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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

edited by
Giulia Gelmi, Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky,
Andrea Nalesso



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Ca' Foscari



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Quaderni di *Venezia Arti*

Serie diretta da
Silvia Burini, Giovanni Maria Fara

6



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Università Ca' Foscari Venezia | Dipartimento di Filosofia e Beni culturali

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Abstract

The volume includes papers presented at the 4th Postgraduate International Conference of the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage of Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Venice, 5-7 October 2022). Our understanding of reality is filtered through myriad media, and we have the ability – and power – to gather, ignore, tweak, and explore the information needed to define what we mean by ‘reality’. The concept of ‘space’ – in its broadest sense – plays an essential role in an individual’s explanation of reality, and we must deal with a plurality of models and concepts of it. As elaborated in the text *Space and Time in Art*, the Russian theologian, philosopher, and art theorist Pavel Florensky states: “all culture can be interpreted as the activity of organising space”. Starting from this culturological reading, Florensky identifies three spatial “dimensions” and three corresponding genres of activity: (1) The space of our strong relations and the activity of ‘Technique’; (2) The mental space and its organisation and the activities of ‘Science’ or ‘Philosophy’; (3) The space between the previous two, and the activity of ‘Art’. Ultimately, all have the same aim: to change reality to reconstruct space. According to leading scholars and critics, the late 1980s saw a “spatial turn” take place in literary, social, and cultural studies. In 1991 Fredric Jameson theorised a shift from the paradigm of time to the paradigm of space, from modernism to postmodernism. The pandemic era has refocused investigation on the present paradigm, where Florensky’s spaces have been concentrated through cyberspace almost overnight. Through the notion of the ‘semiosphere’ – as elaborated by Juri Lotman 100 years ago – we collectively pondered the question: “should we reconsider the concept of space as a cultural category altogether?”.

Keywords Art history. Philosophy. Space. Displaying. Architecture. Historiography. Visual studies.

Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Table of Contents

Introduction	xi
DISPLAY TOOLS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE	
Darkness Visible: The Art of Occupying Public Space as a Space of Appearance Daniel Borselli	5
Space in Mediations. Re-Situating Architectural Experience in the Exhibition Arianna Casarini	23
The Question of Space in the Chilean Representation and Pavilion in Venice Biennale Mariagrazia Muscatello	41
JUGGLING THE PRESENCE, REVEALING THE CONCEPTS	
The ‘Odd’ Conception of Space in Stoic Philosophy Barbara Castellani	57
Making Room: Heidegger’s Concept of <i>Einräumung</i> Marco Cavazza	73
Inflatable vs Tectonic. A Seven Days Diary to Disrupt a Miesian Space in Berlin Laura Mucciolo	91
The Controversial Rise of Skilled Intentionality Reconsidering Hylonoetic Agency in Malafouris’ Material Engagement Theory Riccardo Valenti	109

CULTURAL CROSSROADS: IN SEARCH OF A COMMON GROUND

The Stravinsky's Family. The Home as a Strategy of Life and Creation

Apartment on the Kryukov Canal: From an Apartment House to a Communal Apartment

Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky 133

SOCIAL DYNAMICS' INSIGHT:
QUESTIONING POWER AND COMMUNITY

***Nefs d'Or, Nefs d'Argent* Between Space and Power**

Andrea Missagia 149

PERMEABLE BOUNDARIES: MATERIALITY VS IMMATERIALITY

**The Space of the Body from Classical to Contemporary Dance
A Matter of Coloniality**

Lara Barzon 171

Performance Installation as a Haunted Landscape

Irena Kukrić 187

**Vital Spaces and Living Spaces
in Contemporary Archival Practice**

Costantino Vecchi 203

REPRESENTATION AS TRACE OF ENUNCIATION

**From Inside to Outside and Vice Versa
A Contribution on Spatiality in Analogue Photography**

Miriam Rejas Del Pino 221

**Topology of Scrapbooking
Browsing Through a Space in Constant Transformation**

Simone Rossi 235

**Orbital Dying
Watching the Crucifixion from God's Point of View**

Martin Wiesinger 257

BUILDING NARRATIVES, IMAGINING REALITIES

Constructing the National Image
Identity and Material Culture in Late Imperial Russia
Public Museum Practices

Giulia Gelmi

283

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Andrea Nalesso

Introduction

Giulia Gelmi, Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky, Andrea Nalesso

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

In the dual role of organising committee and editors of this volume, it is with great pleasure that we write this brief introductory text to the proceedings of the 4th Postgraduate International Conference.

Ideated by Prof. Silvia Burini in 2019 and promoted by the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the conference, this year in its fourth edition, boasts a, albeit young, commendable tradition.

Our work has, in fact, been brilliantly preceded by that of our colleagues in previous editions. The first conference, entitled *Text and Image. A Dialogue from Antiquity to Contemporary Age* took place on 6 and 7 June 2019 and was organised by Maria Redaelli, Beatrice Spampinato, Alexandra Timonina; organised by Giovanni Argan, Maria Redaelli, Alexandra Timonina, the second edition, entitled *Taking and Denying: Challenging Canons in Arts and Philosophy*, was held from 23 to 25 September 2020; while, the third, entitled *Behind / Beyond the Image*, was held from 22 to 24 September 2021, curated by Giovanni Argan, Lorenzo Gigante, Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky. Each year, the edition of the proceedings has been curated by the re-

spective organisers, ensuring a thorough and permanent record of the work carried out.

This year's conference, entitled *Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy* and held in Venice from 5 to 7 October 2022, featured 7 panels and the participation of 25 PhD students from universities all over the world: Italy, France, the United Kingdom, Chile, Germany, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Brazil, and Russia.

The thematic focus of this edition, an interdisciplinary analysis of the concept of 'space', aimed to explore and problematise 'space' as a cultural category through the exercise of art and philosophy.

In this first (almost) post-pandemic conference, it was possible to present papers in a dual mode, in presence and online, allowing us to enjoy the live meeting with Italian and international colleagues. The international dimension of the conference favoured the gathering and exchange of different perspectives, connecting students of the Venetian PhD in History of the Arts with other European and non-European universities.

A remarkable platform for interdisciplinary discussion and dialogue, the organization of the conference also proved to be a stimulating creative, and practical test, bringing into play different skills: planning, coordination, adherence to procedures, teamwork, text revision, and networking.

We would like to sincerely thank Professor Silvia Burini, Vice Coordinator of the PhD Program in History of the Arts and promoter of the initiative, for this excellent opportunity for professional growth and academic exchange; Professor Giuseppe Barbieri, Director of the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, for guiding us and supervising the work; and Professor Piermario Vescovo, in his capacity as Coordinator of the PhD Program in History of the Arts, for his support and trust.

Finally, we would like to thank professors, Matteo Bertelé, Elisa Bizzotto, Miriam De Rosa, Angela Mengoni, Massimo Stella, and colleagues, Maria Redaelli and Alexandra Timonina, who kindly agreed to chair the panels of this edition's conference.

Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

Display Tools: From Theory to Practice

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Darkness Visible: The Art of Occupying Public Space as a Space of Appearance

Daniel Borselli

Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, Italia

Abstract During the twentieth century, art has increasingly dialogued with public space to escape the normative role of institutional exhibiting contexts. However, the first artistic efforts in public spaces mostly failed to reconsider what ‘public’ and ‘space’ could represent, thus implicitly upholding the status quo ruling those spaces. By discussing two case studies – namely, Martha Rosler’s *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-72), and Krzysztof Wodiczko’s *The Homeless Projection* (1986) – this paper argues for the presence of artistic operations that instead focused on a critical rethinking of ‘public space’ from a site of transit or an extension of the art system to a space of political appearance.

Keywords Visibility. Public space. Photography. Martha Rosler. Krzysztof Wodiczko.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Ground Control: Spatial Ideologies in Art and Public Space. – 3 Just a Shot Away: Martha Rosler’s *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*. – 4 Citizen Erased: Krzysztof Wodiczko’s *The Homeless Projection*. – 5 Conclusions: Just What Is It that Makes Photography in Public Space So Public, So Agitating?

1 Introduction

During the twentieth century, and more extensively since the 1960s, art has increasingly incorporated the spatial dimension within the definition of the artwork and its experience. By merging the art object with its exhibiting site – be it a gallery, a museum, or, eventually, public space – artists have attempted both to de-define what could

be properly accepted as artwork and to renegotiate the traditional relationships underlying the art system. Despite such utopian élan, the first artistic efforts in public spaces merely tried to bring contemporary art to the widest possible audience, thus failing to reconsider, in and through public art, what ‘public’ and ‘space’ could represent. To counterpoint this condition, the objective of this paper is to stress, through the use of two case studies, the presence of artistic operations – namely, Martha Rosler’s *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-72), and Krzysztof Wodiczko’s *The Homeless Projection* (1986) – that instead focused on a critical rethinking of ‘public space’ from a site of transit or an extension of museums and galleries to a space of political appearance.

2 Ground Control: Spatial Ideologies in Art and Public Space

The history of western art since the early twentieth century could be effectively framed as a story of *space*. As pointed out by the art historians Francesco Poli and Francesco Bernardelli (2016), although virtually every artwork relates in some way to a concept of space – represented, assumed, purely imagined, or even refused –, it is only with the vanguardist movements that a more deliberate shift from the space *of* the work to the space *around* the work occurs. Artists operating at the beginning of the century and, more extensively, during the 1960s and 1970s were animated by a burning desire to exceed the “frame-and-pedestal syndrome” (Lippard 2001, viii), i.e., the representational and self-referential constrictions that supposedly hindered a more direct relation among the artwork and the ‘real world’. In other words, if according to Dan Graham all artists “dream of doing something that’s more social, more collaborative, and more real than art” (Graham, in Bishop 2012, 1), practices such as collages, assemblages, ready-mades, installations, environments, and so on all witness a widespread tension towards “a continuous confrontation with the real space and its progressive involvement in the making of the works” (Poli, Bernardelli 2016, 11). This, in turn, “elicits a sense of reciprocity based on a real mutuality in which *art creates an environmental space* to the same extent that *the environment creates art*” (Celant 1976, 5; emphasis in the original). After these experiences, therefore, the critical paradigms for the comprehension of an artwork could no longer exclude the external conditions of its production, display, and reception. However, *which* aspects of space were to be considered for the understanding of the work has long been related to strictly formal parameters, such as volumes, shapes, size, scale, ‘full-ups’ and ‘voids’, light and darkness, meant to enhance the viewer’s experience of the artistic object. This, of course, is not

neutral and traces back to Duchamp's seminal insight into the power of the exhibition venue to automatically guarantee the artistic status of an artefact, that is, to legitimise through dialectics of inclusions and exclusions highly constructed hierarchies of cultural and economic value (Lebensztejn 1981, 19-47). Following this fundamental acknowledgement of the role of the exhibiting context as content (O'Doherty 1999), artists have increasingly recognised the normative function of the modernist spatial ideology, as well as the situated character of the autonomous, unique masterpiece crafted by a solitary genius. As clarified by Miwon Kwon (2002, 13) in her genealogy of the notion of 'site specificity', the attack on "the 'innocence' of space and the accompanying presumption of a universal viewing subject" started with a redefinition of the *site* – now seen as both a physical and cultural framework – and of the *spectator* – a social subject endowed with class, race, gender, and sexuality. In this perspective, the materialist investigations conducted by authors engaged in various forms of Institutional Critique (Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Hans Haacke, Marcel Broodthaers, and Robert Smithson, among others) exposed the space of presentation as a relay of interrelated places and economies to be challenged in its hermeticism and gate-keeping role. Therefore, in Kwon's words, "To be 'specific' to such a site [...] is to decode and/or recode the institutional conventions so as to expose their hidden operations" (Kwon 2002, 14). A substantial mistrust towards the very possibility of conceiving artistic projects inside the institutional framework that could resist the art system's operations of absorption and neutralisation, together with "a developed sensibility about audience, social strategy, and effectiveness" (Lacy 1995, 20), fuelled the emergence, in the 1990s, of practices in the context of 'new genre public art' and 'socially engaged art'. These explicitly rejected the use of traditional venues, the exclusive role of the sole 'author', and, often, the production of specific objects in favour of collaborative processes of social transformation *for* and *with* specific communities – typically disenfranchised social groups – in their own public spaces. On the one hand, therefore, the site was not so much a geographical connotation, but rather a network of social relations; on the other hand, it was profoundly grounded in the everyday places of participating communities. In their overt political commitment, in their frequent belonging to the same communities their work was supposed to affect, and in their refusal of the gallery-museum nexus, socially engaged artists directly opposed the aesthetic models imposed by what had hitherto been labelled as 'public art'. This mainly coincided with either gigantic minimalist sculptures indifferently disseminated through the city – installed since the early 1960s and

ultimately referred to as ‘plop art’¹ – or integrated projects of architecture and art that, since the mid-1970s, sacrificed their aesthetic qualities to a mere functional ethos as urban furniture. In both cases, the proposed notion of ‘public space’ was not as *public* as presented. On the contrary, it proved to rely on a neutral and formal ideal of space, as well as a unified and generic audience. However, according to philosopher Henri Lefebvre, space is never neutral:

Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be ‘purely’ formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies. (Lefebvre 1976, 31)

In this perspective, artworks in public spaces that show – more or less openly – indifference to the uneven social conditions hidden beneath their sites are not just naïve forms of urban embellishment or amelioration. Instead, they subtly but purposefully uphold the *status quo* ruling those spaces.² In other words, they must at least be reconnected to an understanding of space, as Michel Foucault has extensively elucidated, as an active instrument for controlling, disciplining, and policing bodies (see Crampton, Elden 2007), so as to reproduce the hierarchies and power inequalities behind the established apparatus (Mathews 2010; Mould 2017; Pritchard 2020). Once the normally invisible connections of political and economic interests behind public space are laid bare, a further recalibration of the concept of space may be disclosed. More specifically, the intertwined poles of ‘space’ and ‘time’ – in their relation to discrete approaches to the exercise and/or claiming of power – are essential to the distinction operated by Michel de Certeau between ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’:

1 The term is commonly attributed to architect and professor James Wines, who coined it in the late 1960s in reference to what he considered as non-specific artworks casually ‘dropped’ into urban space.

2 Regarding the social inequalities concealed by these practices, art critic Grant H. Kester has correctly stated that: “While the artist was privileged in all of his or her exemplary individuality, the public was treated as an undifferentiated and essentially passive mass on whom a work of art would be benevolently conferred” (Kester 2011, 192).

I call a 'strategy' the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'. A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, 'clienteles', 'targets', or 'objects' of research). [...] I call a 'tactic', on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality. [...] The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'. (de Certeau 1984, xix)

Space, therefore, is both the objective of the apparatus's strategic control *and* the place where power is (re)produced. However, it can also become, under specific circumstances, the battlefield where everyday practices of resistance can take place. Although tactics can only insinuate themselves into the other's place and hope to gain temporary victories, they can provisionally 'occupy' public space to provoke a questioning of the established order and interfere with consensus-building mechanisms. Even with its structural and systemic violence, space can thus provide the place and medium for a counter-appropriation by individuals. This collective reclaim of the ground as the commons occurs, according to leading visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (2017, 208), "by means of the refusal to move on and the insistence that there is something to see here". In other terms, if a public sphere can only emerge "with the breakdown of the consensus that is otherwise always silently presumed" (Marchart 2019, 145), such public sphere can retain democratic contours "only insofar as its exclusions are taken into account and open to contestation" (Deutsche 1996, 289). The inextricable entanglement between public space, struggle for power, and visibility is thus apparent, and its consequences are eminently political. Close to the Foucauldian notion of the archive as "the law of what can be said" (Foucault 1972, 129), visibility directly relates to what Jacques Rancière has termed the 'distribution of the sensible', and has a strictly normative character. In fact,

Rather than simply a sensory register [...] visibility concerns an enlarged domain that gathers together and interweaves the sensory and the representational (or, symbolic) registers. It is a complex terrain where a continuum between what can be seen and what can be said is laid out. (Brighenti 2017, 1)

The capacity of visibility of not only scoping reality but already acting upon it verifies director Wim Wender's statement whereby "The most political decision you make is where you direct people's eyes" (Wenders, in Levi Strauss 2003, 1). However, when that decision is exclusively retained in the hands of the apparatus, all the subjects that do not reinforce its economic interests and governmental objectives are systematically excluded from visual and political representation. Against this dramatic imbalance, and in the effort to return public attention to 'what has to be seen here', alternative paradigms of political togetherness must then arise to guarantee everyone the right to appear and have a place in public space. In this way, space undergoes a further evolution into what Hannah Arendt (1958) has defined as a 'space of appearance', a social space in which matters of public concern may be articulated from different perspectives. In this complex task of fostering the development of conflictual, democratic, politically engaged, and plural tactics of counter-visibility, a major role can be played by the visual domain *par excellence* – art. In the following paragraphs, therefore, two examples of artistic operations based upon a critical rethinking of 'public space' from a site of transit and an extension of the gallery-museum nexus to a space of visible appearance, political representation, and activist occupation are discussed.

3 **Just a Shot Away: Martha Rosler's *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home***

Even though Martha Rosler's *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* [figs 1-2] is today recognised as a seminal photographic series and has been vastly discussed regarding its visual approach and formal aspects, as well as its iconographic references, the relevance of public space in the meaning of the whole project has long been downplayed, if not intentionally ignored.³ When she started working on the project, Rosler had already received an artistic formation at Brooklyn College and was familiar with the latest trends in Pop Art and Fluxus, as well as the poetry avant-gard, documentary photography, and film (Buchloh 1999, 23-4; Butler 2007, 290). Nevertheless, her pictures were not displayed in galleries or museums as fine art prints, but disseminated through underground publications and, most importantly, distributed as flyers during protests (Rosler 2019, 352). As Rosler later recalled,

it seemed imperative not to show these works [...] in an art context. To show anti-war agitation in such a setting verged on the obscene, for its site seemed more properly 'the street' or the under-

3 In this respect, see Dawsey 2016, 71; De Zegher 2005, 21-5.



Figure 1 Martha Rosler, *Red Stripe Kitchen*, from the series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*. 1967-72 ca. Courtesy of Martha Rosler and Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan



Figure 2 Martha Rosler, *Patio View*, from the series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*. 1967-72 ca.
Courtesy of Martha Rosler and Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan

ground press, where such material could help marshal the troops. (Rosler 2004, 355)

The importance of the space *around* the series – that is, its site of distribution and reception – directly relates to the space framed *within* the pictures. Rosler’s politicised practice began, in the artist’s own words, when she recognised that “things were left out of explanations of the world that were crucial to its understanding, that there are always things to be told that are obscured by the prevailing stories” (Rosler 2004, 353). More specifically, the *House Beautiful* project was born out of dissatisfaction with the ‘official rhetoric’ legitimising American occupation of Vietnam. However, if artistic critiques of the conflict during the late 1960s and early 1970s typically dwelt on vivid depictions of the devastation wrought by the war or on representations of rallies to affiliate viewers with protest movements, the series aimed in a different direction. Borrowing from the practice of political photomontage initiated by Berlin Dadaists such as Georg Grosz, John Heartfield, and Hannah Höch, Rosler combined images of casualties and combatants from the war front with glossy photographs of luxury domestic interiors presented in mass market magazines – *House Beautiful*, as the title suggests, being the main source for such appropriation. The objective of this cut-and-paste process was to hinder the very possibility of a clear separation between the perceived security of American homes and the ‘remote’ locations where the conflict unfolded and was supposed to be confined. “I was trying to show”, Rosler recounts, “that the ‘here’ and the ‘there’ of our world picture, defined by our naturalized accounts as separate or even opposite, were one” (2004, 355). Photomontages thus allowed the artist to reach for “an imaginary space where different tales collided” (353). Such ‘symbolic collision’ was not just about making the Vietnam War visible – a task made redundant by the massive media coverage of the conflict endorsed by the government itself, which had turned it into the first ‘living-room war’. On the contrary, it aimed to challenge received narratives, but also to expose the audience’s complicity with the same ideologies that justified American military campaign. By ‘bringing the war home’, and hence collapsing as much the domestic sphere as the battlefield within a cohesive symbolic space, the project highlighted the normally invisible connections between postwar housing development, consumerism, gender role differences, and domestic containment, ultimately revealing how these “Expertly designed images of domestic bliss were launched to the entire world as part of a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign” (Colomina 2007, 12). The same notions of home, technological advancement, and nuclear family that were supposed to provide “a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world” (May 2017, 1) were thus disclosed as part of the

larger American Cold War ideology, whose main premises were the framing of consumption as freedom, the emphasis on gender differentiation, and, lastly, the spread of American liberal democracy to foreign countries. Moreover, through her disturbing and destabilising photomontages connecting the idealised middle-class lifestyle and the Vietnam War, Rosler exposed not only the situated and highly ideological character of the American Cold War political model but also the flaws and weaknesses of its promises. In its aim “to expose the ideological norms internalized by the individual and exerted by a controlling bureaucracy, by industrial production, or by the media” (Eiblmayr 1998, 160),⁴ the *House Beautiful* series therefore operated a twofold spatial movement. In the first instance, the work visually and conceptually reconnected the war front to the American domestic realm, seamlessly combining troops and housewives, tanks and patios, battlefields and modernist sculptures. Subsequently, in an opposite move, this newly constructed ‘imaginary space’ was returned outdoors, in the streets, where it could serve an agitational purpose.

4 **Citizen Erased: Krzysztof Wodiczko’s *The Homeless Projection***

Public space was also central to Krzysztof Wodiczko’s *The Homeless Projection* [fig. 3], although only as its conceptual framework and not as its site of presentation. As its original subtitle indicated, the project solely existed as *A Proposal for the City of New York*,⁵ never getting to be materially executed on its expected location. On the opposite, it was exhibited at the 49th Parallel, Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, in late 1986, as a series of four slide images projected onto the gallery’s walls; a brochure containing an artist’s statement complemented the projection. Coming almost two decades after the beginning of Martha Rosler’s *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, *The Homeless Projection* emerged from a radically different context, which reflected in both its motivations and its political scope. Instead of joining and fuelling widespread protests such as the anti-war agitations at the core of Rosler’s work, Wodiczko, as a resident of the area near Union Square in New York City, directly intervened in the urban and social context he belonged to. Through the 1980s, the city of New York was undergoing a massively distributed

⁴ Although Eiblmayr’s analysis is not referred solely to *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* but to Rosler’s whole production, her observation is particularly applicable to the series presented here.

⁵ The second part of the work’s title has later been changed to *A Proposal for Union Square*, as it is now mainly known.



Figure 3 Krzysztof Wodiczko, *The Homeless Projection: A Proposal for the City of New York*. 1986. George Washington Monument. © Krzysztof Wodiczko. Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co., New York

and highly problematic urban revitalisation scheme promoted by the real estate industry with the endorsement of the city government. In the specific case of the area of Union Square, the rise of high-rent luxury buildings and the parallel dissolution of affordable housing stocks mostly relied upon the exploitation of the place's 'past' and monuments to justify their premises. The mass eviction of lower-income tenants, as well as the forced expulsion of the many homeless 'inhabiting' the square – explicitly designated by the planning documents as “socially undesirable population”⁶ – was in fact legitimised “in recognition of the area’s unique character or quality”.⁷ In particular, the promoters of the redevelopment of Union Square ‘appropriated’ the square’s historical statues of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Marquis de Lafayette, and the Allegory of Charity to develop a self-legitimising discourse and a distorted image of the site’s history. This, on the one hand, aimed at proposing an extremely questionable continuity between the values of liberty and patriotism represented by the Square’s mythical past and the real estate’s gentrification project, and, on the other hand, omitted the gatherings, protests, and assemblies that had also participated in the place’s life. Aesthetics, as Rosalyn Deutsche (1996, 19) puts it, played therefore a prominent role in framing the beautification program “under the aegis of historical preservation, restoration of architectural tradition, and reinforcement of the existing urban context”, while diverting attention away from the displacement of minorities, homeless, and low-income current residents that would have resulted. However, as philosopher Fred Evans has aptly observed, these communities of citizens could be obscured, but not be completely ‘erased:’ “As disguised, the voice of the expelled is still tacitly contained within the revitalization discourse, in tension with it, even if only as a logical implication, an antonym, of the promised elegant neighborhood” (Evans 2019, 37). In advancing his counter-plan for Union Square – expressed through photographs and texts so as to mimic the bureaucratic descriptive forms of the renovation planning – Wodiczko focused exactly on this entanglement of presentation and obliteration, visibility and obscurity, removal and reappearance. In his images, in fact, photographs of the homeless forced to abandon the area were cast upon the monuments, thus attempting to both bring attention to the displaced subjectivities and disrupt the often-internalised unawareness of the ideological role of the sculptures. This way, as Justyna Wierzychowska (2015, 2) has pointed out, “when the cold, petrified, and obdurate

⁶ Department of City Planning, *Union Square Special Zoning District Proposal*, November 1983, 3.

⁷ “Glossary: Selected planning terms applicable to New York City real estate development”. *New York Affairs*, 8(4), 1985, 15.

structure is flooded with an elusive image or an emotionally-charged narrative, the taken-for-granted narrative is suddenly deconstructed". While relying on the same aesthetic elements commodified by the real estate's 'official narration' - i.e., the statues of American traditional heroes -, the artist adopted a fundamentally opposite approach to the site. In her pivotal study of Wodiczko's work, architecture theorist Deutsche thus described the author's operational paradigm in relation to the politics of urban space:

Its form: site-specific, temporary, collaborative with its audience; its subject matter: the capitulation of architecture to the conditions of the real-estate industry; the content of its images: the fearful social outcome of that alliance. These qualities render *The Homeless Projection* useless to those forces taking possession of Union Square in order to exploit it for profit. (Deutsche 1996, 6)

For Wodiczko, therefore, architecture was not a formally defined space, nor exclusively the place for the strategic exercise of power, but the starting point for tactics of symbolic re-appropriation. In the artist's own words,

The building is not only an institutional 'site of the discourse of power', but, more importantly, it is a meta-institutional, spatial medium for the continuous and simultaneous symbolic reproduction of both the general myth of power and the individual desire for power. (Wodiczko 1999, 46)

As expressed in the five theses declared by the artist in the accompanying brochure, architecture could then serve as a means for redistributing the visibility unequally controlled by the city officials, according to specific objectives:

To magnify the scale of the homeless to the scale of the building!
 To astonish the street public with the familiarity of the image and to make the homeless laugh!
 To employ the slide psychodrama method to teach the BUILDING to play the role of THE HOMELESS!
 To liberate the problem of the homeless from the unconscious of the 'architecture'!
 To juxtapose the fake architectural real estate theatre with the real survival theatre of the homeless! (Wodiczko 1986, 16)

Besides the common appropriation of the square's monuments, *The Homeless Projection* and the revitalisation program mainly differ in that

mainstream planning claims that its proposals will restore a fundamental social harmony that has been disrupted while Wodiczko's project illuminates the prevailing social relations of domination and conflict that such planning both facilitates and disavows. (Deutsche 1996, 12)

Nevertheless, as Evans (2019, 43) has underlined reconnecting the work to Foucault's concept of 'genealogy', "the aim of Wodiczko's counter-architecture is 'not the erecting of foundations' but to disturb 'what was previously considered immobile'". In political terms, the notion of 'public space' underlying the gentrification scheme was a rational, deliberative, 'habermasian' public sphere ultimately aimed at the creation of consensus – pursued, however, for the benefit of private interests. On the contrary, *The Homeless Projection* relied on an 'agonistic' understanding of public space as a conflictual sphere in which the "hegemonic order is susceptible to being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices – practices that will attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony [...], without any possibility of final reconciliation" (Mouffe 2008, 9-10). Accordingly, Wodiczko reclaimed a role for aesthetic expression as "art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate" (Mouffe 2008, 12), rather than the utilitarian tool for the promotion of a self-legitimising discourse.

5 Conclusions: Just What Is It that Makes Photography in Public Space So Public, So Agitating?

Both Martha Rosler's *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* and Krzysztof Wodiczko's *The Homeless Projection* crucially put photography at the very centre of their project of "bringing together conflicting narratives" (Wierzchowska 2015, 5). Whether through photomontages or projected photographs, the two authors appropriated existing images (or monuments) as 'screens' onto which to display the "hidden histories" (Rosler 2004, 372) obscured by hegemonic discourses. "Photography", Mirzoeff (2017, 211) explains, "creates a ground against which figures or subjects can be seen", and it is exactly to this capacity of the medium that authors such as Rosler and Wodiczko directed their interest. However, it is important to stress that the photographic tradition these artists turned to was not fine art photography – nor, in a broader sense, the art world itself. As already mentioned, the administrative aesthetics chosen by Wodiczko for the presentation mode of *The Homeless Projection* was designed to emulate and parody the official language of the revitalisation plans, in order to destabilise and expose the opaque mechanisms of institutional

urban planning. In Rosler's case, the departure from traditional exhibiting contexts marked an even stronger interference in the public sphere, and yet numerous efforts have been conducted to reframe her work as related to the high art scene. In this perspective, while it is certainly true that urban settings are not directly presented inside the space of the project, this does not necessarily imply – as conversely argued by art historian Stephanie Schwartz (2020) – that the series should be seen through the lens of the art world, rather than the social sphere. The decision not to work exclusively with images of the war front or the street, but rather on the intertwined representations of the perceived security of the home and the horror of the conflict, must not be understood, as discussed above, as a disappearance or weakening of the social. On the contrary, it directly aimed at countering the mass media imagery and the subtle complicity, deceptively normalised by magazines such as *House Beautiful*, between Cold War American ideology and the domestic sphere. Consistently, Rosler's return to Dada in Berlin resumed a conception of works "no longer understood in the traditional sense, as a unique piece to be exhibited in a gallery", and used instead "as posters, newspapers, tools for demonstrative actions" (Patti, Sacconi, Ziliani 1979, 24). Hence, just as the Berlin group's signature innovation of the photomontage "attacked the traditional notion of art as unique beauty created by an inspired genius" (Altshuler 2008, 189), Martha Rosler could later describe her project in these terms: "I saw *House Beautiful* not as art. I want it to be agitational".⁸ Significantly, it was not until the late 1980s that an art collector proposed Rosler produce a portfolio of the images composing the *House Beautiful* series (see Wallis 1992, 105; Rosler 2004, 355). Moreover, the scarce possibility, fully acknowledged by that time, of creating artworks *outside* the art system that could then be recognised *within* it, especially due to the financial cuts to public support for artists started by Reagan's administration, is among the motivations that eventually led the artist, once she reprised the project in 2004 as a response to American military action in Iraq, to display the new pictures in institutional exhibiting contexts. In their respective projects, Rosler and Wodiczko thus saw photography as both the instrument of repressive forms of political domination and "a place of refuge, from which the discourse on the res publica may be revived" (Azoulay 2008, 32). By fighting the powers that be on their own constitutive grounds – that is, public space and the symbolic realm – *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* and *The Homeless Projection* proved to rely on a specific and politically-charged redefinition of the meaning of 'public' and 'space'. Publicness, in and through the two works, was defined as the conflictual

⁸ <http://www.moma.org/collection/works/152791>.

tension they fostered between official narratives and obscured statements, or, in Fred Evans' terminology, as the struggle between 'oracles' – characterised by the fact of presenting themselves "as absolute truths and thus not in need of significant revision" (Evans 2019, 38) – and "voices that have been muted by dominating forces" (Evans 2019, 44). In spatial terms, this tension over the 'right to speak' holds at a distance any possible understanding of the city as an outdoor extension of galleries or museums, which would automatically uphold the capitalist and autocratic network of power relations underlying both hegemonic discourses and the art system. By oppositely interpreting public space as "a sphere of assembly, debate, and political struggle" (Marchart 2019, 41), the works of Martha Rosler and Krzysztof Wodiczko can therefore be reconnected – and, in fact, even pave the way – to socially engaged art's operational approach, in that they "are not simply symbolic actions in the spectator system, but rather actions in the social world with a symbolic and aesthetic dimension" (van den Berg 2019, 25).

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Andrea Nalesso

Space in Mediations. Re-Situating Architectural Experience in the Exhibition

Arianna Casarini

Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, Italia

Abstract The production of space experiences has embodied a permanent concern for the curatorial praxis and the theoretical reflection of architecture exhibition. With the analysis of two relevant examples of curatorial strategy applied to architecture – namely, cast collections and virtual architecture simulations – this paper proposes an investigation of the development of the ideological and cultural substratum of the techniques of spatial experience reproduction in the architecture exhibition. The aim is not only to contextualise the efforts of space production operated by the architecture exhibition but also, more radically, to re-situate and re-define the traditional concept of spatial experience achievable through architecture display.

Keywords Architecture exhibition. Exhibition theory. Curatorial theory. Architecture curation. Architecture representations.

Summary 1 The Status of Experience Production in the Architecture Exhibition. – 2 Mediate the Mediators: Re-Thinking the Relevance of Cast Collections. – 3 The Perils of Immediacy: A Reflection on Exhibiting Architecture Through Virtual Reality. – 4 Re-Situating the Idea of Experience.



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1 The Status of Experience Production in the Architecture Exhibition

Representations of space within a space of display, spatialised in a spatial narration: within these premises, the exhibition of architecture is a curatorial issue of often contradictory solutions. The attitude towards the use, benefits and limitations of using architecture representations to visualise and represent space has characterised the tone of the curatorial debate about the possibility and potentiality (as well as the comprehension) of architecture exhibition. At this point, after a long parenthesis of theoretical elaboration, the factual necessity of displaying architecture through its translation into surrogate objects has become an almost rhetorical issue and a mundane reflection for architecture curators. Currently, the praxis of architectural display is instead expanding its focus on issues different from the most suitable strategies for dealing with architectural representations.

In the current theoretical speculation, questions concerning the mediation strategies for architecture exhibitions and their efficacy, as well as attempts to develop a specific curatorial attitude towards architecture, are consistently gaining attention (Gigliotti 2015; Watson 2021). These issues stem from a more calculated concern for the communicative dimension of architecture exhibitions as instruments and catalysts helpful in fostering an updated discussion about architecture culture – the capacity of the architecture exhibition to ‘speak’, visualise, mediate, and represent for the broadest possible array of audiences is the current responsibility that architecture curators necessarily have to consider. Consequently, the current interest in the reception of architecture exhibitions, in combination with a revival of the attention dedicated to how architecture is mediated through display, is reframing the discourse around the ‘language’ performed by architecture exhibitions and the effectiveness of its accessibility.

The interest in providing a more profound understanding of architectural culture – as well as of its social dimension and political impact – to the broadest possible public, the necessity of reconciling the different sets of knowledge of these expanded audiences holistically, along with concerns for making architecture accessible and readable through exhibitions, are the theoretical concerns that are contributing to re-focalise the debate on display techniques and strategies on a renovated involvement with the idea of producing experience and spatial events as curatorial responses for mediating architecture.

From a historical point of view, the reflection on the possibility of reconstructing the experience of architecture and space in an exhibition format or, more generally, on how to reproduce the performative aspects of architecture in a display is not, in its essence, *new*. The problem of how to evoke the idea of space through the use of architectural reproductions and the reconstruction of architectural

experience through display has characterised architecture curation since its beginning. In this respect, it is even possible to affirm that architecture exhibitions also originated from the ambition of reproducing a particular experience of architecture for the publics unable to visit, study and experience it first-hand.¹

However, the purposes supporting this current interest are what differs today in the contemporary discourse around producing an architectural experience. At the moment, it appears that the focus on ‘experience-ability’ in architecture exhibitions follows a similar pattern already observed in a specific type of production of art exhibitions, where the increasing attention devoted to experience, immersivity, and interactivity appears to be inspired not by carefully-developed educational or mediating strategies but, instead, by perfunctory and exploited concepts of spectacularisation, and a severe misconstruction, as well of misuse, of the concept of participation, of its prerequisites and its objectives.² The idea of resolving the complex construction of the mediating efforts of the display into the simple proposal of an experience, left for the publics to consume and metabolise without the intermission of ‘distracting’ intermediary apparatus, is a tempting one, relating to the assumption of the primacy of experiential apprehension as an effective knowledge-production approach. Hazardously, curatorial strategies can, in some events, equate experience consumption with immediacy of comprehension in the publics.

In architecture exhibitions, the idea that “space requires a 1:1 perception-construction through subjective involvement” (Kuehn 2015, 73) to be conveyed appropriately or, to paraphrase, that it needs to be manifested as an un-mediated phenomenon to be *correctly* communicated with its qualities and features produces, in some cases, the conviction that the ‘plain’ tridimensional presentation of space, be it real or virtual, could be sufficient in itself to communicate with efficacy not only the functioning of architecture but also architectural ideas.³

1 Historically, the use of architectural reproductions (prints, drawings, models, and casts) in the first architectural collections was not limited to the diffusion of architectural ideas regarding forms and style. Architectural visualisation instruments also played a crucial role in transmitting a specific understanding of the experience of architecture to architectural experts, *connoisseurs*, scholars and curious audiences unable to visit and encounter them directly. To further the reasoning on the connection between the flourishing industry of architectural representations and the increasing interest in experiencing ‘distant’ architecture through surrogates, see Szambien 1988, 17-22 and 32-40.

2 For an investigation of the increasing relationship between culture and mass entertainment, see Pine, Gilmore 1999, as well as Rifkin 2000, especially for the entanglement of pervasive capitalistic mentality with contemporary cultural production.

3 This idea opens up a series of paradoxical questions on the necessity of architecture exhibition (if architecture can only expose itself by itself, then isn’t the architecture exhibition a superfluous operation?); on the distinction between exhibiting and building (if architecture needs to be displayed as 1:1 experience, then is the exhibition just the building of architecture, and therefore not an act of display but an act of construction?);

This idea that the most immediate way of access to architecture understanding primarily occurs through the presentation of an un-filtered and un-mediated sensorial experience of space develops a series of stimulating yet conflicting problematics when considered from a curatorial approach. To some extent, the focus on experience and the senses as privileged systems of access to architecture apprehension ‘mimic’ the status-quo condition of routinely architecture perception already performed in the everyday. In terms of display strategies and theoretical elaborations around exhibited architecture, it provides little more than the attempt to replicate the natural system for encountering architectural experience in our daily life.

In addition, even if it is evident that architecture is primarily an experiential and performative object, it can nevertheless be debated if direct experience equates immediately to an understanding of architecture or to the comprehension of how a built environment is structured, organised and developed from a theoretical and a functional point of view – to experience, to understand and, ultimately, to know, are not often synonyms, or a consequential and straightforward process.

To this outline, it is also relevant to add that *reproducing* architecture in the exhibition context might be a fairly complex operation. If we are to propose alternatives to the idea of *constructing* a specific space for only display purposes – a solution today not always economically or environmentally sustainable –, the instruments at our disposition are theatrical stage-up of more theoretical than pragmatic nature, spectacular immersive environments or the temporary evocation of architectural atmospheres.

Especially from the perspective of architecture exhibition functioning, display is not just a matter of re-producing and re-presenting architecture but the construction of a relational and narrative context in which architecture can be ‘verbalised’, translated and mediated to create a discourse not only of architecture, but for and about architecture (Borasi 2015, 32). The reduction of the complexity of exhibited architecture to its experiential dimension, as well as the restriction of the architecture exhibition’s potential to a space that replicates the exact same mechanism of architectural encounter of the ordinary everyday, seems a relatively limiting horizon for the expression and development of curatorial action and theorisation. To some extent, singularly concentrating on *experience* can also be interpreted as a curatorial defeat, as the admission that an architecture exhibition, when it doesn’t operate a literal construction of ‘re-

as well as on the sustainability and affordability of displaying architecture ideas as actual work of construction (if exhibiting is making space, what economic restrictions, sustainable regulations and collective benefit this idea of display needs to conform to?).

al architecture' is a superfluous instrument. In the end, the effort of translating architecture into a curatorial display is an ineffective endeavour since the direct experience of constructed architectural objects will always be preferable to the mediated engagement with architecture when displayed. If "architecture is not only about building or about space making but also about the narration and perception of reality" (Kuehn 2015, 85), then that architecture exhibition should primarily strive to offer the re-proposition of an experience as a potential contradiction of considering the moment of display as

Not merely an objective *per se* but rather a strategic tool, [...] for fostering ideas, challenging positions, introducing new themes, questioning current topics and, ultimately, for advancing new theories and changing current practices. (Borasi 2015, 33)

In addition, from a pedagogical perspective, focussing uniquely on the primacy of experience is also a curatorial strategy that, with the idea of privileging immediacy, averts a direct confrontation with the issue of increasing architectural understanding in the publics. Presenting un-mediated (thus also un-problematised, or un-contextualised) experience and so avoiding the challenge of addressing the intellectual construction of architecture critically, the 'experiential approach' could incidentally support deprivation of knowledge tools for interpreting, reading and understanding architecture, limiting thus the possibility for the publics of a critical encounter with architectural ideas in the name of a non-specified and pretended 'democratic' accessibility of the content of the exhibition. If the architecture exhibition abstains from the attempt to illustrate and interpret the mechanism and functioning of architecture, it thus refuses to cultivate architecture understanding, while the idea that experience alone can fill by itself the inadequacies of the average level of architectural education is a wishful oversimplification of an issue of extreme contemporary relevance for architectural discipline. Going beyond the intent of delivering an experience can expand the relevancy of architecture exhibitions as knowledge-production instruments.

To the pedagogical aspect of the question of whether the idea of experience is truly beneficial to the publics, it is also essential to add that the current enthusiasm surrounding the intention of creating experiences at the site of the display is deeply connected to the idea of cultural commodification linked to the pervasiveness of the 'logic' of entertainment and leisure currently corroding the cultural programme of many cultural institutions.⁴ The link between experi-

⁴ See the reflection on entertainment logic applied to cultural production of De Cecco 2015, 122-3.

ence production and mass entertainment cannot be overlooked, especially in the impact of how this challenges and impoverishes the *actual* cognitive experience of the publics of architecture exhibitions.

Despite these problematic premises, the exploration of curatorial strategies interested in producing experience in the architecture exhibition is developing steadily. The ambition in architecture exhibitions to materialise a space, or, alternatively, to reach for the construction of an architecture that may be somehow inhabited, is reinforced by the current inclination for bringing the latest technological development of virtual space in museums and galleries, in order to provide audiences with complex architectural contexts to explore and interact with, at least *immaterially*.

However, computer-generated virtual simulations of architecture are but the most recent addition to the curatorial instruments employed to create a spatial experience in the architecture exhibition. The history of architecture display has witnessed, through the epochs, the emergence and the fall, the deconstruction and the re-interpretation of diverse methodologies for 'manufacturing' space-experience, struggling to develop and perfect representational media that could manifest not only an image of architecture but an 'architectural visualisation' with the power of additionally embody an experiential component. Retracing the history of these 'experiential devices' is also reconstructing how the encounter with space has been attempted through display and, even more relevantly, how different exhibiting practices contribute to producing, influencing, and shaping different perceptions and understandings of space. If favouring a specific medium or representation tool to display architecture reveals how the exhibition defines, interprets and expresses space - thus influencing the development of architectural knowledge in the publics -, then it is possible to affirm that this choice is a conceptual operation of epistemological construction. In this perspective, producing space experiences has an ideological quality that should not be overlooked if we are to illustrate how curatorial strategies are responsible for the production of architectural culture.

In order to explore the impact of architecture display techniques on the creation and reception of space-related ideas and experience, it is interesting to analyse two examples of exhibition practices that might seem somewhat antithetical: casts and architectural fragment display, and tridimensional space simulations through Virtual Reality (VR). The choice to compare two different options situated at the polar opposites of the chronological development of architecture exhibitions is proposed not solely to highlight the systemic metamorphosis encountered by architecture exhibitions in the methodologies of space reproduction. Capitalising on their respective popularity as mass-medium of architectural representation, the intention of culturally contextualising their functioning and conceptual structure is

grounded in the perspective of manifesting how curatorial approaches can become, in their own right, objects of acts of mediation.

The 'emblematic' qualities of these two display methods make them particularly suitable case studies. On the one hand, plaster casts and virtual reality have managed to create impressively complex curatorial dimensions particularly illustrative of the state of the reflection around architecture exhibition in their respective historical moments. On the other hand, both have shaped, with the meta-physical influence of their experience, two diverse and definite interpretations of space expressive of the ideological systems surrounding them. In addition, plaster casts and virtual reality also express evidently the problematics, limitations and potentialities of the technologies generating them, highlighting the necessity of contextualising and mediating, in the architecture exhibition, as much what is exposed as how it is exposed.

The analysis of these two examples can, in the end, also present a particularly intriguing outcome: the possibility to re-situate and reformulate our traditional and standard definition of architectural experience produced and achievable through architecture display. To reexamine architectural experience, making it develop from an idea of merely reproducing sensorial simulation towards, instead, an idea of encountering through display cultural and disciplinary problematics around architecture, could be a favourable process to shape architecture exhibitions capable of producing critical thinking around architecture culture.

2 Mediate the Mediators: Re-Thinking the Relevance of Cast Collections

Casts of architecture monuments enjoyed short yet intense popularity in architecture exhibitions.⁵ Nowadays, they are, in most cases, regarded as obsolete forms of architectural representations, as well as "relics of a bygone museum paradigm" (Lending 2017, 4): pragmatically, their size makes them impractical display devices for a vast majority of exhibition spaces, and their maintenance and restoration are often exceedingly expensive; conceptually, their potentiality as producers of space experience is put into question, and the cultural paradigm they represent is disputed as anachronistic and deceptive. The prolific cast culture that colonised with monumental reproductions museums and architecture academies all

⁵ For an extensive study on plaster cast culture and how casts were 'invented', presented, documented, preserved, circulated, traded and exhibited from the nineteenth century to contemporaneity, see Lending 2017.

over the West during the nineteenth century is an outdated memory suited primarily for historical explorations. The museums and galleries that did not discard their casts and models collection after the first half of the twentieth century are rare, and their 'intellectual embarrassment' in dealing with these cumbersome fossils of historicism is evident.

Touring a cast gallery is indeed a potentially *unheimlich* experience, sometimes better comparable with the encounters with the exhibits of wax museums or archaeological sites than with contemporary architecture collections. Casts and fragments at various stages of ruination populate the space with their phantasmatic presences; they climb and grip walls as parasitic plants, layering the exhibition space as an additional architectural wallpaper, or stand in the middle of the gallery as imposing, threatening funereal monuments. The alienating impression of displacement and decontextualisation generated by the multitude of heterogeneous (both chronologically and geographically) architectures crowded together in spaces dwarfed by their sizes is disorienting - the suspicion of being placed inside particularly elaborated virtual architecture *capriccio* is not easy to discard. The sequence and the progression of architectural history are, in addition, not so easily deciphered:⁶ the assembly of ectoplasmic monuments instead conjures the idea of a chaotically disposed yet meticulously-detailed cataloguing of architectural specimens. In cast collections, we encounter space as a fragmented and eclectic "condensed historical panorama" (Lending 2017, 1).

Nevertheless, the hypnotic charm and even the sensuous seduction of these architectural representations still exercise an enticing influence. The idea of space they evoke is subtly captivating - it relies on atmosphere, artifice and 'cosmetical appeal' to persuade the audiences to suspend their disbelief in confronting this virtual Grand Tour of displaced architectures.⁷ The theatricality that emerges from this typology of collections is alluring: one has the sensation of pacing through an abandoned movie set or being on the stage of a historical play of particularly baroque complexity. Paradoxically, casts heavily rely on emotionally-charged narration to communicate their objectives, despite their mimetic qualities.

6 The limitations of display spaces, the sizes of the model and casts and the complexity of the necessary rearrangements of the collections have deemed the efforts to maintain a coherent organisation of their narration in space unsustainable.

7 It is not surprising, for example, that this type of collection is so often linked with the idea of time travel and space travel in a sort of 'virtual tourism' *ante-litteram*: their spatial narratives were indeed a method to allow the visit and the study of distant, hardly accessible or poorly maintained architectural sites to the broadest public possible. For the link between plaster culture, Grand Tour, and the Voyage Pittoresque, see Lending 2017, 30-5 and 40-6, as well as Szambien 1988, 17-40.

Cast collections originated from a late-nineteenth sensibility where the historicist and positivist obsession for the classification, systematisation and categorisation of knowledge flirted with a fascination for the wonder-inducing and sublime aspects of History and the 'Exotic'.⁸ Even if casts and models were praised for their exactitude, precision and adherence to their originals and "advocated by scholarly elites as a medium par excellence for teaching and disseminating historical architecture" (Lending 2017, 6), it could not be denied that it was also their evocative potential that made them a privileged instrument of architecture representation – especially when architecture needed to be mediated and presented not only to a public of experts in the discipline but opened up to the curious 'masses'.⁹

However, is atmosphere enough to produce architectural knowledge and spatial apprehension? Indeed, the mesmerising evocation of architectural space produced by casts and life-size models is not enough to create a discourse around architecture, let alone an updated one, especially for a contemporaneity that has since long discarded and deconstructed the historicist paradigm as a productive epistemological instrument. The normative criteria of chronology and typology that inspire these collections to be exhaustive pedagogical instruments for comparison of architecture as a phenomenon of styles, orders and proportions are now considered conservative even in the more traditional architectural curricula. To be even more precise, what contemporaneity has dismissed is the very idea, represented by the cast collection, of the past as a cohesive, linearly-readable, typologically-ordered evolutionary continuum, which:

Sprang from a worldview based on the presumption that History could be conceived of as a systematic whole, constituted by distinct and homogenous epochs, each with a particular character and a distinct style. (Lending 2017, 5)

In the end, the spatial experience conveyed by casts progressively decayed once the metaphysical imagination surrounding and justifying its premises started to be undermined.

Furthermore, the pedagogical potential of the space experience produced by cast collections is also put into question precisely due to the suspicions surrounding the excessive 'scenographic' quality of their *mise-en-scene*. The aptitude for stupefaction of the atmospheric

⁸ For the colonialist implications of cast collection and cast production, see Lending 2017, 140-51.

⁹ Plaster cast monuments can be considered by all means 'mass media' of architectural reproduction, as well as the first architectural representations specifically imagined primarily for exhibition.

artificial theatricality of cast display makes the type and quality of knowledge derived from it challenging to evaluate. Despite the unquestionably powerful emotional response produced by the recreation of space operated by casts, it is complex to determine if their sensuous and Romantically 'melodramatic' appeal also carries a certain amount of pedagogical consequences for understanding architecture and its functioning. In addition, from a certain perspective, it is not only the highly theatrical impression of this type of collection that could appear misleading; but also the *ideality* produced by the systematic project to organise and illustrate architecture as an orderly, harmonic trajectory between epochs and style carries a threatening interpretative bias that contemporary architecture history education engaged in re-contextualise.

However, can the whole dimension and impact of the space experience produced by casts be so easily dismissed by contemporaneity? Couldn't there be strategies to re-purpose it and make it relevant once again? Even if it is challenging for us to reconnect with the original space experience evoked by casts display, since we do not share the same value system anymore, it is possible to argue that they can be used to produce a different declination of space and architecture experience.

If we consider the cast collections as an accurate "time capsule containing the reminiscing present of a historicist culture, ordering, elaborating, and presenting the past" (Lending 2017, 4), then this type of display can be interpreted as a strikingly exact embodiment and visualisation of the cultural system that produced it. Instead of a mere re-creation of space, cast displays can provide us with a comprehensive experience of an idea of space literally embodied in an actual display and curatorial manifestation.

Suppose we study casts and their display system as *cultural artefacts* in themselves; they can serve as vantage points from which to apprehend curation and display as profoundly historical phenomena, thus generating awareness around the development of representation strategies, helping us understand them as epoch-bound and site-specific production related to the cultural ideologies substantiating them. While manifesting historical and cultural structures now obsolete in the form of a display mechanism, cast collection can assist in visualising and, concurrently, problematising the apparatus of past historical structures and therefore supporting us in the exploration and study of specific ideas of architectural history. The space experience produced by cast collections can thus become the mediation of a system of mediation, embodying the possibility of presenting a whole historical, cultural system connected with architecture display as an exhibit in itself and discussing a historical idea of architecture curation through a still-existing spatial representation – *de facto* allowing the publics to make the experience of a curatorial system for

architecture and, in general, of cultural ideas surrounding architecture in a spatialised and visualised way.

3 The Perils of Immediacy: A Reflection on Exhibiting Architecture Through Virtual Reality

Tridimensional virtual¹⁰ simulations of architecture are among the production of digital technologies currently investigated (and promoted) as potential instruments to re-produce an experience of space in the architecture exhibition. It is not surprising that the possibility of 'building' *virtually* inhabitable spaces is an enticing prospect for architecture curators whose interests lie in presenting a reproduction of architectural space as attuned as possible to the conditions and qualities that sensory perception attributes to the close, real-life encounter with the built object. In this curatorial dimension, the intellectual operations of *exhibiting* and *displaying* express themselves within the limits of the concept of contiguous *presentation*. The opportunity to present architecture *by itself* through a virtual, immersive simulation, without having to recur to the often problematic paraphernalia of 'traditional' architectural representations or to conjure complex curatorial strategies, might seem a valuable and logical solution not only to evade the limitations of the paradoxical nature of architecture exhibitions momentarily but also to provide an accessible instrument to foster architectural understanding suitable for non-expert audiences. Interpreted as user-friendly and intellectually approachable experience providers, computer-generated immersive virtual spaces seem to present an immediacy of understanding and *potentiality* for performative interactivity that compete and surpass the qualities of all the more explored and traditional architecture representations with ease. As display facilitators, tridimensional virtual spaces are currently praised for their precision and definition, flexibility and adaptability, and potential to engage the contemporary publics in interactive, multimodal and manipulable participatory environments.

Un-mediated and immediate appears to be two frequently-used qualities to describe the experience of tridimensional virtual architectures. The virtual production of space experiences seems to grant a *democratic* point of access to the exhibition of architecture, on the one hand, satisfying the expectations and the need for comprehensibility of non-expert audiences; on the other hand, providing precision and accuracy to architecture representations for the necessities

¹⁰ For the display problems attached to the devices necessary to sustain and produce tridimensional virtual space simulations, see Champion 2021, 209-27. For the specific problem of the technological obsolescence of virtual reality software and devices, see also 224-7.

and interests of expert publics. Conceived as suppliers of experiences seamlessly connecting, surrogating and even substituting the 'real', virtual spaces-simulations pose themselves as architectural representations that do not require either mediation or contextualisation precisely by virtue of their *proximity* with reality.

Despite its potential qualities in delivering space simulations, virtual architecture can also be interpreted as a problematic tool among the instruments of architectural curation – and not only for the factual difficulties in integrating it effectively in exhibitions.¹¹

Primarily, the same quality of the experience of space currently being provided by immersive, virtual tridimensional architecture simulation could be questioned in its efficacy. The potentiality embedded in the simulation qualities and powers of virtual spaces is undoubtedly existing; nevertheless, the current state of the art of the technology is far from providing these possibilities in a sustainable and widely-available fashion.¹² Despite the constantly-evolving development of the technological instruments necessary to sustain the virtual simulation of space (both in terms of bodily devices and software), the capability of the virtual environment to produce a *realistic* experience of space is still lacking in many fundamental aspects.

It is difficult to ignore, for example, the permanence of an emphasis on vision and visual qualities in virtual reality.¹³ Despite the pretences of the efficacy of tridimensionality, VR still “has not focused on what people do in place but what people can view of place” (Champion 2021, 18). The still-present technological limitations of the devices presently in use and the legitimate complexity of integrating holistically sensory stimulations beyond articulated visual perception still make virtual architectural simulation mainly operate on a scopic domain. In this perspective, VR creates an experience that places the emphasis mostly only on visual stimulation, and so where the body is thus effectively redundant: the experience of architecture in virtual space then becomes a sort of disembodied experience, thus undermining any pretence of *realistic* of the space-experience produced by virtual simulation of architecture.¹⁴ In addition, considered specifically from the perspective of architectural curation, this condition of scopic dominance contributes to the general problem of the tendency of architecture display to reduce architecture to an image

¹¹ For an overview of the development of simulation technologies, as well as of their related potentialities and limitations, see Champion 2021, 3-24.

¹² For virtual reality as a primarily vision-focus device, see Champion 2021, 15-16.

¹³ For the relationship between body and virtual architecture, see Grosz 2001, 77-86.

¹⁴ For the problem of evaluating in an effective and scientific manner the cognitive and pedagogical outcome of interactivity in virtual architecture, see Champion 2017, 205-6.

to be consumed aesthetically and visually, rather than to manifest it as an experiential object to be performatively encountered.

Furthermore, the possibility of integrating a certain degree of user manipulation, modifiability and interactivity in the virtual space is still mostly under construction. As Champion states:

Virtual environments were historically designed for single uses and single users [...]. The related tools are likewise designed to look for singular interaction; two-dimensional processes and the 'surround' screens do not create a sense of place. Historically, VR has depicted images of place, but it does not transport us to or allow us to inhabit space (Champion 2021, 23)

This historical calibration of virtual experience to individuality, which additionally does not include any degree of inclusion of personalised inputs in the use of the space simulations, is still a limiting condition commonly present today, due to the difficulty of configuring virtual space as an open system able to react to multimodal and conflicting stimuli, originating at once by diverse operators. From this perspective, instead of recreating an accurate, realistic experience of space, virtually-generated architecture seems to museify the concept of experience and limit the user's experiential and performative agency of interaction with space.

As a corollary to this, just from a cognitive point of view, it is still much debated how (and if) interactivity and manipulation in virtual space could contribute to building architectural knowledge and apprehension, especially one that could be sustained, metabolised and capitalised upon outside of the virtual simulation.¹⁵ As for now, doubts remain concerning the possibility of correctly evaluating how (and how much) users learn from the experience matured in virtual spaces.

In addition, the *gamification effect* that some examples of virtual spaces seem to encourage as an interpretation of participatory activity, despite its relevance concerning the central question of user engagement, might produce some contradictory outcomes. From a pedagogical standpoint, it is much debated if infusing virtual architecture with gaming qualities has the potential to be translated into actual educational value.¹⁶ It is also important not to underestimate the potential issues in progressively and pervasively infusing

¹⁵ For an exploration of the potential and the limit of diverse delineation of gamification and learning experiences in virtual spaces, see Champion 2017, 112-62.

¹⁶ For an exhaustive summary of the research and practical examples on the specific case of the gamification of cultural heritage, its relevance in contemporary exhibition culture and its potential outcomes, see Champion 2011; 2015.

cultural productions with 'entertainment ideology', with all its related consequences in the (de)valuation of the cultural relevance of exhibition and display events.¹⁷

From a perspective strictly related to the curatorial approach to exhibited architecture, it is also possible to debate if using virtual simulation of architecture merely to reproduce space in *realistic terms* could be interpreted as a limitation of its technological potential. If the main objective of a virtual, immersive spatial experience is to simulate with exactitude the impression of real space in the exhibition, where is the added heuristical value of this operation? Moreover, more importantly, is a *literal* re-proposition of an experience of space in virtual terms an effective way to generate architectural knowledge? From a critical point of view, it is legitimate to question how a technology that aspires to create a virtual space so exact to be able to substitute our perception and experience of the real one could then contribute to raising a critical comprehension of the mechanics and strategies of space construction in its users. The question of whether virtual architecture is a suitable space to explore and collocate critically the conceptual and pragmatic aspects of architectural space is a problem that should not be overlooked just in the privilege of its apparent accessibility.

