

INTERIOR REVEALED

the room as domestic archetype



Theoretical Dissertation - Master of Architecture
Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) - 2018

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GENESIS OR THE ULTIMATE ANCESTOR 7 •	SPECIES OF SPACES 11 •	Interior without exterior 15 •	Buffer room 23 •
Reversed room 31 •	Pivotal room 39 •	Negative room 47 •	Typical room 55 •
Private room 63 •	Communal room 71 •	Shield room 79 •	Foldable room 87 •
Imploded room 95 •	Pure room 101 •	Spare room 107 •	Virtual room 113 •
Exterior without interior 119 •	FUNDAMENTAL ACTS 127 •	Frame 131 •	Enter 139 •
Open 147 •	Connect 155 •	Appropriate 163 •	Mediate 171 •
LIVING ALONE AND TOGETHER 179 •	Preview 183 •	BIBLIOGRAPHY 187 •	Iconography 193 •

GENESIS OR THE ULTIMATE ANCESTOR

Architecture was born when light entered the space and discovered the wall for the first time. But origins are not so comfortably simple or clear.

The most widely accepted theory on the origin of architecture is Laugier's *Essai sur l'Architecture*¹. However, the editorial of *San Rocco no.8*², proposes a far less romanticized version of it. Reading it, we are given to understand that Laugier's *primitive hut* is a pragmatic and rather functionalistic response to the most basic needs of the primitive man. It emphasizes the search for an undeniable origin, but offers a deformed reading of what Vitruvius first intended. In the Vitruvian interpretation, the outset corresponds to the invention of fire and the beginnings of language and society, as beautifully illustrated in the engravings made by Cesariano³. He seems to suggest a completely different idea of architecture, one in which origins are complicated from the outset and the shared precedes the private "[...] architecture is a technology not of shelter but of memory - a shared deposit of the unconscious"⁴.

The history of architecture is one of the definitions of enclosure, followed by its destruction and ending in its complete dissolution. As the last representant of the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*, Guadet concludes in his text, *Éléments et Théorie de l'Architecture*⁵, that composition is not to be taught but that it has to be individually studied, interpreted, and adapted to the project and the program at hand. In contrast to Durand's *recueil*⁶, he does not propose a classification of buildings into types, or ready-for-use architectural formulas, not meant to be questioned. His refusal of typology is linked to the birth, in that particular period of time, of a new variety of programs, impossible to be tackled through the lessons of the old models. He thus went on to study what he called *the elements of the composition*, concentrating his attention on the room.

With the advent of modernism's free plan and universal space, the room turned to a formless state, stretched to the infinite in all directions. In the chapter "Typical Plan", of his book *S, M, L, XL*⁷, Koolhaas illustrates this shift to a strategy of the void. In positing the idea that the plan has to be *as empty as possible*, he advocates for an architecture deprived of *qualities, character or uniqueness*, an architecture of pragmatism reduced to "a floor, a core, a perimeter and a minimum of columns"⁸. In doing so, he announces the

¹ Abbé LAUGIER Marc-Antoine, *Essai sur l'Architecture*, Book II, 1755, p.1-7.

² *San Rocco – What's wrong with the primitive hut?*, Editorial, no 8, winter 2013.

³ *Ibidem*, p.6.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.6.

⁵ GUADET Julien, *Éléments et Théorie de l'Architecture*, Librairie de la Construction moderne, Paris, 1894.

⁶ DURAND J.N.L., *Recueil et parallèle des édifices de tout genre, anciens et modernes: remarquables par leur beauté, par leur grandeur, ou par leur singularité, et dessinés sur une même échelle*, Imprimerie de Gillé fils, Paris, 1801.

⁷ KOOLHAAS Rem, MAU Bruce, WERLEMANN Hans, *S, M, L, XL*, The Monacelli Press, 1997.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p.344.

end of architecture, as the *Typical Plan* is amnesiac, it does not remember, it does not learn, it only knows repetition. In contrast to an architecture which has lost its scale and its ability to define space, Kahn's projects show a thorough study of various configurations of rooms, as the primary elements that determine the project. The project can result either as only one room, an aggregation of rooms, or in a carefully assembled group of rooms subordinated to the order of the whole. In his essay *The Room, The Street and The Human Agreement*, Kahn presents the room with a prophetic tone, as the only timeless, universal, delimited space where, in the presence of the human being, architecture is born. He summed up his idea of the room as follows: "The wall enclosed us for a long time until the man behind it, feeling a new freedom, wanted to look out. [...] He visualized the opening as gracefully arched, glorifying the wall. [...] The opening became part of the order of the wall"⁹.

The room is possibly the most obvious expression of architecture. It is the quintessential gesture of making space. As the root of the word itself shows, *room* comes from the old English *rum*, and is similar to the German word *raum*. They both signify *space*. Developing on the origin of the word, Pier Vittorio Aureli writes in his article "A room of one's own": "This meaning exists in many other languages in which variations of the word *rum* designates an open field, or open plain, or the act of making space"¹⁰.

Making space is the first purpose of architecture. It asks for the measure of things. It means to cut into the undefined, to give it form, to frame, to define boundaries. But it also means to classify, to select, to organize and, as a consequence, to order. Intimately tied to the economic and social framework, the room witnessed all the major shifts in the ways of living. Therefore, the room asks for a return to its enclosed, contained condition, as an alternative to the *tabula rasa*. Stripped of all its *specificity*, of all its *uniqueness* and functional ties, the room becomes the degree-zero of architecture. It is the ultimate container of space.

Industrialization brought about the segregation of the private and public spheres. In the domestic realm, the room is the silent witness of our continuous self-reconstruction. A background against which we project all of our fears, needs and desires. The room becomes the engine of life. It gives scale to the world and allows us to appropriate it. It is the place to which we compare all the other spaces we encounter and relate to. The room is a point in space, it is the origin of our system of coordinates. It is a thin line between what is mine and what is yours. The room is a choice. Like a surface, it has two sides, you have to choose one. The room is a frame we draw around what we want to see. The room is the

⁹ KAHN Louis, "The room, the street and the human agreement", *A+U*, January 1973, p.25-30.

¹⁰ AURELI Pier Vittorio, Tattara Martino, "A Room of One's Own: Preliminary Notes on the Architecture of the Room", *Volume No 46*, Winter 2015, p.24.

sensitive container of our day-to-day rituals. The room escapes too easy classifications. It is neither -nor, both- and. But it is never useless.

The ubiquity of the room is tightly linked to our conception of space and dwelling. The room allows us to be alone. By its extension, it offers us the possibility to be together. It is questioning the contours of the domestic sphere. The room negotiates the tension between what is intimate, private, domestic and what is shared, communal, public. The more the two realms begin to merge, the more the room reaches its original purpose. It is the sign of a new paradigm that goes beyond comfortable dichotomous classifications.

Today, conventional dwelling solutions prove unfit to meet the requests of our eclectic lifestyles. Nowadays, we face a social shift as: “[...] more and more people live outside the conventional nuclear family-be it as couples, single parents, singles, or elderly living alone. For many, the idea of collective living offers an affordable remedy to the urban isolation”¹¹. Moreover, the relationship between living and working has changed as a result of the transition from an industrial to a service economy. It is thus necessary to consider where we are now.

The room highlights the complexity of meanings of the domestic space. It surpasses the reflection on the ordinary functions of the dwelling and its configuration of predetermined spaces. As a depository of age-long accumulated knowledge, the room proves an indispensable tool in rethinking new ways of living together that go beyond functionalist definitions and that surpass the model of the nuclear family. It is the exploration of alternative and unexpected spatial patterns. Questioning the existing devices becomes a necessity.

Therefore, the design of the room is an architectural strategy in its own right.

¹¹ Press Kit, *Together, The new architecture of the collective*, Exhibition 03.06.2017-10.09.2017, Vitra Design Museum, p.1.

« The primary aim of architecture is the enclosure of space; therefore the simplest form of building will be a single room. The room is the nucleus and starting point of architectural composition. Whether rooms exist singly or in combination with others, their arrangement anticipates the composition of all other elements of the plan. »

CORTLANDT Nathaniel Curtis, *Architectural composition*,
J. H. Jansen, Jay Printing Company, Cleveland, 1923, p. 104.

SPECIES OF ROOMS

The room is the witness of all the explorations of space and assimilates the evolution of the needs, tastes, and ways of life of a society. Decomposing domestic architecture into a set of rooms can help us create a personal collection to serve as a base for future projects.

Before we explain how the chapters unfold and what are the relations between the different species of rooms, it is important to briefly mention some of the previous attempts to divide them into categories.

