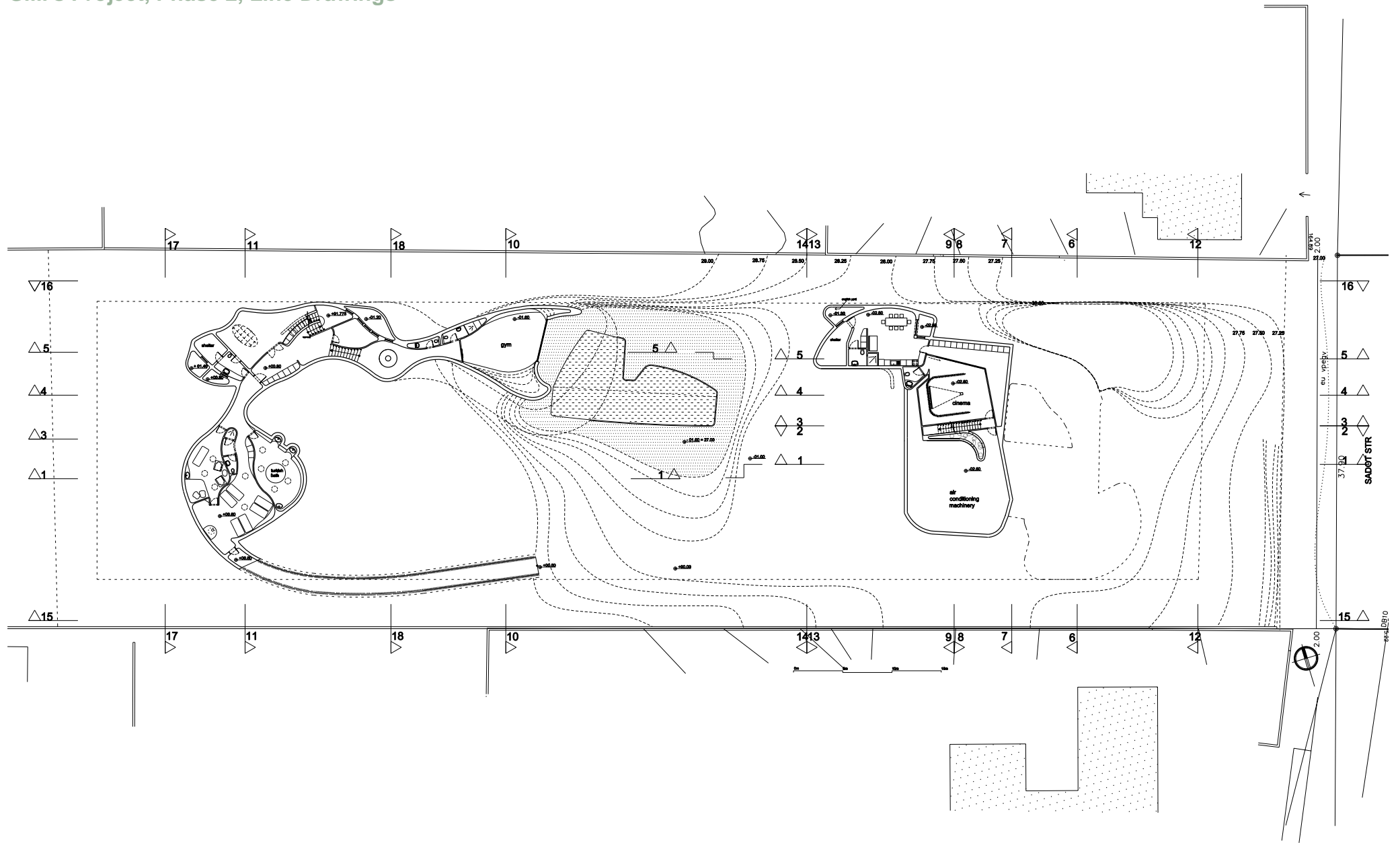


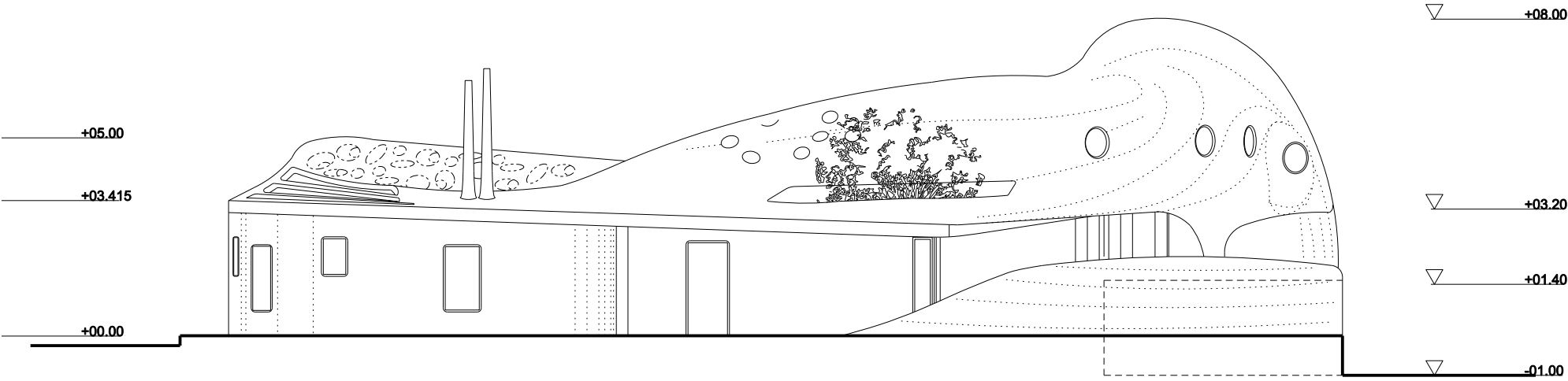
Gilli's Project, Phase 2, Line Drawings



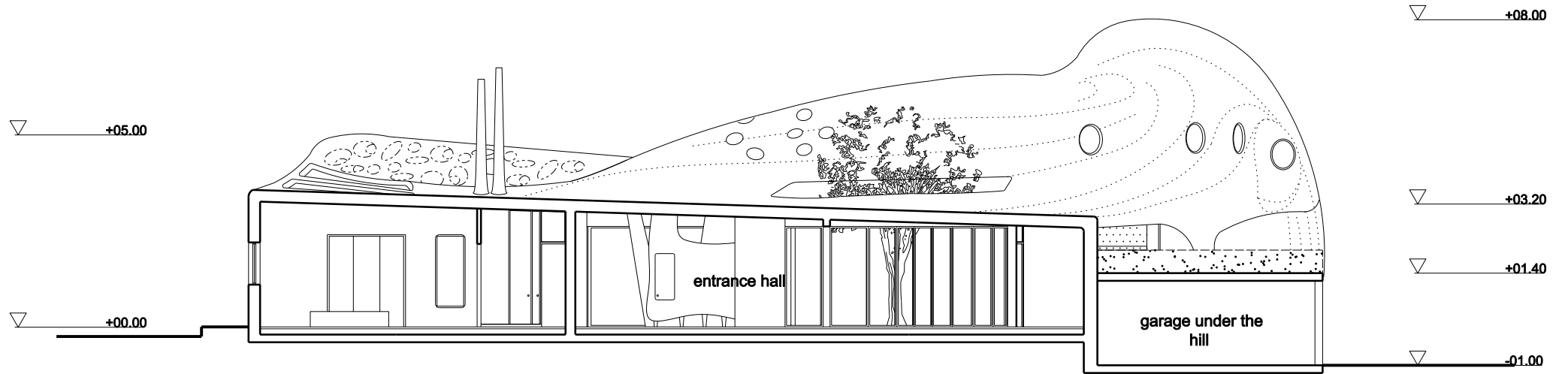


Gilli's Project, Phase 2, Line Drawings

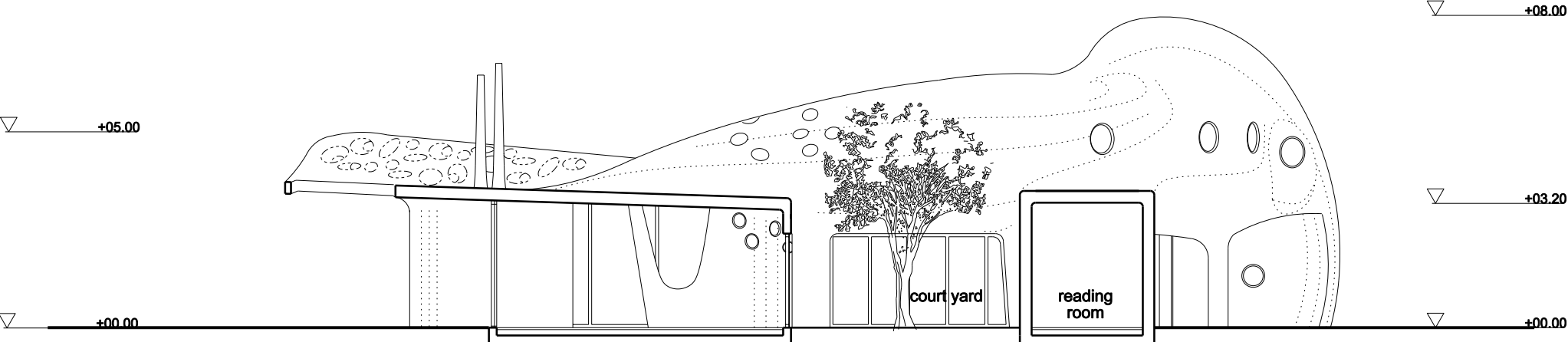




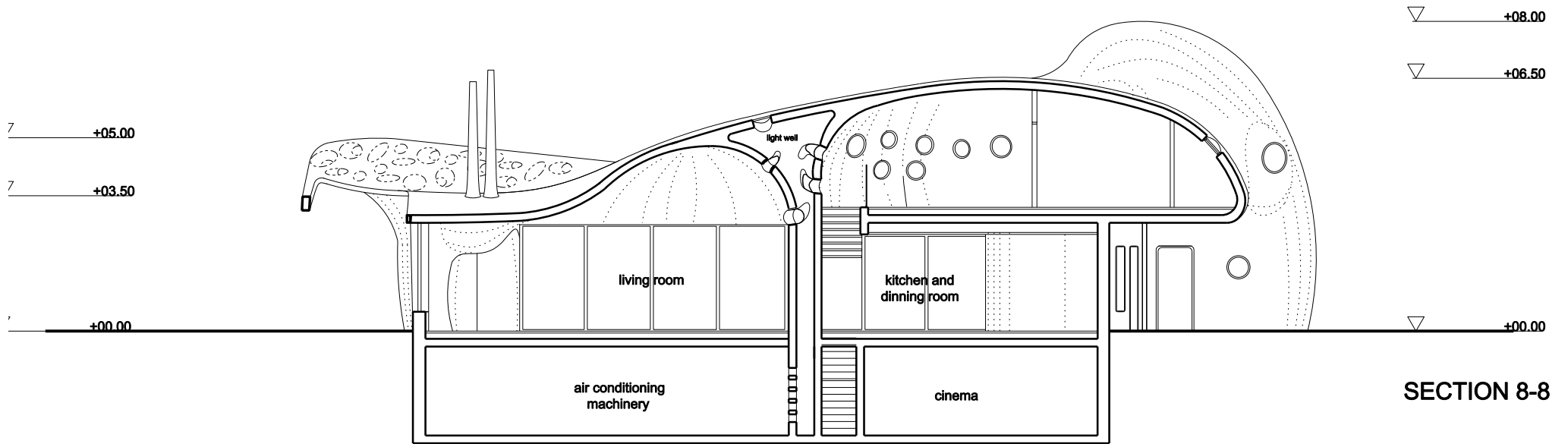
SECTION 12-12

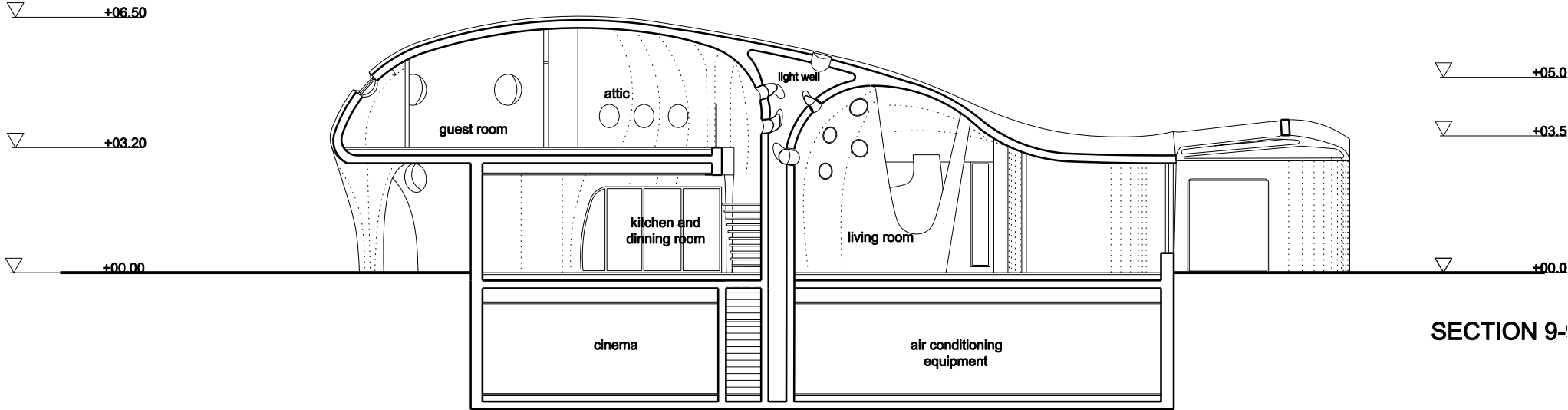


SECTION 6-6

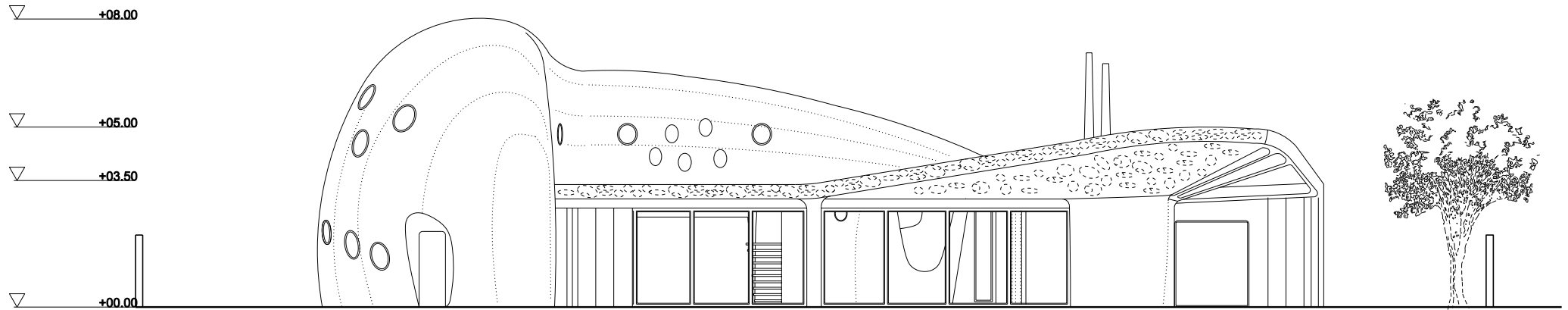


SECTION 7-7

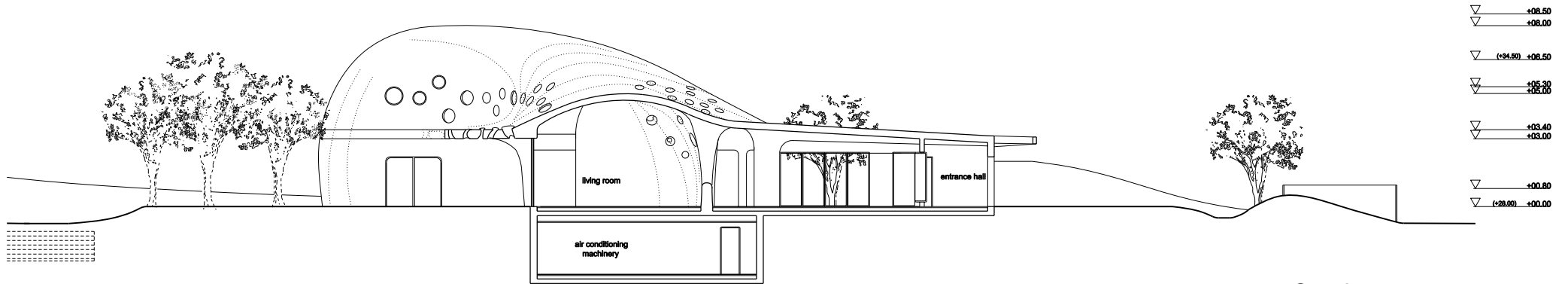




SECTION 9-1



**SECTION
13-13**

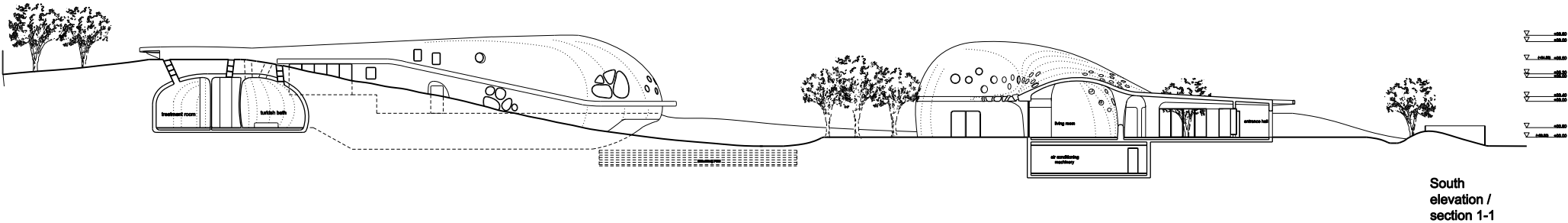


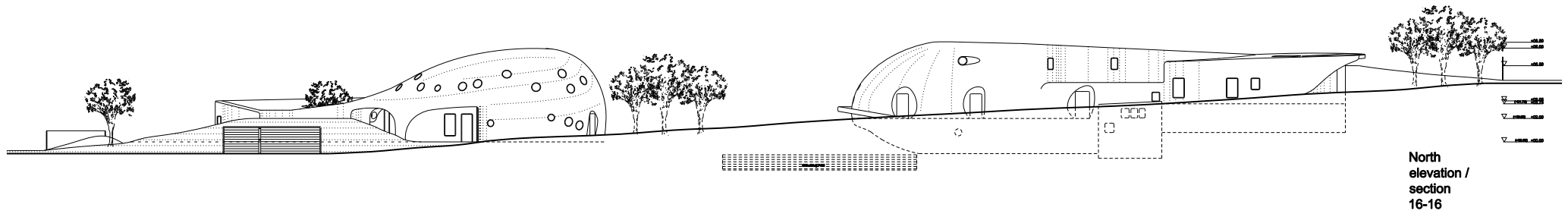
South
elevation /
section 1-1

Gilli's Project, Phase 2, Line Drawings

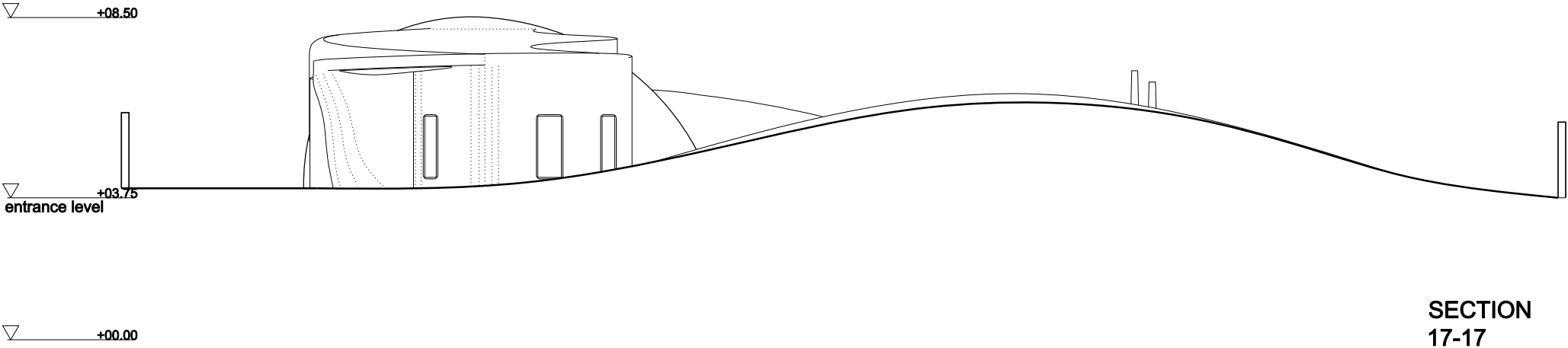


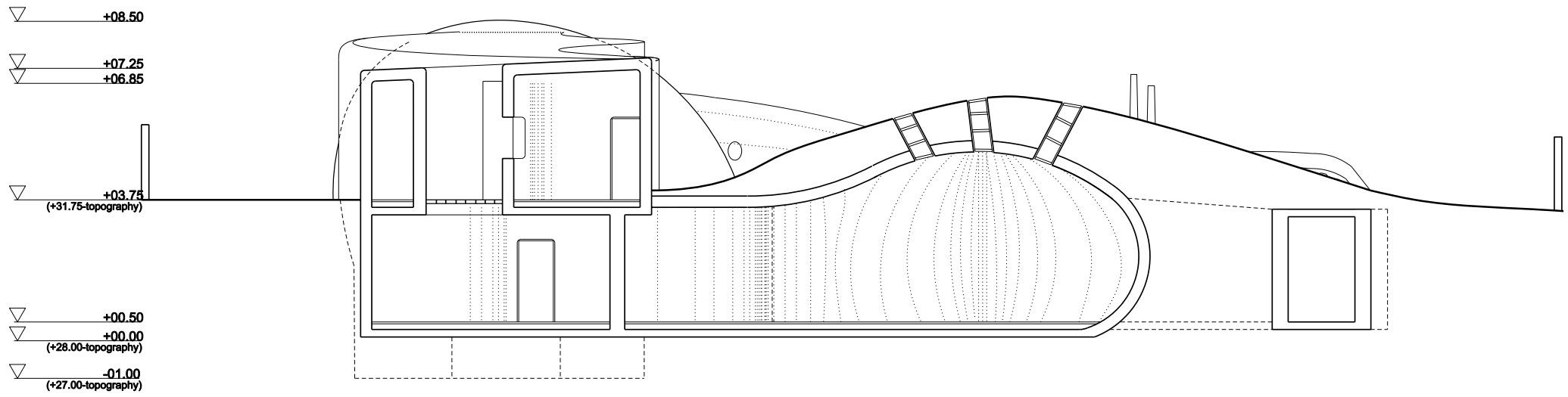
South elevation / Section 15-15



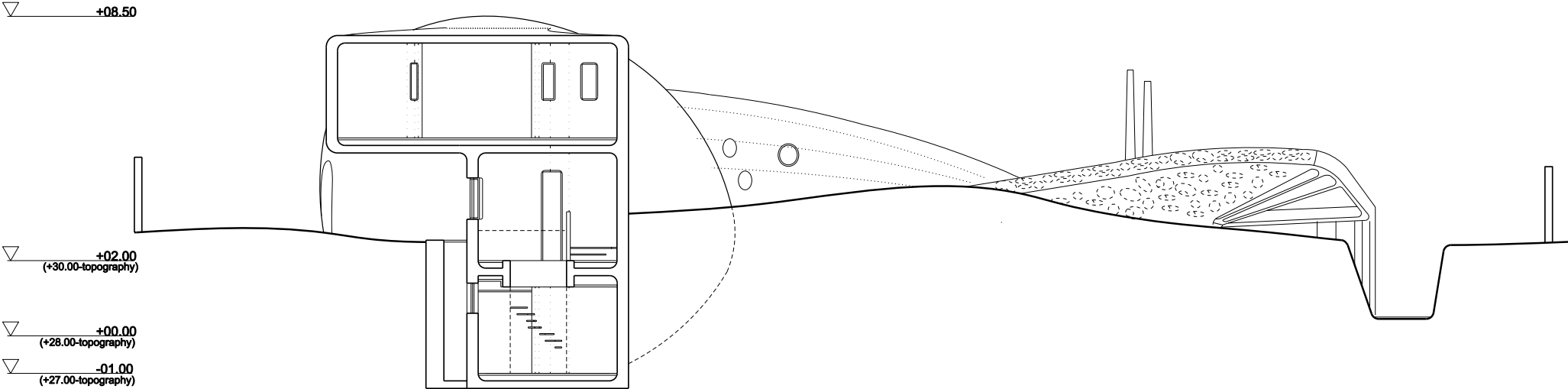


North
elevation /
section
16-16

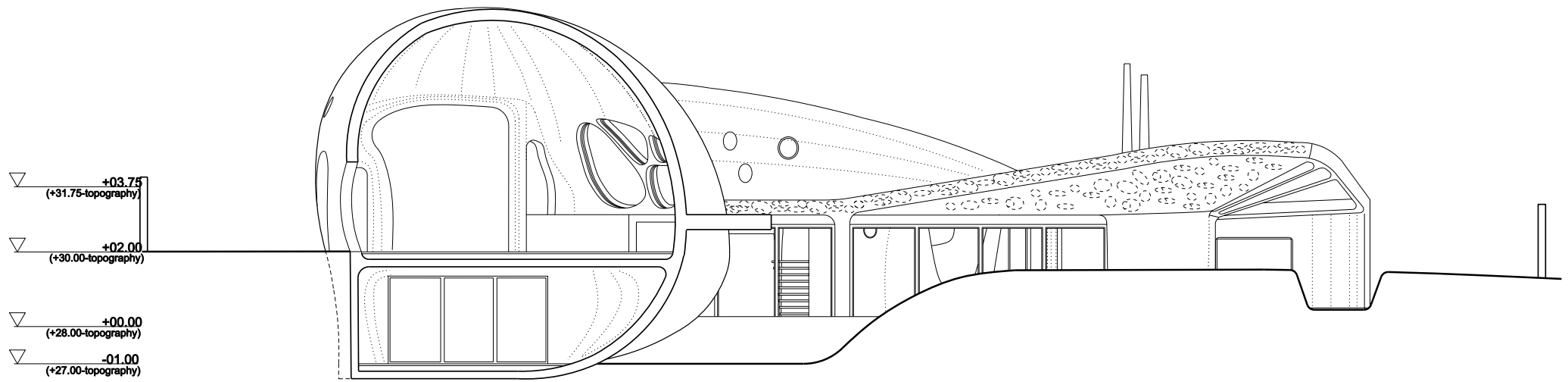




SECTION
11-11

