

MASKS

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# MASKS<sub>theJournal</sub>

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- 1 Editorial  
*Anthony Morey and Clemens Finkelstein*
- 7 Notes on the Paradox of the Actor  
*Letizia Garzoli and Andrea Dutto*
- 19 The Chair got a BooBoo and the “thing” revealed itself  
*Zack Matthews and Zahra Savaferdi*
- 25 When Face Walks  
*Xuan Luo*
- 31 Real Fictions in the Present Future  
*Christopher Norton Riley*
- 35 A Necklace of Bites  
*Clemens Finkelstein*
- 47 The Third Voyeurism  
*Tairan An*
- 55 Veiled Modernism  
*Adam Himes*
- 59 Orientalism Today  
*Razan Tariq Sijeeni*
- 63 Living Heritage: Streams of Consciousness in Buk-Chon  
*Yoonjee Koh*
- 71 Thermal Stories  
*Alex Timmer*
- 77 Junk-Spaces  
*Konstantinos Chatzaras*
- 87 Walking the Dead – David Bowie and the Humanizing Obverse  
*Namik Mackic and Eliyahu Keller*
- 93 The Ex-Urban in Transition: Inner Mongolia as Pacific Gyre  
*Kate Cahill*
- 101 Filetypes  
*Christianna Bennett*
- 107 Neither Here nor There  
*Anthony Morey*
- 117 Image Index
- 119 Contributors

# Editorial

// Anthony Morey and Clemens Finkelstein \\\

## AM

██████ accepts that the truest truths may be built on lies. Lies upon lies, lies and lies, laying upon each other to raise truth to untouchable heights.

The first is the same as the last, the last the same as the fourth and the fourth the same as the first. A system of arbitrary decisions and momentary stability.

Each morning a curiosity to un██████ the veil mirroring in the mirror. A doubt on who or what will be before me when I arise.

Nightly, I fall dormant with no conception of who shall await me. I travel my unconscious, dreaming of potential ████████ to dress a labyrinth of mirrors and shells; reality.

Layers upon layers of history compounded, my endless masking and (de)masking have left me with no idea what truth lies behind any memory or lie.

**CF**

██████ seeks to explore the aggregate of present, past, and future disciplinary structures in and between the fields of art, architecture, and design. We are not trying to reinvent what a journal is, but ██████ aims to display and extend the gestures of dissimulation that define our fields.

Suffice to say, we are not one but the multitude of identity splinters that exceed formal representation in a moment of performance. We swap, we trade, we expose, we collapse.

We all have them, put them on from time to time.

Expressions of open and understanding eyes, labial angles and eyebrows forcefully contained in the face of peeve clients and hackling colleagues. Dominating the micro-expressive shivers of facial muscles when out on a date.. ██████, ██████, ██████.

Internalizing the shifting semblances of criticism, of definition, and discourse: a game of faces. Complicit to a spiraling play that unfolds at the limits of thought and material essence, subject- and objecthood, an abject desire or a pleasurable lack, ██████ reflexively and proactively darts to the fore in incessant variations.



**AM**

What is it that people see when they look at me, is it the face I see when I look in the reflection before me? Do they see what I see or is there a me that I have lost the ability to see?

■■■■■ means to exist. We have no way to completely be everything we are at all times. We have no conception of what "I" means except for the image that is created by the mirroring of society.

Reality only comes to be through the eyes of a ■■■■■. A ■■■■■ is all that separates you from me.

I only exist as "I" because I say I am. Never sure how truthful that could be if I were to actually witness me. ■■■■■ positions itself as a fitting room of theoretical and disciplinary exploits hidden behind disposable facades. It leaves no residue unless worn for too long, it leaves no memory unless stored and worn again.

What is our voice behind the ■■■■■?

*Is it the one that is heard through the vibrations of air?*

*Is it the one that bounces off the multiple translations of our senses?*

*Is it the one that is never heard?*

*Is it the one that is taught as language?*

*Is it the one that we hear ourselves?*

*Is it the one that writes?*

*Is it the one that we copy?*

**CF**

This ludic enterprise is one of surprise and revelation, of denial and acceptance. Extending far above the single subject, individuality, nationality or groups of belonging, the concept of ██████ extends to culture, history and time itself. The act of masking, the process of demonstration and negation are manifold and generative, but most of all, a contract of acceptance.

To mask is to manipulate, to confiscate and to map. A mapping of thoughts and expectations into a projection of the other, to step through the mirror that binds our own reflection to our presence.

What a tragedy it would be to bare mask after mask, only to hasten the insanity and conviction of a never-ending story; feverish attempts to confront the real, while unknown eyes stare back at you; a mirror opposite a mirror, endlessly reflecting origins.

Loosing face. When ██████ stick to the skin, syntheses of interpolating positive and negative nuances crystalize. Faces appear everywhere in desirous *pareidolia*, or dissolve, unable to be recognized, through a *prosopagnosia* of the contemporary.

Deceptive residues smolder around ██████ as environment of time, an *Umwelt* in circumforaneous dwelling.

**AM**

Which ██████ is the truest of them all?

*Is it the one that is seen through the reflection of windows and puddles?*

*Is it the one that is seen it through films and photographs?*

*Is it the one that we imagine when we think of ourselves?*

*Or is it the one that the world calls our name?*

While we are aware that not all of us is on display at all times we are also unaware how much is not on display at any given time. We conceive the concept of the truthful I as a way to feel comfortable with our names, our actions and create a sense of choice but our only choice is to choose to believe in such an absurdity.

What alternative are we left with but with that of exuberant test fitting of masks. What do we have to lose but another mask or anonymous voice. No mask is intrinsically better than the next, always capable of being removed and rearranged at whims notice. We are confronted with the decision to either feel contempt with our current reflection, or blur the waters with the whims of undressing our facades.

My past is torn off with each passing ██████, it allows me to be what I desire for as long as I inquire.

The insanity of life confronts itself at the never-ending process of tearing off layers upon layers of ██████ hopeful for a different result but the infinite layers of lies. ██████ is insanity, a complete acceptance of our constant state(s).

**CF**

Atmosphere without restrictions or intersections. A story of a young you, travelling through ancient monuments, in search of new emotions to experience; a rhapsody, shavings of frozen multiples to enframe the becoming of difference.

■■■■■ aims at a transference and a gluing of topological spaces that produce nominal sheaves. Mathematics subdues abstraction subdues language.

■■■■■ unsees the visible. Hierarchies are infiltrated and formal truths interpolated. EM-pulsing the hard drives of historical condensation, memories are wiped to promote rebirth and progress.

Error is the seed of creativity; sowing the land of theory with polyphemes of blended wood and concrete, glass columns and ■■■■■, fertile grounds are prepared.

NIX. The chaos of nothingness, the cathartic point zero on the dimensional crossroads that could lead anywhere.

Shape shifting spirits in the design of other organisms: NIX.  
This game of faces. Sur/faces, ornament of identity? Rules are somewhat unclear, carrying the likeness of the play from masked incarnation to demasked performance. To not play means to make a conscious decision to indulge in unconsciousness.

# Notes on the Paradox of the Actor

// Letizia Garzoli and Andrea Dutto

## The Society through the Spectacle

In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation.<sup>1</sup>

Guy Debord sustained this thesis, articulating it in 221 paragraphs entitled *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). This work portrays the political wasteland of its time, and beyond a mere observation, it actually seeks an epistemological rupture, a counter action to the contemporary socio-political scenario registered. In fact, the pervasive presence of the “spectacle” requires updated paradigms to investigate reality and knowledge, and to exceed the narrow critique of ideology rooted in the Hegelian philosophy of history. Although Debord himself could not overcome the metaphorical level of his insights, thus failing to achieve a meaningful rupture with past epistemological paradigms, his work still provides a valuable platform upon which one can question architecture in light of the “science of the spectacle”.

## Spectacle and Science

Thus, this essay wants to interpret the contemporary concern of architecture with aesthetics and ethics through the Enlightenment’s scientific turn of the arts, and specifically the art of acting as postulated by Diderot in the *Paradox of the Actor* (1773-1777). Even though Diderot does not consider spectacle as an all-encompassing mirror of the Enlightenment society, his proposed conjunction between the scientific method and the technique of acting still prove insightful as a tool. Since acting becomes a subject of scientific interests, the conceptual apparatuses of aesthetic judgment withstand a radical paradigmatic shift.

Manfredo Tafuri makes use of theatrical representation as a metaphor of the intellectual apparatus in the period of the Italian Renaissance. The *Novella del grasso legnaiuolo*<sup>2</sup> depicts “an elaborate ruse Brunelleschi

perpetrated at the expense of [an] intarsia craftsman," who is lead to believe he is someone else. Brunelleschi's domination of the craftsman is also a way in which the achievement of architecture as *art liberalis* is represented. The logic of the spectacle allows Tafuri to synthesize the setting of the productive apparatus and the central position of the architect simultaneously.

During the Enlightenment the vocabulary of the spectacle is adopted by scientists. Architecture, especially the way it is represented in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, turns its metaphysical humanism into a rigorous craftsmanship under the direction of scientists, so-called *philosophes*. Architectural discipline becomes more interested in facing practical needs rather than theoretical speculations: the architect loses direction but at the same time re-states his position in the mosaic of the various crafts.

### The Bi-polar Subject and the Dialogue

The main thesis of Diderot's Paradox of the Actor is that the good actor does not revive the feelings, passions and emotions of his character, but merely studies and implements, intonations, gestures and facial expression to impress the spectator.<sup>3</sup>

Diderot's actor is a bi-polar subject: on the one side he is a technical subject, while, on the other, he is a human being, giving voice to its instincts and emotions. However, the two sides cannot be reconciled because only the technical one fits into the logic of the spectacle, thus to the requirements of science.

The human expression withstands the dictatorship of scientific method. This kind of scientific direction finds its radical expression in Julien Offray de La Mettrie's (1709-1751) "man-machine," where "man" is reduced to its organic functions and can be represented as a machine, as a common object of scientific analysis.

Nevertheless, Diderot doesn't reduce the actor to a machine. He keeps the contradiction alive: the actor is both a human and a machine and the spectacle is based on this equilibrium. Through the *Paradox* Diderot expresses this contrast as an ontological debate between *Nature* and *Reason* whose duality is represented as an imaginary dialogue between

two subjects.

The first speaker symbolizes *Reason* and impersonates the position of Diderot himself, who sustains the primacy of intelligence over instinct. In fact, for the author, the instinctive performance of the actor is usually unpredictable and cannot be reproduced the same way on different occasions, thus becoming unacceptable. The second speaker symbolizes *Nature*, whose main feature is that of questioning the first. The two characters are also symbolically opposed with a linguistic device: the first speaker makes use of eloquent argumentations; the second one is connoted by a more succinct expression. Diderot distinctly conferred *Nature* the “voice of the question” and only to the *philosophe* the authority and eloquence to answer that question.

### **The Paradox**

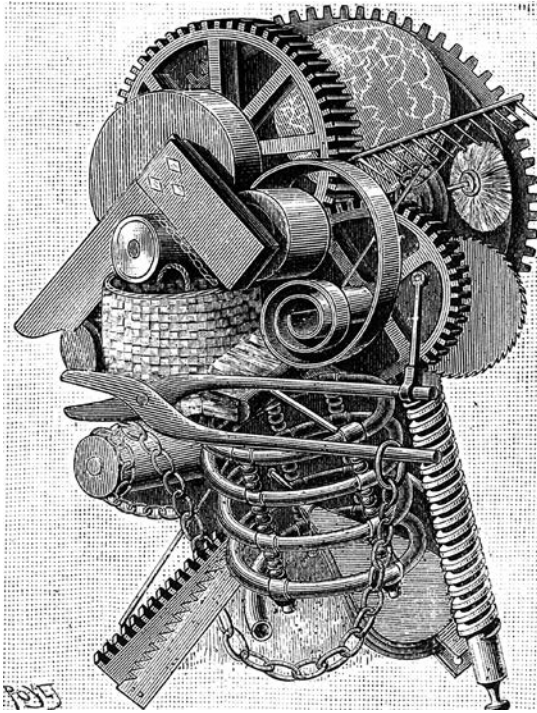
The term “paradox” is used to stress the mutual autonomy, but at the same time interdependency, between Nature and Reason. During the intellectual debate of the eighteenth century, in fact, the use of the paradox was a way to state not a negative output but a more general approach towards phenomena that could not immediately be considered part of science. The paradox introduces the notion of the “suspension of judgment” that bears on Cartesian “skeptical” doubt: in order to gain a solid foundation when building one’s system of knowledge and belief, one must first doubt everything.

Even though Diderot is skeptical about the actor being the representative of Nature or Reason, he assumes as the “fact,” the starting point, the scene of the spectacle. The scene is what emphasizes the bi-polar condition of the actor: while nature changes from time to time, the art of acting is supposed to not change. The science of the spectacle consists precisely in staging this paradox; that could be extended to all the crafts gathered in the *Encyclopédie*: the actor embodies a duality in itself that cannot be reconciled.

### **Aesthetic Paradox**

In the philosophy of Diderot, there is a direct correspondence between art and technique. Even though Art has a “systemic” meaning, it is: “the centre, the meeting point, through which the observations made in sciences are gathered to form a ‘system’”.<sup>4</sup> In the science of spectacle Diderot considers acting as one of the possible representations of

science: acting is the technical reproduction of mythical figures that have been represented over times. These mythical figures have no other meaning than their potential reproducibility by means of technical skills for the only sake of spectacle. Moreover, the latter is not just the mere representation, rather it is *the way* each representation is put in place by the actors, in other words it is the portrayal of the process. “The tautological character of the spectacle stems from the fact that its means and ends are identical.”<sup>5</sup>



### On the Ideal Type and the Machine<sup>6</sup>

I

[...] Go to La Grenée, and [...] ask him for Beauty; and [...] he will be persuaded that all you want from his art is a picture of a handsome woman. The same fault is common to your actor and to this painter; and I would say to them, ‘Your picture, your acting, are mere portraits of individuals far below the general idea traced by the poet and the **ideal type** of which I hoped to have a representation. This lady of yours is as handsome as you like; but she is not Beauty. There is the same difference between your



work and your model as between your model and the type.

II

But, after all, this ideal type may be a phantom!

I

No.

II

But since it is ideal it is not real; and you cannot understand a thing that is impalpable.

I

True. But let us take an art, say sculpture, at its beginning. It copied the first model that came to hand. Then it saw that there were better models, and took them for choice. Then it corrected first their obvious, then their less obvious fault, until by dint of long study it arrived at a figure which was no longer nature.

II

Why, pray?

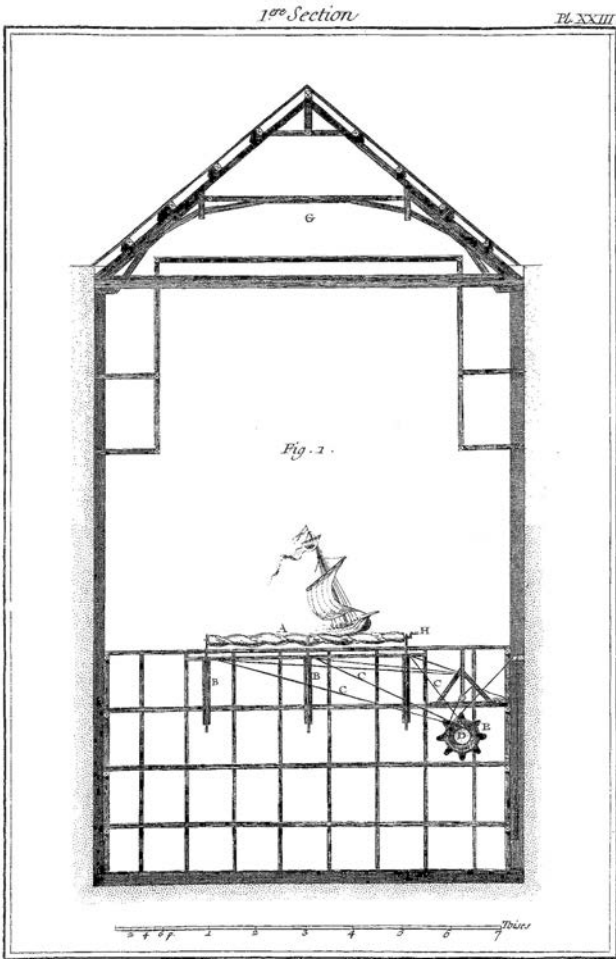
I

Because the development of a **machine** so complex as the human body cannot be regular. Go to the Tuileries or the Champs Elysées on a fete-day; look at all the women in the walks, and you will not find one in whom the two corners of the mouth are exactly alike. Titian's Danae is a portrait; the Love at the foot of the couch is an ideal. In a picture of Raphael's, which went from M. de Thiers' collection to Catherine the Second, ST. Joseph is a commonplace man; the Virgin is a real and a beautiful woman; the infant Christ is an ideal.

Art is not an invention but a translation: it's not the talent, rather it is the continuous exercise meant to re-produce the gestures that makes a great actor. Quatremère de Quincy also describes a similar tendency toward exercise and reproduction. His article on *type*<sup>8</sup> bears on the process of constant improving-through-re-drawing the same reference: at stake is not the object per se, but rather the technique, which represents a "type". How the architect is able to represent his own technical devices, how he relies on reason to make a type.

Through the concept of "ideal type", Diderot stresses the technical affinities between humans and machines: an analogical affinity that is not then related to an "absolute beauty" but rather to what he calls an "artificial beauty": "Artificial is regularity, order, symmetry, the proportions observed in our mechanical productions, our clothing, our buildings, our

gardens.”<sup>9</sup> “Artificial” becomes an adjective to express the “technical” as a new paradigm for an aesthetic judgement that is able both to cross and to join different domains of production. The judgment moves from the shape of the object, or from the gesture of the actor, to their transposition into the multitude: the object expressed in many buildings, and furnishing, while the gesture indistinctly undertaken by different actors.



*Machines de Théâtres.*  
*Coupe sur toute la hauteur et la largeur avec les Rues de Mer équipées.*

## On Masks<sup>10</sup>

I<sup>1</sup>

Have you not observed an urchin coming forward under a hideous old man's mask, which hides him from head to foot? Behind this mask he laughs at his little companions, who fly in the terror before him. This urchin is the true symbol of the actor; his comrades are the symbol of the audience.

II

[The ] son of Le Sage..

I

..played, with equal success, Aristides [...], Tartufe [...], Mascarille [...], for all these different parts he had a **mask**. This did not come by Nature, for Nature had given him but one, his own; the others he drew from Art.

Is there such a thing as **artificial sensibility**? Considering, sensibility, whether acquired or inborn, is not in place in all characters. [...] It is the faculty of knowing and imitating all natures. Believe me, we need not multiply causes when one cause accounts for all appearances. [...] Sensibility, according to the only acceptation yet given of the term, is, as it seems to me, that disposition which accompanies organic weakness. [...] Multiply souls of sensibility, and you will multiply in the same proportion good and bad actions of every kind, extravagant praise and extravagant blame.

II

A great actor's soul is formed of the subtle element with which a certain philosopher filled space, an element neither cold nor hot, which affects no definite shape, and, capable of assuming all.

I

A great actor [...] has no key peculiar to him; he takes the key and the tone fit for his part of the score, and he can take up any. [...] He's an adulatory by profession, he is great courtier, he is a great actor.

II

A great courtier, accustomed since he first drew breath to play the part of a most ingenious puppet, takes every kind of shape at the pull of the string in his master's hands.

I

A great actor is also a most ingenious **puppet**, and his strings are held by the poet, who at each line indicates the true form he must take. [...] Look around you, and you will see that people of

never-failing gaiety have neither great faults nor great merits; that as a rule people who lay themselves out to be agreeable are frivolous people, without any found principle; and that those who, like certain persons who mix in our society, have no character, excel in playing all.