In the first chapter of the book *Composition Non-Composition*¹, one is presented with three notions tightly related to the organization of the rooms: disposition, distribution and composition. While *disposition* has a broader meaning and is defined in *Dictionnaire Historique d'Architecture* by *Quatremère de Quincy*, as what “assigns to each thing its place and its use”², *distribution* was “the division, order and arrangement of the rooms that make up the interior of an edifice”³. *Distribution* was seen as the main objective of the architect in designing interior spaces. This idea was shared by both Blondel, and later on, by Guadet, the last representative of the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*. The increased autonomy of the room, brought about by the doubling of the enfilade, enabled it to host a particular function. This, in turn, led to the growing specificity of the room and determined Guadet to consider it as one of the *elements of the composition*. While Blondel divides the rooms into three main categories: “rooms of necessity, rooms of commodity, and rooms of propriety”⁴, for Guadet they constituted the so-called *useful surfaces*. These, together with the *neutral surfaces*, represented the two complementary categories of the composition. While it is clear that no plan can be reduced only to *useful surfaces*, communications are always needed for their ability to connect the former, to allow access, and constitute the *arteries of the composition*. For him, disposition and composition had similar meanings.

Another insightful way to understand the room is by putting it into a broader context: of the space itself. Georges Perec’s book, *Species of spaces*, presents the extraordinary diversity of spaces with a different approach from the one of the architect. Here, the transition is done from the space of the page, to the bed, the bedroom, from there to the apartment, the apartment building, the

LUCAN Jacques, *Composition, non-composition, Architecture and Theory in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, EPFL Press, 2012.

² QUATREMÈRE DE QUINCY Antoine-Chrysostome, *Dictionnaire, I*, "Disposition", p. 530.

³ *Ibidem*, "Distribution", p. 530.

⁴ LUCAN Jacques, *Composition, non-composition, Architecture and Theory in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, EPFL Press, 2012, p.13.

street, and so forth until we arrive to the space in all its vastness. Pausing a bit in between the chapters concerning the bed and the apartment, there is the room. He remarks that the rooms of an apartment have a finite number and that they are named after the functions they serve: “I don’t know, and don’t want to know, where functionality begins or ends. It seems to me, in any case, that in the ideal dividing-up of today’s apartments functionality functions in accordance with a procedure that is unequivocal, sequential and nycthemeral”⁵. He draws a parallel between time, the activities, and the rooms where they are performed. In doing so, he proves that, it is with a certain self-evident rigidity that we assign to each room a specific task which is carried out at a particular time of the day. As obvious as these might seem, only by challenging the conventional perception of the room, can we truly grasp its meaning.

In an attempt to avoid strictly functional criteria, we have set up other categories of rooms that are influenced both by their performance and use as well as their capacity to organize the whole. From two purely theoretical and complementary examples, the *interior without exterior* and the *exterior without interior*, a variety of rooms is proposed as an inventory that highlights the meaning and potential of each species. The species are, therefore, organized as a gradual sequence that unfolds between these two extremes: the pure inside, on one hand, and the complete dissolution of the room on the other.

The first one is the *buffer room*, the first filter between the private and the public, between the inside and the outside. It brings us to the next ones: the *reversed*, *pivotal* and *negative rooms*, which set up the distribution of the whole. In addition to these species, some others pair up to provide complementary readings of cohabitation: the *private room* and the *communal room*. By the same token, but this time exploring the effects of technology and approaching virtual space, are the *shield room* and the *virtual room*. While the *foldable room* implies an ephemerality of use, the *imploded room* concentrates the use into one single object. The *spare room* questions the very necessity of a fixed function as the prerequisite for the existence of the room. The *typical room* is an inhabitable space found at the intersection of different typologies, those of dwelling and working. The *pure room* investigates the relationship between the theoretical idea of a room and its effects on the global vision of the city.

Each chapter is a research into the different instances of each species of rooms and assembles a non-exhaustive set of projects into a collection. The text and the images are separated in two parts so as to provide the choice for different readings. The photos are presented in a chronological order and they unite different convergent artistic points of view, through paintings, photographs, installations,

⁵ PEREC Georges, *Species of spaces and Other Pieces*, Penguin Books, London, 1997, p.28.

as well as architectural projects that cover a wide temporal spectrum.

“A given gene does not control a specific trait, but a specific reaction to a specific environment”⁶. As a domestic archetype, a close look into the performance of the room proves a useful tool to reconstruct the dwelling and trigger future possibilities that get past conventions.

⁶ VENTURI Robert, *Complexity and contradiction in Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1977, p.70.

INTERIOR WITHOUT EXTERIOR

Interior or the pattern of the mind. Interior focused on itself, introverted, not concerned with the outside, a pure unit, a monad. A monad which defines its own universe and can build up a whole together with other monads.

It is a physical or psychical element, referring to the Monadology work of the psychoanalyst Gottfried Leibniz from the Baroque period. Georges Teyssott presents in the article “Mapping the Threshold: A Theory of Design and Interface”¹ that, according to Leibniz, the monad is an absolute unit without any access to the inside and which cannot be divided. Considered as a microsystem, this primary unit can work as a whole but is not affected by the exterior. The monad, as a pure entity, has inherent properties and creates its inner universe.

The case of the *catoptric cistula*, also called catoptric theater (1), perfectly demonstrates the idea of Leibniz. Our perception of the interior is manipulated with a set of mirrors placed on the periphery of the room (2), transforming the space where a light is brought in by an artificial *oculus*. The space is enclosed, disconnected from all of our senses, with the exception of the gaze. According to the conceptual psychoanalyst Gilles Deleuze, a “monadic space is the architectural idea [of] a room in black marble, in which light enters only through orifices so well bent that nothing on the outside can be seen through them, yet they illuminate in color the decor of a pure inside”².

In this way, there are two different perceptions that merge: the own view of the scene and the additional views created by reflections. Therefore, a game operates between the existing element, its perception, and its reflections. The monad has neither window nor door. It is a sheer space. It is only observable from the outside, which leads one to move around its exterior, but without affecting its interior. Its space is living alone.

Moreover, it is possible to draw a parallel between the monad, finished unity of which one perceives only one facet, and the mind, of which one can never grasp the absolute image. It is possible to express the idea of the separation between body and mind through the image shown here: the body is located outside of the box, whereas the mind is internalized, locked up into the room. As Gilles

¹ TEYSSOTT Georges, “Mapping the Threshold: A Theory of Design and Interface”, *AA Files*, No 57, AA Publications, London, 2008.

² *Ibidem*, p.6. From Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, pp.27-31.

Deleuze asserts: “its walls are hung with spontaneous folds of a soul or a mind”³. The *folds* are the objects, like a table or a chair, but they can always change their shape. They illustrate “the plurality of the world and the categorical unpredictability of its course”⁴.

The gaze is the vector linking the body and the mind and opening up an infinity of visions. The room is, consequently, the witness of our reflections and it can be considered the place of mind, a closed interior, a pure inside. The two folds - inside and outside - are physically dissociated but mentally knitted by the gaze of the observer. However, the interior creates an illusion of space, while the box, on the outside, is not able to do so.

This external box operates as a kaleidoscope, which one is only allowed to watch, but not to interact with.

The monadic device, which can be considered as a mask of vision, is not attached only to the Baroque period where the questions of self-perception, space, and senses are great concerns. This questioning through a monadic device, a narrative artefact, is just as much spatial as physical and psychological. It is a perpetual investigation of the relationship between body and space.

This idea of reflection, generated by a set of mirrors, was treated by painters in the following centuries as a way to question the relationship between the interior and the exterior in the domestic universe. In the example of the portrait painted by Jan van Eyck called *Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his Wife* (3), the mirror that adorns the back wall internalizes the room giving a more intimate character to the *mise-en-scène*, and accentuating the depth of the room. The mirror also allows to open the gaze through the reflection of the window and to distinguish the city. Without the mirror reflection, the city would not be visible.

Moreover, the mirror shows the reflection of a door and thus opens the view to new horizons and directs the gaze out of the room. These effects produced by the mirror also allow blurring the border between inside and outside, revealing a link between the private and the public space.

There is an analogy created between gaze and mirror. This frames the visible and suggests what our eyes cannot see in a given space and time. The space of the room is no longer just a pure space, a pure inside, but a space of representation where our senses are the vectors of interpretation.

The loss of scale is decisive for abstracting this space in the manner of Gert Jan Willemsse’s paintings. One of his rare series is named “Der Prophet” and was published in *Hunch* by Pier Vittorio Aureli and Saskia Kloosterboer under the title “Design for a World

³ TEYSSOTT Georges, “Mapping the Threshold: A Theory of Design and Interface”, *AA Files*, No 57, AA Publications, London, 2008, p.6. From Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, pp.27-31.