In particular, if the idea and the philosophy behind the virtual space are to create a simulation 'more real than reality itself', then its critical and analytical potential is already pragmatically restrained by this premise. In this perspective, it is essential to highlight how this limitation in the cognitive and heuristic contribution of virtual architectures happens not just due to the discrepancies mentioned above between the potential and the factual realisation of the production of a realistic space experience. More precisely, it is possible to affirm that the struggle for realism in virtual experience ingrained in the current approach to this technology is just the unconsciously constant, implicit reaffirmation of the primacy of the 'original' architectural experience rooted in the 'Real'. Seeing from this perspective, virtual simulations of space understood and imagined in these terms represent another acceptance of a curatorial failure in architecture exhibition. Once again, no curatorial strategy or approach could substitute the relevancy of pristine experience with the built object, and space in the exhibition can only be *presented* in the display, which can only attempt to recreate it.

However, if architecture exhibitions confine themselves to the presentation of space, they renounce their crucial role in manifesting cultural ideas around architecture. By re-presenting the 'literalism'

¹⁷ For an exploration of this issue in the current ideological modelling of technology concerning virtual, space simulations, see Grosz 2001, 74-90.

of reality without adding any critical or problematising layer, the architecture exhibition is thus not providing its audiences with any additional instrument to decipher, interpret and understand space and architecture. Instead, if the architecture exhibition strives to foster discourse around architecture, then its essential objectives should be to interpret, translate, and mediate ideas of space, not only to recreate its experiential dimension.

Therefore, unsuccessful realism should not be the problem, nor should experiential recreation be the main pretence of virtual space simulations. If we momentarily abandon in virtual reality the objective of constructing a perception of space as real-as-reality, we could find diverse definitions for the mediation and the presentation of architectural and spatial experience. Only to quote some possible applications, the virtual simulation of space, once surpassed the idea of presenting an autonomous, readable environment, could be used to produce an experience of architecture and space that could focus more on their production than on their presentation, highlighting the process of building space and its functioning – a central endeavour of the architectural discipline. In virtual reality, it could also be possible to interact and experience how architecture is currently using digital simulation to produce and imagine space, even allowing, in specific cases, the users to manipulate and experiment with the same tools as architects. Lastly, on a more conceptual level, virtual interactive space can also be used to visualise complex social, political and cultural aspects of building space and spatial experience in interactive ways, making them more accessible and decipherable for the audiences.

All these usage declinations of virtual simulation of space generate their own specific experience of space: an experience of space that is layered, mediated and contextualised and that empowers its users with heuristic and cognitive agency in the process of developing architectural knowledge. From this perspective, the efficacy of virtual reality in reproducing and problematising an experience of space could be re-evaluated and re-signified, shaping the technology into an updated tool for fostering a conscientious understanding of architecture that could be not only accessible but genuinely innovative in its approaches.

To conclude, it seems relevant to highlight how the current conceptual limitations of the use of virtual simulated space to produce architectural experiences appear to be connected more to the ideology embedded in the technology producing it than to the factual constraints and shortcomings of its programming.¹⁸ If we redefine the premises

18 For a historical, stylistic, typological and taxonomic analysis of the significance of 'virtual' and 'simulation' in virtual architecture and space, see Ettliger 2008.

of virtual simulation of spaces, making them not surrogate alternatives to reality but *expansions* of it, the redefinition of the architectural experience could bring new valuable perspectives for the expansion and the update of the curatorial approach for architecture exhibition.

4 Re-Situating the Idea of Experience

Since its very beginning, the production of space experiences has embodied a permanent concern for the curatorial praxis and the theoretical reflection of architecture exhibition.

The exploration of the specific ideologies and cultural systems underlying the conceptual development of the display reflections born around the temporally-opposite display strategies of cast collections and computer-generated space simulations in virtual reality highlights how not only historical but also contemporary approaches to architecture curation constantly need to be analysed as contextual phenomena. Considered as cultural productions expressing specific worldviews and conceptual systems, they must be problematised in their ideological foundations to reflect and explore their efficacy and relevance. By exposing how these display methods bring the problem of spatial experience to the centre of the architecture exhibition, it was possible to demonstrate the necessity to reframe the current discussion around the interest in producing spatial experience in the architecture exhibition. In order to support an updated approach to experience production through display, it is essential to deconstruct its theoretical and pragmatic premises to consciously evaluate its potentialities and limitations for contemporary exhibition practice and experiment beyond standardised approaches to the significance of experience in the exhibition setting.

Ultimately, the focus on the importance of the contextualisation of curatorial methods indicated that updating and making relevant the spatial experience produced by casts or virtual reality is a matter of *mediation*: an essential operation necessary to reveal the potentialities of architectural reproductions as catalysts for constructing discourse around and about architecture.

The idea of the necessity of mediation additionally deconstructs the traditional ideas associated with the production of architectural experience in architecture exhibitions, especially reframing its objectives from the construction of accurate reproductions of realistic experiences to the idea of architectural experience as a performative encounter with ideas of space and architecture in the space of the display. From this perspective, the radical intention to resituate the meaning and definition of architectural experience in the exhibition is an urgent issue to reaffirm the agency and relevance of the operation of architecture mediation and curation through the act of display.

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Andrea Nalesso

The Question of Space in the Chilean Representation and Pavilion in Venice Biennale

Mariagrazia Muscatello

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia; Universidad de Chile, Chile

Abstract How significant is it to have a National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale? The question of exhibition space is crucial in defining the representation of a Nation, its cultural politics and geopolitical power. A study of the history of the Giardini and Arsenale pavilions reveals the status of nations and their importance over time. It is only since 2009 that Chile has had its Pavilion in the Arsenale. Before this date, the country's representation in the context of the Art Biennale was marginal or almost absent. However, it must be remembered that Chile is the only country to which the Biennale dedicated an entire edition in 1974, titled *Freedom for Chile for a democratic and antifascist culture* to denounce Pinochet's military coup in 1973. The military dictatorship (1973-89) also meant cultural isolation of the country and is since the 1990s that Chile has started to interlace its international cultural network again. The return to democracy represents an ongoing political and cultural process called *transición* (transition). This paper will discuss the case of Chile, its representation at the Venice Biennale and how the possibility of having a National Pavilion at the Arsenale influenced the country's aesthetic production.

Keywords Chile. Venice Biennale. National Pavilion. Biennial Art. Transición.

Summary 1 Introduction: The Venice Biennale as a Unique Model of Exhibition. – 2 The 1974 Biennale *Libertà al Cile per un cultura democratica e antifascista*. – 3 The Chilean Pavilion and the Construction of a Post-Dictatorial Aesthetic. – 4 The Aesthetic of the Chilean Pavilion (2009-19). – 5 Conclusion.

1 Introduction: The Venice Biennale as a Unique Model of Exhibition

The Venice Biennale's model is a unique case in the artworld based on national representations in a specific territory, and was founded in 1895 in the Giardini of Castello. Since 1907, the Biennale allowed to construct the first permanent pavilion in the Giardini and within a decade the most major European and North American countries had one: Belgium in 1907, Hungary in 1909, Germany in 1909, Great Britain in 1909, France in 1912, and Russia 1914 (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2022). In the subsequent years, especially after World War II, the number of international pavilions in the Giardini has increased as the actual number of twenty-nine.¹ In 1980, for the 1st International Architecture Exhibition, opened the Corderie dell'Arsenale, the other major venue of the Biennale.² The history of the pavilions in the Biennale is a first attempt at the geopolitical and cultural influence of nations in different historical moments. The national pavilions held in the Giardini circuit represent the power and the change of status of those countries during the twenty's century, while the Arsenale space symbolises the post-globalisation world and its increasing importance.

It should be noted that the South American Pavilions were among the first extra-Europeans to be included in the Giardini: Venezuela in 1954, Brazil in 1962, and Uruguay in 1964. Argentina was the first country to be invited in 1901 and had several participations (twen-

¹ This is the chronological order of construction (the author's name in brackets): 1907 Belgium (Léon Sneyens); 1909 Hungary (Géza Rintel Maróti); 1909 Germany (Daniele Donghi) demolished and rebuilt in 1938 (Ernst Haiger); 1909 Great Britain (Edwin Alfred Rickards); 1912 France (Umberto Biondo); 1912 Netherlands (Gustav Ferdinand Boberg) demolished and rebuilt in 1953 (Gerrit Thomas Rietveld); 1914 Russia (Aleksij V. Scusev); 1922 Spain (Javier De Luque) with facade renovated in 1952 by Joaquín Vaquero Palacios; 1926 Czech Republic and Slovak Republic (Otakar Novotný); 1930 United States of America (Chester Holmes Aldrich, William Adams Delano); 1932 Denmark (Carl Brummer) expanded in 1958 by Peter Koch; 1932 Venice Pavilion (Brenno del Giudice), expanded in 1938; 1934 Austria (Josef Hoffmann); 1934 Greece (M. Papandreou, Brenno Del Giudice); 1952 Israel (Zeev Rechter); 1952 Switzerland (Bruno Giacometti); 1954 Venezuela (Carlo Scarpa); 1956 Japan (Takamasa Yoshizaka); 1956 Finland (Hall Alvar Aalto); 1958 Canada (BBPR Group, Gian Luigi Banfi, Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, Ernesto Nathan Rogers); 1960 Uruguay; 1962 Nordic Countries: Sweden, Norway, Finland (Sverre Fehn); 1964 Brazil (Amerigo Marchesin); 1987 Australia (Philip Cox), rebuilt in 2015 (John Denton, Bill Corker, Barrie Marshall); 1995 Korea (Seok Chul Kim, Franco Mancuso) (<https://www.labiennale.org/en/venues/giardini-della-biennale>).

² The Arsenale currently host the National Pavilions of Albania, Argentina, Chile, People's Republic of China, Croatia, United Arab Emirates, Philippines, Georgia, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Republic of Kosovo, Latvia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Republic of Slovenia, Republic of South Africa, Tunisia e Turkey (<https://www.labiennale.org/en/venues/arsenale>).

ty-two) between 1901 and 2001.³ The question of space and national pavilions in the Venice Biennale initiated with its foundation. The demand for expanding the exhibition space outside the Giardini, began in the 1950s and grew stronger in the 1970s (Martini, Martini 2013, 22). In 1995, a new attempt of expansion outside the Giardini took place, when the Biennale allowed nations that requested to have their official pavilion in venues located in the city's private or historical buildings. Since 2005 Arsenale space has been used as a location of national pavilions. Why is it so important for a nation to have a pavilion in the main circuit of Giardini or Arsenale?

National pavilions have grown in number ever since, increasing to seventy in 2015 and ninety in 2019. The scholar Edgardo Bermejo Mora claims that

when a nation presents a pavilion at La Biennale, it demonstrates economic stability and a strong interest in developing its artistic and cultural production. The process requires economic resources, tough negotiations, international logistics, promotion of the events at home and abroad, and mediating the voices of many actors without losing sight of the diplomatic importance of the event. For those involved, a national pavilion is a tremendous source of pride. (Nieto Ruiz 2019, 380)

Chile's first attempt to have a pavilion in 1946 in Giardini failed prioritises others South-American countries (Martini, Martini 2013).

2 **The 1974 Biennale *Libertà al Cile per un cultura democratica e antifascista***

The case of Chile is indeed a singular one. The 1974 Biennale *Libertà al Cile per un cultura democratica e antifascista* (Freedom for Chile for a democratic and anti-fascist culture), also known as 'B74', was the first edition after the reform of its statute in 1973, in response to the events of 1968,⁴ which through the appointment of eighteen counsellors from different political parties, redesigned the Biennale

³ The list of all the national representation between 1895 and 2001 in Vecco 2002, 203-11. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations into English are by the Author.

⁴ In 1968 artists from different countries protested against the so-called fascist Statute of the Biennale, a legacy of the past, inadequate and limiting with respect to the demands of the artists and to a new idea of the Biennale that was emerging in those months. They wanted the abolition of the Grand Prizes and the sales office, symbols of the commodification of art, and demanded the transformation of the Exhibition itself into a permanent workshop for research, encounters, and film experimentation active all year round.

as an autonomous entity.⁵ Starting from 1970, several changes were progressively introduced into the Biennale's model following the protests against the 1968 edition: first, the sales office that had previously been incorporated into the Biennale was eliminated (1970), and began a trend of geopolitical decentralisation with the introduction of new exhibition and multidisciplinary spaces. Finally, in July 1974, the Biennale organised an international meeting, with the representatives of all the countries that owned pavilions in the Giardini, to discuss new proposals and new guidelines for the Biennale.⁶

The B74 was not only the first edition with a new statute, but the first to show many elements of an aesthetic reformulation. Aside from including the former representation of Chile in the Biennale, the B74 was characterised by the absence of other international delegations, a unique exception since the foundation of the institution. Additionally, compared to previous editions, significant changes were made to redesign its spaces. The Giardini circuit was closed for the first time in the history of the Biennale except for the Italian Pavilion, which displayed the exhibition *Mostra del manifesto cileno* (Exhibition of the Chilean manifest) with graphics and propaganda of the Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular government in Chile (1970-73). The Brigada Salvador Allende's murals were exhibited on large-format panels in different Venetian squares (*campi*) and streets [fig. 1], while the film festival entitled *Testimonianze cinematografiche sul Cile* (Cinematographic testimonies about Chile), as well as the theatre program and musical concerts, were held in a tent in Campo Santa Margherita. The artistic events also included a selection of photographs by Luis Poirot (1940), Allende's official photographer, and the Italian photographer Gian Butturini (1935-2006), entitled *Imma-*

⁵ The Board of Directors was composed of nineteen members representing local agencies, government, Biennale staff and trade union confederations. The members were Carlo Ripa di Meana, Giorgio Longo, Matteo Ajassa, Mario Baratto, Ennio Calabria, Mario Roberto Cimnaghi, Osvaldo De Nunzio, Francesco Maselli, Giuseppe Mazzariol, Roberto Mazzucco, Mario Monicelli, Ermanno Olmi, Guido Perocco, Neri Pozza, Domenico Purificato, Giuseppe Rossini, Adriano Seroni, Manlio Spandonaro and Pietro Zampetti ("Piano quadriennale di massima delle attività e delle manifestazioni (1974-1977)", in Dorigo et al. 1975, 61-2).

⁶ The new Statute of the Biennale was therefore approved by the Italian Parliament on 26 July 1973, but it was not until 20 March 1974 that the 18 members of the Board of Directors were nominated by all political parties. Carlo Ripa di Meana was elected President, while Christian Democrat Floris Ammannati, former superintendent of La Fenice Theatre, was appointed Secretary General. Vittorio Gregotti took over the direction of the Visual Arts and Architecture sectors. With this reform began an attempt at programming aimed at decentralisation, interdisciplinarity and the overcoming of the seasonal cadence. The traditional venue of the Giardini was joined by new exhibition venues at Giudecca (former shipyards), at Dorsoduro (Magazzini del Sale), and other spaces in the city where happenings, debates and performances were held ("Legge 26 luglio 1973, n. 438. Nuovo ordinamento dell'Ente autonomo «La Biennale di Venezia»", in Dorigo et al. 1975, 15-22).



Figura 1 Murales, Venice 1974. Eventi del 1974. La Biennale di Venezia, *Annuario*, 1975. Photo by the Author

gini e parole dal Cile: da Allende alla Repressione (Images and words from Chile: from Allende to Repression) exhibited on panels in the streets of Mestre, Marghera, Chioggia and in Campo San Polo (Venice). Almost all the cultural events were conceived within the public space. The use of public space meant not only a major change from the previous editions, but also the introduction of decentralisation as a way of breaking through the elitist barriers of the Biennale and approaching a new audience: students and workers, to fulfil the concept of a democratic culture.

The decentralisation of art into public spaces and the collective experience, are also fundamental aspects of the artistic practices in Chile during the years of the Unidad Popular. The Chilean philosopher Sergio Rojas referred to the role of art in Chile shortly before the coup:

There are [...] two kinds of art: the elitist, at the service of reaction, hidden in the false scheme ‘of art for art’s sake’, and the artistic expressions within a socialist society in which the so-called ‘artist’ is just another worker. (Rojas 2021, 11-12)

The Chilean muralists also known as the *brigadas muralistas*, played an important role during the years of Allende’s government, acting mostly in public spaces as a form of “art at the service of the people”. The murals had the characteristic of being collective and collaborative, almost anonymous works, in response to the criticism of conventional art and artists considered *bourgeois*. Art should some-

how represent reality as an expression of its political commitment to the contingency, hence contributing to the social transformation in which popular classes were engaged.

The importance of the collective gesture and its impact on reality and historical contingency, is certainly one of the strongest meanings of this Biennale. There is no formal aesthetic research, but an almost exclusive focus on the production processes of the artworks.

Art critic Mario De Micheli refers to the participation of the Chilean *brigadas* at the B74 as

One of the moments that aroused the most interesting discussion, consensus, and dissent during last year's edition of the visual arts biennial was the intervention of the *Brigada Salvador Allende*, integrated by exiled members of the *Brigada Ramona Parra*. The murals painted in Campo San Polo and Campo Santa Margherita, on the walls of Chioggia and Mira, and on the industrial warehouses in Mestre did not really go unnoticed. This *Brigada* was composed of young Chileans, who were joined by the internationally renowned Chilean artist Roberto Sebastián Matta. (De Micheli 1975, 915)

The text suggests the wide range of events dedicated to Chile throughout the whole area of Venice and its neighbouring cities, and it emphasises the anonymous nature of the artistic work, which also took place together with local students and artists.

From a representational perspective, the exhibition of archive's documents in the Biennale context, such as photographic reportages, graphic manifestos or documentaries, denotes the aestheticisation of history as a form of contemporary art. This shift of the narrative and aesthetic paradigm in the B74 responded to the debate over the role of art in the late 1960s and 1970s and, specifically, over the definition of what contemporary art means.⁷

The B74 was therefore important for different reasons: for the reform of the Biennale statute, the redesign of the exhibition spaces, the decentralization of the museography in the public space and the inclusion of Magazzini del Sale⁸ as a new venue. At the same

⁷ This debate is largely discussed in the interdisciplinary critical contributions section of the catalogue: "Condizioni e ruolo delle arti contemporanee nella crisi di trasformazione del mondo" (Conditions and role of contemporary arts in the world's transformation crisis) which includes texts of Wladimiro Rodrigo, Pierre Restany, Francesco dal Co, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Eugenio Barba, Heinz-Klaus Metzger, Gillo Dorfles, Franco and Franca Basaglia.

⁸ Magazzini del Sale space was restored on occasion of the B74 Biennale and held the exhibition of Ugo Mulas *Verifiche*, a series of photographs on the Biennale taken during various openings.

time, from an aesthetic perspective, it is relevant for its interdisciplinary concept (including art, cinema, music, theatre and architecture) and the centrality of documents and historical archives displayed as artworks. These characteristics also concern the political and collective aspect of art versus the individual and the 'art for art's sake' model.

In relation to the press of the event, it is significant to underline that its political aspect aroused strong criticism from journalists and art critics of the time, both nationally and internationally.

Numerous articles were written, 142 pages of press reviews, which represents a considerable number since the short duration of the event (16 October-17 November). The main criticism has been towards its political propaganda, but also against the decentralisation of exhibitions in public spaces and factories. The art critic Achille Bonito Oliva, interviewed by the newspaper *LE ARTI* in November 1974, expressed his contrary respect to the public space program:

I do not believe that bringing art to Porto Marghera means making popular art. On the contrary, it creates a big misunderstanding. Art must remain in its designated spaces because the museum paradoxically helps art to decode itself [...]. Displaying artworks in the streets, bringing the Biennale to Porto Marghera means making pure demagogy. (Bonito Oliva 1974, 780)

3 The Chilean Pavilion and the Construction of a Post-Dictatorial Aesthetic

The cultural isolation of Chile during the years of the dictatorship (1973-89) influenced not only the representation of the country in the international art scene, but also the local artistic production. After the B74 edition, Chilean artists no longer participated in the Biennale until 1986. This was due to the country's difficult diplomatic relationships, and also to a radical change in terms of artistic output, which distanced itself from the denouncing and confrontational art and, for this reason, was unsuitable for an antifascist and political narrative. Chile went from being a left-wing cultural and political reference to being almost completely ignored during the dictatorship period.

The return to democracy in the 1990s signed a period that has been defined as *transición* (transition) and that brought Chile back to the international panorama. During this period, democratic institutions were strengthened and the political power of the military was slowly rolled back. In addition, the economic consensus around neoliberal economy was followed by a rapid economic growth, and the decline of anti-dictatorship insurgencies that rejected the new demo-

cratic and political rule of a centre-left coalition, were the main characteristics of that decade.⁹

In these years there were also several transformations in the public sphere that determined the post-dictatorial artistic production. Chilean Art critics Guillermo Machuca (1961-2020) and María Berrios (1978) have defined the state's cultural politics as a business based on the media and massive impact, transforming culture into a spectacle. The international art circuit has become fundamental and has changed Chile's local artistic paradigm. Chilean artists passed from a closed and endogamic model during the dictatorship, the *Avanzada* scene defined by the art critic Nelly Richard (1943), to an international one. The 1990s artistic scene developed following international trends and the compulsion of being recognised worldwide (Berrios, Machuca 2006, 65-103). The possession of a national Pavilion was consequently crucial for Chile's cultural politics and artistic circuit. The first Chilean Pavilion opened in 2001 during the 49th Biennale. The exhibition was a tribute to Juan Downey (1940-1993), an experimental Chilean artist and video-maker who lived and died in New York. It was held at Thetis space, a private location rented during the Biennale and located in the Castello district. Finally, in 2009, during the 53rd Biennale, Chile opened its official Pavilion at the Arsenale.

This achievement was crucial not only as regards national representation, but also granted the possibility for Chilean artists, curators, and scholars of having a space to establish international relationships.

Analysing the aesthetic of the Chilean Pavilion during the last ten years (2009-19), it is possible to observe that the centrality of the political discourse that has characterised the B74 edition, which to date is also the most important representation of Chile in Venice Biennale, has been replaced by the institutional program of a cultural reconciliation during the years of transition.

⁹ The preparation for the 1990 transition began within the dictatorship itself when a constitution establishing a transition itinerary was approved in a plebiscite. From 11 March 1981 to March 1990, several organic constitutional laws were approved, leading to the final restoration of democracy. After the 1988 plebiscite, the 1980 Constitution (which is still in effect today) was amended to ease provisions for future amendments to the constitution, create more seats in the Senate, diminish the role of the National Security Council, and equalise the number of civilian and military members (four members each). Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin served from 1990 to 1994 and was succeeded by another Christian Democrat, Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle (son of Eduardo Frei Montalva), leading the same coalition for a six-year term. Ricardo Lagos Escobar of the Socialist Party and the Party for Democracy led the *Concertación* to a narrower victory in the 2000 presidential election. His term ended on 11 March 2006, when Michelle Bachelet of the Socialist Party took office. Centre-right investor and businessman Sebastián Piñera, of the National Renewal, assumed the presidency on 11 March 2010, after Bachelet's term expired. Bachelet returned to the office on 11 March 11, being succeeded by Piñera in the following term (2018-22) (Pecinar 2022).

The main purpose of the institutional narrative during the *transición* period, is to position Chile as a stable, peaceful, democratic and emerging country avoiding internal political and social tension and minimizing the problems of the past, and the aesthetic of the Chilean Pavilion was in line with this purpose.

4 The Aesthetic of the Chilean Pavilion (2009-19)

Iván Navarro, Fernando Prats and Alfredo Jaar, were the three artists who represented Chile respectively in 2009, 2011 and 2013, selected directly by a special commission composed of government cultural bureaucrats. It is also important to note that between 2009 and 2011, President Sebastian Piñera's right-wing government was in office for the first time.

Iván Navarro (1972) belonging to the post-dictatorship generation of the 1990s, but living in New York since 1997, presented for the 53rd Biennale (2009) the installation called *The Threshold*: a series of multicoloured neon doors, and a neon sculpture reflecting a specific word: "BED" [fig. 2]. The use of neon is reminiscent of the works of Dan Flavin (1933-1996) and of the American and European conceptual art scene. The choice of Navarro as the first national artist of Chilean Pavilion, reinforces the idea of a young, cool and new country, looking ahead to a brighter future. The multicoloured neon lights and the conceptual use of English words suggest a multicultural, refined, sophisticated and artistically advanced nation. There is no correlation or reference to the B74 Chile. It seems that memory disappeared in a postmodern present, aspiring to enter the list of rich countries belonging to the first-world, moving away from the Latin American stereotype. Once economic and cultural wealth was established, Chile stimulated its touristic industry by presenting its monumental landscapes to the world. The *Gran Sur* (Great Sur) project by artist Fernando Prats (1965), who represented the Chile Pavilion during the 54th Biennale (2011), summarises the iconic images of Chile: Antarctic territory, volcanoes, and glaciers. The montage is composed of three pieces: an intervention about the impact of the volcanic eruption in Chaitén (2008); a series of pieces that allude to the mega earthquake in the central south of Chile (2010); and a neon lettered installation displaying the mythical job advertising by Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton, published in 1911, looking for men for his Antarctic expedition [fig. 3].

Chilean geography is a strong cultural reference shared by the entire society, regardless of their political orientation. The conservative aesthetics of the dictatorship is based on the exaltation of the landscapes and the local folklore, while leftish artists refer to the territory as a topic of political contention. Chile is presented as a wild coun-



Figura 2 Ivan Navarro, *Death Row*. 2006. 53rd Biennale di Venezia, Pavilion of Chile. Installation, 218.4 × 1,524 × 11.4 cm. Courtesy Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris. Photo Sebastiano Luciano

try, a land of opportunity to explore or conquer again, as Shackleton did. At the same time, this epic and transversal theme reinforces the need for social unity, especially after the 2010 mega-earthquake.

Alfredo Jaar represented Chile during the 55th Biennale (2013) and was also the last to be directly nominated by the government commission. Jaar is probably the most famous Chilean artist internationally and his appointment is not only due to his career but it's also a strategy to give relevance to the Pavilion. The project *Venezia Venezia* (2013) refers to the obsolescence of the national pavilions showing a reduced-scale architectural reproduction of the Giardini circuit that sinks under the sea [fig. 4]. The catalogue highlights as well the artist's international connection, inviting intellectuals such as Jacques Rancière and Toni Negri to reflect on the worthlessness of the national pavilions at the Biennale. However, the criticism of the obsolescence of the national pavilions model in the Biennale appears as a purely academic debate that does not correspond to the growing request for representations of the countries or to the desire of artists to be part of it. No references to Chile were presented at the exhibition, as a form of distancing from the government narrative and as a veiled critic of the artist to the efforts to have a National Pavilion.

Michelle Bachelet's second term government (2013-18) introduced changes to the management of the Chilean Pavilion. A curatorial international contest was established, examined by a jury of professionals, granting autonomy to the selection process. Emphasis on the



Figure 3 Fernando Prats, *Great Sur*. 2011. Neon, aluminium, wood structure, electric generator, 200 × 1,600 × 400 cm. Courtesy Fundación Engel

local history instead of the international ambitions was the new institutional discourse. In political terms, a general public discontent demanding for social reforms has begun to question the *transición* narrative of a prosperous and reconciled country.

The 56th Biennale (2015) is particularly interesting within the Chilean perspective. Okwui Enwezor (1963-2019), the curator in charge, inspired his exhibition *All the world futures* to the political narrative of solidarity of the B74. Nelly Richard's curatorial project *Poética de la disidencia* (Poetics of dissidence) won the first edition of the public contest by presenting the works of Paz Errazuriz (1944) and Lotty Rosenfeld (1943-2020), two exponents of the *Avanzada* scene. It certainly represented a turning point for the symbolic aspect of an all-women Pavilion, as well as for the centrality of the political theme: explicitly referring, for the first time after the B74, to the period of dictatorship. The works of the two artists showed intimate and poetics political aspects of these years: Photographer Paz Errázuriz showed the project *La manzana de Adán* (Adam's Apple) (1982-87): portraits and biographies of underground transvestite and prostitute community. Lotty Rosenfeld presented her work *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* (A mile of crosses over the pavement) (1979), in which white tape transformed the dividing lines of Santiago's highways into crosses. However, memory seems something that belongs only to the past, avoiding the growing social problems of the moment. Dissidence as a form of nostalgic, radical attitude,



Figura 4 Alfredo Jaar, *Venezia, Venezia*, 2013.
55th Biennale di Venezia, Pavilion of Chile.
Courtesy Domusweb.it . Photo Italo Rondinella

while maintaining the *status quo*, represents perfectly the political agenda of the left coalition at the time. Nelly Richards declares that the aim of her curatorial project was to install a local discussion in line to the new political cycle in act (Quezada 2014). She also recalls that the previous artists who represented Chile - Navarro, Prats and Jaar - live and work abroad, while Paz Errázuriz and Lottie Rosenfeld reside in Chile, emphasising the necessity to value local artists.

This attention to the enhancement of regional and local culture became evident during the 57th Biennale (2017) when the artist Bernardo Oyarzún (1963), a native Mapuche descendant, was selected, together with the Paraguayan curator Ticio Escobar (1947) to represent the Pavilion of Chile with the *Werken* project. The installation consists of over a thousand wooden *kollong* masks (used principally in Mapuche rituals and ceremonies), and a list of Mapuche names [fig. 5]. The installation dignifies the Mapuche cultural traditions and identity, but evades the increasing political problems related to the possession of land in the south of Chile. The exhibition represents Bachelet's government attempt to pacify the conflict with a cultural native oriented political program, while the government repression on the Mapuche community is still a very difficult national issue.

Sebastián Pinera's second period government (2018-22) was in office during the 58th Biennale (2019) a few months before the major social outburst (18 October 2019) that brought Chile to international attention.



Figure 5 Bernardo Oyarzún, *Werken*. 2017. 57th Biennale di Venezia, Pavilion of Chile. Courtesy La Biennale di Venezia. Photo Italo Rondinella

Artist Voluspa Jarpa (1971) and Spanish curator Agustín Perez Rubio (1972) were chosen for the Chilean Pavilion. The *Altered Views* exhibition is an investigation into the history of Europe, colonialism and the Western cultural paradigm. *The Subaltern Portraits Gallery* (2019) shows a series of paintings of different historical European moments while the installation *Hegemonic Museum* (2019) denounces colonialism as a cultural and political disposal of Western society perpetuated in the concept of the Museum. This academic and in a way elitist posture of the Pavilion was in line with Sebastian Pinerá's slogan that "Chile is an oasis", economically and culturally, in the problematic and unstable South American situation. A narrative that coincided with the international artistic and curatorial trends of the moment: postcolonialism critique of the Western world, but that completely ignored the Chilean situation that only a few months later turned into a social outburst demanding 'dignity'.

5 Conclusion

By analysing the curatorial choices of the Chilean Pavilion, it is possible to evidence the cultural policies of the government and the changes in the local art scene. The National Pavilion is thus an extraterritorial space that makes the cultural policies of the state visible and hides or minimises its problems. The representation of Chile in the Art Biennale during these ten years (2009-19), and the aesthetic related to the National Pavilion evidenced the difficult political situation of the country, still struggling with the dictatorship heritage and stuck in a never ending *transición*.

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Juggling the Presence, Revealing the Concepts

Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

edited by, Giulia Gelmi, Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky,
Andrea Nalesso

The ‘Odd’ Conception of Space in Stoic Philosophy

Barbara Castellani

Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia, Italia; Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, France

Abstract The complex Stoic conception of space is expressed through three distinct but complementary notions: the void, the place and the room. These are incorporeal entities to be investigated within the rigid corporealism traditionally attributed to the Stoics. First of all, this work intends to provide an organic and coherent reconstruction of the Stoic conception of space, despite the fragmentary nature of the sources at our disposal. Furthermore, it is shown that spatial notions play a fundamental role in Stoic philosophy – think of the theory of universal conflagration – despite the ontological status of incorporeality.

Keywords Ancient Stoicism. Ontology. Incorporeals. Void. Place. Room. Conflagration.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Ontology: Bodies and Incorporeals. – 3 The Void. – 4 The Place and the Room. – 5 Conclusions.

1 Introduction

The Ancient Stoa (III-II century BC) is one of the most important philosophical schools of antiquity, due to the enormous influence it had on the history of thought. However, the works that can be attributed to Ancient Stoicism have been lost, therefore we can only read fragments provided by the indirect tradition, from sources



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that are often conflicting and hostile to the Stoic school.¹ Obviously, this makes the reconstruction of the theories of Stoic philosophy particularly difficult.²

This work is based on a linguistic and conceptual analysis of the Stoic fragments dealing with space: this latter concept proves to be extremely complex, encompassing three different notions, namely the void (*kenòn*), the place (*tòpos*) and the room (*chôra*). In particular, the ontological status of these spatial notions is analysed in detail, to identify their mutual relations. Thus, it is shown that the Stoic conception of space is profoundly unitary, since it is based on interdependent and complementary notions, albeit very different at first sight.

The Stoic philosophical system is divided into three closely inter-related parts: logic, physics and ethics. The study of the Stoic conception of space certainly belongs to physics, but also ontology, in the sense that the Stoics have always endeavoured to carefully define and classify the ontological status and the nature of the entities they studied. Stoic ontology is traditionally defined as corporealist, in that only bodies exist in the full and proper sense. However, the Stoics also admit a series of incorporeal entities in their ontology: these are the so-called 'canonical incorporeals',³ namely the void (*kenòn*), the place (*tòpos*), the time (*chrònos*) and the sayable (*lektòn*). According to the traditional interpretation of Stoic corporealism, these incorporeals merely subsist: therefore, they would be endowed with an inferior ontological status to that of bodies, to which incorporeals are subordinate and on which they depend. On the contrary, the present work intends to demonstrate that the void, the place and the room (which, as we will see, is also fully included among the incorporeals) play a leading role in the Stoic philosophical system, despite their incorporeality.

The following discussion opens with an overview of Stoic ontology, to precisely contextualise the Stoic reflection on space within a cohesive, organic and unitary philosophical system, such as the Stoic one. The three notions that constitute the Stoic conception of space are then analysed, starting with the void and following with the place and the room. It must be pointed out that the notions of place and room are treated together because of their close relation-

1 Works from the Middle Stoa (II-I century BC) have also come to us by indirect tradition; only the production dating back to the New Stoa (I-II century AD) has come to us by direct tradition.

2 The critical edition for the fragments of the Ancient Stoics used in this paper is Von Arnim 1903-05. The entire work is abbreviated as *SVF*; to refer to a single fragment, the abbreviation *SVF* is followed by the Roman number of the volume in which the fragment is contained, and then there is the Arabic number of the fragment itself.

3 Cf. Brunschwig 1994, who employs this expression to indicate that, in the sources, the incorporeals appear systematically together, so that they constitute a fixed and canonical list.

ships and semantic proximity: consider that, in common Greek, the terms *tòpos* and *chôra* were often interchangeable. We examine the ontological status of the three spatial notions, their reciprocal relations and the important role they play in the Stoic system, despite the ontological status of incorporeality. In this way, it is firstly possible to restore a unitary and coherent image of the 'odd' conception of space in Stoic philosophy, despite the fragmentary nature both of the sources and their interpretations; then it is shown the centrality of spatial notions in some fundamental doctrines of Stoic philosophy, such as the universal conflagration.

2 Ontology: Bodies and Incorporeals

The Stoics strongly argued that "all that is, is body" (*SVF* II 467; Author's transl.), hence the label of 'corporealism' traditionally attributed to their ontology. For the Stoics, indeed, reality and everything it contains are constituted by the inseparable union of two corporeal principles: the active principle (god, *lógos*, the forger of natural reality and the orderer of the universe) shapes the passive principle (the formless matter). Therefore, everything is configured as a material substratum permeated by the divine *lógos*.

However, as already mentioned, the Stoics also admit in their ontology a series of incorporeal realities, which cannot be constituted by the union of the two corporeal principles, precisely because of their incorporeality. In fact, one of the most controversial and debated issues in Stoic philosophy is the ontological status to be attributed to the incorporeals within the rigid Stoic corporealism, which is based on the equation between existence and corporeality. However, for the Stoics, the domain of reality does not end with what is fully existent: the Stoic conception of space testifies to the importance that the incorporeals have in the Stoic philosophical system.

Stoic ontology can be condensed in the so-called doctrine of 'something' (*ti*) as the supreme genus.⁴ It means that, from an ontological point of view, 'something' has a greater extension than 'being' (*òn*): indeed, 'something' includes within it both the bodies, which are properly existent and fully *ònta*, and the incorporeals, which are given the ontological status of subsistence (*hypòstasis*). If *òn* had been the supreme genus, the incorporeals would have been naturally excluded from Stoic ontology, because they cannot be attributed the ontological status of existence. Nevertheless, the incorporeals are endowed with some form of being ensured by their belonging to

⁴ See *SVF* II 329, 331, 332; Long, Sedley 1987, 1; Brunschwig 1994; 2003; Alessandrelli 2016.

'something': they are subsistent, a way of being as defined and objective as that of bodies. Moreover, the verb *hypàrchein*, which is difficult to translate,⁵ often appears in the sources, and it is attributed to both bodies and incorporeals, ensuring the objectivity of both these types of entities.

The analysis of the void, the place and the room, which, together with time, constitute the so-called 'physical' incorporeals,⁶ shows that the incorporeals could hardly be relegated to one of the lowest rungs of the ontological hierarchy, as the traditional interpretation of Stoic ontology would say. First of all, this is evident if we consider the doctrine of *ti* as the supreme genus already described: the Stoics consider the 'something' as the supreme genus of reality, which includes within itself both the bodies and the incorporeals. Therefore, these two types of entities are not radically opposed on the ontological level, precisely because they belong to the same genus. Thus, it is not possible that bodies are fully existent and, on the other hand, incorporeals correspond to mere nothingness: precisely as 'something', both types of entities are equally objective and real, so much so that they can be placed on the same level.

The centrality of the notion of incorporeality in a corporeal ontology fully emerges if we consider the Stoic conception of space from a unitary perspective: indeed, it is shown that the incorporeals themselves are the object of organic and structured reflections, as well as the focus of fundamental theories for Stoic philosophy, such as universal conflagration.

3 The Void

The void is also defined as the incorporeal *par excellence* (cf. Brunschwig 1994, 138; 2003, 213), because, at a first glance, it appears as the simplest case, whose incorporeality is not problematic. In the course of the exposition on the void, it will also be necessary to call into question the place and the room, because they are interconnected concepts that refer to one another. In particular, it will become clear that the void is a sort of negative counterpart of the place.

The definition of void given by the sources is "vacancy of body" (SVF II 504; Algra 1995, 265), that is deprivation, absence of bodies.⁷

⁵ The most common translations are "to belong" (Long, Sedley 1987, 1: 162-6) and "to be the case" (Brunschwig 2003, 216).

⁶ Cf. Brunschwig 1994, 134. However, he does not include the room among the canonical incorporeals and classifies the *lektòn* as a 'logical' incorporeal. The examination of the notions of time and *lektòn* is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷ See Sedley 1982; Todd 1982; De Harven 2015.

More specifically, as Sextus Empiricus states:

The Stoics say that *kenòn* is what can be occupied by an existent but is not occupied, or an interval empty of body, or an interval unoccupied by body. (*SVF* II 505; Long, Sedley 1987, 1: 294)

In order to fully understand the nature of void in light of the other spatial notions, it is necessary to quote a long account by Stobaeus, which is the starting point for examining the Stoic conception of space in detail:

Chrysippus declared *tòpos* to be that which is fully occupied by being or that which is able to be occupied by being and is *de facto* fully occupied whether by one thing or by several things. If, of that which is able to be occupied by being, part is occupied and part not, the whole will be neither *kenòn* nor *tòpos*, but a different something which has no name. For we speak of *kenòn* on the analogy of empty vessels and of *tòpos* on the analogy of full ones. *Chôra* is either that which is larger and can be occupied by being, like a larger vessel of a body, or that which can contain a larger body. The *kenòn* is said to be infinite for that which is outside the cosmos is suchlike, but *tòpos* is finite because no body is infinite. Just as the corporeal is finite, so the incorporeal is infinite; for time and the *kenòn* are infinite. For just as the nothing constitutes no limit, so also is there no limit to the nothing, *e.g.* to the *kenòn*. For by its own nature it is infinite; but it is being limited when it is filled up; but when that which fills it is taken away, you cannot conceive of its boundary. (*SVF* II 503; Algra 1995, 264)

As it is evident, both the void (*kenòn*) and the place (*tòpos*) presuppose the existence of bodies for their definition:⁸ in effect, the void is an incorporeal extension that can be occupied by a body, but which is actually left free by the bodies themselves; similarly, the place is an incorporeal space that can contain one or more bodies and which is currently occupied by them, unlike the void. Stobaeus also informs us about the fundamental characteristic of the void, which is described as infinite. The term used here is *àpeiron*, to be understood in its etymological sense as *a-pèras*, 'without limit' (cf. Inwood 1991, 254-66; Powers 2014, 426-9). However, limitlessness is only one of the characteristics of the void, that Cleomedes describes as follows:

⁸ This is true if we consider the definitions of void and place, but actually, void and place do not have the same degree of dependence on bodies: the void seems to be the incorporeal that is most independent of bodies; on the other hand, the place seems to be highly dependent on them.

So *kenòn* must have a kind of subsistence. The notion of it is very simple since it is incorporeal and without contact, neither has shape nor takes on shape, neither is acted upon in any respect nor acts, but is simply capable of receiving body. (SVF II 541; Long, Sedley 1987, 1: 294)

From this passage, it is clear that the notion of void is extremely simple, as if it had been obtained *ex negativo*, stripping it of all positive determinations (cf. Algra 1995, 314). Indeed, the only positive characterisation here attributed to the void is its capacity to accommodate bodies. In light of this, it seems that the notion of void coincides *sic et simpliciter* with that of incorporeality, if we also consider the definition of the incorporeal provided by Zeno:

The incorporeal is that which can be occupied by bodies, but which cannot be contained. (SVF I 95; Author's transl.)

For this reason, the void can rightly be regarded as the most incorporeal of the incorporeals.

Returning to Cleomedes' fragment, the term *hypòstasis* and not the verb *einai* is used in order to indicate the reality of the void, and this is perfectly in line with the traditional attribution of the ontological status of subsistence to the incorporeals, whereas 'being' in the full sense is reserved only to bodies.

It is possible to give the void other characteristics: first of all, the fact that it is located only outside the cosmos, then the three-dimensionality. Indeed, the void, like the place, shares with bodies the characteristic of three-dimensionality, but differs from them in that it lacks resistance (cf. SVF II 502). The absence of internal differentiation and orientation are the last two characteristics (always *ex negativo*) that the sources attribute to the void.⁹

As for the reasons given by the Stoics in support of the existence of the extra-cosmic void, the first and most important is of a physical-cosmological order: there must be an empty space where the cosmos can expand during the conflagration, and which will be left free again when the cosmos itself will have cooled and contracted. One of the cornerstones of Stoic philosophy is precisely the theory of universal conflagration (*ekpýrosis*):¹⁰ according to the Stoics, a cosmic event of

⁹ Indeed, we read: "in the void there exists no difference by which bodies are drawn in one direction rather than another" (SVF II 550; Long, Sedley 1987, 1: 294-5); "the incorporeal void has neither top nor bottom, neither front nor back, neither right nor left nor centre" (SVF II 557; Author's transl.); "the void is homogeneous and the same everywhere in terms of receptivity" (SVF II 552; Author's transl.).

¹⁰ See Hunt 1976; Lapidge 1978; Mansfeld 1979; Long 1985; 2006; Furley 1999; Algra 2003; White 2003; Salles 2009; Alessandrelli 2019.

a cyclical nature develops over time. Each phase, after it has reached its full development, ends with a great conflagration, an immense explosion that will bring all things back to the initial stage of the primordial fire. The story of cosmogony will then resume its course in a new cycle, destined to repeat in an identical way all the stages of each of the cycles already concluded; the cycles will follow one after the other indefinitely. In this regard, Cleomedes states:

Even if the entire substance is resolved into fire, as the most refined of the natural philosophers [the Stoics] think, it must occupy a vastly greater *tòpos*, just like the vaporizations of solid bodies into smoke. Therefore the *tòpos* occupied by substance flowing out during the conflagration is now *kenòn*, since no body has filled it. (SVF II 537; Long, Sedley 1987, 1: 295)

If the void were not an objective absence of body, there would not be anything for the cosmos where to disperse during and after the conflagration at the end of a cosmic cycle. In this perspective, the void is configured as a condition of the conflagration (cf. Alessandrelli 2016, 28).

The other argument in favour of the existence of the extra-cosmic void is that of the so-called space traveller (cf. SVF II 535, 536), which has become very famous. Let us imagine that a traveller is at the extreme limit of the cosmos and stretches his hand upwards: if he can actually stretch out his hand, it is evident that there is something outside the cosmos towards which he can stretch it; but this something cannot be a body, which would offer resistance to the movement of the hand. On the contrary, if there were a body outside the cosmos, we could always hypothesise that the traveller goes to the extreme border of this body and tries to stretch out his hand again, thus obtaining a regress to infinity. Therefore, outside the cosmos, there can only be an unlimited void, as it turned out.

From what has been said so far, it can be concluded that the Stoic conception of the void has two aspects, one physical and the other metaphysical, which are closely interrelated (cf. Inwood 1991, 265-6). The first aspect concerns the conflagration, during which the cosmos expands in the surrounding infinite void; the metaphysical aspect goes in the same direction, since limitlessness is a structural characteristic of the void precisely because it is not occupied by bodies which would delimit it.

The unity and organicity of the Stoic conception of space fully emerge if we consider that there is a generic notion of space or extension (expressed by the term *diàstema*),¹¹ underlying the concepts of

11 Cf. Algra 1995. It is worth noting that the term *diàstema* is also employed in the Stoic definition of time, understood as the "dimension of motion" (SVF II 509; Long, Sedley 1987, 1: 304).

kenòn, *tòpos* and *chôra*. Indeed, the place is a *diàstema* currently occupied by a body; on the other hand, the void is a *diàstema* left free by the bodies; whereas the room is a partially occupied *diàstema*. In line with this notion of absolute space and generic extension underlying the spatial concepts used in Stoicism, it is also the position of Hahm (1977): according to him, for Chrysippus, the place and the void are coordinated species of a third reality, namely the space or extension that can be occupied by bodies. More recently, Powers (2014) also comes to the conclusion that the Stoics admit a notion of absolute space, which is configured as a three-dimensional extension that is partly occupied by the cosmos (place) and partly left free by the bodies (void).

Among the incorporeals, the void seems to have a very particular status, insofar as it appears to be independent of bodies: thus, the traditional interpretation of Stoic corporealism seen before proves to be partial and reductive.¹² As anticipated, this is most evident in the Stoic theory of conflagration: indeed, there must be something, namely the infinite void, where the world can expand at the moment of its final explosion. During the conflagration, the cosmos uses the void, which is thus pre-existent. From this point of view, the extra-cosmic void is logically configured as a condition of possibility of conflagration, namely as a condition for the actualisation of the potential of the cosmos itself.

The close link between void and universal conflagration is emphasised by the Middle Stoic Posidonius,¹³ who departs from the ancient Stoic view that the void outside the cosmos is infinite. Indeed, he believes that the extra-cosmic void is extended just enough to allow the cosmos itself to expand during the conflagration. According to the account of the ps.-Plutarch:

The Stoics say that outside the cosmos there is a *kenòn* into which the cosmos is dissolved at the conflagration; it is infinite. Posidonius maintains that it is not infinite, but just as large as is sufficient for the dissolution of the cosmos. In the first book of the *On the Void*. (ps.-Plut., *Placita* 2.9; Algra 1995, 323)

For Posidonius, the void is neither infinite nor simply finite, but it is finite in relation to the dissolution of the whole: indeed, the void exists in sufficient quantity to allow the cosmos to dissolve.

However, what is certain is that the void is configured as a necessary condition for the occurrence of universal conflagration. Then, it seems that the very existence of the cosmos depends on the incorporeal void that surrounds it: indeed, without the void, the cosmos

¹² See Inwood 1991, 249; Algra 1995, 308-16; Powers 2014, 411-12.

¹³ The most important study on this topic is certainly Algra 1993; cf. also Tieleman 2014.

would not have the space to periodically expand during conflagrations, it could not destroy itself and then reconstitute itself. In such a way, one should renounce one of the cornerstones of Stoic thought, namely the theory of *ekpýrosis*, by virtue of which the cosmos derives its existence by periodically regenerating itself.

4 The Place and the Room

Also with regard to the place and the room, the most important evidence is that of Stobaeus already seen in relation to the void, and that we will now analyse in more detail. The notion of *chôra* is difficult to understand.¹⁴ 'room' is the most common translation, although it is probably more appropriate to leave the Greek term, also because of the different interpretations of *chôra* that have been proposed. Certainly, the absence of *chôra* from the list of canonical incorporeals is immediately evident. Sedley (1999, 396-7) suggests that the Stoics introduced this notion in order to account for the approximate use of spatial coordinates in common language: when we ask where Nelson's Column is located, it is possible to answer that it is situated in Trafalgar Square, even though the latter is also occupied by other bodies (whereas, as we shall see, the place is generally considered to be coextensive with the body that occupies it). However, also the *chôra* can be rightly counted among the incorporeals, as it is, so to speak, a 'median' spatial notion between void and place, whose nature and definition are partly assimilable to those of void and place, as will become clear from the following reflections.

The sources show that the place is a relational notion, which is precisely defined in relation to the bodies that occupy it. Indeed, the definition of place previously seen and reported by Stobaeus is the following:

Chrysippus declared *tòpos* to be that which is fully occupied by being or that which is able to be occupied by being and is *de facto* fully occupied whether by one thing or by several things. (SVF II 503; Algra 1995, 264)

Therefore, unlike the void, the place is that space currently occupied by one or more bodies; the expression translated as 'fully' indicates the equality of extension that is realised between the place and the bodies that occupy it.

It is now necessary to clarify two fundamental expressions for the Stoic definition of spatial notions, namely 'unoccupied' and 'occupied'. In a first sense, 'unoccupied' can indicate the complete ab-

¹⁴ Alessandrelli (2014, 62) defines *chôra* as "an apparently bizarre spatial reality".

sence of bodies and thus denotes the void. In a second sense, it can refer to the absence of impenetrable bodies, which, opposing resistance, would occupy portions of space inaccessible to other bodies: therefore, in this second case, there would be the presence only of diffuse and penetrable bodies such as air. Similarly, 'occupied' indicates a completely full space; or a space that is not free as it is occupied for the most part by bodies that oppose resistance to others that would like to occupy it. In the fragments relating to the place, 'unoccupied' and 'occupied' are always understood in the first sense, whereas in the definitions of *chôra* the second sense is used (cf. Alesandrelli 2014, 55-8).

Proceeding with the analysis of the passage from Stobaeus, he then gives the definition of an entity that has no name and that has been long debated by critics: it is a space that is partly occupied and partly not, which, therefore, cannot correspond *sic et simpliciter* either to place (which is entirely occupied by bodies) or to void (which is completely left free by the bodies themselves). Presumably, it is an anticipatory definition of the *chôra*, and this is perfectly in line with the actual definition of *chôra* that is quoted immediately after:

Chôra is either that which is larger and can be occupied by being, like a larger vessel of a body, or that which can contain a larger body. (SVF II 503; Algra 1995, 264)

Therefore, if the *chôra* is a space or a container larger than the bodies that occupy it, it is clear that it will be partly occupied and partly not, in line with the definition of the nameless entity seen before.

Nevertheless, several times in the sources, *chôra* is attributed precisely the same definition of the nameless entity:

Zeno and his school argue that *kenòn*, *tòpos* and *chôra* differ. The *kenòn* is vacancy of body whereas *tòpos* is that which is occupied by body, *chôra* being that which is partly occupied like in the case of a wine jar. (SVF II 504; Algra 1995, 265)

Again:

Tòpos is what is occupied by an existent and made equal to what occupies it (by 'existent' they now mean body, as is clear from the interchange of names). And they say that *chôra* is an interval partly occupied by a body and partly unoccupied. (SVF II 505; Long, Sedley 1987, 1: 294)

It is immediately evident that these accounts agree in considering the *chôra* as a space only partially occupied, in line with the definition of the nameless entity previously seen.

Returning to the characteristics of place, the sources attribute to it the ontological status traditionally reserved for incorporeals, namely subsistence;¹⁵ then, they describe it as three-dimensional (endowed with length, breadth and depth) and as having six directions, that is up and down, right and left, back and forth (cf. *SVF* II 501); finally, as incorruptible (cf. *SVF* II 319). In fact, Brunschwig (2003, 214) even hypothesises that the Stoics doubted the incorporeality of place, which is evidently the most corporeal of the canonical incorporeals (and this supports the thesis that the void, considered as the incorporeal *par excellence*, is the negative counterpart of place). However, the Stoics desisted from considering place corporeal because, when a body tries to move another body to another place, the two bodies resist each other, whereas this is not the case with place, which remains completely inert. Therefore, if the place were itself corporeal, it would resist the bodies attempting to occupy it, with the absurd consequence that the bodies themselves would have no place where to exist (cf. Alessandrelli 2014, 58).

Even Alessandrelli (2016, 28-30) considers place as the most corporeal of the incorporeals: however, if the place were a body, it would in turn have to be located in a place, thus incurring a regress to infinity. Therefore, the place must be considered as an incorporeal portion of space, objective insofar as it is 'something' and subsistent in connection with the existent body that occupies and delimits it.

Nevertheless, the most problematic notion remains that of *chôra*. At first reading of the fragments, we have seen that it appears to be simply a space that is partly occupied and partly left free by bodies. This definition of *chôra* seems to correspond to the generic notion of space, understood as the total sum of place and void, thus coming to overlap with the nameless entity of Stobaeus' fragment (cf. Long, Sedley 1987, 1). On the other hand, on the cosmic level, *chôra* may well coincide with the Stoic notion of 'all' (*pán*), namely the whole of the cosmos (which occupies a place) and the infinite extra-cosmic void (cf. *SVF* II 524, 552).

However, the issue is extremely complex: for example, for Algra (1995, 261-340), *chôra* is a relational notion since it is always defined in relation to the particular body that partly occupies it. Therefore, *chôra* is always the *chôra* of a particular body and it can neither correspond to the simple and generic sum of place and void nor be considered a third kind of space: indeed, it is a section of space only if understood as the *chôra* of a particular body. Inwood (1991, 248-9), for his part, argues that the *chôra* is only partially occupied by a particular body, while the rest is occupied by something else, such as air.

¹⁵ The verb used to express this concept is *parýfistánaí* (cf. *SVF* II 507).

On the cosmic level, as Algra maintains, the *chôra* identifies a large but finite space that surrounds and encompasses the cosmos and provides the space for the conflagration. According to him, Chrysippus distinguished between the space that can be occupied by the cosmos only in principle and the space that will actually be occupied by the cosmos itself during the conflagration. In other words, according to Algra, Chrysippus drew a distinction between the void as an empty space in itself and the void as a space for the expansion of the cosmos during the conflagration (the *chôra*): only the former is infinite, while the latter is simply larger than the cosmos itself. Therefore, it can legitimately be stated that Chrysippus introduced the notion of *chôra* to collimate his finitist theory of the cosmos and his theory of the infinity of both void and *pán*. Thus, it is possible to summarise Algra's interpretation in this way: the *chôra* is a space that is larger than the body that occupies it and therefore it can contain more than it contains. On a cosmic level, the *chôra* corresponds to the finite receptacle that encompasses and surrounds the cosmos and which provides it with the space for periodic conflagrations. Hence the ambiguous distinction between the void in itself, considered on an ontological level, which is an infinite empty space; and the void as a space for conflagration, considered on the cosmological level, which coincides with the finite *chôra*.

Hence, according to Algra, there are two main meanings of *chôra* that can be found in the sources: *chôra* understood as an infinite sum of place and void (a probably not Chrysippean conception, but widely spread in the Stoic school); *chôra* understood as a larger (presumably finite) space that can contain a larger body and that can be entirely occupied or not by bodies (Chrysippean position).

According to Alessandrelli's interpretation (2014, 60-6), for Chrysippus *chôra* is the space of common sense, the space only partially occupied by animate and inanimate bodies, the space as it is ordinarily perceived, namely not empty, but full of air, which is a penetrable body that makes space itself accessible and free. My desk located inside my room, which in turn is located in my house, and so on, are all examples of *chôra*, of portions of space that are partly occupied and partly not. Therefore, for Ancient Stoicism, *chôra* does not coincide with the simple coexistence of place and void, but, according to Alessandrelli, it must be interpreted as a resumption of the nameless entity, through a reinterpretation of the notions of 'occupied' and 'unoccupied'. As we have seen, in the definition of *chôra*, 'occupied' and 'unoccupied' should not be understood in a rigorous sense as that which is completely full or empty, but in the more informal sense of what is accessible or not to other bodies, thanks to the possible presence of penetrable bodies such as air.

It is then reasonable to conclude that the *tòpos* and the *chôra* are at the centre of Stoic philosophical reflection. In particular, spatial

determinations are those essential conditions for bodies themselves to exist, since, even simply to exist, they need a place where they can express their ontological status. Evidently, the critics have always focused on the general dependence of the incorporeals on bodies, without ever adequately highlighting this indispensability of the place and the room for the existence of bodies themselves. Moreover, examining the ontological status of bodies without in any way placing them on the spatial level would render the entire Stoic corporealism abstract and scarcely intelligible, far from the Chrysippean intention of bringing philosophy closer to common sense (cf. *SVF* II 473, 964).

5 Conclusions

The sources at our disposal show that the space topic constitutes one of the cornerstones of Stoic philosophical reflection. Indeed, three notions are necessary to exhaust the complex and multifaceted Stoic conception of space: *kenòn*, *tòpos* and *chôra*. These are distinct notions, but, at the same time, co-implicating. The void and the place are complementary notions: both are defined as spaces that can be occupied by bodies, but the former is only potentially occupied, whereas the latter is currently occupied. The notion of room 'mediates' between these two, indeed it is partly occupied, like the place, and partly left free by bodies, as in the case with void. The underlying notion of *diàstema*, from and through which *kenòn*, *tòpos* and *chôra* are defined, makes the link between the spatial notions even closer and much more evident.

On a cosmological level, the cosmos delimits the place where it is located and it is surrounded by the infinite void, which makes universal conflagration possible. The room can coincide either with the Stoic notion of *pán* (which indicates the cosmos together with the infinite void) or with the finite space that will actually be occupied by the cosmos during the conflagration.

These reflections are sufficient to provide an idea of the complexity, relevance and 'oddity' of the Stoic reflection on space. Therefore, the label of 'corporealism', traditionally attributed to Stoic ontology, is misleading. Far from being merely subordinate and dependent on bodies, also the incorporeals are the object of structured theories and reflections in Stoic ontology. Even the highest degree of incorporeality that characterises the void¹⁶ does not prevent it from playing a fundamental role in the constitution of the whole reality: indeed, the void allows the universal conflagration, therefore it is configured

¹⁶ For this reason, it is also defined as a pure incorporeal (cf. Goldschmidt 1989, 26; Brunschwig 1994, 138).

as a necessary condition for the very existence of the cosmos and its periodic destructions and reconstitutions. Furthermore, the determination of place is a necessary condition for the bodies to exist, because they need a place where to be what they are, thus manifesting the interdependence between the domain of corporeality and the domain of incorporeality. The room turns out to be essential in order to adequately account for space as it is understood by common sense, namely a space only partially occupied. Therefore, in the Stoic system, the incorporeals play a role as important as that of bodies, such as the 'odd' conception of space in Stoic philosophy has attempted to demonstrate.