Diderot stresses the variety of masks: each one requiring its specific technical skills, as a fundamental feature of the talented actor. This issue is directly related to the idea of philosophical eclecticism exposed in the *Encyclopédie*: “The eclectic is a philosopher who, trampling underfoot prejudice, tradition, antiquity, general agreement, authority [...] returns to the clearest general principles, examines them, discusses them, admits nothing that is not based on the testimony of his experience and his reason.”<sup>12</sup> There is no possibility for an absolute aesthetic judgment. The eclectic, as the actor, requires having “no character”<sup>13</sup>: his personality should be variable to face the variety of spectacles and masks at stake. Only the eclectic personality is able to represent the paradox of spectacle: its contradictions with Reason, its alienation from Nature, its hypocrite Idealism.

### **Ethical Paradox**

The ethics of Diderot cannot be separated from the aesthetics, as much as spectacle is interconnected to society: a society of techniques and technicians.<sup>14</sup>

The ethical paradox requires an overturning of the aesthetical. In this way the theatre becomes dependent on society: the spectacle is supposed to have an “operative” effect on the audience. Even though the spectacle is not focused on Nature, its representation is supposed to affect it: the spectator is supposed to recognize himself, empathizing and “aligning” with the spectacle. To paraphrase Sigfried Giedion, in the spectacle “civilization takes command”; and so Debord states: “the spectacle cannot be abstractly contrasted to concrete social activity. Each side of such a duality is itself divided. The spectacle that falsifies reality is nevertheless a real product of that reality. Conversely, real life is materially invaded by the contemplation of the spectacle, and ends up absorbing it and aligning itself with it.”<sup>15</sup>

**On Sacrifice**<sup>16</sup>

II

If a crowd of people collected in the street by some catastrophe begin of a sudden, and each in his own way, and without any concert, to exhibit a natural sensibility, they will give you a magnificent show, and display you a thousand types, valuable for sculpture, music and poetry.

I

[...] If you say it will, then I shall make you this answer: What is this boasted magic of art if it only consists in spoiling what both nature and chance have done better than art? [...] You're talking to me of a reality. I am talking to you of an imitation. You're talking to me of a passing moment in Nature. I'm talking to you of a work of Art, planned and composed—a work which is built up by degrees, and which lasts. Take now each of these actors; change the scene in the street as you do on the boards, and show me your personages left successively to themselves, two by two or three by three. Leave them to their own swing; make them full masters of their actions; and you will see what a monstrous discord will result. [...] A play is like any well-managed association, in which each individual **sacrifices** himself for the general good and effect. And who will best take the measure of the sacrifice? The enthusiast or the fanatic? Certainly not. In society, the man of judgment; on the stage, the actor whose wits are always about him. Your scene in the street has the same relation to a scene on the stage that a band of savages has to a company of civilized men.

**On Violence**<sup>17</sup>

I

When I gave the Pere de Famille, the magistrate of police exhorted me to follow the career.

II

Why did you not?

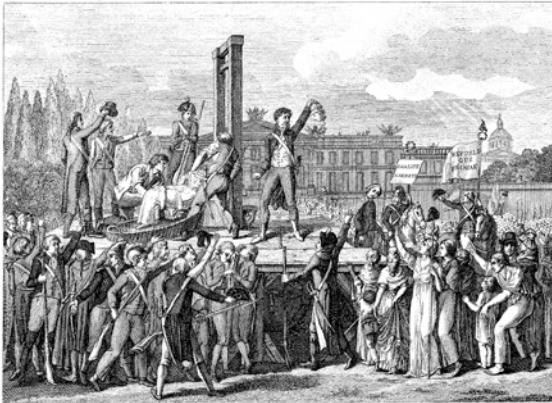
I

[...] The citizen who presents himself at the door of a theatre leaves his vices there, and only takes them up again as he goes out. There he is just, impartial, a good friend, a lover of virtue; and I have often by my side bad fellows deeply indignant at actions which they would not have failed to commit had they found

themselves in the same circumstances in which the poet had placed the patronage they abhorred.

I

The fact is, that to have sensibility is one thing, to feel is another. One is a matter of soul, the other of judgment. One may feel strongly and be unable to express it; one may alone, or in private life, at the fireside, give expression, in reading or acting, adequate for a few listeners, and give none of any account on the stage. On the stage, with what we call sensibility, soul, passion, one may give one or two tirades well and miss the rest. To take in the whole extent of a great part, to arrange its light and shade, its forts and feeble; to maintain an equal merit in the quiet and in the **violent** passages; to have variety bot in harmonious detail and in the broad effect; to establish a system of declamation which shall succeed in carrying off every freak of the poet's - this is matter for a cool head, a profound judgment, an exquisite taste - a matter for hard work, for long experience, for an uncommon tenacity of memory.



*Fun tragique de Marie Antoinette d'Autriche  
Reine de France, executée le 16 Octobre 1793.*

The scene of the guillotine worked as a catalyst of violence, where this extreme is aimed at the reduction of social violence. Interestingly, the guillotine as a product of Reason, an (almost) perfect technical device, represents the spectacle of justice in a society of technicians. The absolute indifference of the machine, its abstraction, elicits the maximum empathy from spectators: they “absorb and align”. Thus, the “technical” object postulates a possible representation of the Kantian moral imperative: an unconditioned duty irremediably applied on every circumstance.

## Endnotes.

- 1 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 1983), 7.
- 2 Manfredo Tafuri, *Ricerca Del Rinascimento: Principi, Città, Architetti, Saggi 760* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1992), 3-4.
- 3 Mario Bonfantini, *Introduzione alla lettura di Diderot* (Torino: Editrice Gheroni, 1963), 62.
- 4 Roberto Gabetti and Carlo Olmo, *Alle radici dell'architettura contemporanea* (Torino: Einaudi, 1989), 109.
- 5 Debord (1983), 10.
- 6 Denis Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting* (London: Chatto & Windus, Piccadilly, 1883), 50-52.
- 8 M. Quatremère de Quincy, *Dizionario storico di architettura: le voci teoriche, Polis* (Venezia: Marsilio editori, 1985).
- 9 Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, "art. Beau" vol 4 (Paris, 1755).
- 10 Diderot (1883), 54-62.
- 11 Ibid., 101-102.
- 12 Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, "art. Eclecticism" vol 5 (Paris, 1755)
- 13 Diderot (1883), 62.
- 14 Yvon Belaval, "Diderot e la riforma del teatro," in *Paradosso sull'attore* (Milano: Abscondita, 2002), 87. «The theatrical activity for Diderot is not marginal to the philosophical. The scene is far too close to morality for the playwright to disinterest himself of the philosopher and vice versa. [...] If the truth of philosophy is the science, the truth of art is moral» Cfr. Herbert Dieckmann, *Il realismo di Diderot* (Bari: Laterza, 1977).
- 15 Debord (1983), 8.
- 16 Ibid., 24-26.
- 17 Diderot (1883), 69-70.





# The Chair got a BooBoo and the “thing” revealed itself:

The Notion of Becoming via Disclosure, Visualized

// Zack Matthews and Zahra Savaferdi

..dissimulation, is the negative; when a man lets fall signs and arguments, that he is not, that he is... simulation, is the affirmative; when a man industriously and expressly feigns and pretends to be, that he is not.

Francis Bacon and Clark Sutherland Northup,  
*The Essays of Francis Bacon* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936).

*We ... are talking dissimulation*

## Part I: Alex

There is not much to say about Alex. Well ... that's false. Alex is Alex and that's the best way to describe him. Alex is one of a kind and a rather strange type ... recognizable on the spot; however, all we need to know is that he somewhat enjoys reading and he is absent minded when he goes about his daily life and normal routines.



## Part II: It

It's 4:37 late afternoon somewhat similar to any other afternoon. Well ... That's false. It has stopped raining outside and everything smells fresh. Some birds are singing from afar and sun rays shine from the odd separation between the thick clouds and a golden light strikes its mark on the edge of every building. Alex is probably unaware of all this. He is going to sit in his chair and perhaps read a bit. Tipping the chair on its hind legs, Alex finds his position between comfort and the masked lighting seeping through the curtains.

*BAM!*

Alex takes a stumble and so does the chair. All Alex barely feels is a dull pain on his left knee; however, this is not the end of it. The impact affects the chair as well. The chair gets a BooBoo ... and so happens an unfolding of events ... Chair's rigid wooden leg is liquefying ... the slender limb bleeding, shifting shapes ... into another character ... concealment can no longer stay intact ... Truth starts oozing out ... All the Thing ever wanted to be was Chair ... but at the end of the day things don't go as planned ...



### Part III: Alex versus It

Alex is witness to it all ... At first, he bends down to reposition Chair after the stumble ... but ... then ... to his own surprise ... he notices transformation: a happening which would make anyone else abandon the chair. Alex watches the whole process with complete attention. Perhaps it's Alex being Alex which causes him more curiosity than pure fear. When Alex sees "It" grow in front of his eyes, he cannot un-see it ... the best solution winds up to be acceptance of this new Being, its desire to be Chair, and its inability to continue the pretense.

Every beginning needs an emergence, a process of becoming: Alex is witnessing the emergence of the "It" ... It is his participation in the event that makes him more accepting of Chair's new personality.

"It" is real.

"It" is real and the Real is left over of whatever which can neither be imaginary or symbolized. First, the "It" very much exists in our real life, second "It" refuses to symbolize anything, and thirdly, it does not make any attempt to mean anything other than being present as an extension of the chair. Consideration of these facts makes the existence of the "It" real.



#### Part IV: The truth is an event

The scene of this encounter manifests a life that never truly existed and it reveals worlds far removed from the world that we are used to. This bizarre encounter and the following unfolding of events make visible the consciousness of another character hiding within. What might seem to be a subjective projection of Alex's imagination is in fact a manifestation of the truth which isn't a priori knowledge, but rather an event - something happening in a particular span of time which makes the process of disclosure sensible. The event is an unraveling of something which very much exists in our everyday life and yet it unfolds to be something within the realm of strangeness. It is an alternate place where peculiar things belong.

The symbol cannot function unless it has a viewer. "It" could go on pretending to be a chair without the necessity of dissimulation, but with Alex witnessing the process of unmasking Truth starts to happen. This renders Truth not only as an event but a conditional event, where the participation of an audience is necessary. There is a need of an outsider's presence for pretense, for disclosure, and for Truth to exist and to be meaningful.

The new, fat leg is an index of another entity living within. Things assume an aura being hunted for the reason that one feels the presence of an entity that isn't physically there. While in the masked phase, Chair would radiate the hunted-ness. Happening of Truth as an event not only physically manifests the Being of the entity living within, but also takes away the hunted-ness and makes banal something that is usually perceived strange, uncomfortable and eerie. This renders Truth as a conditional event that doesn't produce meaning, but represents the unthinkable: making it visible and sensible. The stumble brings ontological Truth of Chair to a degree noticeable and tangible. The disclosure makes ontic facts become the ontological matters of being.



### Part V: Alex versus Us

One should keep in mind the notion of the contextual cipher versus the imagery cipher, and be aware that one could decipher these invisible systems only retroactively. Alex experiences the contextual deciphering – We as readers experience the imagery deciphering. We only see fragments of this event that ultimately prevents us from fully believing this whole story.





**Ah, but do you think Alex cares?**



# When Face Walks

// Xuan Luo



In the year 1185, the ruling Heike family in Japan lost their last battle to the rebels on the turbulent waters of the Shimonoseki Strait. Seeing no hope ahead, the seven-year old Emperor Antoku, with the rest of his family, plunged into the sea, burying with them the shame, grief, and anger of a defeated samurai clan. Fishermen's legend says that the anguished souls of the Heike warriors still linger in the deep stormy currents; when the tide rises, they transform into crabs with shells bearing the faces of wrathful samurais. These crabs (*Heikeopsis japonica*, or *Heikegani* crabs) are real.

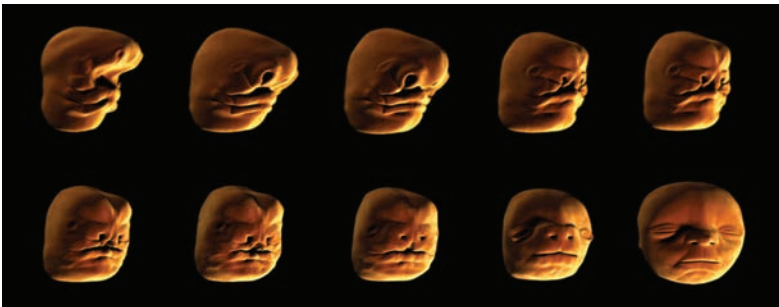
This tale has been used as an evidence for evolution by the biologist Julian Huxley in 1952 and later popularized by Carl Sagan in his 1980 book *Cosmos*. Their argument goes like this: By some whimsical work of nature, some crabs acquired shells that vaguely resembled the features of a human face; those that were accidentally captured in the fishing nets tended to be released by the fishermen out of reverence, resulting in an unintentional artificial selection in which the exoskeletal mask would be gradually perfected for survival.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, this interwoven relationship that is rather beautifully ascribed to nature and culture proved to be a wishful hypothesis.<sup>2</sup> The "face" borne by the *Heikegani* crab might have just been a pareidolic product of the capricious human mind, a result of our psychological propensity to discern familiar configurations out of arbitrary patterns.<sup>3</sup>

Regardless of the controversy, common to both sides of the story, mythical or scientific, is the intense play of emotions. The mystic aura of that powerfully dolorous tale is haunting, like a ghost, disclosing an unnamable fear that is as archaic and as deep-seated as the ocean itself: a fear for the alienation of the face; a fear to imagine that detached face gazing back at its captor, with a cold stream of light emanating from those mournful eyes of the exiled specters... What is it in the face that induces such horror? What is the face?

The image of the face, the one as we are familiar with, that which is composed of the volumes and cavities of eyes, nose, mouth and ears is a result of growth and development mainly between four to eight weeks of the embryonic period.<sup>4</sup> Five swellings called the *facial prominences* emerge and undergo a breathtaking process of folding and kneading, with different plates of tissue eventually fusing into an entity to give rise to a recognizable face.

The face at this stage is clearly not a mere surface but a topography with thicknesses. Protrusions, pleats and apertures migrate and invade one another's space. The exterior eats into the interior, the interior everts to take over the exterior. With the *nasomedial* (that which forms the upper lip and nose) and the *maxillary* (that which forms the walls of the *orbits*, or eye sockets) *prominences* merging together, leaving a vestigial indentation called the *philtrum*, all the bits and pieces finally stabilize and assume their forms and positions. The inside and the outside are consequently made distinct from each other. The face is ready to be read as a surface/ interface.

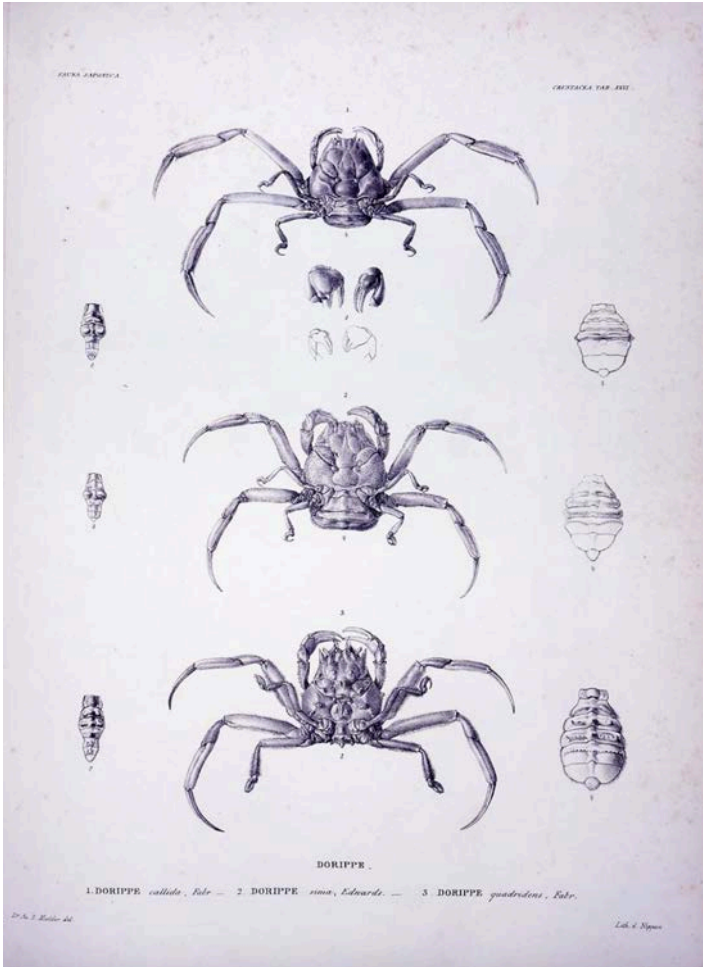




At the early stages of facial formation, all vertebrates seem to share a common blueprint. It is not until the end of the eighth week that the embryo's species starts to manifest.<sup>5</sup> Two mechanisms, *morphogenesis* and *differentiation*, dictate the outcome of growth and development. The former "works constantly toward a state of composite, architectonic balance among all the separate growing parts".<sup>6</sup> There is a progressive, sequential process leading to some kind of totality in the end, i.e. an archetypal "master face" is at work. The later, however, is the generation of variations that can nevertheless be collectively comprehended under a generic type. The embryonic face is, all in all, a biological assemblage of functional parts that is tied with the rest of the corporeal body. The "master face", on the other hand, is something beyond the physicality of the body. By virtue of its perceptibility as a "face", it is intrinsically a symbolic or semiotic construct that is formed *in vitro*. Evolutionists might even claim that the human face per se is a result of both the functional demand of the body and the social interaction with other faces. The dialectics between the single dominant archetypal face and the individuation of many different faces is thus a problem beyond the scope of biology. It enters the sphere of psychological and social theory.

Think for a moment of an eerie image: a fully mobilized human face roaming the deep seas. The mechanistically articulated arthropod appendages and the grooved carapace aptly reify the deterritorialized, inhuman face-machine contemplated by Deleuze and Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they describe the face as "a visual percept that crystalizes out of 'different varieties of vague luminosity without form or dimension'".<sup>7</sup> That is, the face does not take a particular or individual static shape; it manifests itself when it *maps* onto a particular archetype. Before the face comes to be recognized as a face, there pre-exists the *white wall/black hole* abstract machine of *faciality*. The face vaguely emerges "*on* the white wall" and "*in* the black hole"<sup>8</sup> as it becomes deterritorialized from the head-and-body system of the pre-lingual regime. In a tribal society, the mask plays a dominant role in terms of social relations as it hides the face and suppresses it into being a continuous part of the head-body system, to make human exist as an animal. Taking off the mask, the face starts to gather the necessary organic, cephalic parts and re-engage them with the fragments of the external milieu, or the *landscape* as a *deterritorialized world*.<sup>9</sup> Away from the corporeal and organic stratum, the face arises to the stratum of the sign regime which is in turn divided into the two interrelated realms of *signifiance* and *subjectification*. One idea becomes clear: as the face "crystalizes" into being, it is no longer a part of the body,

not even the head. As the face is the product of an abstract machine worked upon the elements of the head, it is of its nature to expand its border to engulf available territories beyond itself. The head, the body and eventually the tools we use can all be *facialized*. The “master face” decodes and *overcodes* the body and its environs.<sup>10</sup> The body becomes appendages, extensions, excrescences of the face. Humans, become walking faces.



Thus, when the *Heikegani* crab, bearing that face without an origin, the face that is purely constructed of signs, first crawls out of the sea and comes into the sight of the unfortunate fisherman, it unmask him through an uncanny gaze, it actuates the machine of faciality, giving him a face, mirroring its own image in his body while the fisherman metamorphoses into a crab himself; he is forever cursed with the bondage to the hierarchy of semiosis, and eternally locked in the grief of the roaming samurai.

The prehensile extensions of the face, that is, our arms, fingers, legs, genitals, our clothes, houses, vehicles, smartphones, et cetera constantly subjugate us to the hegemony of signs. One needs to find the hope to “liberate the immanent force of *becoming* from its self-enslavement to the order of being”.<sup>11</sup> The vision of human-beings becoming swarming crabs present an apocalyptic image accompanied by a somewhat “post-humanist” undertone. Yet at the same time, this image of the walking faces suggests a potentially disruptive power to the established social hierarchy. Whether one wants to be trapped in the omnipresent network of signifiers, be enslaved by the “master face”, or to tear it open and break free, that is the question.