⁴ PROMINSKI Martin, KOUTROFINIS Spyridon, “Folded Landscapes: Deleuze’s Concept of the Fold and Its Potential for Contemporary Landscape Architecture”, *Landscape Journal*, 28:2-09, The Board of Regents of the Wisconsin System, 2009, p.159.

⁵ AURELI Pier Vittorio, Kloosterboer Saskia, “Design For a World Without People: The Story of Jan-Gert Willemsse”, *Hunch, The Berlage Report*, No 4, 2001.

Without People”⁵. Looking for “a non-historical language that was not even theoretical in a classical way”⁶, he was trying to work without any references, except few without the author. In his paintings, the silence of the indeterminate space, where we no longer perceive neither edge nor limit, investigates the pure meaning of architecture and the relationship of our body to space. One perceives neither pure interior nor pure exterior; we are only the witness of the emptiness, questioning our own condition.

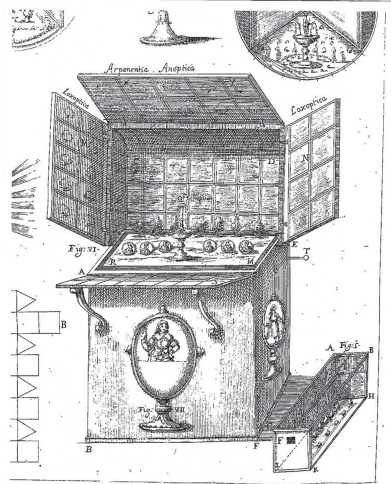
The word intimate comes from the superlative of the Latin interior, *intimus*, which presents the possibility to hide. Hiding its content from the outside, giving a restricted access to a room and focusing on its own world, are ways to evoke a complete interior. A space without windows looks on its own universe to examine itself and its own possibilities. A sheer interior is able to be a room.

⁶ AURELI Pier Vittorio, Kloosterboer Saskia, “Design For a World Without People: The Story of Jan-Gert Willemse”, *Hunch, The Berlage Report*, No 4, 2001, p.49.



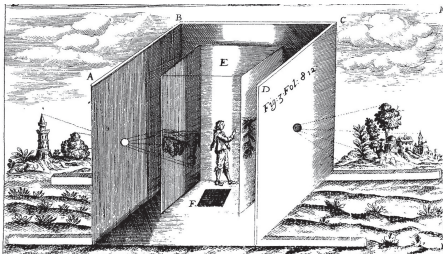
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VAN EYCK, Jan, *Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his Wife*, 1434.

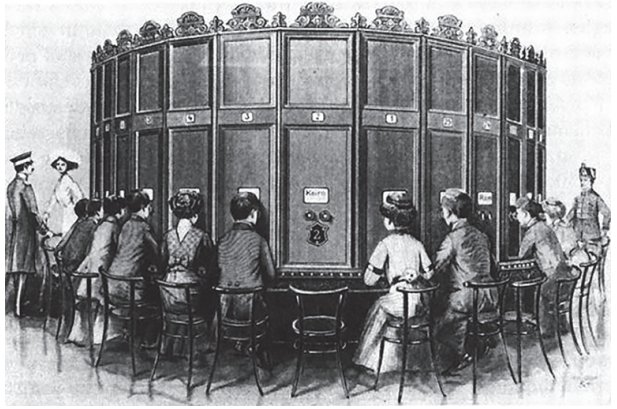


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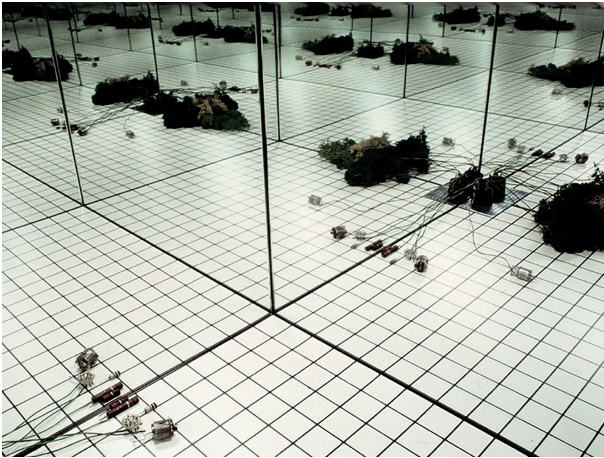
KIRCHER Athanasius, *The Catoptric Theater, Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae, The Great Art of Light and Shadow*, 1646.



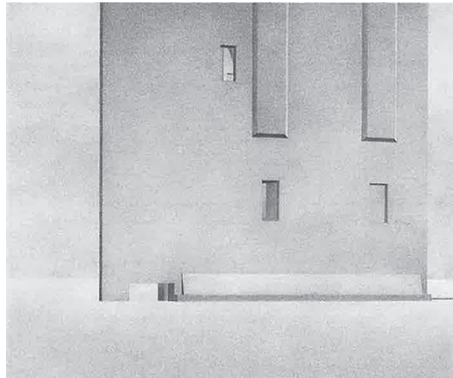
KIRCHER Athanasius, *Camera Obscura, Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae, The Great Art of Light and Shadow*, Rome, 1646.



FUHRMANN August, *Kaiser-Panorama*, 1880.



Archizoom, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape Exhibition*, MoMA, USA, 1972.



WILLEMSE Gert Jan, *Der Prophet*, 1984.



VALERO RAMOS Elisa, *Studio*
Belen 17, Granada, Spain, 2009.

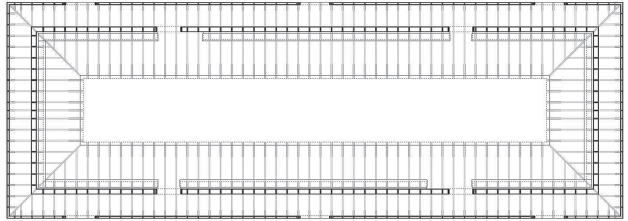
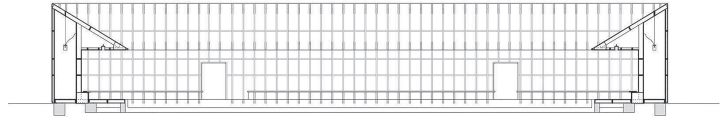


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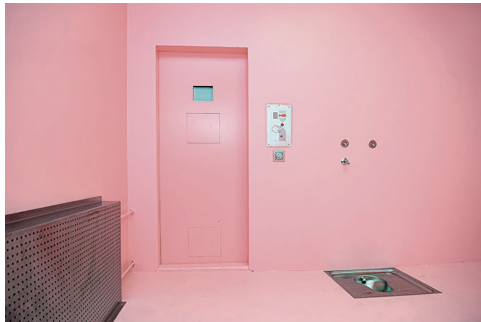


WERBNER Deborah, *Les flâneurs*,
2011.

2B



ZUMTHOR Peter, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion*, London, UK, 2011.



Prison cell, Cham, Zug, Switzerland, 2013.



ABRAHAMSON Lenny, *The room*, "Day 22", movie, 2015.

BUFFER ROOM

A room as a buffer. But the buffer is also there against reality, a device to wait, out of time. A filter space, where you let the public out or the privacy in. It is where you stop to get dressed or take off the coat. It is the room introducing the dwelling.

The significance of the entrance changes over time and highlights the evolution of residential architecture. If in the Middle Ages the rooms were polyvalent, with the passing of time they become more specialized, and trigger new entrance devices. As Christophe Joud describes in his book, *A l'intérieur*¹, the special interest for interior spaces and particularly for the entrance device emerged thanks to social changes and were depicted by the painters of the late 17th and 18th centuries. They take an interest in the common activities of the people, and illustrate their everyday life, introducing little by little a *genre* of painting which neglects religious subjects.

The vestibule, antichambre, hall, and Diele represent the different facets of the entrance depending on the culture where it operates. They also illustrate its evolution and at the same time, the different interpretation assigned to it.

The word *vestibule* comes from the Latin word *vestibulum*, which literally means *out of the living area*. The root vestibule is the same in French and appears at the beginning of the 17th century. The vestibule is the first space when one enters into a dwelling. It has neither furniture, nor ornament. As a neutral space suspended between the exterior and the interior, it does not directly belong to any of them.