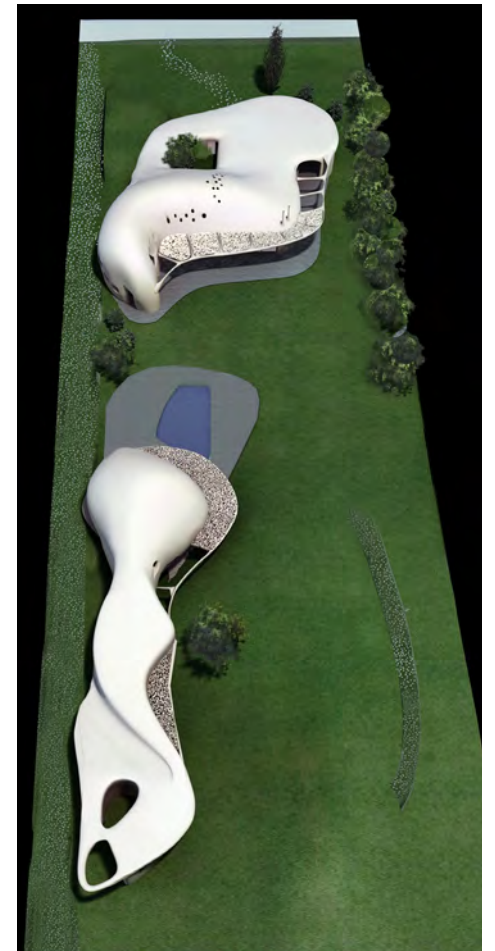
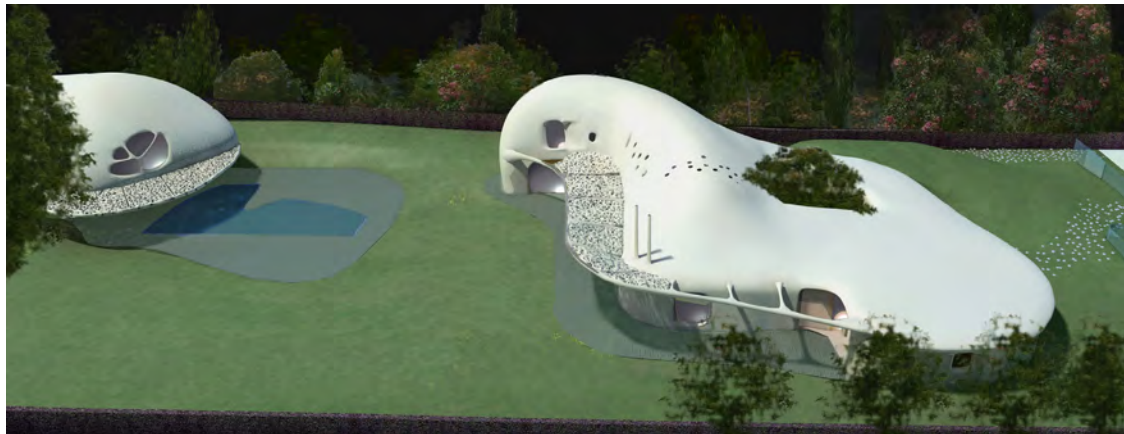


**SECTION
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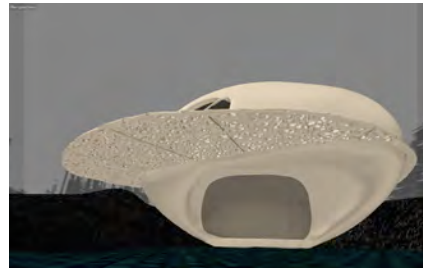
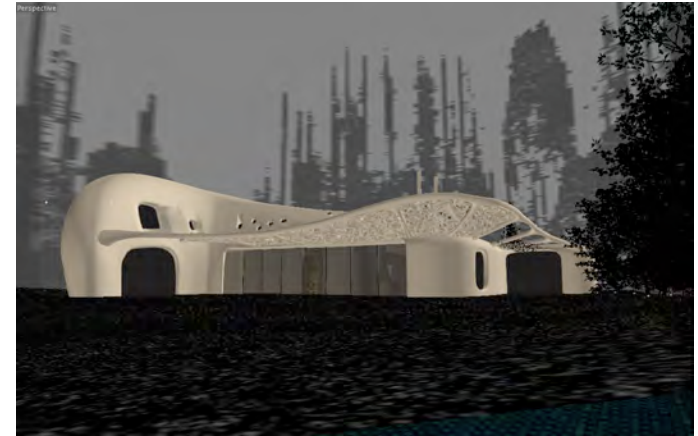
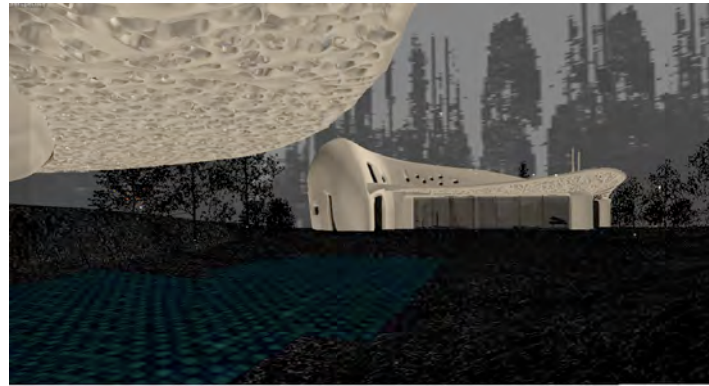


SECTION
10-10

26.3. 3D renders



Gilli's Project, Phase 2, 3D Renders
Digital Design Process



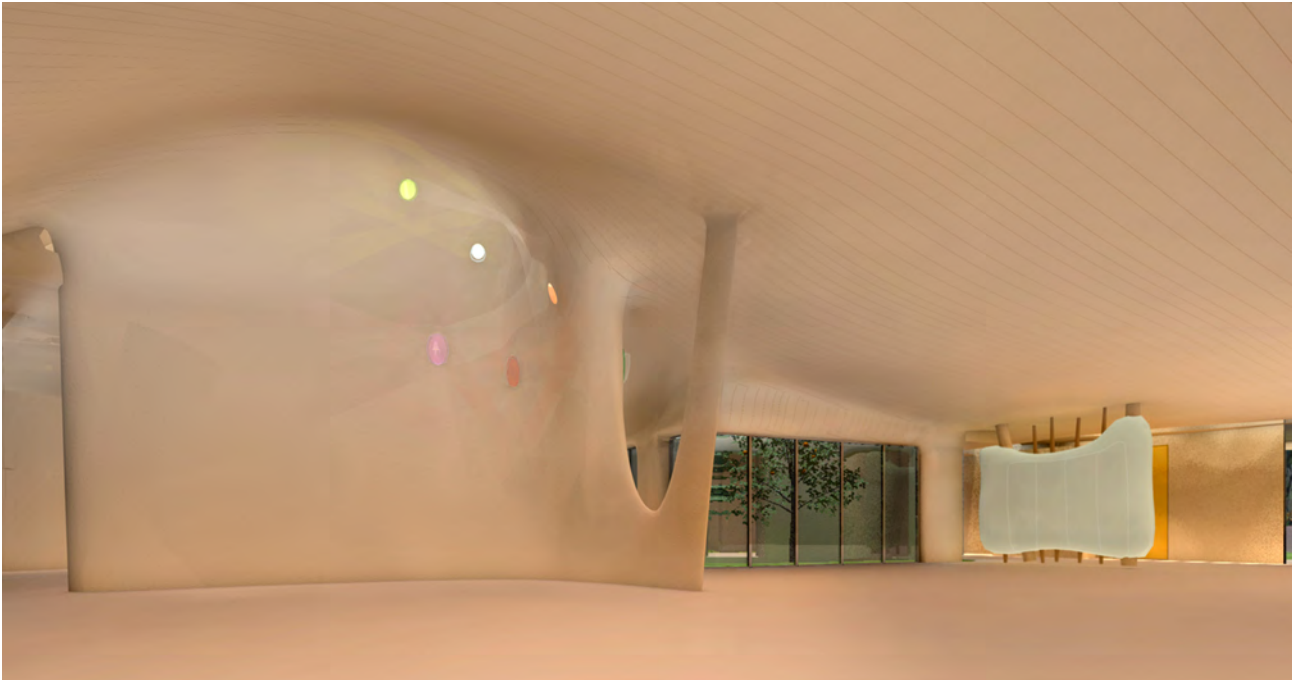
Gilli's Project, Phase 2, 3D Renders
Digital Design Process



Gilli's Project, Phase 2, 3D Renders
Gilli's Family House - View from the 'Sadot' St. - main entrance



Gilli's Project, Phase 2, 3D Renders
The Family House; Interior Views



Gilli's Project, Phase 2, 3D Renders
The Music Pavilion, External Views



Gilli's Project, Phase 2, 3D Renders
The Music Pavilion, External Views



Gilli's Project, Phase 2, 3D Renders
The Family House; view from under the music pavilion's



Gilli's Project, Phase 2, 3D Renders
View from the Family house towards the Music pavilion and the Hill in sunset



27. Observations - Part VIII - A caprice or a passion that should be the architect's knowledge base? 2004 – 2005

Zeynep Mennan – who co-curated the 'Non-Standard Architectures' with Frederic Migayrou, Centre Pompidou, in 2003 - wrote in 2004:

"...R&Sie¹...deliberately abandons the pompous and heroic role of the architect as the creator [demiourgos] and the form-giver..."²

Cache's zealous words considered with Zeynep's are a reminder of the mid 1920s and 30s critique on the Expressionist artists and architects who were regarded as capricious and too emotional. Are we back to square one in the architectural discourse? Yes, but I believe that we will not be so for long. There are some optimistic signs appearing in international architectural discourse, despite there being so little non-conformism amongst the army of parametric digital architects.