## Endnotes.

- 1 J.W. Martin, "The Samurai Crab." *Terra* 31, no. 4 (1993): 30-34.
- 2 Major flaws of this theory include the failure to explain the widespread distribution of a variety of genera from the Dorippidae family in regions outside the reach of Japanese cultural influence. Furthermore, their relative small size, with a maximum width of an adult crab being about 1.2 inches, suggests that they hardly needed to worry about being eaten to begin with.
- 3 Nouchine Hadjikhani, Kestutis Kveraga, Paulami Naik, and Seppo P. Ahlfors, "Early (M170) Activation of Face-specific Cortex by Face-like Objects," in *NeuroReport* 20, no. 4 (2009): 403-07.
- 4 "Development refers to all naturally occurring progressive, unidirectional, sequential changes in the life of an individual from it's existence as a single cell to it's elaboration as a multifunctional unit terminating in death". Robert E. Moyers, *Handbook of Orthodontics* (Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1988).
- 5 "Face Embryology": Overview, Facial Morphogenesis, Early Development of the Face. Accessed April 03, 2016. <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/844962-overview#a1>.
- 6 Daljit S. Gill, and Farhad B. Naini, *Orthodontics: Principles and Practice* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).
- 7 The authors here quote an unnamed "psychologist". Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 168.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*, 172.
- 10 "Even the mask assumes a new function here, the exact opposite of its old one. ... Either the mask assures the head's belonging to the body, its becoming-animal...Or, as is the case now, the mask assures the erection, the construction of the face, the facialization of the head and the body: the mask is now the face itself, the abstraction or operation of the face. The inhumanity of the face". *Ibid.*, 181.
- 11 Žižek states this as "the aim of Deleuze", i.e. to destabilize any established order by never assuming a constant, identifiable state of being, in other words, to free oneself by becoming. Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (Abington, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 25.

# Real Fictions in the Present Future

// Chris Norton Riley

Benjamin Bratton, at a recent TEDx talk in San Diego, stated that “in our culture, talking about the future is sometimes a polite way of saying things about the present that would otherwise be rude or risky.”<sup>1</sup> The talk was critical of what Bratton perceived as the increasing banality of the TED talk and its tendency towards technological televangelism over technological progress. In his words, “the future on offer is one in which everything changes, so long as everything stays the same,” one in which we “invest our energy in futuristic information technologies, including our cars, but drive them home to kitsch architecture copied from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>2</sup>

As designers, talking about the future is something that we often do yet there is always something frustrating about it. The future is always something disconnected, far away. In fiction, the allegory has long been used to confront present circumstances and has often been successful in raising an awareness seemingly impossible by direct conversation. By its nature, science fiction displaces reality in order to avoid the pitfalls of realism, but today as we are confronted by a present and future increasingly melded together, this is no longer enough. In design practice considering the future as inherently present makes apparent our direct control over it.

Filmic and novelistic fictionalizations of the future have historically been a useful tool in addressing present conditions. One example is Hayao Miyazaki’s 1984 animated film *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, which depicts a future world, presumably our own, left in complete ecological ruin by the practices of its inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> In Miyazaki’s fictional world a toxic jungle is rapidly spreading across the earth, uninhabitable by humans without a mask. Despite the condition of the environment, the humans that remain on earth choose to continue to wage violence on each other rather than dealing with the reality of their environment. Today, we can see clearly that this world was not so much a fiction, but rather our day to day reality seen through a different lens. By employing an allegorical mask, Miyazaki was able to shine a light on our world unachievable by traditional

reporting. Through fiction, he shows us reality. Through the future, he shows us the present.

The issue with Miyazaki's model of allegorical storytelling today is that it relies on a clear dichotomy between the present and the future. While we can understand our inescapable reality through the lens of a proposed fictitious future, we also understand the possible future based on that current reality. Going back to Bratton's statement about the danger of saying "rude or risky" things about the present, in any vision of the future we cannot include every aspect of contemporary reality. The viewpoints of any author discussing the future will ultimately omit and include aspects of reality for a number of reasons. But today, the relationship of present and future is rapidly shifting from a clear dichotomy to a muddy dialectic, and as the two slide closer together, the previously mentioned narrowed authorial viewpoints are widened.

Ben Lerner, an American poet and novelist, has made the dialectic of present and future a key theme in his work. In his 2014 novel *10:04*, a very familiar New York City is presented to us in the guise of a future. The book's opening line—"The city had converted an elevated length of abandoned railway spur into an aerial greenway and the agent and I were walking south along it in the unseasonable warmth"—gives the reader a detached picture of what is recognizably today, featuring the Highline and global warming, yet somehow something else.<sup>4</sup> This temporal confusion is present throughout the book, as time, space, and narrator continue to be rotated and displaced. Lerner continually moves back and forth within this gray area and questions the reader's understanding of what is reality and what is not. Perhaps the mantra of the book, a quote and ethos that is continually present, is that in the future "everything will be as it is now, just a little different."<sup>5</sup> The way in which Lerner fluctuates between past and present allows for a broader proposal for a combination of fictitious future and jaded reality.

Designers have to learn from this understanding of the future in order to speak more reliably about it. Less *Tomorrowland* and more *Her*. New York based architecture firm MOS has explored the use of the allegory in architecture through their video projects. Their video *The Zombies Are Late* depicts a group of time travelers after having just arrived to the future.<sup>6</sup> They arrive in the dark and are left to wonder about what they will find once the sun rises. As they discuss the possibilities with each other, they are both present in and separated from the future. In this way, the

time travelers are just like us. We are always theorizing the future while waiting for it to happen, but the truth is that the proverbial sun will never rise. The present is always giving way to the future and talking about the future will always be talking about the present.

If we take seriously this notion that the future is inherently present, it opens up the possibilities of architectural practice and what it is that we do as designers. Sam Jacob argues that architecture has always been a process of enactment, rehearsing a set of ideals and histories. Adapting a quote by Jay-Z, he claims that architects can “speak things into existence,” and that if we accept the inherent fiction of architecture, then we can “write into reality the world we wish to inhabit rather than the world we were born into.”<sup>7</sup> Accepting that our reality is made up of a multitude of constructs, our agency shifts, giving us the ability to adjust and rewrite these fictions into what we want to see.

### Endnotes.

**1** Benjamin H. Bratton, "We Need to Talk about TED," *The Guardian*, December 30, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/30/we-need-to-talk-about-ted>.

**2** Ibid.

**3** Hayao Miyazaki, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (Tokyo: Toei Inc. / Studio Ghibli, 1984).

**4** Ben Lerner, *10:04* (New York: Picador, 2014), 3.

**5** Ibid., 54.

**6** Michael Meredith and Hillary Sample, "The Zombies Are Late," Vimeo Video, 12:14.

**7** Sam Jacob, *Make It Real: Architecture as Enactment* (Moscow: Strelka Press, 2012) Kindle edition. Loc 333, "Naturalizing Fiction".



# A Necklace of Bites

// Clemens Finkelstein

1959. In the swelling heat of summer, the philosopher and anthropologist Ernesto De Martino visits Salento, a region of the Southern Italian peninsula, the *Mezzogiorno*, where magic is still very much alive. Hundreds of people have claimed here in the past, to have fallen victim to the bite of a mythical tarantula, endemic to the region for over five hundred years. They call the illness caused by the bite of the creature *tarantismo* (tarantism). Only the *tarantella*, a dance inducing a trance-like state, in conjunction with the performance of specific music and colors, can cure the sick; a ritual exorcism meant to expulse the demonic possession through the *taranta*.<sup>1</sup>

Deeply ingrained in Italian culture, Leonardo da Vinci describes the sickness as manifesting “a man in his intention, that is, whatever he was thinking when he was bitten.”<sup>2</sup> Associated with states of hysteria, melancholy, somnolence, and madness, the nympholeptic hold of the magical beast carries with it an irresistible craving to express the inner tempest through bodily movement. Succumbing to the poisonous bite, the violent dance that ensues can last a many nights and days. De Martino describes the ritual procession accompanying the exorcism in his resulting study *La Terra del Rimorso* (1961) as communal experience; soliciting “the participation in diverse capacities of musicians, family members and an assorted audience of ‘believers’ who throng at the doors of the hovels where the home cures take place, or who form a circle around the dancing *tarantato* [the *bitten*]” in open squares.<sup>3</sup>

Fast and repetitive rhythms emanate from the musical instruments that thrust their net of hypnotic vibrations through the air, drawing out first minor tremors, twitches, and spasms from the *bitten*. As the melodic chant intensifies, correspondingly, the *bitten*, clothed in a purifying pearly white, convulses more and more, pulsing on the cold stony floor ecstatically, eyes closed, arms and legs flapping, head shaking violently from side to side...



The creation of a “healing” or ritualistic space, both for the passively participating “believers” and the actively immersed *tarantato*, is reliant on what can be broken down into a tripartite rite of music, dance, and colors.

In architecture, the correlate manifests as *performance* (movement), *notation* (semiotics), and *complexion* (color/texture). The translocation of this three-fold program from the ethnopsychiatric and ethnomusicological folklore to a semiotics of space, provides a promising entry point into an architectural investigation of the complex operations of the *bite*. Thus, what is a *bite* if not the registration of forces; forces that may leave an impression, a fading bruise or a scar of penetration. Yet, a *bite* is not a *bite*. When dealing with this operative transgression of violence, we need to distinguish between different intentions and modes of *biting*: a *bite* of sensual desire, animalistic lust or sadomasochistic submission; a *bite* of survivalist aggression, poisonous injection or possessive intrusion. Additionally, we have to distinguish between the active *bite* and the passive *bite*; between *biting* and being *bitten*. Furthermore, distinct from its modes and intentions, the final instance of the *bite*, must be differentiated threefold (if not fourfold<sup>4</sup>), reflected in what will be termed the “degrees” of the *bite*: an ephemeral impression (first degree), a temporary bruise or mark left in the flesh (second degree), or a permanent penetration (third degree), leaving a residual scar as evidence of its own encroachment on the other.

**I. Impression—ephemeral mark.** Let us begin by focusing on the scene of the *bite*—the pressure applied to the flesh, the teeth sinking in, the mouth enveloping the scene of transgression—where the boundaries of the *bitten* and the *biter* blur in a mist of pain and pleasure, pressure and release. The indenture that presents itself as residual mark of the *bite*, then, depending on the amount of force applied, and the physiological predilection of the *bitten*, either gradually fades into non-existence, or transforms itself into a bruise, the rupture of underlying blood vessels, discoloring the skin around the *bite* into gradually changing polychrome shades of red, blue, purple, black, green and yellow.

The first degree *bite*—that of a slightly delayed, yet immediate dissipation—may initially seem inconsequential to the registration of forces that could influence the *bitten* following its occurrence. However, as minimalist sculptor Carl Andre rightly stresses, “nothing ever truly disappears.”<sup>5</sup> Specifically due to the lack of an evidentiary residual mark—visually

indexical—the first degree *bite*, in its subtlety, manifests as *phantom* haunting the *bitten*. Traces of memory take shape as psychological after-image, which in Derridean deconstruction forms as an “‘I’ that is both part of the spectacle and part of the audience; an ‘I’ that, a bit like ‘you,’ attends (undergoes) its own incessant, violent reinscription within the arithmetical machinery; an ‘I’ that, functioning as a pure passageway for operations of substitution, is not some singular and irreplaceable existence, some subject of ‘life,’ but only, [...] a mere function or phantom. A term and a germ, a term that disseminates itself, a germ that carries its own term within it.”<sup>6</sup>

As such, the first degree *bite* operates only within the *bitten*, invisible to outside observers, and even—or especially—to the *biter*. This distancing is due to a difference between the fading forces of the *bite* and the former’s intention. Now externalized and detached from the *biter*, relationships and forces are transformed. Any retention of pain or pleasure within the *bitten* has become a mere function, operating at a remove from the original event. Once absorbed and internalized, the *bite* becomes increasingly affective while the initial sensorial registration of pain dissipates, overwritten by the overall excitement of an intimate violence.

In the second degree *bite*, transgression results in an ephemeral polychromatic mark, a bruise slowly fading. Contrary to its obvious visual presence, the second degree is less potent in transferring the force of the *bite* into the *bitten* than the first degree outlined above. Despite its clear existence—evident to the *bitten*, the *biter*, and outside observers—the second degree *bite*, in its prolonged ephemerality, effectively cancels out the affect of the preceding intimate exchange. Not only does the outward appearance of this prismatic symbol carry with it negative connotations, a bruise remains filled with residual pain, displeasure, and soreness in consequence of the petechial hemorrhage marking the dermal layer, thus overshadowing the more powerful dichotomy of an immediate transversal from pain (*action*) to pleasure (*reaction*) in the *bitten*—as it occurs in the first and third degree *bite*.

**II. Penetration—symbolic scar.** When the *bite* exceeds the ephemeral by penetrating the skin and the flesh of the *bitten*, it presents itself as mark of permanence. More than a mere nibbling, the third degree *bite* ruptures the dermal layer and becomes eternalized as symbolic scar. Here, the initial act of transgression is (literally) more bloody than in the ephemeral

degrees of the *bite*; bringing with it another unique occurrence—a true interrelation and exchange of bodily matter between the *bitten* and the *biter*.

As the most powerful, the third degree *bite* is multidimensional: it embodies the subliminal characteristics of the first degree while its physical zenith presents itself as a visual and palpable scar that possesses a symbolic quality, uniquely layered for the *bitten*, the *biter*, and the spectators of the breach.

For the *bitten*, her wound, the mark of transgression through an other, has become part of her-*self*. The regenerated flesh, the cicatricial tissue, contrary to being solely a record of submission or violation, thus *owns* the other's infraction. By embodying the event of the *bite*, the *bitten* assumes ownership of the identifying signature of the other. In a reversal of submission and domination, gaining on the breach, the *bite* becomes a Platonic *pharmakon*, both poison and cure; the wound, as Héléne Cixous poetically remarks, reveals itself “in breaking, [...] a strange thing: [...] a kind of work takes place [here], mysterious [...] trace, even if it hurts us. It is here that I sense things happen [...], the story.”<sup>7</sup>

An abysm healed, remains, in its intention, as *writing*, as surficial root to a deeper dissimulation; of a registration of forces within the intimate exchange of the *bite*. This intimacy is bi-directional. The *biter*, in turn, has lost control over her former indiscretion. The mark of dominion, as it morphs into the scar tissue of the *bitten*, has turned on her-*self*. As the *biter* is now unable to alter or re-assume her mark—trying to renounce the scar as abstraction of an event now misrepresented—agency is inversed. Similarly, for outside observers, the symbolic scar acts as evidential witness of the original event; of something that has long since happened, yet that remains actual, collapsing past and present emblematically.

In transcending the mere mark as surficial symbol, we must, therefore, recalibrate and collimate our tools here in accordance with Merleau-Ponty, whom points out, regarding the oscillating depth of the visible, that, “since things and my body are made of the same stuff, vision must somehow take place in them; their manifest visibility must be repeated in the body by a secret visibility.”<sup>8</sup> Echoing the biblical reference of the Eucharist ritual, the dual subcategory of the third degree—wrapping up our theory of the *bite*—culminates as an exchange of bodily matter, of substances being withdrawn from or injected into the *bitten*: “He that eateth my flesh, and

drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”<sup>9</sup>

As demonstrated above in De Martino’s study on the mythical *taranta* of the *Mezzogiorno*, we know that a *bite* can also carry with it a poisonous gift, be it supernatural or physiological, demonic possession<sup>10</sup> or feverish infection, cured by an exorcism or antidote. Conversely, the exchange can also culminate in the saturnine consumption of bodily matter of the *bitten* by the *biter*; consumption of matter as either flesh or blood. Rarely accidental, its intention is the most ferocious and ranges from “normal” nutritional diets to such highly charged instances of anthropophagy (cannibalism) and exsanguination (vampirism).

Charged mythologemes fester around these instances of the *bite*: the biblical *Ur*-sin of Eva’s transgressive act, piercing the skin of a juicy apple that will bring impending doom and expulsion from paradise; Saturn, fearing to be overthrown by his own offspring, devours them upon their birth; and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) or E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Die Serapions-Brüder* (1819-1821) and *Vampirismus* (1821), the latter transcending Stoker’s comparatively tame eroticism by constructing a German literary history of the vampire as figure that de-romanticizes the *bite* as raw fetishistic dimension of necrophilia. Oddly enough, in the seam of these magical and more rational images, architecture emerges. Eclipsing the mere mythos of such fantastical tales, Philip Johnson could be recalled, whose own “origin story” as an architect owes much to his 1927 visit to the Greek island of Naxos, where, being “caught up in a local vampire panic spurred by a cholera outbreak,” his life would change forever.<sup>11</sup>

**III. Archi-bite.** Synchronously constructing, designing, exposing, and transforming forces in a relational action between *biting* and being *bitten*, architecture operates diagrammatically at an instance of contact-based tension/pressure. Characterized by and acting out aspects of the *bite* outlined above, architecture condenses “a space of tension between thought and material constraints, logical implications and real implications, habits of thinking and dehabituating tendencies of matter.”<sup>12</sup>

However, not all architectural projects that deal with tropes of the void or wound, in effect, truly embody the full potentiality of the *bite*. The *bite*—in these cases—only superficially exists and perpetuates the appearance of a forceful operation through its “opened” visuality and pictoriality; be

it in the appearance of the façade, pure allegorical form, or theoretical contextualization. While there exist many seemingly apparent cases of the *bite*—misrepresentations of the intricate system we have outlined above—we shall turn to one architectural instance that devotedly performs operations of the *bite*: transgressing, infiltrating, devouring, possessing, on the surface or deeply structural, visible or invisible.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's *Seagram Building*, furnished by Philip Johnson and prominently located in the heart of New York on 375 Park Avenue, lends itself to our emergent speculation. Demonstrating Mies' first attempt in 1954-58 at a 515 feet tall high-rise office building following the principles of modernism, which he had honed beginning in the 1920s in his Berlin skyscraper experiments, the architect's project encompasses all three programmatic correlates of the *bite*: *performance* (movement), *notation* (semiotics), and *complexion* (color/texture).

Though static in its monolithic sublimity at first glance, the Seagram firmly oscillates as intricate performance between interior and exterior, moving about and anchoring itself into the urban fabric of Manhattan in an active expression of spatial forces. The ritualistic dance that ensues takes its cues from its surround, the proximity to other architectural structures, which it plays off of intricately in the creation of an unfolding space of dynamism. "The very body of the building," describes K. Michael Hays, "contorts to assume the form demanded by the contingent configuration of the site and to register the circumstantial images of the context."<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, movement is not solely achieved through relational operations, yet, similarly to De Martino's *bitten*, emerges from within the structure itself; from its gridded body and architectural *skin*.

In his essay *The Principle of Cladding* (1898), Viennese architect Adolf Loos, as Anne Anlin Cheng remarks, "attributes the origin of architecture not to structure or solid material, as might be expected, but to mobile surfaces: fabric, even skin."<sup>14</sup> Loos' *Bekleidung* (cladding) connotes both, as Cheng points out, the covering of bodies as much as buildings.<sup>15</sup> Mies' glass curtain wall, accordingly, presents itself "alternately transparent, reflective, or refractive depending on light conditions and viewing positions," writes Hays, through which the building's *skin* "absorbs, mirrors or distorts the immediate, constantly changing images of city life" it is surrounded by.<sup>16</sup> *Biting* into the urban fabric—always already—as the dominant steel and glass structure that it is, the Seagram is thus also marked by the *bite* of its circumambient—the infrastructure, other

architectural structures, and the exhibitionism of New York hustle and bustle that accumulate on its reflective surface.

Bi-directionality, as characteristic of the intimate exchange between *bitten* and *biter*, here excavates traits of the first degree and third degree *bite*. On the one hand, a passing ephemerality of the dissipating mark, as it





is registered on the surface of the Seagram by the city's actors such as the human and vehicular bodies roaming its enclosing space, steers us towards the first degree. On the other hand, the symbolic scar of the building itself—a residual mark of the Seagram's *bite* into the urban flesh of New York City—remains as attest to the third degree. The latter is further underlined by the rectangular streets that, like cicatricial tissue, encircle the scene of the violent inscription.