One of the paintings of Samuel van Hoogstraten (1) depicts the new role of this first room as an access to the private life. It presents the entrance as an intermediate space between the outside and the inside. The observer looks through the frame of the door to another door, which opens to the private. The materiality of the floor, the brush leaning on the wall in the foreground, as well as the slippers left at the door, give depth to the threshold. Moreover, they illustrate different gradients of privacy and strengthen the role of this room as an in-between space. A contemporary example of the vestibule is illustrated by the project for the Herdernstrasse (2) competition designed by the office Knorr & Pückhauer. Once entering the dwelling, one is in a neutral space, neither out in the corridor nor in the living area. The room is modest and guides the visitor to the rest of the apartment.

¹ JOUD Christophe, *A l'intérieur, les espaces domestiques du logement collectif Suisse, Cahier de Théorie*, No 13, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2016.

The *antichambre* appears in the middle of the 17th century. Its origins can be traced back to the Italian *anti camera* that has the same significance as the French *antichambre*, and the German *Vorzimmer*. Its aim is similar to that of the vestibule, but is the “room” before the one it introduces. Referring to the Encyclopedia of Debret, “the *antichambre* is the room in the apartment that precedes all the others”². Considered as a distributive room where you wait to be invited to go further into the apartment, it is not necessary at the entrance of the dwelling. For example, in the Amelot de Gournay Hotel (3), designed by Pierre Cottard in the 18th century, the vestibule, as a buffer between the courtyard and the dwelling, is placed in the middle and serves both the main stairs and the antichambre. More generous than the vestibule, the antichambre is not only a waiting room, but also a transition device employed in the Bourgeois dwelling.

Two recent projects that reinterpret the antichambre are the Letzibach (4) project from Caruso St-John’s Office and the project of Knorr & Pückhauer previously explained. Both of them explore the implications of a room before another room into the composition. They share similarities in the way they employ a space of transition that at the same time organizes the rest of the rooms. This kind of antichambre implies that one has to wait here before entering into the other rooms. These spaces constitute a buffer between the common and private part of the dwelling.

The term *hall* comes from the French *halle* and originally referred to a covered meeting space. From the 17th century it started to be used in the English manor, at first, as a polyvalent reception room, and after, as the entrance into the house. The polyvalent room was at the same time entrance, living or kitchen and had no transition device to enter. It lacked a space between the outside and the room. With the assignment of the different functions to separate rooms, the hall becomes as independent as the entrance. It serves as a typical pivotal point of distribution with the rooms arranged around it or set in *enfilade*.

For instance, the Hardwick Hall (5) is the first house which opens itself to the external gaze through great openings that render the hall transparent. This allows to go from the entrance to the garden and have a continuous view of the landscape while crossing the space. Therefore, the hall is a space of distribution and does not have a given function. It is an independent space, contrasting with the *enfilade* distribution. The plan depicts a way of life where the inhabitants privilege the social interface as the center of the house. This space organizes on its long sides the other rooms, following varying degrees of privacy: from the more public in the center to the most intimate on the outside.

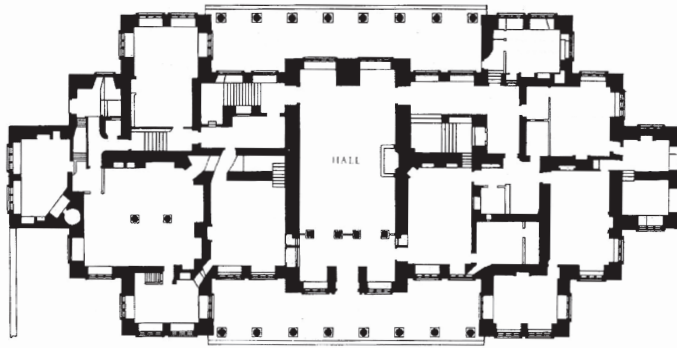
² Free translation from French (VB, MW), DEBRET, *Encyclopédie moderne: dictionnaire abrégé des sciences, des lettres, des arts, de l'industrie, de l'agriculture et du commerce*, Ed. Firmin Didot Frères & Fils, Paris, 1861-1865, vol. 3, p. 424.

In comparison, the German hall, the *Diele*, emerges in the last century with the increased need in the post-war era to reduce the surface and the cost of the dwelling, particularly in social housing. It is not only an entrance and a transition space but also a space to live, which can host other functions. It starts to be furnished and becomes a room in itself. With its dimensions and location, the *Diele* is able to influence the composition of the apartment.

At different periods, some other examples are able to clarify and investigate the question of the entrance device.

The Torre Velasca project (6) designed by BBPR in the 50s and the project for the Uetlibergstrasse (7) by Darlington Meier Office illustrate what a *Diele* can be. Both of them use a hall to come in and access the other rooms. The entrance dimension is compared to a small room of the flat, and a chair proves it belongs to the dwelling, as a room. These rooms give a rhythm to the composition of the flat, and the effect of continuity is strengthened by the circulation running along the façade, with foldable or sliding doors between the rooms.

The buffer room is the filter of privacy, a platform where private and public meet. As the first space of the dwelling, its presence is requested to introduce the apartment to the visitor. The connection between the buffer room and the other rooms stems from its nature as distribution space and, nowadays, can be subject to new interpretations.

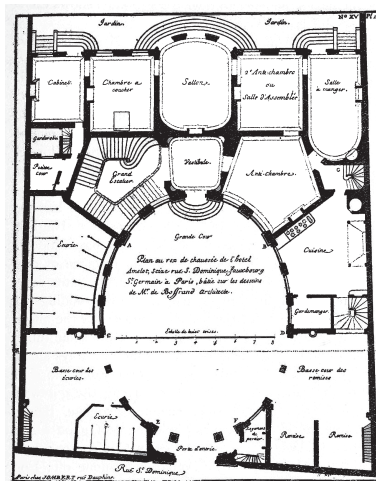


SMYTHSON Robert, *Hardwick Hall*, Doe Lea, UK, 1535-1614.



VAN HOOGSTRATEN Samuel, *Les Pantoufles*, 1654-1662.

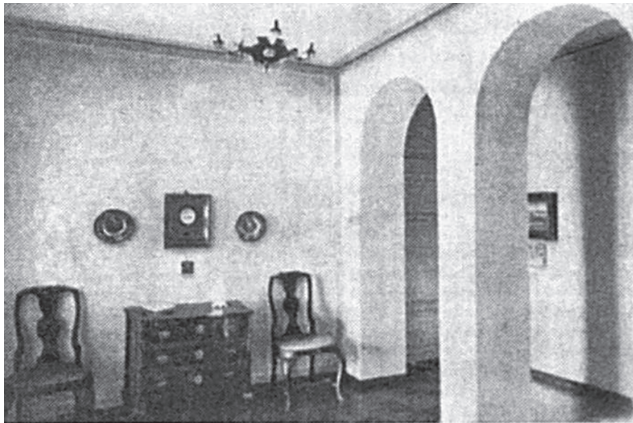
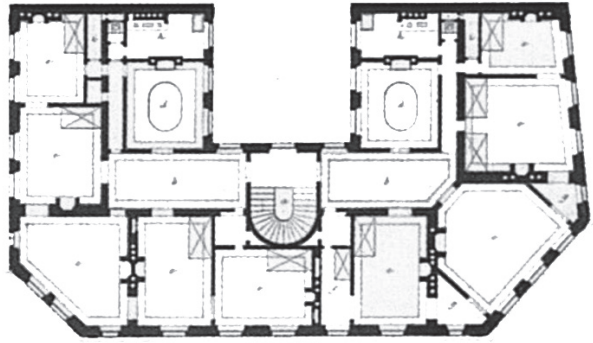
1



COTTARD Pierre, BOFFRAND Germain, *Amelot de Gournay Hotel*, Paris, France 1713.

3

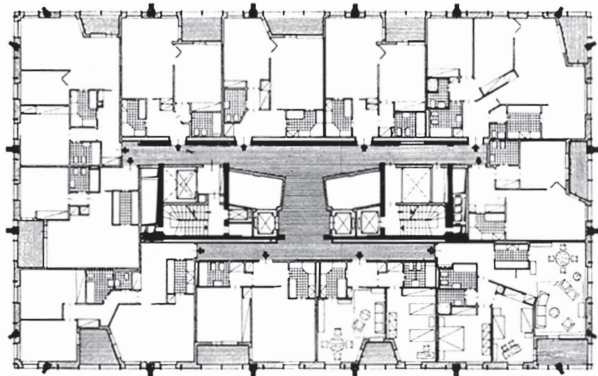
ROLLAND Francois, Maison
à loyer, *Rue de Rivoli 88*, Paris,
France, 19th century.