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Andrea Nalesso

Making Room: Heidegger's Concept of *Einräumung*

Marco Cavazza

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract The study deals with a little-known concept in Heidegger's thought, that of *Einräumung*, a term that can be translated as 'making space'. In the first section, a quick review is given of the relations between time, space, and existence in *Being and Time*, Heidegger's main work. The second section provides an introductory discussion of the concept of *Einräumung* from the stratification of its meanings. Finally, in the third section, these meanings are transposed into the dimension of Heidegger's thought, showing how *Einräumung* calls into question a much more complex structure, in which a place is arranged so that it in turn arranges hospitality.

Keywords Heidegger. Space. Dwelling. Art. Void.

Summary 1 Time, Space, and Time-Space. – 2 A Question of Meaning. – 3 The Arrangement of Space and Its Conjunction. – 4 Conclusion.

1 Time, Space, and Time-Space

One of the best-known claims by Martin Heidegger is surely that time is the meaning of being (*der Sinn des Seins*), as it is already suggested by the title of his masterpiece, *Being and Time* (cf. Heidegger 1977a, 24-6). This should sound like a revolutionary thesis, insofar as a long-standing tradition has thought of being as an eternal and supratemporal permanence. The temporal nature of the meaning of being is shown through another well-known concept of Heidegger's



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thinking, namely the *Dasein*, i.e., that entity that understands something as its own being. Indeed, the rehabilitation of the question of the meaning of being requires the horizon of *Dasein*, because only through *Dasein* can being authentically become a question, since only *Dasein* cares for its own being, and thus it has a privileged and essential relationship with being.

Dasein's 'care' (*Sorge*) for its being is not something simply occasional or accidental for *Dasein*, but rather it is its fundamental trait since it coincides with its very 'being there' (the actual meaning of the German *Dasein*): there is *Dasein* insofar as *Dasein* cares for its being there. Heidegger also expresses this by calling the relationship that *Dasein* holds with its own being 'existence' (*Existenz*). To exist, in its deepest meaning, then, means to open up the question of the meaning of being.

In *Being and Time*, after a meticulous analysis, Heidegger exhibits the temporal character of *Dasein*'s opening to being (cf. Heidegger 1977a, § 65). That which most distinguishes the temporality of existence is *Dasein*'s 'ecstatic' character, namely the fact that *Dasein* transcends itself and its own being there in the direction of its possibilities, i.e., in the direction of that openness that we have quickly said is its being. In this way, by opening up its being as possible, *Dasein*'s past turns out to be its future, in the sense that what constitutes its history is both the outcome of choices – and thus of possibilities – and possibility as such, that is, something itself open to 'repeating' (*Erwiderung*) and a new beginning (cf. Heidegger 1977a, § 74). This complex structure of *Dasein*'s being constitutes that which is called by Heidegger 'temporality' (*Zeitlichkeit*), from which derives the common concept of time (*Innerzeitigkeit*), often understood as a 'sequence of Now' (*Jetztfolge*).¹

But if then *Dasein* and its temporality constitute the meaning of being, what does the expression 'making space' have to do with it? Although the topic of this paper is space, rather than time, it is useful keeping in mind the temporal meaning of *Dasein*'s existence, because space and the concept of *Einräumung* related to space are essentially intertwined with time and *Dasein*'s ecstatic movement. This is a point that has never been sufficiently emphasised, not even by those important studies that have noted the full importance of spatial issues in Heideggerian thought after *Being and Time*.²

It is true, namely, that space acquires ever greater prominence in the thought of being, but it has almost gone completely unnoticed

¹ Heidegger 1977a, 440-2: "Die Zeit als Innerzeitigkeit aber entspringt einer wesentlichen Zeitigungsart der ursprünglichen Zeitlichkeit". Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the Author.

² Cf. Malpas 2006; Vallega 2003.

that this increasing preponderance of space over time takes place within what Heidegger calls 'time-space' (*Zeit-Raum*), or at least from it. Time-space is intermediate concerning the path that would lead Heidegger from time to space,³ and seems to indicate both 1) the relationship of space and time 2), as well as their origin, 3) and the origin of the relationship of space and time as well, especially if this relationship is the one thought by contemporary physics.⁴

Time-space has an original status, therefore any reference to time and space cannot avoid the confrontation with time-space. As will be seen shortly, the concept of *Einräumung* too belongs to time-space, and not in exclusive reference to space or time.

To provide an essential introductory framework, a further distinction must be made, this time concerning space. Just as with time, divided into *Zeitlichkeit* and *Innerzeitigkeit*, in *Being and Time* space too is divided into a spatiality of *Dasein* and one of the entities other than *Dasein*, namely the ones that, according to Heidegger, do not have a complex relationship with their own being and possibility, as they are 'simply present' (*Vorhandensein*), i.e., their being is given them all at once.

Paragraph § 12 of *Being and Time* provides a first set of indications on how to understand *Dasein's* spatiality. Here *Dasein's* being-in-space is shown first and foremost as possible only on the foundation of 'being-in-the-world' (cf. Heidegger 1977a, 75), which is the fundamental character of *Dasein* and from which all other determinations of its being depart. How *Dasein* relates to space is then determined by 'being-in' (*In-Sein*), namely the meaning of the 'in' contained in *Dasein's* being-in-the-world.

Being-in is characterised by Heidegger in both negative and positive ways. Negatively: by contrasting it with the *Sein-in*, i.e., the 'being-within/being inside something' proper to the entities characterised by the *Vorhandenheit* (that we could simply call 'things'). Being-within is further defined as *das Beisammen-vorhanden-sein, das Nebeneinander, Ineinander Vorhandener, Inwendigkeit in einem Räumgefäßt* (Heidegger 1977a, 74). In all these variations of being-within, the fundamental presupposition is the identity between the mode of being of the content and that of the container, i.e., always the *Vorhandenheit*. Only two subsistent things can be inside each other. Given that *Dasein* has its own way of being-in, it can never be inside anything else.

³ Heidegger's interest in time can be traced back around to his lectures on "the phenomenology of the religious life" (Heidegger 1995), if not before (cf. Heidegger 1978, 415-33), while its confrontation with space starts at the end of the 1950s. However, during the 1930s, Heidegger speaks neither of space nor time, but of time-space.

⁴ For all of these senses, see Heidegger 1989, §§ 239-241.

The positive characterisation of being-in is instead derived from the etymology of 'in', i.e., *innan-*, which means *wohnen, habitare, sich aufhalten, gewöhnt an, vertraut mit, colo, diligo, pflegen* (73). Heidegger further distances the semantic richness of being-in from the categorical sense of being-within by referring to the difference between the present tense of the first and third person singular of the German verb 'to be', *Sein*, i.e., between *bin* and *ist*: if the thing is (*ist*), I am (*bin*), in the sense of 'being close to' (*bei*), i.e., in the mode of that 'turning to' that Heidegger calls 'taking care of' (*besorgen*)⁵ and that gathers together the different nuances of *In-Sein*. 'In', 'bin', and 'bei' thus express all together the relationship among the world, being, and care.

If paragraph § 12 provides the interpretative framework of space, it is, however, in paragraphs §§ 22-24 that Heidegger develops the main reflection of *Being and Time* on spatiality. Here Heidegger analyses both the spatiality of the "innerweltlich Zuhandene" ('intramundane usable', § 22; to simplify, it is always about the thing, but caught in its instrumental character) and *Dasein*'s one (§ 23-24). In both analyses, space is considered as a constitutive of the world (cf. Heidegger 1977a, 136), therefore not only being-in directs the understanding of space, but also, and above all, the 'worldliness of the world', i.e., the context of significant references teleologically oriented by *Dasein*'s taking-care (cf. Heidegger 1977a, § 18). The spatiality of *Dasein* is thus that of the intramundane space discovered through caring and 'circumspection' (*Umsicht*) and it is only on this ground that spatiality is revealed.⁶ Hence, *Dasein* is in space through its being-in, but space is in turn in the world as 'intra-spatial' (*Innerräumliches*), i.e., as the spatiality of the intramundane entity that is taken care of and whose experience is in turn possible within the phenomenon of (being-in-the) world.⁷

Of course, here Heidegger does not want to reduce space to the mere dimension of 'caring commerce' (*besorgende Umgang*), namely

⁵ To be precise, *besorgen* also includes *begegnen* and *berühren*. *Dasein* is in the world in the sense of 'being-close-to' (*sein-bei*), which allows both *Dasein* to encounter something and, in turn, that something "in der Berührung sich offenbaren kann" (Heidegger 1977a, 74). It should therefore be noted that spatiality has its own stratification, in which each level is a condition for the possibility of another, in accordance with a procedure typical of *Being and Time*. Keeping this in mind will allow for a better understanding of the phenomenon of *Einräumung*. Furthermore, Heidegger states that entities that are not able to touch something else are *weltlos* instead of *raumlos*, anticipating the difficult relationship between space and world that runs through the paragraphs on spatiality (Heidegger 1977a, §§ 22-24) and that recognises the world's pre-eminent position against space.

⁶ Cf. Heidegger 1977a, 151: "Raum kann erst im Rückgang auf die Welt begriffen werden".

⁷ Cf. Heidegger 1977a, 135-6.

our experience of using things, but rather to show how space is preliminarily discovered within the horizon that characterises *Dasein*'s average understanding and experience. Nevertheless, Heidegger struggles to enrich the analysis of spatiality within this setting, and indeed any departure from the average understanding of space always risks becoming a degradation, such as the theoretical consideration of a pure space that is indifferent to what occupies it, as the geometrical space is (cf. Heidegger 1977a, 150).

The very spatiality of *Dasein* itself, characterised by the phenomena of 'de-distancing' (*Ent-fernung*) and 'directing orientation' (*Ausrichtung*), is thought along the lines of that of the usable thing, that is, the 'being in one's own place', which is fixed and reached precisely through 'direction' (*Richtung*) and 'distance' (*Entferntheit*) (Heidegger 1977a, 137-8). There is thus a perfect complementary between the spatiality of the usable thing and that of *Dasein*, which becomes even more acute with the analysis of the *Einräumen*, the 'granting of space' that in *Being and Time* constitutes the main existential of *Dasein*'s spatiality. By granting space, *Dasein* allows for the *Begegnenlassen* of the intramundane entity, that is its coming in proximity that can be arranged according to the multiple modes of spatialisation: *umräumen*, *wegräumen*, and *einräumen* (Heidegger 1977a, 148).

This first appearance of the *Einräumen* within the context of the world and *Dasein*'s relations with 'equipment' (*Zeug*, another Heideggerian expression for things that are used and taken care of by *Dasein*) is surely a harbinger of further insights, and yet they seem to remain in the background of the dimension of the *Umgang*, i.e., the dimension in which things are used.

In a footnote, Heidegger asks, for example, where the distance that is de-distanced comes from and that, above all, allows the primacy of presence, i.e., 'proximity' (*Gegend*).⁸ A little further on, Heidegger also recognises that *Dasein* can never encounter distance as such, especially if the *Begegnenlassen* - and thus every encounter - takes place within proximity; at most, distance can only open up as the *Spielraum* in which we turn our hearing and sight away from what is nearer (Heidegger 1977a, 143), only in the direction of a new encounter. The phenomenon of distance thus remains a mystery in *Being and Time*, and it cannot but be so, since that which is distant is first and foremost the equipment that *Dasein* brings nearer to itself, which is in principle always susceptible to be approached, given its 'being at hand' (*Zuhandensein*).

In addition to the experience of distance, another question remains open in the experience of space in *Being and Time*, namely that of *Dasein*'s own place. While things are in their place about their use,

⁸ cf. Heidegger 1977a, 140.

does *Dasein* have its own place? The question is set out convincingly when Heidegger notes how *Dasein* does not simply occupy a place but, by its spatiality, it takes it, arranging and ordering the place it reserves for itself. However, a few lines further on Heidegger drops any possible development by stating that the ecstatically made space of one's own is the leeway (*Spielraum*) of the sphere of the totality of the things one immediately takes care of (cf. Heidegger 1977a, 487-8). Hence, we know nothing about the very place of *Dasein*.

Of course, after *Being and Time*, these issues are taken up again, provided, however, that space is freed from the dimension of the world and the *Umgang*. On the other hand, the world/space relation is problematic, because either it is recognised that space is completely absorbed by the world and the relation to things (since it has been seen that even the spatiality of *Dasein* cannot be separated from them) or space becomes the aseptic space of geometry – a homogeneous space indifferently suited to everything. A third way of experiencing spatiality, solely concerning *Dasein*, is missing.

The decisive theoretical step, however, consists in no longer experiencing space as a space in which one is. Being-in and being-within are two declinations of how one can be in space, but there is never any question about being already in space, i.e., it is not under discussion that *Dasein* is already in space, and that spatiality is fundamentally understood from the being-in. This is why Heidegger can also base the spatiality of being-in on time: because being-in is 'already' in space, and thus due to a temporal anteriority.⁹ A glance at the semantic richness of being-in, however, shows that if the question is moved in terms of being-in-space, rather than relative to the being of space, then it is not original.¹⁰ The reference to dwelling and the link with the Latin *colo* is only partially taken up by *besorgen*, since the aspect of permanence compared to migration is completely omitted, which is instead fully part of the experience of space and manifests itself where the *colère* designates a site that puts an end to migration, with the introduction of cultivation – a site that is, perhaps, a phenomenon far more original than the everyday trade with things itself.

All these issues are taken up by Heidegger from the *Einräumen* of *Being and Time* as well as from *Dasein's* temporal-ecstatic movement. Heidegger's time-space can thus be seen as a result of the combination of these two topics.

⁹ Cf. Heidegger 1977a, § 70. In the conference *Time and Being* (1962), Heidegger criticizes his own theoretical step, cf. Heidegger 2007, 29.

¹⁰ Cf. Heidegger 2018, 70: "Dasein' hier ganz irrig als ‚Sein im Raume‘ gefaßt -statt *Sein des Raumes* (genitivus mundi)".

2 A Question of Meaning

Einräumen and the noun related to it, *Einräumung*, are not easily translatable. *Einräumen* means to concede, to grant, to admit, to allot. Since it contains *Raum*, space, that which is granted through the *Einräumen* is a space. A good translation for *Einräumen* could thus be 'making room'.

In *Being and Time*, *Dasein* allows things to come forward in proximity, through de-distancing, as well as to announce themselves in their usability, through orientation within the plexus of references that Heidegger calls 'significance' (*Bedeutsamkeit*). As we have seen, here Heidegger, first of all, thinks of the *Einräumung* about the use of things, and thus the space given to them is all related to this purpose.

There is however another nuance in the meaning of *Einräumung* that may be hard to perceive in English, but it helps to make explicit how *einräumen* makes room. Indeed, *Einräumung* means *dispositio*, which, in turn, stands for both attitude and the way something is arranged. In this sense, the word 'order' means as much arrangement as the result of the act of commanding, therefore it can be used to translate the *Einräumung* when it means *dispositio* (of course, the problem is that the two meanings of *Einräumung* stand together). Notwithstanding that, order means also request, hence we ask ourselves if making space follows an order or is rather the result of a request). In this situation of ambiguity, the possibility of a command to vacate a space is outlined as much as that of a request to occupy it.

The discussion becomes even more complicated if we consider other words to translate *Einräumung*, such as 'disposition' and 'disposal'. Disposition could be a good translation of *dispositio* too because it makes explicit another meaning, namely that of inclination and availability, which, although it does not seem to be immediately shared by *Einräumung*, is nevertheless thought by Heidegger when he uses expressions like "Zur Verfügung den Göttern" ('being at the disposal of the gods', cf. Heidegger 1989, 18). The German word for disposal, *Verfügung*, belongs to the German verb *fügen*, which also means 'to place and arrange', so it has a very similar meaning to *Einräumen*. By including the semantic area of *fügen*, widely used by Heidegger together with the noun *Fuge*, which can be translated as 'juncture', we not only return to the dimension of command, i.e., of injunction, which therefore imposes itself over that of request, but we also learn that the space that is granted and arranged has a juncture, i.e., it is a joint space. Only within conjunction can order be perceived: a simple space is not ordered, as it is bare. Finally, if we leave aside the 'at your disposal' formula, we know that 'disposal' means first and foremost dispersal, divestment, the act of getting rid of something. This too is part of the *Einräumung* experience. When Heidegger speaks of the intertwining of space and time, he is referring to dispersion

(*Zerstreuung*) and estrangement (*Entfremdung*), in the sense of the original condition for the experience of time and space as a collection (cf. Heidegger 1989, 385). As if making order presupposes original disorder.

The last word that makes up the semantic network of *Einräumung* is the German verb *räumen*, which at first could be understood as 'spatialising', 'making space' in the meaning of separating things, drawing a furrow, a hiatus – at least as long as we understand space as a distance between things. More accurately, *räumen* means 'to clear', 'to vacate', or 'to deplete'; for instance, Heidegger links *räumen* to *roden*, i.e., 'to plough', and to the expression "die Wildnis freimachen" ('to clear the wilderness', Heidegger 1983, 206). The connection between *Einräumen* and *Räumen* is first of all confirmed by the fact that Heidegger seems to use one expression and the other equivalently. Indeed, in some pages of *Contributions to Philosophy, Einräumung* appears together with *Zeitigung*,¹¹ while in others the pair is *Zeitigung/Räumung*.¹²

Although this problem cannot be addressed here, it must be said that the semantic valences that certain words have between one language and another, and the problem of translation in general, constitutes a decisive issue for Heidegger (cf. Nardelli 2021). This does not only mean that different languages contribute to a different experience of space, but, above all, that to each language the command of *Einräumung* sounds different, and what Heidegger calls *Volk* is constituted precisely based on the use of space reserved for it within a language. English 'disposal', Latin *dispositio*, German *Einräumung*: these are all translations that have been juxtaposed here in a general network of meanings, but the use of a language is not neutral, thus it does not exist something like a network of general meanings, independent of historical languages. Therefore, reading *Einräumung* and *dispositio* together from a Heideggerian perspective also means having to deal with the Latin-Roman experience of space and the German experience.

This might even sound like a platitude, i.e., a commonplace, were it not that the very discourse on *Einräumung* eliminates the possibility of a commonplace as such because the specific spatial experience of each language has the meaning of a specific command towards the arrangement of space. That is to say, it is not simply a matter of linguistic relativity, but a matter of tuning in to a command within historical languages. Space is thus discovered using a command that always sounds different. In the age of globalisation, this does not sound reassuring at all (cf. Cattaneo 2017), because it means that there is no common space, but always a contested and bounded space, at least

¹¹ Cf. Heidegger 1989, 192, 429.

¹² Cf. Heidegger 1989, 272, 383-5.

until we all speak the same language. However, when that happened, if space is granted within the command of one language, then we may well lack space because the sense of the command of the very language that will impose itself on the others remains undecided.

The richness of the semantic network of *Einräumung* is not a second-order point, for indeed the relationship between language and space is essential. Incidentally, this relationship seems something peculiar to space, since time, on the other hand, presents a much less complex range of meanings.¹³ Of course, time also has its own semantic complexity, as mentioned in the *Zeitlichkeit/Innerzeitigkeit* distinction. Nevertheless, the semantic stratification of time is dictated, in the case of time, by a transcendental procedure: each meaning is a condition of the possibility of another. There is, for instance, the understanding of something as X (e.g., the primacy of the present) and this is due to Y (e.g., the self-temporalisation of the ecstasy of the present; cf. Heidegger 1977a, 460). However, in the case of space, it is a different matter: one moves between the various meanings not because one goes back to more and more original conditions of possibility, but because one listens to the language that speaks of space. The very idea of a condition of possibility is something internal to the *Einräumung*, in its meaning of concession.

In other words, language itself seems to be a form of articulation of space, an arrangement that not only orders the elements of our experience into a syntax but, above all, commands and dictates them. Indeed, Heidegger insists that our experience of language is an experience of listening to language (cf. Heidegger 1985, 29). The experience of listening to the command inherent in the word is dictation. In dictation, the words take their place with authority, and we listen to them and take notes. In the experience of dictation, we cannot help but hear the call to dictatorship. And yet, Heidegger rather makes the case for another experience, namely that of *dichten* and *Dichtung* (cf. Heidegger 1980, 29-30), of poetry, not in the narrow sense of verse composition, but in the broader sense of art as listening and enactment/putting in the work ("ins Werk setzen", Heidegger 1977b, 59) - listening to the language of colours, of materials, and, of course, of language itself in poetry.

Based on this preliminary characterisation of *Einräumung* from its linguistic dimension, *Einräumen* then means being arranged at listening to the order of language; an order that manifests itself in the organisation/displacement of something.

13 In contrast to *Räumung* and *Einräumung*, Heidegger only speaks of *Zeitigung*, a word that has an almost technical meaning. *Zeitigen* means to generate, to produce, and in Austrian also 'to ripen'. While in *Being and Time*, maturation is not approached with the temporality of *Dasein*, it is precisely this that Heidegger gradually uses to refer to time.

3 The Arrangement of Space and Its Conjunction

This network of meanings is explored first of all about the ecstatic movement of existence, which, at the same time, highlights a fundamental ambiguity inside the *Einräumung*. This ambiguity, which has already been seen to permeate the words as *dispositio*, concerns, so to say, the 'object' of the *Einräumen*. What is it that is *ingeräumt*?

In its coming out of itself, *Dasein* leaves a void behind, as if it were a centrifugal suction that leaves no residue. Indeed, it is not a matter of exiting from an essence, according to the traditional sense of *ex-sistere*, because *Dasein* itself does not stand before its existence. This is a theme that Heidegger does not abandon after *Being and Time*, and indeed he takes it up again, remodelling it about Hölderlin and the experience of exile: *Dasein* is driven out of the hearth of being, as we also read in the chorus of Sophocles' *Antigone* (cf. Heidegger 1983b, 165; Heidegger 1984, 63), and its being-there turns out to be therefore a being-outside, a being displaced (*Verrückt*) and exposed (*ausgesetzt*) to the weather of existence (cf. Heidegger 1980, 36, 100).

What is it, however, that stands out before *Dasein*, in its ecstatic movement? If it leaves behind a nothingness, nevertheless there is a nothingness also against it. The possibilities projected are indeed a form of emptiness, and its most authentic possibility, 'being towards death' ("Sein zum Tode"), precisely reveals nothingness as the impossibility of existence (Heidegger 1977a, § 53).

Dasein is thus surrounded by nothingness, and yet the nothingness in front of it does not seem to be, somehow, the nothingness behind it (cf. Spanio 2013, 132). If this were the case, *Dasein* would coincide with itself, that is, it would have an identity, and it would cancel itself out because it would be a thing like any other. Said differently, how could there be such a thing as a movement of existence, if the starting point coincided with the endpoint?

From a metaphysical point of view, discourse around the nullity of something would have followed the direction of a foundation preserving existence from total annihilation. On the contrary, here it takes on an eminently phenomenological sense. Indeed, Heidegger thinks of the nothingness that surrounds *Dasein* both as a void and in spatio-temporal terms: in front of itself, *Dasein* is propelled towards the void by temporal ecstasy; behind itself, it is instead surrounded by the space it has already left to be thrown into the world. The impossibility of representing this movement should not be discouraged, since Heidegger intends precisely to break the primacy of representation. On the contrary, we will see how the phenomenological interpretation of the nullity of *Dasein* is precisely the strong point of Heideggerian discourse. The reference to time and space is of fundamental importance, precisely because it anchors thought to the phenomenological

dimension of experience: an experience that is as much spatio-temporally situated as it is an experience of time and space.

Let us then see how the spatial experience of *Einräumung* fits within this phenomenological framework. If there is a space that *Dasein* leaves behind it, then it must first be recognised that, concerning *Being and Time*, spatiality is addressed in its independence of the world. Hence, space is now released from *Umgang*, and it becomes a space that is free, empty, and open. The emptiness of space should not be understood negatively, i.e., as a deficiency, precisely because *Dasein* is already always ecstatic, and thus does not leave behind a space it could otherwise fill in. Heidegger also links this 'emptiness' (*Leere*) to 'reading' (*lesen*), taking up the connection between language and space (cf. Heidegger 1983a, 209). If the void of space is connected to reading, then the emptiness of space is that which something gathers around, as it is the 'gathering' that expresses the meaning of *lesen* (cf. Heidegger 2000, 215). Heidegger also refers to the hollow centre of a jug (Heidegger 1989, 339), proving that the negativity of the void is somehow functional to a positive moment of space-making. *Dasein* thus leaves behind the spatial void, but this is not lost, rather it surrounds it and somehow gives it form.

Understanding therefore the emptiness of ecstatic movement as a space, rather than a mere nothingness, allows us to discern its constitutive capacity. The clearing present in the making of space (*Räumen*) enables (*räumt ein*) something, that is, it is a making of 'space for'. The idea of making room for something recalls a rather well-known concept from Heidegger's philosophy, namely that of *sein lassen*, to 'let it be' (cf. Haugeland 2007). *Lassen*, in both its active and passive meaning, would indicate for Heidegger "the deepest sense of being" (Heidegger 1986, 363), and is usually interpreted about two other important concepts, such as *Gelassenheit* and *Seinsverlassenheit*. In this way, being lets beings/entities (*Seienden*) be, withdrawing itself from it. Consequently, one could then understand the meaning of *Einräumen* as leaving space for the entity. This is also suggested by some of Heidegger's expressions, in which space appears as the result of *Einräumen* (cf. Heidegger 1989, 62, 298, 429).

However, *Einräumen* does not allow itself to be clarified based on *Lassen*, and it seems that the opposite is rather true, namely that *Lassen* is a way of understanding *Einräumen*.¹⁴ Leaving a space free indeed presupposes that one is in some way in possession of that space, or at least of the faculty to free it. But what is this faculty, and what

14 We have already mentioned that it is *Dasein* that leaves space behind, whereas the subject of *lassen* is being itself. To this we should add that if *Einräumen* meant making space for things, then it would continue to have the same meaning as in *Being and Time*, whereas we have ruled out this hypothesis.

is that space already possessed? Moreover, it should be noted that here the discourse has an ontological significance: the space that is left is the space of being, in which the things that occupy it can be said to be. But then, what does it mean that that space was not previously free? What occupied it? Heidegger undoubtedly speaks of the "retraction" (*Entzug*) and "refusal" (*Verweigerung*) of being (cf. Heidegger 1989, 293), but if it is understood in the sense of leaving space for beings, it means that being is thought of as something that can, in turn, occupy a space: that would sound quite ontic. Furthermore, if abandonment is required for beings/entities to be, it means that being occupied that space without margins, as if it were something unlimited, which then limits itself. All this sounds very metaphysical, also and above all because being's abandonment of beings/entities does not at all guarantee that beings are: according to Heidegger, beings 'are', even without being, in the sense that, in the age of the abandonment of being and the technical domain, our experience of things takes place even without thinking the truth of being within beings (cf. Heidegger 1989, 111). To assert the opposite, namely that being retracts itself for the sake of beings, is to continue to think being in favour of beings, reiterating what for Heidegger is the pattern of thought of metaphysics, which achieves 'beingness' (*Seiendheit*) instead of being. The being of beings (*das Sein der Seienden*) is in a certain sense independent of the abandonment of being: that being withdraws from beings does not mean that beings thus accede to being, but rather that beings lose their original belonging to being.

As in the case of nothingness, sticking to the phenomenological dimension of the *Einräumen* avoids giving it a metaphysical tone, which is completely absent in these pages by Heidegger, and instead allows the character of the space that is *ingeräumt* to come into sharper focus. Space is not the residue of the self-annulment of being, both because this does not make much sense from a phenomenological point of view, and because, above all, this perspective does not allow the special character of space to be grasped, given that, from the point of view of *Lassen*, space is only such insofar as it is liberated, i.e., it follows from something else, in short, it is not grasped from itself: it is not a *Phänomen* in the sense of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1977a, 41).

The space that the *Einräumen* thus opens up has a constitutive character, rather than being a mere nothingness. Nevertheless, we have also seen how the constitution granted by *Einräumung* cannot be understood as a 'leaving space for'. To further clarify this sensitive point, one could also refer to the difference between *räumen* and *einräumen*. The space that, through the *Räumung*, is cleared has negativity absent in that which is granted by the *Einräumung*. The space that is granted is not simply abandoned, a house that is occupied because the previous tenants have left it, more or less in concession. If this were the case, our experience of space would always be priv-

ative, that is, the frame that remains once the picture has been removed (cf. Heidegger 1989, 373).

In what, then, does the proper character of the space of the *Einräumung* consist? What is granted in the *Einräumung* is not simply a space freed from something for something else, a space that is free insofar as it has been freed, but rather a space that is originally welcoming. This is tantamount to recognising that the space one allows oneself is not an inhospitable space (another reason why it is neither nothingness nor deprivation of being), but rather it is a space such that something can come to be in it, and not simply because it is free but by its specific character, which here could be defined as 'hospitality'.

Hospitality can be characterised as the capacity to welcome, not only within oneself. For space is not only that within which things are but also that which surrounds and defines. Boundary, contour, and border are spatial concepts, and can thus be assumed to come into play about hospitality. Concerning *Being and Time*, the relation of things to space thus takes on a markedly constitutive trait, which is expressed by the welcoming things. Hence, the place of things is not only that which endows them with meaning, i.e., which provides indications of their use but also becomes the space around which things have gathered, entering within their contours.¹⁵

However, the space granted by the *Einräumung* is not a space that already invites entry. Rather, it is a space arranged in such a way as to have within it the possibility of both welcome and rejection. Therefore, hospitality does not already imply access but expresses a configuration of space that can allow entry, and in general living. If it is not simply a matter of crossing a threshold, but of living in space, then the space must be configured in such a way as to guarantee this possibility, regardless of whether one lives in it or not. This is the sense of the profound connection between conjunction, configuration, and concession, all expressed by *Einräumung*.

The hospitable space is not just a simple room, into which one enters and from which one leaves, but it is the space of existence, in which the human being experiences his locality, that is, his situatedness, in history, in a people, in a corporeity. The configuration assumed by space is thus that disposition, that *habitus* (hence 'habit') that allows one to inhabit a space. Moreover, we witness a peculiar stratification of space: 1) there is the bare space, 2) the space arranged for living in and, of course, 3) the space inhabited. The central position of the arranged space underlines its intimate possibil-

15 One hypothesis regarding the continuation of this discourse might be that it is neither, of course, a metaphysical discourse, in the vague and broad sense, nor a strictly phenomenological one. Indeed, I do not believe that the few indications given by Heidegger on the constitutive role of space go in the direction of a phenomenology of the processes by which space, rather than consciousness, constitutes the objects of experience.

ity: the fact that hospitality is the result of a command excludes the fact that we are already in a habitable space, as well as that we can dwell in it. This is tantamount to saying that we can remain excluded from the space, even though it is arranged for us. This becomes even more disturbing when we consider the fact that the command of arrangement does not depend on us, but on what reaches our ears from language.

In *Contributions*, the link between space and possibility becomes even more pronounced, as the possibility that is *eingräumt* is the "Möglichkeit der Schenkung" (Heidegger 1989, 384), i.e., the possibility that the 'refusal' of being (*Sichversagen*) is not total, but rather 'lingers', being fixed and endured precisely through space and its 'bewitching/inviting' (*berückend*) character. The reception of space then guarantees the possibility that the retreat of being is *Ereignis*, the word that for Heidegger indicates the complex relationship between being and *Dasein*. *Einräumung* is thus an arrangement of space such that indecision is delineated in it, that is, whether it welcomes or not, and this remaining suspended defines the character of possibility, its being a pure relationship.

The insistence on purity must not, however, misunderstand the political implications of space. Indeed, the possibility of reception shows that space is always a space traversed by others or a space concerning which others are hunted and kept at the border. Indeed, one does not wish to cross the border to an inhospitable place. This is why the arrangement of space also includes the theme of agreement and contention: the 'contents' of space are as much what is held together (*con-tinēre*) as what is contested. The *Einräumung* thus organises forces that define both the possible and uncertain character of reception and the contractions that animate it. Inside and outside, near and far, but also high and low: it is through these dimensions that space is arranged by the *Einräumung*.

These dimensions of space constitute the conjunction of the arranged space, the object toward which is directed the *Einräumung*. What does it mean that it is the internal structure of space that is arranged? How does the arrangement of, for example, distances take place? What is it, moreover, that decides in favour or against the accommodation of space? What, finally, must the arrangement be, to allow the possibility: for example, must inside and outside be present in equal measure, to generate a perfect opposition and the indecision that constitutes possibility, or not?

These questions make explicit a certain ambiguity in Heidegger's discourse on space, which has already been seen by briefly reconstructing the semantic network in which space is thought. The ambiguity is as follows: is the *Einräumung* directly concerned with space or with something internal to it, which may be called spatial conjunction? What is arranged when one arranges a space?

Let us take the example of distance. The space that is laid out seems to be a space furrowed by great distances since it is precisely distance that marks the difference of space from the world of *Being and Time*, where things are defined by the relationship to hand (*Vor-handenheit/Zu-handenheit*). In *Contributions*, space is also the site where the decision about the proximity and distance of the gods falls, so it is relatively clear that the arrangement of space has to make room for distance. But how is the ordering of these distances directed at space, rather than at things? Said even more clearly: how does one draw a distance without at the same time arranging the extremes of distance? In the specific case of distance, this is all the more evident when one considers that one is talking about the distance of the gods and not just any distance between two points. That is to say, how a god is distant would be incomparable to how a tool is distant since it is not enough for me to stretch out my hand to cancel the distance. If it is the *Einräumung* that arranges distance, then it cannot only address space but also what forms its conjuncture in it. Thus, something strange occurs: there is 'something', such as the gods, which form the conjuncture of space, and its interplay of distances, and these in turn accommodate something else. In this case, the unusual reference to the gods means that the object of the *Einräumung* is not things, which in turn accommodate other things. There is a gap, a difference, in the arranged space between the elements that arrange it and the things that enter it and are welcomed.

In the brief text *Art and Space* (Heidegger 1983a, 203-10), forty years later than *Being and Time*, Heidegger seems to return to the question of the *Einräumung*. Here, the *Räumen* is defined as "Freigabe von Orten" (207), while the *Einräumung* is the occurrence of this liberation of places (207), in the dual sense of giving access (*Zulassen*) and setting up (*Einrichten*). By 'place', Heidegger means instead the space around which the thing gathers, and in whose proximity, it shows itself. Heidegger wonders whether it is not precisely placed, in their imposing themselves and in their gathering, that assign *Einräumung* its fundamental directive, rather than thinking of places as the result of the concession of space. Heidegger seems to lean towards the latter option. That which was then called the conjuncture of space, on which *Einräumung* in the sense of command is directed and from which *Einräumung* in the sense of welcoming concession derives, is place.

The *Einräumung* liberates the place, that is, it arranges the space in such a way that inside it things can constitute themselves and gather. The space arranged in this way, the place, in turn, opens up a 'region' (*Gegend*), i.e., an area within which different things can coalesce. This is not just a co-partnership of things within the same semantic area, or within the same sphere of use: here Heidegger is probably thinking of the much broader co-partnership that takes

place within the *Geviert*, in which earth, heaven, mortals and the divine co-participate (cf. Heidegger 2000, 152-3).

Heidegger states that things themselves are places. The difference between the conjuncture of space, its welcoming structure, and the things that inhabit it then becomes inverted: the things themselves grant space, opening up distances in which no longer other things, but mortals and the divine, are placed. That which comes to inhabit the space laid out by the place unveils a new experience of spatiality, because belonging to a place does not only have the sense of a location but of a coexistence with that which makes our mortality explicit and that which overpowers it.

4 Conclusion

We have thus seen how the thought of *Einräumung* begins with the experience of the spatiality of things being used and ends by returning to things again, but in a radically new sense. Things are no longer tools, and equipment, but become places. In this profound inversion, the experience of spatiality naturally changes: whereas in *Being and Time* it was understood as an approximation of tools within a complex of relations of use (the world), it now becomes the experience of belonging to a region opened up by the thing.

Einräumung, therefore, means the opening up of that particular space that is the place, that is, the space/thing capable of guaranteeing reception. The complex web of meanings, sometimes ambivalent, of *Einräumung*, can thus be explained within the experience of place, which is a thing and at the same time welcomes things, which is open/ordered and in turn opens and disposes of.

But in all this, where is existence, with its time-space movement, ecstatically reaching out into space? If it is the gods, mortals, heaven, and earth that characterise the juncture of the thing/place in the sense of *Geviert*, then existence falls within it: human beings are the mortals. This, however, only indicates that *Dasein* has a meaning not limited to the human being: the *Da* it opens up is itself a place, if not the place *par excellence*. Just as the place is at once a thing, so the *Da* is at once proper to an entity, the human being. In the *Da* too, then, there is the complex movement of *Einräumung*, in the sense of the ecstatic command that moves out of itself by opening up a space and at the same time the invitation to fill and guard it, making it habitable. Existence is thus the original sense of making room.

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Inflatable vs Tectonic. A Seven Days Diary to Disrupt a Miesian Space in Berlin

Laura Mucciolo

Sapienza Università di Roma, Italia

Abstract The *Hypercomfort* summer school hosted by the Berlin UdK, inside the L.M. van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie, has represented an operative moment of a 'space oddity', highlighting proper characteristics of ephemeral architectures. The construction of colourful craftmade and handmade inflatables, similar to nomadic settlement systems, has defined an offensive and paradoxical component, absolutely contrary to 'Miesian' architecture. The paper aims to analyse the scientific construction of inflatables, to highlight the temporal suspension and the cancellation of the spatial surroundings as effects of the ephemeral architectures.

Keywords Architectural design. Mies van der Rohe. Ephemeral architecture. Inflatables. Hypercomfort.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Day 1. The Arrival at the Neue Nationalgalerie by Mies van de Rohe. – 3 Day 2. The Reversible Pneumatic Construction. – 4 Day 3. A Five Days Realisation, a Four Hour Building-Life Time. – 5 Day 4. The Precariousness of Building Materials. – 6 Day 5. The Inflatable Ugliness. – 7 Day 6. From Dawn to Dusk of a Day. – 8 Day 7. Farewell to the Neue Nationalgalerie / The Epilogue.



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1 Introduction

Meanwhile, like a form of architectural prayer, civic plans have been set in motion to rebuild the Campanile *dov'era, com'era*, as if the dilapidations of time and entropy could be reversed.

(Thomas Pynchon, *Against the Day*, 2006)

Il legame tra tempo e calore è dunque profondo: ogni volta che si manifesta una differenza tra passato e futuro, c'è di mezzo il calore. [...] L'entropia di Clausius è una quantità [...] che cresce o resta uguale, ma non diminuisce mai, in un processo isolato.

(Carlo Rovelli, *L'ordine del tempo*, 2017)

From 5 to 10 September 2022, three huge inflatables invaded and occupied the space of the Neue Nationalgalerie by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The temporary pneumatic architectures were created as part of the summer school titled *Hypercomfort* sponsored by the University of the Arts Berlin (Universität der Künste, from now on as UdK) and coordinated by Stéphanie Bru (BRUTHER) in collaboration with Eveline Jürgens (UdK) and the French-German architect Hans-Walter Müller (guest lecturer of the workshop).¹

The workshop, starting from some imposed conditions such as the concentrated realisation of the inflatables (five days), the very short duration of the set-up (four hours), the precariousness of the tarpaulins and construction materials, the ugliness of the inflatables, the absence of predetermined use of the space built, tried to investigate with an operational way, the conditions of the temporary architectures within the museum space, exploring the drifts of the 'comfort zone' or 'hypercomfort'.

The research stems from the idea that the comfort zone is the obligatory passage in the appropriation of a space, which is domesticated with conditions of climate and hygiene to be inhabited by humans; air, in its primitive meaning is an element that can be shaped to define favourable conditions for habitation; on the other hand, it is a rel-

The author would truly thank prof. Stéphanie Bru, prof. Eveline Jürgens, Hans-Walter Müller, Verena Brüning, and all the workshop participants for the shared experience.

¹ *With Mies van der Rohe into a New World* is the public exhibition of the *Hypercomfort* summer school by the University of the Arts (UdK, Berlin), Neue Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Freunde der Nationalgalerie e.V, Euroboden GmbH, from 5-10 September 2022. With the workshop team leaders prof. Stéphanie Bru with prof. Eveline Jürgens, the students Felix Anatol Findeiß, Dörte Meyer, Sarah Scherzer, Paul Brückner, Gustav Ingold, A. Axel Thorisson with Clara Ancel, Nicolás Bobran, Vassilissa Brahmī, Benjamin Brenner, Paul Brückner, Anneke Frank, Sunghoon Go, Marius Grubert, Richard Hees, Leon Hidalgo, Gustav Ingold, Johannes Jakobi, Ana Kolenc, Konstantinos Lekkas, Jan Lessmann, Tevi Allan-Ston Mensah, Laura Mucciolo, Kalle Niemann, Tan Oktik, Nuttamon Pramsumran, Helena Schenavsky, Felix Schuschach, Zoya Solovieva, Kei Urayama, Flavia Vilka, Nick Zinthäfer.



Figure 1 The three inflated architectures realised during the one-week workshop
 With *Mies van der Rohe into a New World* inside the Hypercomfort Summer School.
 UdK, prof. Stéphanie Bru with prof. Eveline Jürgens. © Verena Brüning

atively recent idea that air can be used as the structural fullness that allows a space to exist. These are the premises of the challenge proposed by the pneumatic architectures of Hans-Walter Müller, guest architect of the summer school and designer of the inflatables created during the week-long workshop.

The three architectures (two cylinders and a pavilion of composite form) [fig. 1] were made from paper models of the various parts of the project exploded and printed on a 1:1 scale, subsequently reproduced in the necessary number of tracings, on recycled plastic sheets in white, black, transparent, blue, and yellow; then, under an economy-production regime, double-sided tape welded the various parts together. The use of materials such as packaging membranes, mainly used in agricultural production, defined a textural contrast within the museum space and ensured an airtight skin much more durable than the use of recycled material. The construction of the cavity was possible through the input, within the plastic drapery, of a certain quantitative relationship between air and pressure: the drapery thus became a pneumatic definition of a space, whose final form was outlined as a whole, only at the end of the filling operations.

The works, at the end of the public exhibition, as night came on, returned to being drapery deflated with air: the mechanically dissolved architectures, albeit for a few hours, reconstructed – within the Neue Nationalgalerie – a temporary and paradoxical alternative to the (apparent) statuesque reality imposed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The colourful and imperfect, ‘craftmade’ and ‘handmade’ inflatables, properly and strictly ephemeral (i.e., of one-day duration), allowed certain design actions to attack the museum: reversibility, short durability, precariousness. These areas, foreign to architectural design that relates to the ‘long life’, to the stability of a work, to its extended life in time, introduce into the rigidity of the ‘Miesian’ space a way of escape, the suspension of time imposed with a sudden, noisy, unbalanced ensemble of machines circus.

This paper, using the narrative form of the diary, will examine the workshop experience by associating each day with an operational consideration given by the experience, and then drown the praxis in a broader theoretical framework that highlights the meaning and spatial consequences that these ephemeral pneumatic constructions unveiled.

2 Day 1. The Arrival at the Neue Nationalgalerie by Mies van de Rohe

The Neue Nationalgalerie, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, is a space arising from a square layout, governed by rules of symmetry, within the district known as the Kulturforum (not far from the ABB Roland Ernst Area and the Philharmonie by Hans Scharoun). The space of the Neue Nationalgalerie, divided in two levels, one above ground and one semi-basement, is substantially delineated by the iconic black matte steel coffered roof.

The semi-basement level is defined from the outside as a basement volume that organises on the various sides of the volume different access conditions (ramps, monumental stairs, utility stairs, service accesses).

The access space on the above-ground level is made with the crossing of the glazed boundary. Inside the strongly symmetrical space is confirmed by two blocks of vertical connections (stairs and automated platforms); by following the alignment with the leading edge of the stairs, two hollow bodies clad in green Tinos marble, are used as cages for the plant conditions.

The basement spaces, only partially lit by a patio, house the art collections, defining spatial hierarchies in chained boxes that follow one another in a ‘climatic’ spatial hierarchy (in the specific from the largest space to the smallest).

The total symmetry that governs architecture has been subverted, through the construction of reversible pneumatic architectures.

3 Day 2. The Reversible Pneumatic Construction

The experience of building electrically air-powered inflatables makes it possible to identify some considerations, both on the 'reversible' process of ephemeral architectural space and on its own 'pneumatic' condition of existence. The reversibility of the inflatable is the construction, on closer inspection, of a dream. The inflatable has undergone two, perhaps three, state transitions: disassembled into disunited pieces, joined in the form of deflated plastic drapery, space filled with air. The construction trajectory followed the normal progression, as with an architectural building in the strict sense, only unlike a building that is designed to 'last', this space was deflated, triggering a process of reversibility and thus of loss.

Spatial reversibility, which perceptually carries with it a salvific theme, namely the idea that the process of reversibility is transitive and therefore replicable, clashes with the factual reality, which highlights the loss of architectural space, highlighted in the opening by Pynchon's words 'it was, as it was'. As highlighted by Barthes:

I do not know the voice of being loved except when it is dead, recalled to memory, remembered in my head, far beyond my ear; voice tenuous and yet monumental, since it is one of those objects that do not exist except when it is gone. (Barthes 2014, 91-2)²

While even the prospect of return can appear salvific and safe, it is the loss of space, its total disappearance, its erasure, that confers proof of existence.³ The power of space erasure is a repeated event in the architectural design field, which has repeatedly manifested itself as a praxis to heal certain deficiencies (from Plan Voisin to Pruitt Igoe); in this case, the erasure, like a dreamed spell, is linked to the pneumatic existence of the inflatable.

The powering (or existence) of the inflatable [fig. 2] was through motors activated by electricity that fed air and pressure into the three bodies, calibrating their relationship. The erasure of architecture coincides with the absence of air, understood in this case as the structural element of space. Air, albeit through an experiment that did not include habitability, is the element that ensures the mechanical survival of the architecture. Inflatables, therefore, function in contrast to

² The quotes given in English have been translated from Italian by the Author. Instead, where grammatical period construction was more complex, the Author preferred to transcribe the quote in the original language.

³ As recalled by Agamben (2019, 19): "This is why it could be said that not paradise, but its loss constitutes the original mythologema of Western culture, a kind of original traumatism that has deeply marked Christian and modern culture, condemning to failure any search for happiness on earth".



Figure 2 The powering (or existence) of the inflatable was through motors activated by electricity that fed air and pressure into the three bodies, calibrating their relationship. © Verena Brüning

built architecture, where if we tried (with great difficulty) to subtract air, we would verify that the structure would not be compromised.

Structure does not give happiness; but every structure is habitable, and this is perhaps its best definition. I can very well inhabit that which does not make me happy; I can complain and at the same time continue to remain where I am; I can reject the sense of the structure I endure and accept without too much suffering its everyday waste (habits, minute pleasures, small securities, bearable things, passing tensions); and of this continuity of the system (which makes it properly habitable), I can have the perverse taste: David Stylites lived very well on his column: he had managed to make it (despite the obvious difficulty) a structure. (Barthes 2014, 189)

The term 'structure', which unites both the reversibility and the pneuma of the inflatable's architecture, is what is most appropriate to define the space of inflated domes, and, as Barthes confirms, it is something reversible and mechanically originated, but above all habitable - the secret of habitability lies in the continuity of structure.

4 **Day 3. A Five Days Realisation, a Four Hour Building-Life Time**

The proportionally inverse relationship that exists between the construction of a space and its durability is what undermines the previously investigated continuity of a system, thus its habitability.

The inflatables, made through a copy tailoring technique, took five days of collective work (with twenty-five people) [fig. 3] to become a single drapery; the attention was placed on the joints between the parts, since any gaps not covered by the drapery would have undermined the inflatable system, allowing air to escape, generating unintended dissipation [fig. 4].⁴ The only time the inflatable took shape was during the morning of the fifth day: prior to that time, the drapery was just a huge quilt of plastic; so any shape, possible symmetry, any flaws or encumbrances, were only remotely intuitable.

In contrast, however, the public demonstration of the inflatables was a short-lived event (about four hours) that saw about three times as many people involved in the construction in the same space, curious to see the inflatables from the outside or to enter them (where possible).⁵ The entry of people into the inhabitable inflatable structure occurs through calibrated openings but brings with it spaces for dissipation, in this case, controlled but allowed.

The inflatable revealed two faces, the private and the public. The former, during the five-day construction with twenty-five people, the latter during the exhibition of seventy-five people. During the private construction, air dissipation was opposed, understood as a factory defect of the space; in contrast, with the public, air dissipation was allowed precisely to let them discover the space, otherwise only intuitable from the outside. Air dissipation linked public and private in an existence relationship that involved duration, thus the entropic condition of space, whereby:

Ten years before he understood that time is slowed by masses, Einstein had understood that time is slowed by speed. (Rovelli 2017, 39)

The duration of bubble construction occurred in a time perceived as very rapid, the creeping drapery (a deflated mass), made by a few people who did not really sense the shape of the object they were making, who did not perceive it as a mass [fig. 5]. However, the group who worked according to the deflated drapery took on the connotations

⁴ About dissipation see Lynch 1992, 77-8.

⁵ The public display of the inflatables took place on 10 September 2022, from 4 to 8 p.m., at the Glass Hall of the Neue Nationalgalerie.



Figure 3 The inflatables, made through a copy tailoring technique, took five days of collective work (with twenty-five people). Hans-Walter Müller with Stèphanie Bru (BRUTHER) during the workshop. © Verena Brüning

Figure 4 The inflatables, made through a copy tailoring technique, took five days of collective work (with twenty-five people) to become a single drapery. The attention was placed on the joints between the parts, any gaps not covered by the drapery would have undermined the inflatable system, allowing air to escape, generating unintended dissipation. © Verena Brüning



Figure 5 The creeping drapery (a deflated mass), made by a few people who did not really sense the shape of the object they were making, who did not perceive it as a mass.
© Verena Brüning

Figure 6 Plastic tarpaulins used in agriculture for fourth-range greenhouse cultivation, packaging materials such as double-sided tape and bubble wrap, scissors and paper patterns: the materials used to make the inflatables, despite being created to protect and resist any weather, border on absolute precariousness of strength and framework: soft, brittle, malleable materials, the implementation of which depends on the quality of application.
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of the slow mass, which has “the shape of a convoy, united by the remoteness of the destination” (Canetti 1982, 47).

This first slowdown, amortised over five days, was not perceived given the tendency of the mass to centralise attention and divert time (add mass and power).

During the public event, on the other hand, the presence of the inflated mass, thus its true first appearance, the speed of public exposure, and the presence of additional interactive masses (people) worked, as Rovelli argues, as time-slowers. The short durability of the event (only four hours) expanded into a time perceived as very long (many of the participants perceived the event as all night lasting).

The regulation of air dissipation is, on closer inspection, the mechanism that regulated both the construction of the structures and their existence. The transition between past (construction phase) and future (public display phase) are linked by the energy expenditure of heat that occurred, made possible by the presence of the architectures and bodies, understood as masses.

5 Day 4. The Precariousness of Building Materials

Plastic tarpaulins used in agriculture for fourth-range greenhouse cultivation, packaging materials such as double-sided tape and bubble wrap, scissors and paper patterns: the materials used to make the inflatables, despite being created to protect and resist any weather, border on absolute precariousness of strength and framework: soft, brittle, malleable materials, the implementation of which depends on the quality of application [fig. 6].

Despite their precarious nature, i.e., not guaranteed but obtained ‘almost’ by a miracle (again, the drapery of the inflatables is ‘questioned’ as if it were alive), the inflatable endured by going on stage. Through the imposition – by curators Hans-Walter Müller, Stéphanie Bru, Eveline Jürgens – of a ‘sustainable’ line on materials, a criterion of endurance to durability was verified. The inflatable habitable structures by arranging a convenience of realisation:

Se consideriamo i costi allargati di qualcosa, è talora vero che un oggetto più costoso ma più duraturo diminuirà nel tempo il suo costo, mentre ci darà anche i piaceri di una cosa familiare e ben usata. Ma altri oggetti saranno più convenienti se effimeri, anche perché potranno meno vincoli al nostro futuro. [...] La vita ottimale di una cosa dipende dai costi relativi di produzione e manutenzione a cui bisogna aggiungere il costo di eliminazione. La nostra affezione per oggetti quasi permanenti può essere controbilanciata dalla noia che ci danno, o dal modo in cui limitano il nostro futuro. Ci sono occasioni in cui diciamo: una bella liberazione! (Lynch 1992, 254)

The argument about the convenience of implementation well applies to architectures as well, and not only to things. Trying paradoxically to substitute for Lynch's 'things' and 'objects', domestic architectures or properly the word 'house', forcing the argument, this would not change its meaning. The house, precious architecture and space of affection, carries with it the limited spatial flexibility of a design defined to last (in theory) a lifetime; the presence of the house fixed element works as a limiter of the future with respect to the inhabitant and the spaces (he or she) might wish to inhabit. The inflatable, pneumatic inhabitable structure as a domestic prototype in its own right, although primitive and *in nuce*, without any hygienic or energetic services, in its construction, it contains reasoning about energy and the expenditure of production, maintenance, and above all elimination.

For the first time and in a declared way, the house as a space for living can disappear, be erased, or eliminated because it is obsolete, without this bringing with it an economic loss of investment, without the erasure becoming a counterproductive move. Inhabiting the air, using its structural fullness as domestic space carries with it the idea that domestic architecture should be generated, summarily regulated by a boundary and not dominated (by walls, hierarchies, rooms, spaces, meticulous interiors, engineered air conditioning systems or electrical survival). The inflatable bubble becomes a device to inhabit where hierarchies of control undergo updating:

To control/Definitions

To check something to make sure the required conditions are fulfilled

To check the accuracy of something

To subject to meticulous examination

To supervise a person

To exercise moral, material or political domination over a region or a country

To manage one's body, feelings or instincts voluntarily

A controlled environment, or critical environment, is an area that must have certain parameters controlled, specifically, pressure, temperature, and segregation. Many laboratories are considered controlled environments, as they have controlled temperature and pressure and are separated from other operations, such as manufacturing or shipping. (Bruther 2020, 58)

Following the trajectories proposed by Bru and Theriot, the space of the inflatable, habitable structure is a space of control by temperature, pressure, and transit capacity, i.e., the possibility of exit from it; that same inhabited inflatable hypothesised by Banham in 1965 (Banham 1965, 70-9).

6 Day 5. The Inflatable Ugliness

The inflatables, once filled with air, involved certain senses of perception: hearing (the noise emitted by the air motors), touch (haptics), smell, and especially sight. The inflatable structures manifested themselves in all their ugliness. Touch collaborated in this perceptual construction: through the interaction between hands and inflatable structures, the aura of distance that enveloped the unfamiliar and - apparently - frightening objects made it possible to establish a relationship of proximity with the architectures, making them accessible, dominating them by touching or entering them.

In addition, due to a casual choice of materials used, the originally smooth and continuous smoothed sheets were cut into parts and joined through glue joints, passing each time from hand to hand among the participants, touching the ground, getting dirty with dust, and accidents. The air bubbles possessed all the characteristics of the anti-beautiful, the anti-positive, and the anti-avoidant. Upon the intake of air, the inflatable structures revealed deformations and irregularities, formal conditions that lump these objects together with macabre apparitions within a space, that of the Neue Nationalgalerie, easily understood as an architectural expression of Western beauty.

The absolute and polished compositional and formal clarity of the Neue Nationalgalerie contrasts with the overflowing and pushing structure of the air cylinders and the ungainly hypothesis of the central inflatable. With immediacy, the formal difference between museum space and plastic structures is noted, highlighting their profound difference: the former for which criteria of harmony, magnificence, and symmetry define an architecture of appreciation; the latter, for which ideas of repulsion are presented through the obscene, the unclean, the indecent. Technically, inflatables would fit the perspective of formal ugliness, intended:

Come squilibrio nella relazione organica tra le parti di un tutto.
(Eco 2007, 19)

These dirty, dissimilar architectures slip into that history of the ugly outlined by Eco, establishing a dissonance, a tension with the host architecture; a hierarchy is established, between the Mies van der Rohe museum and the deformed, dirty, objects of repulsion [fig. 7]. This tension brings the container into the background, almost making it disappear, indeed highlighting the presence only of the inflatables. The ugly, which is not universal but refers to times context and society, emerges overbearingly generating a spatial suspension of the existing, ignoring the surroundings, and using the ugly as a fetish.

Famous examples of this design strategy were Saint Phalle and Tinguely's *She-a-Cathedral* at the Moderna Museum in Stockholm

(1966); although it was not a pure inflatable, but rather a steel structure covered in fabric, the operations before and after the exhibition paralleled the inflatables in the Neue: the object built in forty days by eight people, exhibited for two months, was a large interior in the shape of a female body to 'enter'.⁶ The museum that housed the fetish became an immense anonymous white box, the destruction of the fetish (save the head) determined the end of the exhibition. Or Paul McCarthy's *Tree* of 2014, a 24-meter-tall 'Christmas tree-like' structure in Place-Vendôme that was destroyed in the night (by turning off the mechanical fans and cutting the tie-rods that stabilised it), erased, if only for a few hours, the urban void of Place-Vendôme.

The ugly as fetish temporarily erases the surrounding for the duration of its presence, so much so that only one presence is allowed - as with McCarthy's tree - either the architecture or the fetish. Picking up the meaning of Barthes' words, which emphasise:

Il tatto è il più demistificatore dei nostri sensi, al contrario della vista che è il più magico. (Barthes 1994, 147-8)

These ephemeral architectures, whether urban apparitions or not, act as fetish-objects capable of deceiving and bewildering the viewer, erasing the existing context wherever possible (as with the Neue Nationalgalerie's inflatables or Saint Phalle's Cathedral), or declaring absolute incompatibility with the context, such that either one or the other may survive (as with McCarthy). Visual perception brings with it the power of transformation, of imagination, on the architectural body, narrowing the field, giving rise to other and more hallucinatory visions, which sometimes exclude 'reality' [fig. 8]; touch on the contrary, as demonstrated by the irruption on McCarthy's inflatable, opposes sight, seeking to dominate, conquer, declassify the object by operating de-mystifying actions, that is, of cleaning, of de-secreting, of unveiling the mysteries that sight has produced.

7 Day 6. From Dawn to Dusk of a Day

The construction of the inflatable bubbles was a bodily, physical, collective endeavour whose final direction was the exhibition to the 'public' of the habitable structures: the exhibition had, from the beginning, an imposed duration of four hours, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on 10 September 2022; the architectures would have a deadline.

⁶ See "Remembering She-a-Cathedral": <https://www.modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/exhibitions/remembering-she-a-cathedral/>.



Figure 7 These dirty, dissimilar architectures slip into that history of the ugly outlined by Eco, establishing a dissonance, a tension with the host architecture; a hierarchy is established, between the Mies van der Rohe museum and the deformed, dirty, objects of repulsion.
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Nella definizione comune il termine effimero, 'che dura solo un giorno', ha origine nel lessico medico, indicando febbri di breve durata esaurite le quali era esaurita la malattia. Per estensione il termine stabilisce quindi una relazione specifica tra durata e progetto, descrivendo gli apparati architettonici che si consumano nel tempo determinato della festa. (Fava 2017, 19)

Durability and design, when mutually related, trigger the initiation of a festive time, as in the case of the inflatables, that of public display. For this, I can fall within the realm of the ephemeral, but also for the experiential condition of expectation that festivity brings. However, the relationship between durability, architectures, and celebration is not direct, as much as what happens by involving architectures within the festive action, that is, in the relationship between 'flaunting'



Figure 8 Visual perception brings with it the power of transformation, of imagination, on the architectural body, narrowing the field, giving rise to other and more hallucinatory visions, which sometimes exclude 'reality'; touch on the contrary, as demonstrated by the irruption on McCarthy's inflatable, opposes sight, seeking to dominate, conquer, declassify the object by operating de-mystifying actions, that is, of cleaning, of de-secreting, of unveiling the mysteries that sight has produced.
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(space) and 'wasting' (time).⁷ 'Flaunting' and 'wasting' refer to two differentiated realms, the former belonging to the sphere of space, the latter to time; festive architecture thus oscillates between time and space, dilating the relationship of duration (as already seen, only before the festival, the duration of the event was known; during the festival, a sense of time was 'lost'), and contracting the spatial perception of the inflatables.