Evocative and affective in being both, proof of the *bite*'s permanent mark in the city and stage for the procession of those other actors and witnesses to *bite* back, the darkened asphalt veins lead us to our second determinant of the *bite*. The Seagram delicately interlaces *performance* with what forms through the crystallization of images and signs as *notation*. Akin to musical harmony, which has been a leitmotif of architectural theory prominently in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the sequential score of the *bite* materializes as a time-sensitive image that transcends a straightforward identification, yet can be found in the “coexistence of all images, without center, direction or orientation.”<sup>17</sup> “What is at stake,” writes Maurizio Lazzarato here fittingly in following Henri Bergson, “is the image in itself, an image that no eye perceives.”<sup>18</sup>

As symbolic vessel, the Seagram “transmits movements, in which action and reaction are merged,” it assumes the role of emitter, receiver, catalyst, and inceptor that, following a certain notation, puts the myriad of images that erupt and fold in on themselves into a potent equation. Implying a ritualistic cyclicity of performing these assorted tasks, day after day, the building operates as an image that has transcended its ability to be fathomable on a purely visual scale, rather piercing through matter and experience as “tremor, pure vibration, shiver”—as *bite*.<sup>19</sup>

The Seagram manifests as the architect's very own engagement with *image* in this way, as a proleptically astute creation of space through contrasted flow. By delaying an immediate repartee with the neighboring urban fabric, achieved by mining “air to breath” through the preceding plaza that sets the building aback, Mies delicately pits negative and positive space against each other—organically oscillating between horizontality and verticality.

In allowing for a prolonged approach to the Seagram from the edge of the street, he not only underlines the processual *mise-en-scène* of monolithic proportions unfolding in front of the visitor advancing towards the building,

yet virtually anticipates a directionally opposed enactment of movement through urban dwellers enthralled by two large fountains inserted into the plaza. While the building itself formerly executes vertically directed forces through its symbolic shell—though horizontal movement obviously always simultaneously takes place internally on each of the building's floors—the plaza functions exclusively on the accumbant plane. Further enhancing the performance of the *bite*, which in the preceding is enacted by a clearly defined compass, the Seagram on a level of dissolution blurs spatial limits as one enters its lobby; where the pearly white ceiling carries through from the exterior to the interior.

As Hays accentuates, and through which he leads us to our third determinant, that of *complexion*, Mies' attention in the Seagram project seems to have revolved—"from the start, judging from the documents"—around the "pink granite plaza" in front of the building, situated in contrast to the "cavernous [polychromous flowing] streets of New York," and the vertically stretched, onyx tinged block of glass that is the upwards striving skyscraper.<sup>20</sup>

The obsidian hued and bronze tinted glass curtain wall of the Seagram, by day, acts markedly as a *Claude glass*, abstracting through abatement of the tonal range and the sharpening of silhouettes and edges the surrounding urban landscape in a painterly and picturesque operation. By night, when the interior of the building is illuminated by an oddly warm, xanthous glow emanating from the ceiling panels, the Seagram's black grid-like structure, now enhanced, even further emphasizes the importance of complexion and contrast to our perception of the architectural forces at play. A perception that, as Bergson stresses, "seizes the infinitely repeated vibrations that are constituted by light or heat, [...] and contracts them into relatively invariable sensations: these are the trillions of exterior oscillations that the vision of color condenses in our eyes, in a fraction of a second."<sup>21</sup>

The chromatic spectrum, whether day or night, thus acts as revelatory tool regarding the affectation of the *bite* ascribed to Mies' Seagram. Experience is related via a movement through color and space, textures and sensations that reveal their inner essence by blinking, taking in the oscillations Bergson alludes to, not by staring.

The complex operations that have been revealed thus far, begin to elucidate the potential of the *bite* in providing a theoretical groundwork for engaging with architecture; making apparent the gestural, auratic,

desiring, dialectic, violent/pleasurable performative potential inherent to certain architectural projects. As such, in a first symptomatic reading, Mies' Seagram emerges, not as a superficial nibbling, but as a full-fledged *bite*.

**Epilogue.** As a last taste of this excursion into the territory of the *bite*, Derrida provides us with an example of a truly special case, that of *biting one-self*. Having expounded on the transgression of one towards the other, this operation truly collapses the relationship between the *bitten* and the *biter*—the dialectic active/passive or submission/subjection. Derrida writes:

*To see*, without going to see, without touching yet, and without *biting*, although that threat remains on its lips or on the tip of the tongue. Something happens there that shouldn't take place—like everything that happens in the end, a lapsus, a fall, a failure, a fault, a symptom (and *symptom*, as you know, also means 'fall': case, unfortunate event, coincidence, what falls due [*échéance*], mishap). It is as if, at that instant, I had said or were going to say the forbidden, something that shouldn't be said. As if I were to admit what cannot be admitted in a symptom and, as one says, wanted to *bite* my tongue.<sup>22</sup>

*Biting* one's own tongue, again, depending on the force applied, may very well lead to an inability—passing or permanent—to speak, to a symptomatic silence. Utterly self-inflicted, this silence, as Jean-Luc Marion points out, is itself an ambivalent thing: "precisely because it does not explain itself, [it] exposes itself to an infinite equivocation of meaning."<sup>23</sup> Architecture, in such muted instances, thus may find itself in a highly charged atmosphere of potentialities, anticipating further engagement in a silence that is demanding to be broken. It is in the silence—pain or pleasure—that may echo this essay, that we excavate the further potential for an investigation into the *bite* and architecture, suspended until re-*bite*.

## Endnotes.

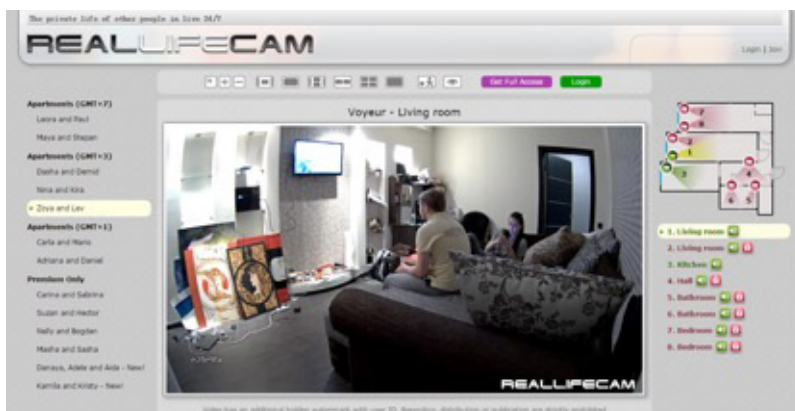
- 1 "Demorsi Appuli curantur sono . saltu . cantu . coloribus." (Apulian bite victims are treated with music . dance . song . colors.) – Gaudenzio Merula, *Memorabilia*, Lyons 1556, ch. LXIX.
- 2 Leonardo da Vinci, cod. Il. 18 v.
- 3 Ernesto De Martino, *The Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism* (London: Free Association Books, 2005), 22; originally published as *La Terra del Rimorso* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1961).
- 4 A fourth possible dimension of the *bite*, that of "following through" on the third degree, culminates in the consumption of bodily matter.
- 5 Phyllis Tuchman, "An Interview with Carl Andre," *Artforum* 8:10 (June 1970), 55-61 (56).
- 6 Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), 325.
- 7 Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (London: Routledge, 1997), 16.
- 8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, trans. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 164.
- 9 John 6:56.
- 10 Possession, which itself can be supernatural or natural. Mother Nature is no stranger to curious occurrences, and this the following example shall prove; an homage to Ed Eigen, whose scholarly obsession with mollusks did enlighten a many lectures on architectural history witnessed by this author at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design: A snail, upon having consumed the parasitic worm *Leucochloridium*, is turned into a so-called *zombie-snail*, result of an aggressive mimicry in which the worm paralyses the snail and invades its eyestalks, pulsating hypnotically to imitate the juicy patterns of caterpillars attractive to birds that will in turn consume the snail and return the worm with its feces to become eaten by other snails—completing the cruel cycle of life.
- 11 Benjamin H. Bratton, "El Proceso (The Process)," in *e-flux journal* #69 (January 2016), n.p. (1).
- 12 Reza Negarestani, *Torture Concrete: Jean-Luc Moulène and the Protocol of Abstraction* (New York: Sequence Press, 2014), 10-11.
- 13 K. Michael Hays, "Abstraction's Appearance (Seagram Building)," in *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, ed. Robert E. Somol (New York: The Monacellii Press, 1997), 276-291 (278).
- 14 Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.
- 15 See *ibid.*, 24.
- 16 Hays (1997), 278.
- 17 Maurizio Lazzarato, "Machines to Crystallize Time: Bergson," in *Theory, Culture & Society* 2007 (SAGE, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore), Vol. 24(6): 93-122 (97).
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Hays (1997), 282; addendum my own.
- 21 Henri Bergson, *Œuvres* (Paris: PUF, 1991), 1334-5; as cited in Lazzarato (2007), 97.
- 22 Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," in *Critical Inquiry*, Vo. 28, No. 2 (Winter, 2002), 369-418 (373); emphasis my own.
- 23 Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 54.

# The Third Voyeurism

// Tairan An

Sure, he is a snooper, but aren't we all?<sup>1</sup> – Alfred Hitchcock

Put the word “voyeur” into the search bar of Google. Press Enter. Click the first entry you get. Do it now. I just did, at 4:05 pm, EST, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.



Here I am. I am on a website called *REALLIFECAM*. In the middle of the webpage, a video is playing, showing the interior of a room. I see two people on a couch, one male, one female. The guy is holding a controller in his hand, looking up at the screen, playing some video game, his back turned towards me. Besides him, on his right, a girl is reclining on the couch, looking at her cellphone, facing the camera. They are talking to each other, desultorily, in a language that I am unable to identify. On the floor, there is a power cord, several chargers, several paintings, and some other household items. A half-opened door on the far right background, invites speculation on what mind unfold behind. It seems that this is just an ordinary house, with two people sitting around in their home. What am I watching?

**I**

A line on the top left corner of the webpage provides me with an elegant answer: “The private life of other people in live 24/7”. I say it is elegantly-written, because it is so concise and comprehensive that almost each word of it is quotable. Let’s parse it carefully:

**“Private Life”**—Check. It is an interior space of a private house. It is not a domestic sitcom or TV drama: I am watching people’s indoor activities as if I am peeping at my neighbor through a chink in the wall, as if I am monitoring someone’s personal life, as if I am prying into the intimacy that is supposed to be concealed. I am like a spy, a snoop, and of course, a creepy voyeur. Can I watch something more private, like their bedrooms? The plan and annotations on the right indicate that I can, as long as I am able to “unlock” them. I presume I have to pay.

**“Other People”**—Check. Certainly I am not watching myself, or anybody that I know of. Who are they? I do not know, and I do not really care. They are absolutely “other” people, from another place, speaking another language. Do they have names? Yes they do. Look at the left column of the webpage: “Zoya and Lev”, two names simple enough to enunciate in one second, two succinct signs that are reduced almost to nothing. Well, they are more than nothing: at least I know this is a house of two, and I almost automatically take the final “a” of “Zoya” as a specifically feminine linguistic characteristic. What the two names tell me is not at all who they are, but their probable relationship in a house inhabited by one man and one woman: what I am watching, very likely, is a marital life of a couple.

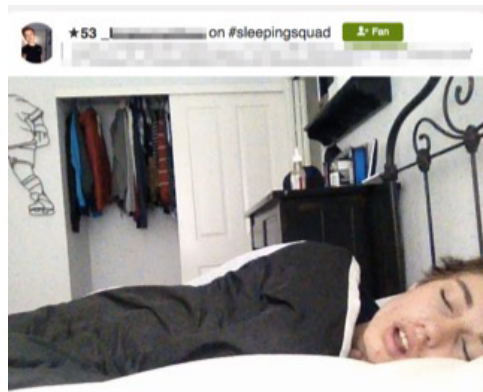
**“Live”**—Check. This is not a movie. Nor am I watching a YouTube video. This is a live broadcast. Remember John Hejduk’s cinematic analogy of the modern eyes? “The eye is like a camera”.<sup>2</sup> The camera, which is nested on the wall, does not simply shoot or record; it sees, at this moment. Or more accurately, it stares; it gazes. Beatriz Colomina asserts that “modern eyes move,” but the post-modern eyes here do not; they are fixed.<sup>3</sup> Zoya and Lev are doing what they are doing right there, right now. But where are they? Intriguingly, time and place are bundled with each other, with the aid of time zones: although I do not know exactly where they are, their time zone “GMT+3” indicates the region that they are possibly in. Let me check the world time zone map: well, they are in Russia, West Asia, or East Africa. Indeed, they sound like Russian. Furthermore, I can know what time it is for them: 11:05 pm, GMT+3. It’s time for some nightlife, folks.

“24/7”—Check. Not one second is left out. After watching for twenty minutes, I am asked by the website to “join as a member”. Membership means money, obviously.

## II

The idea of publicity and the fetish for privacy have been together in a symbiotic relationship ever since the two concepts, in their modern sense, were invented. Since the 17th century Europe, domestic architecture has been functioning as a fig leaf for personal or familial privacy; or to put it another way, the interior has been masking one huge part of humans’ daily life called privacy for three to four centuries.

“The defense of privacy always follows the emergence of technologies for breaching it,” writes the historian Jill Lepore.<sup>4</sup> Till this day, on the one hand people emphasize privacy of their own to a new extreme; on the other hand, a culture of voyeurism in the digital age, an obsession of watching “the private life of other people,” is gaining momentum in a hitherto unknown way. Since the launch of “Meerkat” in February 2015, a mobile app that enables users to broadcast live video streaming through their mobile device, live streaming has become a new favorite in the age of *We the Media*.<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that there are some subtle differences between an obscene peeping Tom in a Hitchcock movie and a spectator of live stream broadcasts such as *Reallifecam*, between the scopophilia of looking at pornographic objects and the voyeurism of looking at other people’s everyday life (literally). Using the app *YouNow*, you may pay a teen while he or she is sleeping; the Korean app *Muk-bang* is for watching people eat. These bizarre fads are very similar to the voyeuristic project *Reallifecam*: people pay for watching others’ unremarkable and regular private activities on their screens.



Watching intimacy and privacy on a screen is hardly new to anyone. The production and the consumption of videos of private activities commenced almost immediately after the invention of the motion picture.<sup>6</sup> However, what is unprecedented is the obsession of watching the live broadcast of other people eating, sleeping, sitting around, idling about etc. in their private space. Correspondingly, a new exhibitionism of everyday activities comes into play; they may be humdrum, unexceptional, non-erotic, but there are always people willing to watch, as long as these things are happening in a private space.



### III

Since the British film theorist Laura Mulvey's seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was published in 1975, voyeurism and the male gaze have been seen as central elements in cinematic viewing.<sup>7</sup> Two years later, in the book *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, the French film theorist Christian Metz expounds "two kinds of voyeurism".<sup>8</sup> The first voyeurism is that of the theatre. He writes:

[...]the one which classical theatre sometimes comes close to, when actor and spectator are in each other's presence, when the *playing* (of the actor, and the audience) is a distribution of roles (of "character parts") in a game, an active complicity which works both ways, a ceremony which is always partly civic, involving more than the private individual: a festival.<sup>9</sup>



The second voyeurism is that of the cinema:

I watch it, but it doesn't watch me watching it. Nevertheless, it knows that I am watching it. But it doesn't want to know [...] [...] It is even essential[...] that the actor should behave as though he were not seen (and therefore as though he did not see his voyeur), that he should go about his ordinary business and pursue his existence as foreseen by the fiction of the film that he should carry on with his antics in a closed room, taking the utmost care not to notice that a glass rectangle has been set into one of the walls, and that he lives in a kind of aquarium.<sup>10</sup>

The theatre is a social rendezvous. In the theatre, the voyeur (the audience) and the exhibitionist (the actor) must be present at the same time and place; and also a designated time and place. The drama is alive; it knows, and wants to know, that an audience is watching it. In a sense, it is a striptease show: the actor poses and self-exhibits on stage for the sake of the off-stage audience, a throng of voyeurs. It is a bilateral revelry, with the exhibitionist acting on one side, and a pleasure of collective looking, a public voyeuristic ceremony, manifesting on the other. Subject/object is constantly interchangeable: the actor is seen and self-exhibits; the audience sees and is exhibited to. Both the actor and the audience are simultaneously active and passive.

In the cinema, however, we are confronted no longer with a festive feast, but a furtive one. The film is a ready-made dead videotape being played. It is watched by the spectator, but does not watch the spectator watching it. The absent actor is an unknowing "victim" of the voyeurism. Moreover, the watching is rendered surreptitious by the darkness of the cinema, which isolates the spectators from one another and privatizes the experience of pleasurable looking. As Mulvey describes, "although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world."<sup>11</sup> During the shooting of the film, the opposite is the case: it is the spectator that is absent. Here the camera lens acts as an interim voyeuristic eye, through which the image of the exhibitionists is transmitted to the real voyeurs. Hence a stagger of the exhibitionism on the film set and the voyeurism in the cinema: the actor self-exhibits to a machine in the first place, and the spectator watches a projection afterwards. The subject/object is not interchangeable in either the shooting or the screening of the film.

Metz's discussion of the two voyeurisms offers a framework to examine the scopic mechanism of the live stream privacy show. I call it a show, because all the inhabitants of the houses in *Reallifecam* are hired by the project, which is to say, they utterly know what is going on at the other end, where they are being watched on numerous screens by voyeurs like me; yet they act as if they do not notice the cameras and feign to be unknowing. Once the cameras are on, no matter what Zoya and Lev are doing in whichever room, such as some intimacies in the bedroom, some frivolities in the living room, or some chores in the kitchen, it is through and through a fabricated spectacle, a knowing Truman Show which offers the peeping Toms merely an illusion of peeping (but still pleasurable). The voyeurism at work here is comparable, and has close ties to those of the theatre and the cinema. In terms of the simultaneity of performance and watching, it can be called a theatre; in terms of the private viewer and the "innocent" actor, it can also be called a cinema.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the live privacy show is different from both in many ways. It is an undramatic drama, a play with no plot, a film with no script, in which the actors are playing no other roles but themselves. It differs from the openness of the theatrical voyeurism because the peep through a laptop is conceivably personal, covert and even sneaky. The computer screen is for one person only. After all, being a weirdo snooping on others' privacy is nothing to be proud of; it is still shameful, more or less. Most possibly, the voyeur is looking at the bedroom of other people on a screen in his/her own bedroom, gazing at the other's privacy in his/her own private, which is closer to the viewing experience in the cinema. Yet it also differs from the cinematic voyeurism, being accessible live. It is a mania for simultaneity, an infatuation with "now". The cameras are not at all movie cameras. They more likely resemble CCTV cameras for surveillance.

The space is therefore both private and public: it can be monitored by everyone in the world, a panopticon-like penitentiary with volunteer prisoners. Well, they are not really volunteers; they get paid (allegedly it is a well-paid job) by acting as themselves, by being controlled around the clock. Every second of their transparent life, at least for the period of time they are hired for (at least months), is being possessed; they never get off from work, providing the voyeur with an opportunity to watch whenever he/she desires. The voyeur, too, is perfectly aware of the illusionary nature of the project; but he/she just enjoys this virtuality. This is the third voyeurism which synthesizes, while negating, both of Metz's: a publicized privacy with willing "victims", a conscious hallucinogen with deliberate

fantasizers, and a mental masturbation with a pleasurable self-deception. We come across a synthesis of contradictions: it is a rendezvous that can be anywhere at any time; it is a private watching together with millions of others; it is a knowing hoax but nobody debunk.

The third voyeurism is a hitherto unknown condition of online peeping that fabricates knowing illusions on both sides of the voyeur and the exhibitionist, along with a tacit collusion in between. In this condition, the concept of privacy may be redefined, as well as a corresponding new definition of publicity: Privacy is the state of personal life that is, or has the potential to be commodified to sell to the public. Publicity is the state of consuming, or having access to consuming privacy. As long as there is Wi-Fi, one is always private and public at the same time.