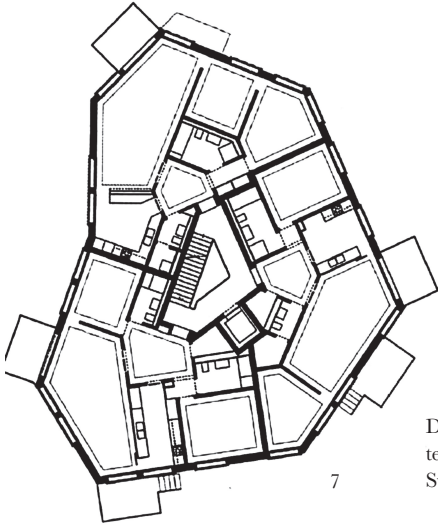


BRYGGMAN Erik, Immeuble de
rapport, *Brahenkatu 9*, Turku,
Finland, 1923-1924.

BBPR Architects, *Torre Velasca*,
Milano, Italy, 1950-1958.

6



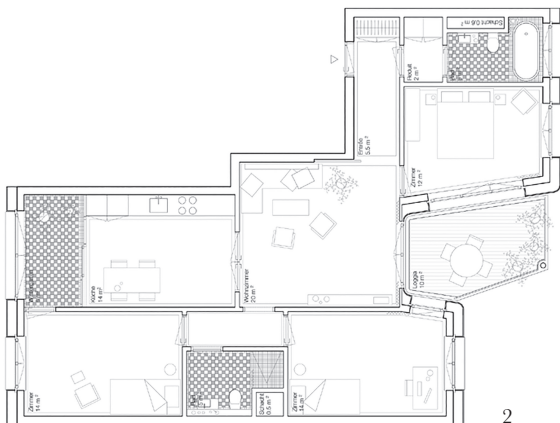


DARLINGTON MEIER Architects, *Uetlibergstrasse*, Zürich, Switzerland, 2009-2011.

7



DUPLEX Architects, *Hohlweg competition*, Rapperswil, Switzerland, 2012.

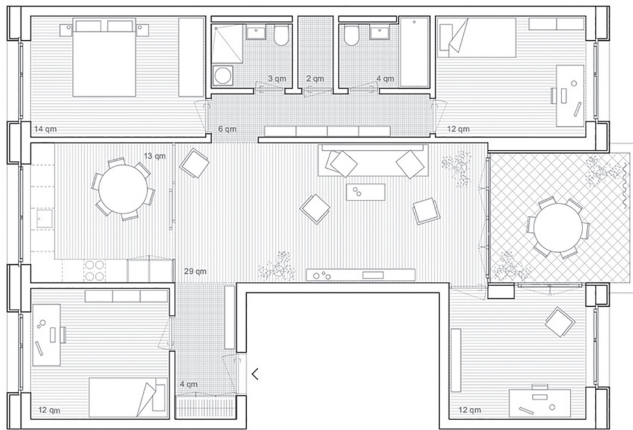


KNORR PÜRCKHAUER Architects, *Herdernstrasse competition*, Zürich, Switzerland, 2014.

2

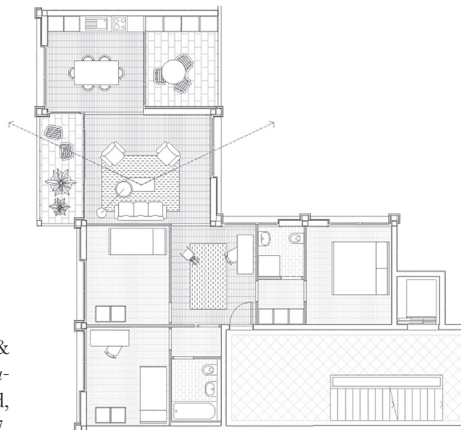


4A



4B

CARUSO ST JOHN Architects,
Letzibach, Zürich, Switzerland,
 2016.



JOD VEGELY BEAUDOIN &
 WOLFF Architects, *Plaines-du-*
Loup, Lausanne, Switzerland,
 2017.

REVERSED ROOM

The room trades its function and position and can turn itself into another. Reversing the roles of the rooms into the dwelling or importing other qualities can give to a room another destination.

During the first half of the 20th century, function and its materialization in space are investigated through functionalism. The expression *form follows function*¹ implies that the shape of a building, its design, is directly based on its intended use. This involves a refinement of the space, a purge of the superfluous, a simplicity where form, façades, and interiors turn to an essential geometry and a minimum of ornaments. The consequence of this rationalization is the reduction of spaces to the minimum, and is linked to the production of social settlements. The entrance and the corridor do not escape this reduction. They are central in the investigation concerning distribution and how it came to acquire new roles.

The entrance space, initially a reception device, allows normally to link the public exterior of the dwelling to its private interior. However, the inversion of values from a distribution space to a common room allows the entrance or the corridor to become the kitchen or the living room.

In an example of the late 50s (1), Luigi Caccia Dominioni investigates these possibilities of the corridor. The way it is represented conveys the idea of spatial dynamic. The corridor appears as a continuity of the living areas, and as Christophe Joud mentions: "The distribution space is thus integrated into an overall spatial theme. The plane geometry, as the interior architecture, makes the corridor completely entangled in the room's system, a fact [...]"² The flat reveals through this its accessible rooms for the visitors and the corridor becomes a meaningful space.

To illustrate this idea, one can observe the housing project of Vogelbach in Riehen (2) made by Michael Adler. The corridor links the entrance to the kitchen and the living room, but it is expressed itself as a room with doors and windows. One is able to use the corridor not only as a circulation axis in the flat, but also as a room in which one can stay. A recent project, employing the corridor in a similar way, is the housing building (3) designed by Miroslav Sik for the Hunziker Areal. Here, as well, the corridor is an entity. Due

¹ Statement of Louis SULLIVAN on functionalism.

² Free translation from French (VB, MW), JOD Christophe, *A l'intérieur, les espaces domestiques du logement collectif Suisse, Cahier de Théorie*, No 13, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2016, p.56.

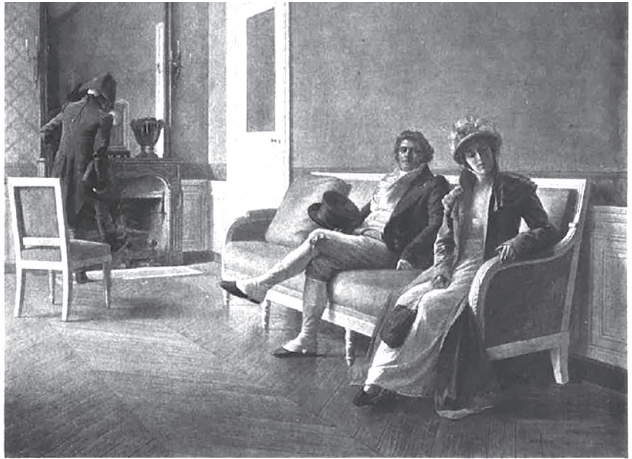
to its generous width, it can serve as both entrance and distribution and, at the same time, existing in itself as a room.

Together with the corridor and the entrance, the other common areas, shared by tenants and guests, are the living room and the kitchen. This inversion of the entrance's value, that comes to integrate the other communal functions, recalls the farm kitchen, which often represents as well the entrance of the farmhouse. It becomes a convivial and distributive space at the same time.

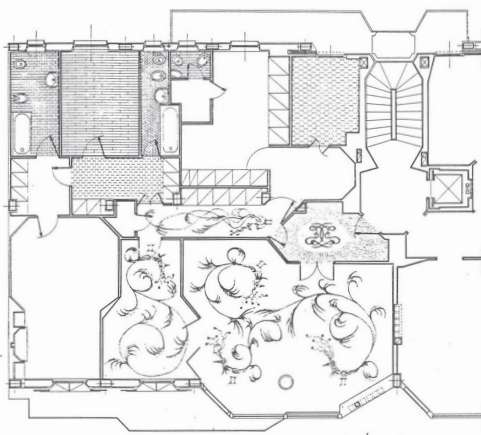
The Waldmeisterweg project (4) proposed by Lütjens Padmanabhan embodies this reversed value, where the entrance takes on also the function of a kitchen and a place to eat. The kitchen represents at the same time the first idea of family home, attached to the central fire, where private family life is shared. It is the core of the dwelling, which brings together the basic human needs – producing, eating, sharing, warmth and protection. The resulting distribution gives in this way more privacy to the other rooms and concentrates the shared into the central living-dinning-kitchen room.

From now on, the reversed room opens up opportunities in the dwelling to merge different uses into one room or exchange functions between the rooms. Reversing values bring up a new kind of distribution into the dwelling. It allows a room to take on the role of another, broadening its meaning and increasing its value.

LAISSEMENT Henri Adolphe,
Dans l'antichambre, 1896.