In uno spazio limitato c'è moltissimo, e i molti che si muovono entro quell'area possono tutti parteciparvi. Il rendimento di qualsiasi coltura o allevamento viene offerto alla vista in grandi mucchi. [...] C'è più di quanto tutti insieme potrebbero consumare, e

7 "Festivo è il comportarsi in modo da ostentare ingenuamente o sprecare vistosamente, indipendentemente dalla collocazione nel tempo, o magari contro il tempo, di questo agire" (Jesi 2013, 93).



Figure 9 The verification of the festive action attracts the presence of festive masses, corresponding to ephemeral, day-long architectures that from dawn to dusk disrupted the space of the Neue Nationalgalerie. © Verena Brüning

allo scopo di consumare affluiscono sempre più persone [il tempo]. [...] La festa è la meta, ed essa è stata raggiunta. La concentrazione è molto alta, ma l'uguaglianza è per buona parte uguaglianza di arbitrio e piacere. Ci si spinge davanti caoticamente e non parallelamente. Le cose che stanno là accatastate, cui si partecipa, costituiscono una parte essenziale della concentrazione, il suo nucleo. (Canetti 1982, 73-4)

As Canetti confirms, in the space of the Neue Nationalgalerie that has become extremely limited during the festival, the many flockers move in correspondence to the objects-fetishes, which appear as piles, heaps, pushing objects. The presence of these architectures cancels the container and dilates time, which is more than could be consumed. The participants in the festival use the architectures as obstacles, moving chaotically and not in parallel (as in the days of realisation). The verification of the festive action attracts the presence of festive masses, corresponding to ephemeral, day-long architectures that from dawn to dusk disrupted the space of the Neue Nationalgalerie [fig. 9].

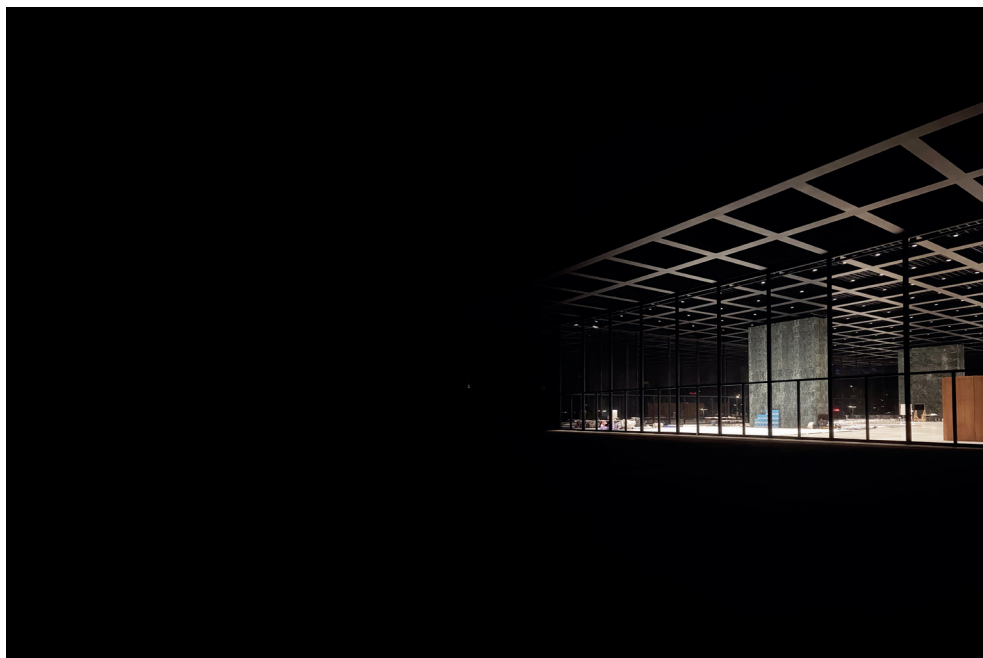


Figure 10 From midnight between September 10 and 11, 2022, in complete Berlin darkness, the engines powering the inflatables were turned off. The habitable structures disappeared as architecture-fetish and returned to drapery, making the museum reappear, missing for a day. © Laura Mucciolo.

8 Day 7. Farewell to the Neue Nationalgalerie / The Epilogue

Vorrei che non si spegnesse anche il ricordo del mondo d'ombra che abbiamo lasciato alle spalle; mi piacerebbe abbassare le gronde, offuscare i colori delle pareti, ricacciare nel buio gli oggetti troppo vistosi, spogliare di ogni ornamento superfluo quel palazzo che chiamano Letteratura [Architettura]. Per cominciare, spegniamo le luci. Poi, si vedrà. (Tanizaki 1965, 67)

The day after the public performance of the event began long before the new dawn rose. From midnight between 10 and 11 September 2022, in the complete Berlin darkness, the engines powering the inflatables were turned off. The habitable structures disappeared as architecture-fetish and returned to drapery, making the museum reappear, missing for a day [fig. 10].

The exhibition at the Neue Nationalgalerie operationally corroborates the theory that the construction of temporary architectures

densely extends the event over time (the temporary architectures seem to last longer than expected) and cancel out additional surrounding spatial presences (other architectures seem to disappear) (Gausa 2009, 198). The dilation of the subject and the disappearance of the surroundings are, indeed, spatial 'oddities' that deform the experience and memory of a space, confirming the echo of the temporary: architectures that seem, and are not.

The inflatables, staged one night only, were deflated and stored, remaining at the disposal of the University of the Arts in Berlin, which will re-purpose the temporary architectures in other places and times, as large habitable structures with no specific use.

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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The Controversial Rise of Skilled Intentionality Reconsidering Hylonoetic Agency in Malafouris' Material Engagement Theory

Riccardo Valenti

Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, Italia; Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, France

Abstract In this paper some features of 'skilled intentionality' are considered. It is specified what has to be intended for Material Engagement Theory and why Malafouris' formulation of it deserves a prominent role. Then, it is indicated how the transition from the holomorphic theory to the hylonoetic one is prepared in his works. In the third paragraph, Malafouris' approach is partially criticised by confronting his theses with Bergson's. In the final section, the criticism is made more explicit, considering the case of the Acheulean hand axe's symmetry.

Keywords Malafouris. Skill. Field. Knapping. Blind man's stick.

Summary 1 In the Beginning Was the Stick: Malafouris' Material Engagement Theory in a Nutshell. – 1.1 The Blind Man's Stick. – 1.2 Malafouris' Material Engagement Theory. – 1.3 The Case of Writing: Memorising and Forgetting. – 2 From the Hylomorphic to the Hylonoetic Account for Object Creation. – 2.1 Ingold's and Malafouris' Criticism. – 2.2 From Thinking About the Matter to Thinking Through the Matter. – 2.3 How an Acheulean Axe is (not) Made. – 2.4 How an Acheulean Axe is Made: The Matter Strikes Back. – 3 The Rise of Skilled Action. – 3.1 The Noetic Side of the Intention. – 3.2 The Bergsonian Heritage: Organ and Obstacle. – 3.3 The Skilled Intentionality. – 3.4 The Anticipatory Character of the Action. – 3.5 Remembering the Past, Imagining the Future. – 4 The Origin of Symmetry: A Genuine Paradigm Shift? – 4.1 Knapping as an Intermediate Process: An 'Unintentional' Step Aside? – 4.2 Intelligence in the *Creative Evolution*. – 4.3 Cognitive, Exploratory Geography: As a Conclusion.



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“Which came first, the chicken or the egg?”
“The rooster.”

Predestination, M. and P. Spierig (2014)

1 In the Beginning Was the Stick: Malafouris’ Material Engagement Theory in a Nutshell

Arguably, it all started with ‘the blind man stick’ dilemma, and to this everything may return (Malafouris 2008c; Malafouris 2013, 4). This good renowned example of an alternative, substitutive ‘sense-experience’ sample, was first paradigmatically highlighted by the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002), along with the Hungarian philosopher Michael Polanyi (1962, 8-64) and the American cognitive anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1973). What does this topic involve? Why is it so relevant?

1.1 The Blind Man’s Stick

This classic pattern was originally apt to explain the complex ethological reorganisation a man who has tragically lost sight had to face to manage ‘seeing’ once again. This example depicts the awaking of the ability this unlucky man ought to develop to appreciate – once again – a reliable aesthetic knowledge of his still rich, surrounding physical environment. So, the stick this blind man counts on, Merleau-Ponty, Polanyi, and Bateson pointed out, ceases – and so does in this specific case of upsurging, anyhow matured, blindness – to be an ‘object’, qua material entity separated by this man’s mental, spiritual self, and thus becomes something integrated, namely a ‘part’ of this blind man’s inner being or, to put it simply, body expression. For this blind man, Merleau-Ponty states, the stick’s point, i.e., its very edge,

has [now] become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch, and providing a parallel to sight. In exploration of things, the length of the stick does not enter expressly as a middle term; the blind man is rather aware of it through the position of objects than of the position of objects through it. The position of things is immediately given through the extent of the reach which carries him to it, which comprises besides the arm’s own reach the stick’s range of action. (2002, 165-6; see also Hoel, Carusi 2018, 60; Malmqvist, Zeiler 2010, 140; Reynolds 2017, 424)

By using this haptic tool as a prosthetic corporeal means of effective gesture proficiency, this blind man can somehow overcome – through time passing by and a considerable amount of untiring practice – his critical sense deficiency. Therefore, he can perform with surprising

ease, accordingly, several concrete, habitual operations. This process of training can be patiently led to such an extent that, under certain and rare circumstances, the loss of sight becomes a pretty negligible fact.

This practical feature has been stressed by Alexander Riegler, too. Recalling the famous story of Virgil, a man who recovered his sight at the age of fifty, Riegler emphasises the principal difficulties this man had to face to get finally acquainted with his new condition. Virgil at first declared he was living better in his former condition, and it continued to be so for a while since he was accustomed to “living in a world of anticipation, of subsequent checkpoints which acted like the handling-over in a relay race” (2001, 414). Indeed Virgil, given his previous condition, trained so hard to survive ‘his’ world, according to his means and his capacities, and it should not come as a surprise that this incredible novelty took him unprepared.

1.2 Malafouris’ Material Engagement Theory

Yet this impressive, technological bodily addition raises the issue of how far the human agency can extend itself. Specifically, this involvement concerns how far human sensitive investigation can suitably go further, when not necessarily applied to help physically impaired people. Finally, some commentators ask how far does this prodigy run - if it can, this is what is at stake here - beyond human physical limits without properly losing its constitutive ‘human’ or ‘human-like’ status of body act, this latter considered as an action whose a ‘body’, qua guiding agent, may be addressed as responsible for.

The debate concerning this post-humanistic topic, concerning human body boundaries, has nowadays reached a large audience. This debate also comprehends post-phenomenological technoscientific arguments, like Don Ihde’s (1979; 1993; 2009), and involves ideologists of the Material Engagement Theory too, such as the cognitive archaeologist Lambros Malafouris. This latter, in particular, taking up the Batesonian question about the ambiguous power-extension of the above-mentioned blind man prosthetic stick, i.e., “[w]here does the blind man self begin?” (Bateson 1973, 318; Malafouris 2005, 56), next formulates his inquiries about the nature and the uniqueness of human creative action, like, for instance,

- i. “[w]here does the mind stop and the rest of the world begin?” (Malafouris 2005, 55; 2008b, 403; see also Ihde, Malafouris 2019, 205-7; Roberts 2005, 4; Tewes 2016, 33; van Dijk 2018); or, in a very specific context that will be further examined,
- ii. “[w]here does the knapper’s mind end and the stone tool begin?” (Malafouris 2010b, 14; 2013, 162; Ingold 2013, 45; see also Malafouris 2021, 11-17; Overman, Winn 2019a, 459, 474-6;

- Overmann, Wynn 2019b, 45; Wynn, Gowlett 2018, 22-7); and, comparably, again on the knapper's case,
- iii. "[w]here does the 'thinking' stop and the 'flaking' begin? Where do we draw the boundaries of the mind with respect to the body, materials, and techniques?" (Malafouris 2021, 108); and, finally, relating to a similar setting,
 - iv. "[w]here does the mind of the potter stop and the form of the object begin?" (Malafouris 2016, 295; see also Malafouris 2008a, 31-5; Malafouris 2010b, 59-60; Malafouris 2013, 209-26; Vaesen 2012, 215-16).

Consequently, in answering these questions, Malafouris reconsiders the mainstream outlines of human agency. He does so by broadly criticising the notable Cartesian legacy of rigid ontological dualism, which divides the mental, spiritual *res cogitans* from the material, bodily *res extensa* (Brown, Toadvine 2003, ix-ix; Malafouris 2005, 53-4; Malafouris 2010b, 17; Malafouris 2013, 25-6, 57-9, 163, 173, 234; Overmann, Wynn 2019b, 42; Roberts 2005; Spahn 2016, 78-9; Walls, Malafouris 2016, 628, 632).

Malafouris fundamentally asserts that human effectiveness, i.e., body agency, is not to be intended as bounded by the narrow limits imposed by the human, physical body. Moreover, in addition to this statement, he replies that the material, 'extensional' correlates of human activities play a pivotal role in deciding the course of human action's final result, as the potter's wheel case aforementioned visibly illustrates. 'Shaping' something, i.e., the act of giving form to matter, it can be argued following Malafouris' statements, is more about indulging the natural veins of the block of marble, than rigidly commanding, 'informing' some inert and passive piece of matter.

1.3 The Case of Writing: Memorising and Forgetting

Malafouris takes into account the material reckoning, i.e., the report of the hard, efficient 'matter' in casting our actions and in formulating our thoughts. Given that the "human mind remains an incomplete and unfinished project" (Malafouris 2013, 244; see also Malafouris 2016, 290; Idhe, Malafouris 2019, 203), and so echoing Bernard Stiegler's motif of man's essential, technical 'incompleteness' (Stiegler 1998, 260; 2009, 198; James 2013, 70; 2019, 39-41), Malafouris claims humans need the sustain of a material relief to fully operate on this world. He testifies this by providing the example of the Linear B scriptural notes on wax tablets, as these are preciously collected and retrieved from the secret rooms of the Mycenaean palaces.

On the same topic, Overmann highlights the proportional relationship which lays between the "availability of counting devices" (2016, 45)

and the growing complexity of administration in ancient societies: the more men can successfully count, i.e., giving an order, rationalise, the more they can profit from material supports (just like fingers, for instance), the more they benefit of tools in their intellectual proficiency backwards (see also Malafouris 2010a, 38-41).

The act of writing – i.e., the performance of putting down relevant stocks of information or pinning mental shortcuts to promptly recall something pertinent to a related task – has to be intended as the ‘prostheticisation’ of an active, creative material engagement of operating, working memory. This ‘material’ memory mixes up biological capacities, Malafouris argues, mnemonic affordances, and, among these features, a significant data storage capacity. As these archaeological records stress, writing, thus, appears to be a trustworthy cognitive artefact. It is something inscribed and incorporated in mnemotechnical practices and, most importantly, something coactively designing a “hybrid historical synergy” that synthesises ‘form’ and ‘matter’, mind and material body, the spirit of the writer along with the frame of the scriptures (Malafouris 2012, 72-5; see also Rietveld, Kiverstein 2014, 326-30).

In Malafouris reading, Mycenaean Linear B not only serves a purpose for recording pieces of information but also provides a ‘thinking’ process, enabling an active, cognitive role to matter. This given, the Mycenaean scribes do not need to remember everything they work on, according to this process of reliable, cognitive ‘unloading’ method. As Malafouris writes, following the Material Engagement Theory, “Linear B is [...] seen as a situated technology instantiating a new way of remembering and a new way of forgetting. The Mycenaean simply reads what the Linear B tablet remembers” (2013, 79).

2 From the Hylomorphic to the Hylonoetic Account for Object Creation

One of the most decisive Malafouris’ achievements, as he states in his famous work *How Things Shape the Mind*, is the depiction of the “human cognitive processing as a hylonoetic field – a mindscape quite literally extending into the extra-organistic environment and material culture” (2013, 227). Elsewhere, in his most recent paper, Malafouris coherently speaks once more about the proper composition of this singular “hylonoetic [...] field of intentional, anticipatory and attentive material engagement” (2021, 112).

2.1 Ingold's and Malafouris' Criticism

Employing the truly inspiring neologism of hylonoetic field, which unifies the Greek terms of *hyle* (matter) and of *nous* (or *noesis*, for 'mind', i.e., the conscious and intentional act which is properly referred to a *noema*, a sensible content of meaning), Malafouris intends criticising what the anthropologist Tim Ingold once polemically defined the "holomorphic ontology of mind over matter, which mislead us to read creativity backward" (2010b, 97; quoted in Malafouris 2013, 235; see also Ingold 2013, 20-50, 95; Walls, Malafouris 2016, 627).

Again, by "holomorphic model of making -, Ingold defines - the imposition of pure form that raises naturally given raw material to an artificial state" (2013, 81). This paradigmatic model of thinking neglects the contribution of an active material playing a part in any phase of the complex process of object creation and form's sensible constitution. This latter is erroneously considered qua the immediate, atemporal application of an abstract, intellectual 'project', subtracted by any 'form', by any manner of material influence or obligation. The 'inner' brain, the soul, thus, appears to be in full charge here, according to the holomorphic theory. The creator's brain directly acts on his 'outer' body and, subsequently, by the means of this body, he operates on the 'outer' material world and does so without any acceptable room for any 'archaeological', i.e., material, compromise.

Against this theoretical setting, Malafouris analyses some noticeable examples of human creation over a considerable period of humankind's history. Among these, he examines the world-shaking formation of the 'biface', Acheulan hand axe, and finally holds that human thought and action, acknowledged qua the practical performance of co-constitution and consequent modification of a living *Umwelt*, is just inconceivable without implying the material, environmental concrete support.

2.2 From Thinking About the Matter to Thinking Through the Matter

Trying to overwhelm what Malafouris affirms to be a historical, "asymmetric approach to evolution based on the split between the organism and environment" (Malafouris 2021, 110), the Material Engagement Theory (MET) engages in the formulation of a revolutionary, ecological hypothesis according to which human mind and human action are fundamentally situated, i.e., operating and evolving in bodies, exclusively 'through' bodies, these latter located in an open, interrelated physical world of omnipresent causal relations. Respectively, the MET radically claims that "organism and environment form a necessary unit" (Malafouris 2021, 110).

In this [remodelled, ontological] context of transactive distributed intelligence, the conventional meaning of biologic adaptation as the fitting of organism to environment mediated by natural selection gives away to a more extensive, enactive and largely semiotic view of adaptability [...]. This is what in the context of MET [i.e., the Material Engagement Theory] is referred as creative thinging [...]. The knapping process will be approached as a creative entanglement, a co-constitution of mind and matter. Tool making is not a transposition, externalization or the imposition of form on raw material but the gathering together of all the different elements - internal or external; neural, bodily or material - needed in order to make an edge of a stone [...]. [T]ool making provides a unique case for metaplasticity demonstrating the complex exchange of energies and materials between the human organism and its niche. (Malafouris 2021, 110; see also 2021, 117; 2014, 141-52; 2019, 3-13; 2020, 5-7)

The ideal pattern proposed by hylomorphic ontology or hylomorphic model making, as critically defined by Tim Ingold, is thus opposed by the way of creative “thinging” lately highlighted by Malafouris in attentively focusing on Acheulan knapper’s action (Malafouris 2013, 44-146). The ontology Malafouris wishes to develop is then one of “thinking through and with the matter”, in the same way, arguably, the blind man above-mentioned suitably thinks ‘with’ his vital support, as Merleau-Ponty highlighted,

[t]hrough the ‘stick’ [...] [and so, at the same time and in the same way the blind man] feels, discovers, and makes sense of the environment [...] [and] also enacts the way forward. (2013, 236, 244)

The ‘matter’ here at stake, however, may be intended in many ways. On the same wavelength, I argue, cognitive psychologist Michael Tomasello speaks about “cultural learning” in his work, trying to define an imitative learning process according to which a child is “not just learning from the other person but is learning through them” (2001, 141; see also Tomasello 2016, 643; Buskes 2019, 3; Mcelreath, Boesh, Köhl, Mcelreath 2018, 193; Nungesser 2012, 8). As Tomasello points out in the present, eye-opening paper “Cultural Learning”, “what is learned is learned *through* the youngster’s direct interaction with the physical environment”, i.e., ‘through’ the operative effectiveness children, can operate on the physical world they are laying on (Tomasello 1993, 496).

2.3 How an Acheulan Axe is (not) Made

The knapper mentioned, the one “detaching flakes from a flint core” (Malafouris 2021, 107), is indeed one of the most striking pieces of evidence experimentally cognitively archaeological related for the heuristic revision Malafouris would like to recommend in his long-standing research. In forging the ‘biface’ hatchet or the so-called “Acheulan handaxe” (Malafouris 2021, 110; see also 2013, 9; Garofoli 2016, 314; Idhe 2009, 72; Idhe, Malafouris 2019, 207-8; Ingold 2013, 33-6; Overmann, Wynn 2019a, 463; Vaesen 2012, 207; Wynn, Gowlett 2018, 21), this ancestor from Lower Paleolithic age manifestly shows, according to Malafouris and most of his colleagues taking part in this appealing discussion, how he appears not to be in full control on the ‘intentional’ action of knapping he is running and, consequently, Malafouris infers, this axe creation exhibits how a few things somehow, inevitably, wrest from this knapper’s grasp.

Still, this is not how the forgery of this particular tool, i.e., the Acheulan ‘biface’, actually works. In this intriguing yet enigmatic ‘lithic’ study, the ‘formal’ shaping the knapper tries to perform is not - in this explicit, practical context of tool fabrication - ‘anterior’ to the material association the form needs to handle to be ‘materially’ generated, i.e., to be truly effective into the physical realm of instrument’s production. The character of the knapper Malafouris insists on does not “spoils everything” by eventually losing touch on what he is currently, skilfully doing, as by accident, just like a clumsy apprentice could regrettably do, if not properly taught by his master on how to deal with some sort of delicate stuff. What is Malafouris’ point, then? In the action of knapping, Malafouris argues, the knapper is not the one and only protagonist of his final, practical deed. He is not the sole and relevant participant in the process of axe formation, just like an internalist, cognitivist, computational, representationalism-based theory of action would erroneously hold.

2.4 How an Acheulan Axe is Made: The Matter Strikes Back

On the contrary, as Malafouris remarks, the stone which is repeatedly hit by the knapper to correctly forge the hand axe, a bit surprisingly, “strikes back through the manipulative complexity (inseparably cognitive, bodily and technical) that it affords” (2021, 110). “In this dynamic vision of participatory mentality - Malafouris states a few lines before - bodily acts and material affordances generate and constitute through processes rather than merely execute them” (109).

This is sensibly remarkable. But this is not all. According to 2019 Idhe’s and Malafouris’ manifesto “Homo Faber Revisited: Postphenomenology and Material Engagement Theory”, which resumes some

of the most brilliant ideas of both authors, we humans, as natural producers, do not only “make things” but we also – and most importantly – “are made by them” (Idhe, Malafouris 2019, 209). This is also retrievable in many more Malafouris contributions. For instance, in “Beads for a Plastic Mind” human “behaviourally important experiences – are – often constituted [...] by the use of material objects and artifacts which for that reason should be seen as continuous integral parts of the human cognitive architecture” (2008b, 404). Again, in “Knapping Intentions and the Marks of the Mental”, commenting on the process of axe formation, Malafouris holds that the “flaking intention is constituted, at least partially, by the stone itself” (2010b, 17). Finally, in “Creativity as a Developmental Ecology”, illustrating a hunting scene, Walls and Malafouris maintain that the

hunter’s posture [within this complex dynamic of targeting and hitting a huge caribou] is altered by the force of the bow straightening itself, or by the sudden release of tension between the arms, that alteration will become a condition of the arrow’s path that it leaves the bow. (2016, 630)

This aspect is somehow also recovered in Stiegler’s work, as some of his commentators suggested. According to the very title of the first volume of Stiegler’s philosophical masterpiece, the ‘human’ essential feature, namely the property which makes us humans is, properly speaking, an act of ‘invention’. Yet this invention is a two-way one: “the human invents the tool while being invented by it in turn”, Michael Haworth observes (2015, 6). The operation of flint knapping is, indeed, according to Stiegler, the “first reflective memory, the fist mirror” (1998, 142; also quoted in Johnsons 2013, 38). Following this statement

human achieves self-reflective consciousness – once again – through its manual engagement with the material world [...] The artefact endures as a trace, a record of the process of manufacture external to the human agent. (Johnson 2013, 38)

Despite the fact that the operational sequence of knapping “presupposes a certain intentionality, a capacity for anticipation in the agent of technology – Christopher Johnson continues – the what [the technological] invents the who [the human] just as much as it is invented by it” (see Stiegler 1998, 177). Stiegler declares: “[t]ool is, before anything else, memory” (1998, 255). In this regard, Daniel Ross also writes that “the global retentional apparatus we have constructed also constructs us, that is, interacts with processes of psychic and collective individuation” (2013, 249).

But how does the peculiar ‘causal’ backlash mentioned above, the material ‘striking back’, have to be understood in this two-folded ac-

tion? How, or better, ‘through’ what – as quoted before, taking up Malafouris’ lexical reformulation inferred by material engagement theory –, the knapper learns to cope with this inevitable exterior resistance, if is it the case? And, most importantly, “who” or “what”, quoting once again Stiegler’s assumptions (1998, 134-79), is being held responsible for the emergence, over a pertinent amount of time, of the so-called ‘skilled action’ or ‘intentionality’, i.e., for the advent of the required ‘craftmanship’ in knapper’s ‘intention’ of forging a ‘biface’ axe as normatively wished? How, then, the biface is done in a ‘workmanlike manner’?

3 The Rise of Skilled Action

In his most recent piece of work, namely, “How Does Thinking Relate to Tool Making?” (2021), Malafouris compellingly tries to answer these tricky questions. The large diffusion, over time and geographical span of the fabrication of Acheulan hand axe, brings Malafouris to consider

- i. the huge material ‘affordance’ this tool has reached (and then successfully provided for newcomers, trainee young knappers); and, controversially, given the Material Engagement theory postulates aforementioned, to take into account;
- ii. the ample ‘intentional’, skilful, intake the knapper efficiently offers in continuously ‘affording’ the operation of knapping, along with its technical conservation and spatial-temporal (re)iteration, far beyond, as it is evident, Lower Paleolithic era. The undeniable, wide distribution of the making of this paradigmatic tool, its intrinsic value and usefulness for everyday life survival, makes wonder about the relevance that the ‘noetic’ side of this hylonoetic action paradigm must unmistakably recover in Malafouris’ theory.

3.1 The Noetic Side of the Intention

In effect, Malafouris does not neglect this crucial, ‘complementary’ aspect of human agency in tool making. In taking advantage of the precious commitment of Rietveld and Kiverstein (2014, 335), he underlines that skilled performance, i.e., the active development and improvement of knapping technique over time and never-stopping practice, just like the Merleau-Ponty’s blind man’s example, requires, to be effective, some smooth and “dexterous movements, fine manipulative abilities and eye-end coordination” out by the knapper (2021, 107).

The good knapper can indeed predict the effects his hammering would eventually produce on the stone’s surface right before knapping it. At the very same time, he can efficiently organise the mani-

fold, difficult phases of his yet repetitive, monotonous manual work. On the other hand, the operation of knapping would be impossible to fit without a certain material affordance, i.e., without a certain material intervention. This is the reason why, to different materials, the good knapper, i.e., the ‘expert’ one, yields different knapping techniques, depending on the occasion. This said, the hylonoetic field just instituted must both consider the “role that changing forms of materiality and situated action might have played in the constitution of cognitive processes, especially over longer time scales”. As Malafouris makes explicit, “human dexterity depends on both muskolo-skeletal and neurobiological capacities and constraints” (2021, 108).

This coercive aspect has been also highlighted by Christine Boesh and Michael Tomasello in the context of normative social patterns’ dissemination within human populations. As the two scholars claim social “constraints not only determine what will be acquired but also limit the possible modification of the cultural variants throughout their existence” (Boesh, Tomasello 1999, 595). This seems again deeply in consonance with Malafouris’ “cognitive dialectic” argument provided by the potter’s wheel illustration: since this distributed activity equally involves the potter’s brain, potter’s muscles, along with the “affordances [...] of the potter’s wheel, the material property of the clay” and, this given, it cannot tell which component can properly determine “the contours of activity in isolation”, Malafouris concludes this interaction lays in a perpetual “state of becoming through the process of accomodation and resistance” (2005, 59).

3.2 The Bergsonian Heritage: Organ and Obstacle

Following the previous, fascinating Malafouris’ quotation, the ‘material’ capacities and constraints just evoked seem to also implicitly refer to the metaphysical features of Henri Bergson’s ‘matter’, such as exposed in *Creative Evolution*, and as these have been brilliantly pointed out by the French philosopher and musicologist Vladimir Jankélévitch. For this commentator, the Bergsonian materiality both offers to the *élan vital* an “organ” (i.e., a tool, an instrument of playing), and, at once, an “obstacle”, a counteracting resistance (2015, 139-49). According to this specific causal dynamic, the immaterial, spiritual *élan* could not make a move of any sort, i.e., it could not be a creative force, without the mediated support provided by ‘its’ material income and, at the same time, quite paradoxically, this very ‘matter’ constitutes – for Bergson – an oppositive force which prevents *élan vital* from operating all sorts of things, and so, to bear a physical unrestricted faculty of invention.

Malafouris, in the wake of Bergson, offers an even more energetic, fluid paradigm for sustaining this material authority, underly-

ing the subsistence of a mysterious ‘cognitive life’ hidden in – knapper’s – stones. This cognitive life allows the human evolution of “anatomy and manipulative abilities” via the construction of proper ‘stone’ tools which are “developmentally incorporated [through active processes] into our very own constitution as biological organism and cognitive agents” (Malafouris 2021, 108-9).

This outstanding means of this external scaffolding, deeply influenced by the upraising of different material affordances, these latter forming a variety of “melodies of tool making”, which concede the “sense of learning to move with and think through the materiality of the stone” (Malafouris 2021, 110; see also 2021, 114), represents the main source for the formation of the so-called “skilled intentionality” (2021, 113).

3.3 The Skilled Intentionality

It is hard to define what skilled intentionality could represent in Malafouris’ study, how could it be properly defined, given the scarce information he advances for this specific topic. This occurs maybe because Malafouris rapidly abandons this model of intentional agency for the ‘enactive’ one. The enactive intentionality is interpreted as a more suitable pattern for distributed agency theory, according to the hylonoetic revolution he wants to start. The rise of skilled intentionality could be intended, in my reading, as a sort of ‘trained’ faculty of selection (of “images”, Bergson says in *Matter and Memory*, 1991, 30), a spring of possible, virtual and even premeditated action, and this even admitting the total absence of any representational or mental content (in knapper’s mind), according to Malafouris. The skilled intentionality is the exercised power to benefit from matter, the proficiency derived from its use (or abuse), eventually without implying the subject to be actually ‘involved’ by it. This could be read as something in deep contrast with the beliefs of Material Engagement Theory.

So, Malafouris manifestly prefers to speak about the “perceptual involvement, or attunement with the tools and materials involved” (2021, 113), which is a reasonable terminological choice also retrievable in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002, 86, 98), and thus this option seems justifiable for his original purpose. Malafouris argues that since the “stone projects towards the knapper as much as the knapper projects towards the stone”, it is clear, in his opinion, that the intentional action, the ‘learning’ to control knapping, i.e., the mastery of knapping resides in the knapping “process”, i.e., as a happy result of this latter, rather than in the knapper’s mind, as the mere application of a mental scheme which would come before any proper intentional, effective “action” (Malafouris 2021, 111-12).

Again, it is the action of knapping itself which is somehow “causing the hand to move, drawing the attention to the brain to the changing state of the stone [...]. Knapping – Malafouris pursues – binds time as it binds intentions” (2021, 113). Mind or intentional state is thus guided by its noematic correlate, phenomenologically speaking.

3.4 The Anticipatory Character of the Action

This seems legit and leaves no room for any doubt about that. Yet, Malafouris admits, human agency is, as told before, ‘fundamentally situated’ and thus unequivocally distributed. This means this faculty is not located out of time and space, for it could not be the case in Material Engagement Theory. Conversely, human agency is deeply rooted in the spatial and temporal ground of action. That being said, I conclude, as Malafouris indeed does, Lower Paleolithic knappers can accumulate an appreciable amount of experience over time and ‘through’ exercise, just like do – or did – the scribes working on wax tablets in the Mycenaean palaces, helping themselves to collect and use valuable pieces of information over the Linear B writing supports; or as the potters do with the spinning wheel or, again, as the blind man does with his inseparable stick, stalking regularly across the rooms of his house to get more and more used to its foreseeable perimeter.

This enables the drill of the controversial – I hold – “anticipatory character”, as Malafouris indicates, a specific feature that allows the knapper to eventually master his forging art (2021, 114). According to this principle, the knapper can treasure the lesson derived by the past material ‘involvement’ from which the matter structurally held him back. This means that, according to his previous, reliable experience, the knapper can ultimately come to foretell the future of knapping process, the very end of its action. As a consequence of this, the knapper would not commit the same mistakes, because he would now have the means to constantly improve his body technic. He would then manage to escape from his material ‘slavery’, in a certain sense. At the hypothetic end of this learning procedure, if led to its extreme, like the blind man’s case, the knapper could finally succeed in controlling the matter.

3.5 Remembering the Past, Imagining the Future

For Malafouris, this point is not a significant issue: as far as this specific ‘tool cognition’ is situated, and, most importantly, in cases in which we accept it is ‘born this way’, the upsurging of this temporal ability or material mastery does not pose any kind of problem to

him. So, he posits that the constitution of “human deliberation [is] based on enactive intentional skill”, and it does not matter whether what he names by “reflective awareness” then successfully arises, through experience, for this is not what is at stake in his version of Material Engagement Theory (2021, 114).

Yet even though the “computational system”, i.e., an intellectual, full-grown subject-object relation “emerges out of an acting and moving body”; and, once again, even if “[k]napping movements always happen in context”, these movements are necessary actions that, Malafouris quotes, “remember their past (leaving their traces on rock’s surface) and imagine a future (anticipating and predicting the position of the next strike)” (2021, 115).

Malafouris’ last word about this theme seems to pay attention to the “sensuous prosthetic becoming by which humans learned to attend and to transform their world”, as it to stress once more the material roots of this possible, idealistic world transformation: the key feature is, for Malafouris, the “continuity” generated by “the persistence practice of percussive stone tool making” which brings forth a “network of constituent processes with sufficient unity” (2021, 117). But is it ‘our’ last word about this complex ‘materiality of mind’?

4 The Origin of Symmetry: A Genuine Paradigm Shift?

One thing remains to be said, and this is something potentially troubling for the Material Engagement Theory, in my opinion. The birth of skilled intentionality, through time and practice, is only possible via the co-constitution of a larger word of practice typically afforded by a certain material engagement. That is for sure. Nonetheless, facing some human products of unquestionable expertise, such as the fabrication of the magnificent Acheulan hand axe, which has been reproduced so many times and in different scales in human history, and in so many disparate regions of the Ancient world, a few questions may then arise. Apparently insignificant particular strikes the eye: this Acheulan ‘biface’, hand axe, appears to be in most cases almost perfectly symmetrical.

4.1 Knapping as an Intermediate Process: An ‘Unintentional’ Step Aside?

Where does this symmetry come from? Is this a purely random feature, an incidental fact that may be then rapidly overlooked? Or is it, on the opposite, an essential aspect of the Acheulan tool? Can we still call ‘biface’ an admittedly asymmetric hand axe? Indeed, “[d]oes the knapper – Malafouris asks himself, – aim to create a tool with bilater-

al symmetry [...] or just a large cutting tool whose sides converge on a pointed tip?" (2021, 111). The point is not trivial. The intrinsic, stunning beauty of this old tool kindly supports the first viewpoint. Its extrinsic usefulness, and its adaptability in various circumstances, on the other hand, is the second one. Malafouris then resumes – again in “How Does Thinking Relate to Tool Making?” – the main opinions the major scholars hold on this famous topic, concluding that either intentional outcome or a poor, minor coincidence of bifacial flaking, done so for obtaining a sharper blade, these premises do not collide with the Material Engagement Theory. In both formulations, mind and tool appears to be separate, as if the mind properly were “behind the tool” (2021, 111). This criticism is consistent and in total synchrony with the overall Malafouris’ argument, which is no use to be summoned here once again.

In hindsight, however, maintaining the first view, i.e., the finalist assumption according to which symmetry would be premediated result of a conscious, skilled modelling action, would mean necessary to consider the ‘first’ stone, the one knapping the ‘second’, i.e., the modelled one, as an intermediate, ‘middle term’ in the process creation, which is something Merleau-Ponty, in his blind man stick’s proof quoted in the first paragraph, strongly denied too. This conclusion implies a different interpretation of the ‘middle’ technological tool, which is no more, according to this pattern, an integrated extension of corporeal efficacy, but the extrinsic good for achieving a deliberate goal.

4.2 Intelligence in the *Creative Evolution*

On close examination, this is precisely what Bergson was principally afraid of. Despite the fact he does not reject the empirical intake of time and habit in human developmental and continuously improving action, as the snowball example in *Creative Evolution* may best tell, Bergson holds a negative opinion on human ‘intelligence’ and adaptability, for it drives human understanding away from the real, ‘flowing’ nature of things. As Bergson claims, though, “memory is – always – there, [and it is something] which conveys swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes increasing – rolling up itself, as a snowball on the snow” (1944, 4). In addition to this, as Edward Casey cleverly highlights, in retrieving one of Bergson’s most famous claims, “there is no perception that is not full of memories” (Bergson 1991, 133; cited in Casey 2000, 43; see also the still fundamental Casey 1984, 279-85 on Bergson’s habit body).

Still, the nature of ‘intelligence’ is one out of the three different directions the evolution of life originally took, among ‘torpor’ and ‘instinct’, in *Creative Evolution*, and which is the one belonging to

human, concrete action 'on' things - and consequently not 'through' things, as Malafouris would have argued instead - is that of a tendency in the geometrising natural world, i.e., making it controllable, foreseeable. Bergson firmly criticises the impurity of this life direction, for it brings fundamental "hesitations" in action, separating or detaching human beings from the rest of the natural, 'actual' world (Bergson, 1944, 123).

One might then wonder 'where' this intelligence comes from. Intelligence is undisputedly born with the matter, action is indeed born with passion, and maybe from it since the matter is told to be "in tune" with intelligence (Bergson 1944, 214). The matter is also profoundly "determined" by intelligence backwards (1944, 218). But this is not Bergson's final say on this topic. Being one of the three tendencies which "have bifurcated with their growth" (1944, 111), intelligence, instinct, and torpor have the same inception. That is not all. Again, these tendencies rely upon "one great [vital] effort" (1994, 140); or, just like the "shell" bursting sample (109) or, furthermore, to the vessel full of steam one put on evidence, these forces, though sharing the same origin, find themselves in a situation of perpetual conflict, this latter due to an irreparable "difference of rhythm" (1994, 141) which inevitably separates their 'tunes'. Is it not hard to see, then, how intelligence has somehow emerged from matter, or rather how Bergsonian matter may be reputed as 'intelligent', just like Malafouris' Linear B example clarified. For the same reason, it is not hard to see, likewise, where this difference of rhythm resides, even if "mind exists through material expressions" (Malafouris 2021, 117).

Intelligence is, according to Bergson, the most natural inclination in human behaviour, given our innate wish to influence and modify our encompassing living world. It is the most prevalent and yet detrimental one, because it introduces the category of 'possibility', of 'virtuality', in the heart of the action, i.e., a time discontinuity, a rhythmical, irredeemable desynchrony. Although Bergson reprimands the effects of this intelligent behaviour, manifestly preferring the 'intuitive' one, i.e., the quasi-absorption into the flux of things humans sometimes can perform, the fact remains that intuition "is of no help in directing our action on things" (1944, 53), and thus intelligent conduct remains a shred of incontestable evidence. Since intelligent outcomes would not rise without intelligent performances causing them, human finality, the strongest evidence of causality in the world, is thus paradigmatically an intelligence-based behaviour.

4.3 Cognitive, Exploratory Geography: As a Conclusion

Is it the same procedure at play in Malafouris' argument concerning the key differences which separate skilled intentionality from the enactive one? It could be argued so. Despite the fact Malafouris seems to pass over the most relevant outcomes of human learning processes, in this reading, I tried to highlight the crucial role 'skilled intentionality' retains in his works, notwithstanding this aspect remains anyhow latent and not duly expressed in his major writings.

Malafouris' principal concern is that of elucidating the rise of exploratory movement, as it appears to be evident once again in the lines of his last piece of work. This movement, "enacted during knapping" is so designed that

each flaking act (striking the core), like the tapping with the [blind man's] stick, enacts the way forward. Flaking stone brings forth the exploratory movement that will produce the edge of the tool; tapping with the stick brings forth the exploratory movement that will allow the blind to travel from point 'A' to point 'B'. (Malafouris 2021, 114)

Malafouris describes how every human step 'enacts' the way forward, such as the exploratory movement provides the constitution of a step-by-step 'mental' - yet not representative - map for the blind man. Anyway, I tried to highlight, this exploratory movement is in reality more complex than it may appear. First of all, this movement is not only present-located: to be located, distributed, properly means to have a past together with a related future. Remembering would be impossible without performing some kind of anticipatory progress, although we cannot tell which comes first.

This also means this exploratory movement has to cope with some kind of opposite forces, just like Bergsonian matter pointily hinted. The Material Engagement Theory, as portrayed by Malafouris, renders a reliable "cognitive geography of action and the distribution of cognitive labor" (2021, 116). We shall also remember though, reliving for one last time the example of the knapping process, which is the very core of the process of learning in Malafouris' theory, that this operation is not only composed of the skills offered by the knapper's hand and by the material affordances of the stone on which he is working. I conclude that the material remains of the knapper's knapping 'past' should be considered as the trait d'union of *noesis* and *hyle* in the hylonoetic field of practice.

Perhaps, a possible answer to this ever-lasting dilemma may be found in Tomasello's formulation of cultural learning or Stiegler's tertiary memory hypothesis. According to Tomasello, the history of "hammerlike tools shows a gradual increase in complexity over time

in human prehistory”, as the symmetry case aforementioned testifies (1993, 508; see also Haidle, Schlaudt 2020, 169; Reindl, Tennie 2018).

One of the most relevant features of human ‘cultural’ uniqueness is, in Tomasello’s opinion, the ability to accumulate modifications of many sorts over multiple generations. This marvellous ability of data, skill, and knowledge storing, is described via the inspiring metaphor of the so-called ‘ratchet effect’: the ratchet intuitive figure prevents human culture to downgrade itself, by providing the good sustain to further develop its story. As it is now evident, the origin of symmetry may be not accounted for the genuine creation of a single, extraordinary genius: on the contrary, such revolutionary achievements are true products of “sociogenesis”, namely a process according to which “something new is created through social interaction of two or more individuals in cooperative interaction” (Tomasello 1999, 41, also quoted in Nungesser 2012, 8).

Similarly, Stiegler affirms the existence of a “‘tertiary memory’, the ground of epiphylogenesis, a witnessing of dead’s past” (2009, 6). This is a specific kind of recollection which is a sort of “material substrate of the collective knowledge about the experience that has conditioned the formation of each individual consciousness always already situated in its historical and ethnocultural milieu” (Crogan 2013, 109). Comparable to the ratchet effect outcomes, this typical form of human, technical memory, which overcomes the limits of the genetic and the epigenetic one, corresponds to the proper constitution and maintenance of human culture over an incalculable time of learning.

These examples do not fully resolve the issue just exposed, but they express at least the status of the human culture background upon which any further creative action is thus instantiated. Commenting on the dual origin of the human, i.e., the natural and the technical one in Stiegler’s work, a problem which also takes up Rousseau and Leroi-Gourhan ideas, along with the Malafouris’ ‘knapping process’, Michael Haworth tries to close the books on this case. As he quotes

[n]either man nor tool comes ‘first’: rather it is a movement conceived as an exteriorization with no preceding interior. The exteriorizing process (technics as material memory support) constitutes the interior that is exteriorized, which once again comes back to epiphylogenesis. (2013, 11)

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**Cultural Crossroads:
In Search of a Common Ground**

Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

edited by, Giulia Gelmi, Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky,
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The Stravinsky's Family. The Home as a Strategy of Life and Creation

Apartment on the Kryukov Canal: From an Apartment House to a Communal Apartment

Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract The image of the Home is the topography of our innermost self, and the house is an instrument of analysis of the human soul. The things surrounding a person become like clots of relationships between people or geological strata, by which one can trace the change in ages, tastes, affections, and hobbies. Especially of interest is the analysis of the house as an ark of family traditions. Its evolution and transformation in material and geographical terms. The analysis of the toponymy of the Home space can provide insight into the structure of the daily life of a particular family – Stravinsky's family. Comparing the Home of Stravinsky's family will help to identify in which works the acquisition/movement/loss of home has manifested and in which works we can find a reflection or memory of the past.

Keywords Home. Igor Stravinsky. Fyodor Stravinsky. Stravinsky's family. The Tupikov House. Kommunalka. Communal apartments.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Concept of Home: (Self)-Identity. – 3 The Tupikov House: An Apartment Building. – 4 *Kommunalka*: Communal Apartments. – 5 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

One of the leading research subjects in twentieth-century philosophy was the human being, his role, and his place in the world. In contemporary philosophy, the question of man's relationship to home as a primary constant of one's being is paramount. The Home plays a vital role in human life: regarding its being and value and the element of self-determination. As part of the study of this problem, philosophical anthropology is of significance. It describes the main characteristics of human existence (analysis of living space), studies the process of finding one's place in the world, and characterises human activity and mental relationship with the domestic area.

One aspect of the study of the Stravinsky family examines their life in relation to the 'Home'. This approach allows us to examine the complex processes: the connection between space and society, the external and the internal, and the interior and the exterior. The interior opposes the surface, but within the home, these oppositions find harmonious unity. The private and the public are identified with different contexts: the familiar/unconventional, the open/closed, etc. The interaction of these domains in everyday life is determined by the place in which one lives. The distinction between outer and inner space is relative, and for the individual, it is set by different situations that define the actual boundaries of being.

This article presents one of the many addresses of the Stravinsky family, but one that is fundamentally important: the house where Igor Stravinsky spent his childhood and to which he returned as a guest more than half a century later. St. Petersburg, corner house No. 27/6-8 on Dekabristov Street and the Kryukov Canal, built and inhabited by the Stravinsky family based on vital needs and values. The study of this house is philosophically and anthropologically problematic. It allows us to consider the family and specific individuals from the perspective of their mutual influence and development and to reveal the genesis of personality in interaction with the domestic space.

2 The Concept of Home: (Self)-Identity

First and foremost, the Home, acting as an archetype of sedentarisation, allows us to approach an understanding of the social strategy of the modern world – nomadism with its archetype of the Road. The primordial man begins by withdrawing from his natural habitat – nature – and creating a unique refuge that guarantees a relatively secure existence. Home (*oikos*) becomes such a place. The subject humanises through the presence of Home, the space of his life, and his existence in the world. We believe that the Neolithic epoch can be

rightly called 'the epoch of the house' or 'the epoch of the birth of the house'. Because of the Neolithic revolution's essence in domestication, man transitioned from 'conquering' the macro-space of the ikumen to mastering his own home's micro-space. In this connection, the original thoughts of O. Shpengler become clear:

The prime form of the house is everywhere a product of feeling and of growth, never at all of knowledge. Like the shell of the nautilus, the hive of the bee, the nest of the bird [...]. (Shpengler 1922, 129)

If we turn to Heidegger, we realise that the place of enlightenment, where the man 'gathers' in his radiant qualities, where he can be human, is a *topos*, a kind of Home. *Topos* is rooted in one's place, which sets the intensity of being. Man and the things around him are juxtaposed in the world, and the world is juxtaposed to him. Heidegger's place of being in the space of *Dasein* is where the divine and the human, the earthly and the heavenly, converge in the act of the event (Heidegger 1977). Man exists and finds himself within the boundaries of these modes.

Gaston Bachelard speaks of topophilia's attachment to a particular place. The researcher must identify the human value of spaces belonging to man. Spaces defended against hostile forces and beloved spaces (Bachelard 2014). The image of Home is the topography of our innermost self. Home is an instrument of analysis of the human soul. J. Baudrillard puts forward the following idea:

Human beings and objects are indeed bound together in a collusion in which the objects take on a certain density, an emotional value - what might be called a 'presence'. (Baudrillard 1996, 16)

The symbolic contours of the figure of a dwelling, the formation of the Home, is why we are so imprinted with the image of one's Home in this conception of space. The home environment is one of the phenomena of a person's life experience.

Although there are many definitions and components of the Home, I propose focusing on just a few. It is these definitions that have become a tool in the study of three generations of Stravinsky. In this research, I want to consider the function of the Home not only as a social, architectural, and symbolic space but also as a place of human existence through philosophical and anthropological functions, such as a human portrait.

I used two known parameters of home research. The first is context. Contextual events are inherently connected with the experience of ancestors, family, and the collective unconscious. External factors always determine context. And the Home is built from these very molecules - what surrounds us. Most important is belonging to a specific place and clan ('identity').

Another important parameter that defines most homes with a capital letter is things and objects. This science is called realogy (from the Latin *res*, meaning 'thing'). The subject of realogy is the essence of the item and is not reducible to the product's technical qualities, the commodity's economic properties, or the work's aesthetic attributes. The item has a unique lyrical and memorial essence and increases with the technological novelty, commodity value, and aesthetic appeal. The acquisition or systematisation of objects is a way of ordering the world in the daily organisation of individual existence. And their definition makes it possible to understand the awareness of oneself ('self-identification'). In this case, the transfer of objects has a special ritual and sacredness. It leads us to the term Yuri Lotman 'semiosphere' (Lotman 1984). Semiosphere is, above all, the domain that allows culture to define itself and situate itself to dialogue with other cultures. If we analyse, the life and artwork of any individual semiosphere can be understood as the worldview. This fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompasses the whole of the individual's or society's knowledge and point of view. It can include natural philosophy; fundamental, existential, and normative postulates; or themes, values, emotions, and ethics.

3 The Tupikov House: An Apartment Building

Corner House No. 27/6-8 at Dekabristov Street and the Kryukov Canal has a rich history of an old profitable house, once owned by the merchant of the second guild and Kolomna landlord A.M. Tupikov, because it is closely connected with the history of the city and its tenants - the most famous figures of national culture and science. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that it is an apartment building. The architecture of the nineteenth-twentieth century is developing quite dynamically in the direction of architectural diversity. The architectural appearance of a building depends on the so-called client. Apartment houses in cities arose in connection with the growth of city dwellers and the formation of an urban way of life. The internal space of an apartment house is zoned according to the rank of the dwelling, corresponding to the owners' financial position. The building as a whole has a cellular structure. Hence its external appearance is significant, with closely spaced rows of windows, with a rectangular gateway leading into the courtyard. The town was more and more densely built up, acquiring the character of a solid façade [fig. 1].

The Stravinsky family settled in house No. 27/6-8 on the corner of Officerskaya Street (now Dekabristov Street) and the Kryukov Canal, in flat No. 66. In the summer of 1881, the composer's father was searching for a new flat for the family. As early as 1881, in a letter



Figure 1 The Tupikov House, Saint-Petersburg, 2015.
Courtesy of Stravinsky Family Fund

to his wife, Fyodor Stravinsky complains on 16 pages about his ‘ordeal’ in the search, excusing himself that it is on the third floor and not on the second:

Я пытался, пытался и пытался и все понапрасну. Искал того, чего нельзя было найти, ибо то, что мы с тобой проектировали, были розовые надежды, которые и растаяли после двухдневных моих походов в поисках квартиры. Но как всякий труд, как всякая тяжелая работа по большей части венчается успехом, так и мое горькое прозябание и угнетенное существование с 22-го и по сей день, проведенное в страшных трудах, неестественно напряженных и тому подобных усилий, все же наконец увенчаются успехом, хотя и не во втором этаже, но не меньше блестящем третьем.

I tried and tried and tried, and all in vain. I searched for what could not be found, for what you and I had projected were rosy hopes, which melted away after two days of my adventures in search of a flat. But just as all labour, just as all hard work is for the most part crowned with success, so my bitter misery and oppressive exist-

ence from the 22nd to the present day, spent in terrible labour, unnaturally strenuous and the like, is finally crowned with success, though not in the first floor, but no less brilliantly in the third.¹

He describes all the details of the future flat and draws a detailed plan, marking each room: living room, dining room, maid's room, and Petrushka's room [fig. 2].

Три комнаты и передняя на канал, на солнце весь день, все три комнаты огромные, в первой три окна, в остальных по два, простенки такие, что каминное гарвальское зеркало свободно войдет, четыре комнаты и кухня таким порядком: две комнаты и большая (вроде нашей детской) по два окна и две по одному окну, при чем та, которая по соседству с кухней больше, чем ее соседка, то есть шире. Затем громадная кухня, на концах коридора два клозета: наш и людям.

Three rooms and a canal forecourt, in the sun all day, all three rooms are enormous. The first has three windows, the others have two, and the partitions are so large that a Harvel fireplace mirror would fit through. Four rooms and the kitchen are like this: two rooms and the big one (like our nursery) have two windows, and two have one window, with the one next to the kitchen more extensive than its neighbour, which is more expansive. Then the vast kitchen, two toilets at the ends of the corridor: ours and people's.²

At this time, the family already had two sons, Roman and Yuri. A couple of months later, the Stravinskys discovered that a third child would be born in the summer. He - little Igor - was brought to the flat on the Kryukov Canal in September 1882 from Oranienbaum. He spent his childhood and youth sharing a room with his younger brother Yuriy. It was this very room that was 'Petrushka's room'.

The flat where Stravinsky spent his childhood is a very important *topos* on the map of his artistic life. Considering this place not just as a living space but as a cluster of creative and social energies will reveal the main points for topographical analysis of the human soul, the soul of the composer.

The uniqueness of this flat lies first and foremost in its geographical location. It was a five-minute walk from the Mariinsky Theatre. It was the place where the composer's father, bass Fyodor Stravinsky,

¹ Stravinsky, F. *Letter from F. Stravinsky to A. Stravinsky* 30 August 1881. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the Author.

² Stravinsky, F. *Letter from F. Stravinsky to A. Stravinsky* 30 August 1881. Letter from F. Stravinsky to A. Stravinsky, 30 August 1881, Saint Petersburg.

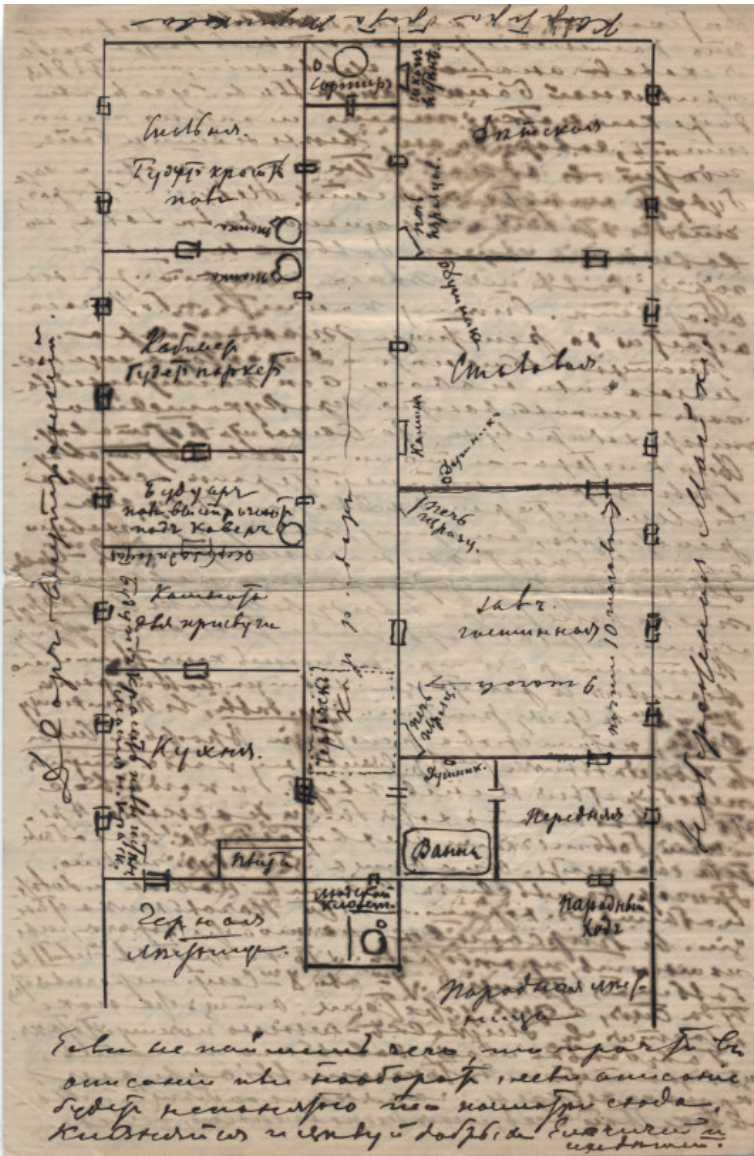


Figure 2 Stravinsky's flat plan no. 66, Saint-Petersburg, 1881. Paper, pencil. Courtesy of Stravinsky Family Fund

served as a soloist at the theatre. Also across the road was the conservatoire, where Igor Stravinsky did not study but which certainly influenced him. From the memoirs of Robert Craft:

Contrast this with his reaction, around the corner, to the Conservatory and the Mariinsky Theater. As soon as he recognizes the former, an involuntary 'Glazunov' comes out (after fifty years!). He then looks the other way, at the green-and-white Mariinsky, and his whole face ripples with pleasure. Anyone seeing this could not doubt that he had learned to hate music at the one place and to love it at the other. (Stravinsky, Craft 1963, 255)

The life of the head of the family was within the same neighbourhood, where he created his creative and social world of being. Fyodor took the form of a space of 'rest' with the perceptible boundaries of his way of life when he settled in this flat. His choice to be in this 'rest' rather than movement, in a 'point' (Razova 2006) rather than a line, is linked to the death of his firstborn son, Roman - Igor's older brother. As a man of faith, he sought to realise a God-like identity with his being. He compensated for his desolation and abandonment with the Home, which fulfilled his existence, local and personal. It allows us to characterise Fyodor's type of life as sedentary.