Perhaps the superlative form of the third voyeurism is being created in Japan and China. With “bullet screens”, or danmu, which meld videos with text messages sent in from the audience, while their comments become instantly visible to everyone else watching, the voyeurism of live privacy is publicized to another level.<sup>12</sup> At any given time the scene may be overlaid with multiple “bullets,” or comments, scrolling across the screen. The line between the content of the exhibitionists and comments of spectators is ultimately blurred. The viewer and the actor, the articulable and the visible, the word and the image, the subject and the object, literally become one. This is the orgy of the voyeurs.



## Endnotes.

- 1 François Truffaut, Alfred Hitchcock and Helen G. Scott, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 216.
- 2 John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa: works, 1947-1983* (New York: Rizzoli Intl Pubns, 1985), 71.
- 3 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 5.
- 4 Jill Lepore, "The Prism: Privacy in an age of publicity," *New Yorker*, June 24, 2013.
- 5 *We the Media* is a book by Dan Gillmor published in 2004. Gillmore discusses how the proliferation of grassroots internet journalists (bloggers) has changed the way news is handled. One of the book's main points is that a few big media corporations cannot control the news we get any longer, now that news is being published in real-time, available to everybody, via the Internet.
- 6 See i.e. the 1896 French film *Le Coucher de la Mariée*, in which the actress performed a bathroom striptease. It is considered one of the first pornographic films made.
- 7 The essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was first published in 1975 in *Screen*. It was influenced by the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, and is one of the first major essays that helped shift the orientation of film theory towards a psychoanalytic framework. She employs some of their concepts to argue that the cinematic apparatus of classical Hollywood cinema inevitably put the spectator in a masculine subject position, with the figure of the woman on screen as the object of desire and "the male gaze."
- 8 The book was first published in French in 1977 as *Le Signifiant imaginaire: Psychanalyse et cinéma*, and was translated into English in 1982.
- 9 Christian Metz, *The imaginary signifier: Psychoanalysis and the cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 94.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 94, 96.
- 11 Laura Mulvey, *Visual pleasure and narrative cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1989), 17.
- 12 The idea behind "bullet screens" originated in Japan, where they were first popularized by a Japanese ACG (animation, comics, games) video portal *niconico*, which later became the inspiration for similar Chinese ACG video sites such as *bilibili* and is extensively used by the live stream apps.

# Veiled Modernism

// Adam Himes

Qatar's ongoing efforts to protect its built heritage have overwhelmingly emphasized vernacular architecture, highlighting its adaptation to the local climate, use of local materials, and cultural relevance. Yet Qatar's modernist buildings, most of which were built in the 1970s and 1980s, deserve much the same praise as their predecessors. They widely employed deep recesses and minimal fenestration and many made use of louvered shading structures. Concrete was well adjusted to diurnal temperature swings and, at the time most modernist buildings were constructed in Qatar, was produced within the region. The style itself reflected the desire of the newly independent emirate to be seen as an emergent modernizing nation. However, Qatar's modernist built heritage has faced a quiet siege of neglect, punctuated in recent years by an abrupt series of demolitions. Recent efforts by Qatar Museums have spared a select few from the wrecking ball, at least for now.

Independent of a concerted conservation effort, a handful of modernist buildings have, in fact, already been preserved, albeit not in the manner applied to vernacular landmarks. Despite their integral passive conditioning strategies, these buildings have been completely sealed and re-clad in a second skin. These sleek shrouds conceal the original buildings' climatic and aesthetic merits in favor of their tenants' brands; genius loci gives way to the generic logo. Poor material choices have made them inefficient to condition, almost as if the overworked cooling systems have forced the modernist structures into cryogenic slumber.

The most prominent example of this condition, in terms of both legibility and historical significance, is Qatar Petroleum Headquarters. When it was completed in 1978 it was the first office tower in the emirate and the first building erected on an expansive swath of reclaimed land on which Doha's contemporary business center, West Bay, would later be built. Designed by the architecture-engineering collaborative Triad-CICO, it is, in comparison to the phantasmagoria of tower forms that dwarf it today, a modest structure, organized on a square plan and comprising a double-height ground level with eight stories of offices above. Although



lacking a nuanced understanding of solar orientation, its design acknowledged its local climate through the deployment of identical grids of site-cast concrete to shade the glazing on each of its façades. The benefits of these brise-soleil were nullified when the building was sealed and re-clad in glass during renovations in 2005–06, although the original façade remains visible through the large oil drop icon emblazoned on each side of the tower.

Other high-profile examples dot Doha's Corniche. When the Doha Marriott took over the Gulf Hotel complex—one of Doha's earliest luxury hotels—it preserved one block in its original state while the other was sealed beneath a blue-glass curtain wall and its balconies merged into the guest room interiors. The beautifully austere, narrowly fenestrated concrete façades of the Qatar Insurance Company building did not fare so well, hidden as they are today beneath banal aluminum cladding applied during renovations in 2004. Salam Plaza, the first mixed-use development in West Bay, has been completely swallowed by the recent construction of a luxury shopping mall around it. While earlier designs for the mall called for Salam Plaza's concrete tower to be wrapped with a glass curtain wall, it has remained visible since the mall's opening, although its plinth has been re-clad to unify it with the larger development. Most bizarrely of all these cases, the original punched window openings of the Qatar National Bank Headquarters are still visible through the building's newest glass envelope (the latest of several) when the interior is lit at night.

Despite their unfortunate makeovers the original façades remain, to varying degrees, intact beneath their new exteriors, suggesting that perhaps someday their seals could be reopened and the buildings revived from their hibernation. Yet, in a city that seems all too inclined to eliminate its modernist heritage, they beg the question: is it better to preserve in an impure form, or not to preserve at all?





# Orientalism Today

// Razan Tariq Sijeeni

Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist's work.<sup>1</sup>

What is the influence of the West on Middle Eastern representation today? And how does the East reflect its identity in a Western standards of authenticity? Staged Photography is one way to start this journey of research and raise questions.

The first set of photographs depicts the conflict between modernity and culture; how The United States of America influenced Saudi Arabia's culture and development. Saudi developed abruptly in the 1960s after its partnership with the USA and the accompanying oil boom that transformed the country. As a result, people who lived in old houses made of local materials such as coral stones and clay, abandoned their homes for the comfort of concrete and the convenience of the modern life. This created a gap between the old and the modern, locals had to adapt to modernity that was implemented and executed by foreign companies.

The second set of photographs is staged in the desert, portraying a typical oriental view of what many Westerners think is the norm to Saudis, but in fact, it is as experimental to some parts of Saudi Arabia as it would be for tourists. This photo-shoot occurred on a trip on the south side of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. As a group, consisting of Saudi females, two tourists, and a tour guide, we met with Bedouins who are specialized in raising falcons, and we spent the day learning from them, the history of their ancestry and listening to poems. One photograph in the series portrays the female group, wearing Western clothing and holding cameras, taking photos of the man holding a rifle in the center, just as if they were tourists, despite



them actually being locals. This photo was not staged, and it challenges the concept of “normal” lifestyles of Saudi Arabians and the presumed authentic image of Saudis; both happening in the same place and as the same time, demonstrating how the contrast between the old and the new has not yet been attuned.

Wanting to incite reaction and discussion, this photographic series is meant to help understand the meaning of being Middle Eastern, and how that identity is being portrayed and depicted in the contemporary art and design discourse.

### **Endnotes.**

- 1 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 283.



# Living Heritage: Streams of Consciousness In Buk-Chon

// Yoonjee Koh

The physicality of a place depends on natural and built impermanence, rooted upon *genius loci*, the essential spirit of a place. Formed by a culturally salient “placeness” as well as architectonic arrangement, a living city embodies evolving landscape formations, political boundaries, and social structures that channel cultural values within evanescent frameworks of time and space. Streams shift their course of navigation; empires eventually dwindle; and the young grow old with passage of time. No built structure stands eternally; yet continuous attempts to monumentalize a point in time or a piece of historic structure continue to yield false notions of permanence. In Buk-Chon Village, Seoul, Korea, efforts of restoration and gentrification coincide where Buk-Chon comprises historic *Han-Ok* dwellings from the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897) in close adjacency to the central commercial, financial hub of Seoul.

How does the role of *genius loci* claim a second look at the fundamentals of a site? How can historic recognition address cultural narratives to localize palimpsests of the past?

From its earliest formations to the early 1900s, Seoul was structured around a network of streams. Surrounded by the Baek-Ak Mountains that drain rainwater into the Han River in the physical city center, Seoul's watercourses were fundamental to city planning as well as the everyday lives of *Joseon-In*, or Joseon's inhabitants. Evident in its etymology, watercourses constituted an elemental part of living in Seoul as Gang-Buk names the northern part of Seoul, “Gang” meaning “river” and “Buk,” “north.” The city first formed in Gang-Buk in the late 1300s, as a capillary network of twenty-three North to South mountainous streams primarily collected in Cheonggye-Cheon, a single East-to-West stream in Gang-Buk before discharging into the Han River. In Buk-Chon, the northern part of Cheonggye-Cheon, streams guided urban circulation where pedestrian streets formed along the streams following the North to South directionality. Parallel networks of streets formed, creating striated inhabitations that combed the city fabric along the base ridgelines of mountain slopes. Ridgelines and streams, each one named, became

natural borders of administrative zones and palaces. Junghak-Cheon outlined the east wall of the Gyeong-bok Palace and Gahoe-dong stream flowed along the wall of Chang-deok Palace.<sup>1</sup> Cheonggye-Cheon was a seam that both separated and connected Buk-Chon and Nam-chon, the southern part of Cheonggye-Cheon.

In these streams, life happened. The coldest and clearest waters of Seoul, each stream was given a name, and children, women, and men drank, bathed, and washed clothing throughout different times of the day. The streets, *Gol-Mok-Gil*, became collectors of social, commercial life as people sat along stream banks to share conversations and markets often formed along the side of the *Gol-Moks*. Gwan-Myung Lee (1661-1733), Minister of Justice during the reign of Young-Jo, verses the *Gol-Mok-Gil* of Sam-Cheong-Dong:

With a walking stick guiding my trail  
 Withhold the freshness of a mountaintop  
 Hushed waters flow deeper below  
 As the crisp mountain ridges guard for thousands of years  
 Countless gorges echo sounds of autumn  
 While a lonely wild goose flies through the fog in withering sun  
 I freely sit on untethered grass  
 Enveloped by this bliss, forgetting to return<sup>2</sup>

Mountains and streams were fundamental components of everyday urban life, inseparable and engrained in the daily walks, the breathed air, and the water that the people drank. Surrounded by the mountains to the North and streams towards the South, Buk-chon sits on the most highly regarded spiritual, natural landscape formation of Buk-Go-Nam-Juh, higher sloped towards the North and lower towards the South. The cultural, residential *caput mundi* of Joseon's Seoul, Buk-Chon prided itself on an aristocratic-class identity. In this dignified site lived intellectuals, upper bourgeoisie, and the highest government officials, who commuted to the adjacent Gyeong-Bok and Chang-Deok Palaces, engrained in the intricacies of life that the natural landscape had to provide.

Yet today, the double-edged sword of locational adjacency to historic Palaces reductively monumentalizes Buk-chon as an elitist residential neighborhood. Traditional Korean *Han-Ok* houses of Buk-chon became symbolically charged structures of the Joseon Dynasty before the Japanese colonization, "reproduc[ing] and reinforce[ing] attempts

to inflict permanent change on both demography and cartography.”<sup>3</sup> Monumentality, as Herzfeld states, “implies permanence, eternity, the disappearance of temporality. Monuments have a metonymic relationship to the entities that they serve (such as nation-states), and their ponderous ontology discourages thoughts of their potential impermanence.”<sup>4</sup> The physicality of the standing *Han-Ok* dwellings in Buk-Chon today was directly endorsed by foreign ideologies wishing to gain control over Joseon’s governmental power as well as later national efforts to restore and preserve the houses that withstood turbulent, colonized times as sacred entities.

The monumentalization of domestic space, and further, the diminution of populated urban sites produce “social and cultural evacuation of space.”<sup>5</sup> Paradoxical it may seem that designating value to a site leads to demographic withering, especially when the recovery of the once-lost yields to the loss of present-day regional populations. Classification of a village defies housing as lived environments with forms of cultural intimacy, and a controlled state of existence where urban renewal or gentrification persists to relegate security of the inhabitants in favor of securing the monumentalized village in a purist state. Mainly serving the interests of “nationalist and other culturally fundamentalist projects of a supposedly post-colonial era,” gentrification cites practicality and efficiency as necessitated drivers in lieu of modernization.<sup>6</sup>

Invasive efforts of Japanese colonial powers in Korea closely utilized notions of hygiene and conformity in laying a deliberate policy of gentrification designed to gain control over a part of Seoul through urban planning. Before Korea’s seizure under Japanese rule from 1907 to 1945, crypto-colonial endeavors reaching back to 1888 evidence gentrification of Nam-Chon, south of Buk-Chon, in order to gradually besiege the governmental residences of Buk-Chon as well as to seize the Palaces. Initiated by the establishment of a Japanese Municipal Office in Nam-Chon in 1888<sup>7</sup>, colonial powers introduced Japanese merchants into the Nam-Dae-Moon Market, one of the most active outdoor markets in Seoul to this day. Aimed to suppress local merchant capacity, the increasing number of Japanese merchants systematically appropriated not only petty market transaction, but also areas of transportation and trade that connected to Seoul’s greater supply and exchange market.

One of the most heavily pioneered projects was the renewal of the water system in Nam-Chon, where issues of natural drainage had created damp

soil conditions. The Japanese understood well the engrained nature of the water streams in Seoul's formation besides *Joseon-In* cultural life. Situated in a naturally lower slope of the city, Nam-Chon's increasing foreign merchant population faced difficulty in transporting goods to Nam-Dae-Moon Market through muddy streets, especially during the summer seasons of heavy rainfall. Propelled by reinforced principles of hygiene and conformity, Nam-Chon soon underwent massive urban water work renewal in the early 1900s supported by a decree that annulled the necessity to renovate existing housing. While masquerading as improvement and development, the colonial ideology disregarded interests of the existing locals in favor of laying groundwork within a greater framework of subjugation. With the start of the water works project, existing Han-oks along the trajectory between Nam-Chon and Nam-Dae-Moon were the first to be demolished, followed by the construction of new sewers, public bathrooms, and street lights, a *Hausmannization* that led to central Seoul's appearance as it is today. Within months, the newly installed water system catalyzed the influx of not only additional merchants, but also Japanese settlers who introduced a range of new occupations, hence deepening urban planning-initiated crypto-colonial efforts through cultural seepage.

The renewal of the water works in Nam-Chon was a deliberate decision of eminent domain, aimed to turn the entire village region into a residential hub for the Japanese. Increasing numbers of new Japanese settlers converted the regional demography of Nam-Chon. From 1894 to 1905, in the brink of political subjugation, the Japanese population in Nam-Chon increased from 848 people to 6,323 people. In 1910, three years into the seizure, their numbers reached 28,188; the largest overseas Japanese community in the world at the time.<sup>8</sup> Only a few *Joseon-in* families were noted to be left, pitted against the swarming number of incoming foreigners and left with minimal means of income as Nam-Chon was largely comprised of a commercial merchant population that fed the rest of Seoul. From petty merchants to traders, the Japanese engrossed a range of commercial occupations: including craftsmen, food merchants, lumberjacks, architects etc. The wider the range of commercial activity, the stronger the foreign market grew, and a more distinctly dualistic cosmopolitan demographic classification began to emerge as Nam-Chon's growing Japanese merchant population pressured Buk-Chon's intimidated Joseon governmental population.

It was only a matter of time till the surging Japanese population brought



in their new culture. New occupations, new building functions, and new lifestyles were introduced in lieu of crypto-colonial appurtenances of gentrification that claimed to conduct a more hygienic and conformed mode of living. Examples of introduced building types include public baths, hairdressers, and motels. The notion of public bathing was not unfamiliar in pre-colonial Korea, yet the upper streams and natural pools of the Won-Dong stream and Cheonggye-Cheon had been sites of bathing and laundry until the early 1900s. As the first Buk-Chon bathhouse Joong-Ang-Tang dates back to 1969, the urban installation of waterworks soon damaged the purity of the natural streams to eventually necessitate hydro stations and larger scaled urban water inventions. Public bathhouses started to gain wider demand, yet as part of the waterworks project, Japanese merchants gained jurisdiction over the operation of bathhouses. As the national publication *Gye-Byuk* (1920-1926) evidences in 1922, "there is no Joseon-in who manages a bathhouse. In all of Nam and Buk-Chon, there are only Japanese-operated bathhouses."<sup>9</sup> The Korean land and property ownership system was based on absentee landlords, most of them having lost their entitlements overnight by Japanese corporations like the Oriental Development Company.

With a long history of public bathhouses, ranging from *onsens* in the mountains and *sentos* in urban communities, Japan applied a cultural subversion and assimilation of the lifestyle of bathing by systematizing and regulating Joseon's natural waters. A reversed form of irredentism, Japan aimed to justify its territorial claims by planting its people directly into the land that it wished to attain. Also a form of spatial cleansing, the "clarification of boundaries, with a concomitant definition of former residents as intruders," operatively abated the already withering number of Joseon-in families.<sup>10</sup> The area of Nam-Chon soon became part of the day-to-day life of Japanese residents, whose presence and infiltration of foreign culture gradually shifted the Nam-Chon community more than any overarching national governmental power could.

Beginning in 1925, many of Nam-Chon's streams were buried, conventionalizing the once contradistinctive, clear waters into streamlined, covered sewers as part of a project to create an underground sewage system in lieu of the waterworks project, but also to convert some of the North to South circulatory pedestrian roads into East to West motorways that would facilitate access to the Eastern Sea towards China in preparation for the Sino-Japanese War. The most prominent East to West stream, Cheonggye-Cheon was announced in 1926 to be covered

up for new land development with further planning declared in 1935 for an elevated railroad over the development. Although only a part of the streambed was able to be infilled with sediment in 1937, because all of Japanese financial resources were poured into the Sino-Japanese War, the incomplete hydro-planning and infilled streams were enough to create filth for half a century of post-colonialism and war.

Meanwhile, Buk-Chon suffered from complete lack of sewerage regulatory support from the Japanese colonial government in the 1920s. In deliberate contrast from Nam-Chon and its infrastructural intervention, Buk-Chon was left without sewage regulation, purposely aimed to fall into dilapidation. As a national newspaper, *Dong-Ah-Il-Bo*, states in its 1923 issue:

The most discriminatory jobs done by the Japanese government regards sewage control, and of that, the removal of excrement. The northern, eastern, and western Joseon districts and the southern Japanese region are as disparately treated as a national border(...). It is apparent that more labor and financial sources are wasted in reconstructing the southern part of the land that was unpolluted from birth. We do not know the details in number because the authoritative regime refuses to disclose figures, yet the distinct sanitary levels of living is discernible to any eye.<sup>11</sup>

It was not until the 1940s that Buk-Chon's sewerage was regulated at a time when Japanese infiltration reached the northern districts of the city as well. There couldn't be a better mode of spatial cleansing than disparate cultural reproduction aimed to outmode an existing way of life as unsanitary. Upholding the Japanese renewal projects was the notion of hygiene as an integral part of modernization.

A framework of infrastructural conformity directed the allocation of hygiene into areas decided as needed. No longer did the waters flow along natural slopes, but collected discharge was given second life to circulate in a systemic operation declared by socially hierarchical top-down demand. Today, the term heritage is a "fully institutionalized and commercialized" term, condensed as "a label for the valorized past."<sup>12</sup> De-temporalized and decontextualized, the vestiges of the past are crystallized into classified objects to inevitably reduce its significance within greater time and space. As the waters were regulated into bathhouses or fountains, an erasure of the indelible relationship with the land, which structured the very basis of the urban structure as well as the *Joseon-In's* daily lifestyle, ensued to eliminate existing Joseon bathing culture as well. The same scale of

systemization, the overarching globalist structure, that failed to address the intricacies of valorized pasts, continues to be at fault today.