1A

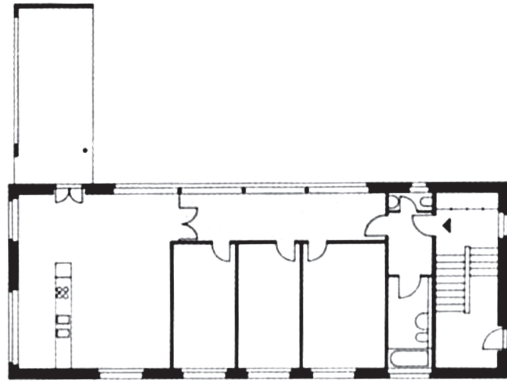


1B

CACCIA DOMINIONI Luigi, *Via Giuseppe Vigoni 13*, Milano, Italy, 1959.

ADLER Michael, *Vögelbach Residential Housing*, Riehen, Switzerland, 1992.

2



35



EDELAAR MOSAYEBI INDERBITZIN Architects, *Avellana Housing*, Zürich-Schwamendingen, Switzerland, 2010-2012.

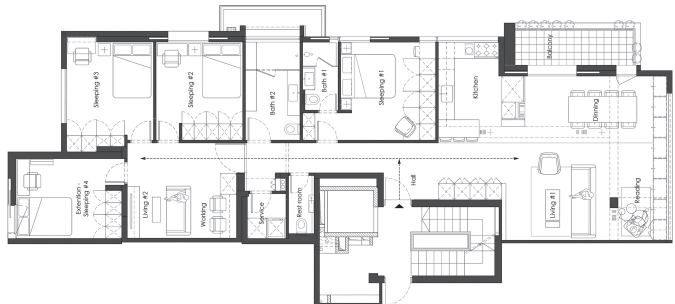
POOL Architects, *Hunziker Areal*,
House G, Zürich-Leutschenbach,
Switzerland, 2012-2015.



SIK Miroslav, *Hunziker Areal*,
House B, Zürich-Leutschenbach,
Switzerland, 2012-2015.

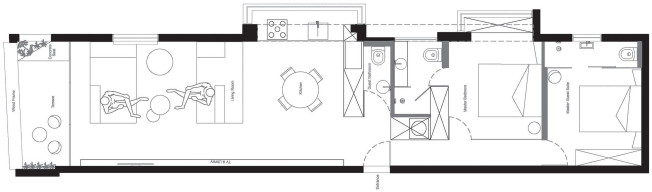
3

STERN Raanan, *Apartment No 4*,
Tel Aviv, Israel, 2016.





PERRY Yeal, *S|H Apartment*, Tel Aviv-Yafo, Isreal, 2017.



37



LÜTJENS PADMANABHAN Architects, *Waldmeisterweg Competition*, Zürich-Unterstrasse, Switzerland, 2013-2018.

4

PIVOTAL ROOM

A reference room towards which everything tends and which organizes around it the other rooms. The pivot, as a central axis involves a converging point, a common center. The pivotal room is the center of the dwelling, the *foyer*.

This center is the nostalgia of the fireplace, which is protected by layers of rooms around it. It is also analogically the square of the flat where people meet, recalling the primary gathering in history, around a fire. The studies about the human origins show a strong link between the development of society and the fireplace, which was the safe, warm and shared place. It is where people begin to organize their life together, to speak and to live. The example of the Caribbean Hut (1) of Semper in the *Four Elements of Architecture*¹ demonstrates this idea of the fire as an element of architecture with the earth, roof, and the enclosure.

The Chemosphere project (2) of John Lautner also refers to this analogy. The center of the house is embodied by the fireplace surrounded by a sofa. It is a place to express oneself, to interact and exchange with the others. Conceived as the reference point in the dwelling, all rooms are developed around it.

The aim of the fireplace is to give a center to the dwelling. In the apartment building (3) in Sargans, Märkli interprets this by placing the living room on the edge of the apartment and tying it to the entrance hall through an open angle. This arrangement of rooms is described in the book *Approximations*, as “the various elements are interlocked like the rooms of the Palace of Knossos”²(4). The center slides from the entrance to the fireplace. The representation in plan illustrates the intensity of the central room and the fireplace and blurs the boundary between the two interwoven rooms.

Another instance of the pivotal room is presented by the Hammerstrasse project (5) of Diener Diener. Here, the center is completely introverted, which allows erasing the fireplace element itself. It is detached from the outside by the layers of distribution space and rooms. This creates a filter between the public exterior and the private interior and renders independent the private rooms on the edges and the common one in the center. The apartment illustrates the neutrality of rooms. It avoids defining functions in order to leave it open to the needs of the inhabitants – family or flat sharing.

¹ SEMPER Gottfried, *The Four Elements of Architecture and other writings*, RES Monographs in Anthropology and Aesthetics, Cambridge University Press, (1851), 1989.

² MÄRKLI Peter, MOSTAFAVI Mohsen, *Approximations: The architecture of Peter Märkli*, AA Publications, London, 2002, p.16.

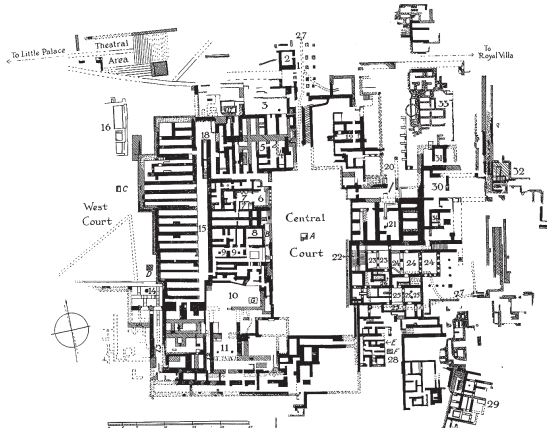
The idea of a center recalls the point of rotation as an organizer of the circulation. As a center, it is the point distributing the access to the entire apartment, which brings the inhabitant close to the façade. The room contains in this way the path and can be compared to a square in the city, which condenses the fluxes and creates a meeting point. The office Meili Peter explores this side circulation in the Building C (6), where the position of the walls and the activities in the dwelling influence our movement. The central living space, marked by a set of four pillars, is a room and a circulation space at the same time.

Other projects, such as the one of von Ballmoos Krucker in the Witikonstrasse (7) and the one of Igal Guggenheim in Leutschenbach-Mitte (8) contain the dining room as a central room. They exhibit the dining room as a *foyer*. The center becomes in this manner the most common room, where one eats and communicates.

The pivotal room merges circulation and furniture related to the function. Without furniture, the room is still identifiable through its role as pivot. Materiality can thus be an answer to represent disappearing elements. The differentiation of the floor through materiality is an interpretation and translation of enclosure. This device is noticeable in Leonidov's proposal for a Garden City (9). The guidelines for the project are to unify landscape and production in the city. It takes the form of a linear strip organized by a grid. In the center there are the residential buildings, accompanied on both sides of the strip by public ones. Inside the square, which is the geometrical figure that organizes the design on all the scales, the common spaces form the shape of a cross, while the private rooms are on the angles. The drawing implies a centrality both through its form but also through the texture of the floor.

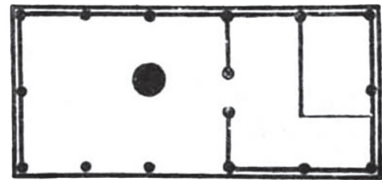
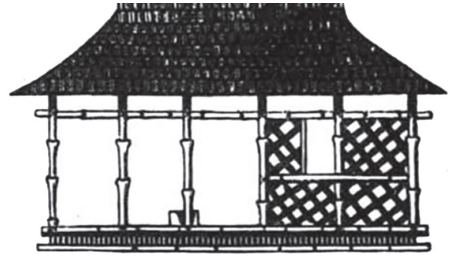
The pivotal room is the reference of the dwelling, marked either by the expression of the fireplace or the material treatment of the floor. It conveys a contemporary interpretation of the ancestral fire as a place to share.

PLAN OF THE PALACE OF KNOSSOS.