Secondly, the social status of the house is essential. It was called the 'artistic' house. The building, erected on this site in 1750, was one of the first stone residential buildings to form Theatre Square. Many prominent Russian music art figures lived in the corner house No. 27/6-8 at different times. Edward Napravnik, the famous Russian conductor and composer, lived in Apartment No. 72 from 1877 to 1916. A Czech by nationality, he spent most of his life in Russia. From 1863 to the day of his death in 1916, Napravnik was the permanent conductor of the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg and was the first director of many famous Russian operas, including works by Tchaikovsky. In this house, in the early twentieth century, the brilliant Tamara Karsavina, daughter of Platon Karsavin, a former ballet soloist with the Mariinsky Ballet Company, also rented a flat. Her flat was one floor above the Stravinsky family apartments. The appearance of Karsavina was an actual event and a new stage in the Russian ballet theatre's history. In addition, the Stravinskys' flat No. 66 was where notable guests came to visit - famous musicians, singers, and artists: Dostoevsky, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Shestakova (nè Glinka), Stelletsy, and many others.

Thirdly, the physical world of this flat is fascinating. The main attraction of flat No. 66 was a room with massive bookshelves and the family library, lovingly collected by the head of the family, Fyodor Stravinsky. It was always proudly displayed to friends and guests of the house. Rare books were admired by contemporaries and were the secret en-

vy of metropolitan booksellers. Fyodor Stravinsky regularly enlarged his collection and always worked with books when receiving new roles and opera roles at the theatre. Through research, we can say with certainty that Igor Stravinsky sought to recreate such a library, seeing it not just as a unique intellectual unit but as a link to the space of his childhood (Baranova-Monighetti 2021). The properties of personality and a person's individuality are refracted in its 'private' material field. A person's personal 'thing-sphere' is those attributes of his social being that create feelings of comfort, security, well-being, belonging, satisfaction, and solvency. There was, for example, an 'altar' for composers in Stravinsky's room, a likeness of which is also fun in Igor's house in Hollywood fifty years later. From Robert Craft's memoirs [fig. 3]:

In a photograph of I.S. in his room, dated 1899, the walls are crowded with pictures and mementos as they are now in Hollywood, except that Berlioz and Wagner were prominent among the deities then. (Stravinsky, Craft 1963, 256)

In addition, the Childhood Room appears in works by Stravinsky. In his 1910 ballet *Petrushka*, Igor Stravinsky introduces this place of childhood. He described it as a small and gloomy space where *Petrushka* (or Igor himself) is all alone and not wanted, where he desperately tries to break through the room wall and get into the bright and bustling world of fairground festivities.

4 **Kommunalka: Communal Apartments**

The flat, which can rightly be called an essential *topos* in Stravinsky's creative constellation, became empty. Fyodor Stravinsky died in 1902. After that, three sons – Yuri, Igor, and Guriy – and their mother lived in the house. After the 1917 revolution, Anna Stravinsky lived alone in the flat for some time and was appointed custodian of her late husband's library. However, the apartments began to be 'condensed' by moving in neighbours. Through some bargains and exchanges, they agreed on settling not quite strangers but the Holodovsky's family – Anna Stravinsky's relatives and other acquaintances – so that the landlady of the nine-room flat had only two rooms left. In 1922 she went to join Igor in France, while Yuri – Igor's elder brother – returned to St. Petersburg with his family from the Crimea. Between 1938 and 1942, the rooms were further partitioned and divided, with little space left. During the Siege of Leningrad, the Stravinsky family managed to move to another flat in a nearby entrance with a warrant for two rooms. It was Napravnik's flat, the inhabitants of which had already died. The once elite house had finally become a communal flat. In principle, the phenomenon could be considered predomi-



Figure 3 Igor Stravinsky, Saint-Petersburg, 1899.
Courtesy of Stravinsky Family Fund

nantly Russian. The space of the apartment was divided between the tenants, leaving a communal area. The communal organisation of life contributed to a specific relationship within the collective. The communal living space facilitated a reorientation of everyday life from the family to the collective. Communal life illustrated the way the home space influenced people's lifestyles. Living by the established rules in a communal flat clearly defines the boundaries of private and public spaces. Here private and public spaces overlap, and each resident is an equal master of their own and the communal areas.

In 1962, Igor visited Leningrad and visited his childhood home. It was not the flat his father had rented fifty years earlier, but it was next door, across the wall. The family of Xenia Stravinsky, the composer's niece, lived in the two rooms. Many things have been preserved: furniture, interior items, portraits, and photographs. Xenia tried to recreate the atmosphere of the past for her uncle: two rooms in which five people lived were turned into a 'living room' and a 'dining room'. The neighbours were persuaded not to show themselves during the visit. Igor Stravinsky never realised that this was a communal flat. The composer recalls the view from his window - the apartment where he was brought in the autumn of 1882 and where he lived for twenty-two years:

I remember the rattling of the horse-drawn tram, especially the squeaking of the wheels, as it turned the corner of our house, where it picked up speed to get to the bridge over the Kryukov Canal. On the other side of the canal stood a very handsome Empire-style building, yellow in color, like the Villa Medici in Rome, but a prison, unfortunately. (Stravinsky, Craft 1960, 23)

The view from the window became different. Instead of the prison, there was a residential building. Instead of the Lithuanian Market, there was the House of Culture of the First Five-Year Plan.

This view from the flat's window, from Igor and Guriy's room, was captured twice in drawings. The first drawing is stored in the Stravinsky Family Fund - a watercolour, author unknown [fig. 4]. There's an expanse, a horse-drawn carriage, the Lithuanian castle opposite and the Lithuanian market. Another drawing was made in 1903 by Igor Stravinsky's sister-in-law, his elder brother Yuri's wife Elena Stravinsky, born Novoselova, an artist and a pupil of Ian Zyanglinsky. It was published in Robert Craft's *Dialogues* in Russian translation. It shows the same view of the Lithuanian castle, the same stretch of Officers' Street, and the synagogue's dome.

The Lithuanian castle (prison) was demolished in the late 1920s. The new building of the Mariinsky Theatre (Mariinsky 2) now stands on the site of the Litovsky Market. Stravinsky's 'Petrushka's room' windows offer a view of the foyer.

Fifty years later, Stravinsky returned to his homeland, the home of his childhood. It was a different country, culture, and flat, but it was a return. The iron railings on the canal embankment are the same, as he said, so is the wooden footbridge on the corner. The street is still paved with stone, and the trams still brake loudly on their tracks (X. Stravinsky 1978). The visit to the house was special:

Еда должна быть сугубо домашняя. Ведь наш дом был единственным в России частный дом, который посетили Стравинские. И так - пирожки с капустой, пирог с яблоками, домашнее варенье и, конечно, вино, водка и всякие закуски. Все должно было радовать Игоря Федоровича, должно было предстать перед ним наилучшим образом. Сохранились кое-какие вещи - бронза, книжные шкафы, фарфор, портреты и др., - которые принадлежали его родителям и которые ему, без сомнения, приятно будет увидеть, как напоминание о детских и юношеских годах.

The food had to be strictly homemade. After all, our house was the only private house in Russia that the Stravinskys visited. Cabbage cakes, apple pie, homemade jam and wine, vodka and other snacks. Everything must have pleased Igor Fyodorovich and been presented to him in the best possible way. Some things had sur-



Figure 4 View from Stravinsky's family house, Saint-Petersburg. XX century. Paper, watercolour. Courtesy of Stravinsky Family Fund

vived - bronzes, bookcases, china, portraits, etc. - which had belonged to his parents and which he would no doubt enjoy seeing as a reminder of his childhood and adolescent years. (X. Stravinsky 1978, 147-6)

The Home where Igor returned had a particular characteristic, different from the one he had in his childhood home. This characteristic resonates incredibly well with the composer's lifestyle and acts as an antithesis to the sedentary lifestyle of his father, Fyodor. Igor Stravinsky is a nomad. His physical movement, oriented to dispersal through space and, as a result - belongs not to one country but to the whole world, to the blurring of identity in the multicultural environment of the first third of the twentieth century. Nomadism as a tra-

ditional form of nomadic livelihood is revealed in Igor Stravinsky's mode of existence, in his choice of Home, cultural objects and things. At the same time, the impulse for a 'nomadic' way of life was the composer's fear of revolution, rally, or urban procession, from which he always tried to flee to a safe space. Stravinsky lived in at least twelve different addresses, held three nationalities, and in recent years was on constant world tours, so he lived in hotels. His life was dominated not by the Home but by the Road, which called for new journeys and opened up new world horizons. In the Road, one can lose one's identity by being forced to constantly reintroduce one's meanings into new spaces without having a permanent private space.

The communal apartment phenomenon destroys the home's primary function - the privacy of living - and forms collectivism, transparency, openness, and publicity of living. The space of the communal apartment can be seen in the context of archaeology. Archaeology is a metaphor for memory (Bojm 2002). In this sense, the archaeology of the communal apartment leads us to understand it as a place of memory, a cultural and symbolic ruin. The communal apartment is inherently dynamic in its microcosm - shared spaces, kitchen, corridor, bathroom - and in its macrocosm - the constant change of neighbours or changes in their numbers. Under these conditions of man's deterritorialisation, there is his transformation into a nomad, and the Home becomes a kind of 'waiting room'.

When Stravinsky 'returned' to his Home, he found himself in a place whose form and characteristics represent himself if we consider the individual as a *topos* in space.

5 Conclusion

The question of man's place in the world is answered by philosophy and architecture. Unique methods allow it to build strict geometric images of the human lifeworld - the living space of a city, a house, a flat, or a room. It is essential to note the architectural features of different types of housing, their place in the natural and urban environment, and to define the mentality of the 'home man' that changes significantly with the evolution of housing from Home to city flat. It is necessary to move away from defining space only in a geometric sense and approach its expanded understanding in a humanitarian context.

The space of the Home initially acts as an artificial place of human activity. Home, human habitat, everyday life, and topoanalysis is a systematic psychological study of sites that play an essential role in our inner life (Bachelard 2014).

The reflection of a person's destiny in the space of their Home and vice-versa has particular interest for researchers. By juxtaposing the space of the Stravinsky Homes, it is possible to consider the phenom-

enon of the 'Russian house', the 'Russian estate' and its total extermination and then resurrection in emigration after the revolution of 1917 (Dmitrieva 2020). It allows us to identify in which works the acquisition/migration/loss of the Home manifested itself in Stravinsky's work, how it influenced the change in the style of each character, and in which works we can find a reflection or remembrance of the Home.

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Social Dynamics' Insight: Questioning Power and Community

Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

edited by, Giulia Gelmi, Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky,
Andrea Nalesso

Nefs d'Or, Nefs d'Argent Between Space and Power

Andrea Missagia

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Feliciano Tosetto

Sophia University Institute, Italy

Abstract The so-called *nefs* were an important 'presence' in the European courts starting from the Late Middle Ages. They were precious miniature ships, shown during banquets held in the halls of the nobility. In addition to delighting the sight of diners thanks to their ornamental richness, they were used as containers of spices, drinks, or luxury silverware. The preciousness of the vessel and of its content were just some of the elements that determined the function of ostentation of power through the *nefs*. Taking into consideration sources and examples ranging from the fourteenth century to the early sixteenth century, the purpose of this contribution is to investigate both the spatial relationships in the practices of use of the object and those intrinsic to the object itself. The main trajectories of analysis refer to three spatial relationships: that of container and content, that of long-distance travel embedded in the object, and the geography of power in noble banqueting rituals. These spatial relationships reflect power relationships that will be investigated on a case-by-case basis in the course of our study.

Keywords History of art. Nefs. Late Middle Ages. Early Modern Age. Ship models. Ritual. Power. Conspicuous. Consumption.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Defining the Nef: Some Evidence from the Fourteenth Century. – 3 Representing Ships: Nefs From the Fifteenth Century to the First Decades of the Sixteenth Century. – 4 Symbolic and Spatial Dimensions of the Nefs. – 5 The Role of the Nef. Ritual and Material Culture in the Courts. – 6 The Nef as Element of the Ritual Space. – 7 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

Published by French historian Henri Moranvillé, the *Inventaire de l'orfèvrerie et des bijoux de Louis I, Duc d'Anjou* (Moranvillé 1903)¹ allows us to retrace the splendour of the collections of precious objects belonging to King Charles V of France and his brothers, including Louis I of Anjou-Valois. Drawn up between 1379 and 1380, the inventory lists – among various artefacts – many “Nefs d’or” (Moranvillé 1903, 56), “Nefs d’argent dorées” (248-61), “Nefs d’argent esmaillé” (248-9), “Nefs d’argent hachées” (260-1), “Nefs d’argent blanches” (261-3). In this essay, we will examine the so-called *nef* or ‘table *nef*’, a term used in Old French that indicates the ship. It is an artefact linked to the richest environments and places of prestige such as the table or the salon of courts and higher aristocracy. A specific object whose origin and diffusion can be traced back to the Late Middle Ages.

The following analysis is primarily intended to be a study on the three-dimensional representation of a miniature ship.² Starting from the first half of the fourteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century, this study will develop an in-depth look on this type of object through a historical-artistic approach, focused on capturing aspects of stylistic evolution from a chronological and aesthetic point of view. Furthermore, this article proposes a reflection on the topological relationship that characterises our perception of space: through the case of the nefs we will study the relationship between the container and its content. Moreover, considering how the container has many functions that can be related to cosmologies, meanings, and different worldviews, as well as to aesthetics formed in specific historical processes of social groups, it is our will to argue that table nefs symbolically preserve the idea of long-distance travel. To do this, both material and metaphorical elements will be considered, even in those cases in which these small ships were not used as actual containers for material goods. Travel and the idea of movement can be seen as part of the meaning of a *nef*, thus contributing to enriching its value and the prestige of its owner. Last but not least, another spatial relationship that nefs allow to investigate is the ritual space that is typical of the medieval table or banquet.

In the present article, Andrea Missagia is responsible for §§ 1-3 and 5, Feliciano Tosetto is responsible for §§ 4 and 6-7.

1 For an in-depth comment by the author, see also Moranvillé 1901.

2 Miniature vessels were created for different purposes and contexts; in this paper we will examine the specific category of nefs, in relation to the court dinner table of sovereigns and high personalities. There is not much monographic literature on nefs, see mainly Oman 1963, and more recently Timmermann 2021, with bibliography.

2 Defining the Nef: Some Evidence from the Fourteenth Century

In the European art history context, the ship has always been a theme of particular importance, especially for its value as a symbol in Christian iconography. We know that nefs – scaled-down replicas of ships – were an important element of the table in the medieval banquet, and for this reason they were objects of high material and formal quality. Coming into common use at least from the Late Middle Ages, nefs were ship-shaped containers that used to be placed on the table in luxury dining rooms. They were typically made in two sections and the upper part was often removable, so the hull could be used to store assorted items: spoons, knives, crockery such as serving dishes or glassware, but also spices, salt, pepper, condiments, and drinks. Dating back to the first half of the thirteenth century, the first textual sources cite them as containers for wine (Oman 1963, 3, 25). Starting from the fourteenth century, some miniatures give us useful insights to start defining the image and the function of the nef during court ceremonies or during those events that included a banqueting moment. During these great ceremonies, the nef was usually placed in front of the most important person at the table, as a sign of his status. This is testified by the miniature from the second quarter of the fourteenth century from the *Secretum Secretorum*³ illustrating King Alexander III of Macedon at the dining table. In front of the King, in addition to the cup, we see a golden nef. Lifted up from the table by a base, the ship is represented with some typical features that let us understand it is a cog,⁴ a round merchant boat with square sails, which from the twelfth century had begun to sail the European seas. We can find this ship type in numerous miniatures from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as in a copy of the *Décameron de Boccace*.⁵

Another famous miniature illustrating a nef is the one by the Master of the Bible of Jean de Sy in the *Grandes Chroniques de France*.⁶ In

3 London, BL, Ms. Add. 47680, f. 60v. The *Secretum Secretorum* is a treatise in epistolary form attributed to a Pseudo-Aristotle, which purports to be a letter written by the Greek philosopher Aristotle to his pupil Alexander the Great on a wide range of topics. On the miniature, see Oman 1963, 7; Timmermann 2021, 275. A deliberate anachronism is clearly recognisable in this miniature and in all the others that will be mentioned in this paper. For a digitised copy of the manuscript, see http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_47680_f060v.

4 For features' description, see Timmermann 2021, 275. See also Steusloff 1983; Springmann, Schreiber 2008.

5 Paris, BnF, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms-5070 réserve, f. 91v. For the miniature, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100018t/f196.item>.

6 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 2813, f. 473v. An illuminated manuscript dating back to the 70s of the fourteenth century, commissioned by Charles V of France. The text il-

this miniature we find a sumptuous banquet with sovereigns and high prelates, a banquet offered in 1378 by King Charles V of France (1364-1380) – in central position – to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (1355-1378), accompanied by his son Wenceslaus of Luxembourg. The miniature depicts the royalties at the table with three nefs, with the largest one placed in front of Charles IV.⁷ The design of these three ships is crescent-shaped,⁸ without mast and sails, and it is represented with a certain research into details that characterise the golden band of the hull at deck level. It is also interesting to notice how the nef facing Wenceslaus has a visible lid.

There is not much material evidence for the fourteenth century, but some artefacts still survive. We can find some nefs that were reconsidered as religious objects. The first example is the so-called 'Golden Ship', the *Goldenes Schiff* [fig. 1], dated to the first half of the fourteenth century and preserved in the parish church of St. Mary of Uelzen,⁹ in Germany. Fashioned with gilded copper, this nef is adorned with precious stones, gems and cameos. The richness of this artefact is accentuated by the preciousness of the materials that define it. Examples like these were unique pieces, realised with the specific purpose of displaying wealth. Another survived object is the nef belonging to the Cathedral of Toledo,¹⁰ in Spain, which is dated to the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Donated by Toledan archbishop Pedro Tenorio (1377-1399) with the desire of converting it into a reliquary, this precious ship displays, like the previous example, refined decorative features such as some quadrilobed coats of arms, originally decorated with translucent enamel. All elements that make it a high quality object.

illustrates the history of the Kingdom of France from the beginning of the Valois dynasty to the events of the reign of Charles V. In the miniature, the banquet is held in the midst of a great spectacle wanted by King Charles to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem during the First Crusade in 1099. On the miniature, see Oman 1963, 10; Fliegel 2002, 22; Belozerskaya 2005, 227; Timmermann 2021, 272-4. For a digitised copy of the manuscript, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84472995/f958.item>.

7 In his work Timmermann (2021, 274) argues that the largest ship is placed in front of Charles IV because he is the oldest sovereign.

8 As observed by Timmermann (2021, 274), the nefs' shape recalls the ship used for the transport of siege troops visible in the foreground of the image.

9 For an in-depth look at this nef, see Timmermann 2021, 284-6, with further bibliography.

10 See Oman 1963, 14; Fliegel 2002, 24; Timmermann 2021, 275.



Figure 1 Northern goldsmiths (?), *Goldenes Schiff*. First half of the 14th century. Uelzen, parish church of St. Mary. © Wikimedia Commons

3 Representing Ships: Nefs From the Fifteenth Century to the First Decades of the Sixteenth Century

Increasingly, visual evidence for the nefs became more common during the fifteenth century. We can note how numerous nefs appear formally simpler, generally as containers with lids without masts or ropes, with references to real ships only in form. Several miniatures testify to this typology, and many nefs can be found within scenes related to episodes of the Arthurian cycle. For example, some episodes from the two volumes of *Tristan de Léonois* of Luce de Gat, dated to the first quarter of the fifteenth century,¹¹ such as the scene of the banquet at the home of Guidaban's father,¹² the scene where Galahad is presented to King Arthur,¹³ or the scene where a damsel kneels in front of Arthur.¹⁴ As a further example, we can also add the scene with Arthur and his knights from *Des Cas des nobles hommes et femmes* by Giovanni Boccaccio, translated by Laurent de Premierfait.¹⁵ The type of crescent-shaped nefs shown in foreshortening is widespread in the field of miniature art, and we find it not only in relation to Arthur, but also in scenes involving other kings or emperors, as in the miniature from the *Histoire romaine* of Titus Livius, translated into French by Pierre Bersuire¹⁶ or in the miniature from *La flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient* by the Armenian Hayton of Corycus.¹⁷

Remaining within the sphere of the art of manuscript illumination, we can compare one of these nefs with the contemporary images of real ships. A convincing comparison can be made between a nef [fig. 2] from the *Livre que fist Jehan Bocace de Certalde des cleres et nobles femmes, lequel il envoya a Audice de Accioroles de Florence*,

11 For the manuscript's detailed description and full bibliography, see <https://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/manuscrit/45501>.

12 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 101, f. 77v. For the miniature and manuscript's description, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9059123t/f79.item>.

13 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 101, f. 178v. For the miniature, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9059123t/f180.item>.

14 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 100, f. 125v. For the miniature, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9059122d/f127.item>.

15 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 226, f. 237r. For the miniature and the description of the manuscript, generically dated to the fifteenth century, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9009520k/f246.item>.

16 BGE, Ms. fr. 77, f. 86r. The manuscript is dated to the first decades of the fifteenth century. For the miniature and manuscript's bibliography, see <https://www.e-codices.ch/en/list/one/bge/fr0077>.

17 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 12201, f. 10v. The manuscript is dated to the early fifteenth century. For the miniature and manuscript's description, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8452199j/f30.item>.



Figure 2 French miniaturist, *Queen Kneeling in front of the King*. 15th century. Illuminated manuscript page, from *Livre que fist Jehan Boccace de Certalde des cleres et nobles femmes, lequel il envoya a Audice de Accioroles de Florence, countess de Haulteville*. Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 12420, f.114r. © Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

*countess de Haulteville*¹⁸ and a miniature [fig. 3] from the *Tristan de Léonois*, representing a cog.¹⁹ Miniaturists often emphasise the presence of the base supporting the bottom of the hull. It is an important element for the visual impact that a viewer could experience in front of a nef. We see it in the miniature with Knight Brumant the Superb's punishment [fig. 4] in the *Lancelot-Grail*. 4,²⁰ where the pedestal supporting the nef rises through a high rim, has a polylobed

18 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 12420, f. 114r. The manuscript is generically dated to the fifteenth century. For the miniature, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b10509080f/f235.item>.

19 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 101, f. 349r. For the miniature, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9059123t/f351.item>.

20 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 120, f. 474r. For the miniature, dated to the beginning of the fifteenth century, and manuscript's description, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84920806/f11.item>.



Figure 3 French miniaturist, *Cog with Passengers*. First quarter of the 15th century. Illuminated manuscript page, from *Tristan de Léonois*. Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 101, f. 349r. © Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

shape and is characterised by wide pitches delimited by visible ribs' lines. A further example is a banquet scene, a feast served to King Alexander and his courtiers depicted in a miniature from the mid-fifteenth-century manuscript *L'Histoire du bon roi Alexandre* by Jean Wauquelin.²¹ In the miniature, the nef has a railing decorated by a sumptuous Gothic spire ending in a lily. It also has a base supported and raised in height by small animal legs. Finally, we can also recall the nef in the well-known and much discussed Limbourg Brothers' illustration for the month of January from the *Très Riches Heures*²² of Jean of Valois, Duke of Berry (1360-1416). The nefs in these examples are of considerable form and size, heavily gilded and incorporating jewels and other precious materials: they were explicitly symbols of

²¹ Paris, Petit Palais, LDUT00456. For manuscript's description and bibliography, see <https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/petit-palais/oeuvres/livre-des-conquestes-et-faits-d-alexandre#infos-secondaires-prolongement>.

²² France, Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms. 65, f. 1v. For a digitised copy of the manuscript, dated between 1412 and 1416, see <https://les-tres-riches-heures.chateauchantilly.fr/>.

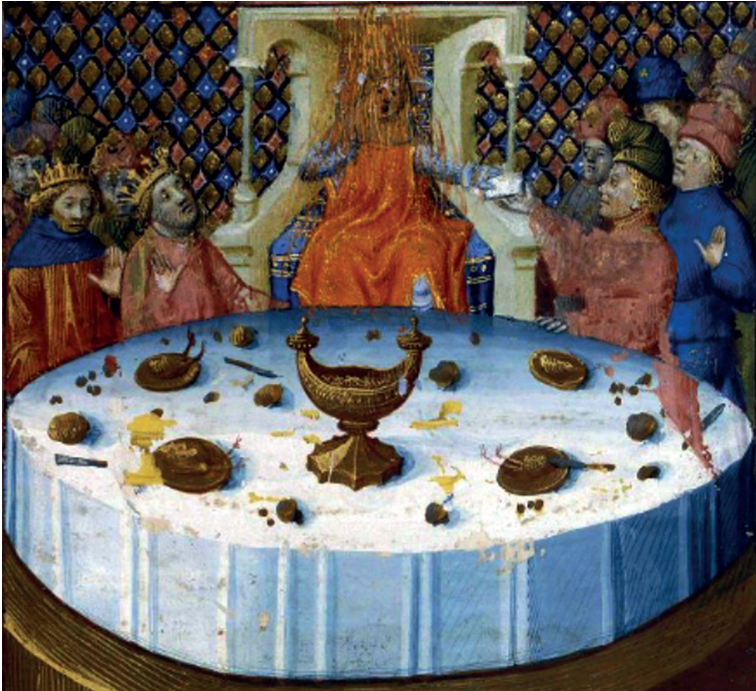


Figure 4 French miniaturist, *The Punishment of Sir Brumant*. Early 15th century. Illuminated manuscript page, from *Lancelot-Grail*. 4. Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 120, f.47r. © Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

royal status and power. Supporting evidence for this is represented by the surviving table ship preserved in the Cathedral of Reims and today known as 'Reliquary Nef of St. Ursula',²³ donated as a tribute in 1500 by the city of Tours to Queen Anne of Brittany, consort of King Louis XII of France. This nef has mast, sail, and rigging, and the deck - which is also a lid - is populated by various passengers. It is crafted from gold, silver, copper, and carnelian (a variety of red chalcidony), with coloured enamels embellishing the little figures and the basement. Miniature crews also characterise other nefs, such as the one now in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, dated to 1503 and crafted by a local goldsmith shop.²⁴ Known as the *Schlüsselfelder Schiff* by the name of the patrician family of Nuremberg who owned it, this table ship was made in imitation of a specif-

²³ On this object and its conversion into a reliquary, see Salet 1966; Normore 2012; Rouillac 2012; Timmermann 2021, 283-4.

²⁴ Timmermann (2021, 276-9). For ship's parts shown in detail and bibliography, see <http://objektkatalog.gnm.de/objekt/HG2146>.



Figure 5 French goldsmith (?), *The Burghey Nef*. 1527-28. London, Victoria and Albert Museum. © Wikimedia Commons

ic ship type, the carrack. The carrack was a sailing vessel, normally equipped with three masts, which started to be used from the fifteenth century and became a well known ship in the Modern Age due to its usage for ocean navigation. Crafted from precious gilded silver and supported by a double-tailed mermaid base, it is a sumptuous goldsmith work lively populated by its crew: you can see for instance the sailors working the sails and climbing up the shrouds. These el-

ements were all designed to return a greater final realism, to amaze and to be admired. This accuracy and this vivacity of representation are also reflected in the miniature showing the feast of Richard II of England, from the *Recueil des croniques et anciennes istoires de la Grant Bretagne* by Jean of Wavrin,²⁵ where a crewed nef is depicted. Such models soon spread: to cite two other examples, we cannot forget the nef in the Treasury of the Basilica of Sant'Antonio in Padua,²⁶ dated to the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the one dated to 1527-28 and preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London [fig. 5], the famous and so-called 'Burghley Nef'.²⁷

4 Symbolic and Spatial Dimensions of the Nefs

In our investigation we try to explore what the nefes tell us by focusing on the interconnection between their symbolism, their spatial dimensions and their usage in the context of the banquet ritual. Instead of starting from narrow definitions of 'space', we took into account what tableships suggest about space and power. Among the various symbolic dimensions proper to the nefes, three features lend themselves to be meaningful signifiers: the preciousness of the materials, the craftsmanship and the ship-shape. The first two dimensions are particularly apt for conspicuous consumption, which highlights the economic power of the owner of the object (Veblen 2004). Meanwhile, the symbolism of the ship is linked to the ability to control bad luck. In fact, sea businesses represented a concrete risk and the sea was a symbol of the unknown danger, as testified by Ulysses' character in Dante (Ferroni 2014) or Boccaccio's story of Landolfo Rufolo (Wolf 2017). It is no coincidence that nefes are often supported by sea dragons or mermaids, the same beings that in medieval and Renaissance cartography indicated the risks of navigation (Van Duzer 2014). The reference to the sea is sometimes also made on a material level with the use of shell and nacre, as for the 'Burghley Nef'. There are also some more purely religious objects that resemble the symbolism found in the nef: votive vessels and incense burner shuttles.²⁸ In the former, the idea of rescue from adverse fate and from the danger of the sea is present; instead, the latter are more easily

25 London, BL, Ms. Royal 14 E IV, f. 265v. The manuscript is dated between 1470 and 1480; for the miniature, see <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&ILLID=57372>. See Normore 2015, 144-5.

26 See Oman 1963, 19, 24; Collareta 1995, 156-8; Timmermann 2021, 286-7.

27 See Oman 1963, 56; Timmermann 2021, 276. For object's images and full bibliography, see <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O73113/the-burghley-nef-salt-cellar-unknown/>.

28 For incense shuttles see Collins, Martin 2018.

attributable to a symbolism that sees the ship as the church connected to God through the smoke of the incense rising towards the sky.

The symbolisms of the ship-shape entails a pre-conceptualisation of a geographical space that lives only in cultural trajectories. There is a sedimented and naturalised belief in the existence of a geometric and objective space. However, beyond that, the processes of socialisation to space construct it at the precise moment in which we learn to experience it. Interpretation and experience originate a cyclical movement through which we incorporate space, which is by no means a mere datum of nature, ready to be measured. Instead, it lives in cultural and historical dynamics and it is the subject of contention in affirming its political and symbolic dominion (Merleau-Ponty, Landes 2012). The processes underlying the symbolic construction of space reveal political dynamics, which are more or less hidden in every human group, in every time and in every place. The claim of positivity of the physical-geometric space is an example of this in the contemporary West (cf. Lefebvre 1991); however, to analyse the political dimension of spatial relations from a procedural point of view, it is advisable to exploit the historical distance that separates us from the Middle Ages. The process of cultural construction of space passes through the body. Merleau-Ponty (1968, 248) states that our world is made of the same flesh as our body, and our ideas of space in fact depend on where we 'decide' to draw a boundary between the limits of our person and what surrounds us, on what we include or exclude in our identification process. Even today, as Goffman (2021) observes, we use space or spaces as an extension of our face, of our presentation of the self. Some objects have a social productivity, an agency of their own, precisely because of their ability to connect different spatialities. Nefs are composite objects, often made of precious materials, but often also of 'exotic' materials. The ship models' composite nature connects the perceived virtuality of geographical distance to its own materiality and form. Ship travel as the power of controlling misfortune is part of the object's meaning. This is obtained by the nef being shaped as a ship, by its precious content and by the sea related materials like mother-of-pearl. This is not an isolated case, as the work of Clark (2019) on ceramic vessels in the fifteenth century shows.

Among the topological relationships that characterise nefes, the most relevant is the container-contained one. This relationship is inscribed even in the semantic field of its name. A nef is a vessel model, and the term 'vessel' has an ambiguity that is constitutive of its usage: a vessel is both a ship and a container (Stevenson 2010). A vessel is a container par excellence, but it also gets part of its importance from the contents it carries. The preciousness of the nef serves to reinforce the luxury of the content and vice versa. If the linguistic argument serves only to corroborate our thesis, we also point out that the englobing/englobed relation stands on a deeper level, as shown

in the work of Massimo Leone (2013). The above described symbolic dimensions are proper to the nefes themselves. Differently, when the ship models are presented before the lord on the table, they inscribe those power symbols within the space, while also expanding the spatial reach of the lord's personhood. Let us analyse this in more detail in the next sections.

5 The Role of the Nef. Ritual and Material Culture in the Courts

As we have seen, nefes were placed in front of the most important personalities during banquets or official receptions; eminences such as kings, princes, lords or men of the Church. In the specific geography of power that was performed during court events, nefes could also be placed on the table close to the most important guests. For instance, a nef is illustrated on the left hand side of the table next to the guest in blue dress in a miniature from the *Regnault de Montauban*.²⁹ Nefes, with their 'presence', made reference to the cosmopolitan network of contacts of its owner and played a central role in court ceremonies, underlining prominence and prestige. In this regard, we can recall the illustration with King Richard II of England (1377-99) together with his Court after his coronation ceremony [fig. 6] from the *Anciennes et nouvelles chroniques d'Angleterre* of Jehan de Wavrin,³⁰ where a nef can be identified on a table – the so-called *dressoir* (Helfenstein 2013, 164-5) – set up for the display with vessels of high quality and precious materials: it is a visual marker of status and hierarchy.

In the fourth tome of the *Mémoires d'Olivier de La Marche*, published by Henri Beaune and Jules D'Arbaumont (Beaune, D'Arbaumont 1888), Olivier de La Marche (1425-1502) describes in detail the etiquette of the table and the rituals that had to be observed at the court of Charles the Bold, the Duke of Burgundy (1467-1477). By citing La Marche, in his essay Helfenstein (2013, 162) underlines how a guest who had come to meet the Duke at the table could not actually be able to see him well, due to the size of the nef that was placed next to him. For this reason, we can see how in many contemporary illustrations rulers receive guests on one side, with the nef placed on the op-

29 Paris, BnF, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms-5075 reserve, Tome IV, 135r. This is the fourth tome of a popular fifteenth century romance of chivalry named *Regnault de Montauban*. It is a French *chanson de geste* rewritten in prose also known as *Les quatre fils Aymon* that tells the story of four brave knights (Renaud, Aalard, Richard et Guichard) fighting against the imperial power. For the miniature and manuscript's description, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55006678h/f281.item.r=Montauban>.

30 London, BL, Ms. Royal 14 E IV, f. 10r. For the miniature, see <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&ILLID=37356>.



Figure 6 Master of the Vienna and Copenhagen Toison d'Or, *Richard II of England with his Court after his coronation*. 1470-80. Illuminated manuscript page, from *Anciennes et nouvelles chroniques d'Angleterre*. London, BL, Ms. Royal 14 E IV, f.10r. © Wikimedia Commons

posite side. The considerable size of the nef that could have blocked the view of the sovereign may be confirmed by the banquet scene in the miniature with King Syphax receiving Scipio Africanus and Hasdrubal Barca at his table from *Romuleon*.³¹ The function of the nef as a container is reported by Olivier de La Marche in a passage:

et après luy va le sommellier, qui porte en ses bras la nef d'argent qui sert à l'aumosne; et dedans icelle nef sont les trenchois d'argent et la petite salliere, et une autre petite nef; ensamble le baston et lycorne dont on fait l'espreuve en la viande du prince. (Beaune, D'Arbaumont 1888, 22)

31 Paris, BnF, Ms. Français 364, f. 197r. The manuscript is dated between 1485 and 1490; for the miniature, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6000786m/f399.image>.

and after him follows the *sommelier*, who carries in his arms the silver *nef* that is used for alms; and in this *nef* there are the silver platters and the salt cellar, and another small *nef*; Together with the staff and the *lycorne* with which the prince's meat is tested.³²

In addition to tableware and a salt cellar, we therefore learn that a *nef* could also contain another, smaller, *nef*. It is interesting to notice how the latter was related to a very specific object, the *lycorne* – a unicorn's horn. The small *nef* and the *lycorne* are connected by a ritual, as La Marche explains later:

et doit le varlet servant prendre la petite nef où est la lycorne, et la porter au sommelier au buffet, et le sommelier doit mettre de l'eau fraîche sur la lycorne et en la petite nef, et doit bailler l'essai au sommelier, vuydant de la petite nef en une tasse, et la doit apporter à sa place, et faire son essai devant le prince, vuydant l'eau de la nef en sa main [...]. (Beaune, D'Arbaumont 1888, 27-8)

and the attendant who serves has to take the small *nef* where the *lycorne* is, and bring it to the *sommelier* at the buffet, and the *sommelier* has to put fresh water on the *lycorne* and in the small *nef*, and he has to give proof of the tasting to the *sommelier*, emptying from the small *nef* in a cup, and he has to bring it to its place, and make the test in front of the prince, emptying the water of the *nef* in his hand [...].

The small *nef* in the ritual space of the medieval table appears necessary for the 'tasting moment'. It had, therefore, the practical purpose of protecting the ruler from poisoning along with the horn of the unicorn, an object sought after by princes and kings for its magical powers as an antidote to poisoned cups.³³

6 The Nef as Element of the Ritual Space

The fact that the *nefs* were used within the specific context of the banquet, and that therefore they were only a part of a larger ritual and symbolic machine, puts the emphasis again on the relational nature of space. As stated by Normore:

With their inventive blend of media and collaborative production, feasts blurred the boundaries between spectator and spectacle,

³² Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the Authors.

³³ On unicorn's horn and its power, see Stark 2003-04, with bibliography.

creator and audience, and in so doing helped form a culture deeply invested in discernment, whether directed toward objects, other humans, or one's own motivations. (2015, 3)

The nef extends and embodies the power of the sovereign precisely because it is in its proximity within an anti-structural space, where all the components 'blend' together. Both spatial relationships previously analysed make table ships a useful resource within medieval banquets. A simple model of a ship could only count on a symbolic reference, but by containing salt, spices and other precious objects it becomes tangible proof of the wide range on which the power of the sovereign can act. If the nef were not placed in front of the person of high rank it could not extend his person.

'To sit above the salt' and 'to sit below the salt' are two expressions of the English language that indicate a respectively high or low status of the subject.³⁴ Both come from the overlap between the geography of power and the geography of the banquet, where the salt cellar - often a nef - is the central element (Plass 1963). Precisely by virtue of the container-contained relationship, the nef divides the space, reaffirming the distinctions of power: here we can find the agency of the object. The banquet participants are socialised to this politicised space precisely because they are part of those conventional interpretations incorporated into the nef. The fact that the precious salt cellars - of which the nef is a fine example - entered an idiomatic expression testifies that they represented power. However, we must not forget that the tabletop ships were only one of the cogs of the ritual machine called banquet. The success of the nef also lies more in its ability to recursively summarise the banquet, which is basically a rite of redistribution, of conspicuous consumption, of potlatch, useful to reaffirm the power of the sovereign. In the banquet ritual, eating becomes a public act of sharing: the seats were counted in bowls, as each bowl and glass was shared by two diners. The bread used as a cutting board was given in alms, the personalities of higher rank chose the courses which they then distributed (Malinverni 2016). The medieval banquet seems to be a historical example of a broader human tendency that we can call the rite of redistribution (Pollock 2015). From the Roman banquets, the Christian Agape feasts, which can perhaps boast a historical continuity with our case, to the *potlatches* of the Kwakiutl, to the feasts for the Trobriand gardens (Mauss 2004), in many human societies the reaffirmation of power comes through the capacity of the leaders to redistribute resources. The nef summarises all these dimensions in their own material symbolisms and symbolic spaces: the ability to procure spices, to possess precious objects and to control

34 See the idiom under the entry salt in Brewer's dictionary (1923).

adversity are displayed at the very moment in which resources are redistributed and the prestige is shared. However, seeing the banquet as a ritual of resource distribution should not be understood as a practice where power itself is distributed; resources are distributed unequally to highlight the power of those who can distribute them, reaffirming an unequal hierarchy. If, on the one hand, nefes divide the space in a hierarchical manner, on the other hand they reconnect the two halves: nefes are placed on the table by a servant and their contents are shared among different society strata, but that is made possible only thanks to the lord.

7 Conclusion

Through royal inventories, miniatures and a series of examples of tabletop ships, we have analysed one of the central mechanisms in the art of the banquet. We have seen how the emergence of nefes from the first half of the fourteenth century constituted a central element in outlining the power relations within the ritual space. The ability and the multi-mediality of the object to symbolise different elements of prestige through the incorporation of travel, preciousness and geographical extension are resources employed in a greater symbolic mechanism, in which the powerful reaffirms the hierarchy by redistributing resources and reaffirming the bonds with his peers. The nef extends the space of the sovereign's person by dividing the ritual space, mediating prestige and power and apodictically naturalising the status of the ruler. The nef invites us to look at space not as an empty vessel but as a sociocultural construct which, by separating bodies through specific devices, draws a hierarchy of power. This takes place through a reworking of symbolic forms and materials that are evident in the case of table ships: in fact, each spatial dimension of nef testifies to a relationship of power.

Abbreviations

BGE	Bibliothèque de Genève
BL	British Library
BM	Bibliothèque municipale
BnF	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France
Musée Condé	Bibliothèque et archives du musée Condé
Petit Palais	Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-arts de la Ville de Paris

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**Permeable Boundaries:
Materiality vs Immateriality**

Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

edited by, Giulia Gelmi, Anastasia Kozachenko-Stravinsky,
Andrea Nalesso

The Space of the Body from Classical to Contemporary Dance A Matter of Coloniality

Lara Barzon

University of Warwick, UK; University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract This essay aims to reveal the changes in the understanding of the space of the body in Western theatrical dance through decolonial lens. Arguing that the dancing body has fallen prey since the Renaissance to the rhetoric of modernity/coloniality, the following pages analyse the main stages from the establishment of the colonial body to recent decolonial experimentations showing how the myth of the efficient body-organism is gradually giving way to the chaos resulting from desire freed from colonial conditioning.

Keywords Dance. Coloniality. Cultural decolonialism. Modernity. Body. Space. Organism.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Establishment of the Colonial Body. – 3 A New Dance for a New Body. – 4 Against Efficiency, Against Capitalism. – 5 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

To speak about dance is to speak about bodies and space. Bodies may be one or many, humans or not; space may be a dedicated stage or any urban or natural space, public or private. In any case, these two elements are essential, everything else is a *surplus*. This space – conventional or not, urban or natural, public or private – is the ‘objective space’ where the body dancing creates a series of meanings and sig-



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nifiers that generate a 'symbolic space' proper to that dance. Then, there is an internal and hidden space, the 'space of the body', theorised by dance scholar José Gil who, in *Paradoxical Body*, describes it as "the skin extending itself into space; it is skin becoming space" (Gil 2006, 21). The space of the body is not the space that the body occupies, but the body's own space, its internal organisation and extension; it is not exhausted within it, and it is not contained by the skin because the skin is not a boundary but a point of extension. If there is no boundary there is no distinction between inside and outside and the dancer's movement 'in space' is transformed into 'being space'. This characteristic makes the body paradoxical, since it is at the same time different from 'physical space' but not separate from it, so connected to it that it is not possible to distinguish one from the other. Hence, the space of the body has no limit, and it is intensified:

Let's immerse ourselves completely naked in a deep bathtub, leaving only our heads sticking out of the water; let's drop onto the surface of the water, near our submerged feet, a spider. We will feel the animal's contact on the entirety of our skin. What happened? The water created a space of the body defined by the skin-membrane of the bathtub's water. From this example we can extract two consequences pertaining to the properties of the space of the body: it prolongs the body's limits beyond its visible contours; it is an intensified space, when compared with the habitual tactility of the skin. (Gil 2006, 21)

As we can deduct from the example, the paradoxical body and the space of the body do not concern only the dancer's body, but any body under any circumstances. What then defines a dancing body? According to Gil, it is the ability to adapt "to the rhythms and to the imperatives of the dance" (2006, 23) and to move according to a "kind of interior map" (23). The organisation of the interior map is the reference coordinate system for the creation of the symbolic space. It goes without saying that there is no single possible spatial organisation. On the contrary, the map of the space of the body is the result of socio-cultural aspects and changes hand in hand with the transformation of society. And these are precisely objects of investigation of this essay: the processes of change of the space of the body in Western theatrical dance. I tackle the issue with a decolonial approach arguing that, since the Renaissance, the dancing body has been embedded in rigid structures aimed at specific representations that have served "the colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo 2009, 39) and questioning the possibilities of decolonising the space of the body from such subjugation. In support of my analysis, I embrace the thesis that sees the terms 'modernity' and 'coloniality' as the two pillars of Western civilisation "supported by a com-

plex and diverse structure of knowledge, basically, Christian Theology and Secular Sciences and Philosophy” (quoted in Hoffman 2017, 2) in turn backed by institutions that constantly act within the colonial matrix of power. Decoloniality means first of all disengaging from that overall structure of knowledge in order to engage in a reconstruction of knowledge and knowing, ways of thinking and language, ways of living and being part of the world.

2 The Establishment of the Colonial Body

Our journey begins with the conquest of the Americas and the related European historical period known as the Renaissance. With the sixteenth century the modern era begins, bringing with it a radical change in society and the economy: we enter the colonial era and witness the emergence of the capitalist economic system. Accomplice to the Europe at the time is the rise of the “rhetoric of modernity – that is, the rhetoric of salvation and newness” (Mignolo 2009, 41). Thanks to scholars such as Anibal Quijano and Walter D. Mignolo, it has recently been pointed out that this narrative carries with it a hidden side involving both the economic sphere and the sphere of knowledge: “human lives became expendable to the benefit of increasing wealth and such expendability was justified by the naturalisation of the racial ranking of human beings” (Mignolo 2009, 41). This grey area is called ‘coloniality’ and is rooted in the idea of a supposed racial and cultural superiority of the Western world. The term, introduced in the 1990s by Quijano, emerges as a result of colonialism but extends far beyond it in terms of both duration and encroachment. Coloniality in fact concerns culture, knowledge production and inter-subjective relations. Dance is also assigned a part in the ‘modernity/coloniality’ project, terms that are “intimately, intricately, explicitly, and complicitly entwined” because “two sides of the same coin” (Mignolo 2018, 4); a coin representing a white, macho, Christian, capitalist society acting in the name of progress. It is from this period onwards that dance loses its social role to become an artistic expression, giving rise first to Renaissance court dances and then to classical dance. With the emergence of ballet as the theatrical dance form *par excellence*, what was previously a societal practice is now structured into a demanding and rigid codification system, which, through a certain body type, aims to represent a certain narrative produced by specific social roles. The dominant narrative expands hegemonically and can be summarised as “una figura femminile, fragile, aerea e in equilibrio sempre precario (come ben mette in evidenza l’uso delle punte), contrapposta ad una mascolinità di supporto” (a female figure, fragile, aerial and always precariously balanced [as the use of pointe shoes makes clear], set against a supporting masculinity) (Pon-

tremoli 2004, 107).¹ But what body to meet these expectations? As the dance scholar André Lepecki reminds us, we witness the “establishment of modernity with the subjectification set in place by the Cartesian division between *res cogita* and *res extensa*” (Lepecki 2006, 10). In fact, the modern Western (and therefore colonial) body is defined in its organisation according to a system of organs with mostly independent functions that together constitute the *res extensa* of which Descartes wrote:

E, benché forse [...] io abbia un corpo a me congiunto molto strettamente, tuttavia, poiché da una parte ho un’idea chiara e distinta di me stesso in quanto soltanto una cosa che pensa non estesa, e, dall’altra un’idea distinta del corpo in quanto soltanto una cosa estesa e non pensante, è certo che io sono distinto realmente dal mio corpo, e che posso esistere senza di esso. (Descartes [1641] 2019, 98-9)

And, although perhaps [...] I have a body joined to me very closely, nevertheless, since on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself as only a non-extended, thinking thing, and, on the other hand, a distinct idea of the body as only an extended, non-thinking thing, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and that I can exist without it.

Given that ecclesiastical power has a crucial influence in the modernity/coloniality, it hardly comes as a surprise that the soul is given a clear superiority over the body, to the extent that man can exist without it. This body is traversed by three imaginary straight lines, the Cartesian axes, which constitute its mapping: the longitudinal axis crosses it vertically from the centre of the head to the heels; the transverse axis divides it with a horizontal line parallel to the ground; the sagittal axis crosses it from front to back. It is around this body map that the rigid execution parameters of academic dance are built, towards an ideal design of the human body inspired by aesthetic canons conceived *a priori*. The Cartesian axes provide the guidelines on which to develop the movements: torsion and rotation around the longitudinal axis, flexion and extension around the transversal axis and inclinations, abductions and adductions following the sagittal axis. This organisation of the space of the body, propagating itself in the physical space by means of lines, curves, diagonals, creates a perspective vision with a univocal vanishing point that coincides with the vision of the spectator. Symmetry is thus ensured. But how to achieve this? Thanks to the invention of choreography. From the

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all the translations are by the Author.

Greek *choréa* 'dance' and *gráphō* 'write', the art of choreography is a further product of modernity. In 1589,

a Jesuit priest who happened to be an ecclesiastical judge and a lawyer who happened to be a mathematician – Thoinot Arbeau and his alter ego, the student Capriol – join forces under the power of State, Justice, Science, and God to create the new art of moving rigorously and privately, which Arbeau named *orchesography*. (Lepecki 2007, 123; emphasis in the original)

Although the term choreography would not appear until later in the eighteenth century, with *orchesography* Arbeau proposed choreographic models to follow, and it is no coincidence that the first exercise published in the homonymous book is a march with a military rhythm. In accordance with Lepecki, this testifies to the will to subjugate dance on the part of the State and the Church, a will that was to become customary with the rise of choreography, defined by the scholar as an “apparatus of capture”, an expression borrowed from philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. With the codification of steps, the hegemony of narratives, the schematisation of the space of the body and the disciplining of bodies, the game is played:

at a certain point in the history of Western subjectivities, a certain social (and socialising) activity called dance fell prey to a stately (and theological) apparatus of capture called choreography. (Lepecki 2007, 122)

A body deprived of the depth of its space, stiffened and sectarianised, a space of the body emptied of its soul, a dancer reduced to a mere executor; this is the result of a dance that

loses its powers (*puissance*) as it is submitted to the power (*pouvoir*) of the choreographic [...], a very specific masculinist, fatherly, Stately, judicial, theological and disciplinary project. (122)²

Until the end of the nineteenth century, this corporeal model imposed itself as the normative body, son and servant of the colonial matrix of power; an aesthetic body, efficient and in perpetual motion, a metaphor for a society intoxicated by progress, productive and constantly advancing. Then, at a certain point, from this body comes the need for a break with the rigidity of the academic code.

² Lepecki explains that *puissances* is a matter of becoming, whilst *pouvoir* is a matter of the State.

3 A New Dance for a New Body

We are now in late-nineteenth-century Europe. The narrative of the fragile and ethereal female figure hovering lightly in her pointe shoes begins to feel narrow. The paradigms of classical dance begin to waver, leaving room for a new conception of man and the rethinking of the role of the subject in a society that is changing profoundly: from aristocratic-bourgeois society to the mass society. Dance moved to the forefront in the fight against academicism. In this widespread climate of cultural and social ferment, the search for a renewed expressive possibility of the body in movement began, aimed at overcoming Cartesian dualism and a reconciliation between body and mind. It was the Frenchman François Delsarte who theorised those principles that were to give birth to modern dance. He polemised against the traditional principles of teaching, which “ignorano, secondo lui, i codici dell’espressione gestuale e riducono le possibilità dell’animo umano di esprimersi ad un infimo repertorio di atti convenzionali stereotipati e per ciò stesso falsi” (ignore, according to him, the codes of gestural expression and reduce the possibilities of the human soul to express itself to a lowly repertoire of stereotyped conventional acts, and for this very reason false) (Pontremoli 2004, 9), fighting, on the contrary, for the search for a truth of expression. The manifestation of the exterior gesture should correspond to the emotional dimension, becoming a direct agent of the soul. Thanks to Delsarte’s theories we see a strengthening of the organic unity of the body, once again a body made up of an ordered and efficient set of organs, each with its own role in the proper functioning of the body-organism. But the soul and psyche are also an integral part of bodily unity. The Cartesian reference system leaves room for a conception of the human being as one and triune and “come tale, le sue parti intellettuale, emotiva e fisica vanno esercitate in modo penetrato” (as such, its intellectual, emotional and physical parts must be exercised in an interpenetrating manner) (Randi 2018, 25). Delsarte’s theories will have great success overseas, finding fortunate application in the revolutionary insights of the three American pioneers: Ruth St. Denis, Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan. We should not be surprised that the protagonists are three women since

The agents (and institutions) creating and managing the logic of coloniality were Western Europeans, mostly men [...]. And they were - in general - mostly white and Christian [...]. Thus, the enunciation of the colonial matrix was founded in two embodied and geo-historically located pillars: the seed for the subsequent racial classification of the planet population and the superiority of white men over men of colour but also over white women. (Mignolo 2009, 49)

Lepecki identifies in the revolution that will lead to modern dance an attempt to escape the tyranny, so present in the history of Western dance, namely to free dance from the apparatus of choreographic capture. Each attempt “fell back into the strata of the choreographic” (Lepecki 2007, 123) but this relapse at least opens new possibilities for dance and non-Eurocentric models begin to be taken as examples (even if the approach to them remains extremely colonial). In particular, St. Denis, together with her husband Ted Shawn, founded the Denishawn School for Movement and Dance Education in Los Angeles in 1924, where the main exponents of modern American dance were trained. At Denishawn, an effort is made to widen the perspective by offering courses in different types of dances from different parts of the world with the aim of creating a plurality of aesthetic perspectives that each student can use to create his or her own dance technique. We thus move from the codified and pre-established framework of academic dance to a range of possibilities from which to draw to find a personal style. This process, however, does not lead to a real liberation of movement, but to different codifications of it that have given rise to the different modern dance techniques. What is shared by all these techniques is a bodily architecture composed of a system of triads that from the three inner faculties (spirit, soul and life) becomes more and more particular, in the image and likeness of the universal order that governs the cosmos. In one of Ted Shawn’s lectures at the George Peabody College for Teachers in 1938, he explains that “the body was divided into three zones [...] the physical (lower trunks and legs), the spiritual-emotional (torso and arms) and the mental (head and neck)” (Shawn 1950, 49). Three types of movement correspond to this bodily division:

oppositions, denoting physical strength and brute force, parallelisms, denoting, on the physical plane, weakness, but also on the mental plane being used for decorative and stylized movement, and successions, the highest and greatest order of movement which passing through the body moves every muscle. (49)

This natural architecture of the human body is corrupted in modern man because of the inhibitions and education to which Western man is subjected. The civilisation of modern society has, according to Shawn, poisoned the body by making the adult Western body “rigido, poco flessibile, inibito, diseducato e dunque inespessivo o mal espressivo” (rigid, inflexible, inhibited, uneducated and therefore inexpressive or poorly expressive) (Randi 2018, 37), thus leading to constant lying. The mission of modern dance is therefore to educate the body disciplining it (interestingly, it is necessary to discipline in order to liberate) so that it returns to the archetypal model of unity. Shawn writes:

The Zones of the Body, Doctrine of Special Organs, Realms of Space, Orders of Movement and Laws of Motion all inter-pen-
 etrate, are all simultaneously operative, and each affects and has
 influence on all the others – they are like the skeleton of the body,
 the muscular, nervous, circulatory, digestive and other systems
 and parts, which may be separated in thought for the purpose of
 study, but which in actuality are all parts of a complex unity; or,
 like a fabric, all of these laws are threads-the warp and weft of
 a unit (the fabric) which also has qualities, colours, textures, de-
 sign. (Shawn [1963] 2016, 43)

As a consequence of this different conception of the space of the body,
 a different relationship between artist and spectator makes its way:
 the symbolic space is no longer aimed at telling a story but is rath-
 er the result of an attempt at expression, from the inside out. Chore-
 ographic movement in physical space has no aesthetic purpose, but
 each gesture must arise from a communicative need. This is clearly
 seen in the choreographic work of Marta Graham, a student of Den-
 ishawn commonly considered the mother of American modern dance.
 In 1926, she founded the Marta Graham Dance Company and the
 Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, where she taught her
 dance technique. According to Graham, the typical body of moder-
 nity, codified in classical ballet technique, is a body “‘a pezzi’ - fatto
 di sezioni tra loro slegate” (‘in pieces’ - made up of unconnected sec-
 tions) and, therefore, is inevitably “il riflesso di una psiche spezzata”
 (the reflection of a broken psyche), whereas “una macchina anatom-
 ica intera, invece, perfettamente connessa nei suoi elementi, rispec-
 chierebbe un’anima integra e armoniosa” (a whole anatomical ma-
 chine, on the other hand, perfectly connected in its elements, would
 reflect an intact and harmonious soul) (Randi 2018, 58). This idea con-
 firms the conception of an organic and effective body in its entire-
 ty. A body that once it has been “shaped, disciplined, honoured, and
 in time, trusted” (Graham 1991, 4), moves in outer space to express
 what lies within. According to Graham, “The spine is your body’s tree
 of life” (8) and the movement that propagates in space is consequent
 to the perpetual motion of inhalation and exhalation, translated into
 dance in the ‘contraction-release’ technique, in which a widening and
 involvement of the entire body in the act of breathing takes place. Ac-
 cording to this model of the space of the body, the spatial map sees a
 set of well-organised organs that give rise to a movement that starts
 from the centre, identified as the propulsive core, and propagates to
 the extremities (i.e., arms, legs and head), then projecting into objec-
 tive space. This bodily unity produces a symbolic space that is made
 possible by a “Movement [that] never lies” (Graham 1991, 4). In the
 words of Graham,

It is the magic of what I call the outer space of the imagination. There is a great deal of outer space, distant from our daily lives, where I feel our imagination wanders sometimes. (1991, 8)

This new space of the body of modern dance was systematically theorised by the German naturalised Hungarian Rudolf von Laban. His research goes towards a free movement, which is a personal expression of the individual and is accompanied by a mathematical and geometric will to investigate the dynamics of the body in space. Free dance does not mean spontaneous dance, on the contrary, it means liberation from all physical conditioning and pre-established technique. Once again, the effort therefore is that of a 'de-civilisation' of man, that is, 'de-colonisation' following our thesis that sees the advancement of Western civilisation coinciding with coloniality. Again, by this term I do not mean territorial colonialism, but coloniality of knowledge and imaginaries. Laban spatial research departs from the spatial scheme of classical dance in that he replaces "a static theory dealing with states of bodily carriage and positions" with "a dynamic theory of form which will deal with the process of movement and dance" (Maletic 1987, 59). The choreographer introduces the concept of 'kinesphere' - drawing inspiration from the Greek *kinesis* 'movement', and *sphaira* 'sphere' - to indicate the space around the body within reach of the dancer and the rotational movement of arms and legs at maximum amplitude. This space is distinct from the infinite space and is the extension of the space of the body. Laban writes:

The human body is completely oriented towards itself. It stands free in space. Its only resource, if we can call it that, is its environment, the spatial sphere which surrounds it, and into which it can reach with its limbs. (quoted in Maletic 1987, 59)

Despite his desire to deviate from classical technique, in his paper *Choreographie* he takes the six feet positions of academic dance as a starting point, bringing as a difference the fact that "they are spatial directions towards which the legs move, and to which the upper body makes an obvious counter-movement" (Maletic 1987, 59) and not "only referred to the placement of the feet" (59). Furthermore, instead of merely considering the three directions of the Cartesian axes, he determines the directions according to the angle of deviation from the vertical. To the six positions of the feet, Laban adds as many opposing positions of the arms. This creates a system of twelve spatial situations. The three axes of classical dance become with Laban three planes - vertical, horizontal, sagittal -, which in turn give rise to six dimensional directions - up, down, right, left, front, back. From the union of these points, several geometric figures arise that delimit the kinesphere: the figure of the octahedron

given by the union of points, the cube that derives from the tracing of diagonals and the icosahedron given by the intersection of planes and the connection of angles. In the elaboration of this spatial orientation, Laban completely abandoned the traditional one-directionality and two-dimensionality of classical ballet to approach a dynamic theory of the body in its three-dimensional movement in space. In line with this theory, the icosahedron is the “rappresentazione plastica di tutte le sequenze armoniche” (plastic representation of all harmonic sequences) (Pontremoli 2004, 72) and it is from the different combinations of spatial orientations that dance is born, made up of geometric figures that respond to a law of correspondence between straight line and immobility, curved line and instability, etc. To this study of movement body Laban gives the name ‘Choreutics’ or ‘space harmony’. The spatial directions “always going through the centre of gravity of the body” (Maletic 1987, 82) and aim at maintaining a certain symmetry, while always serving an expressive purpose and not movement as an end in itself. To summarise, with the transition from classical to modern dance there was a shift from the two-dimensional to the three-dimensional and from a body separated from the soul and placed second to it to a unity of body and mind that makes the body a functional, complete and efficient organism. The result of this bodily organisation is an objective space animated by constant movement choreographed in precise steps and directions, though no longer the result of a unique codification, but the expression of an interiority that presents itself to the world through dance. In *Exhausting Dance*, André Lepecki points out how the dance/movement paradigm that was established as the norm with the advent of modernity/coloniality, becomes even more entrenched with modern dance. At the beginning of the twentieth century, therefore, if on the one hand the space of the body welcomes the soul within it and opens to different expressive possibilities, liberating gender roles from pre-established and stereotyped models, on the other hand it is confirmed “that the ground of modernity is the colonised, flattened, bulldozed terrain where the fantasy of endless and self-sufficient motility takes place” (Lepecki 2006, 13). Confirming this, the famous dance critic John Martin stated during his lectures at the New School in New York City in 1933 that only with modern dance did dance discover its true essence “which it found to be movement” (quoted in Lepecki 2006, 4). Classical dance was in fact too bound to the plot, whereas dance must be pure movement, only then does it acquire autonomy as art. Modern dance thus is as another step in the modernity/coloniality project “where the privileged subject of discourse is always [...] experiencing its truth as (and within) a ceaseless drive for autonomous, self-motivated, endless, spectacular movement” (13).