Heritage as “a mode of cultural production that gives the endangered or outmoded a second life as an exhibition of itself” reduces points of the past as apprehensible episodic incidences.<sup>13</sup> Historical works, according to Alan Colquhoun, “have here lost their meaning as part of the fabric of time and space and are preserved as emblems of a generalized and superseded past.”<sup>14</sup> Yet the very notion of designation of heritage, especially in UNESCO’s colonizing global approach, evaluates objects of the past by categorization of “age value” or “as long as it reveals the passage of a considerable amount of time.”<sup>15</sup> Although not the originator of the leitmotif “heritage,” UNESCO indisputably remains to be a “global-level instrument which mobilises resources, reproduces dominant arguments and rationales, establishes program agendas and policies, and dispenses status surrounding the conservation and preservation of the thing called ‘heritage.’”<sup>16</sup> “Imposing a common stamp on cultures across the world and their policies,” UNESCO ineluctably creates “a logic of global cultural uniformity.”<sup>17</sup> A globalized scale of operation and universalized aims reflect an emergent “world culture.”

Buk-Chon, designated as World Heritage, stands today as a site of a crystallized past aiming to provide a glimpse of how Seoul’s villagescape could have been, had neither colonization nor modernization infiltrated upon Joseon’s streets. Its specific building typology valued as one of Korea’s national assets, the Buk-Chon *Han-Ok* dwellings and the consequential picturesque character of the village are “protected as a way to safeguard native culture, and also to attract tourists – who found the modern districts unappealing.”<sup>18</sup> Nationalistic images associated with the *Han-Ok* monumentalize the dwellings, catalyzing commercialization of Korean heritage. The Seoul City Wall Division of the Seoul Metropolitan Government sells the village in its Cultural Heritage section, introducing Buk-chon with “many galleries around Hwadong-gil...[and] many traditional restaurants and cafeterias... Many architects and painters open their workrooms in Bukchon to allow people to feel the living history. Needless to say, this phenomenon boosts Bukchon’s historical and cultural value.”<sup>19</sup> As stated, “cultural value” is a term loosely applied around the benefits of commerce at the expense of Buk-Chon residents whose lives are supposed to uphold virtues of a “living history.” Is placement of expectation towards maintaining an image in the pretense of an ever-growing flow of tourists part of conserving cultural heritage?

## Endnotes.

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- 2 Sun-hee Ok, *Buk-Chon-Tam-Ik* (Seoul, Korea: Purume, 2009), 283.
- 3 Michael Herzfeld, "Spatial Cleansing: Monumental Vacuity and the Idea of the West," in *Journal of Material Culture* (2006), Vol. 11(1/2): 127-149 (129).
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- 5 Herzfeld (2006), 132.
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- 10 Herzfeld (2006), 142.
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- 12 Marc Askew, *The Magic List of Global Status: UNESCO, World Heritage and the Agendas of States, Heritage and Globalization* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2010), 19-44 (19).
- 13 B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Theorizing Heritage," in *Ethnomusicology* (1995), 39:367-80. 168.
- 14 Alan Colquhoun, "Thoughts on Riegl," in *Oppositions* (1982), 25.
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- 17 W.S. Logan, *Globalising Heritage: World Heritage as a Manifestation of Modernism, and Challenges from the Periphery, Twentieth Century Heritage: Our Recent Cultural Legacy: Proceedings of the Australia ICOMOS National Conference 2001*. 28 November – 1 December 2001. University of Adelaide. Adelaide. Australia: University of Adelaide and Australia ICOMOS, 26.
- 18 Yuko (2013), 133.
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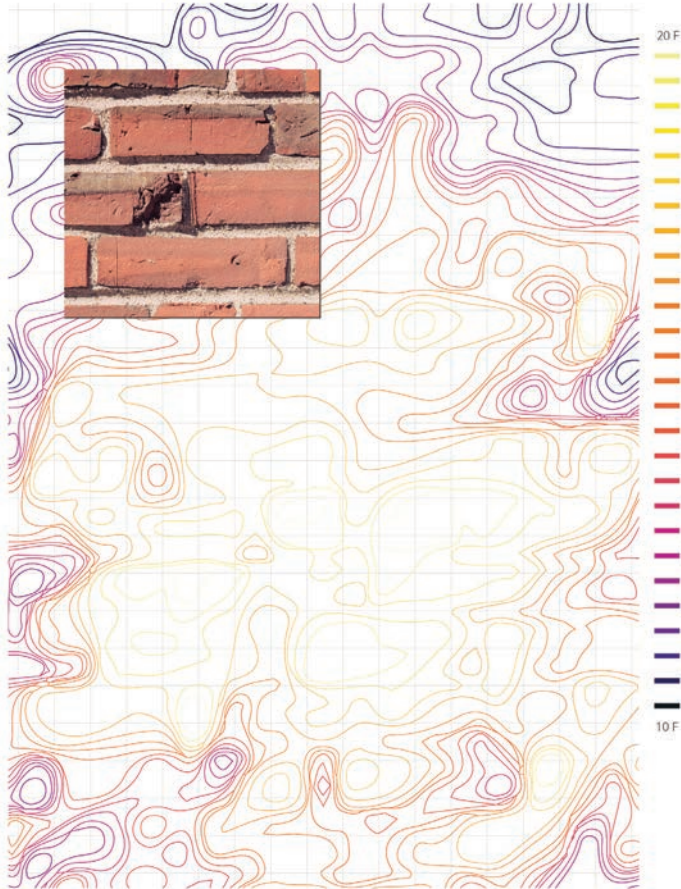
# Thermal Stories

// Alex Timmer



**ART GALLERY** The feet of the bench sink into the tepid concrete floor. The heat seeping up from the boiler below inadvertently anchors the bench to its place in the otherwise cold gallery. Ducting reaches out from the below the bench leaving radiative trails in the concrete floor.





**Brick Wall** Raised and cracked, the worn materiality of the wall creates shadows and fissures. Discolored units, darker than their neighbors, absorb increased amounts of radiation. This rupturing of the surface while visually continuous is thermally erratic. An honest material hiding it's disingenuous inner life.







**Museum Courtyard** The air is seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit at a relative humidity of forty-five percent; no more, no less. There is no sound. The art hangs quietly, preserved against the very patrons it is intended for. Fortunately, our occupation of the space ruins its perfect sensorial equilibrium. We are like a disease to the building. It actively must fight to eliminate the atmospheric presence of our bodies.



# Junk-Spaces

// Konstantinos Chatzaras

Students, professors and professionals, all of them present their work, work that showcases the depths of architecture's expanded field nowadays. Presenting, answering, defending. That is the drill. Voices from every part of contemporary architecture are heard here, in a place of shelter. Straight and curved lines, the city and the countryside, the house and the museum, public and private space, the real and the imaginary, poetry and rationalism, logic and sentiment, the sculpture and the machine, computational or "handmade;" all aspects of architecture have found their place in this sloped hall.

## A little bit of history

The ongoing discussion in its whole, becomes a manifesto of contemporary design that deals with the stylistic variety that contemporary Architecture provides us with. This "little bit of everything" has come as a slow yet rather explosive reaction to the *modern* "advance of secularization and the withering away of the myth".<sup>1</sup> "Less is more"! This absence of variety in the Modern era, theoretically provides the basis for the generic international style. This stylistic domination did not allow for that other, equally strong movement within the cultural ideology of mass society that did not offer a universal and standardized solution, but rather provided a popular and individuated aesthetic aimed at both mass esteem and individual choices of taste to be explored.<sup>2</sup>

Post-modernism comes to save the day! While Loos argued against unnecessary ornament, Le Corbusier for the art of architectural synthesis and Gropius for type standardization, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown found solace in 'complexity and contradiction', Charles Moore and Philip Johnson experiment with allusion and quotation to recuperate a "lost" historical tradition of monumentality and Gehry forges his aesthetic of assemblage, which culminates in the production of an ahistorical spectacle in Bilbao.

Post-modernism, tries to enrich, once again, the narrative, or *myth* as

Vidler calls it, that early Modernism had stripped architecture of. This enrichment however, has not come to reinstate what used to be, but to add, and simultaneously separate the additions. We live in a time where style characterization is not quite possible, but rather a more simplistic identification of genres and sub-genres that run through architectural production. An age that is mostly characterized by the ruins of an intense clash, that of modern and post-modern. This clash has produced remnants of ideologies and architectures that are now being explored individually. It is not the historical event that matters, but it is the ruins that are found and investigated by contemporary designers. We despise ornaments adorning our buildings, but we admire buildings that look like or possess the aesthetic and stylistic aspects of ornamentation.

### The Journalist

In 1972 a young journalist graduates the Architectural Association as an emerging architect, and distances himself from the ongoing clash, observing/ recording/ documenting its outcome. Rem Koolhaas turns his back on the notion that architecture was called in to serve abstract, analytical ideas; ideas that were concocted and passed on with the help of learned, interdisciplinary treatises, devising his own version of anti-representationalism in architecture.<sup>3</sup> That is to say, from now on architecture fully participated in the “proteanism of the social ‘program’ and exposed the often absurd contiguity of incommensurable human activities and ideals.”<sup>4</sup>

Approaching the field as a detached insider, he is able to observe architecture’s increased voluntary confinement within a set of self-imposed, “radical” directives without himself simply trying to evade their grip. Koolhaas replaces Anthony Vidler’s myth, with the metropolitan mythology, as an alternative realm of research for fresh architectural ideas introducing the notion of an ever applicable event or program.

He treats the ruins of modern architecture similar to Bernard Tschumi, whom “advertises” the Corbusian Villa Savoye in his postcard series *Advertisements for Architecture*. Tschumi’s postcards print: “*architecture only survives where it negates the form that society expects of it. Where it negates itself by transcending the limits history has set for it,*” a fact explicitly evident in Rem’s contribution to the Milan Triennale in 1986, where he literally goes on to “bend” the obsessively orthogonal geometry of Mies van der Rohe’s plan for the Barcelona Pavilion, reprogramming

its space, refitting it for a fully multimedia inflicted immersion of the exhibition's visitors. In his own words: "the exhibition aimed to shock people into an awareness of the possible hidden dimension of modern architecture."— Mission accomplished.

However, this detachment comes to an end when he frames the present in historic terms, foretelling the contemporary state of Architecture with *JunkSpace* in the Harvard Guide for Shopping, "where he calls us to recognize what is already everywhere around us."<sup>5</sup> Keep in mind that while he was detached from the conventional architectural debate, the ongoing architectural excavation of the ruins produced by the Modern vs Postmodern clash continued, and produced showcases that exhibit the complexity and contradiction of the analysis and thought on those ruins. Those ruins that we now call contemporary Architecture—where diversity and identity, both intellectually and morphologically, touch infinity-, enlarge the repertoire of our built environment.



## The Archeologist

In this contemporary environment, the study of an 18th century architect with hardly any built project, Giovanni Battista Piranesi becomes relevant. In his time, “history was a thing for the contemporary moment” and archeology proved an architect’s worth; while Architecture was seen as fragment of its past. Unlike today, the “hot” debate then revolved around Greek and Roman Architecture, with Piranesi defending the supremacy of Roman origins.

## From the *Carceri* to *JunkSpace*

Piranesi distances himself from the debate, by creating the *Carceri* (prisons), a series of drawings, in which, as Tafuri states “on one hand, we find a disarticulation of the organisms; on the other, references to highly structured historical precedents.”<sup>6</sup> The *Carceri*’s constant disintegration of the coherence of structure has a very precise function. It induces the spectator to recompose laboriously the spatial distortions, to reconnect the fragments of a spatial puzzle that proves to be, in the end, unsolvable. However the spectator of the *Carceri* is obliged, more so than invited, to participate in the process of mental reconstruction proposed by Piranesi.<sup>7</sup> *JunkSpace* functions more like an input that stimulates the imaginary—proposing a reformation of the construed environment differently every time the text is read. The key difference between the two, is that the Prisons bring to a fore the irreplaceable role of imagination as an instrument of scientific progress, as a source of hypotheses not otherwise formulable, whereas *JunkSpace* remains critical and ironic without an intent to reinvent.

## #stateofdesign

Irony is the new self-criticality. Because we abhor criticism, we have condemned ourselves to a lifelong immersion to our own prisons, frowning upon those who dare ask if we are prisoners. “New” is the new “Identity,” the new button that makes us go “wow” to ourselves and whoever represents that self. The “Journalist” replaces the “Archeologist” in playing the role of “the wicked architect,” this time via written language, as the *JunkSpace* takes the place of the *Carceri*.

### **From the Greco-Roman to the Modern-Postmodern**

Giovanni Battista's answer to the Greco-Roman debate comes easy. As an archeologist he documents, maps, synthesizes, ultimately producing his imaginary "Prisons". Remment announces the ambiguous state of the world after the modern and Postmodern development, and architecture's death in the 20th century, creating the *JunkSpace*. But that is the job of the journalist after all, to arrange, criticize, and expose. Thus, a fundamental question is raised. Is there a possibility of a contemporary archeological mapping of the debate Rem Koolhaas creates, in *JunkSpace* after the Modern-Postmodern clash? The 'fundamentals' in Venice create a spread sheet of its components, never suggesting how it should be.

Continuity is the essence of Junkspace; it exploits any invention that enables expansion, deploys the infrastructure of seamlessness: escalator, air-conditioning, sprinkler, fire shutter, hot-air curtain...<sup>8</sup>

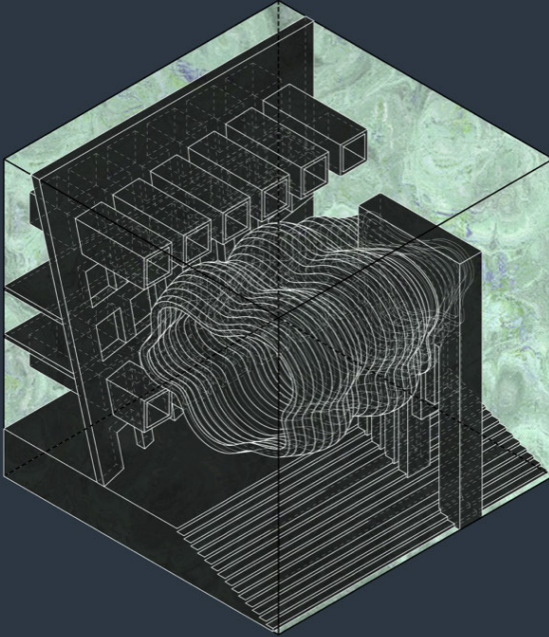
In the *Carceri*, the Roman infrastructure and continuity dominate the space, synthesizing a quasi-inhabitable non-finite dystopia, with planimetries whose dominating element is the randomness of the episode.<sup>9</sup> Koolhaas only describes modern infrastructure and technology through events, never as a synthesis. If the *Prisons* unfold infinite space through the repetition of various types of monads in the drawing, is there a spatial way to unfold *JunkSpace*?

### **Mapping the *JunkSpace***

*Bigness* was a "model of programmatic alchemy"<sup>10</sup> that allowed for internal diversity. As Hal Foster suggests, the "fuck context" of *Bigness* offered a certain excitement when it was announced; *JunkSpace* suggests that it is the only context we have, "and it sucks".<sup>11</sup> In 1974, the new architectural sublime is registered in architecture through a blurring of the human sensorium, with the creation of extravagant spaces that tend to overwhelm the subject. An architecture by the likes of Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid that is dedicated to the "glory of the powers of the day".<sup>12</sup> This architecture's sublime emphasizes the fathomless complexity of its creation. *JunkSpace* becomes sublime only as its mission to intimidate—through its omnipresent existence and multiplicity.

*JunkSpace* provides us with the ruins of Modern and Postmodern Architecture. As "new" archeologists our only tool is drawing. We have

Junkspace No.07





arrived at a time where the spatial concerns of architecture do not remain in the Modern-Postmodern debate. The field has unfolded many times since then, filling the world with multiplicity, with Neo Baroque, Neo Classical and many other models. *JunkSpace* has a place for every approach, even though each approach is exclusive to itself. To brake that exclusivity, it is vital to find a way to synthesize the curve with the straight line, the computer code with the ruler and a compass, while exploiting this infinity that we are provided with. Learning from the Baroque architects an understanding of infinity should simply involve an interpretation of the fold, but a synthesis of elements that project its thought:

[...] it is always interior, so extensive that you rarely perceive limits; it promotes disorientation by any means (mirror, polish, echo)[...] *Junkspace* is sealed, held together not by structure but by skin, like a bubble."<sup>13</sup>

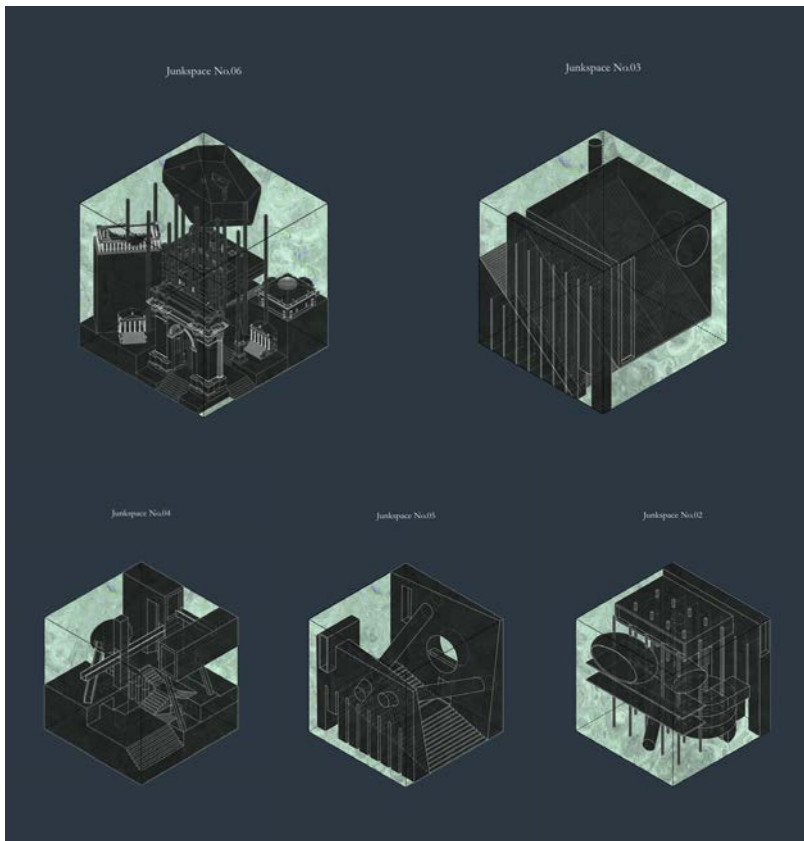
Infinity is mapped by Piranesi's *Prisons* employing a Roman vocabulary. *JunkSpace* is mapped by our own intuition, by our own understanding of the built and unbuilt environment. Everything is viable as long as it is contained within a thin membrane. Everything is interiorized, creating infinite viewing angles, facades, sections and plans. Cubes, blobs, ships, signs, restaurants, circles, stairs, corridors, grass, canopies, windows, doors, rectangles, trapezoids, pyramids, columns, lights, steel, concrete, brick, ropes, ornament, elevators, fire extinguishers, air-conditioning, greenery, all exist within that realm. When we are producing different objects, add to the contemporary discussion, and create different frictions, we add to the *JunkSpace*, infinitely expanding it.

If such an experiment is to be attempted, we must create our own "new" *Prisons*, visions of the *JunkSpace*, that never completely map it, but rather present versions of it, where infinity becomes the new ideal. It can be contained in our own membranes, by creating spaces that, though seemingly infinite, are actually very finite. We therefore need to embrace our own context that "sucks" and immerse ourselves into its vastness and multiplicity. *JunkSpaces* will not rely on a single view on formal and theoretical arguments, but on their constant battle within the field. *JunkSpaces* become a field of spatial discourse that maps the contemporary, and the histories of our immediate past—as once defined by Anthony Vidler in his doctoral thesis.