In the Netherlands, in 2004, Lars Spuybroek [NOX] – who used to be a digital architect - though never one of the fanatical ones – reported assertively in his new book that the digital scene changed back to a cultural pursuit. Most of his peers, I feel, won't agree with him, but I do. He was always less zealous than other digital architects, choosing to simply report what he observes during his design process. As he phrased it:

"the computer has reached a cultural stage, finally. The years that it was used for dreaming of perfect shape grammars and design automation...those years are over."³

In Melbourne, Australia, in 2005, Leon van Schaik, in his book *Mastering Architecture*, expressed a different view point from Zeynep's or Casch's when he explains the process of architects searching for their 'architectural problem area' through their mastery. As he explains, it's often a personal search that 'marks' their pursuits as different from their peers.

Van Schaik agrees that the search for new truth, or, as I see it, for new aesthetic, involves being frequently engaged with a personal obsession. He expands:

"The second function of peripherality plays out in the individual's search for the architectural problem area that is to become his or her own consuming passion."⁴

1 'R&Sie...' architects are Francois Roche and Stephanie Lavaux, Paris.

2 In the Korean magazine *Design Document series_05, Corrupted Biotopes 'R&Sie...' Architects/ France, February 2004, pp.018-019.*; Zeynep Mennan, 'Delicious Decay'. (Zeynep Mennan wrote a critic essay under this title where she used these terms.)

3 Lars Spuybroek, (NOX), *Machining Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, 2004, P.4

4 Leon van Schaik, *Mastering Architecture, Becoming a Creative Innovator in Practice*, Wiley-Academy, Great Britain, 2005, P.36.

Or as he wrote about the creative individuals:

"They are undaunted explorers of the chosen terrain or field within the domain, where they find a problem that obsesses them"¹

Passion and obsession, as I understand them, are usually the characteristics of the architect's preoccupation that leads to a new architectural aesthetic. This preoccupation has the characteristics of what some people would recognise as caprice, or, what some critics might refer to as indulgent 'solutions' which are imposed on others.

Van Schaik describes these architects - the creative individuals – as 'rebels':

"...[when they] have some of the qualities of the rebel and of the rebellion as identified by Albert Camus: to design is to assert an alternative future..."²

In other words, van Schaik explains how obsessions are often precursors for innovation and the process of turning an obsession into innovation often depends on the social circle recognising this.

These are encouraging notes, although as architects we have to be smart to find support, or, in other words, to identify where a support can come from – either in peers or in social organisations – that will be powerful or assertive enough, when they recognise the architect's unique knowledge, to act upon and inspire others to trust our endeavours and by doing so, turn our new and creative design into a recognised innovation.

28. Gilli's Project, Phase 3 – Emotional Beauty - form, materials, light and reverie, 2006 - early 2008

28.1. Spatial Depth Part VI - Design Concept and Depth-Scape as an emotional beauty

For some time now I have been preoccupied with designing an alternative to planar architecture – spatial configurations of planar surfaces including walls, floors and ceilings - flat or curved - that make the 3D space. I aim at transforming what I term 'Spatial Depth' or 'Depth-Scape' imagery into architecture.

But, as I am creating that 'Depth-Scape' my ambition is to affect the spaces from within, bringing

Gilli's Project, Phase 3 Spatial-Depth Part VI; materials light and reverie

1. Zumthor, Thermal Baths, Vals, Switzerland, 1966



2. Herzog & De Meuron, de-Young Museum, San Francisco, USA, 2005.



3. Evan Douglas, 'Haku' Japanese Restaurant, New-York, 2005.



silhouettes to induce people into reverie. In some specific locations those layers will change their appearance in a cyclic manner, transforming from material to immaterial in three phases. I tend to protect those precious interiors - wrapping them in strong buildings that are situated softly, but proudly, in the surrounding landscape.

As architects we are exposed to a proliferation of new materials and construction techniques that impact upon spatial form, experience and architectural meaning. In contemporary architecture the manipulation of surfaces has become the dominant substance of ornament.

The rise of digital culture within architecture has simultaneously enabled rapid and efficient production directly from drawings, sophisticated exploration of forms and industrial applications that are both economic and evocative. Paradoxically, the resulting spaces are often hard, homogenous and abstracted from any sense of materiality or sensuality, since materials used are limited to those the manufacturing machines can work with - mostly wood, hard polystyrene and metals.

This is not surprising given that the whole computational procedure was intentionally developed towards an accurate production of complex forms, while sensuality or an emotional expression was not playing any role in the goal being striven for.

The Depth-Scape I am aiming at would be applied through the manipulation of materials, combining hard and soft materials to achieve a greater variety and sensuality.

I am interested in manipulating form and materials so as to impact on the use of light and sound. I want to turn the material into immaterial and impact upon perception and experience.

These explorations instigated my preoccupation with experiential and atmospheric spaces. Although these elements are pursued by many other architects, they are pursued predominantly through the impact of light reflecting from the material surface (ref. Zumthor at Thermal Baths, Vals, Switzerland, 1966; using stone, Herzog & De-Meuron at the de Young Museum, San Francisco, USA, 2005 where they use patterned surfaces, wood, and perforated metals, or developed through enriched surface manipulation, produced using CAD-CAM technologies, as in Evan Douglas's 'Haku' Japanese Restaurant, NY, 2005. Here, evocative ornaments are attached to flat surfaces that become more three dimensional but still solid and hard). Such investigations rarely examine how natural and artificial light cycles are internally reflected around and through the depth of the manipulated mix of materials that unites interior and exterior of architectural forms, and thus often miss out on the random, more organic, aesthetics.

The nearest examples for the interference of light and shadows with space is found in the works of Sverre Fehn and Steven Holl (as mentioned before), though both of these architects affect their spaces in very different ways.

My academic background in the sciences (a BSc in Biology), prior to migrating to architecture, has fostered inclinations towards an architecture of new forms and new materials: glass reinforced plastics, ferro cemento and composite materials. My work has always involved new or alternative uses for materials although I have not had the opportunity to theorise or articulate these central interests; to give a brief example, in 1988 I constructed a translucent rooftop apartment created from two layers: a knitted textile held 20 centimetres away from white PVC sheeting.

Other examples include all my building elements being made off site by plastic and wood craft artisans (1995) as in this project - Gillis' house and music pavillion. In this case, I explored with a mixture of materials: textiles, ceramics and plastics, in combination with digital techniques using CAD-CAM prefabricated polystyrene blocks so as to spray concrete ('shotcrete') in-situ to create undulating surfaces following the design accurately.

Rapid prototyping and manufacturing have both had a radical influence on architectural discourse, enabling the uniting of manufacture, structure and ornament as well as the opportunity for departures from standardisation (ref. 'non-Standard Architecture' Pompidou, 2003), and in my opinion enable even further the pursuit of self expression so that it becomes easier for the process of manufacture to accommodate the diverse outcome of free thinking.

28.2. Applying for AHRC Fellowship Grant - Light & Acoustic Installation, September 2006

I was applying for a three year research grant (given for practitioners only) in collaboration with Brighton University School of Architecture and Design, with the support of its head at the time - Anne Boddington - in September 2006. My main aim was to explore the collaboration between the Textile department, 3-D design, and Architecture, in producing the Architectural Depth-Scape ideas I was exploring for some time, with the extra aim to make it an Acoustic Depth-Scape as well as a luminus depth-scape. The combinations of soft and hard materials will enable addressing the important issue of controlling sound in a designed architectural space: ensuring good acoustics. Hard surfaces generally, such as concrete floors, walls and ceilings bring unwanted echo, while introducing soft materials will transform the sound quality.

During this fellowship I aimed to explore this paradox of the sophisticated CAD CAM industrial

1.



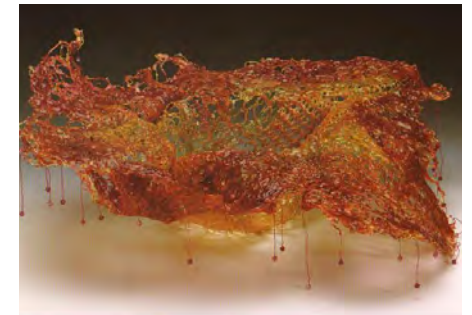
1-3. Hardened- textile craft art references:

1. Frances Geesin, metalised heat formed nylon yarn 1977.

2. Marcia Windbank, knitted random lace embedded in resin, 2000.

3. Nora Fok, Heat formed nylon yarn, 2002.

2.

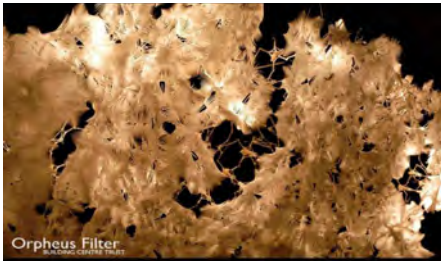


3.



Light & Acoustic Installation Spatial-Depth Part VI; materials light and reverie

1.- 2. Philip Beesley's installations



All cited artists in pp.434-435 are engaged with a similar spatial approach. I termed it 'Spatial-depth', they might term it differently. Each is using different tools, different materials, different scale. It tells us about something. It seems Zeitgeist is at work.

3. Wood contemporary craft art



applications that are both economic and evocative though result in spaces and places that are often hard, homogenous, and abstracted from any sense of materiality or sensuality.

I aim at creating an architecture of what I have termed spatial depth, formed through material manipulation and studies of the relationship between ornament, structure and form.

My main research question suggested to be explored in this fellowship was:

“In what ways might knowledge of materials and their use by contemporary crafts practitioners inform the design language of architectural environments and artefacts in the creation of an alternative integrated aesthetic?”

This project aimed firstly to develop an alternative architectural aesthetic experience and investigation of the 'Spatial depth' or, 'Depth-scape', through the mediation of light and sound and the manipulation of materials, space and form. Secondly, to develop new architectural design methods through examining contemporary crafts practice and their interrelationships with architectural engineering and environmental technologies.

I aimed at conducting a series of spatial and material experiments using synthetic, composite materials (plastics); exploring a rounded, softer organic aesthetic.

In parallel I aimed at investigating the structural and spatial technologies of constructed textiles, alongside casting and thermoforming to generate architectural form and space. I wanted to test their potential for light and acoustic penetration, as a means to explore spatial depth and the interrelationship between the material and environment. Similar experiments have been conducted by: Gaetano Pesce: 'Pavillon des souvenirs'. Avignon (1999) - un-orthodox use of silicon, and Tobi Schneider in 'Lattice Archipelogs' Graz (2002) - creating small repetitive plastic components to create an extendable lattice.

I wished to research the position of craft in contemporary architecture working in collaboration with contemporary crafts practitioners, and acoustic consultants to reflect on how this research might be applied and formalised within architectural practice.