4 Against Efficiency, Against Capitalism

To find a critique of this model of efficiency and progress we must wait a few decades. During these decades, the capitalist regime, which, as we have mentioned, took hold as a new economic model hand in hand with colonial conquests, evolved into its contemporary “financierizada, neoliberal y globalitaria” (financialised, neoliberal and globalitarian) (Rolnik 2019, 25) version between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (the period in which we saw the birth of modern dance) and intensified after the First World War, when capital became internationalised. Towards the middle of the twentieth century, the capitalist aspect of modernity/coloniality begins to be explicitly targeted and rethinking the space of the body is the pivotal point for getting rid of it. In 1947, the French theatre writer Antonine Artaud complained about the fiercely efficient organic body, considering it the slave body of the prevailing capitalism in the Western world, and proposed the Body Without Organs as an alternative. This provocation would later be taken up by the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and further applied to Dance Studies by José Gil in the article we mentioned at the beginning: “Paradoxical Body”. In “To End God’s Judgement”, Artaud (1965) rebels against the body map as an organisation of organs. This condition, in his view, makes us victims of God’s judgement, by which I mean God who has the Power, making us slaves to a predetermined system in which we are but cogs in the capitalist machine, just as every organ is but a cog in the bodily machine. According to Artaud (1965, 76), “there is nothing more useless than an organ”, indeed,

Man is sick because he is badly made | We must decide to lay him bare so we can | scratch this insect for him, which itches him to death | god | and with god | his organs. (76)

Deleuze and Guattari developed the Artaudian idea by posing the theoretical foundations for overcoming the conditioning of the body and offer an alternative to the space of the body that initiates a decapitalisation, or decolonisation, of the corporeal conception of the dancer. In hindsight, it is not the individual organs that are useless but the organism; it is precisely the organisation of the organs that is subject to the judgement of God (or of those who hold Power) since God is the one who makes “un’organizzazione di organi che si chiama organismo, perché non può sopportare il CsO” (an organisation of organs called an organism, because it cannot bear the BWO) (Deleuze, Guattari [1980] 2017, 238). And God cannot endure the Body Without Organs because He would be confronted with a disjointed and formless body that lives a life of its own driven by God’s enemy: desire. The Body Without Organs is the field of immanence of desire, “là dove il desiderio si definisce come processo di produzione, sen-

za referenza a nessuna istanza esterna, mancanza che verrebbe a scavarlo, piacere che verrebbe a colmarlo” (where desire defines itself as a process of production, without reference to any external instance, lack that would come to excavate it, pleasure that would come to fill it) (232). Desire itself must escape the negative judgement that God attributes to it, on the one hand connoting it as something that is generated in the presence of a lack and on the other condemning the pleasure that should satisfy it. But the aim of desire cannot be the attainment of pleasure because this would lead to its exhaustion, or at least, to its interruption; desire must make itself unattainable through the coincidence of subject and object: desire desires other desire. It is not born to fill a lack but comes to life from the Body Without Organs and, in the words of José Gil,

[desire] augments itself by assembling. To create new connections between heterogeneous materials, new bonds, other passageways for energy; to connect, to put in contact, to symbiose, to make something pass, to create machines, mechanisms, articulations - this is what it means to assemble. (2006, 29)

To assemble, therefore, and to desire connections that are always different, never finished and never the same, to continuously create mechanisms that allow connections: this is the investigation from which symbolic space is generated, which is populated with multiple actions and as many vanishing points. The symbolic space coincides with the ‘plane of consistency’ of desire - a word that in Deleuze and Guattari contains a double meaning, in addition to being a geometric figure it is also the noun of planning in the sense of ‘drawing a plan, a map’ - in which the Body Without Organs undoes all those layers that enchain it in the correspondence between “significante e significato, tra interprete e interpretato” (signifier and signified, between interpreter and interpreted) (Deleuze, Guattari [1980] 2003, 239) and “si rivela per quello che è, connessione di desideri, congiunzione di flussi, continuum di intensità” (reveals itself for what it is, connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensity) (241). The result: a dance made of “materia intensa e non formata” (intense, unformed matter) (231) that is the energy generated by desire, a space for experimentation and not for interpretation. But what is a body if it is not a collection of organs? Perhaps, a paradox. According to José Gil, the dancer’s body is paradoxical, its first dimension is depth, and it is devoid of internal limits; the body is paradoxical because it becomes space and “the movements of the space of the body do not stop at the frontier of the body itself, but they imply the body in its entirety” (Gil 2006, 26). The paradoxical body of the dancer is always open and cannot but be so since there is no boundary between inside and outside, the internal space spills outwards revealing what is the space of the

body. The symbolic space is devoid of logic and narrative, it is ambivalent and hosts a multiplicity of contemporary actions without hierarchy. The Body Without Organs dances a “dance backwards again [...] | and that reversal will be his proper place” (Artaud 1965, 76) because, as Artaud says (76), only “when you have given him a body without organs | then you will have freed him from all his automatisms | and returned him to his true freedom”. Freedom is substituted for the efficiency willed by God’s judgement: no norms, no rules, no footholds of known meaning. No choreography understood as a system of codified steps. We are therefore faced with an objective space populated with several disorganised points of view, and perspective univocity gives way to the multiplicity arising from the chaos of desire. ‘Desire’ therefore becomes a key and problematic word: are our bodies able to truly desire autonomously from the colonial conditioning imposed for centuries by Western capitalism? What does a decolonial body desire? The answer is given to us by psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik, who urges the arts, and thus also dance, to search for our body knowledge that she calls the knowing-body. We have seen so far how dominant politics have influenced throughout history – and continue to do so in the present – macro and microscopically in the construction of standardised corporality organised according to an insurmountable hierarchical order. This conditioning that is as invisible as it is dangerous and long-lasting is defined by Rolnik as “the unconscious repression of the knowing-body” and reduces subjectivity to a subject that the philosopher calls a ‘zombie’.³ Zombie subjects are normalised and blinded by a shiny world that someone has prepared for them, a world that catalyses their desire without ever letting them cross the threshold. Zombie subjects are not masters of their own desire because they are victims of cultural capitalism. From the 1960s onwards, the capitalist regime in fact expanded to invade the cultural sphere as well, this means that

es de la propia vida que el capital se apropia; más precisamente, de su potencia de creación y transformación en la emergencia misma de su impulso [...]. La fuerza vital de creación y de cooperación es así canalizada por el régimen para construir un mundo acorde con sus designios. (Rolnik 2019, 28)

it is life itself that capital appropriates; more precisely, its power of creation and transformation in the very emergence of its impulse [...]. The vital force of creation and cooperation is thus channelled by the regime to build a world in accordance with its designs.

3 Videoconference “Suely Rolnik: The Return of the *Knowing Body*”. Hemispheric Institute, São Paulo. <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/enc13-keynote-lectures/item/2085-enc13-%20keynote-rolnik.html>.

And this world operates as:

Una religión monoteísta cuyo escenario es básicamente el mismo de todas las religiones de esta tradición: existe un Dios todopoderoso que promete el paraíso, con la diferencia de que el capital está en la función de Dios y el paraíso que promete está en esta vida y no más allá de ella. Los seres glamorosos de los mundos de la propaganda y del entretenimiento cultural de masas, con su garantido glamour, son los santos de un panteón comercial: ‘superestrellas’ que brillan en el cielo-imagen por encima de las cabezas de cada uno, anunciando la posibilidad de unirse a ellos. (Rolnik 2005, 9)

A monotheistic religion whose scenario is basically the same as that of all religions in this tradition: there is an all-powerful God who promises paradise, with the difference that capital is in God’s role and the paradise it promises is in this life and not beyond it. The glamorous beings of the worlds of propaganda and mass cultural entertainment, with their guaranteed glamour, are the saints of a commercial pantheon: ‘superstars’ shining in the sky-image above everyone’s heads, announcing the possibility of joining them.

With this scenario in mind, it is clear that it is not enough to reject the body as it is imposed on us by Power, but we must also free ourselves from induced desire in order to be able to reorganise the body according to our real and pure, deconditioned bodily knowledge.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, to decolonise its interior space and the way it acts in the world, body needs to delink from all socio-cultural imposition by disposing of the efficient organism. To be effective in making itself a Body Without Organs, it must become master of its own desire and to do this it must return to the knowing-body. Dance, as the art of the body, is the right terrain in which to search. Or better said, dance cannot elude this responsibility. Seeking “the bodily power to listen to the diagram of the forces of the present”⁴ is the only way to transform and increase our powers of existence through differentiation. Differentiation instead of normalisation: if capitalist colonial power wants us to be normative beings, returning to unconditional

⁴ Videoconference “Suely Rolnik: The Return of the *Knowing Body*”. Hemispheric Institute, São Paulo. <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/enc13-keynote-lectures/item/2085-enc13-%20keynote-rolnik.html>.

bodily knowledge necessarily leads to diversity. Every body has its own space, always different. And this is the space of the decolonial body: disorganised, undisciplined, but above all desiring. There is no longer any paradigm and no recognisable technique; dance does not mean movement; immobility is accepted as mere presence. Symbolic space is no longer the space in which the dancer conveys a message to the spectator but is an anti-narrative and fragmentary space that requires the desire to be present on the part of each spectator overcoming the division of roles between artist (active) and audience (passive).

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Andrea Nalesso

Performance Installation as a Haunted Landscape

Irena Kukrić

University of Arts Bremen, Germany

Abstract As humans today so often relate to people who are not physically present and to media governed by code, this essay proposes that in a performance without humans acting, the audience might find more sensory connection than with the human actor at the centre of it. Looking into what is left once the human actor is not present, this study will focus on the notion of hauntology and landscape and how the two might be entangled. It explores how past, present, and future come together in the space of a performance, as well as the notion of landscape as a model to organise our thoughts and performance setting. These notions are difficult to grasp. Perhaps only through practice, can we rehearse and come to further understanding.

Keywords Presence. Absence. Hauntology. Landscape. Non-human. Technology. Performance installation.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Hauntology. – 3 Actor. – 4 Performance. – 5 Landscape. – 6 Conclusions.

1 Introduction

Beginning with the title of this essay, several questions come to mind: what does it mean for an installation to perform, or to perform at all? How is performance connected to a landscape and what is more a haunted one? Who or what is haunting it?

The starting point of this essay is the relation between the notion of 'performance installation' and Derrida's concept of hauntology.¹ Hauntology explores the return of the elements from the past, in the manner of a ghost as well as the lingering of certain aspects of the future. Hauntology looks at the space between presence and absence, suggesting that the two can take place simultaneously. What I consider in this essay is the absence of human actor and what takes its place within a performance. Searching for a framework to situate the post-human performance, I explore the notion of landscape.

Landscape, as opposed to idyllic scenery, can be thought of as a template for the critical imagination and organisation of our thoughts and creative processes as well as elements in space. Landscape, in the context of contemporary theatre and performance, is here explored in the writing of Elinor Fuchs and Ana Vujanović, and dates back to Gertrude Stein's 'landscape plays'. It has to do with the 'spacing out' of spatial as well as discursive elements.

Throughout the article, I propose a connection between the notion of hauntology and looking at a performance space as a landscape. The indeterminate nature of the terms makes it more convenient to approach and entangle the two. This uncertainty embedded in them relates as well to the socio-political conditions of the twenty-first century. In this sense, this essay might not be reaching a definite conclusion, but a possible way to navigate our being in the world through theoretical terms, as well as through contemporary performance practice.

I coined the term 'performance installation' to refer to a performance of non-humans or a theatrical event where human actors do not perform and are therefore absent. What I reconsider here is the relationship between the absence and presence of the human. While the human body is not performing there is a co-presence, or rather a sensual encounter, that is created in the performance of non-humans and the audience and it has to do with traces. To look beyond, what is for the most part considered the dualism of presence and absence, terms such as hauntology, actors, performance and landscape will be more closely looked at and situated within the framework of this article.

¹ The term hauntology is coined by Jacques Derrida in his book *Spectres of Marx* (Derrida 1993) and refers to how the communist ideology continued to haunt Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Throughout the text the reader will encounter short descriptions of the ‘performance installation’ I worked on, *How To Walk On Water*, performed in November 2021. The terms explored through different chapters are not as separated as the paragraphs of text would indicate.

Time: 0-5 min. The audience enters and takes a seat.

The audience gathers around this landscape that slowly transforms throughout the performance. At first, the folded textile on the ground appears as something they can oversee and grasp.



Figure 1 Scene from the performance installation *How To Walk On Water*. First premiered at Schwankhalle, Bremen, 2021. Photo Farzad Golghasemi

2 Hauntology

‘Hauntology’ is a play on the word ontology, the study of being and presence. Hauntology considers the present absences, that which is *not yet* and *no longer*. Relying on Heidegger’s ‘metaphysics of presence’,² Derrida reconsiders the temporal relevance of *being*:

A spectral moment, a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalised presents

2 The concept of metaphysics of presence is related to the history of Western thought and philosophy and encompasses all western metaphysics, which Heidegger looks to overcome. It is an important concept in Derrida’s deconstruction, where presence is seen always in relation to the absence and *différance*.

(past present, actual present: 'now', future present). We are questioning in this instant, we are asking ourselves about this instant that is not docile to time, at least to what we call time. (Derrida 1994, xix)

In line with Derrida's view on deconstruction, any linguistic term gains meaning from its *différent*,³ from the other, rather than according to its positive qualities. 'Present' then 'becomes' always related to that which is not present, whether finding its origins in the past or the future. The future, I consider concerning certain wishes, fantasies, or the impossibility of imagining the future, what is in more recent writings (Fisher, Berardi, Campagna) known as 'lost futures',⁴ referring to the imagined futures that never came to be.

Looking at the disappearance of communist ideology, Derrida's view is not necessarily about a nostalgic reflection on the past but could be seen as the failure to give up the loss. In this return of the things past, a certain attempt "to ontologize remains" (1994, 9) happens. Derrida's view is concerned with 'actual events' with a temporal and ontological disjunction. In some ways, one could suggest that hauntology can give validity to things absent and past. In his view, the formal failure of the communist ideology, with the dismantling of the Soviet Union, can result in Marxist ideas being even more prevalent, as they go on to 'haunt' the societies of the future.

Turning to other than Derrida's possible usage of the term, Mark Fisher, a British writer and philosopher, wrote about hauntology in the age of late capitalism. Avoiding the relation to the supernatural, Fisher points out: "hauntology is rather about the agency of the virtual, that which acts without physically existing" (2014, 18). As capitalism spread on a global scale, so did the media and post-media technologies that came with it. If we see hauntology as the agency of the virtual, it could be understood as the ongoing condition of being in the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As Fisher writes:

In this sense hauntology was by no means something rarefied; it was endemic in the time of techno-tele-discursivity, techno-tele- iconicity, simulacra and synthetic image. (2014, 18)

³ Here used in French *différent* meaning 'different' relates to the term coined by Derrida: *différance*. It is a deliberate misspelling of *différence*, though the two are pronounced identically (*différance* plays on the fact that the French word *différer* means both 'to defer' and 'to differ') referring to the temporal as well as semantic notion of the term.

⁴ In his book *After The Future*, Franco 'Bifo' Berardi refers to slow cancellation of future: "I am not referring to the direction of time. I am thinking, rather, of the psychological perception, which emerged in the cultural situation of progressive modernity, the cultural expectations that were fabricated during the long period of modern civilisation, reaching a peak after the Second World War" (Berardi 2011, 18-19).

In the post-Internet world, once the Internet became a given, hauntology could gain its full effect. The virtual or that which is not physically apparent should as well be considered in a broader context than the one usually implied today (media and post-media technologies, etc.). It can, among many meanings, refer to the forces that govern global capitalism, that are not fully available to our sensory apprehension.

As I introduce more the term and how it is relevant in the socio-political context, I would further turn to how it is reflected within a 'performance installation'. On one side, I propose the relation explored above that I would refer to as the more broad socio-political context and, on the other, the inner workings of the artistic practise in question. The two are connected as any performance form throughout history has always been, in one way or another, a reflection of the moment it was created in.

Within my artistic practise, media such as mechanical elements and software are animating the physical objects, recorded voices can be heard and light is usually considered. These elements attempt to evoke the familiar within the experience of the audience. Like Derrida's 'traces' they are lingering moments from another point in time, creating a pathway to what is experienced in the 'now'.

As technology gains more agency in our daily being in the world, the perspective of the audience in performance could be shifting and evolving as well. In his dissertation on 'theatre without actors', the Portuguese theatre maker, Pedro Manuel writes how the human and technology become entangled and are seen less in their opposition. According to Manuel:

The ontology of disappearance bears the mark of a hauntological relation between the perception of presence and physical disappearance, or between the human body and technological media, which are not seen as separate entities but rather simultaneous occurrences. (2017, 176)

As humans today so often relate to people who are not physically present, as well as to media governed by code (games, VR, different online platforms and social networks), I propose that in performance without humans acting, the audience might find more sensory connection than with the human actor delivering the performance, as usually suggested by the institutional theatre. Thinking of performance without actors as a space to rehearse hauntology would lead to the articulation of the notion of presence and appearing, absence and disappearing as well as traces and spectrality in the context of human and non-human actors such as technology and objects. But who is performing once the human actor is not there?

Time: 2m 56s. Curtain 1 opens followed by curtains 2, 3 and 4

As the curtains of the central space open, they create the notion of intimacy, opening the central space of the installation and revealing the other members of the audience sitting across the room. As the performance goes on, the textile is rolled up from its centre, creating different images and pauses in the ‘virtual walk’. As the voice takes the audience to different places, the set is centralised and slowly moving.



Figure 2 Scene from the performance-installation *How To Walk On Water*. First premiered at Schwankhalle, Bremen, 2021. Photo Farzad Golghasemi

3 Actor

What does the word ‘actor’ mean in non-human performance? What agency is left in the space of a performance, once the human actor is removed? When thinking of the non-human, post-human and object-oriented theories,⁵ I would like to turn to the French philosopher Bruno Latour’s ‘actor-network theory’. Latour writes that an actor exists always in relation to the other actors within a network. Something or someone doesn’t come to act or doesn’t gain agency unless they are connected to the other in the network. Describing these connections Latour writes:

⁵ Many theories that gather under the term ‘New Materialism’ have in common a theoretical and practical ‘turn to matter’, emphasising the discursive nature of ‘matter’, as opposed to, for example, text.

Action should rather be felt as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled. (2005, 44)

In these relations, according to Latour, it is not relevant if we talk about human or non-human actors. As opposed to most of the theater scholars today, who see the relation of the human actor and spectator as the only condition of co-presence and a precondition for this ontological notion of performance to be achieved (Lichte,⁶ Brook), looking to hauntology and ‘actor-network-theory’, we can see that there is another way of thinking of agency of the non-human. The prevailing opinion is that the agency only belongs to humans in the performance, whether they are controlling the lights or giving a performance, the props, costumes, software and any other non-living element has no agency whatsoever. The humans animate the otherwise inanimate objects, not the other way around. But, as Rebecca Schneider writes in “New Materialism and Performance”:

The “other way around” perspective is at least in part what the New materialist thinkers are reevaluating, and this “turn” may become less uncommon”, thinking rather about “how things initiate and choreograph behavior. (Schneider 2015, 10)

Hans-Thies Lehmann, in his *Postdramatic Theater*, indicates glimpses of this notion, yet it is still, for the most part, an alternative understanding of what performing non-humans could mean:

What we encounter is an obvious presence but it is of a different kind than the presence of a picture, a sound a piece of architecture. It is objectively – even if not intentionally – a co-presence referring to ourselves. Hence it is no longer clear whether the presence is given to us or whether we, the spectators produce it in the first place. (Lehmann 1999, 142)

Here, we can once again consider the ‘trace’ and the agency that is enacted through the relation of a trace within our experience, and so within the space of performance. If we think of the past as an ongoing occurrence that unfolds through its traces within the present moment, a trace is always embedded in whatever materialisation of what was, is or is to come.

⁶ Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008, 50) states that the event of a theatrical performance cannot take place without a human delivering a performance and argues that a specific autopoietic feedback loop is created through the relation of the actor and the audience.

Theatre director Peter Brook writes in his *The Empty Space* (Brook 1968, 7) that if a human crosses an empty space while another person is watching them, this is what it takes for an act of theatre to appear. But what if no human crosses the empty stage? What if something else happens while someone is watching? What or who is present then? In the space that opens up once the focus from the human actor shifts to something else on stage,⁷ I argue that we find something between presence and absence, between the void of the human actor and what fills that void. Let us start with the possibility of an appearance on the stage. Once the human actor is present, there is a meaning attached to this appearance before the person utters even a word. If we take a step back, if the person never enters the stage, if only a light turns on, what is present then? Heiner Goebbels, the theatre director and composer, mentions how during the rehearsal of one of his productions, once the actor left the stage, the stage designer commented how lovely it looked when he left. As hard as it was for the human actor to hear this, for Goebbels, it opened a new perspective: if there are no actors on stage, the attention of the audience can be distributed across different things (cf. Goebbels 2015, 1).

Through these “different things”, the non-human elements, there is a space that is left for ‘other’ meanings to emerge. The agency that the non-human actor gains in performance is in many ways related to the traces of human experience (the experience of the audience members). What the audience sees in a movement of satin or a rotating chair is always related to their own past experiences with these objects, as well as my own as the creator of the piece. In Derrida’s view of hauntology, something or someone has gone in the form it was but is left lingering and taken on a different or modified meaning according to the different context in time. In this sense, the trace is different from its original (whether the human that was there or the physically present non-human element) as well as differed, or postponed, in that the trace relates to an event that happened at another point in time. “In order to access the present as such there must be an experience of the trace, perhaps something other than Being”.⁸ This “other than Being” can be thought of as a spectre, a spectre of the past appearing in the present, entangled with the present. Whether I think of the meaning that might emerge from the moving satin textile or the rotating chair, I start always with an experience of a trace. In the experiment with the material and its relation to light, sound

⁷ Stage here is used in reference to theatre, but as the ‘performance installation’ is situated between theatre, performance and art installation, it can refer to performance space in general.

⁸ Video interview on YouTube: “Derrida: What Comes Before The Question?” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2bPTs8fspk>).

and movement, I try to translate these traces of my own being in the world, depending on the context of the work. In turn, once exposed to the audience, they take on yet another interpretation and signification and so the act of the performance appears.

Time: 8min 29s

The voice guides the audience toward a park. The textile moves up and down slowly as if it is breathing. It grows, creating a hill greater and greater, blocking the view to other members of the audience, until it is rolled up completely, by which time the audience is (with the movement of the textile, meditative sound and light setting) immersed. The individual is guided by the thread that is pulling the textile.



Figure 3 Scene from the performance installation *How To Walk On Water*. First premiered at Schwankhalle, Bremen, 2021. Photo Farzad Golghasemi

4 Performance

In theatre, the term performance is, as mentioned before, usually considered in terms of a human actor delivering a performance or in performance art, a human artist performing. In media theory, within the umbrella of New Materialism, different scholars write about performance and performativity that relate to performing matter, thereby challenging ontological dualism. Moving away from language as the primary means of meaning-making, matter is seen not only as agential but discursive as well. Karen Barad's view on performativity as the post-humanist process of knowledge production is particularly of interest here. From this post-human perspective, Barad's appropriation of the term 'performativity' has to do with agency seen

as enactment, ‘intra-action’⁹ and entanglement, rather than representation. Barad writes:

It is possible to develop coherent philosophical positions that deny that there are representations on the one hand and ontologically separate entities awaiting representation on the other. A performative understanding, which shifts the focus from linguistic representations to discursive practices, is one such alternative. (2003, 826-7)

In Barad’s agential realism, agency is not attributed and does not belong to any subject or object. It is ‘doing’ / ‘being’ in its intra-activity, in its becoming. As I suggested in the section above, considering who or what has the agency on stage, there is the usual perspective of humans giving agency to the props and costumes, or the other way around, where it can be argued that a costume gives the agency to the actor or scenography to the director. I would propose a third way, where there is a mutual enacting happening in the process, where the human and non-humans intra-act in a way that is by the end of the process indistinguishable in terms of agency, as it is not a given attribute but is created through the relations, as Barad writes.

Thinking of Barad’s ideas within my practice I try to reflect on the process of working on *How To Walk On Water*. The shifting focus between the movement of the materials, light changes, language and sound left the audience members meandering through their thoughts. The starting point of the process was a scene¹⁰ called “How to Take a Walk?”. The text proceeds to guide the reader or the audience through the virtual landscapes of Google Earth images, “collected for all of us to see”. Towards the end of this scene, the audience is guided to the ocean: “What now? How to walk on water?” alluding to the inability to move further within the digital image.

I decided to approach the text with an apparent destination in mind, and many detours on the way. The voice narrating the text would be an amalgam of the person navigating the Internet and the computer-generated personality. The protagonist here is a hybrid between the audience member, the sound guiding them and the scenography entangled in the feedback creating associations and relations.

⁹ Intra-action is a term coined by Barad and “is used to replace ‘interaction’, which necessitates pre-established bodies that then participate in action with each other. Intra-action understands agency as not an inherent property of an individual or human to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces (Barad 2007, 141) in which all designated ‘things’ are constantly exchanging and diffracting, influencing and working inseparably” (<https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/i/intra-action.html>).

¹⁰ From the play by Iva Brdar, *Tomorrow is (for now) always here*. It is about a woman communicating on the Internet asking WikiHow various how-to questions, reflecting on our digital memories and intimacy within our online lives.

Only through the relation of these elements the ‘performance installation’ appears and meaning is created. The meaning is then dependent more on the relation of the performing things, the materiality of those things and the experience of the audience, rather than solely on the language as a signifier. As Barad writes:

Performativity is properly understood as a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve. (Barad 2007, 133)

Barad’s ‘performativity’ I consider on one hand acknowledging matter (as opposed to language) as discursive and therefore performative and on the other, through the entanglement of the elements that are performing. But how are these elements positioned in a space of performance and how do the relations between them emerge? How could the audience navigate this post-human performance? I further move to the notion of landscape as a framework for rehearsing and positioning a performance without humans in a spatial and semantic sense.

Time: 20min 10s. All the sculptures rotate.

The objects or sculptures that are left spinning to the emotional musical number at the end as the lights are more dimmed, resemble islands or artefacts of our analogue lives, as mere deformed fragments.



Figure 4 Scene from the performance installation *How To Walk On Water*.
First premiered at Schwankhalle, Bremen, 2021.
Photo Farzad Golghasemi

5 Landscape

The post-human perspective on performance can be traced back to the post-dramatic ideas of Gertrude Stein and her landscape plays. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Stein wrote and spoke about creating performances based on landscapes rather than linear texts:

I felt that if a play was exactly like a landscape then there would be no difficulty about the emotion of the person looking on at the play being behind or ahead of the play because the landscape does not have to make acquaintance. You may have to make acquaintance with it, but it does not with you, it is there. (Stein [1934] 1985, 122-5)

Landscape plays oppose the usual hierarchy in theatre, removing the central human character, as well as the idea of a linear narrative. Instead, looking at a theatre play as a landscape would mean looking at all elements on stage as elements of a landscape, related to each other. Stein was more focused on text and its materiality. In her long, sometimes barely readable texts, the reader can end up in the liminal space of meaning and non-meaning.

As theatre in the early twentieth century began to manifest a new spatial dimension, both visually and dramaturgical, landscape could for the first time be understood not only as a mere background and setting in theatre. It stood apart as a character and became a figure on its own (Fuchs, Chaudhuri 2002, 3). Later on, it is perhaps even more present in films, where the landscape is truly the main character such as in Tarkovsky's *Solaris* or *Stalker*. In contemporary theatre, we can see clear shifts in the plays such as *Schtifter's Dinge* by Heiner Goebbels, where he works with animated pianos, projections and dry ice, or Romeo Castellucci's *Riot of Spring*, a choreography for bone dust, and Susanne Kennedy's plays where, while still having the actors present on stage, the landscape in both visual and dramaturgical manner is emphasised.

Departing from Derrida's concept of hauntology, I propose that the notion of deconstructing the metaphysics of presence is related to viewing the performance space as a landscape. As Derrida looks beyond the presence-absence dualism, Gertrude Stein rethinks the hierarchical established model of dramaturgy in theatre plays. As Derrida thinks of the end of philosophy, Stein suggests the end of a linear narrative.

If I think, once again, of hauntology as the agency of the virtual, two directions of thought come to mind in the context of this essay. One is the virtual landscape of the techno-mediated society and the other is the virtual landscape of the performance space. What is connecting the two is the presence of something in virtuality even

though it is not there in actuality (Fisher 2014, 19). Could it be that within these techno-mediated conditions, the concept of hauntology and landscape are entangled?

Ana Vujanović, researcher, writer and dramaturg, writes in her text on landscape dramaturgy, Stein's ideas had to do more with textual spacing out of imaginary situations than what we might call 'a natural landscape':

'Landscape', as a concept to describe the new theatre, indicates a 'spacing out' that involves both actual spaces and scenography, as well as the symbolic spaces opened up by discourse. (2018, 3)

Stein's ideas related to other artistic directions of the time, such as cubist painting and avant-garde cinema. They were aligned with the experience and values of the age of industrialisation and the changes effected by it. The artistic movements of the time tended to be quite radical in thought and implementation. In today's late capitalism, Mark Fisher's lost futures' come to mind:

While 20th century experimental culture was seized by a recombinatorial delirium, which made it feel as if newness was infinitely available, the 21st century is oppressed by a crushing sense of finitude and exhaustion. (2013, 8)

The anticipation of what is to come or the lack thereof is reflected in creative processes and artistic works that arise in such a state. In the context of today's media driven, social-networked society, landscape dramaturgy has to do with the notion of perspective. As opposed to the one central point of view (still present since its first use by Brunelleschi in the Renaissance), in a spatial but also semantic sense, landscape dramaturgy is grounded in rethinking the position of human agency on the world. The one central point perspective was seemingly representing the 'realistic' image of the world, keeping the spectator firmly outside of the frame, looking onto it. Today, there is a certain distrust in the present organisation of the world and our position in it. Landscape can be seen as a model for rethinking this position. Here, it is more about the calm, almost melancholic attempt at creating a performance, as Vujanović writes:

Creating a performance as a semantically undetermined landscape of various things in which the only way to situate ourselves is to become one of the components (2019, 9)

It is about meandering through and getting lost in a space of fluid belief systems, searching for something to hold onto without solid ground to stand on.

While thinking of the material I would use in *How To Walk On Water*, I was looking for a material that would capture the experience of 'being online', navigating a space without a clear orientation and perspective, going further and then back, opening tabs in the browser, reading one text halfway, which reminded me of another video or song, forgetting where I am going. Searching for a non-digital medium, I found a textile such as satin, a volatile material that can be at once a large landscape-looking shape and at another point can fold into a cloud. As opposed to the measurable and observable space we inhabit, such as the room we are in, the malleable satin, changes as it moves, folds as the text leads the audience through its crevices, it scrolls on and on and on. We are guided by it, as it disappears in front of us, as many perspectives merge into one point.

Time: 28min 9s. The initial 'landscape' made of satin textile is now completely rolled up and removed from the floor. The curtains close, ending the gaze of the audience and isolating the central sculpture of the laptop alone in the room once again.



Figure 5 Scene from the performance installation *How To Walk On Water*. First premiered at Schwankhalle, Bremen, 2021. Photo Farzad Golghasemi

6 Conclusions

There is a virtual landscape that humans create through their behaviour and relations that extends beyond the Internet. If I think of virtuality as a condition of being in the world in the post-Internet era, this landscape we create, along with other humans and software, does not belong here or there. It has no border or 'actual' (physical) land. Rehearsing this virtuality in a performance without human actors would resemble navigating a haunted landscape. We can think of a performance installation perhaps as a performance of spectres, a haunted landscape as a space where we come to rehearse our human perception of reality, one that is haunted by our spectres and the connections we make with the spectres of others along the way.

Reflecting on the terms explored in this essay, various connections between them are relevant in the creation of this haunted landscape. From the traces and spectres of humans, how they relate to an audience and how they may be translated through non-humans (actors), through an entanglement of different theatrical elements and what is created through their relations for a performance installation to take place (performance), to the relation between hauntology and landscape dramaturgy (landscape).

Landscape as a term escapes measurement and concrete definition, but can at the same time be revealing about our human relations to the world. As a 'frame' to look through, it has often been considered 'a way of seeing' and can as such be a resourceful model for an artistic research in both critical and creative sense. Same can be said for the concept of hauntology.¹¹ As artists, especially within a time-based performance, navigate between facts and fiction, the presence and absence, appearance and disappearance, actuality and in-actuality, we get closer to the very essential question of opposition between "life and non-life". Thinking beyond these oppositions is thinking of "the possibility of the spectre or about the spectre as a possibility" (Derrida 1994, 13).

As landscape and hauntology both tend to be ambiguous, they are as such generative terms that can be related to ongoing meaning making (and breaking). Therefore they are valuable to think of as concepts related to process, that can be further explored through the artistic practise, as the post-human performance can perhaps only be grasped through practice itself. Once the audience gathers together to reflect on what we usually experience alone in our rooms, the ritual of performance might help us navigate the virtual landscape we live in.

11 Hauntology relates to the unknowable and, within scientific research, this could be problematic as the "traditional scholar does not believe in ghosts - nor in all that could be called the virtual space of spectrality" (Derrida 1994, 12). In the context of artistic research, however, the concept of hauntology, I see as an enabling one.

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Vital Spaces and Living Spaces in Contemporary Archival Practice

Costantino Vecchi

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract This paper explores the different meanings of 'space' that emerged in the context of the humanities' 'archival turn'. The changing nature of the archival spaces due to the advent of the digital age is analysed. This study also focused on how the different 'spaces' of the archives relate to 'time' and the power of control over information, and reflects on which spaces are 'vital' for an archive in the contemporary world. Eventually, the role of 'outside/living' spaces in critically questioning the archive as a knowledge production system will be traced through the case of the repatriation of sound recordings in ethnomusicology.

Keywords Sound and audiovisual archives. Ethnomusicology. Archival turn. Digital archives. Archival spaces. Musical repatriation.

Summary 1 The Archival Turn. – 2 Space in the Classical Conception of the Archive. – 3 Space in the Contemporary Conception of the Archive. – 4 'Vital Spaces' in Contemporary Archival Practice. – 5 Spaces Inside and Spaces Outside the Archive. – 6 'Living Spaces' in Contemporary Archival Practice: Thoughts Around the Repatriation of Sound and Audio-Visual Musical Recordings Preserved in Western Archives. – 7 Conclusions.

1 The Archival Turn

In recent decades, an 'archival turn' has taken place in the field of humanities. The archive has been subjected to a critical analysis that has led it to transcend its traditional boundaries and be thought of as a philosophical and cultural category. As Stoler noted:



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The 'archive' has been elevated to new theoretical status, with enough cachet to warrant distinct billing, worthy of scrutiny on its own. (2002, 92)

In this process of abstraction and expansion of the concept of 'archive', the famous speculations of Foucault¹ (1969) and Derrida (1995) certainly played a very important role and have become recurring references in scholarly studies.

The main factor that caused this shift in perspective about archives is certainly related to what is perhaps the most radical change of our time, consequent to the development of computer technology, that is the change in the nature of information (what information is, how information is produced and the way it is accessed). A multitude of new issues and opportunities have emerged, and new (theoretical and practical) challenges continue to arise day after day.

This revolution has inevitably had a profound effect on those whose established role is to protect and preserve information, namely the archives. In turn, however, the change in storage processes has had a direct influence on shaping information. As Derrida stated:

The mutation in technology changes not simply the archiving process, but what is archivable - that is, the content of what has to be archived is changed by the technology. (2002, 44-6)

Another undeniable consequence of technological development, and an interesting point for reflection, has been the disproportionate increase in the amount of data produced and stored in our daily life. This has led the domain of archives to expand from the institutional realm to encompass the private sphere much more than in the past.

According to Eliassen (2010, 30), another event that contributed to this explosion of interest in archives after the 1980s has been the opening of the archives of former totalitarian regimes, which prompted questions about the dynamics of power and control of information, and led to archives being seen as increasingly less 'neutral' places.

The archive, therefore, has been transformed from a static and taken for granted concept, into a hot ground through which contemporaneity can be read and defined. Over the past two decades, theoretical reflections on the nature of the archive have also explored the implications of the concept of 'space' within the archive and how

1 Foucault speaks of the archive in different meanings in several writings between the 1960s and the 1990s. An analysis of the use of the term 'archive' and the concepts associated with it in different writings and different periods by the French philosopher can be found in Knut Ove Eliassen's essay (2010).

it contributes to the definition of the archive itself. These considerations involved both the historical and 'traditional' conception of the archive and the new shapes it has taken in the digital age.

The archive also turns out to be a particularly fertile ground from which to investigate how space relates to time. Time as action, as a continuous and inexorable force that sooner or later affects the form and matter of all (living and non-living) things, and time as perception, collective or individual memory, historical narrative, past, present, and future.

2 Space in the Classical Conception of the Archive

The word 'archive' originally referred to a physical space, a building, even before it was used to refer to an organised set of documents. The term is derived from the ancient Greek ἀρχεῖον *archeîon*, via the Latin *archium* / *archivum* / *archivium*, meaning 'palace of the archon', a place where it is thought that the acts issued by the magistrate were kept. Within Western culture, a conception that we might call 'classical' of the archive, based on two main inseparable constituent elements, has developed and settled. Indeed, the term 'archive', until the final decades of the last century, was used mainly to identify both a collection of information (mainly textual and fixed on paper or parchment) and the building in which this body of documents was stored.

Within this traditional conception of the archive, space - understood as physical, architectural space - turns out to be a necessary element for the existence of the archive itself. Concerning this, the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe states:

The archive has neither status nor power without an architectural dimension, which encompasses the physical space of the site of the building, its motifs and columns, the arrangement of the rooms, the organisation of the "files" the labyrinth of corridors, and that degree of discipline, half-light and austerity that gives the place something of the nature of a temple and a cemetery [...]. (2002, 19)

Also, according to Derrida, 'space' is one of the two pivotal elements in defining an archive along with 'control' by an authority (originally the archon in the Greek world):

To be guarded [...], in the jurisdiction of this stating the law, they [the documents] needed at once a guardian and a localization. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence. It is thus, in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place. (Derrida 1995, 10)

These reflections by Derrida and Mbebe, in addition to emphasising the foundational importance of space in defining the archive, highlight the role of space in regulating power dynamics within the archive. The archive space must therefore be circumscribed and have well-defined boundaries through which the authority can exert its control over access to information.

Archive is not a living memory. It's a location - that's why the political power of the archons is so essential in the definition of the archive. (Derrida 2002, 42)

The relationship between archives and power is one of the topics that has been most investigated and subjected to critical analysis in recent years. The archive has long been seen as a neutral place, a guarantor of the rigour and truthfulness of information. These attributes have also been extended to the figure of the archivist. Within Western culture, archives have also long been considered, and to an extent are still considered, as oracles - infallible authorities whose word is not questioned. In the context of knowledge production, especially in relation to history, archival documents are brought in as evidence to support a claim, as a guarantee of its veracity.

Historians are used to questioning the authenticity and correct interpretation of a document, but, until recently, this reflection has rarely gone so far as to question why a specific document was preserved in that archive and passed on to us. Why was this document preserved rather than another one? What documents have been produced throughout history? Which of these have been lost and which have been preserved? How and why did this selection process occur?

Within the archival turn, it was realised that establishing the pool of data/documents contained in the archive (and thus establishing the set of possibilities) is a complex process that involves the exercise of power (establishing what is included and what is excluded, what should be preserved and what should not and, secondly, what information can be accessed and what cannot). That undoubtedly has enormous consequences for the readings of reality and the past that can be delineated from archival records (Schwartz, Cook 2002; Mbebe 2002). Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook wrote about this:

Archives - as records - wield power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies. [...] Taken together, the on-going denial by archivists of their power over memory, the failure to explore the many factors that profoundly affect records before they come to the archives, and the continued assumptions by many users of archives that the records

presented to them are not problematic, represent a prescription for sterility on both sides of the reference room desk.

When power is denied, overlooked, or unchallenged, it is misleading at best and dangerous at worst. Power recognized becomes power that can be questioned, made accountable, and opened to transparent dialogue and enriched understanding. (Schwartz, Cook 2002, 2)

Some authors have pointed out that space, in the framework of the classical notion of the archives, stands not only as an instrument of an authority's control over access to information but also as a means of control (or at least containment) over the inexorable action of time. The primary purpose of archives in addition to mediating access to information is, in fact, to protect records from the effects of time, extracting them from the present to project them into the future.

This occurs through a 'spatialisation' of time. Moments of time are 'frozen', through fixation on a medium that is stored in a given space. This objectification of time is what allows humans to exercise control (however partial) over it. In this way fragments of time become portions of space, as Eivind Røssaak and Wolfgang Ernst pointed out:

Fundamentally, the archival practices that evolved alongside modern state formations transform time into a set of spatial orders. (Røssaak 2010, 12)

Since antiquity and the Renaissance, mnemotechnical storage has linked memory [time] to space. (Ernst 2004, 49)

However, the digital revolution has severely challenged this classical notion of the archive. A conception of the archive inextricably linked to a physical, architectural space such as the one Mbebe (2002, 19) speaks of has disappeared. A definition of an archive that is not uniquely tied to the presence of a building is not only possible but is now the norm in the contemporary world. Although the archive's connection to physical space has not completely disappeared (as will be detailed below), it is undeniable that the paradigm has become considerably more complex and that the 'spatial' variables within the archive have multiplied in number and type.

Therefore, the traditional relationship between space and time in archives has profoundly changed as well.

3 Space in the Contemporary Conception of the Archive

No medium, analogue or digital, is immune to the ravages of time. No carrier is capable of preserving the integrity of the information it contains forever. The only way for information to survive over time is to transfer it from one medium to another. While, however, the transfer from one analogue carrier to another (and from an analogue carrier to a digital one) inevitably involves the degradation of information, only digital-to-digital transfers are, on a theoretical level, lossless. This is one of the most powerful and innovative features of digital technology that opens up a range of once unimaginable theoretical perspectives: digital information, if properly transferred, is potentially immortal and non-perishable.

However, this almost 'divine' power of the digital, in a sort of counterpoise, is limited by a combination of factors. Digital media are usually more vulnerable to loss of information through wear and tear than analogue media. Their lifetime is generally short – three to ten years (much less than analogue media²) – because of a combination of system obsolescence and storage media format, and due to high data density (a large amount of information in a small space).

With the digital turn, therefore, there has been a gain in stability in terms of maintaining the integrity of information at the price, however, of greater instability and insecurity in terms of media preservation over time, which therefore requires greater attention and more frequent direct actions (cf. Ernst 2014).

This has forced archives to give up their traditionally 'static' nature by becoming increasingly, as Røssaak said, "in motion":

The archive was the space outside time, where everything was kept in a dormant state. [...] The archive doesn't want to move [...] and yet, today, it is on the move more than ever, both conceptually and physically. This is critical, it is even a crisis; one may even claim that it is one of the most interesting crises in our time. I believe it is exactly the oxymoronic quality of the situation, the impossible conjuncture of motion and arrest, which has given the archival discourse such an ubiquitous impact today. (2010, 16)

This continuous migration of data, according to media theorist Wolfgang Ernst, has radically changed the traditional connection between space and time within the archive, reversing their relationship. Archives are no longer places where time is 'spatialised' but where space (or spaces) experiences a condition of constant precariousness in temporal terms; their existence is thus increasingly 'temporalised':

² An analogue paper document can survive for centuries.

The static residential archive as permanent storage is being replaced by dynamic temporal storage [...]. (Ernst 2004, 49-50)

With the archive itself being transformed from an agency for spatialization of time into an in-between ordering (arresting) of dynamic processes [...], spatial architectures of the archive transform into sequentializing, time-critical, synchronous communication. (50)

Space becomes temporalized, with the archival paradigm being replaced by permanent transfer, recycling memory. (50)

Another attribute of contemporary digital archival space, in addition to temporalisation, is that of fragmentation. The total space of an archive is given by the sum of a multitude of spaces (smaller memories) that may also reside in different physical locations. The spaces are perceived as unique as a result of an abstraction that links them to the name of an institution. But there is not necessarily a physical correlation between the spaces in which an institution is located and the physical locations in which storage media are held.

The bond between digital storage space and physical space though profoundly changed has not totally broken down. Digital storage media allow large amounts of information to be enclosed in very small physical space (a much more favourable ratio than analogue storage media) but still occupy a portion of it. Until now, the technology paradigm has been to store more and more data in less and less space. It should be considered, however, that this process is countered by an ever-increasing demand for storage space, both in institutional and private contexts all over the world. This is a new and interesting relationship all to be investigated. The balances between these two forces and their repercussions on physical space are not stable and are constantly in question. At present, however, the impacts of digital storage space on physical space do exist and are perhaps more evident than a few years ago. Just think of the size that the world's largest data centres offering cloud computing services reach, which exceeds one million square meters.

I find it curious that even in the age of 'dematerialisation', the power dynamics among the world's largest companies are still somehow linked to the ownership of physical space, of the same land that has always ruled power relations among humans.

4 'Vital Spaces' in Contemporary Archival Practice

Most of the institutional archives in the cultural field, almost for more than two decades, have been in an ambivalent stage where old and

new spaces coexist. All archives born before the full establishment of the digital information era are required to manage the preservation of the analogue media on which they store their data. They must therefore cope with the specific physical space requirements and preservation strategies for the carriers they hold. Since the digitisation of analogue media has been universally recognised as the only way to pass on information without loss, archives have had to embark on this onerous new challenge and deal also with digital storage spaces and their ever-changing nature. For most historical archives this 'dual status' will probably persist. For current sound, audio-visual and photographic archives, on the other hand, the connection to the media's physical dimension has faded very quickly, and for many of them, the all-digital 'future' is already an established 'present'.

Having an adequate amount of digital storage space in relation to the materials held has thus become 'vital' for any contemporary archive.

Attention must be drawn to the fact that the advent of digital has led to a profound shift in the archival paradigm, by moving the focus from 'storage' to 'access' as Angelika Menne-Haritz (2001) pointed out. Thanks to the mobility of digital files and the possibilities of sharing them through the Internet, a new era for archives has undeniably (at least on a theoretical level) begun. Over the years, the Internet has profoundly changed our habits to the extent that it has become the first place in our daily lives where we search for information (of all sorts). This has certainly had an impact on people's expectations regarding archives, as Carolyn Landau and Janet Topp Fargion point out:

Digital technologies and the Internet have played a role – not only do people know they can access recordings, they now clearly expect to access them. (2012, 128)

Therefore, it becomes essential for an archive to also possess adequate space on the Web to provide access to its collections if it intends to play a role in the contemporary world and meet its expectations.³

It can be said that the digital space of contemporary archives has a dual nature related to two different functions: 'conservative' offline storage space and online 'access' space. In my view, both are to be considered 'vital' spaces for a contemporary archive, the former providing the basis for the very existence of a digital archive and the latter being necessary for an institutional archive to play an active function in society today.

3 In compliance with legal and ethical issues related to the dissemination of archival collections.

In Italy, most archives in the cultural field have now embarked on their digital transition and are equipped with more or less functional and up-to-date infrastructures for offline digital storage and have launched digitisation projects.⁴ Instead, the digital age expectations that were held for web access, at least for sound and audio-visual archives, have been largely unfulfilled.⁵ The reasons for this are complex and depend on an intertwining of copyright and privacy management issues, lack of expertise, and funding. Until recently, in order to put their collections online, archives have had to manage and maintain their own web server with the appropriate features to meet their storage space and bandwidth needs. The cost of system maintenance and staffing to manage it has been too high for the budgets of many cultural institutions. This is especially so for sound and audio-visual archives that have to deal with much 'heavier' material than archives that preserve textual documents or images (cf. Schüller 2008, 7-8).

However, with recent developments in cloud computing, this has changed somewhat. The balance between archive needs and service costs has become more sustainable. A subscription of a few hundred euros per month⁶ could now meet the storage and data transfer demand of many sound and audio-visual archives without them carrying the expense of an on-premises web server; however, for many institutions, these expenses are still difficult to incur. In addition, the cost of cloud storage services appears to be increasing, and its future sustainability for cultural institutions is difficult to predict (Banerjee 2022).

The status of the 'vital' spaces of digital archives is rather unstable and constantly changing. I think that even though the situation is complicated, institutions and archivists should not give up and not stop looking for effective solutions in order to allow the vaunted 'opening of the archives' to take place on a large scale. Just preserving in our age is not enough. I believe that archives should play a more

⁴ However, many efforts to digitise risky archival collections have yet to be made.

⁵ These statements are based on experiences gathered as part of my current Ph.D research through interviews with directors and archivists of about twenty European sound and audio-visual archives in the music field.

⁶ This assertion is based on an estimate of the possible costs of the S3 One Zone-Inrequent Access service (the most in line, in my opinion, with the needs of a sound and audio-visual archive in the cultural field) by Amazon Web Services (the industry leader). The price per month for this service is \$ 0.0105 per GB in Europe (Milan) region (<https://aws.amazon.com/it/s3/pricing/>, accessed on 23 September 2022). Data transfer courses should be added to this figure, but, after simulating several scenarios through the AWS price calculator (<https://calculator.aws/#/>), I can say that these expenses are quite insignificant for the number of data transfers assumed for an archive in the cultural field and can therefore be excluded from the calculation. For 10 TB online storage (a realistic amount for the needs of a small sound and audio-visual archive) the monthly price is about \$ 100; for 25 TB storage (a realistic amount for the needs of a medium sound and audio-visual archive) the price is about \$ 250 per month.

active role in disseminating their records and become an active part of the cultural debate. Otherwise, for many archives, passing directly from analogue inaccessibility to digital oblivion poses a real danger.

5 Spaces Inside and Spaces Outside the Archive

As has been stated, the space of the archive is no longer monolithic but plural and mobile. Although its declinations have changed, the definition of 'space' remains essential for an archive. Despite the great changes that have taken place, the archive's need to define (more or less permeable) boundaries to establish an inside and an outside has not disappeared. The need to define an 'inner space' (or spaces) in relation to 'outer spaces' is still present.

The importance of an 'outside', an external dimension, for the very existence of an archive is emphasised by Derrida (1995). An outside to which the archive addresses itself and from which, at the same time, it protects the documents located in its interior:

There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside. (Derrida 1995, 14)

According to Wolfgang Ernst (2004) and Arjun Appadurai (2003), external space (and the people who live in it) is crucial to the archive because it is only through it that the data contained in the archive can take on meaning and become part of a narrative:

Archival space is based on hardware, not a metaphorical body of memories. [...] Upon its stored data, narratives (history, ideology and other kinds of discursive software) are being applied only from outside. (Ernst 2004, 47)

All design, all agency and all intentionalities come from the uses we make of the archive, not from the archive itself. (Appadurai 2003, 15-16)

Ernst and Mbebe in their writings also rightly point out the nature of the archive as a collection of discontinuous elements, whose main characteristic is that of fragmentation, not linearity. The archive is commonly seen as the seat of intrinsic, objective, linear memory, whereas in reality archival records do not speak for themselves but represent fragments of 'events' floating in the vastness of the seas of history:

Let us not confuse public discourse (which turns data into narratives) with the silence of discrete archival files. There is no neces-

sary coherent connection between archival data and documents, but rather gaps in between: holes and silence. (Ernst 2004, 48)

Through archived documents, we are presented with pieces of time to be assembled [...] in an attempt to formulate a story that acquires its coherence through the ability to craft links between the beginning and the end. A montage of fragments thus creates an illusion of totality and continuity. (Mbebe 2002, 21)

The coherent readings and pathways that connect archival documents by bridging the gaps between them (like the lines that join the stars to form constellations among an infinite number of possible combinations in a star chart) come from outside the archive, that is, they are not intrinsic to the documents and data themselves but are constructed and thus are always connoted, never neutral.

In light of these reflections, the role and the power of those who have control over the archival records appears to be even more important in determining all the readings that can be made from a pool of possibilities selected by them. The fact that the system underlying an archive is not neutral must always be taken into account. The birth and development of an archive must be placed in a historical and social framework on a par with the documents it preserves.

6 'Living Spaces' in Contemporary Archival Practice: Thoughts Around the Repatriation of Sound and Audio-Visual Musical Recordings

There has been a recognition that the space outside the archive is not unique but plural. External spaces are not all the same and different interpretations, different readings, and different uses of the same archival documents can result from them.

As an 'extreme' case study, the investigation of colonial archives provides an important contribution to better understanding the power dynamics within archives and the key role of 'external', 'living' spaces in determining different readings of an archive (seen as a set of records but also as a system of knowledge production). As an ethnomusicologist, here I will focus on sound and audio-visual music archives.

The world's first sound archives emerged as part of early comparative musicology studies at the height of the colonial period.⁷ In many cases, even after the end of the colonial era, in ethnomusicological

⁷ The Wien Phonogrammarchiv was founded in 1899 and the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv in 1900.

research⁸ there inevitably was a power imbalance (in terms of economic and technological power) between the scholars and the people who were being studied. The result was that most of the musical recordings collected around the world were deposited by researchers in archives located mainly in Europe and the United States. These documents have entered archives for different purposes and have been included within narratives that have long been confined to the Western domain only. This awareness has led many scholars to reflect on the perspectives related to the repatriation of musical recordings held in Western sound archives.

In a recent paper, Anthony Seeger, one of the scholars who has worked most on these issues, defines repatriation as follows:

I use 'repatriation' to refer to the return of music to circulation in communities where it has been unavailable as a result of external power differences - often the result of colonialism - but also including differential access to wealth and technology, educational training, and other factors. (Seeger 2018, 145)

In the field of ethnomusicology, the first considerations about repatriation emerged in conjunction with the archival turn in the late 1980s and especially in the 1990s as a result of a critical analysis of power dynamics in colonial archives⁹ and due to new resources in the field of digital audio that made it possible to make copies of a recording without devaluation and to circulate them much more easily (cf. Seeger 1986).

From the outset, repatriation is not used simply as a synonym for 'passive access' (such as making records accessible online or sending back copies), but as an activity that wants to play an active role in reflecting on the process of recording, archiving, and the impact that past recordings can have on a community's present (cf. Chaudhuri 2021, 96).

Repatriation thus emerges as a noble intention of Western scholars to come to terms with their past and the past of their discipline, but it has been realised that this process has complex consequences and opens up many problematic ethical and practical issues:¹⁰ how can we define the community of origin of a recording, especially in cases where that recording relates to a musical practice that has now disappeared? By what criteria are individuals who will receive the recordings back selected? Are there criteria for selecting which re-

⁸ As a discipline focused on the study of oral tradition music and non-Western musical traditions.

⁹ "Who 'owns' traces of the Lore?" wonders Robert C. Lancefield (1998, 47) in one of the earliest and most influential contributions on the topic of musical repatriation.

¹⁰ See Lancefield 1998, 47-9; Nannyonga-Tamusuza, Weintraub 2012, 216; Chaudhuri 2021, 96.

cordings should be repatriated and which should not? How might the introduction of cultural knowledge from the past conflict with current cultural and social practices? Who wields moral rights over these documents: individuals or institutions? What should be done when members of a community refuse or have no interest in receiving back the recordings of their ancestors, as has happened in some cases?

As is evident from this set of questions, there can be no simple solution to the problem of repatriation, and as if that were not enough in this field, the risk of falling back, even unintentionally, into colonial-style paternalism is just around the corner. As Schwartz and Cook, and Ajotikar and van Straaten pointed out:

It is important, as Verne Harris¹¹ has noted, not to romanticize the marginalized, or feel elated for saving them from historical oblivion: some do not wish to be “rescued” by mainstream archives and some will feel their naming by archivists as being “marginalized” only further marginalizes them. (Schwartz, Cook 2002, 17)

[The ideological undercurrents of the notion of giving ‘voice to the voiceless’ and ‘recovering lost sounds’] include the underlying neoliberal assumptions of individualism as a universal, and the problematic implication that such select recovering of individual voices and narratives equate reparation of systemic inequalities. [...] In the so-called decolonial project of saving voices of the unheard, analyses often confirm – rather than critique – their biases and stereotypes about the Othered. (Ajotikar, van Straaten 2021, 12-13)

The answer to all these questions is that there is no single valid answer to them. Each context is different, there is no single repatriation model that can be applied to all. One should not think in terms of universal solutions but should always start with a dialogue to highlight the specific dynamics of a given context, to develop *ad hoc* approaches in a collaborative way, directly involving community members. This should not be done by imposing a single top-down model, but by building one together case-by-case, even if this certainly requires more research and interpretive efforts (cf. Lancefield 1998, 57-60; Nannyonga-Tamusuza, Weintraub 2012, 220-5). The method stems from the same foundations of the demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines, that is, in this context, to apply elasticity, as well as the relativism and non-dogmatism that distinguish them.

The repatriation of sound recordings also stands as a privileged method for reflecting critically on how different narratives concerning ‘other’ musical cultures have been constructed in the West. Observ-

11 See Harris 2001, 12.

ing in the present, with members of a community, archival records from their past allows the researcher to focus on the criteria and conceptions that were behind the selection by previous researchers of particular sound documents over a wide spectrum of possible choices (Nannyonga-Tamusuza, Weintraub 2012, 221-4). How do the documents collected and deposited in archives relate to the totality of a community's musical expression? Which repertoires have been documented and which have not? Why were certain choices made? What do internal community members think about the choices that have been made by Western researchers? What kind of decisions would they have made if they had wanted to representatively document their ancestors' musical culture? Why would they have made those choices?

The last three questions highlight how repatriation can also be an effective tool to open a channel of communication on the present and past music conception of a studied community. Repatriation could be then seen also as a method of doing better ethnography (cf. Iyanaga 2018).