The monad of each individual ruin produced by the clash, and thereafter has evolved on its own, is able to coexist with other ruins and synthesize space as the Baroque master-builders did, from Borromini's *San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane* and Guarini's *Cappella della Sacra Sindone* to Piranesi's drawings. In these spaces, where contemporary architecture is in constant open conversation and relation, infinity can exist—infinity of choice, meaning, form and space.

If space-junk is the human debris that litters the universe, Junk-Space is the residue mankind leaves on the planet.<sup>14</sup>

If Dali was the sane person who tamed surrealism, Le Corbusier masked insanity with rationalism<sup>15</sup>, and Rem, as a journalist, exposes modern and post-modern pluralism and chaos, then it is time to tame the exposed *JunkSpace*. After all, it is only space...earthly, finite space.



## Endnotes.

**1** Antony Vidler, *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use* (Massachusetts: Stetling and Francine Clark Institute, 2008) , x.

**2** Ibid.

**3** Richard Roty at MoMa on anti representationalism: "a shift away from the idea that there is something to which human beings are responsible- something like God, or Reality, or Truth. It is a movement toward increasing self reliance on the part of our species, toward the idea that we are responsible only to one another, and not anything that is neither a human being or a creation of human beings."

**4** Emmanuel Petit, *Irony or, the self critical opacity of PostModern Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 179.

**5** Hal Foster, "Preface," in Rem Koolhaas/Hal Foster, *Junkspace with Running Room* (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2013), viii.

**6** Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), 26.

**7** Ibid.

**8** Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace," in Rem Koolhaas/Hal Foster, *Junkspace with Running Room* (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2013), 1-38 (9).

**9** Tafuri (1987), 26.

**10** Foster (2013), 45.

**11** Ibid.

**12** Ibid.

**13** Koolhaas (2013), 4.

**14** Ibid., 3.

**15** Peter Eisenman and Rem Koolhaas, *Architecture words 1: SuperCritical* (London: Architectural Association, 2013), 136.



# Walking the Dead

## David Bowie and the Humanizing Obverse

// Namik Mackic and Eliyahu Keller

Confront a corpse at least once. The absolute absence of life is the most disturbing and challenging confrontation you will ever have. — David Bowie

When a deity dies, the world mourns in a feigned surprise. Confronting a corpse may be disturbing, for all sorts of predictable reasons, but what does one face in this case? A wardrobe of shed skins, recently aired in a canonizing exhibit; a discography restlessly splicing the ambiguous self with re-engineered sound; an auto-biography—if ever there was one—of calculated reinvention, yet captive to stylistic gluttony and a dogged aspiration to Art.

David Bowie's legacy seems now embalmed, in a fairly ubiquitous interpretation. (Everything ubiquitous deserves to be knocked down.) Performer personae, fiction frames, visual mannerisms, and sonic arrangements: a keen shoplifter of visions and stitcher of prophecies, the late artist was hailed by countless eulogists as someone who celebrated the liquefaction of gender and class, markers of bourgeois identity. This is a well-earned, albeit predictable praise. Some, however, have gone so far as to confuse Bowie with one of his cinematic roles as an alien visitor, in whom the layers of the human were peeling away. *This* is a misinterpretation—a symptomatically willful, if not sentimental reading on our part.

It does not take an esteemed scholar of continental philosophy to see the notions of identity and authenticity inverted in Bowie, and yet his work has prompted also such learned analyses.<sup>1</sup> What is astonishing about the latter-day reception of Bowie is the failure to move beyond this superficial critique. It is as if we can't help fixating on the veneer of blush and lipstick, seeking truth in the mass ornament pasted on the face of a star.

I always had a repulsive need to be something more than human. I felt very puny as a human. I thought, Fuck that. I want to be a superhuman. — DB

Rising out of the outer rings of post-WWII London suburbia, where the city's gravitational field was felt all the stronger: David Jones—suburban schemer, commuting apprentice, learning the ropes of mass persuasion in a Mayfair ad agency; precocious singer-songwriter, disciple of mime and cabaret, adopting fakery as way of life. In parallel with the bombed-out, soon-to-be ex-imperial city, the ambitious boy was strategizing for redress—an aspiration so hard, it could only have been fuelled by the anxiety of falling into shadows, the only thing worse than landing in the gutter. By no means was it a given that either city or boy would come to achieve their global status over the following decades. Unbridled ambition coupled with shrewd marketing is what in each case created the global brand. Bowie the world citizen was early to emerge as something like a cultural figurehead of that same neo-imperial strategy that later fostered such global hits as the U.K.'s 1980s pop music elite or the 1990s' Cool Britannia.

And so the trajectories of the big city's and the suburban boy's yearning converge. In J.G. Ballard's vision, suburbs are imperial Britain's mutant unconscious: sinister places, the blandness of which forces the imagination into new realms. Ballard would expand the oppressive microcosm of the suburb to the cosmic scale, foreboding—or channeling—an inexorable machinic protocol passing from the crumbling urban environment into the dissolving psychic interior, and back again.

I wanted to be a fantastic artist (...) I wanted to be a musician because it seemed rebellious, it seemed subversive. — DB

Laying down the yellow brick road out of identikit suburbia, young Bowie was soaking up what the cosmopolitan city had to offer. Around him, London was beginning to swing, youth were flirting with Eastern mysticism. Bowie learned at an early age the necessity of trying out disparate approaches, pursuing the cut-up and the collage in the interest of penetrating the market (again and again). Such was the code of that “creative restlessness”. This, arguably, is what secured him an indelible image and a lasting cultural impact, rather than a surpassing excellence in any particular medium.

In the course of a decade or so, the impulse of 1960s' rebellion would become co-opted as the logic of cultural dominance. Superficially at odds with tradition, Bowie's was the politics of incessant self-actualization, complicit in establishing a new regime: that of perpetual performance and

pursuit of open market validation. Bowie was one of those 20th century blacksmiths who forged a contemporary currency out of the artist figure: on the obverse, the imageability of self-destructive genius; on the reverse, the profit-cold edge of minimum viable avant-garde product. Out of this crucible, the Po-Mo cult of serial resurrection was born. Glam-rock; plastic soul; the mythologized cocaine glare of Bowie's first American sojourn; the electronic chill of the Berlin years, a somewhat more uneven production throughout the 1980s, 1990s, all the way to our saturated and impoverished 21st century: seen in retrospect, Bowie's output is hardly valorized by deferential journalists and their repetitive accolades: "creatively restless," "constantly innovative".

How does this project of commodified travesty of character stand in relation to the ever-expanding landscape of machines for the living, styled as exurban utopias? How is this an alternative to the force of the conveyer belt in which humans are molded into less-than-perfect Barbies? Having been given a false choice at the price of credit, masses come out of sinister assembly lines packaged in pink boxes, dressed up as doctors, lawyers, horse riders or rock stars. Identities stacked on a crate, ready to inhabit reproduced floor plans. And he who had supposedly escaped that very same industrial belt, where does he go? With an oeuvre that could have been equivalent to raising the hammer to smash the walls of that factory, Bowie the superstar takes a guest seat in the boardroom. The shape shifter takes the role of an anesthesiologist alleviating the mutation pains of homogenization; the supposedly heterogeneous and polygendered devours identities like a zombie.

What does it mean, on the other hand, to live in a society that venerates the flippant and self-centered semi(o)porn in which Bowie indulged, while symbols and values attached to distinct religions and ethnic groups are appropriated or disdained, and entire symbolic orders are being wiped out by the capital machine? Has our era rendered symbolism so remote or vacuous that it only counts when siphoned through the marketing scheme of a serial white male iconoclast? The spirit of Halloween capitalism prevails under the guise of subversion, and as every one dresses up, business marches on with no need for disguise.

For me a chameleon is something that disguises itself to look as much like its environment as possible. I always thought I did exactly the opposite of that. — DB

This is a shoplifting youngster speaking again, whose capacities and ambition far outgrew his modest background; someone who, like Joni Mitchell's Scarlett, "carries the weight of all that greed".<sup>2</sup>

Quite different from this externally calibrated estrangement-as-marketing strategy is the stark Ballardian inner space—the precisely foretold psychogeography of today where internal and external landscapes liquefy and merge. Rather than braving a radical rift from the human condition, Bowie's serial masquerade reads, from this perspective, as a modern individual's accelerated search for the last vestiges of human form. Bowie's personae—always ambiguous and therefore expressive ("Expression is possession, the manifestation of a lust for domination."<sup>3</sup>)—are nowhere near the binary, true-or-false logic of the machine. Was it not this nostalgic quality behind the theatrics of hybridization, that enabled the audience to relate to his work over time as one consistent output?

In choosing to accentuate the obverse, which aligns rather handsomely with the ambiguous literary definition as both "face" and "the opposite of truth", Bowie has consistently avoided the riskier pitfall of dispensing with the face and musical legibility altogether. One could only wish that this extraordinary talent was instead invested in the search of the hidden reverse of the age of the machines. David Bowie and the mimetic project that is his fifty-year long career, has been an evolving document of a culture progressively reluctant to face the transformation it is subject to, from sources it fails to identify.

I'm always amazed that people take what I say seriously. I don't even take what I am seriously. — DB

While the tenets of the social state and modernist planning were dying and comprehensive council housing projects in Thatcherist Britain were discontinued, the self-exiled Briton was sailing up internationally as a herald of (im)personal brand re-packaging. He might have channeled, in sensuous ways, the chilling visions that were playing out as grim reality in the world around him, but those were not expressions of a Ballardian desire. A desire that extends through the plot of humanity like machinic inevitability, animating a thoroughly dehumanized society. In a paradoxical achievement, by putting on either one of his many masks, Bowie has been exploring not the ever-narrowing line between man and machine, but the crumbling inner ramparts of the human.



In late 1960s, when humankind first witnessed the fragility and the containment of the world encapsulated in the blue marble photograph, Bowie was turning an existentialist question of individual versus society—eloquently formulated two decades earlier—into a narcissistic parade. Fifty years later, in one of his final public moments, the veneer of the corporeal would finally crack. His face is now covered not with makeup but with gauze, the hallmarks of this endlessly painted and reconfigured visage hidden. The heterochrome eyes are gone—windows to a soul that have been gouged and hollowed, purged of even alienated humanity that eyes convey. Replaced by hardware nuts, the eyes suggest a soothsaying Tiresias in a steely grip, blindly delivering a prophecy of a future hidden in the unknowability of technical objects. In the lyrics of the song, the past is revisited, as Bowie is now looking inside into the inner workings of a human dying—neither superhuman, nor post-human; no bionic man. Looking inside and alone in the room, David Bowie is walking himself.



## Endnotes.

*All quotes: David Bowie, from azquotes.com*

**1** Simon Critchley, *Bowie* (New York: OR Books, 2014).

**2** Joni Mitchell, *Shades of Scarlett Conquering in Hejira* (Asylum, 1976).

**3** Lebbeus Woods, *Anarchitecture: Architecture Is a Political Act* (London: Academy Editions, 1992), 11.

# The Ex-Urban in Transition: Inner Mongolia as Pacific Gyre

// Kate Cahill

*The following narrative records a two-day glimpse into an ex-urban place on the verge of transformation, at the crossroads of social, economic, technological and climactic flux.*

*Saiwusu, Inner Mongolia, China*

Just before I moved back to the United States from China, Weidan, an architectural designer and coworker, invited me to visit a small village in Inner Mongolia to which I would otherwise have had no access.

The village Weidan comes from is called Saiwusu, or “place of good water” in the local dialect, but the environment has changed and the river bed is now dry. Saiwusu is at the brink of an uncertain future. Its existence is teetering on the tensions between traditional and modern ways of life, responding to shifting social attitudes, a rapidly changing climate, and a new technological input meant to mitigate these extremes which may instead be contributing to the place’s demise.

*A “place of good water”*

Saiwusu is not very far from Beijing, but nonetheless remote. No paved roads, no plumbing, no trees, few people. No water for bathing, but enough to keep sheep alive. A limited amount of electricity is available to run one light bulb in each house and a few electric water pumps, though most of the water is drawn up by hand from the three wells the village shares. The landscape and climate are harsh: hot in summer, very cold in winter, and, in every season, the wind is incessant. Just north of Beijing the Chinese government has invested in thousands of wind turbines, which dominated the view across the flat farmland between steep, rocky mountains during the first half of our trip. Upon reaching Inner Mongolia, the turbines disappeared. Our bus driver remarked that this is because the wind is actually too strong for them here—“it just rips everything apart.”





It took nearly twelve hours to travel to the village via a series of ever-tinier and ricketier vehicles on ever-bumpier roads, first through a small city, then a big town, then a small town, then a smaller town, at which point you basically need to convince someone to drive you to the village. Upon arriving in Kangbao, the first big town, I stepped off the bus and turned to find a crowd of a dozen people following us down the street. Beijing is quite cosmopolitan due to the number of embassies and foreign companies located in the city, and a tall foreigner, which I would classify myself as, doesn't turn many heads there. In Kangbao, people literally stopped their cars in the middle of the road, got out, and stared at me; friendly, but seemingly incredulous I'd found my way there.

*A traditional and a modern way of life*

The next day we arrived in the village around noon and were treated to lunch by Weidan's aunt. Every meal begins with a bowl of milk tea made with butter or some kind of oil derived from milk and a little bit of a grain, which you drink plain or add chunks of an extremely dry, hard cheese to. The tea makes the cheese chunks soft(er) and you eat them out of your tea with chopsticks and then drink the tea. The only crop people can reliably grow is potato, which apparently does fine in an environment with no water. For dinner, a huge bowl of every part of a roasted lamb was placed in front of me. I didn't know where to begin. Weidan said that this is not typical; everyone in the village raises sheep for a living, but they rarely slaughter them. This one had died due to an unfortunate shearing accident.

The houses are rectangular in footprint with the long sides facing exactly north and south. Windows (one per shallow room, three rooms per house) and the door are located only on the south side. The door opens to the central kitchen, which contains a low, rectangular masonry stove for boiling water or steaming dumplings in a large round metal dish. The heat from cooking also heats a raised platform (similar to a Korean *ondol*) in the room next door, which people sit on to eat and also sleep on at night. The walls of the houses are constructed of a mixture of sand, straw and manure. Every house has a small gated courtyard in front which is bounded by a high wall of mostly the same sand-straw mixture. The sheep and goats return each evening to sleep in this courtyard right up against the house. And every house has a dog to guard the sheep.

Although no one could tell me exactly how old the village is, Weidan knows her grandfather was born there. When Weidan was twelve her family moved to Beijing so her parents could earn money to pay for her and her older sister's college educations by working as cooks for laborers on construction sites. Houses in the village are not bought and sold; you "own" the land your house sits on, but you cannot transfer it outside your family. Farmland is not owned and, instead, is allotted by the government. Since Weidan's family has not been using their allotment, the government pays them a very small stipend annually. While Weidan's family resided in Beijing, they were essentially homeless for a decade. The way of life was sacrificed for the education of the next generation.

### *A shifting social attitude*

Weidan says her family's story is not uncommon. The village is clearly shrinking. Weidan thinks there may have been one hundred residents when she was a child; now there are about forty. Many houses sit empty, crumbling, because the families have left to earn money elsewhere and can't sell or afford to constantly keep them up against the elements. We visited Weidan's parents' house which is also empty and crumbling. The wind has blown in the glass and is in the process of shredding the roof and turning the walls to dust. Sifting through the rubble inside, amazingly, Weidan pulled out a tiny blue tea pot and little cups which had been left there fifteen years before and which she remembers her father drinking *baijo* from when she was a child. She also found a book in which she had drawn a dancing lady in a pink dress.

The small school which Weidan attended as a child is also in ruins. There are no children in the village and no residents of an age that could have children, which brings me to one of the things I found most remarkable: almost all the children of Weidan's generation have gone to college. Everyone we spoke to in the village had children who were either off at college or had graduated and were working in big cities or abroad in places like Hong Kong or Australia. The village residents we met didn't stare at me and gawk as the people in the big town had. At first I thought they were just being polite or shy, but later I realized that actually I was less exotic to them. Few or no foreigners ever visit the village, and the villagers rarely leave except to work in the big city for an extended period, but to them I'm just "a friend of one of the kids."

### *A changing environment*

We spent most of the day walking up and looking over the hills surrounding the town. The ground is rocky and steep with many deep gorges eroded along the sides of the hills which look like earthquake faults, evidence of the damage and danger even a small amount of rain can wreak. We'd come to an edge, slide down the very dry and sandy soil, and climb up the other side to cross. At the tops of the hills sometimes you will find a carefully-arranged mound of stones. Weidan says these serve as both landmarks and a kind of spiritual destination—like a small chapel. The grass on the hills is still quite low this time of year thanks to the weather and the roaming sheep herds, but the hills smell strongly of thyme and sage or some herb like them which was crushed under our feet as we hiked around. Apparently many herbs and flowers that are used in Chinese medicine grow in these hills and collecting them is another local source of income.





### *A new technological input*

In Beijing, on infrequent days when the air was fresh and the skies were blue, we would say it's because the wind was coming from the north, from Inner Mongolia, from Weidan's village. Residents take great pride in being a world apart from the dirty, suffocating air of the city. They take pride in the idea of their pristine, unpolluted landscape. Weidan is extremely nostalgic about the village and dreams about leaving Beijing, fixing her house and moving back. Her parents, aged 60, also want to return. We met several other relatives in the village who had also just moved back permanently a couple weeks or months before after living years away in Beijing to make money. "The market is changing, it's possible to live as a shepherd again," they told us.

By my observations, there is another factor making farming a more viable livelihood once again in this extreme climate as the environment grows seemingly hotter, colder and drier from years past. We began our reverse-journey at sunrise on a van which picks up once per day and ferries people to the small town. Peering out at the landscape as we dashed between villages, in the distance a vast, flat expanse seemed to shimmer and ripple as if it were open ocean. As the sun rose further, it became apparent, and heartbreaking, as to what was causing the effect: plastic.

To lengthen the short growing season and keep moisture on the land, farmers had apparently began using a thin, cheap plastic sheeting to cover crop rows, which the whipping wind was actively shredding into fine threads and embedding across the landscape. Ensnared in every crevice of the low open field of grasses and fragrant shrubs, it was covering the grazing terrain, working its way into the soil. I felt for a moment as if I was staring at a terrestrial version of the immense garbage patch of the Pacific Gyre.

*How could it be possible? Is this new technology, introduced to enable a fragile way of life to persist, actually contaminating and destroying the land which supports it?*



# Filetypes

// Christianna Bennett

One measure after another: Notes on drawing, measuring, annotation and the struggle to assemble images that perform in the unfolding and collapsing of time.

To the right, a greyscale drawing depicts a range of information collected from (6) musical scores and (2) notational instructions for instrumental performances originally transcribed by Toshi Ichiyanagi for Kenji Kobayashi in 1961.

TOSHI ICHIYAMAGI STANZAS FOR KENJI KOBAYASHI AUG. 1961  
BY TOSHI ICHIYAMAGI  
MUSIC FOR PIANO NO. 7 AT TOCHI-ICHIYAMAGI March 1961

ordinario    sul ponticello    sul tasto    col legno

Read the notes, pitch, and dynamics. The approximate pitch, as in the piano - higher towards right and lower towards left. The performer may play any number of notes, up to the number of notes indicated in the score, or approximately when a thin line is in the case of four lines, the performer may play a tone - based on the number of notes covered by the line, or by a tone indicated in the score.

Do not touch the keys of the keyboard or change the key silently and press the keyboard by the following rule.

The notes indicated by horizontal lines correspond to the thin lines of the side, white spaces seem to correspond as white keyboard, double notes.

graduated change means to change the black keyboard, triangle above, not keyboard.

while the pattern means to correspond as the combination of white and black keyboard.

When the notes are indicated by a thin line, the notes should be played on the black keyboard and the lower half on the white key.

Notes indicated by a thin line should be obtained from other source than the keyboard. Horizontal lines indicate the notes to be played as short notes. The notes indicated by horizontal lines seem to be played as long as possible.

Vertical lines indicate the number of notes from other source than piano. The notes which are indicated by horizontal lines and vertical lines (w) to be chosen.