Contemporary craft practices have advanced significantly in terms of their work with materials and the potential developed through their material manipulation. Re-engaging in collaboration between crafts and architectural practitioners offers the potential to reinvestigate and reunite the spatial, environmental and sensual within the architectural design process, where these

elements have become disaggregated and fragmented into a series of different disciplines.

Research exhibitions such as 'Textural Space; contemporary Japanese Textile art', (2001), 'Through the surface' (2004), 'Radical Craft' at Art Centre Pasadena (2006) and 'Extreme Textiles' Cooper-Hewitt Museum (2005) all featured large scale inspiring spatial works. In short, the materials and processes I wished to use are constructed textile technologies and plastics - testing a new aesthetic within architectural discourse.

We were not awarded the grant we applied for, but during the process I learned much from meetings with a rich variety of professional people and hope to continue exploring these aspects in the future.

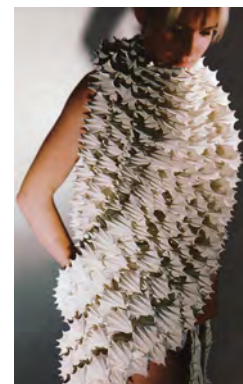
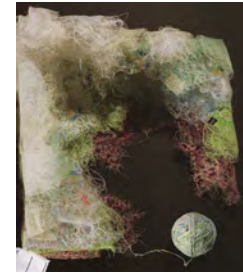
28.3. Depth-Scape - Time-Cycled Installation: Design process, early 2008

The ambition was to explore an architectural aesthetic experience, as well as a methodology for architectural design. Investigating the architectural implications of complex interspatial conditions. Investigating light cycles travelling around and through 3-D manipulated materials and forms that invade space beyond the surface level and deeply into the void; where light would cyclically turn 'material' to 'immaterial' at the preference of the inhabitants to opt for the preferred atmosphere on time. Exploring the role of the silhouettes in low light – the quality of light and reverie that instigated my preoccupation with experiential and atmospheric architecture.

The three major stages I am interested in as part of the time-cycle are:

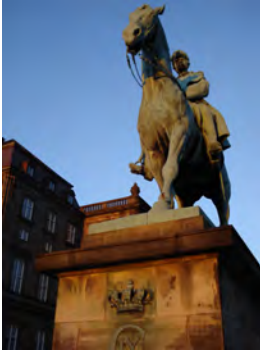
1. 'Blooming' - Material in daylight phase – the 'manifold silhouette' installation during the day. When no light is emitting from it we see the specific idiosyncratic properties of the materials.
2. 'Manifold silhouettes' - Manifold silhouettes in low-light phase – when light is being emitted from behind the installation only. A projected light which is coming from the artificial celestial vault brings the silhouette into effect.
3. 'Light' - Immaterial at night-time or when the room is dark – light is being emitted from the installation. We only see light, not the qualities of the material.

1-4. textile craft art



Time Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation Spatial-Depth Part VI - Installation Design Process

1-3. Copenhagen –the
Horse rider and low light.



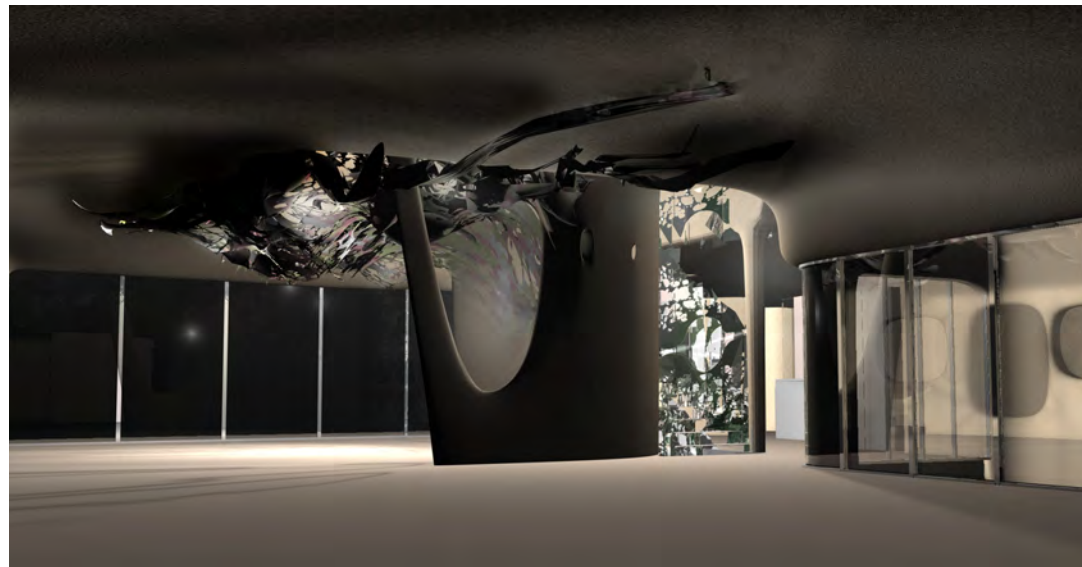
1. The change from the materials' colours to the silhouette would be just like the statue in Copenhagen's castle of the man on his horse, as in the image I show here. The colour turns from light blue-green to black as you move around it, depending on where the light is in relation to you and the statue. The blue-green is the genuine copper's colour of the very material the sculpture is made of and black is when it all becomes a silhouette.

To visualise the time cycle and the different effects, I embarked on exploring a computational design process alongside producing 3-D physical models so as to gather more knowledge about the Spatial-Depth, or Depth-Scape, I was aiming through further design activity, especially trying to express the metamorphosis of the 'Manifold Silhouettes' through the time cycle.

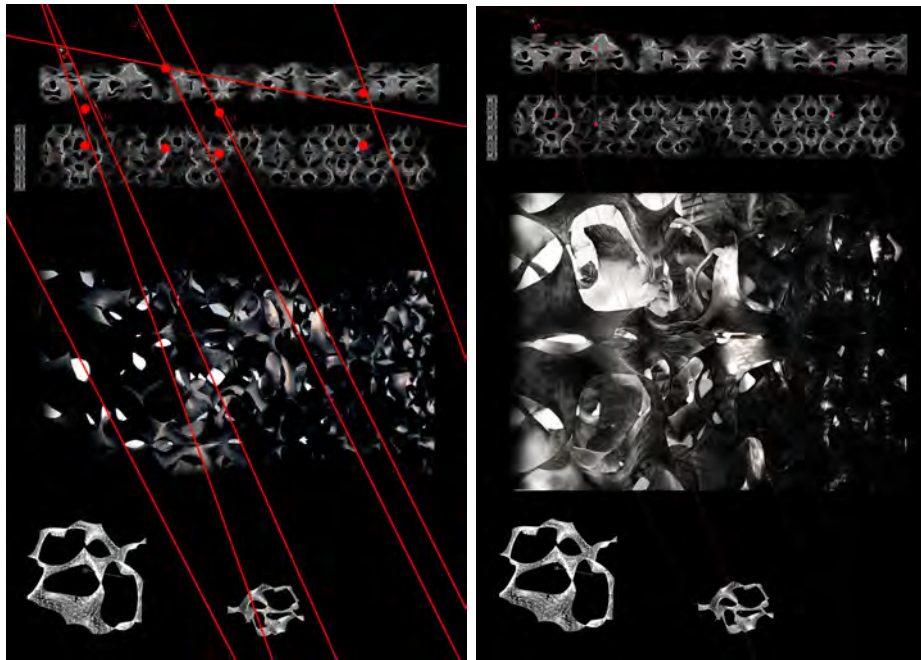
In the first run the result was beautiful, I thought, even though a plethora of rounded holes became an ubiquitous feature of projects seen in various architectural magazines by 2008. That made me explore further the relationship between the soft and hard materials visually at the imagery level, so as to explore new expressions.

In both variations the aim was to develop the time-cycle visually. Design development was relying on the early stages study since 2004. The results are thanks to working with Maro Kallimani, Andy Shaw, and later on with Lorene Faure.

The colours of the 'manifold silhouettes' installation will be changed as the time-cycle moves on; from day time when you actually identify the materials as they are (and as I chose them to be: three types of green from light green to dark green, pink, red, and off-white), to the dark silhouettes to the color of light - which is yellow, green and orange depends on its controlled light-volume.¹



Time-Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation Spatial-Depth Part VI - mixing Digital & Analogue Tools



The importance of combining Digital with Analogue

Even though digital tools are very important, there are some things that are very hard, almost impossible to achieve on a computer. The geometries that come out of a digital model are too neat, too perfect.

In this project, the notion of edges, of fragmentation and imperfection, of stretched material, ripped surface is very interesting.

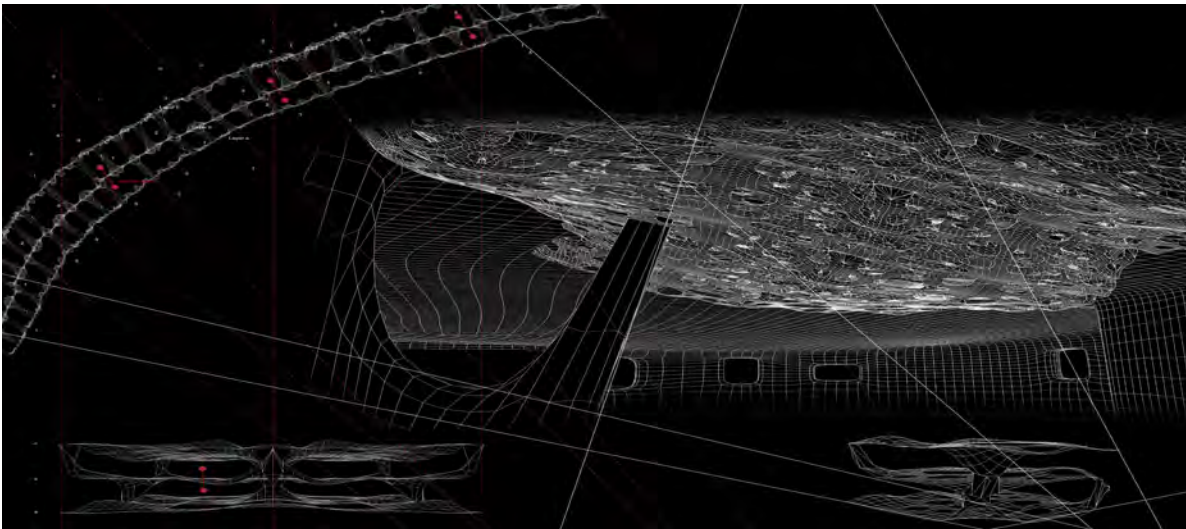
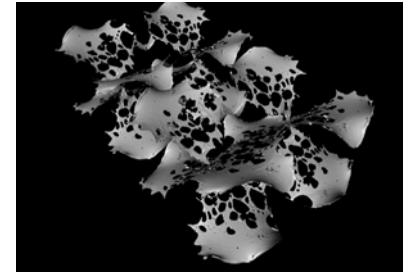
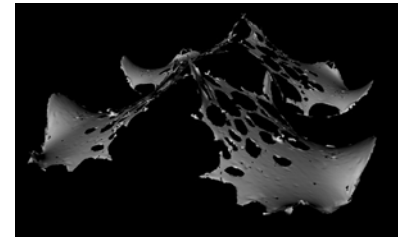
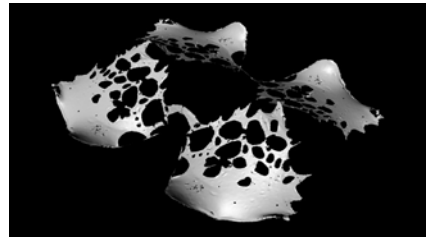
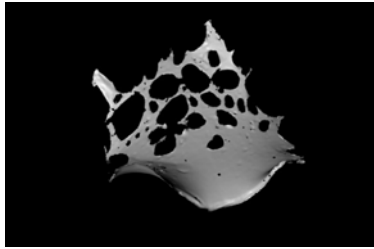
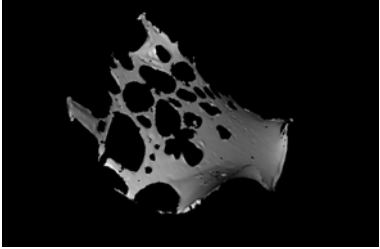
All of these qualities are achievable through physical modelling, using textiles such as stockings, lace, etc.