Archives need 'living spaces' to address to and from which to draw meaning; without this interpretive process, records remain mute. These spaces may need the archives to build their own vision of the past and memory. Their relationship is mutual. The more the visions and readings are plural and come from different spaces the better we can investigate, critically understand and analyse the mechanisms behind the creation of archives, reconstruct their selection process, and the conceptions on which it is grounded.

With their external gaze, someone who comes from a different cultural background can help to question and critically evaluate the dynamics involved in how knowledge is produced through archives, which are usually taken for granted.

7 Conclusions

Analysis of the spaces of archives is an important tool for understanding their (changing) nature and role in society. In the traditional conception of the archive, architectural space is an essential means for controlling access to information and the action of time on documents. Time is 'spatialised' in order to contain its effects as much as possible. In contemporary digital archives, the decay of information is 'frozen' and transmitted without loss, at the cost of continuous and more frequent migration of the spaces in which it is stored. Space is thus increasingly 'temporalised'. Digital storage space and its connection to the Internet constitutes the 'vital' space for contemporary archives but its management is not easily sustainable by institutions and poses continuous challenges. 'Living' spaces outside the archives are crucial to give meaning to 'mute' and 'fragmentary' archival records by

including them in a linear reading of the past. Different readings of history can arise from different 'living' spaces starting from the same archival documents. Having multiple interpretations of the same archival records helps to better highlight the dynamics of data production and preservation, which are never neutral but always connoted.

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Representation as Trace of Enunciation

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Miriam Rejas Del Pino

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract The aim of this paper is to identify the mechanisms for producing meaning in the visual through the visual itself, the interpretation of which should not be entrusted to the dimension of the extra-figurative. Focusing on the theoretical opposition of opacity and transparency theorised by Louis Marin, here, three analogue photographs from the early to the mid-twentieth century will be analysed following the visual semiotics methodology. In those photographs, which propose a complex representation of semiotic relevance, the opposition between the represented space and the material surface of the medium will be explored through the analysis of the traces of enunciation within the text.

Keywords Analogue photography. Visual semiotics. Image Theory. Enunciation. Opacity. Transparency. Louis Marin.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Epistemological Question: Transparency and Opacity. – 3 Photographing the Surface: Visual Silences. – 4 Evoking the Surface: Figured Graphics. – 5 The Material Space of the Surface: Plastic Lacerations. – 6 Final Considerations.

1 Introduction

Thanks to technologies such as Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, the question of mediating the spatial dimension of various technologies has once again become a central object of study for various



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221

disciplines. Even though current reflections focus on the study of new media, the tension between represented three-dimensional space and biplanar surface space in Modern Art artworks presents theoretical questions that still need to be explored.¹ This essay takes the form of a heuristic work that, analysing three photographs from a Greimasian semiotic perspective, will focus on theoretical issues such as the tension between surface and space of representation, 'transparency' and 'opacity' (Marin 2014), artwork and observer, and between utterance and enunciation praxis. The decision to interrogate photography by emphasising the above points is motivated first and foremost by its ontological status. Photography is, in fact, historically considered the modern indexical medium *par excellence* - from a Peircean perspective - namely, a medium that entertains a privileged relationship of resemblance with the reality it represents. This technique results in creating images with a high degree of iconicity and the consequent production of reality effects.² Hence, it is the intention to investigate this object, often associated with media transparency, to identify some of the mechanisms of 'opacification' within the visual discourse. Following the model of semisymbolism, the analysis of the plastic qualities of the photographs will be used to trace both the 'discursive field' and the structures of signification immanent to the visual texts; afterwards, some strategies and 'figures' through which analogue photography shows its enunciatonal framework will be identified. In this binary relationship, the possibilities for photography to act on its material surface to produce different spatial effects within the represented image will be investigated, namely, how the plane surface can contain depth and how the photographic *dispositif* uses its own materiality to produce other senses. If the figurative modes of producing effects of transparency in the representation in photography are well-known (cf. Marin 2014; 1998), what are the visual strategies or 'figures' that photography uses to produce opacity effects?³ In short, we will assume the 'figures of con-

1 Theoretical approaches that can be grouped under the umbrella of 'Image Theories' have developed suitable analytical tools for a better understanding of the logic of the visual. In addition to those mentioned above, disciplines such as Media Studies or Media Archaeology make this perceptual tension a central aspect in their objects of study.

2 We refer to the term 'iconicity' to define those images that have a motivating relationship that insists on similarities of configuration between the sign and the object it represents. For more on indexicality see Barthes 1980; Marra 2006; Belting 2013; Floch 2003.

3 If perspective organises the represented space three-dimensionally as if one stands in front of a window looking to the world, in photography the same effect of distance can be achieved by including oblique lines - internal geometries - that, when combined with vertical masses in the foreground, give an idea of proportionality. One can play on the framing as well as with shadows and focus by provoking a *floou* effect that reduces the sharp division between outline and background, or one can double the objects represented by means of mirroring surfaces. In fact, photography, from a tradi-

cealment' as possible objects of study that pose the same theoretical problem: that of the structure of the photographic device of vision and the relationship between the observer and the observed in the production of a spatiality.

2 The Epistemological Question: Transparency and Opacity

Various authors moving at the confines of different humanistic disciplines have studied the effects of presence or absence produced by media in images. Gottfried Boehm, in the wake of Merleau-Ponty's research on the gaze, theorises in his text *Was ist ein Bild?* (1994) the concept of 'iconic difference', based on what the author calls the "iconic's own logic of meaning" (Boehm 1994). Boehm refers to a theoretical paradigm that recognises a singularity in producing meaning in images independent of the *logos'* autonomous logic. The image, thus endowed with an autonomous logic of the sensible, is the bearer of a dialectical tension between "its concrete materiality and the sense that, while rooted in it, transcends it" (Pinotti, Somaini 2009, 40). In the image, in short, the two contrasting dimensions of concrete materiality – for instance a pictorial stain – and the meaning to which it refers, coexist and are perceived at a single glance in the medium. Within this theoretical framework, Boehm distinguishes between weak and strong images, where 'strong' images are those that make use of their material conditions to make themselves bearers of senses other than philological and iconographic ones. On the other hand, the adjective 'weak' refers to all those images that allow themselves to be 'crossed' by the gaze as mimetic copies of the natural world.⁴ Boehm notes how:

There is the possibility that images dissolve, completely oblivious of themselves, in the illusionistic rendering of something refracted, or – on the contrary – that they emphasise they are being made as images. In extremis, the image denies itself completely as an image to achieve the perfect representation of a thing. (quoted in Pinotti, Somaini, 2009, 61)⁵

tional point of view, presents the perspective cage as the premise of a correct representation; the telephoto lens responds to normative fixed, aesthetic and cultural principles that must be altered manually should one wish to subvert them, not only by modifying the technical parameters, but also by making the photographic print the support of further elaborations.

⁴ In Marin's terms, mimesis is described as the substitution of absent elements for others that are present within the representation, linked together by their similarity (Marin 2014).

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, all translations into English are by the Author.

Faced with this theoretical palimpsest, there is the inevitable connection to the proposal by Louis Marin (1931-1992) a scholar who devoted his research to theories of representation. Several years before Boehm, Marin coined a different term – ‘transparency’ or ‘transitive state of the image’ – to define the effect of illusory continuity between the space of representation and that of the viewer. Marinian transparency thus indicates the result of the cancellation or dissimulation of the traces of the production of a work, which becomes the artificer of a representational deception to the highest degree: the work presents the lie of an original and filterless contact between a man and the world. Marin will propose the opposite definition of ‘opacity’ to refer to the visible rendering of the armature enunciation of every representation.⁶ Opacity will become apparent if the spectator is questioned: the image’s transparency will thus be breached. The French scholar argues that every device of representation will present itself by representing something:

Every representation will be composed of a reflective dimension (it will present itself) but also of a transitive dimension (it will represent some object in the world). (Marin 2014, 113)

According to the arrangement of these two dimensions – and thus according to the exhibition or cancellation of the enunciating instance of the work – different effects of transparency and opacity will be produced.

3 **Photographing the Surface: Visual Silences**

The first analysed photograph was taken by the artist Raoul Ubac in 1938 and is entitled *Portrait Dans un Miroir* [fig. 1]. In the photograph, measuring, one can partially observe a woman’s face covered by a dark stain that prevents her from being fully identified. The stain, which seems to be deposited on the face, decomposes the woman’s features until they dissolve into a shapeless background. The opaque mass seems to create a ‘visual silence’ in the image, namely a space of subtracted information of the woman’s identity. From a plastic point of view, this liquid stain has uneven areas of colour and non-linear contours: on the right-hand side, it merely veils the surface of the woman’s face, while on the left-hand side, it has a more signifi-

⁶ Gottfried Boehm proposes to use the terms ‘opacity’ and ‘transparency’ to refer to different notions than the Marinian ones; in fact, Boehm uses the term ‘opacity’ to refer to every material object in the artwork that can be modified by the artist to produce new meaning.

cant saturation and colouring that prevents the face from crossing the diaphanous surface of the mirror. The face is as if 'ejected' from the silvered surface of the mirror, which is used here as a covering texture subverting the classical use of the mirroring device – which is supposed to expand spatiality instead. In our opinion, the stain that encompasses the face plays a crucial role not only concerning the oscillation between the covering and transparency of the face on a figurative and plastic level but also in its role in the discursive production of spatiality. Indeed, an interplay of 'flattened' spaces and planes prevents this reflection device from fulfilling its task. In semiotic analysis, it is interesting to recall that a semiotic of the text considers spatiality as a foundational element. It is important to understand the discursive organisation and the immanent structures of the signification of visual texts through analysis that, according to Omar Calabrese's proposal, would entail a further division of the spatiality of the object rather than the classical one between surface and depth. Starting from Greimasian considerations on the spatial aspects present at the discursive level of the syntactic structures of a text, Calabrese, in his study on abstract enunciation (Calabrese 2006), proposes to overcome the Thürlemannian opposition between surface and depth in figurative painting, identifying four types of spatiality in the work of art instead: the depth between the painting and the observer, the material surface of the painting itself, the surface of the painting as a geometric plane (on a topological level of representation) and the illusive depth beyond the painting (the effect of window to the world). We recall this methodological premise because the analysed photograph presents plastic characteristics that 'dissimulate' some of the spatialities proposed by Calabrese.

Returning to our image then, the mirror, invented in antiquity to see bodies where there are none, is a device that is particularly well suited to producing doubling effects of the spatially refracted and that retains on its surface an image that is perceived as a body simultaneously present and absent.⁷ Ubac photographs the reflection in the mirror by situating himself behind the woman and selecting a portion of the world inhabited only by this subject. An enunciatinal illusion is created where the apparently objective discourse produces

7 In this regard, Maurizio Giuffredi, in a study dedicated to the psychology of the photographic self-portrait, observes how: "More generally, it should be remembered that the very invention of the photograph depends directly on its relationship with the mirror, almost as if an intimate filtering relationship existed between them. When in 1829 Niepce first succeeded in fixing an image through the camera obscura in Judea bitumen, his ambition was to fix the image of the mirror. Moreover, Nadar, in 1900, in the book *Quand j'étais photographe*, would write the prodigious characteristic of photography, a characteristic that would clearly distinguish it from all the other inventions and discoveries of 19th century, would consist in the materialisation of the reflection of one's body on a mirror surface" (Giuffredi 2004, 111-42).



Figure 1 Raoul Ubac, *Portrait Dans un Miroir*. 1938. Gelatin silver print, 29.6 × 23.8 cm. The Met, Purchase, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift, through Joyce and Robert Menschel, 1987. © 2022 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

strategies of construction that seem alien to the subject of the enunciation.⁸ The effect of the 'self enunciating image' is accentuated by the fact that the opaque stain allows Ubac to conceal his own reflection and covers the space of the representation, making one believe that the subject has self-portrayed herself against a dark background and that she has subsequently applied some corrosive substance to the film. This paradigmatic case allows us to observe how, while not working on the material surface of the shot, a powerful 'surface effect' can be provoked, revealing the opacity of the photograph and, thus, the traces of the enunciation. *Portrait Dans un Miroir* seems to take part in a metadiscursive game *tout court* on the idea of transparency and opacity of the photographic medium, where the device of transparency *par excellence* (the mirror) is represented and placed in a condition of covering the image of the person projected onto it.⁹

4 Evoking the Surface: Figured Graphics

Soldier Behind Shield, Northern Ireland (1973) is an image by Philip Jones Griffiths, a Magnum Photos agency photographer specialising in war documentary photography. In this image it is possible to recognise specific figurative formats that can be traced back to the features of a male face. Immersed in a play of *chiaroscuro*, the face appears disconnected from the rest of the body, floating against the dark background that encompasses it. Although we can guess that the gaze is directed toward the camera operator, we cannot decipher it. In this 'dialogue' of indeterminate gazes, an element disrupts the scene: the soldier is shielded by the weaving of scratches (cf. Bruno 2016) that, oriented in all directions, thickens the space of the enunciation and enacts an enunciational *débrayage*. The two most accentuated scratches, perfectly superimposed above the centre of the face – one horizontal and one vertical – create a sort of 'cross' that recalls the diagrams of weapon sights that assist in shooting. Louis Marin would call the different modes of opacity that interrupt the diaphanous and transitive spaces of representation *syncopes*:

⁸ It is always a matter of traces since the enunciating subject is only logically presupposed by the existence of the utterance, and its gaze can always be reconstructed through the choices of discourse it makes.

⁹ Louis Marin notes that for the 'window on the world' effect described as efficient, a supporting surface must exist; reality is projected onto it as an image, and through it the eye receives the world. The surface-screen is, in the words of the author: "A reflecting and reflecting device on which 'real' objects are represented. It is necessary to neutralise the superficial device, the material canvas in the technical, theoretical and ideological assumption of its transparency. It is the invisibility of the surface or support that makes the visibility of the represented world possible. The diaphanous is the theoretical-technical definition of the plastic screen of representation" (Marin 2014, 131).

Thus, opacity and the process of opacification depend on every trait, element, part, detail, mark, figure that questions (disturbs, breaks, interrupts, determines a syncopation) the whiteness of luminosity, the transparency of the plane, the diaphanous of the surface, the emptiness of the support. Through its mode, the reflexive opacity makes the 'presenting' of something appear in the representation (Marin 2014, 198)

In our opinion, these scratches are actual figures of opacity, 'syncopes' that prevent the observer from clearly accessing the object of one's vision. This photograph, taken from behind a torn riot shield, evokes the pain and wounds of war precisely because of its 'plastic texture'. This concealment device opaquates the photographic support from the moment it shows the traces of its author's enunciation and prevents the transparent figuration of the represented image. This mode of shielding seems to fulfil a dual function necessary to designate the observer's body as the site of the advent of a pathemic transformation. From the protective role of the shield, we pass to the insecurity evoked by the cuts and wounds. This 'fabric' shields the face and protects the operator from the soldier's gaze, interrupting the spatial and temporal continuum of the scene. The observer's point of view takes us back to a state of vulnerability: lying down behind a broken shield, we look at an anonymous face approaching (enemy or friend in battle is unknown). The cuts, interposed between us and the face, seem to be made directly on the material surface of the photographic shot. However, it is clear that to achieve the desired efficacy and to instil a strong pathemic state in the viewer, the scratches must be only represented and not inflected directly on the photosensitive material. The prevalence of the plastic dimension over the figurative dimension of the human face is proposed as a shielding device that returns the viewer's attention to a figural matrix having the function of de-iconising and concealing the identity of the subject and, consequently, the destiny of the observer.

5 The Material Space of the Surface: Plastic Lacerations

As Marin states in one of the essays collected in *Della rappresentazione* (About Representation):

The surface is like a screen of inscription-description on which the 'surface' of the world is projected or recorded, a screen in which it is represented, inscribed or rather replicated (Marin 2014, 96)

The surface is thus a screen, an area where the natural world around us is inscribed. In the classical mediums that take part in represen-

tation, there is a specific place of conflict between depth and surface: the matter. In the case of painting, whether figurative or abstract, representations appear as if deposited above the space of the canvas, an effect that tends to intensify if the distance between the eye and the canvas is shortened. It is possible to perceive the matter that gives form to the figures, their rhythms and intensity, and the surface that makes them emerge. In the case of photography, on the other hand, the perception of the support is often annihilated by the high degree of iconicity and legibility with which the figures of the natural world are portrayed; the surface is often transparent, and the iconographic motif depicted is 'inside' the material. The referential image tends to deny the artifice of representation and assert its independence while appearing on a material surface endowed with concrete characters, which it conceals. We explore the surface, in general terms, as a membrane or screen (cf. Strauven 2021) that stands between the observer and what is being observed, as the place where the various tensions between the two 'theoretical' spatialities of photography come together. As Giuliana Bruno (2016) proposed from the perspective of media studies, the surface is a set of materialities, aesthetic qualities, technological leftovers and the temporalities of a particular historical moment.¹⁰ Surfaces, in general terms, are the place of mediation between subjects and objects. They ubiquitously clothe the fixed substance of our world objects. Within Bruno's theoretical proposal, in which surfaces are places of transformation and images become the sartorial fabrics of visual space, the screen of the surface is the connective tissue where the tension between inside and outside dissolves. Like the face of things, the surface allows us to know and perceive the world and its objects through haptic visuality.¹¹ In Bruno's words:

The film in fact is, above all, a material deposit, a residue, a remnant. The photosensitive tissue is a thin membrane, porous like skin, that absorbs time on its own surface. (Bruno 2016, 131)

One recalls how photography, as well as film, makes use of a thin layer of substance not too dissimilar from a painter's brushstroke to fix their creations onto a support. The film can be extended onto other surfaces, it can be used to cover or to coat, but also to reveal or conceal the image, it can shape or alter the iconic content within so, overall, it can function as a true layer of malleable material.¹²

¹⁰ For more on the materiality of the image, see Finke, Halawa 2012; Lange, Berndt 2015.

¹¹ Some essential texts for placing the concept of haptics in an art-historical disciplinary framework are Riegl 1997; Paterson 2007.

¹² For further insights into the idea of 'coverage' and 'display' in screens see Avezzù 2016.

Like other components, this independence of the surface in the creative process can be understood as a sense-making element. The last image analysed, *Harvest, Philadelphia* (1984) shot by Joel-Peter Witkin, shows a complex situation of representation of semiotic relevance for verifying the theoretical issues described above. Witkin, famous for his baroque-style compositions in which the human body is shown fragmented, lacerated, sometimes deformed, or lifeless, has been present since the 1960s on the contemporary scene. The photographer composes his scenes like *Tableaux Vivants* or *Still Lives*, using elements from the language of classical painting. In part, Witkin's creative gesture consists of re-proposing the style and purity of pictorial language subverted by an atypical and alienating content. In *Harvest, Philadelphia* the lying face of a man appears on the scene, with parts of his neck and shoulders; his decapitated head is 'opened' so that the viewer can distinguish in detail what is inside it, the tissues, the muscle fibre, and the skin. These organic fragments lie on a black background in a failed attempt to preserve their original morphology. It is possible to see vegetal figures that recompose the missing parts of the human body: with obvious reference to Arcimboldo's painting, the skull is filled with a great variety of fruits, flowers, and roots. The newborn man presents itself to the observer within a composition that places an appetizing variety of vegetables and the putrefying flesh of the human animal on the same level.

These elements often appear in dialogue in classic representations of *still life*, in Italian called 'natura morta', perhaps a term we would prefer here: game and fruit are often arranged on a table, ready to be eaten. The lacerated meat and vegetable elements here seem ready to be devoured, even if only by our gaze. This depicted body conforms to an initial opposition between openness and closure: a staged 'carnal openness' disposes usually hidden parts of the body to the gaze, but this is done through a complete closure of the gaze of the subject depicted, causing the annulment of its own vitality (Fabbri 2012). The new man-hybrid who has ceased to resist seems to emulate the image of a martyr kept in a niche. Indeed, a strong *mise en abyme* effect is achieved in the shot through plastic formants that create a frame within the representation (Stoichita 1998).¹³ This effect, addressed at length by Victor Stoichita in his studies on European painting, is achieved by direct engraving on the photographic film. The doubling of the frame recalls the reflective dimension of representation in which the mimetic transparency leaves room for the artistic object as a constructed representation (cf. Stoichita 2002; 1998; Marin 2012). Witkin's photographic practice, distinguished above

13 Stoichita's text reflects on the margins of painting and their relationship to elements such as niches, fixtures and doors.

all by elaborating the photographic surface at a 'post-developmental' stage, reinforces the 'pictorial effect' of the shot. The photographer employs on the one hand the language of classical painting in terms of composition, and, on the other hand, implements a pictorial gesture by working directly on the various layers of the image even when the photographic process is complete. Witkin traverses the photographic matter with his etchings to introduce the viewer to the opening of the flesh that is figured in the shot. In his attempt to explore the human body, Witkin infers a graphic wound on the surface of the medium that brings the image back to us; he does not emulate the cuts as Griffith does (a vital operation to convey the pathemic states related to the situation of enunciation) but inflicts them directly onto the surface. The operation of 'openness' is twofold: in fact, it accentuates the decomposition of the human figure fragmented by interrupting figurative features and encapsulating it in a niche; it also brings the observer back (thanks to the simulacral temporality of the scratches) to the original moment of the cutting of the real flesh as well as the metaphorical moment of cutting the world represented within the shot. Witkin excavates the photograph's surface to penetrate the body, to open up the body of the figure and that of the picture itself. In a didiherbermanian sense, Witkin 'opens up' the image to show what was previously hidden: not only the interior of the body and its flesh but the interior of the photographic material substance itself (cf. Didi-Huberman 2008). As a result of the gestual work done onto the surface a plastic niche that doubles the original frame of the photograph appears. It produces an illusory representational space within the photograph's original space.

6 Final Considerations

The reflection presented here, aimed at a heuristic analysis of the opposition between surface and space represented in photography, has covered both the classical transparency effects of the photographic technique and specific opacity effects that declare its status as a constructed image. Overall, spatiality has been investigated transversally: through the tension between the support's two-dimensionality and the three-dimensional representational space, through an examination of the material aspects of the film and the way they can be modified to produce sense effects, and, finally, spatiality has been examined as a founding element of the semiotic method through various analyses. The problem of the 'veil of the image', theorised by Leon Battista Alberti as a condition for the possibility of vision, profoundly marks the history of modern representation. The veil of the image or surface is theorised not as the limit of representation but as what makes it possible, namely, as what mimetically takes on the features

of something that allows the text to be a window onto the world. Starting with the classical distinctions between surface and depth, the focus is on the concrete space of the text's subject matter. Noting the absence of literature that explores the effects of meaning in photography regarding opacity strategies, here we set out to heuristically 'put to work' the various epistemological questions on specific objects. Finally, by focusing on the photographic surface as a significant and malleable element on a plastic level, an attempt was made to understand through which figures photography appropriates its material body to produce effects of meaning and 'surface effects'. By this expression, we mean those effects caused by a figural texture placed in front of an iconic figuration and, by preventing a clear perception of the forms, proposes a 'second skin' of the shot. In the first analysed photograph, *Portrait Dans un Miroir* by Raoul Ubac, it was observed how in the absence of direct work on the photosensitive material - an action that was historically uncommon at the time - an effect of media transparency is reached. Wanting to move away from a classical mode of female portraiture, this photograph seems to need the presence of very obvious plastic elements to emancipate itself from a more classical mode of portrait and the conception of referential photography. This opacity of the reflecting device set into crisis produces a flattening effect of the spatial three-dimensionality not included in the shot. Finally, one observes how the reflecting device placed in an opaque condition - and thus brought to perform the role of its antagonist - seems to help hide the traces of the enunciating entity. The chromatic density and the undisciplined nature of its eidetic forms seem to evoke a material work on the very surface of the photograph that creates a figural matrix that becomes the bearer of meaning.

The second image analysed, *Soldier Behind Shield* (1973) by Peter Griffith, presents a photograph taken from behind a surface (originally diaphanous) covered in the weaving of scratches resulting from a collision. In Griffith's case, the visual thickening of the 'veil of the image', namely the surface located between the two faces (between the shooter and the portrayed), shields the vision of both figures and thus takes an active part in the discursive process necessary to provoke a particular pathemic state in the viewer. Where the title and the dense graphical warp induce feelings of vulnerability or hope in the viewer (the face could instead be that of an ally), the photograph is opaque and rich in the marks of enunciation.

The third and last image by Joel-Peter Witkin (1984) presents itself as the purest metadiscursive play between artistic genres and a striking example of direct work on the material surface. Witkin's engravings provoke a high degree of opacity in the image, where these marks are taken as traces of enunciation that intensify the figurative effects of the photograph. They not only place the human figure within a plastic niche but also shift the viewer's attention from the ele-

ments of the 'visible' to those of the 'visual'. Picking up on Boehm's terms presented at the beginning, this image can be described as a strong image that takes on its material conditions to produce other meaningful effects. The medium declares its opacity, its status as representation to the highest degree. Through these brief analyses, it has been observed how highlighting or emulating a 'second skin of the photograph', i.e., a shielding surface space, can produce different effects of transparency and opacity that highlight the space of the life of the object of the body of the photograph, thus of the medium itself and its material qualities. As we understand images through the specificity of differing media, the last becomes an apparatus susceptible to alteration in favour of the production of other senses. The figures of opacification detected in the analyses weaken the identification of what is observed by imposing limitations on the observer's gaze. In this way, the figures reveal themselves as 'devices of vision' capable of modulating the relationship between observer and object of vision, thus granting depth to the medium, declaring its opacity. In the selected corpus, the photographic act is continuously brought into play; the viewer is confronted with the reflexivity of a medium's language, its tools, and conditions of possibility. In the space of enunciation, where the marks of the photographer's technical intervention are 'deposited', there is a figural matrix that translates into substantial effects of opacity and the manifestation of its photographic surface.

The dialectical tension between illusory space and biplanar material space seems, in some cases, to resolve itself into a figural synthesis, in others, accentuate the material space of the utterance, and in others still take on a central role in the erasure of the three-dimensional space that is being figured. Thanks to the developments analysed, we move on to consider these processes of figuration as processes of figurability, where the photograph is thought of in the interaction between image, medium, and recipient's body, namely in the concrete anthropological depth of its objects.

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Andrea Nalesso

Topology of Scrapbooking Browsing Through a Space in Constant Transformation

Simone Rossi

Università luav di Venezia, Italia

Abstract The essay sheds light on the practice of scrapbooking promoting a spatial reflection. Topology is used as a tool for exploration and stimulates an investigation in terms of movement and morphological deformations. The topological references, along with three examples of artist scrapbooking, enable tangent reflections that depict a multifaceted contemporary scrapscape with profound design, cultural, and media value. Scrapbooking emerges as a metamorphic threshold practice between the private and the public, capable of empowering the ephemeral and questioning ever-moving constructions such as culture and identity, both visually and materially.

Keywords Scrapbook. Scrapbooking. Topology. Ephemera. Material culture. Visual culture. Isa Genzken. Eline Mugaas. Elise Storsveen. Hudinilson Jr.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Poaching Topology, Gleaning Culture. – 3 Narcissus, Make Yourself Pretty! Why Does the Gay Version Always Look Better? – 4 Conclusions.

The space of experience is really, literally, physically
a topological hyperspace of transformation
(Massumi 2002, 184)

1 Introduction

Mach dich hübsch! is a scrapbook by Isa Genzken, filled with playful and layered collages in which she reflects on life in the metropolis, media culture, sexual identity and her own biography. (Genzken 2015)

This reads on the back cover of the scrapbook published as a facsimile for Genzken's exhibition of the same name at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 2015.¹ These few lines attempt to recap in verbal form an editorial and artistic exercise otherwise devoid of explanatory text. Also in Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen's *ALBUM* (2014), another publishing venture this study takes into consideration, the back cover verbally sums up a project that would otherwise be visually cryptic.² Such an analogy is indicative of a scrapbooking practice that uses the image as a privileged tool of interrogation, knowledge, and interpretation. The image is given an autonomy of meaning and space that provides it full agency.

Both projects base, each with their own peculiarities, their narrative on visual collages. These recycle, reframe and rewrite existing materials, mostly ephemera. But not only that, because through this montage operation these materials trigger surprising new visions and semantic shortcuts. This aspect is well highlighted by another scrapbook author, Brazilian artist Hudinilson Jr., who states:

Although I'm appropriating, I'm always creating images, both through the selection and, consequently, the grouping, as well as through how I "cut" those images, either maintaining their "original" aspect, or stressing / removing certain details. (Resende 2016, 403)

The aforementioned projects provide an initial testimony to the vast horizon of scrapbooking. Likewise, they invite reflection on the tools with which to interpret this ephemeral space, where double pages inherently preserve that state of eternal draft that ensures them to be continuously modifiable and expandable. Then, how is it possible to theoretically accompany the movement that characterises a

¹ The exhibition was held from 29 November 2015 through 6 March 2016.

² The volume collects the first ten issues of the fanzine of the same name, created in 2008. In the back cover are summoned the themes of the single fanzines.

space that by its very vocation is visually cryptic, temporary, and metamorphic?

The analysis chooses to turn to topology, as a metaphor, a vehicle for understanding and movement. This means to privilege a method that analyses objects more in the extension of space than in the becoming of time (Vitiello 1992, 84), and to think about elements in terms of continuous transformation and invariance, flows and inter-connections, embodied gazes, non-orientability and morphological deformations.

All this in a scape where culture itself has recently started to be thought in topological terms.

We no longer live in or experience 'movement' or transformation as the transmission of fixed forms in space and time but rather movement – as the ordering of continuity – composes the forms of social and cultural life themselves. (Lury et al. 2012, 6)

It is then from the possibility offered by a space capable of repeatedly deconstructing and reconstructing imaginary heterotopias and always open to new interpretations by the reader, that the study will seek to understand what it means to think about scrapbooking topologically, as a subaltern space of cultural critique and subjectivation based on constant transformation.

A space that has actually been little studied so far. Research on scrapbooking has indeed always suffered from a certain academic distrust, justified in part by the difficulty of framing the topic at the disciplinary level, in part by the complex retrieval of original material and the micro-histories contextual to the artifacts, and in part by its eminently private dimension. Thus, while aesthetic, artistic, and architectural theories have long been concerned with the atlas as a peculiar device of knowledge and mapping (Bruno 2002; Didi-Huberman 2010), and while it is the ephemera that has attracted the gaze of scholars, in epistemological (Muñoz 1996; Halberstam 2011), design (Farias 2014; Pecorari 2021; Salvaneschi 2021), and media terms (Grainge 2011; Comand, Mariani 2019), the scrapbooking practice has remained in the shadows, despite offering fertile reflections not only on the cultural, artistic and design levels, but also on gender and feminist issues. Today, the interest of the humanities in scrapbooking seems to focus precisely on the latter issue, deepening the role and of the narrative promoted by women in this practice (Downs 2007), reactivating non-dominant and sometimes subversive narratives (Garvey 2012), and considering scrapbooking as a potential feminist methodology (Walling-Wefelmeyer 2021).

The choice to medially and editorially appreciate the practice of scrapbooking and the space it fosters from a topological point of view intends to bring all these experiences together and finally find a way

to connect space, gaze and motion, three key elements to convey the multilayered complexity of the practice. This choice, however, requires some premises and entails some consequences.

2 Poaching Topology, Gleaning Culture

Topology was developed in the late decades of the nineteenth century in modern mathematics as a general theory of space.³ Initially born as an understanding of space in terms of the properties of connection and invariance of figures in transformation, within a few years many disciplines – as psychoanalysis, architecture, art, philosophy, and the humanities – began to use topology as a conceptual tool for understanding dynamicity, intensity, and transformation as other logics of relations and dynamics of structures, thoughts, science, and culture. Indeed, space, in topological terms, from a stable container becomes the object of a much more complex articulation that makes movement and metamorphosis of forms its hallmark.⁴

There are mainly three topological references on which the analysis intends to insist in order to better introduce scrapbooks and the practice in discussion. Three examples of a quite different nature that highlight the extreme semantic and disciplinary elasticity to which the topological matter lends itself.

The first – in a journey from theory to practice, from the most recent to the most dated – is a study of “new media and techniques of reproduction” in contemporary art by philosopher and media theorist Boris Groys (2008, 73). Groys seeks to understand the time and space of contemporary art by situating it in its “relationship to the Modern project and to its Postmodern reevaluation” (71). Taking up Walter Benjamin’s insights that “mass reproduction – and not the creation of the new – constituted modernity” (72), he tries to understand what function reproduction operates in contemporary art, ultimately arguing that it implies dislocation, deterritorialisation, and “networks of topologically indeterminable circulation” (73). According to him, the original-copy dualism preserves an essentially topological difference, respectively between a “closed, fixed, marked, auratic context” and an “open, unmarked, profane space of anonymous mass circulation” (73). This serves to show how contemporary art is no longer interested in producing copies from an original, but

³ The term topology was first coined by the German mathematician Johann Listing in 1847. But modern topological science is more commonly linked to the research of French mathematician Henri Poincaré and his study *Analysis Situs* published in 1895.

⁴ The Tate Modern, London devoted a seven-month symposium to topology between 2011 and 2012 (<https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/34687/topology/>). For a broader discussion of topology and its various applications, see Bursztein 2019; Lury 2013; Rosen 2006.

instead to produce an original from a copy with “a technique of topological relocation of this copy” (74).

The topological trope thus serves Groys to reflect on the installation aesthetics of contemporary art and likewise problematise the original-copy relationship that has nurtured art, production, and information since early modernity. A relationship also central to the practice of scrapbooking, constantly in between clippings, reproductions of pre-existing materials and the quest to make new sense of elements and develop new narratives. The tension between original and copy moves scrapbook compilation from the very beginning. Suffice it to say that when it developed in the United States in the mid-1850s, scrapbooking reflected the brand-new newspaper editors’ practice of exchanging, which involved recycling newspaper articles from one to another, so that a single article in a local paper would potentially reach millions of readers throughout the country. This form of recycling was not seen as an editorial failure but rather as a virtue, a mechanism to unify information across the states (Garvey 2012, 213).

The intimate and often solipsistic practice of scrapbooking could not be effectively understood without keeping in mind that it developed within a prospering system that feeds on exchange and constantly moves images, capital, and data. Indeed, the medium could be read as a litmus paper of the evolution of the capitalist system, making fully manifest some of its structural features, such as consumerist accumulation, the intensive circulation of information, and the crucial role played by the image (Sontag [1977] 2005, 119).

Composed almost exclusively of ephemera from the paper heaps produced by mass media society, the scrapbook uses the imaginary of objects and representations of the past to compose a new object that, never more so than in this case, is both the product of a given imaginary and the producer of a new one composed of the same elements from which it seeks to emancipate itself. This is how the scrapbook topologically rewrites the role and meaning of what is copy and what is original. And it is not uncommon, especially in scrapbooks compiled by subaltern people or artists, for the tool to trigger the cultural imaginary as a practical counter-weapon to attempt a reconfiguration of communicative and identity dynamics and an unveiling of hidden meanings present in advertising and mass information.

The subversive and privately emancipatory potential of this practice leads to the second example useful for framing topology alongside scrapbooking. Indeed, considering the practice as a tool for personal and cultural rewriting brings the analysis to a consideration that places its creator, also known as maker or compiler, at the centre. To understand its role, the study mobilises the second topological reference, Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* ([1980] 2002), and the “poaching practices” enucleated therein. In reference to scrapbooking, the theoretical task that moves de Certeau analysis

appear insightful. Indeed, his interest lies not in the cultural products offered by the market, but in the uses that are made of them. Central to de Certeau's attention is reading – not as a passive practice, but an active one – as a way of creating everyday life. It is compared to a form of poaching. Using de Certeau's words, it could be said that the scrapbook stands out as a form of silent production in which:

The drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance. ([1980] 2002, XXI)

As a daily exercise of collecting, archiving and resemantising cultural imagery, the scrapbook presents itself as a paradigmatic form of rereading everyday life. De Certeau emphasises the subversive and meaningful role that reading takes on in people's lives. Readers are compared to travellers, to nomads poaching their ways. The page becomes a place of transit where the things that enter are the indices of a passivity of the subject in relation to a tradition; those that leave are the signs of his power to manufacture objects and develop narratives. From this perspective, the scrapbook 'writing through clippings' takes on a value that goes beyond the archival one. The new narratives it produces appear relevant also from a cultural and critical point of view. Quoting de Certeau, one could argue that this type of narration, as opposed to the map that cuts up, cuts across:

The space of operations it travels in is made of movements, it is topological, concerning the deformation of figures, rather than topical defining places. (129)

Topology enters the domain of narration. The scrapbooker seems to possess at least some key characteristics of that narrativity that de Certeau named 'delinquent', namely that which is able to rewrite the logic of narration and space, and make it personal, against the norm, any form of external discipline, and "characterized by the privilege of the *tour over the state*" (130; emphasis in the original).

The metaphor of poaching to describe the appropriation of texts by readers for their own uses and meanings can be particularly interesting because it is able to highlight the condition of continuous movement and transformation that the activity entails in spatial, identity and cultural terms.

Ellen G. Garvey (2003), in an extensive study of American scrapbooking, also takes up de Certeau's fitting metaphors for talking about this practice and proposes a shift in meaning. Resuming a concept developed by media theorist Henry Jenkins (1992), Garvey moves from the figure of the poacher to that of the gleaner.

Like the poacher, the gleaner does not own the land, does not produce the crop or livestock, but steps in when it is ready, takes what is available, and puts it to her or his own uses. Gleaning shifts from the implied masculinity of shooting game, engaged in a kind of warfare with the landowner, to a model of gathering that is not passive or compliant, and is decidedly open to feminine participation. (Garvey 2003, 208)

Abandoning the predatory and abusive metaphor of the hunt and entering the more agricultural and functional metaphor of the life cycle allows Garvey to leave behind a logic of collision, and to conceive of scrapbooking not only as an exercise in contesting the present, but as a practice intrinsic to the recycling system that feeds it.

Together these two spatial and practical metaphors explain not only the role but also the socio-cultural and productive context in which scrapbooking evolves. If it is Garvey's intention to highlight the relationship between the practice and the capitalistic society, de Certeau tends instead to emphasise possible strategies for actively reappropriating an increasingly chaotic, alienating, and numbing everyday life.

The denunciation of the increasing passivity and alienation caused by consumerism leads the analysis to deal, in this backward path, with the third topological example, a Situationist one. As Giuliana Bruno notes (2002, 264) the legacy left by Situationism should not be reduced to a critique of the society of the spectacle, but is articulated primarily in spatial terms, rethinking urbanity and geography with radical, psychic, and labyrinthine cartographic thinking. The importance of wandering is fundamental in the Situationist framework. Walking through reveals the possibility of losing oneself, of rethinking a space that until then had only been perceived as immutably fixed.

The fascination for the ruptures and scraps of Situationism anticipates and introduces a new post- era marked by a disenchanting reinterpretation of ideologies and the grand modern Western narratives, informed by the reuse and free citation of the past, and an epistemological relativism. Within this context, a publishing experience highly significant and experimental at the edge of the Situationist International deserves mention. It is *The Situationist Times*, a magazine published by Dutch artist and editor Jacqueline de Jong between 1962 and 1967, consisting of six issues.⁵ From issue 3, the magazine introduces topology as its focus of investigation, delving into a wide range of topological forms such as knot, labyrinth, ring, and chain. Issues 3, 4, and 5 present an eccentric visual archive of illustrations and

⁵ All issues are available digitally via *Monoskop* (https://monoskop.org/Situationist_Times) and by video description with the author through the *Institute for Computational Vandalism* platform (<https://vandal.ist/thesituationisttimes/>).

photographs cut out, traced by hand, or xeroxed from other sources and books. Like a scrapbook, the magazine chooses to republish mainly existing materials and compare them, through a morphological study of cultural forms.

The topological *derive* and *détournement* of *The Situationist Times* is interesting for several reasons. Primarily because it reveals the subversive and ludic side of topology. De Jong explores it thanks to Asger Jorn, a multifaceted, avant-garde artist and thinker who, in a broader effort to comprehensively reinterpret the logic of modern scientific thought (Rossi 2022), approaches topology to playfully rethink mathematical laws not as guarantors of a stable and normed universe but, on the contrary, as revealers of a complex and agitated world (Pollet 2011, 108).

Once beyond the apparent scientificity produced by the succession of topological figures and texts by renowned mathematicians, physicists, and art historians, *The Situationist Times* is indeed underpinned by a playful framework, continually poised between the serious and the facetious. Topology is used to overcome the limitations of Euclidean geometry, which appears inadequate to understand an increasingly chaotic world and to take into account the observer's point of view (Rossi, forthcoming).

In *secundis*, de Jong's magazine is useful as it shows what it means to organise space with topological forms. Topology not only fills the pages but seems to inform the very logic of the magazine, where a single potential figure in constant motion unfolds homeomorphically in infinite deformations. Namely, it offers the possibility of conceiving a project on paper by means of continuous metamorphic movement that affects both the forms that inhabit it and the medium that enables it.

Finally, it is important because it provides a way to conclude and bridge a journey that from the eminently theoretical thought of Groys led the analysis through the intellectual but equally practical insights of de Certeau to an editorial design manifestation capable of embodying theoretical thought in sensible form. In other words, it allows the reader-traveller's point of view to appreciate the different planes of fascination that topology can exert on scrapbooking.

3 Narcissus, Make Yourself Pretty! Why Does the Gay Version Always Look Better?

Isa Genzken's *Mach dich hübsch!*, Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen's *ALBUM* and Hudinilson Jr.'s *Cadernos de referências* represent three significant examples of a rather layered contemporary scrapbook scenario. From the topological reflections, practices and *derives* of Groys, de Certeau and de Jong respectively, it is possible to appreciate their space and design from renovated light.

The tension between original and copy is evident, for example, in Hudinilson Jr.'s scrapbooks. These absorb clippings and ephemera from magazines and newspapers over a span of more than thirty years of cultural and media production. Found images are not simply pasted into the *Cadernos* but are replicated countless times and each time they are edited, cut, xeroxed, altered in resolution [figs 1-2]. Each copy becomes an original in the context that hosts and enhances it. The artist's attention to reproduction techniques and the layout of elements on the double-page space is a fundamental aspect of the construction of a topology of the self. The *Cadernos*, which number more than 120, as a whole seem to delineate an image of the male that unfolds homeomorphically in infinite variations. The deformations of this single metaphorical body in constant motion entirely fill the double pages that leave no room for the medium to emerge. There is no space outside this figure that fragmented, torn, and readily re-assembled interrogates the nature of the image and challenges its status as a copy.

The male body is investigated topologically and pornographicaly. Narcissus is the mythological figure the artist constantly refers to (Stigger 2020), renewing its meaning and role in the image-consuming contemporary world. The pages present themselves as a mirror. More than objects of vision, they are voracious eyes scrutinising a helpless reader, who immediately perceives the objectification to which they are destined [figs 3-4]. This continuous and silent questioning of what is original and what is copy, of what is object and subject of vision, produces a pervasive non-orientability. This, rather than generating stillness, stimulates an incessant flux and metamorphosis of gaze and space that are the very essence of this illusion of desire on paper [fig. 5] (Rossi 2021).

The practices of poaching and gleaning proposed by de Certeau and Garvey - capable of highlighting not only the context of circular exchange in which scrapbooking evolves but also enucleating strategies of reappropriation of an increasingly dysfunctional everydayness - may instead shed new light on the fanzine *ALBUM*, by artist Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen [fig. 6]. Created entirely from found images taken from etiquette manuals, cookbooks, travel and fashion magazines, and sex manuals circulated in Scandinavia between

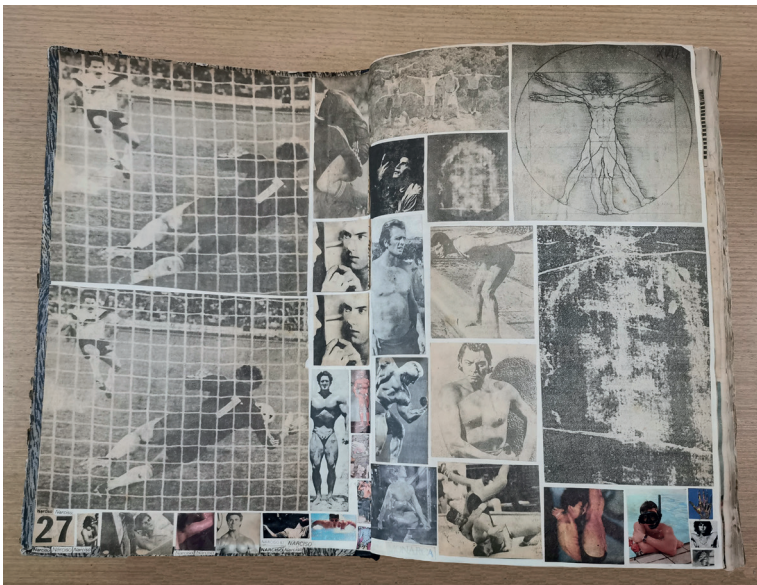


Figure 1 Hudinilson Jr., *Caderno de referências XX*. 1980s. Prints, newspapers cutouts, magazines cutouts, documents, photocopies, prints on paper. Unique. 22 × 33 × 7 cm (closed). Courtesy Galeria Jaqueline Martins (São Paulo/Brussels) and Hudinilson Jr. Estate. Photo Simone Rossi

Figure 2 Hudinilson Jr., *Caderno de referências XVII*. 1980/2000s. Photographic prints, newspaper and magazine cutouts, photocopies and documents on paper. Unique. 23 × 32,5 × 10 cm (closed). Courtesy Galeria Jaqueline Martins (São Paulo/Brussels) and Hudinilson Jr. Estate. Photo Simone Rossi

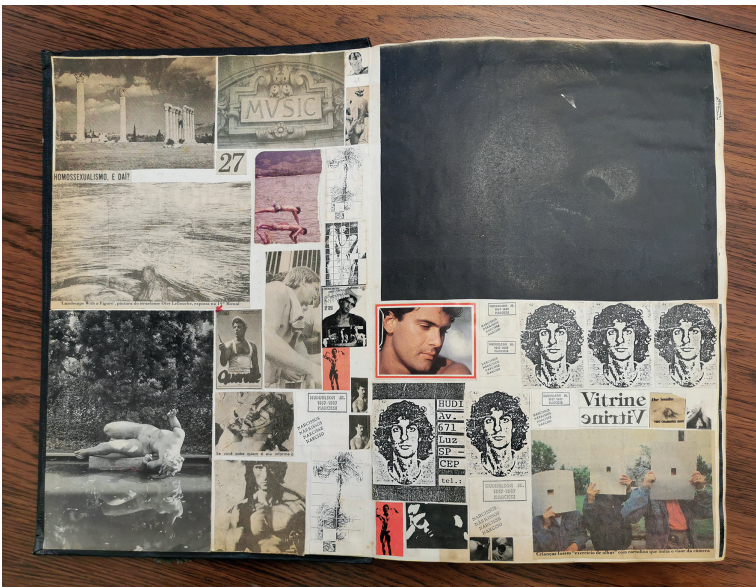
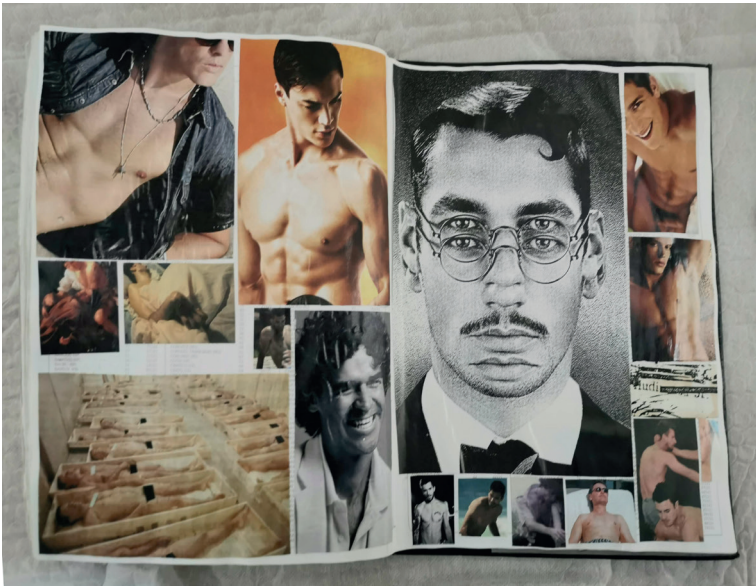


Figure 3 Hudinilson Jr., *Caderno de referências 125*. 2000s. Photograph prints, newspaper and magazine cutouts, photocopies and documents on paper. Unique. 22 × 28 × 5 cm (closed). Courtesy Galeria Jaqueline Martins (São Paulo/Brussels) and Hudinilson Jr. Estate. Photo: Simone Rossi

Figure 4 Hudinilson Jr., *Caderno de referências IX*. 1980s. Photograph prints, newspaper and magazine cutouts, photocopies and documents on paper. Unique. 22 × 33 × 4 cm (closed). Galeria Jaqueline Martins (São Paulo/Brussels) and Hudinilson Jr. Estate. Photo Simone Rossi. Courtesy



Figure 5 Hudinilson Jr., *Caderno de referências XVII*. 1980/2000s. Photographic prints, newspaper and magazine cutouts, photocopies and documents on paper. Unique. 23 × 32,5 × 10 cm (closed). Courtesy Galeria Jaqueline Martins (São Paulo/Brussels) and Hudinilson Jr. Estate

the 1960s and 1980s, *ALBUM* reflects in retrospect on the popular imagery present in Scandinavian households during that period. It offers a refined and sharp meta-narrative on the human body, sexuality, and social life of images that shows how the media act and create stereotypes and, at the same time, how the reader can transform these streams of information into elements of cultural critique [figs 7-8]. Scrapbooking, habitually used to reframe the present, becomes a propaedeutic tool for a mocking and biting, but no less serious, rereading of cultural history. Indeed, the hilarity that exudes from the pages of the fanzine takes no time to reveal itself for what it actually is: a sincere and superficial questioning of a series of taboos and clichés on which Scandinavian, and more generally, European culture has been culturally and sexually erected. The chosen images are neatly displayed, always in their entirety and never overlapping, and the reading is organised into a series of heavy themes expressed in the form of ironic questions, such as “on heterosexuality, or why does the gay version always look better?” Or “on the condition of the lonely man and his search for meaning and love” [fig. 9].

Another intriguing detail of *ALBUM* is that its medium appears to be continually in metamorphosis. The original images undergo a series of reproduction and layout processes that continually and topolog-



Figure 6 Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen, *ALBUM*. 2014. Courtesy of the artists, Primary Information, and Teknisk Industri AS

ically alter their use value. In 2014, both an exhibition⁶ and the publication of a facsimile of the first ten issues of the fanzine take place. A year later, at Harvard University's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, another medial shift occurs. In the showcase dedicated to the project, pre-xeroxed original collages are displayed along with facsimile posters and some of the fanzine's most iconic pages.⁷ Exploiting the permeability of the practice, artists Storsveen and Mugaas thus manage to work on multiple levels simultaneously, for an elastic and medially impure understanding of the scrapbooking space.

Finally, Isa Genzken's scrapbooking practice also seems to suggest a topological understanding of its space.⁸ In this case, rather

⁶ The show was held at White Columns, New York from 11 June to 26 July 2014. <https://whitecolumns.org/exhibitions/primary-information-album/>.

⁷ More info can be found at <https://carpenter.center/program/album> and at <https://jamesvoorhies.com/projects/display-case>.

⁸ *Mach dich hübsch!* is the second scrapbook published as a facsimile by the artist. The title can be translated as 'Make yourself pretty!'. It follows the publication of *I Love New York, Crazy City* (2006) published within an artists' books series edited by Beatrix Ruf, also co-curator of *Mach dich hübsch!* exhibition at Stedelijk in 2015-16. The two facsimiles are similar in terms of composition techniques and large format.



Figure 7 Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen, *ALBUM*. 2014. Courtesy of the artists, Primary Information, and Teknisk Industri AS

Figure 8 Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen, *ALBUM*. 2014. Courtesy of the artists, Primary Information, and Teknisk Industri AS



Figure 9 Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen, *ALBUM*, 2014. Courtesy of the artists, Primary Information, and Teknisk Industri AS

than the male body as in Hudinilson Jr.'s example, it is the metamorphic becoming of seductive references and spatial representations that informs Genzken's narrative, which invites a fast-paced scrolling where the single element becomes significant only in the formal and conceptual relationships it establishes with other elements in space (Thürlemann 2019). Different coloured adhesive tapes frame, censor, divide, and layer content on the page. Their function from paratextual becomes the absolute protagonist and makes explicit the meticulous work of sedimentation, layering, and research accomplished. Under the tapes an entire submerged psychogeographical narrative moves as if in watermark, and only sometimes emerges, as if after an apnea [fig. 10]. The movement of the narrative seems intrinsically linked to the emotion that grips the artist when confronted with certain content. Recalling the etymological affinity linking movement to emotion (Bruno 2002, 6), Genzken's feelings shape a visual framework that makes its own the principle of Situationist *détournement*, namely that the most effective way of representing reality today seems to be the appropriation and free manipulation of its fragments. Fragments that are not manipulated statically but cut up and reconstructed through movement.

Genzken's facsimile also allows to note how private scrapbooks, when published, often are released as rare and very expensive editions, more like a precious coffee table book than a notebook of experiences filled with clippings and scraps, with ephemeral value. Such formalisations completely overturn the use value of the materials, which now appear musealised. Transformed into objects to be admired in their sacred stillness, they thus risk losing that predisposition to transformation that analysis seeks, on the contrary, to renew.

If one examines the facsimile of *Mach dich hübsch!*, it becomes immediately clear that such a reproduction prevents one from moving the stickers, lifting the paper, flipping through the images, and especially from highlighting the pages in which the play of overlapping and intertwining is deliberately disassemblable. The reading returns to favour a two-dimensional horizontal scrolling that the design of the scrapbook had originally intended to elide, working not only superficially, but also vertically, down to the bottom of the page. While revealing structural and conceptual limitations, however, the facsimile in any case makes it possible not only to recover ephemeral materials that would otherwise be much more difficult to approach, but also to broaden the audience and the meaning of that operation, which from being eminently private now becomes of socio-cultural relevance.



Figure 10 Isa Genzken, *Mach dich hübsch!*. 2015.
Courtesy the artist and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König

4 Conclusions

The essay attempts an interpretation of scrapbooking capable of highlighting its space in mobile and deformative terms. The medium is thought of not only as a fixed object made of forms in constant transformation, but as a space of movement itself, which can be continually distorted and deformed without gaining or losing its actual properties.

Enhancing the scrapbook's own space of enunciation, the analysis offers an initial overview of a practice continually evolving. Scrapbooking can be read as a way of being and communicating, a practice in which the boundary between the personal and the social becomes blurred, in which projection and absorption collide, and the imaginary takes power, designing and channelling a person's lifelong gaze and desires, as in Hudinilson Jr.'s case; or the scrapbook can renew and reinvent its value by getting printed in facsimile and thus entering fully into the publishing system, as in Genzken's example; or, eventually, scrapbooking can inform the design of magazines, fanzines, and a wide range of publishing projects that absorb its typical techniques of composition and use of materials, as *ALBUM* demonstrates.

Contrary to what one would expect, paper scrapbooking is not actually disappearing as the digital age advances. As it dematerialises in blogs (like Tumblr), social media (like Instagram) and other platforms (like Are.na), it continues to stimulate and inform numerous paper-based projects, renewing forms and modes of consumption.

Many scrapbooks by prominent designers and artists are being published as facsimiles.⁹ Major exhibitions dedicated to the art scrapbook have been organised,¹⁰ and curatorial actions that operate on museum space in an editorial way are taking shape.¹¹ A growing number of publishing experiments are also emerging that explicitly mimic the practice of scrapbooking to develop objects that are difficult to catalogue but nevertheless created for publication, thus reversing the original marginality and privateness of the tool.¹²

⁹ Among the many, in Western culture only, worth mentioning are the ones by Cecil Beaton, Walter Pfeiffer, Wendell Castle and Albe Steiner.

¹⁰ The curatorial and editorial work done by American rare book collector and curator Andrew Roth is here inspiring, particularly the exhibition *Paperwork: A Brief History of Artists' Scrapbooks* held in New York at the Andrew Roth Gallery in 2013 and at ICA London in 2014.

¹¹ *Museum for Preventive Imagination*, the three-year program envisioned by curator Luca Lo Pinto at Macro, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome, is for example conceived as an exhibition project articulated by imagining the museum as a three-dimensional magazine, developed around themes and formats that function as columns to accommodate heterogeneous content. <https://www.museomacro.it/institution/museum-for-preventive-imagination/>.

¹² In this regard, of interest are the *FAUND*, a magazine conceived by graphic designers Daniel Pianetti and Renato Zulli, made entirely of material found on the In-

Overall, the practice seems to problematise some fundamental binarisms of Western thought, such as private and public, social and identity, high and low culture, imaginary and real, original and copy, proposing a new space of experience and counter-narrative with both personal and cultural value. It also triggers issues such as the heterodox construction of identity, the deep relationship that binds modern people to mass media information, and the reader's not only passive-contemplative position in the spectacle of the world. Likewise, it allows to emphasise some more purely design issues, such as the conversion of the primordial use value of the medium that host the practice, and the further transformation that the medium undergoes when it enters the publishing system; or, even, the 'amateur professionalism' that empowers a single person to invent a complex editorial role where multiple editorial tasks have to be fulfilled, ranging from material research to graphic design.

The use of a series of examples using topology to reflect on notions of space, medium, original, reading, and culture is thus intended to suggest a possible lens for studying a practice that spatially transforms and resemantises the elements and the medium it recycles. Concepts such as homeomorphism and non-orientability, never used scientifically but much more 'superficially', can nevertheless help develop trajectories of understanding the constantly moving forms and labyrinthine space that scrapbooks display. These references, along with three examples of vastly different artist scrapbooking, allow tangent reflections that attempt to depict a multifaceted and vast contemporary scrapscape.

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Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Andrea Nalesso

Orbital Dying Watching the Crucifixion from God's Point of View

Martin Wiesinger

HFBK Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg, Deutschland

Abstract A small drawing made by Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591) shows the Crucifixion in a rare, if not unique, view from above. Opening with a closer look at the restoration report as well as the iconographic reception of the drawing within later images, the following paper seeks to bring out the drawing's triangular constellation of subject, image and others in regard of the intertwined dynamics of individuality, positioning and image-making. The diagonal perspective onto the Passion speaks from a dis-placed subjectivity in face of the image and by the example of the author's own practice of drawing, a possible understanding of this rare point of view shall be gained.

Keywords Crucifixion. John of the Cross. Drawing. Bird's-eye View. Orbit. Altar. Artist. Audience.

Summary 1 Searching for the Author's Traces and Position. – 2 The Cloud and the Crowd. – 3 Several Bystanders... – 4 ... and Two Idiots. – 5 The Overview.

If only, on your silvered-over faces,
You would suddenly form
The eyes I have desired,
That I bear sketched deep within my heart.

Withdraw them, Beloved,
I am taking flight!

(John of the Cross, *The Spiritual Canticle (CB)*, 12-13)

1 Searching for the Author's Traces and Position

In 1968, the restorer Vicente Viñas Torner was asked by Father Juan Bosco of the Discalced Carmelite Order to take care of a tiny drawing that was made between 1574 and 1577 by the Spanish mystic and Doctor of the Church, Saint John of the Cross [fig. 1].¹ Father Juan Bosco was urged to search for help by the drawing's alarming state of disintegration: about half of it was already covered with black stains that carried away the graphic image into a blurring darkness.²

Viñas Torner could stop the process of blackening and liberate the drawing from the stains. Once again, the small paper was saved from vanishing by caretakers, long time after it had left its creator's hands. Before it was inserted into the monstrance during the first decades of the seventeenth century, there must have been not much left of it but a tiny shred. Back then, it was showing just a fragmented rest of a body as well as a geometrical construction behind it [fig. 2]. Nothing was left but two arms, one hand, some drops of fluid in the moment of falling, and one nail, connecting the left hand with the constructive element in the back. Of course, this must have been the Crucifixion of Christ.