The piece should be played in the following manner:

After playing the notation with two vertical lines, the optional notation for playing sheet can be played without the notation.

2. Play all ten sheets from both sides or turning the score up side down in second time.

After playing the notation with three vertical lines, the notation for playing sheet can be played without the notation.

3. Play the notation with four vertical lines, the notation for playing sheet can be played without the notation.

4. Play the notation with five vertical lines, the notation for playing sheet can be played without the notation.

After playing the notation with three vertical lines, move to the notation with two vertical lines, or

Dynamic, the notation with three vertical lines, the notation for playing sheet can be played without the notation.

After playing the notation with four vertical lines, move to the notation with three vertical lines, or

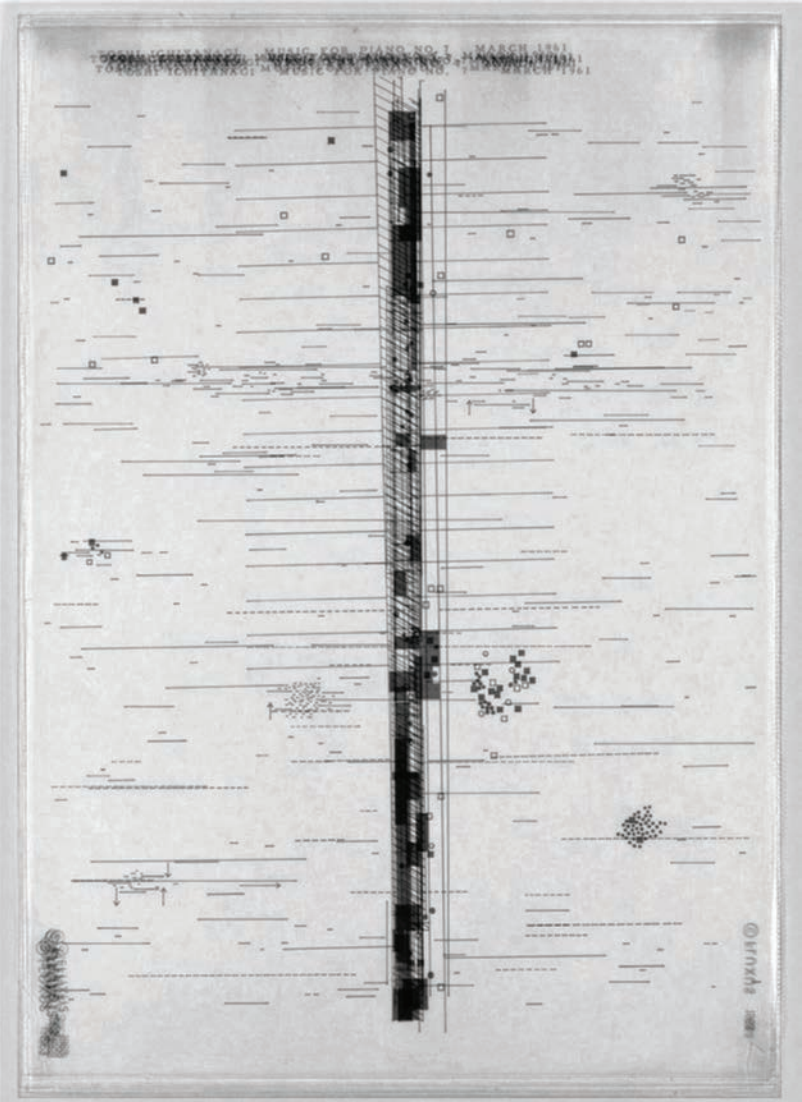
move to the notation with two vertical lines, or

The performer may move to any notation after playing the notation (-----), or the notation which is played without the notation.

The performer must play all the notations at least once before finishing the piece. The tempo of the piece is free otherwise. The piece may be played with violin, viola, cello, or bass, or with any combination of those instruments such as in a string quartet. The contact microphone or any other electric device may be used upon the discretion of the performer.

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(10) fluxus scores are collapsed into one image, a greyscale drawing, representing the combined information for all musical scores intended for a piano performance by Toshi Ichiyanagi. All of these scores, created for Piano n° 7 were transcribed by Ichiyanagi in March 1961.





In the drawing (3) separate scores are combined into one greyscale. The following lists each drawing and their transcription histories (the order does not imply the structure of transparency, hierarchy or overlap in the greyscale): 1 Music for Electric Metronome (and Instructions),1960; Score typed and drawn by George Maciunas, 1963. 2 IBM for Merce Cunningham, 1960; Score typed and drawn by George Maciunas, 1963. 3 Kaiki (Recurrence) for Koto for John Cage, 1960.



# Neither Here nor There

// Anthony Morey

What does it mean to view the world?

*Is it only what we see with our eyes?  
Is it what we remember with our minds?  
Or what we create in our imaginations?*

What does it mean to find yourself in this view?

*Is it only the reflection we see in the window?  
The one we see in puddles as we walk through jungles of concrete?  
Are we the photos we store through our narcissistic lives?  
Would we recognize ourselves if we finally came upon our true selves?*

Jacques Lacan's Mirror stage diagram (Figure 1) has been understood as a key element and abstraction of our means of deciphering and ability to view the world. Lacan presents us with a simplified understanding of how we interpret and understand the world around us through various stages of our self identity and its construction throughout our physical development. The diagram positions the viewer—the gaze—and the object—*subject of representation*—at opposing ends. The gaze is the end of the process, the object receiving the unknowable and translating it into the identifiable. This tension between the subject and the end all receiver—the gaze—frames and amplifies the relationship of truth and its contingency to perception to opposite ends of this diagram.

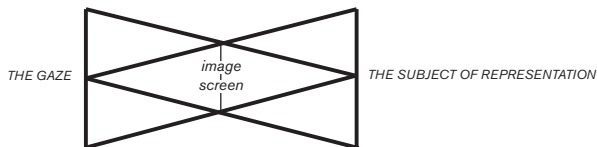


Figure 1

History, if we are to understand *History* as a viewer, one capable of a gaze, views the past from this same position, a catcher of all events and their connections. History is thus positioned directly opposed to its subject.

Jacques Lacan and History are flawed.

The past is made up of elements of time that are gone and completed. They are events that have already occurred, events that have lead to the current perception of themselves. We are meant to discover these buried events through various forms of tracking, re-readings and deductive assumptions. The term “assumptions,” is used purposefully, because as with all things passed, it is intrinsically impossible to be aware of all the variables that occurred; and as a result certain assumptions and conclusions are allowed, in fact they are embraced. To expand and clarify this statement, we can run it through a parallel scientific theory called the Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. In this it states that it is impossible to know the position and speed of any given object with complete certainty for both of those variables at the same time.

To expand this, to understand the speed, any position is unknowable due to the fact that speed is movement which destroys the concept of location. Simultaneously, to know the position one must forgo the expectation to be able to know the speed, as a position is fixed and must be stopped thus eliminating speed. Time is excluded, paused and abstracted for the sole intention of an event to be recordable, to be witnessed and translated. The concept of time could be understood as movement and event as position. These two elements are constantly opposed to each other, simultaneously compromising their own existence and precision. Traditionally, we have positioned ourselves to be seen as the funnels in which these events flow and are understood, translated and broken down for current day reference and readings.

However, the viewer is not the end or even the catcher of the filtered image. The viewer is the filter engulfed by the unfilterable, the unfunnelable. More precisely, the viewer is the screen / image itself; a singular geometric point that forces the point of light to pass and bend, such as a rock that breaks water in a stream causing endless ripples and waves: ripples of distortion radiating out from the moment of impact, shifting everything just a bit, but just enough. This obstruction—the gaze—forces the flow to erupt over, around, and splash about incoherently but never passively and completely through.

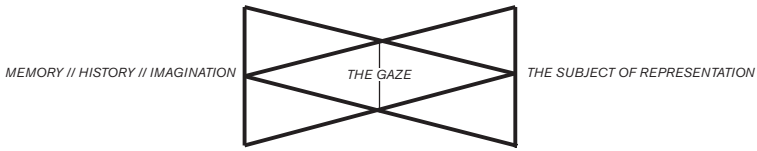


Figure 2

Aligning this comparison with Lacan (*Figure 2*), we could say that all points of light return to the flow of darkness and all points of geometry fade to obscurity through time and perspective. What would these ripples generated through this delineation mean then for history, memory and consciousness? These ripples mix and tear these streams and present us with abstract, chaotic and undifferentiated cesspools of creativity and events unhinged from any consistent thread.

We are suddenly pulled from the receiver of such an interpretation to become one of the interpreted. The distance between the image and the gaze has been collapsed and absorbed into a singular moment, a singular point. As we think back to memories that we have stored, we are confronted with moments that we are unsure even existed. A memory itself is a representation of a series of elements, senses and atmospheres that are stored for reference for the conscious and subconscious layers of our identity to reference at later dates. A physical moment that is then translated to become a building block of what we come to call I. They are a series of flashes that are left for our unconscious and conscious mind to delegate authorship or desire for. Neither one commanding and declaring authority, we find the subconscious pushing for fantasy to become reality and the consciousness not completely sure beyond all doubt if such fantasy is fantasy at all. Our minds filter, blend, construct, and create a rational tale which we call memories and ones that seem too impossible are delegated to the categorization of fantasy. As we sit, ponder, and wonder, through the traces of our existence, we are confronted with the hindrance of an inability to separate truth from fiction, myth from desire, or personal versus social individuality. They have all mixed, shaken, and been flooded into a cocktail of unidentifiable separations.

Memories of a sight my eyes never laid upon?  
 Memories of an embrace that was never given?

Memories of a childhood that I never knew were passing until they are gone.  
 Memories of days on the beach swimming even though I never learned to swim.  
 Memories of sleeping in forts of grass and tree limbs even though I never lived in  
 a house.

As our minds perceive a single moment and convert it to personal truth, to reality, all other possibilities fall into place to support and produce the rational scaffolding for such a moment to have occurred beyond any reasonable doubt. Our minds are constructed in order to convince us of our own lies and empty memories. (Figure 3) Our minds produce the complete map of support material in order to compile the conscious stability that our subconscious has conveniently archived. Our minds are not capable of pondering and considering the existence of a singular moment or even the existence of a non moment. A moment must have a beginning and an end. Our minds are programmed to produce connections even if there aren't any to be made. Here again we find Heisenberg's uncertainty principle applicable, our minds' persistence of solidifying a certain event as memory forces itself to simultaneously produce the structure of support that such a moment would not need if it was never stopped. A moment is always reduced and compiled into a manifestation of its entirety by being given an origin and trace. Every moment is both a history of all others and a birth for history to begin, even the moments we do not perceive—the ripples that have engulfed us and which we are not aware of having affected us.

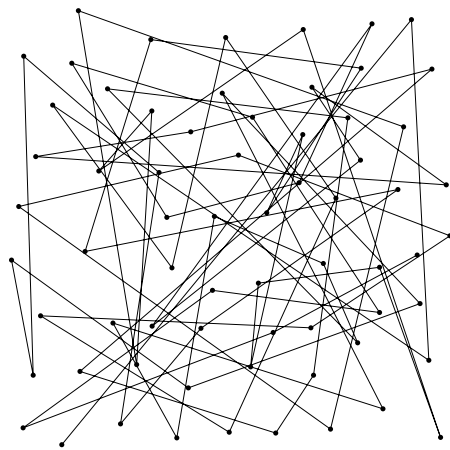


Figure 3

All moments within our minds call upon each other to stabilize themselves in this system of desperate chaotic reasoning. Walls of differentiation are torn and blurred in order to create equilibrium, memories flow to dreams, dream into histories, and every iteration in between, all of them connected and yet fragmented in their prime existence. Yet, with all these weaknesses, these constructions are what allows us to perceive anything at all, they are the lies that produce truth for our sense. They allow each moment to be different to every gaze that falls upon it, every rock feels a different flow and every flow approaches each rock differently.

Every unique moment is capable of producing an equally unique and differentiated existence. Is this differentiation true or solely a shadow of our inability to accept such an isolation within its system? This automatic completion of a rational conception of memories is both satisfying but ultimately deceiving. The structure and or scaffolding is erected with the sole purpose of solidifying the object's righteousness, with the tension that such support itself may be treacherous in itself. Italian theorist Manfredo Tafuri gives us a unique insight into such a tension, as it plays its role in the production of the historical interpretation of events.

There comes a moment (though not always) in research when all the pieces begin to fall into place, as in a jigsaw puzzle. But unlike the jigsaw puzzle, where all the pieces are near at hand and only one figure can be assembled (and thus the correctness of each move be determined immediately), in research only some of the pieces are available, and theoretically more than one figure can be made from them. In fact, there is always the risk of using, more or less consciously, the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle as blocks in a construction game. For this reason, the fact that everything falls into place is an ambiguous sign: either one is completely right or completely wrong. When wrong, we mistake for objective verification the selection and solicitation (more or less deliberate) of the evidence, which is forced to confirm the presuppositions (more or less explicit) of the research itself. The dog thinks it is biting the bone and is instead biting its own tail.<sup>1</sup>

What Tafuri is emphasizing through this elongated metaphor is simply "if it is too good to be true, it usually is" approach to academic and historical investigation. Historical and academic investigation then in turn according to Tafuri should be closer aligned to an approach synonymous to Schrödinger's cat experiment and its positioning of the uncovering and

unknown paradox. In this experiment, Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger creates a paradox pertaining to the state of a cat contained within a closed box under the guise that the cat until uncovered is simultaneously in the state of death or life and can only be revealed once the box is opened by the decision of the human hand. This closed box is understood as containing every possible iteration in between these two extremes and is only exposed once the state of impossibility is removed – until the box opened. This similar understanding could be useful in the understanding and categorization of events of the past. All history, memories, imaginations and or lies all exist in the same ripples, movements, and splashes and are only delegated through the intentional uncovering due to personal desire to uncover and assign states of existence. Tafuri and Schrödinger understand the paradox in the process of discovery and investigation that itself is intrinsically biased and heavily personally driven and through this process. All possible outcomes are only diminished through each act that is taken towards its discovery.

Pushing further, we have only discussed the possibility of one rock in the river delineating the flow of history, truth, memory, and consciousness. What occurs once we realize that there are multiple rocks existing in this flow—constantly shifting these paths—never able to return to the original flow, if there was one. One moment's ripples become the solidified stream for another moment, another rock. Here again, if we were to imagine a flow passing through such a system (figure 3), we would be left helpless to project the exact rippling, splashing, and mixtures that may occur. Through chaos and chance, certain moments may find themselves untouched; others may find themselves turned inside out, flipped, and turned inside out again. We would have been pinned with the impossible task of understanding it's original flow. Here our minds would create this perfect falling-in-place jig saw puzzle that Tafuri presents us with; this clear understanding that when investigating History, or its influence, any conclusive argument must be understood as a guided and biased reading and stoppage. History's two levels of understanding—time and event—are impossible to exist simultaneously.

Our minds are constantly presented with a timeless painting of time. Nothing here is chronological, alphabetical, authored, labeled or even differentiated between image, dream, fantasy, desire, or even medium fetishization. The objects just are, they are simultaneously presented and collected. Our minds are filled with stains and oils composed of truths and lies that are painted and presented to our mind as memories

lived, of our history. The moments painted onto the empty canvas we call consciousness, filled in with little or no regard to myth or truth—only image and desire. History is nothing more but a painted fresco made to symbolize the post rationalization of the time that we view it from. How much of what we remember is surely yours to remember? Does our mind paint time with the mediums of memories and dreams, turning our existence into an impressionist painting of moments long gone and moments impossible to have been at all. Where do these limits exist and how, if at all, is it possible to understand these distinctions?

We have yet to conclude—through this understanding—whether we are the pebbles in the stream, the ripples from their collision or standing on the bank unaware of the stream at all.

**Endnotes.**

**1** *Manfredo Tafuri, The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 1.







# Image Index

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## Notes on the Paradox of the Actor

Letizia Garzoli and Andrea Dutto

// **10** // Poyet (unknown), *Head of the inventor*. Tissandier Gaston, *La Nature* (Paris: Mason et Cie, 1890), Vol. 1, lithography, 20,5 x 30 cm, ca. 1890.

// **12** // Pl. XXIII: *Coupe sur toute la hauteur et la largeur avec les Rues de Mer équipées*. Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers. Machines de Theatre. Vol. IX. Robert Bénard et al. (unknown), engraving, 1806-1830.

// **16** // *Fin tragique de Marie Antoinette d'Autriche reine de France, exécutée le 16 octobre 1793*. Prints of the French Revolution, engraving, etching, ca. 1793.

## The Chair got a BooBoo and the “thing” revealed itself

Zack Matthews and Zahra Savaferdi

// photographs by Zack Matthews/Zahra Savaferdi, © 2016.

## When Face Walks

Xuan Luo

// **25** // Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *The Ghost of Taira no Tomomori*, ukiyo-e print, 1851.

// **26** // Recomposed collage from animation video, Xuan Luo, BBC, “Face Development in the Womb - Inside the Human Body: Creation - BBC One,” 2011. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFY\\_KPFS3LA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFY_KPFS3LA), March 28, 2016.

// **28** // A page from *Fauna Japonica*, a research work in Nagasaki in the 1820s by German botanist Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866), published in five volumes between 1833 and 1850.

## A Necklace of Bites

Clemens Finkelstein

// **36** // Gian Franco Mingozzi, *La Taranta*, 1962. Screenshots, cropped and edited. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyDXNUeJ5\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyDXNUeJ5_s), April 17, 2016.

// **42** // top left, top right // Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Seagram Building*, 375 Park Ave, New York. Photography/Courtesy: Frederik Jaeger, frederikjaeger.com, © 2016.

// **42** // bottom // Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Seagram Building*, 375 Park Ave, New York. Photography/Courtesy: Cameron DeLargy, © 2016.

## The Third Voyeurism

Tairan An

// **47** // *Reallifecam*, an online voyeur project. Screenshot, 2016. <http://reallifecam.com>, March 17, 2016.

// **49** // Teenager broadcasting his sleep on the app *YouNow*. <http://buzzfeed.com/katienotopoulos/im-addicted-to-watching-teens-sleep>, March 17, 2016.

// **50** // *On Muk-Bang*. Girls are paid to be watched eating. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/29/world/asia/korea-eating-room/>, March 17, 2016.

// **53** // An actress broadcasting her life live on the app *Panda TV*. <http://m.07073.com/1295485.html>, March 17, 2016.

### **Veiled Modernism**

Adam Himes

// **56** // top // Triad-CICO's design for Qatar Petroleum Headquarters featured brise-soleil on all sides. © Stacey International, Ltd., from the 2005 publication *Qatar*.

// **56** // bottom // The original façade of Qatar Petroleum Headquarters is still visible through the oil drop logo on each elevation. Photography: Adam Himes, © 2016.

// **58** // top // When Marriott took over operation of the hotel, it sheathed its western block in a blue glass curtain wall. Photography: Adam Himes, © 2016.

// **58** // bottom // The western block of what was then known as the Gulf Hotel originally featured the same façade system deployed on its eastern counterpart. Undated postcard, likely from the late 1970s or early 1980s.

### **Orientalism Today**

Razan Tariq Sijeeni

// photographs by Razan Tariq Sijeeni, © 2015.

### **Thermal Stories**

Alex Timmer

// photographs and drawings by Alex Timmer, © 2016.

### **Junk-Spaces**

Konstantinos Chatzaras

// drawings by Konstantinos Chatzaras, © 2016.

### **Walking the Dead – David Bowie and the Humanizing Obverse**

Namik Mackic and Eliyahu Keller

// **91** // Digital Collage of David Bowie, *Blackstar*. Music video directed by Johan Renck, 2015; Eliyahu Keller, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kszLwBaC4Sw>, April 17, 2016.

### **The Ex-Urban In Transition: Inner Mongolia as Pacific Gyre**

Kate Cahill

// photographs by Kate Cahill, © 2014.

### **Filetypes**

Christianna Bennett

// collages assembled by Christianna Bennett, © 2016.

### **Neither Here nor There**

Anthony Morey

// drawings by Anthony Morey, © 2016.

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# Notes

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