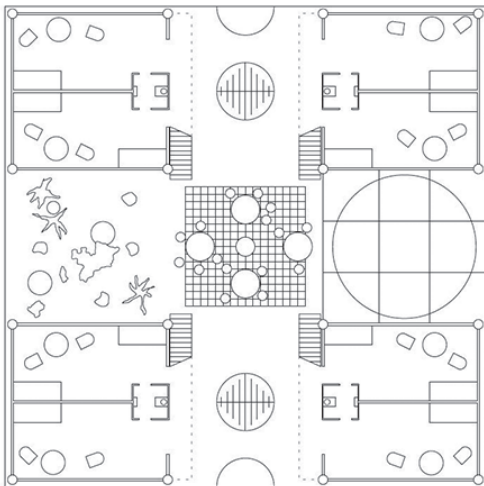


Knossos Palace, Crete, Greece, II millennium BC. 4

PLAN ACCOMPANYING "THE SEA KINGS OF CRETE," BY THE REV. JAMES FAIRIE, F.R.S.E. (L. AND O. PLACE, LONDON)

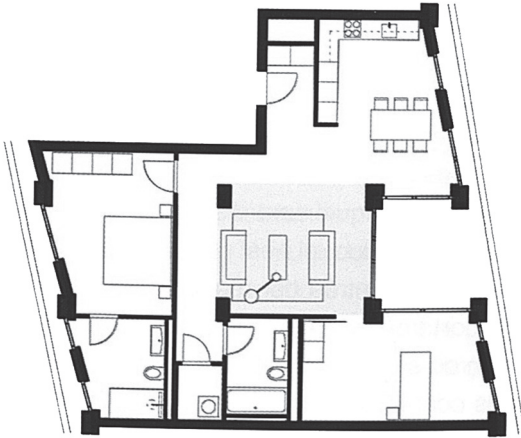


SEMPER Gottfried, *The Caribbean Hut*, 1851. 1



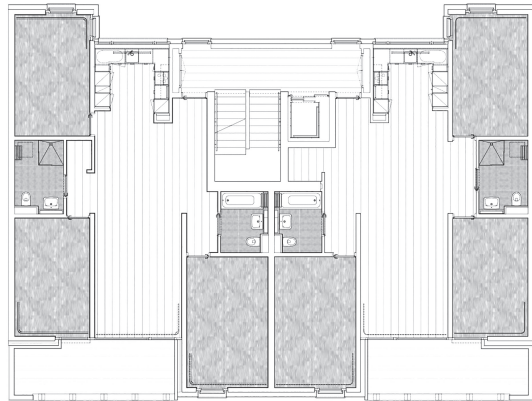
9

LEONIDOV Ivan, *Garden City*, Magnitogorsk, URSS, 1930.



MEILI PETER Architects, *Building C, City West*, Zürich, Switzerland, 2003-2009.

6



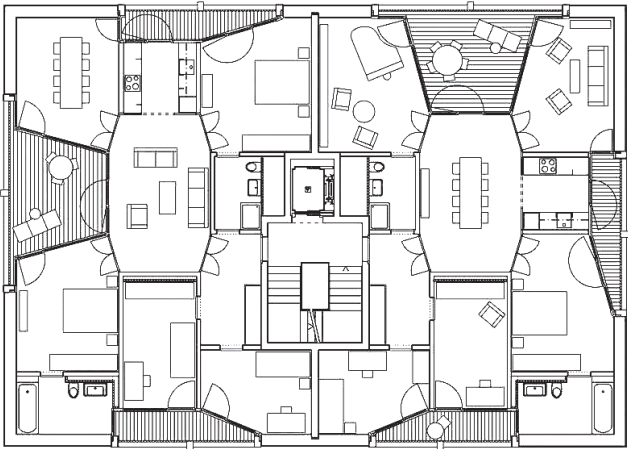
MÄRKLI Peter, *Im Gut Housing*, Zürich, Switzerland, 2012.



VON BALMOOS KRUCKER Architects, *Wütikonstrasse*, Zürich, Switzerland, 2014.

7

ESCH SINTZEL Architects,
Schönberg Ost, Bern, Switzerland,
2011-2015.



8A



8B

IGUAL GUGGENHEIM Architects, *Leutschenbach-Mitte*,
Zürich-Seebach, Switzerland,
2015.

NEGATIVE ROOM

Generated by the imprint of the rooms, a negative room can be either a straight corridor, a fluid circulation or a space with a defined function. The negative room acts as coordinator, it organizes flows and becomes the social core in housing by merging all shared spaces into a single, continuous one.

While the rooms are specified and become a central concern, the function of the corridor is not. With the passing of time, the corridor is developed from a serving space, a pure circulation space, to an element making the rooms independent and, nowadays, to a room in itself.

The word corridor appears merely in the middle of the 18th century. It was previously reserved to servants, like the kitchen, as a hidden circulation, because the rooms were set in enfilade and were only used by the inhabitants. At the same time, the kitchen is separated from the living rooms to avoid the inconvenience of smell and noise.

The arrangement of the rooms, the circulation and services in the *bourgeois* dwelling are rethought and the corridor starts being considered as a recess of the rooms, which suggests that the room can extend to this space. It is an “appropriable extension space, [...] a possibility of use enriching its distributive function”¹. A space that one entirely crosses in the apartment in order to get to the room one wants.

Subsequently, due to the maximization of efficiency and rationalization of space during the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as the industrialization and mass production in the post-war context, circulation is the major element that allows to be efficient in the distribution of the rooms, and renders them autonomous. The interior is rational, sized for the essential needs. The kitchen in the Neubühl Settlement, for instance, based on the Frankfurt model, is controlled, calculated and its use perfectly defined.

As a device, a machine, the corridor and its borders can create unexpected effects and distort the perception of space. They affect and mislead our gaze and thus our body. Dominique Spinetta's apartment (1) in Ajaccio proves this idea. By controlling the position of walls and their shapes, he changes our perception. The effect of the bend wall he designs is double fold. The closed parts guide the gaze and direct the body through space. Yet, it keeps at the same time the privacy of the flat, separating the entrance from the living,

¹ Free translation from French (VB, MW), JOUD Christophe, *A l'intérieur, les espaces domestiques du logement collectif Suisse, Cahier de Théorie*, No 13, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2016, p.44.

so that one cannot directly see from it.

Another example, relevant for the strong effect it has on the perception of the corridor, is the plan of Luigi Caccia Dominioni of the Giuseppe Vigoni Building. The pattern on the floor alludes to a fluid space dedicated to the movement of the body.

In another project, the Museum of Kanazawa (2) of Sanaa, it is interesting to notice the functional corridor between the boxes. The perception of the space is different, everything is made of glass. The fluidity of the space is perceived more by the gaze than by the body. One can see everything but one cannot reach all these spaces. As the circulation area is the negative shape of the rooms, the distinction between it and the rooms is blurred. The glass treatment of the walls of the boxes supports this idea. The rooms are visually interlaced with the circulation space, while their shape still leads one's body.

The corridor is often made to go from one point to another, following a linear path. But, the idea of a *promenade* as a circulation device provides to the eyes a sequence of images of the dwelling as a cinematographic suite. The *architectural promenade* was introduced in 1923 in the House La Roche (3) of Le Corbusier. The *promenade* is essential in order to understand the whole, as it creates many interior views of the target space. The division is clear between the circulation spaces, where one performs, as on stage, while the rooms are private.

During the last decades, the corridor, as the archetypal circulation device, is again put forward in the composition of the dwelling. It begins to increase in size and to contain furniture. Nowadays, the corridor grows into an organic shape and merges with the kitchen-dinning-living room.

The corridor induces movement into the space thanks to its dynamic shape. As Josef Frank explains through a comparison between the house and the city, in the article *Das Haus als Weg und Platz* ², that streets, like corridors, lead to the square. However, when circulation is no longer linear, but expressed through an organic shape, this creates disorientation, lack of hierarchy, as well as ambiguity. As the office Edelaar Mosayebi Inderbitzin Architects describe their project in Hottingen (4), “the aim is not finding, but getting lost”³. The shape of the rooms is less important than the movement creating a *meandering* effect.

Another project, the Patumbah-Park (5) designed by Miller Maranta, has the same concern about space, but the conception is different. They choose to merge the circulation area with the rooms instead of creating a fluid space in the center. It is an extreme perception of space, where the unused surface does not exist, where

² JOSEF Frank, “Das Haus als Weg und Platz”, *Der Baumeister*, XXIX, 1931.

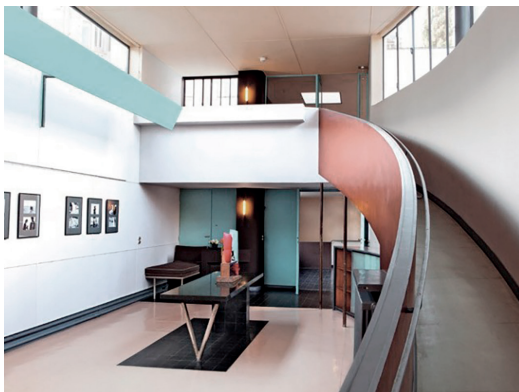
³ Free translation from French (VB, MW), JOURD Christophe, *A l'intérieur, les espaces domestiques du logement collectif Suisse, Cahier de Théorie*, No 13, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2016, p.58.

everything is connected. There is no hierarchy, all rooms have the same value and are united into one single communal space. The geometry, as well as the material influence our perception of space.