It is interesting to combine both physical and digital modelling, in order to benefit from both techniques' advantages.

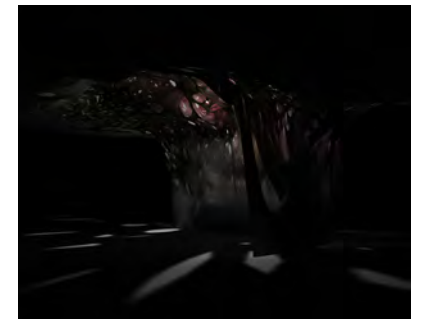
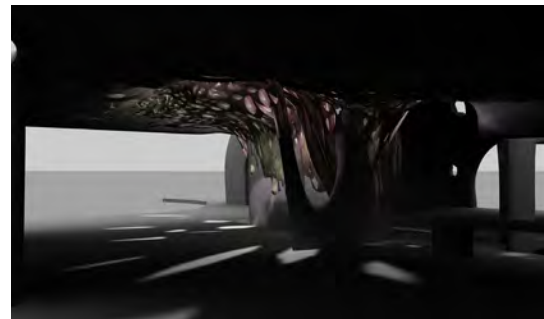
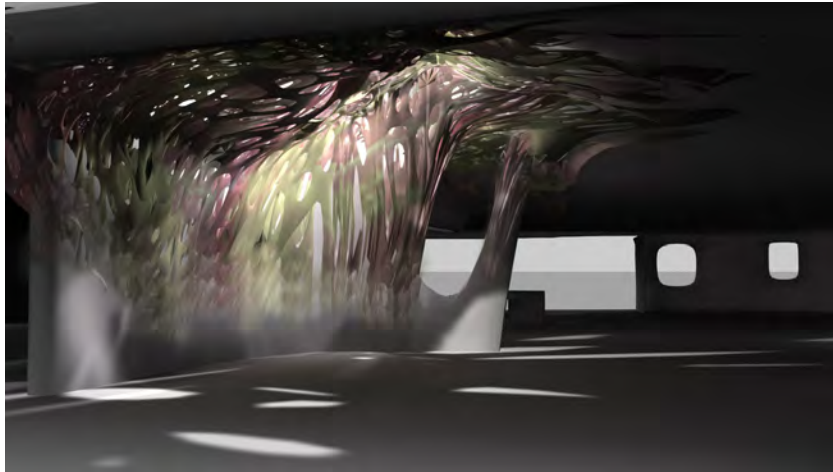


Time-Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation Spatial-Depth Part VI - Mixing Digital & Analogue Tools

1-5 The manipulation of Digital images of the scanned physical model is an important part of the design process



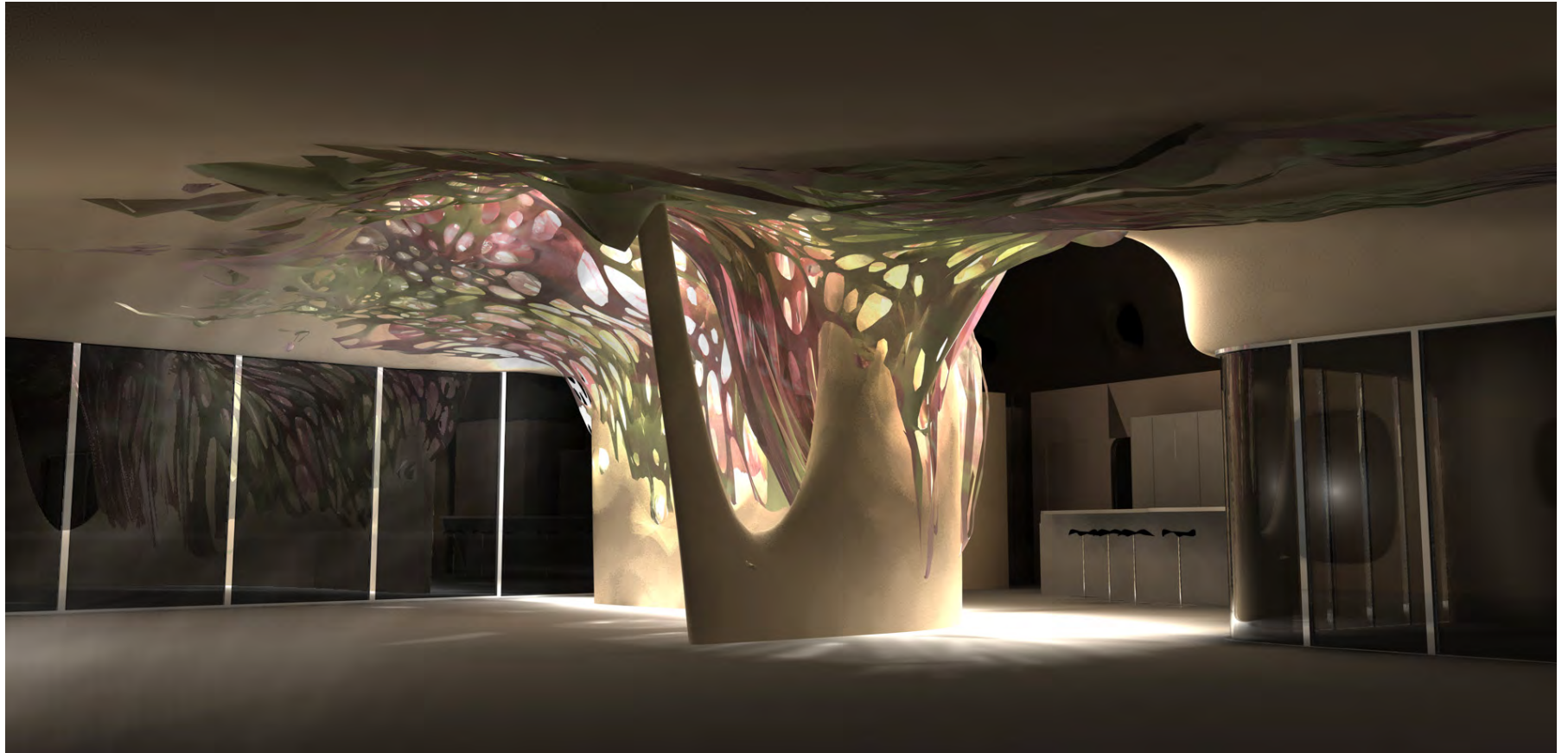
Time-Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation
Spatial-Depth Part VI - Mixing Digital & Analogue Tools



Time-Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation
Spatial-Depth Part VI - Emotional Beauty: *Manifold Silhouettes* phase



Time-Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation
Spatial-Depth Part VI - Emotional Beauty: *Blooming* phase



Time-Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation Spatial-Depth Part VII - Differentiating between Soft & Hard

Day time - early model



'R&Sie...' architects - Francois Roche and Stephanie Lavaaux, Digital physical model, Venice Bienalle 2008.



28.3.1. Spatial-Depth Part VII - Differentiating between Soft & Hard materials

R&Sie...' architects - Francois Roche and Stephanie Lavaaux, exhibit digital 3D-models in the Venice Bienalle 2008. By that year many other architects arrive at this organic porous expression. I decided to generate new imagery and avoid the ubiquitous appearance of circular holes. It went well alongside my ambition to compose together hard and soft materials. Up to now in terms of its appearance it is hard to define when the soft materials end and the hard start or vice versa. Thus 'Spatial-Depth Part VII' resulted in the new appearance of the same notion of a light and acoustic installation though the materials are differentiated and fluctuates between soft and hard which influenced the overall appearance and the way the light permeates through.

Time-Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation
Emotional Beauty: *Blooming* - Spatial-Depth Part VII - Differentiating between Soft & Hard

Day time - latest model - *Blooming*

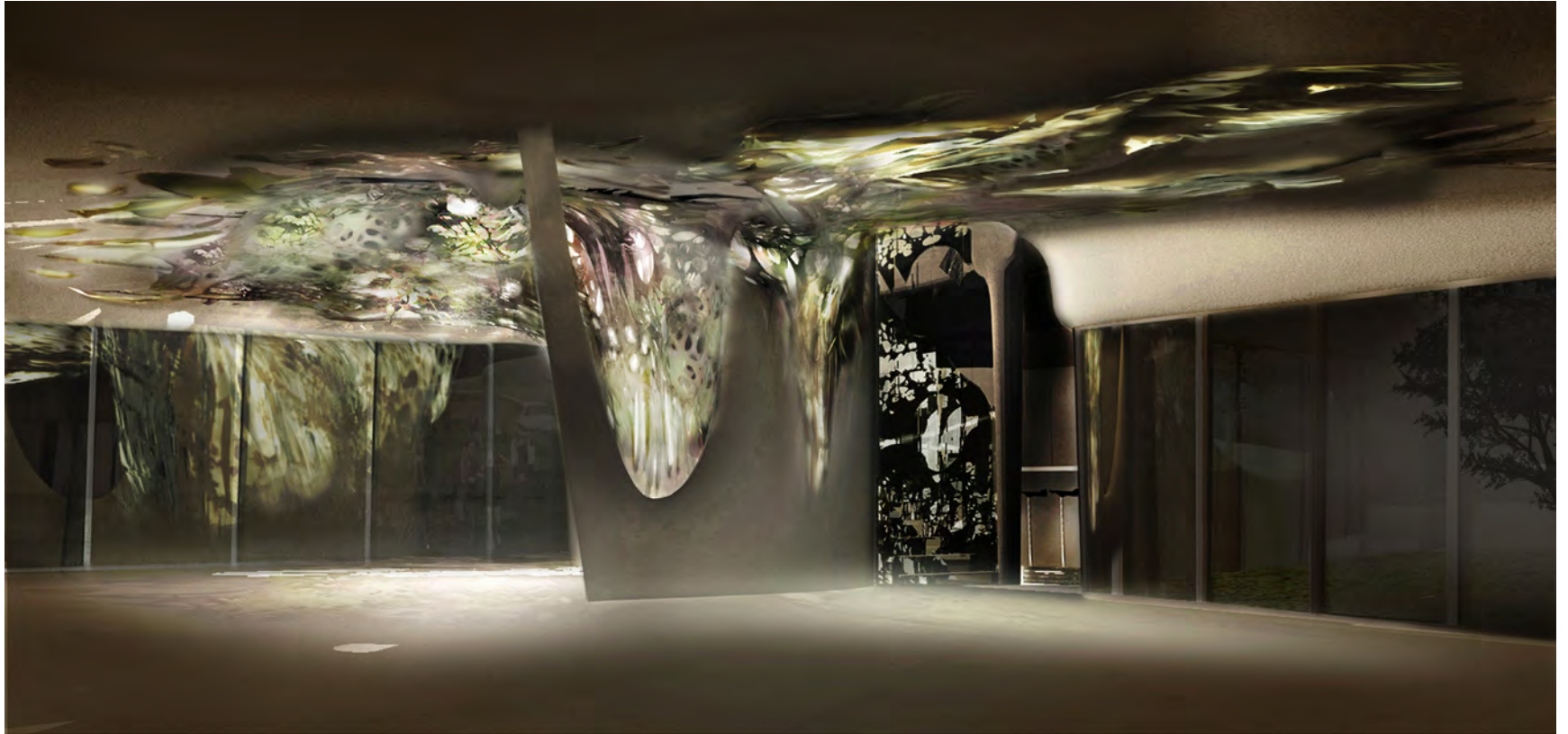


Time-Cycled Light & Acoustic Installation

Emotional Beauty: *Dusk* - Spatial-Depth Part VII - Differentiating between Soft & Hard