As immediate as we can recognise these few elements in their iconographic tradition as Crucifixion, the way we see them - the uniqueness of the perspective in which we see them in this version drawn by John of the Cross - stands in contrast to the conventional representation of the Passion. Because conventionally, we are standing right in front of the cross, facing and mirroring the fixed body.³

To use the orbital sphere as a (non-)localisation of the mind within the process of imagination is a metaphor I gained from the artistic work of Sophie Lindner, to whom I am thankful for this 'orientation'.

1 No certain title of the drawing has become established within the field of research. From *La Vision de Jésus Crucifié* (Florissoone 1956) over *Le Christ en Croix* (Oliver, Gelabert 2016) to *Drawing of the Crucified Christ* (Kavanaugh, Rodriguez 2017), several variations can be found.

2 All following details concerning the material aspects of the drawing were taken from Torners restoration report. See Torner 2015.

3 With art historian Daniela Bohde we can make out spacial variations of the frontal perspective onto the cross in southern German art from 1500 to 1530. By rotating the cross within the image, the onlooker was set into "dialogische [...] Kreuzigungen" (di-

But now, way above the cross, we observe the martyr as if we see it with the eyes – God? Or is the drawing just the outcome of an artistic practice by a spiritual who found a small crucifix lying on a table next to him a worthy subject (Oliver, Gelabert 2016)? The speculation about the draftsman's original intention will not come to an end, not to ask if there ever had been one clear and verbalisable intention that lead him.

Viñas Torner found out that during a first restoration in the seventeenth century an authority unknown did not just add new lines to the image by bringing back most of the body of Christ; also the remaining original lines were redrawn by this unknown restorer, covering the last traces of the original hand of Saint John of the Cross and in consequence, making the drawing a graphic palimpsest. This first restorer's will to save the drawing from decay was stronger than his skills, according to Viñas Torner, and therefore causing the blackening over the centuries. Nevertheless, all these caretakers found the small drawing of high value, not only because his creator was a saint. It is the drawings perspective, facing every spectator with the same question: 'with whose eyes am I looking at the Crucifixion and why should I actually put myself into this elevated position?'

Far away from even touching this blasphemous tendency of the drawing's perspective as an apotheosis of the spectator by putting him or her into the position of God, the visual comments on the genesis of this artwork concentrate on the spatial circumstances under which the drawing was made.⁴

One of the first images trying to explain the genesis of the drawing is accompanying the description of the vision within the hagiography written by Jerónimo de San José in 1641. According to Jerónimo (1993, 252-5), the image of the crucified as seen from above was a visionary appearance John of the Cross received while contemplating about the suffering of Jesus. Only afterwards, the Saint grabbed a pen to capture what he had first seen with the eyes of his soul. Nevertheless, when Jerónimo describes the perspective of the drawing, he talks about the Saint having seen the crucifix in a way as if he had been sitting on one of the tribunes which were common in the churches at those times, located next to the main altar.

alogical crucifixions) that confronted the onlooker with his own role of watching the scene (Bohde 2014, 86). Within drawings from Martin Schongauer, Albrecht Dürer or Hans Baldung, the alignment of the cross connects the geometrical composition with a symbolical meaning, moreover, a moral message: "So ist man kein neutraler Zuschauer mehr, sondern gezwungen, über die eigene Position und das eigene Verhältnis zu Christus nachzudenken" (86) (Thus, one is no longer a neutral spectator, but forced to reflect on one's own position and relation to Christ).

⁴ For a comprehensive collection of the reception of the drawing within other images, see Florisoone 1975, 60-77; 1956, 191-7.



Figure 1 John of the Cross, drawing of the Crucified Christ. 1574-77. Ink on Paper, 6.4 × 5.1 cm. Ávila, Museo del Monasterio de la Encarnación. © Photograph by the Author

When visualising this explanation within the publication of the first hagiography, the engraver Herman Panneels comes to a twofold solution showing the origin of the drawing as a visionary imagination as well as a real observation within the ecclesiastical building – even though the inner room of the church he had depicted was of a highly schematic outlook [fig. 3]. The angle in which the Crucifixion was drawn by John of the Cross forced both Jerónimo as well as his engraver Panneels to speculate about the spatial position in which the vision could have been optically received even though it was declared to be non-optical but visionary.

2 The Cloud and the Crowd

Herman Panneels shows us an image that is carrying several layers, or rather, it is opening several pictorial spaces. Each of them cuts open the one that it appears in and thereby redefines the status of its own ontological position within the bigger picture. None of the parts can be called a layer in the sense of a flat insertion, as their in-

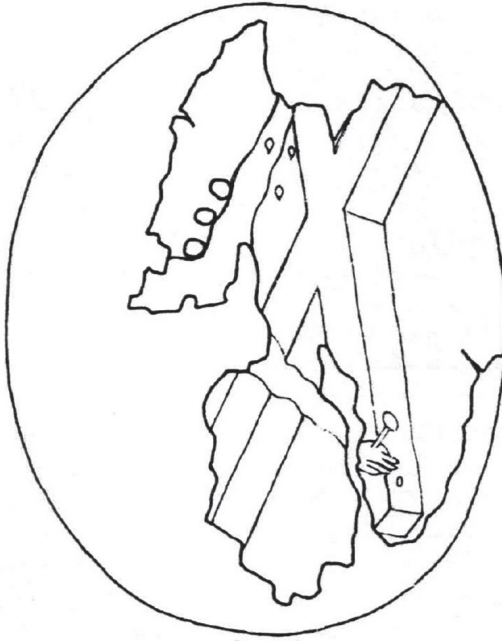


Figure 2
Scheme accompanying
the restoration report
by Vicente Viñas Torner (2015)
to outline the remaining
original part of the drawing

volvement within the whole image is that of a door opener for another spatial setting and each one influences the meaning of the other parts regarding the distinction not just between inner and outer imagery, but also between what we see and what John of the Cross sees.

The three-dimensional interior of the room lays out a grounding 'reality' from which the cloud-framed vision is distinguished, as Ganz (2008, 18) defines the "Modell negativer Analogie" (model of negative analogy) between reality and vision within the image.⁵ The clouds' moving vagueness marks the threshold between the linear perspective of the ecclesiastical room on the outside and the immeasurable depth of paper-coloured ground on the inside of the visionary field. In symbolically functioning as a purified ground where the crucifix can appear, the blanc surface of the paper within the clouds con-

5 An English translation of Ganz (2008) is announced as *Spaces of Revelation. Visions in Medieval Art*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2021 (Studies in the Visual Culture of the Middle Ages). In his description of methods depicting visionary experience, Ganz also refers to Stoichita 1997.



Figure 3 Herman Panneels, 1641. Graving. First published in Jerónimo de San José, 1641. Taken from the 1993 edition

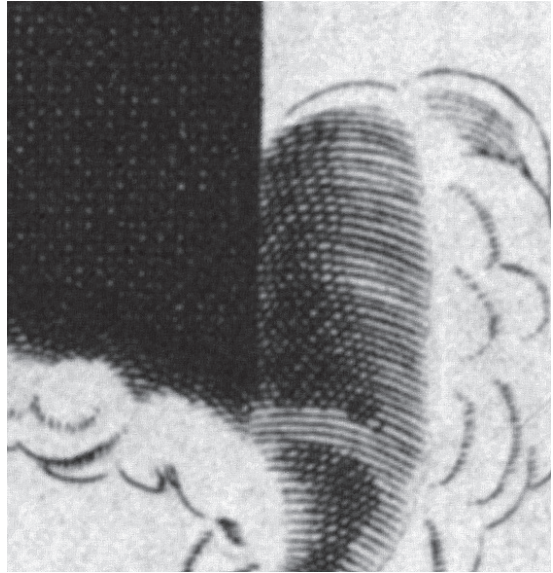


Figure 4 Herman Panneels, 1641. Detail

trasts the measurable depth of the 'real' space due to its irrational void. Nevertheless, the 'reality' of the depicted church room - which is seen almost exclusively on the left side of the graving - is threatened by several aspects.

John of the Cross receives the vision from within a darkness that immerses him in another irrational depth, as if the bright field of his vision needs to correlate with a dark background of nothingness. We, too, encounter this darkness at the end of the ecclesiastical room, the vanishing point itself seems to have vanished into it, in this also unsettling our impression of seeing a 'real' space. The two dark and two bright areas each seem to provide the possibility of creating a grey-scaled visual figure formed by graphic lines, but also they stand for its dissolution. Within the clouds, this *Gratwanderung* between dark and light takes place [fig. 4].⁶

Panneels needs to depict the Crucifixion two times, its status as one image seen twice gives a hint at the consequence in which one

⁶ Here, the german *Gratwanderung* connects the metaphorical meaning of wandering along a mountain ridge (*Grat*) in the sense of a balancing act with the burr (*Grat*) that is being created alongside linear carvings in a metal plate.

image causes the other as soon as the perspectives and therefore the individual positions from where it is seen, differ in time and/or space. This is because we see John of the Cross receiving the appearance and the appearance as how he sees it simultaneously. It confuses identities and positions in face of the image and interchanges our viewpoints, so that we see the Saint from the outside while receiving the vision and we see him also from the inside (that is, we take over his view). The doubled Crucifixion within Panneels' graving involuntarily comments on the fact that the prototype, as any kind of original image to be traced back to, is untraceable.

But whereas the small crucifix situated on the altar is a visionary appearance within the pictorial space of the church room and therefore an image inside an image, the appearance of the big crucifix is threatening the whole picture by displacing the three-dimensional interior with pure void. The small crucifix cuts a circle into the 'real' space of the ecclesiastical setting, the big one is about to push away all of it, as the clouds spread towards us, crawling along the tiles on the floor.⁷

Ready to receive the approaching vision, the Saint is standing behind the window that gives view to the theatrical space of the church. Furthermore, this window cuts open the integrity of his own identity as it is held together by the sequence of the letters that figurate his name, the name that makes him an individual subject.

We can see "IOANN [] ES", as it is written onto the wall and opened up by the squared hole of the window, allowing an exchange between inside and outside. This self-opening of the individual name gives access to the sacred area, possibly identifying the church room with the inside of John of the Cross and inverting the ecclesiastical space into the interior of his soul to prepare it for the meeting of Christ and soul alone.⁸ On one hand, the balustrade separates our area from the Saint's and makes us an audience that is attending this moment of intimate revelation as witnesses. On the other hand, we are overwhelmed by the approaching vision on the right side, getting involved into the moment of visionary appearance. It raises the question whether the space we see here is public or intimate, whether the crucified appears to John of the Cross alone or if he appears to all of us.

7 The pun of 'the cloud and the crowd' refers to a printed dialogue between Catherine Keller and Richard Kearney. The cloud as a paradox apophatic appearance of God to the individual has an infinite number of witnesses, as Keller and Kearney emphasize. Countless narrations of experiences follow the ever-shaping figures of that cloud. With Nicolas of Cusa, Keller and Kearney see the chance to turn apophatic theology into politics that try to bridge the gaps between different positions, making the individual experience of something unsayable and incommunicable the basis for a tolerant exchange between different perspectives. See Kearney 2019, 98.

8 If we read the ecclesiastical room as the inside of John of the Cross, it fits his own idea of the self "to become an altar for the offering of a sacrifice" when "[t]he soul will be clothed in a new understanding of God in God" (Kavanaugh, Rodriguez 2017, 129).

As his hands are raised in front of the chest in a gesture of pray and receptivity, they wait to fulfil their capability to draw what the mind was seeing the very moment and they are willing to share what only the eyes of John of the Cross had seen. His hands stand in severe contrast to the fixed hands of the Crucified, nailed onto the wooden bar and incapable of any further action.

There is no sign of a pen in the hands of the Saint and so we can say, Panneels was following Jerónimo's explanation that the vision was drawn onto paper after the reception of the vision. Still, there is a hypothetical space in which we see John of the Cross and even though he might not have needed to sit on the tribune of a real church, two aspects lead Jerónimo to at least compare the perspective with the one from a gallery situated on the side of the altar.

On the one hand, it is hard to imagine oneself being able to draw this axonometric perspective of the cross without a real view on it. On the other side, this view might have reminded Jerónimo of the position that was reserved for spiritual or secular leaders who were used to sit above the crowd, in a position different to where the common people were situated - namely, underneath and in front of the cross.

3 Several Bystanders...

The difference between the outstanding elevated position of one individual having a view that is not the one of the people is, as mentioned above, already outlined within the hagiography of Jerónimo de San José:

Y para que así le viese, es fácil considerar y creer estaría el siervo de Dios en alguna ventana o tribuna, que en las iglesias de conventos suele haber al lado del altar mayor, en medio del cual se considera haberle aparecido, vuelto derechamente al pueblo. (Jerónimo [1641] 1993, 255)

And because we see him [the Crucified] that way, it is easy to consider and to believe that the servant of God [John of the Cross] would be in some window or tribune, which in the churches of convents is usually located next to the main altar, in the middle of which it [the vision] is considered to have appeared to him, turned straight to the people.⁹

This small note about the cross being "turned straight to the people" reveals the hierarchy giving to understand that by the look one obtains in the Saint's drawing, it is 'me up here on the tribune and

⁹ If not indicated otherwise, all translations are by the Author.

down there is not just the Crucified, but also the assumed crowd of onlookers standing frontally to the cross'. The confrontation of the individual look with the common look is marking the outstanding position of the mystics within their institution, the church, or generally speaking, the question of how to deal with individual experience in the face of conventionalised language.

Michel de Certeau draws attention to the fact that John of the Cross, as other mystics, found himself within a position of social and ethnical discrimination, striving for new ways on old streets in a time of dramatic changes within the Christian church and within European society in general (de Certeau 1992, 17-26).

Staying inside of an overcome clerical and theological language building, the mystics did not leave the Christian community but searched for new combinations of words to express their religious experiences – always on the edge to heresy.

[Their] 'manners of speaking' relate the struggle of the mystics to language. More precisely, they are traces left by that struggle, like the stones Jacob blessed and left near Yabboq after his night of wrestling with the angel. (de Certeau 1992, 114)

Teresa of Ávila, a close companion of John of the Cross and the leading force behind the reformative process within the Carmelite order, did so by writing in a highly personal and detailed manner about her visions, positioning her subjective experience as a fortress against the threat of supervision by the inquisition. John of the Cross, instead, straddles the sayable by a poetic oeuvre in which the *unio mystica* as the wedding of the soul with God is allegorically hidden within radical secular love songs of an unbearable eroticism, even violence and self-sacrifice:

O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
The Lover with his beloved,
Transforming the beloved in her Lover.

Upon my flowering breast,
Which I kept wholly for him alone,
There he lay sleeping,
And I caressing him
There in a breeze from the fanning cedars.

When the breeze blew from the turret,
As I parted his hair,
It wounded my neck

With its gentle hand,
Suspending all my senses.
(*The Dark Night*, 5-7; Kavanaugh, Rodriguez 2017, 51)

It is the mystic's speech preparing the 'I' as a welcoming ground for God, but not as a subject that is in triumphant possession of itself, but one that is ready to lose itself completely within the dark void of the *nada*, as John of the Cross calls it - to be found by God.

Regarding the writings of Teresa of Ávila, Alois Haas points it out as follows:

Wie keine andere ist die mystische Rede am Ich-Sagen interessiert, da sie einzig es ist, die die Gotteserfahrung zu verbürgen in der Lage ist. Wo Gott sich dem inneren Menschen nähert, ja einigt, da läßt sich die Beweislast für diese Begegnung und Vereinigung mit Gott niemand anderem auflasten: Das Ich muß für seine Innerlichkeit selber einstehen. (Haas 1998, 612)

Like no other, the mystical speech is interested in I-saying, since it is the only one capable of vouching for the experience of God. Where God approaches, even unites, with the inner, the burden of proof for this encounter and unification with God cannot be placed on someone else: the I has to stand in for its inwardness itself.

Spaemann (quoted in Haas 1998, 616) calls this authorised position from where the mystics speak, the "Festungshöhe des Ich" (Fortress height of the I) that is not just elevating the subject into an overview which identifies itself with the position of certainty and authority. It also catapults the self into a sphere of "unbeteiligte[m] Zuschauen" (uninvolved watching).

Banned onto the gallery, this view is the one we obtain observing the Crucified from above. Apart from raising the question of theodicy - 'why is god not interfering in face of the cruelty that takes place?' -, the drawing contains a hidden diagram regarding the triangular constellation of subject (me looking), object (the image, the Crucified) and the yet unseen but assumed bystanders (as we know because of the cross being "turned straight to the people").

The condition of the individual experience as being set apart from any of the others' points of view is inherent to the tiny drawing of the Carmelite. Its constellation can be made more tangible in comparison to a different and more collaborative practice in the face of an image, the one that is instructed by Nicolas of Cusa in his writing *De Visione Dei* from 1463.

Nicolas of Cusa had sent a letter to the monks of the Tegernsee as well as a painted icon showing the Son of God. The monks wished to be guided through Cusanus' mystical theology, but instead of giving them

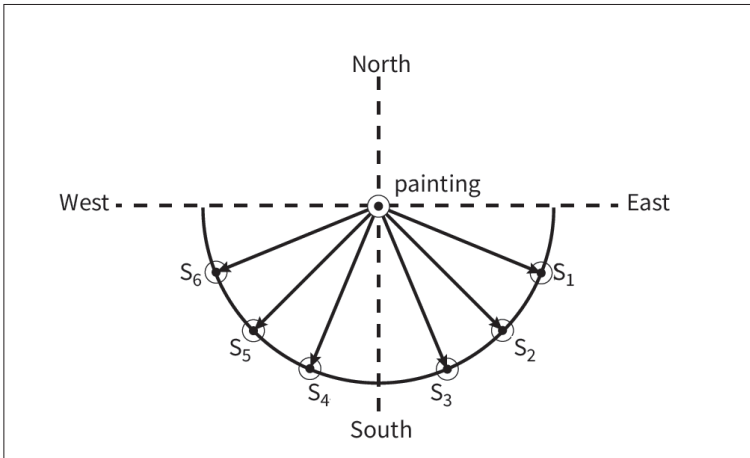


Figure 5 The scene: a stratification of spaces and a relation of positions. Diagram taken from Certeau 2015, 42

a written explanation alone, he directs them to experience a paradox phenomenon in front of the painted image. They should hang the icon onto the wall and set themselves up in a semicircle in front of it [fig. 5].

Now, each of them realises that his own look meets the one of the painted Christ and even when he moves from east to west in front of the image, the look of Christ is following him. As if this were not enough of a wondrous phenomenon, Cusanus goes further by telling the monks to share their experience with one another. In consequence follows what de Certeau (2015, 46) calls “[t]he social Space of the Look: Believing”.

It is not just the look of the painted face following the own individual look that is leading to astonishment. Furthermore, Cusanus points out what the brothers can reveal to each other – that the icon is looking at each one of them individually and at all of them at the same time. This paradox shall stand for the way of looking which cannot be understood and which is only reserved to God – to see everything at once. As de Certeau emphasises, the only way for the monks to get a glimpse into this paradox enlightenment is to believe each other what they experienced individually:

This passage is accomplished first by a transposition of the not-knowing/known relation to a relation between an initial astonishment (“I don’t believe my eyes about it”) and a final assent (“I believe what the other says about it”).

[...] A *will* marks the threshold of an access to a regimen of operations that is other, achieved by several and no longer alone: it makes a qualitative change of space, by allowing the introduction of a social field into the visual one. (de Certeau 2015, 48)

The will to know bridges the unbridgeable gap between two or more individual positions according to de Certeau, as it was practiced with Nicolas of Cusa's spiritual guidance as an exercise in front of the image. Therefore, the individual experience of a paradox and godly revelation needed a community of ones willing to believe each other about what they see. But this is just one possible outcome of the diagrammatic structure that is set up in face of the image.

4 ... and Two Idiots

Changing from agreement to disagreement, from the will to believe each other to neglecting communication or even setting up a false truth, two further examples shall illustrate the intertwined dynamics between the solitary perspective on one side, as it is connected - for better or worse - to a community of views bundled into one, on the other side.

First, there is *The Fat Woodworker*, written by Antonio Manetti in the late fifteenth century. Taking place in Florence in 1409, the story tells us how the world of Manetto (being called the 'Fat Woodworker' and not to be confused with the story's author Manetti) is being turned upside down from one day to another. In a meticulous plan forming some kind of *Truman Show* of the Renaissance, Filippo Brunelleschi drafts a set up against Manetto in which several members of the local society play the role of convincing Manetto of not being himself anymore, but someone else called Matteo. After talking to his stolen self through the closed door of his own (former) house, he begins striving through the city, constantly meeting people who call him Matteo and not Manetto. Little by little and during several conversations, the tricked loses faith in his former identity, standing completely confused on the Piazza San Giovanni and saying:

Jetzt bleibe ich so lange hier stehen, bis jemand kommt und mir sagt, wer ich bin. (Manetti 1993, 17)

Now I'll stand here until someone comes and tells me who I am.

Encounter after encounter, Manetto is slowly accepting his new identity as Matteo, the line between dream and reality was redrawn and blurred by the community of tricksters. It is of high significance that the mastermind of the story is Filippo Brunelleschi. It is as if the trick that he is playing to Manetto is following the same rules as his invention of the linear perspective - to optically distort all objects that are surrounding the subject into a view that is suiting his or her first-person position, giving an impression of a 'right' angle. In consequence, all elements are fitting his or her perspective, but they are also open to a fictional construction (Bach 2009).

After the resolution of the trick, Manetto could not stand staying in Florence, because this place had become the stage of his embarrassing metamorphosis. It was not just a transformation from one individuality into another, rather still he got stuck within the Neverland between two individualities, because: what if the resolution was just a trick again?

Leaving the city in a rushing manner, he only comes back for a visit now and then. During those visits, he has the chance to gradually learn about how he has been tricked, realising that most of it took place "im Kopf des Dicken" (in the head of the Fat) (Manetti 1993, 75). He had been fooled.

Another 'idiot' stands central within the second example - another story which speaks from a "Madness in the crowd" (de Certeau 1992, 31). Once again, it was Michel de Certeau who pointed out the extraordinary constellation of one individual standing crosswise to a community, when he tells us about *The Idiot Woman*, a story coming to us from the fourth century.¹⁰

Being the "sponge of the monastery" (33), the unnamed idiot woman lived within, but equally at the edge of the community of 400 sisters, being treated badly but bearing everything "without murmuring" (33). The story gets rolling when an angel appears to the ascetic Saint Piteroum, who lives solely on a mountain. The angel says, if he thinks of himself being a righteous believer, this idiot woman in the monastery is living way more in a godly manner than he does:

She is better than you. Contending with that crowd, she has never turned her heart from God, whereas you, who stay here, in thought you wander in through the cities. (33)

Piteroum descends from his elevated position both physically and symbolically, when he goes to the monastery and demands to see the woman. Then, he falls at her feet asking her to bless him, and therefore, evoking the astonishment of all the others. In return, she is mirroring his act by falling on her feet the same way, asking him for blessing. Now, the sisters aside excuse for the idiots behaviour, but Piteroum encounters:

You are the ones who are the idiots [...], for she is for me and for you our mother. (33)

After he says this, all the sisters fall on their feet themselves, confessing whatever degrading things they have done to the idiot woman. From that moment on, the community admired the woman, but,

¹⁰ De Certeau (1992) translated the story himself on the basis of the text by Butler (1904).

in consequence, makes her leave the monastery as she could not bear this admiration:

Where she went, where she hid herself, how she ended her days,
no one has found out. (33)

The woman not just left the community, she dissolved into nowhere for them and only she knows, how her story ends.

These two stories figure the vanishing points of the perspective constellation which is evoked by what we see in John of the Cross' Crucifixion. It is the moving and vivid line between the individual perspective that is solely standing aside the others'. Power and powerlessness of the outstanding position on the balcony of the world are shown as two sides of a coin that is easily being flipped around. The Archimedean point of a transcendent subject is enthroned as an outstanding perspective, but nevertheless, it is always threatened of getting lost in the void of the unbound overview, above the (common) ground.

5 The Overview

When John of the Cross drew his tiny but outstanding image in Ávila during the 1570s, not far from him, halfway to Madrid in the middle of nowhere, the Escorial was built as a centre of the world-spanning Empire of Philip II. As Christoph Asendorf puts it, the Escorial stands for

eine neuartige, nämlich bürokratische Form von Herrschaft, ausgeübt von einem nun nicht mehr reisenden Herrscher. (Asendorf 2017, 175)

a new, namely bureaucratic form of reign, exercised by a ruler who was now no longer travelling.

Merging secular and spiritual architecture within the Escorial, Philip II was able to see the altar of the central basilica from his bedroom, looking through a window - and because the Escorial was the central point bundling all the information coming from a territory mostly ever unseen to his Emperor, there was no need for Philip to travel the globe (Asendorf 2017, 175). His reign was made possible by what Latour calls the "immutable mobiles" as a system of "paperwork" (1986, 25) that made (visual) information both "optically consistent" (7) and movable anywhere.

The mobilisation of the seen was possible by the servitude of its medium, the flatness of the carrier. By flattening the world into two dimensions, the onlooker is put into a bird's-eye view automatical-

ly. Sybille Krämer calls this process central to the idea of *Graphism*, following the anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan:

Ein durch Begrenzung handlicher, oftmals auch handhabbarer und zumeist rechteckiger Raum wird erzeugt, den wir kraft seiner Verflachung – jedenfalls tendenziell – vollständig überblicken und gegebenenfalls überarbeiten können. Flächigkeit versetzt in eine Vogelflugperspektive, die das, was gezeigt wird, im Überblick darbietet. [...]

Flächigkeit evoziert den Eindruck von Sichtbarkeit, Kontrolle und Beherrschung dessen, was sich darauf zeigt; sie verwandelt den Leser und Betrachter – ein Stück weit – in externe Beobachter. (Krämer 2016, 16)

Through limitation, a rectangular space is created that is handy, often also manageable, a space that we can – at least in tendency – completely survey by virtue of its flattening and, if necessary, revise. Flatness puts into a bird's-eye view, which offers an overview of what is presented. [...]

Flatness evokes the impression of visibility, control, and mastery of what is shown on it; it transforms the reader and viewer – to some extent – into external observers.

The intelligible shift of treating a surface as if it had no depth catapults the image-maker into a space outside, giving him or her the position from where the world can be lifted out of its hinges. But the price for this position is high, replacing act with passive observation. Right here I stand, by looking onto the drawing of Saint John of the Cross, realising with God's eye that "both despair and triumph are inherent in the same event" (Arendt [1958] 2018, 262).

While creating the image, we turn our eyes away from the world – in order to look onto the flat surface, a surface that is the ground for the creation of absence.¹¹ It is not just the look of Saint John's drawing that is flying above the Crucified in an orbital and uninvolved watching, it is every look onto an image that sets us outside the world and "instead of nature or the universe [...] man encounters only himself" (261).

11 It is a small but severe shift to understand the visual presentation of a thing or a person not such much in the sense of making it present to us, but emphasising its absence. As we see the depicted thing or person, we realise it is not present at this very moment.

In this sense, Blümle and von der Heiden (2005, 13) outline Jacques Lacan's understanding of what an image does, rather than imitating or representing. With the example of a "geheime Geometrie" (hidden geometry) (13) underlying a painting of Georges Rouault – in which a group of figures is arranged in a circle around an empty centre – Lacan comes to the conclusion that this empty centre stands for the absence that is created by an image in general.

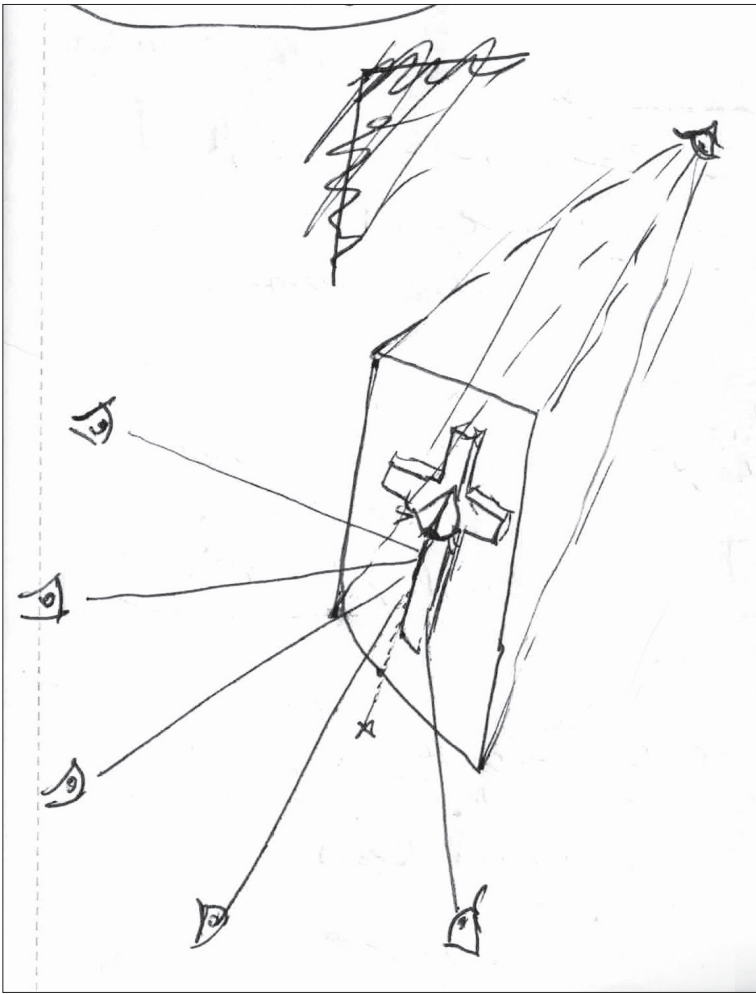


Figure 6 Sketch of the drawing's inherent constellation. 2022. © The Author

Within the constellation of this tiny work of art, the participants form a triangle of abandonment – no look meets the other anymore [fig. 6]. There is the Crucified, lost and forgotten by God, becoming an image by being killed or being killed by becoming an image. There is the crowd in which each individual is optically de-individualised, as Lambert Wiesing (2009, 218) points it out, because “[d]ie Zuschauer sitzen letztlich immer im selben Boot” (the viewers are always in the same boat in the end). None of them has an outstanding position differing from the others’ and each one loses himself or herself within a mass in which all share the same visual impression. But what about the third part, the flying eye, the idle God?

Even though the view from above can easily comment on a subjectivity that seeks to be a sovereign wholeness and loses itself in distance, the drawing seems to close itself from being read in a way that makes any further sense. What can it say to us? It stopped talking, just like the Crucified. And like every image it leaves us in the critical state of trying to give meaning to it, but there is none – we only see the act of image making itself in all its violence.¹²

Within the noise of the market hustle in which people and their images interact, change positions and get mixed up [fig. 7], the Carmelite’s drawing infuses a silence that gives way to the fear like the one of an astronaut floating away into space, hearing nothing but the own breath. John of the Cross opens a vacuum inside and around each individual onlooker as an almighty powerlessness of the *homo pictor*, showing that

both the worst fear and the most presumptuous hope of human speculation, the ancient fear that our senses, our very organs for the reception of reality, might betray us, and the Archimedean wish for a point outside the earth from which to unhinge the world, could only come true together, as though the wish would be granted only provided that we lost reality and the fear was to be consummated only if compensated by the acquisition of supramundane powers. (Arendt [1958] 2018, 262)

In this sense, Leon Battista Alberti’s emblem of the flying eye as “*quasi deus*” (Alberti quoted in Belting 2008, 231) was set out on the way to lift the modern subject into a godlike position when the draftsman is equipped with the power to unveil and to create.¹³ Anything

12 For a further understanding of the intertwined dynamics of image making and violence, see Kappeler 1988.

13 With Belting (2008, 230), we can say more precisely that the flying eye is not so much the godlike overview that sees everything at once, but the earthly application of the will to do so – a look that wants to see everything and therefore flies and races in all directions.



Figure 7 Crucifixion and Descent from the Cross as seen at the Semana Santa in Medina de Rioseco, Valladolid. Image taken from Martinez et al. (2003, 150). © F.A. Novo Pérez

yet hidden shall be discovered, anything imaginable shall be visualised and the creator will be astonished by the power of his own possibility to make visible. But with Hannah Arendt ([1958] 2018, 248-84) we can point out that the line between discovery and production is blurred, and instead of the world, we discover our images and encounter ourselves.

Apart from the idea of the draftsman or draftswoman being a visionary or creator, it is also possible to think of him or her not seeing, but blind - and the linear perspective of a focused forthcoming going over into a steadily tactile screening of the own ability to communicate both visually and scriptually.¹⁴ Within *Graphism* "als ges-

¹⁴ The idea of describing the drawer as a blind was adopted from Derrida 1997, 49. In the moment, when the pen touches the surface of the paper, the "Einschreibung des Einschreibbaren" (Inscription of the inscribable) is invisible to the drawer and therefore "muß der Strich in der Nacht vorhergehen" (the stroke must precede in the night).

tische Lösung des Problems der Menschwerdung" (as the gestural solution of the problem of *Menschwerdung*), a trace of scribbling enfolds within "einer paradoxen Parallelität von übermächtiger Kraft und wirkmächtigem Zeichen" (a paradoxical parallelism of overpowering force and powerful sign) (Driesen 2016, 322).¹⁵ This powerful sign speaks from our ability to make images, to name, to grasp and to understand. As the overpowering force, our signs and images return to us. A practice of drawing that tries to entangle these two opponents – the human need for naming on one side and this need's potential violence on the other side – has to lead the parallelism of both forces into a crossing, visually expressing an endless dialogue: 'It is. It is not.' [figs 8-10].

The balancing scribble traces back to a point before our abilities to leave a mark, to make an image and to write letters depart from one another. The scribbling, therefore, gives space to a state in which we are just about to draw a distinction, but no thing appears yet. It acknowledges the human need for making images but is aware of the consequences.

Like the mystics, the drawer could be someone who

cannot stop walking and, with the certainty of what is lacking, knows of every place and object that it is *not that*. (de Certeau 1992, 299)

Within the narcissistic arena, he or she therefore resembles God by gaining self awareness through leaving a mark, through naming or image-making, but loses the controlling power which was postulated in the beginning of the drawing process and loses himself or herself right away [fig. 11]. It is this entanglement of self awareness and powerlessness which we are facing when we look at John of the Cross' drawing. If there is any resemblance between God and a human being, it is this unstoppable disintegration in face of the depicted world. The look of the absent God above the Crucifixion equals the look of the absent human above the two-dimensional ground of visualization – leaving nothing but an eye/'I'.

The creation of images drags behind itself the trace of a visual stuttering just like the mystics' paradox speech about what is unnamable and incommunicable, a speech that sets in with the authority of the 'I' and loses itself in search for the beloved. Just as if the invisibility of the other leads to my own. When the orbital look of the

¹⁵ The translation of *Menschwerdung* into 'incarnation' would be too one-dimensionally theological, but the one into 'anthropogenesis' cannot take into account a certain impossibility of self description of the human within the scientific language. *Menschwerdung* seems to stay in between these two poles as 'being/becoming human'.



Figure 8
A Graphical Stuttering.
Detail of an unfinished
drawing. 2022 © The Author

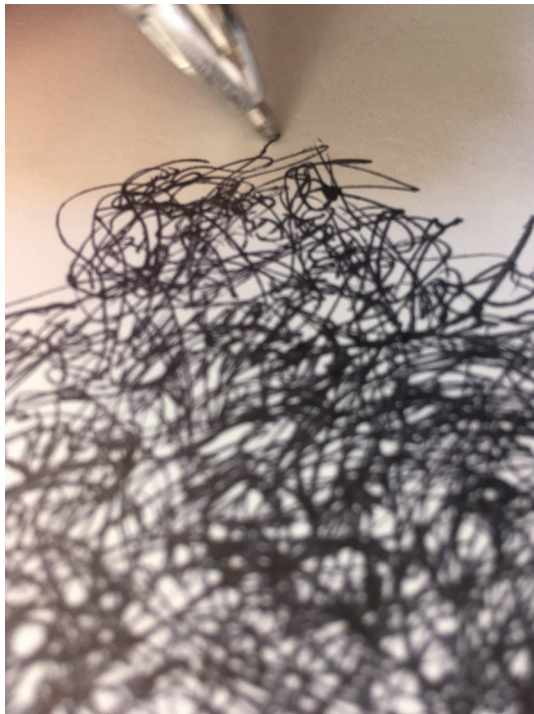


Figure 9
*The Stroke Must Precede
in the Night.* Detail.
© The Author

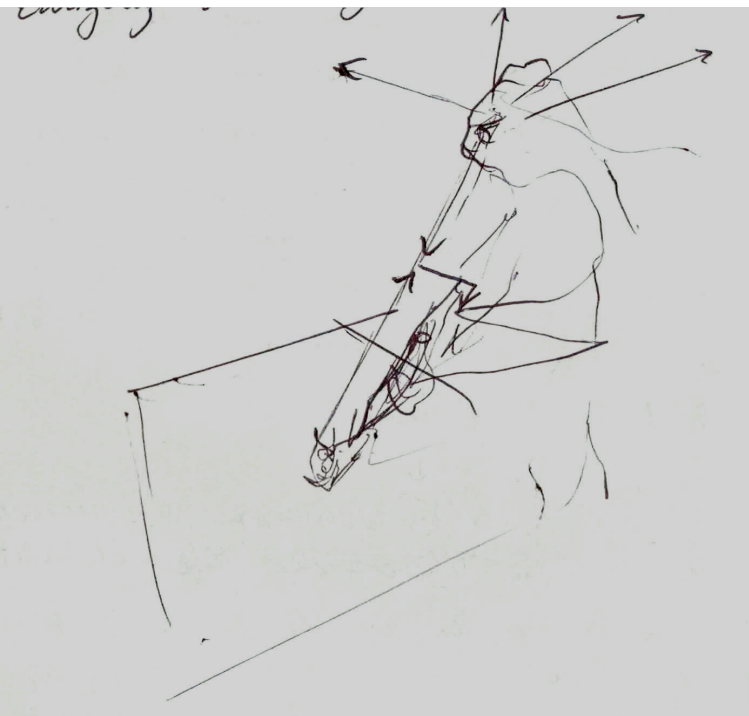
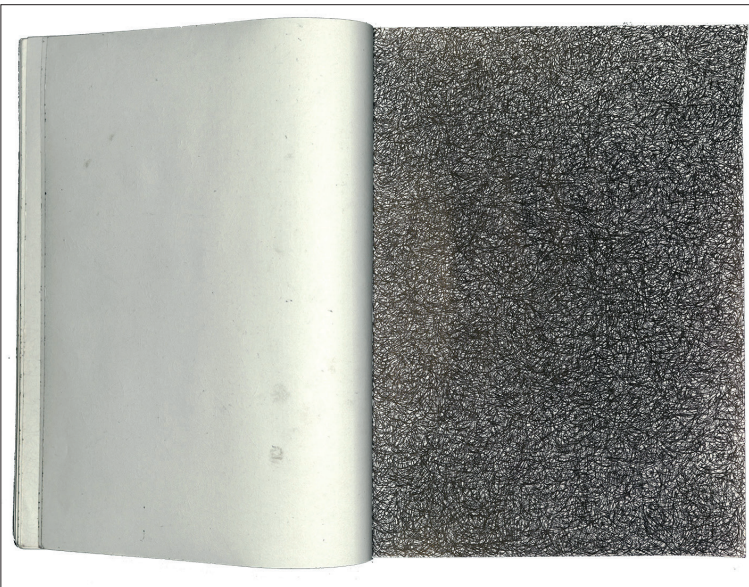


Figure 10 Untitled drawing of an ongoing series of scribbles. Since 2018. © The Author

Figure 11 *It is. It is not. I am. I am not.* Sketch to visualise the critical state of drawing. 2022. © The Author

drawing sets me outside the world, then I am the one who is being searched for. Just like the idiot woman. So where did she go and how does her story end?

Es begann mit den Namen – sie allein sind übrig geblieben. Es ging weiter mit den Bildern, die statt der Dinge persistieren. Man fertigte Karten der Erden an, die als *mental maps* keinen Widerstand dulden können. Schließlich verbindet sich das Ingesamt der Zeichen zu einem Orbit, der eine restlose Gültigkeit beansprucht – und daran scheitert. Das symbolische Universum der Namen, Bilder und Muster bricht durch die erklärte Allmacht der Gedanken ein. (Kamper 1996, 39)

It started with the names – they alone are left. It went on with the images which persist instead of the things. Maps of the earth were made which, as *mental maps*, cannot tolerate any resistance. Finally, the total of signs combine into an orbit which claims a rest- less validity – and fails at it. The symbolic universe of names, im- ages and patterns breaks through the declared omnipotence of the thoughts.

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Building Narratives, Imagining Realities

Space Oddity: Exercises in Art and Philosophy

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Andrea Nalesso

Constructing the National Image Identity and Material Culture in Late Imperial Russia Public Museum Practices

Giulia Gelmi

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, late imperial Russia began witnessing the so-called phenomenon of 'museomania'. A peculiar example of this process of 'musealisation' was the Commercial and Industrial Museum of Artisanal Products of the Moscow Province Zemstvo, otherwise referred to as the Moscow Kustar' Museum, established in 1885. Created as a focal point for the arts and crafts production in the 'Russian style' that had come into vogue at that time, the museum soon took on the role of a plural and hybrid space for reflection on and reconstruction of the national visual identity through the arts.

Keywords Russian style. National image. Visual identity. Museum. Kustar. Arts and crafts. Folklore. Cultural space. Cultural discourse.

Summary 1 Dealing with your own 'Otherness'. – 2 Building a Public Cultural Space: The Universal Exhibition and the Museum. – 3 From Revival to Musealisation of *Kustar'* Art: The Establishment of the Moscow Kustar' Museum. – 4 Conclusion: National Identity as Constructed Image.

1 Dealing with your own ‘Otherness’

As Mikhail Bakhtin theorises “the spatio-temporal expression of the chronotope allows meanings to take on a sign form and enter our experience” (Bachtin [1975] 1979, 405), thus any reflection on human-kind and its activities need to be developed by first framing their *chronotope*.¹ This article does not intend to separate chronotope’s spatial from its temporal component but it focuses only on the spatial one, and, in particular, on the close semantic relationship between the physical space and the discourse(s) that define and inhabit it.²

The article refers to a moment in Russian history, that falls between the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, in which the function and perception of the physical space of culture were radically changing and evolving. First, the research focuses on defining and contextualising the issue of ‘national identity’ in Russia in the outlined timeframe. Second, it analyses the processes of cultural space-building, of which universal expositions and museums are some of the most significant phenomena. Finally, it considers an emblematic case-study of ‘musealisation’ specifically dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of folk and peasant material culture, so to demonstrate the key role of museums both in the construction and diffusion of a national visual identity.

Throughout the history of its never-linear development process, Russia encountered more than one sudden turning point. During each one of them, patterns were subverted, and each time a radical systemic transformation took place. As a timeframe of profound changes for late imperial Russia, it needs to be presented as the result of an ongoing process started since the political-economic reforms ordered by Peter I. In the eighteenth century, Czar Peter the Great had systematically and coercively imposed a ‘westernisation’ of his empire that, through a historicist gaze, led to a crisis of Russian collective identity and to a reconsideration of existing life and cultural doctrines.

As early as the first quarter of the nineteenth century, these historical and cultural premises ignited a process of self-discovery – and rediscovery – that forced Russia to reexamine its historical path and develop a ‘national consciousness’. In the post-Napoleonic age, Europe and Russia were crossed by a wave of nationalism and saw the flowering of Romanticism. In its own way, each nation questioned and sought to historically justify its origins grounded in each country’s unique history and culture. As brilliantly summarised by Whittaker:

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the translation is by the Author.

² On the *chronotope* in Bakhtin, see Bemong et al. 2010; Diddi 2009.

From London to St. Petersburg, a fascination with the folk and bygone eras prompted an urgent desire to possess a documented history and encouraged new sciences such as archaeology and ethnography. Scientists embarked on expeditions, during which artists produced richly illustrated volumes of antiquities, costumes, monuments, and ornaments, which were instrumental tools for looking at the distant past and reflected the ongoing nationalistic fervor of the times. (Whittaker 2010, 3)

How to define ‘Russianness’? In what terms this concept brought Russians to compare themselves to the Western and Oriental ‘Others’? In order to provide an answer to these questions, we can turn to the words of Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. (Hall, du Gay 1996, 4)

In view of the fact that, since the eighteenth century, Russia has been self-identifying in opposition to the ‘West’, the above statement allows us to emphasise that when it comes to Russia, the matter somehow goes always back to a ‘question of identity’. An ancient and deeply rooted issue in Russian history, in our context, ‘identity’ configures as a discursive and cultural construct, endowed with a non-hereditary memory, by which a people and its territory identify themselves and/or are identified with. Although a common speculative context, in Russia the ‘question’ becomes more urgent. In comparison to Europe, Russia was still a “peripheral country in terms of industrialization and technological advancement, but it was also a great power and multi-ethnic empire” (Swift 2021, 109). The country’s instability was caused by a variety of factors – e.g., the proto-industrial development, the urbanisation processes, and the subsequent and sudden socio-economic transformations – and prompted late nineteenth-century Russia to assume an ambivalent attitude towards modernity (Siegelbaum 1998, 37-8).

Between the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, Russia’s artistic self-presentation reflects the country’s tensions and contradictions between the desire to demonstrate its distinctive national identity – both at home and to its Western counterpart and the need to establish itself as a socially and economically leading country (cf. Swift 2021). Russia’s troubled situation was further complicated by the 1861 post-reform environment, that decreed the end of peasant slavery, not only disrupting the economic system’s pillars but also leading rural and folklore traditions to slowly disappear.

2 Building a Public Cultural Space: The Universal Exhibition and the Museum

To reconstruct and spread the Russian national image, the attention turns to the rediscovery of the country's history and the sources of what could visually represent the 'true national spirit'. Here the rural and folkloric artistic production of the pre-Petrine tradition comes into play. From a visual point of view, this self-discovery process demanded to unequivocally identify 'Russian' elements and to create a distinctive and coherent national artistic image. To build this domestic image to export even abroad, it was urgent to select a set of motifs and the creation of a recognisable style.³ On this account, the fading traditional heritage of rural-folkloric arts and crafts was interpreted as one of the key sources of national identity and originality. Hence, the 'Russian style' was its main visual language. A highly decorative and ornamental style derived from medieval as well as peasant architecture and folk arts (Swift 2021, 118), the 'Russian style', or *style russe*, constitutes one of the most striking phenomena of Russian art of the nineteenth and early twenty centuries.⁴ In analysing the concept of 'style', Lotman's insight comes to aid:

What interests us is not what general traits enable us to ascribe certain paintings, statues, poetic texts, furniture, clothing, to the manifestations of a style, but why it is characteristic of a certain style to manifest itself in phenomena of different kinds. (Lotman 2022, 178-9)

As the investigation turns to the 'spatialisation' of this narrative, thus to the process of building and organising the cultural space, the 'exhibition device' assumes a central role as we learn from a journalist's comment from 1861: "After politics, exhibitions play the most important role these days" (Dianina 2012, 173). As forms of spatialisation of a constructed memory and socio-cultural texts, the exhibitions, with their venue, organisation, and exhibited objects became the place for the national visual identity-building process *par excellence*; a process in which the 'Russian style' is assumed as a signature style. In this space, the construction and development of a cultural discourse were addressed and fuelled by newspapers and specialised printed magazines, whose production, and influence, increase exponentially in the historical period under consideration.⁵ Within the ongoing

³ For a comprehensive overview of the reception of Russian art abroad, see Burini 2019.

⁴ In this respect, see also Kirichenko 1991.

⁵ The key role of newspapers and journals, both in establishing and strengthening public exhibitions as valuable and familiar institutions of visual culture and as a herit-

cultural discourse, not only Russian intellectuals but the society at large became increasingly interested in the critical debate that was developing around national art, questioning national identity, Russian folklore, and arts and crafts.

In the process of re-defining the country's image, two phenomena came to play a key role as exhibition spaces in Russian cultural discourse: the world fairs and the so-called 'museomania'.⁶

Although in Russia industrial exhibitions, intended to boost the national industry, were organised by the government since the 1820s, the tradition of organising universal expositions began in 1851 with the Great Exhibition hosted at the Crystal Palace in London. On that occasion and at later world fairs,

Russia's displays of decorative and fine arts, opulent jewelry, and peasant handicrafts often received far more attention than its raw materials, manufactured goods, or agricultural products, and commentators sometimes described Russia as oriental or barbaric" (Swift 2021, 110)

The 'universal' exhibition - as well as the Russian or All-Russian ones - was configured as an encyclopedic attempt at self-representation. Promoting a partial representation and a fictitious narrative, these types of exhibitions were characterised by a strong contrast between a dimension of national brotherhood and nationalism led by principles of comparison and competition. During the nineteenth century, the existence of the exhibition serves the main purpose of presenting a certain range of products to as wide an audience as possible, in order to enlarge the market, and to assert the level of economic and technological development achieved by the nation.

Between the 1851 and 1913, an increasing number of Russian industrial exhibits began to forge the image of a rapidly developing country. Every area of human production could ideally contribute to the shaping of the discourse around nation and nationality. But the cultural one was configured as the main. In order to assert its uniqueness, Russia necessarily had to stand in opposition to the other nations. Especially from 1867 onwards, the use of national vernacular architecture became widespread at world fairs, and the 'Russian style' began to establish itself as a striking element of distinction.

The other pivotal phenomenon, concurrently shaping Russian cultural space and national discourse, was the opening of a substantial and growing number of public museums.

age of common knowledge and popular curiosity, will not be the subject of the present discussion. See Dianina 2013.

⁶ In this regard, see Dianina 2012, 173-95.

The change in Moscow's cultural landscape in the 1860s was so radical that one witness described it succinctly as "*museomania*", defined as an unruly passion that drove the city to establish more and more museums (Ts-a). (Dianina 2012, 177)

Nowadays almost considered a sempiternal institution, which preserves and enhances its collections, destined to last and represent a country's legacy, the museum, at its beginning, was a place of constant transformation, reflection, and debate. The Russian museum boom of the 1860s and 1890s was part of "a broader quest for a secular cultural identity" (Dianina 2012, 177). The panorama of public cultural institutions in the first half of the nineteenth century Russia was rather narrow and had its centre in Saint Petersburg. Despite being the capital, the city could boast only a few private museums and galleries. There were, naturally, exhibitions open to the public, particularly those organised by the Imperial Academy of Arts, but they were not frequent enough and their subjects were of little interest to a wide audience. From 1862, several cultural events took place in Moscow and led to the role shift, so that, while Saint Petersburg continued to be associated with foreign influences, the former capital acquired the role of centre of national culture. Among these events, the transfer of the Rumiantsev Museum from the imperial capital to Moscow, the *Ethnographic Exhibition* (1867) and the *Polytechnical Exhibition* openings (1872), with the two institutions it engendered (the Polytechnical and the History Museum), and the Tretyakov Gallery made accessible to the public from 1881, appeared to be particularly significant.⁷

For the duration of the nineteenth century, the modern Russian nation was largely a discursive construct, fashioned first in fictional literature and later increasingly in the popular press and the visual arts [...] It was in the sphere of culture that the Russian idea [...] took shape. The museum age was one positive landmark on Russia's uncertain road to modernity. (Dianina 2012, 177)

3 From Revival to Musealisation of *Kustar*' Art: The Establishment of the Moscow *Kustar*' Museum

The beginning of the twentieth century bears witness to one of the most dramatic consequences of the development of mechanised industry: the decline of rural and folkloric craft production, connected to manual labour, and, consequently, of the related material culture,

⁷ For an in-depth look at the context in which the 1872 Polytechnical Exposition was developed, see Bradley 2008.

with its system of values and symbols.⁸ In the process of rediscovering pre-Petrine Russia, objects and evidence of this culture – belonging to a past considered untainted by modernity and westernizing influences – came to reify the concept of nation.

Like other European countries, the *revival* of arts and crafts, expression of the Russian folk and rural world, responded to the collective identity crisis deriving from the rapid industrialization. The Russian *revival* became an integral part of the culture-building practice from the 1870s thanks to Savva Mamantov, a merchant belonging to the new entrepreneurial élite who also was one of the most influential art patrons of the time. The epicenter of the *revival* was the Abramtsevo estate, located about 60 km from Moscow. Acquired in 1873 by Mamantov and his wife, Elizaveta Mamontova, the estate soon became a meeting place for some of the most important artists of the time and a hub for traditional craftsmanship revival and development.⁹

Within the outlined context, the word *kustar'* is a Russian word that refers to a home or cottage worker engaged in cottage, artisanal, industry to earn an income, usually in combination with agricultural production. This term did not enter the common lexicon until 1861, when it came to denote a “fashionable issue” [*modnyj vopros*] (Siegelbaum 1998, 39).¹⁰ From the moment the preservation and development of *kustar'* production became a public issue, a massive intervention of financial and social welfare was implemented, involving both public and private resources.¹¹

A variant of the European arts and crafts museums and an illustrative example of the Russian ‘musealisation’ is represented by the Commercial and Industrial Museum of Artisanal Products of the Moscow Province Zemstvo (Torgovo-promyšlennyj muzej kustarnykh izdelij Moskovskogo gubernskogo zemstva), also known as the Moscow *Kustar'* Museum (Moskovskij Kustarnyj muzej), established in 1882.¹² Due to its distinctive features, the museum became a repre-

⁸ In this respect, see Warren 2009.

⁹ For more on the topic of Russian revival of arts and crafts and private workshop activities, see Hilton 2019; Salmond 2009.

¹⁰ *Kustar'* art included a wide range of products, from embroidery to wood carving. Its popularity can be regarded in the light of the arts and crafts revival of the nineteenth century.

¹¹ A manner of supporting such production takes the form of exhibitions with designated sections. Between 1882 and 1913, indeed, in Russia were held four major *kustar'* exhibitions. Before these exhibitions, a section specifically dedicated *kustar'* was presented for the first time in 1872 at the *Polytechnical Exhibition (Politehničeskaja vystavka)*. See Siegelbaum 1998.

¹² The museum’s legacy is still practically unexplored and unpublished. Recent scientific publications on the subject emphasise the need and the interest in investigating and deepening the role of *kustar'* art as material evidence of the processes of producing an organic image of Russia. See Narvojt 2021, 7.

sentative cultural institution in a delicate and complex period of historical transition.

As remarked by Narvojt, although preliminary ideas for the museum realisation blossomed in Saint Petersburg already in the 1870s, the Kustar' Museum was concretely designed after the *All-Russian Industrial and Art Exhibition (Vserossijskaja chudožestvenno-promyšlennaja vystavka)* held in Moscow in 1882, where *kustar'* objects from the Moscow and Central Russia provinces were exhibited for the first time.

Among the museums whose history is inextricably linked to the will and activities of art patrons, the Kustarnyj muzej occupies a special place. On this account, the museum's main patron was Sergei Morozov (1860-1944), a representative of the merchant class and a passionate lover of antiquities. While visiting the 1882 *All-Russian Exhibition (Vserossijskaja vystavka)*, Morozov decided to buy the entire collection of handicrafts exhibited, which formed the core of the future museum.¹³

Consistently with the work started by private workshops, such as the Abramtsevo estate, the museum opened its doors in 1885. Since this cultural institution was called to play an active role in the development and improvement of peasant and folk arts and crafts, it not only performed collecting and preserving functions, but also a modernising one.

As atypical as this enterprise might seem, it nevertheless exemplifies an excellent representative of virtuous grafting between public interests and private resources. As reconstructed by Mamantova, the Kustar' Museum's first decades sought to arise interest in forgotten forms, to transfer knowledge to modern artistic practices and to support centres of peasant and folk production. In the early 1880s, the museum's main tasks were related to trade operations (e.g., supporting and assisting artisans in selling their products). Later in that decade, the Moscow Provincial Zemstvo, the organ of rural self-government in the Russian Empire and from which the museum depended, decided to expand the museum's areas of operation. In 1888, the Arts and Crafts Commission, set up under the Zemstvo administration and to which Morozov was invited, advised the museum's reorganisation. In 1890, the muscovite patron was appointed its head and maintained that position until 1897, when he was elected honorary trustee. In line with the project to reorganise the museum's activities, Morozov was also the man behind the museum's educational vocation.

In other words, the museum, exceeding its physical and action space, helped to define and shape the cultural discourse. A refer-

¹³ In this regard, see Mamantova 1996.

ence for the production of furniture and decoration in the ‘Russian style’, the Moscow Kustar’ Museum soon became a plural and hybrid space for reflection and reconstruction of the national visual identity through the arts. Concurrently the museum came to represent a creative enterprise, a space for the collections’ conservation and enhancement, an experimental workshop, and a production, promotion, and sales centre of Russian artisanal goods. Throughout the years, and thanks to Morozov’s work as director, the museum became a place that answered different needs concerning:

- the question of identity, self-reflection and self-representation;
- the preservation and development of traditional artistic handicrafts production;
- the creative quest and the work training for both artists and artisans;
- educational needs;
- last, but not least, the sales and income generation issue.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Kustar’ Museum not only embodied a remarkable, rich collection of folk and rural crafts, but also a cultural hub in its own right. Not only did it become a point of attraction both for artists and artisans, from Moscow and the provinces, and for the general public, but it also promoted brilliant exhibitions of Russian national art, both at home and abroad.¹⁴

Several transformations taking place between the Revolution and the present day, through the Soviet era, brought the Kustar’ Museum core collections to be incorporated into the All-Russian Decorative Art Museum in Moscow. Established in 1981, the latter is an institution today specifically dealing with the preservation, study and display of the arts and crafts production from the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, and even from the contemporary Russian decorative arts and design.

4 Conclusion: National Identity as Constructed Image

In conclusion, through this brief journey, first of all, it is possible to assert that, in an ever-changing and evolving cultural space, the blurry metaphorical boundaries, within which the concept of ‘national identity’ is, are in constant need of rethinking and redefinition. The very concept of national identity – which in this case is mainly considered in its visual dimension – is configured as a discursive cultural construction. During the nineteenth century,

¹⁴ See Narvojt 2021, 8-14.

the modern Russian nation was largely a discursive construct, fashioned first in fictional literature and later increasingly in the popular press and the visual arts [...]. (Dianina 2012, 177)

As observed, in the turbulent transition from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, the Russian cultural space was in midst of a complex redefinition process, in which the 'Russian style' came to embody its main visual device.

Second of all, the analysis framed this process, in which the world exhibitions and the newborn national museums are configured as two of the most significant space-building phenomena of the time. Within the 'museomania' context, Russian museums, founded between the 1860s and 1890s, became "one of the most powerful means to attain national consciousness" (Dianina 2012, 173). Through collection and exhibition activities, the museum assumed the fundamental role of helping to 'visualise' and 'shape' the country's national visual identity.

In the last part of the investigation, the Moscow Kustar' Museum, through the preservation and enhancement of the folk and peasant material culture, offered an emblematic example of the processes involved in the construction and diffusion of the national identity as constructed image.

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