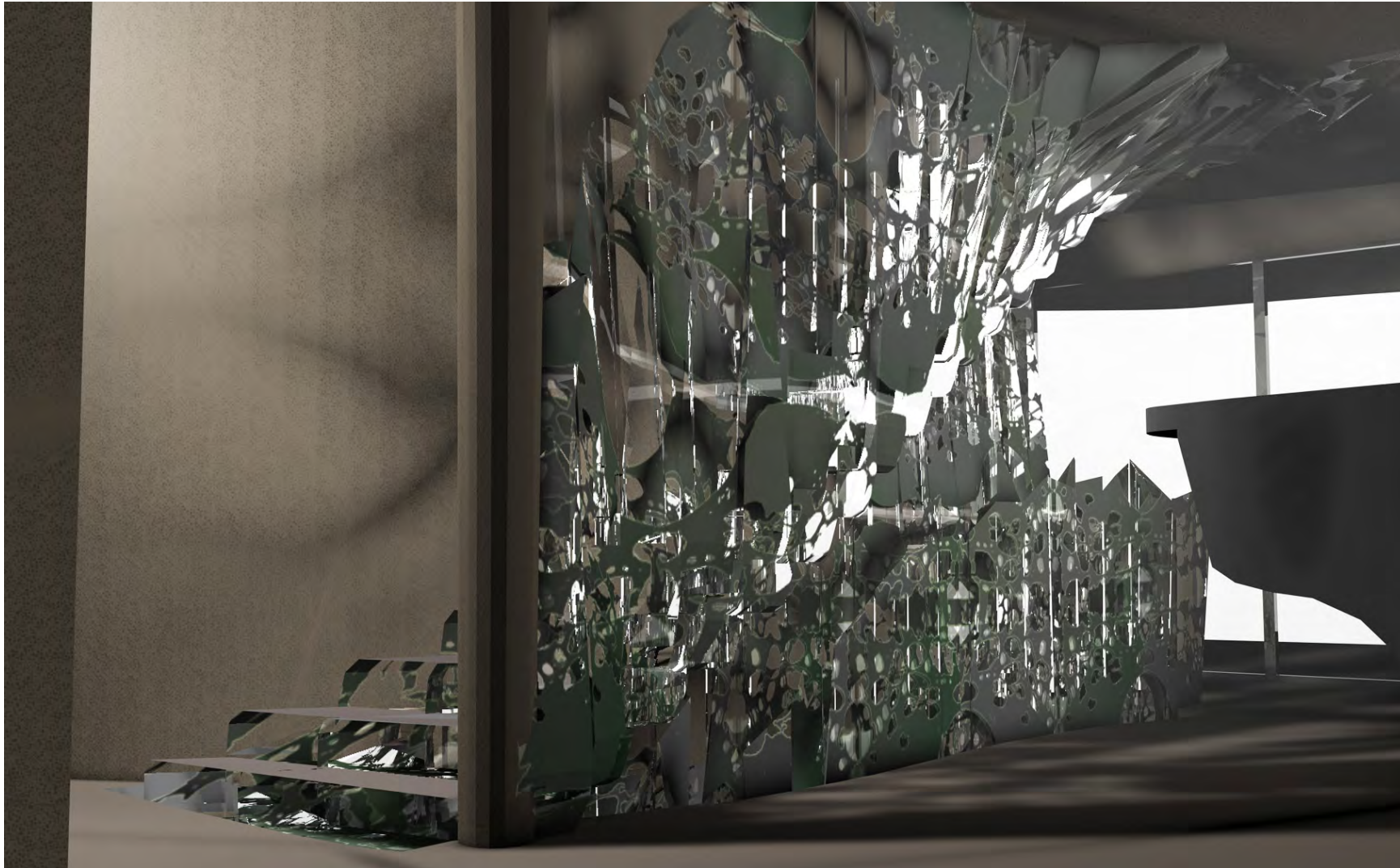


Night time - lit condition - *Light*



Gilli's Project, Phase 3 Staircase Daytime

These two images - of the staircase connecting between and kitchen-dinning space and the attic in Gilli's house - were further designed to complement the light and acoustic installation.





29. Conclusions

29.1. The Self and non-determinism in architecture

One forgets that in the 19th century the effect of socialism - in its early days - on architecture was that the individuality of artists and architects was considered beneficial, believing that a unique artistic output would introduce a meaningful new beauty to society (as in the Art Nouveau movement). However, following the late 1920s and the fall of German Expressionism, self expression was ridiculed and became taboo in the architectural discourse for about 50 years. In the 1930s the apologists of modernism – all architectural historians: Gideion, Sartoris, and Mumford - led to a utilitarian approach which Banham strongly believed transformed early modern architecture, led by aesthetic considerations, to a practical utilitarian movement for the next 40 years, fuelled by the prevailing socialism, where the role of the architect was perceived to be one of servicing society in a practical and utilitarian manner. This resulted in the repression of the role of architectural appearance in inducing well-being or pleasure. That attitude was enhanced by the 20th century focus on democracy, growing trust in public opinion and the elevation of objectivity. Cultural historians have suggested that scientific progress has had its own ramifications enlarging the trust in rational thinking and mechanisms. Since most people associate scientific progression with the rational objective procedures of scientific research, curiously, the scientist's dependence on intuition and lateral thinking during any research has been conveniently overlooked.

In architecture, distrusting the eye (or the "I") and the decline of the Self generally, led to the repression of the spontaneous intuitive thinking or any unruly imagination, but also to the repression of personal passions as well as personal judgement. All this, together with the rise of utilitarian approach, deprived architecture in many cases from being a cultural register or being able to evoke emotions or introduce character.

It is an historical fact that when technical approach overtakes the design process character is ridiculed. However this could be a failing factor in architecture since architecture is an outcome of an impure and complex set of activities that by its very nature has to be the result of a synthesis of many different pursuits. Juhani Pallasma defined this beautifully in my conversation with him as he said that "The discipline of architecture is 'impure' in the sense that it fuses utility and poetics, function and image, rationality and metaphysics, technology and art, economy and symbolization. Architecture is a muddle of irreconcilable things and categories." And I believe that to create good architecture we have to keep its impurity.

In the decade of 1977-88 there was a major rebellion against these modernist architectural characteristics, when more architects once again began to perceive architecture as one of the visual arts. When personal expression became understood as a register of collective culture, emotions and feelings became a genuine and important part of the design process as well as free imagination - but not for long. In 1988, the Decon show - led by Mark Wigley's

curatorial interpretation – twisted historical reality by underplaying the emotional aspect of architecture and introducing Derrida's philosophy. The intellectualisation of the design process began with enthusiastic support of the architectural community. For the second time in the 20th century it was the apologists, as historians or theoreticians, who had the tremendous influence and power to almost reverse the content of architectural discourse. For a long time the intellectualisation of the design process became, for many, more appealing than free imagination and design ideas.

By the early 1990s the use of philosophers and philosophy was a common ground in many architects' design processes, substituting the personal voice for the authorial voice of Derrida, while Deleuze's influence was absorbed few years later.

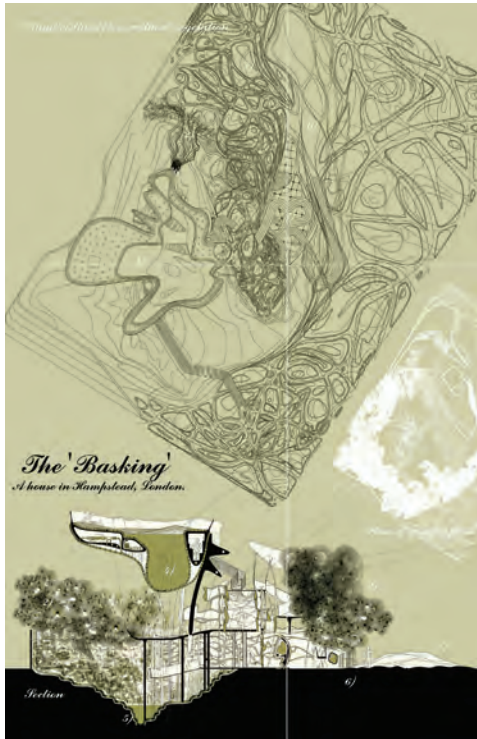
The 1990s were also the years when the digital era took the architectural discourse by storm. This created a culture where digital architects such as Greg Lynn could succeed and influence. In fact, it was Lynn's use of philosophy and mathematics in order to objectify and rationalise his work which made him so influential in the early days of pure digital architecture. In fact, despite the likes of Ron Arad, Enric Miralles and Frank Gehry dealing with Folding in original and successful ways – and before Lynn's time – it is Lynn who remains more closely associated with that theme in the architectural academic world. His objective approach, supported with pseudo-scientific theory, closely connects his work with that of Deleuze and Leibniz's calculus. This paved the way for the acceptance of his work as new and significant, despite his embarrassingly basic and primitive design for the Sears Towers in Chicago (1993), and that approach became the leading avant-garde of the digital architecture for the next decade. Thus the architectural shift of the late 1980s continued to influence architects for nearly 20 years, beyond Deconstruction and well into the digital architecture era.

Non-determinism in architecture was a polemic issue in the architectural discourse of the 20th century, appearing in the 1980s and then again in the 1990s, although each time with different reasoning. In the '80s, when architecture was once again perceived as related to culture and form-generating was perceived as an authentic act of its time, and when spontaneity and intuition were considered once more significant, it was not without a serious design development revolving around the 'open system' concept, as Pritzker and Gehry referred to it. The architectural open system was the way to avoid determining the use of a building: designating specific space for specific use as part of a genuine ambition not to impose one's will on others' behaviour, while still working intuitively and subjectively on the very design. For example, it became part of the identity of Coop-Himmelblau projects, where it was often the roof that differentiated the use of space, while Gehry enlarged the amount of free space by creating an interior and a shell free from each other structurally. Lebbeus Woods' Heterarchical organisation - a democratic organisation as opposed to a hierarchical one - was a result of a similar thinking. Thus, these are examples of how self-expression exercised via a laborious design process is not an imposition of the architect's will.

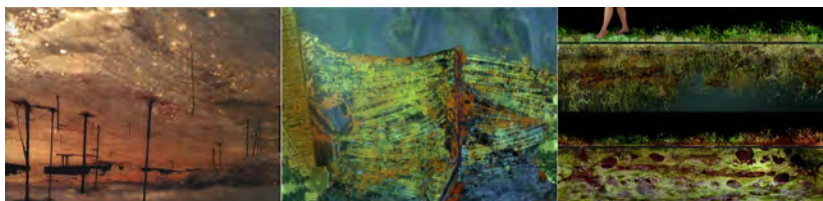
As the digital architects in the 1990s were interested in the purity of computational procedures, it seems there was no place for an affinity with the Self in their design process. Thus, along

Conclusions

1. Spatial-Depth as portrayed in its early days before we named it so. Bartlett MArch student Marjan Colletti, 1998-99



2. Bartlett MArch student Aniko Meszaros, 1998-99



with quoting Deleuze, modernist non-deterministic values were adopted, making a taboo, once more, out of personal expression. Anything that was extrinsic to the mathematical process was foreign to the design process, including metaphors (as had happened before, in the days of utilitarian modernism) or hand-made models or sketches; all reflect on personalities. The leading interest was to keep to the CAD-CAM linear and procedural design process, from three-dimensional drawings to the physical prototypes production.

The use of one's free imagination, let alone personal judgment imbued with creative enthusiasm, had been perceived as architecture's arch-enemy; therefore, it was interesting to watch how Kol-Mac bravely introduced lateral thinking to the digital process and even more delightful to observe the digital virtuoso Hernan Diaz-Alonso, some years later, using his personal judgements to put him in control of the software and not the other way round.

It is satisfying to observe how these days some digital architects go beyond the technical, cerebral and rational approach and become the new Romantics; a sign of maturity delivered by their gained virtuosity.

I believe that recognising the architects' tendency to over-intellectualise the design process and to isolate it from influences of our impulse and personal judgment would lead to architecture that is more successful in touching peoples' hearts and brings with it pleasure and joy that evolves from its very appearance.

29.2. Spatial-Depth and my contribution to the field of architecture

My ambition was to create a new architectural language that will substitute the ubiquitous and already old Modern planar architecture.

Spatial-Depth or Depth-Scape were two equivalent terms I coined for a new architectural spatial pursuit; it is the spatial-depth quality and effect that I explored between 2004 and 2008 that I believe is the aspect of my research that is a contribution to the field of architectural design.

It is a new architectural spatial concept, as opposed to the prevalent topological surface, with continuous and consistent skins, an exuberant 'inside-out', complex three dimensionally with an enhanced depth to be inhabited or involved with at close distance. A new spatial quality engulfed with emotional triggers such as the manifold silhouettes in the interactive time-cycled



3. Philip Beesley, 2004

Light and Acoustic Installation - an emotional beauty, where I explored light cycles travelling around and through 3-D manipulated materials and forms that invade space beyond the surface level and deeply into the void; where light would cyclically turn material to immaterial.

It was enhanced also by the aspiration to go beyond the tendency among the digital architects towards homogeneity of materials which merely suits 3D printing machines and often loses aesthetic opportunities of material diversity. However, not less of an incentive was my ambition to reduce noise in our living systems and the introduction of soft materials within the deep installation had its useful ramifications on the acoustics of the given space, an extra quality that enhances the sense of interiority, protection and cosiness.

My students work, including Marjan Colletti's 'The Basking House' and Aniko Meszaros' 'Plant Anima' (both projects from 1999) represents the early days of this spatial-depth aesthetic; David Head's project 'Brutality Garden' for Rio de Janeiro in 2004 is a more elaborate example.

As I became more aware of what I am preoccupied with, and especially after the 2nd interview with Lebbeus Woods in October 2006, I started to connect between this aesthetic of my pursuit with that which is found also found in projects - completed since the turn of the 21st century - by Woods himself, Peter Cook and Hernan Diaz Alonso, as we could see in their respective chapters here. But it doesn't end there; CJ Lim - in his project 'Virtually Venice' (2004) embarked on his new language, exhibited in the Venice Biennale's British Pavilion which was also found in 'The Baker's Garden' (Soho, London, 2008) shown here, as well as Philip Beesley's 'Orgone Reef-inverted landscape' travelling architectural Installation' (University of Waterloo, Canada, 2004) to mention just a few who share this attitude to form.

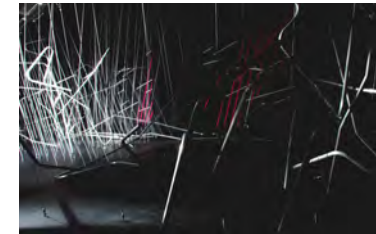
While the particularity of this aesthetic arguably unites these projects, each architect works from a diverse range of thoughts while using different design tools and media. This new spatial language, by its very nature, is spatially deep as well as exuberant.

29.2.1 Emotional beauty¹

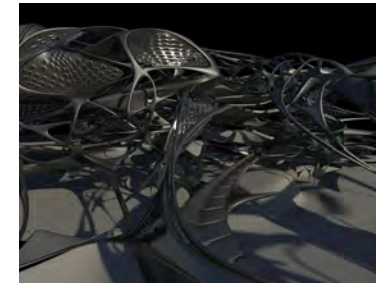
Naturally, my critic of the long-time enthusiasm for rational thinking and mechanistic approach to architectural design enhanced my exploration of emotive architecture where feelings and emotions are part of the design process. What seems natural or taken for granted in the arts was forgotten in the architectural realm; there is a direct affinity between the presence of self-expression in design and raising emotions among the inhabitants, participants, or onlookers. One cannot invoke people's emotions in architecture that was created via a mechanistic design process.

Beauty became the iconography of desire, as Dave Hickey suggested, and in my case the silhouette was a long term passion.

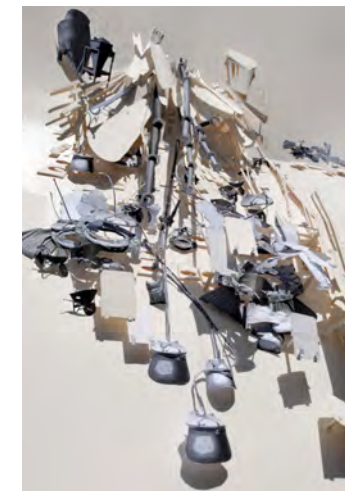
I opted to learn from nature how to invoke equivalent emotions. I studied further the work



Lebbeus Woods, 2002



Hernan Diaz Alonso, 2002-03



C J Lim, 2004

1. Emotional Beauty - I think adding the word 'emotional' here is like saying 'twice emotional', since the word 'beauty' is already including an emotional aspect. When Goulthorpe said: 'Indifferent Beauty' he took away, removed, the emotional aspect that is included in the word beauty. That's why he had to add it. I added emotional to beauty as an emphasis only and a reminder that that is what I am about.

Conclusions

– spanning from the 18th century to today - of various artists who focused on this magical moment in nature, in a direct or roundabout way, how to improve that sensation visually in an artificial, man-made condition, in particular via their wide spectrum of concepts and techniques.

A complex new organic configuration of what I termed spatial-depth or depth-scape became the locus for my desire. Thus the spatial-depth of the manifold silhouettes installation is not only a new formal language, but one that might create an emotional experience. G. Bachelard's exposition of issues contained within poetry teaches us that like poetry, visual poetic images might release people into reverie, the state of mind in which the eidetic memory is accessed.

Fluid forms that I am attracted to are not new to us but suits the organic Depth-Scape I am interested in. As one can see in the images I show here of other architects' work fluidity was persistently re-appearing during the 20th century in architecture and in art, and the digital technologies help us to further its complexity, articulation and build it less expensively.

As an architect who has spent years battling against the suppression of the 'eye' or the 'I' and its role in the design process of so many architects, I especially identify with the American Psychologist James Hillman¹ who wrote:

“this curious refusal to admit beauty in psychological discourse occurs even though each of us knows that nothing so affects the soul, so transport it, as moments of beauty – in nature, a face, a song, an action or dream.”² He suggests:

“We [are] left with fractals and wittily named particles [by definition non-sensate] of theoretical physics³, the puns and parodies of architecture, and the language games of philosophical analysis resulting in a severe dissociation between what is thought, said, and written and what the senses see, the heart feels, and the world suffer.”⁴

29.2.2. Cultural identity

One way to attain cultural diversity in architecture and to develop authentic and unique local culture is by nurturing and preserving the variance. Architects as creative personalities assimilate the various shades of their personalities and culture in their design work, consistently and continuously. This approach will enable the uniqueness of each architect to develop and to express itself, and, through this, the character of the community or the society in which the architect works will also be manifested, since the individual does not live in a social-cultural vacuum.

I believe that my intimate landscape, though personal and unique, might touch other people's feelings since as people we never think or act in a vacuum - we act in relation to what we observe in the world around us, in our environment, thus often it reflects on the collective culture and becomes a register of our culture in our time.

I believe that in a country which more than its half is a desert and most of its other half is along

1. James Hillman, an American psychologist, is considered to be one of the most original of the 20th century. Hillman was director of the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich for ten years. He is a Founding Fellow of the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, publisher of Spring Publications, and editor of Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture. Bill Beckley with David Shapiro, Uncontrollable Beauty, Towards a New Aesthetics, Allworth Press, NY, 1998, p.405

2. Bill Beckley with David Shapiro, Uncontrollable Beauty, Towards A New Aesthetics, Allworth Press, NY, 1998; 'The Practice of beauty', an essay by James Hillman. p.263

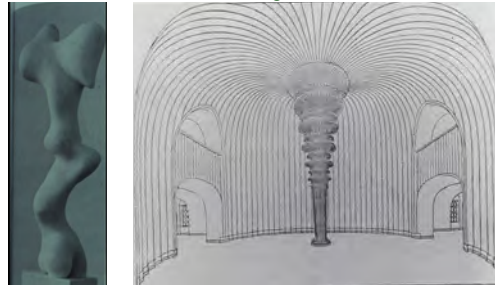
3. As someone who enjoyed studying science for my first degree before turning to architecture and who sees the value of the acquired knowledge from this world, I still find the amount of references to scientific territory among architects overdrawn and unbalanced.

4. Bill Beckley with David Shapiro, Uncontrollable Beauty, Towards A New Aesthetics, Allworth Press, NY, 1998; 'The Practice of beauty', an essay by James Hillman, p.266

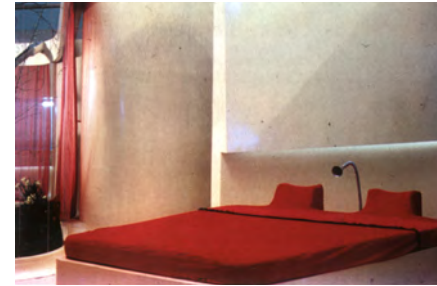
1-2. Jean Arp, 1931-1938



3. Hans Poelzig, 1919



4. P.&A. Smithson the future house 1956



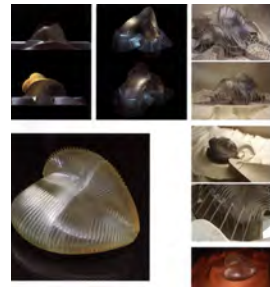
5. Mike Webb, 1970s



6. Bartlett student, 1991



7. Greg Lynn, 2000



8. Kolatan MacDohald, 2002



9-10. Glass art, 2004



the sea shore looking west into the horizon a time-cycled light installation portraying the silhouette might invoke people's emotions.

Personal expression is a reflection of one's culture and, eventually, a visual discrimination commenting on a broader, collective cultural spectrum. Collaborative design systems were always the architects' methods of working, as we see in other fields such as film and play direction, in science, or in business and politics; they all depend on leadership and personality to add clarity and highlight significance

Individuals such as Zvi Hecker, Thom Mayne and Hernan Diaz Alonso, to mention three, do bring cultural identity to the fore. Their work is a result of social-cultural contents that have received a developed visual expression.

Many within the Israeli community have embraced Zvi Hecker's Palmach Museum of History (Tel-Aviv, 1992-96) and view the building as a distinctive group portrait of the 'Palmachnics' created through form, materiality and ultimately aesthetics. Hecker refutes the analogy, believing that architectural expression cannot be approached directly but is achieved by having "faith in how to make the materials speak"; it is a state to aspire to.

Thom Mayne's Caltrans District 7 Headquarters, in downtown Los Angeles (2001-2004), captured his own voice alongside reflecting a local communal identity; it is an elegant, monumental landmark that brilliantly portrays the Angelino culture while at the same time successfully demonstrating the key

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characteristics of Morphosis' architecture – highly intense and energetic, with big, angular, folded elements that peel away from the large block, defining, at the public entry level, a human scale.

A different kind of example is Hernan Diaz-Alonso, a digital architect who radically turned the digital architectural discourse's typically cerebral characteristics upside-down by introducing his authorial voice into the design process while at the same time reflecting on a culture of a new architectural aesthetic pursuit - the new Depth-Scape aesthetic. This threw light on a Zeitgeist situation as a real creative cultural response, not knowing in real time what might become the Zeitgeist, but following one's intuition and passion.

I think that beauty, as a concept for our age, is a product of the individual for other individuals and as an authentic product for a pluralistic global time and is not a singular idea. The beautiful is many and by many and therefore an 'Uncontrollable Beauty'.¹

Architectural appearance is not a passive outcome and a mere result of all the other important activities involved but it has a unique role in the design process. I believe it is time to argue once more that the architecture's aesthetic has the power to synthesise all the complex qualities, emotional values, poetics, pragmatic constraints and the overbearing cultural issues and at the same time cohere with the construct of the architectural design and yield good architecture.

1. After the inspiring book: Uncontrollable Beauty: Bill Beckley with David Shapiro, Uncontrollable Beauty, Towards New Aesthetics. Allworth Press, NY, NY, 1999

Emotional Beauty - Spatial-Depth Part VII - Phase inspired by C.D.Friedrich's The Wanderer above a sea of mists



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