An example reconsidering domestic possibilities is the Casa Mora (6) project of Abalos Herreros. It is a research for an unrealized project, situated between the open plan and the conventional subdivision in serving and served spaces. The corridor, as a negative trace of the rooms, disappears. No space is lost. The rooms are themselves the circulation space and they express a fluid and non-hierarchical composition.

The negative room, the corridor is thus the expression of the dwelling content. It is the gathering of the communal rooms. The negative room embodies the life of the occupant, bringing up its potential to tell a story.

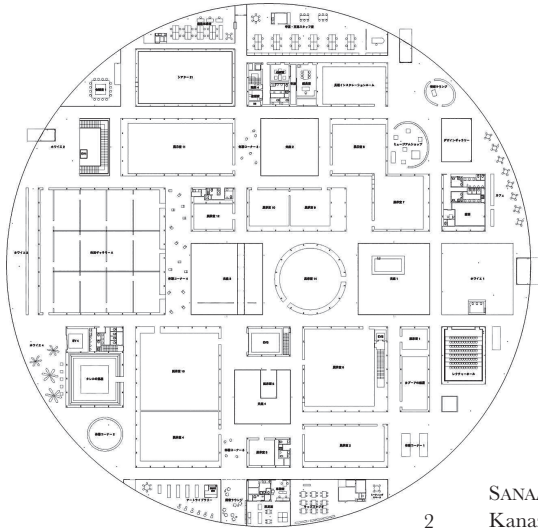
LE CORBUSIER, *Maison La Roche*,
Paris, France, 1923-1925. 3



SPINETTA Dominique, *Apartment*
Ajaccio, Ajaccio, France, 1978. 1

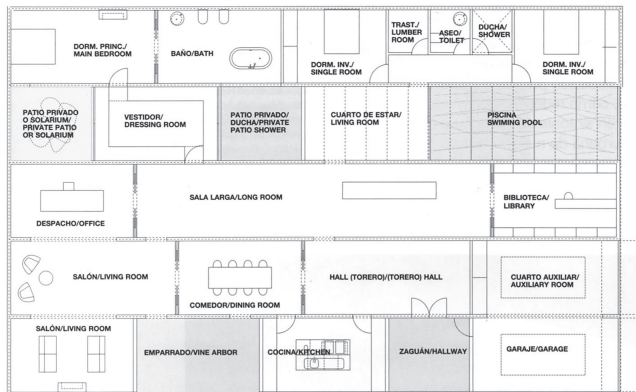


ADLER Michael, *Vogelbach Residential Housing*, Riehen, Switzerland, 1992.



2

SANA, Museum of Kanazawa,
Kanazawa, Japan, 2004.



6

ABALOS HERREROS Architects,
Casa Mora, 2000-2003.

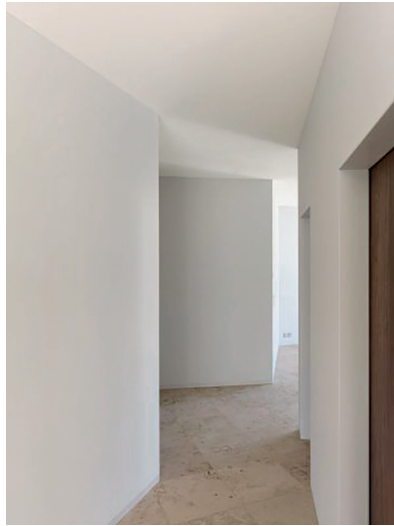


MEIER HUG Architects,
Elderly apartments Sonnenhof, Wil,
Switzerland, 2011-2014.



5

MILLER MARANTA Architects,
Patumbah-Park, Zürich, Switzer-
land, 2013.

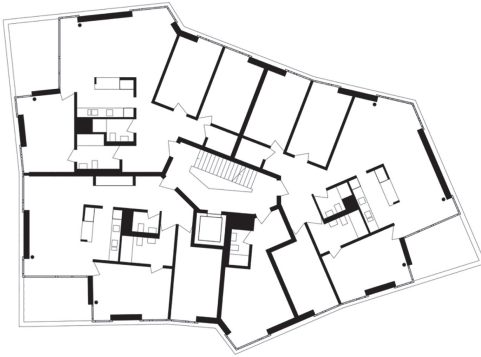


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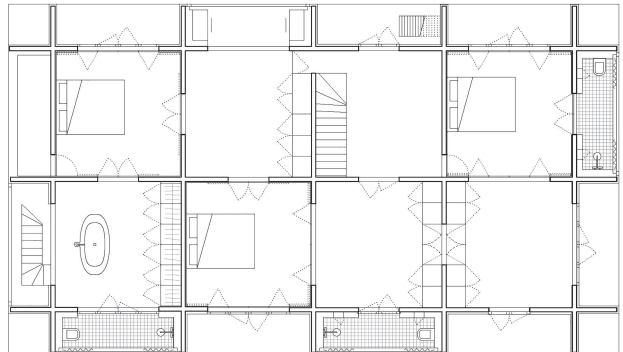


4B

EDELAAR MOSAYEBI INDER-
BITZIN Architects, *Wohnbauten*
Steinwies-/Irisstrasse, Zürich-Hot-
tingen, Switzerland, 2011–2015.



BAUMBERGER STEGMEIER &
EDELAAR MOSAYEBI INDER-
BITZIN Architects, *Töblerstrasse*,
Zürich, Switzerland, 2011-2017.



OFFICE KGDVS, *Villa Der Bauu*,
Linkebeek, Belgium, 2011-2015.

TYPICAL ROOM

The typical is the exhibition of a pattern generated by context and history. The typical room is a generic space. It materializes the shifts in our ways of living.

Our conception of the room over time has grown to be a highly functional one. In the ancient Greek house, rooms did not have any fixed function. They could serve a multitude of uses, according to specific needs. In the Middle Ages, domestic spaces were poly-functional and all the events of domestic life took place in the communal room. Later, in the typical *Bourgeois* apartment, we could clearly distinguish the rooms by their use and this was reflected in their treatment and degree of opulence: the more public the room, the heavier it was decorated. However, it was not until the advent of functionalism that our daily rituals were broken down into actions assigned to specific rooms. Consequently, every room was invested with a specific function.

These changes are clearly traceable in the way we use specific words in order to define our domestic reality. Monique's Eleb book, "Les 101 mots de l'habitat à l'usage de tous"¹, is a reflection on the words defining the habitat and how their meaning has evolved with the customs, uses and sensibilities. The organization of the place of life testifies to the way of conceiving human relations, the tastes of an era, the modes of life, the progress and the technological advances.

Throughout time, there were different driving forces behind the design process of the room. With the rise of the program in the 90s, architecture suffered a decrease and was reduced to a mere envelope that allowed for complete neutrality and flexibility at the interior, and thus, leading to the dissolution of the room. It is for this that bringing to attention the elementary vocabulary of the architecture of the room is necessary and unavoidable.

The idea of a possible typical room recalls the famous *Typical Plan* (1) introduced by Koolhaas in *S, M, L, XL*². Defined by the unprecedented neutrality of the grid, it became fast one of the most widespread models for the architecture of production. By the same token, the typical room contrasts with the most common understanding of the room as a progressive accumulation of knowledge and uses. It appears as the only type able to question

¹ ELEB-VIDAL Monique, *Les 101 mots de l'habitat à l'usage de tous*, Archibooks + Sautereau Editeur, 2015.

² KOOLHAAS Rem, MAU Bruce, WERLEMANN Hans, *S, M, L, XL*, The Monacelli Press, 1997.

the age-old models of collective housing and bring about change. The typical room does not know about composition. It is part of a system that allows it to be multiplied to the infinite. Therefore, all rooms are equal, but their expression changes the moment another use is assigned to them.

Therefore, the typical room liberates the space from the burden of answering to a sole use and, instead, is function-less. As such, the typical room is no longer a domestic space. It is a neutral, generic, inhabitable space that can serve for both living and working. It does not blindly mimic a forced domesticity. The project submitted by Abalos Herreros for the Diagonal of Barcelona (2) competition in 1988 ³ illustrates how technology can serve to bridge the gap between office typology and housing. The two merge to create one unique space. This radical proposal is a reminder that the domestic realm, now more than ever probably, does not and cannot support only activities related to reproduction. From its very outset, the typical room allows for both production and reproduction.

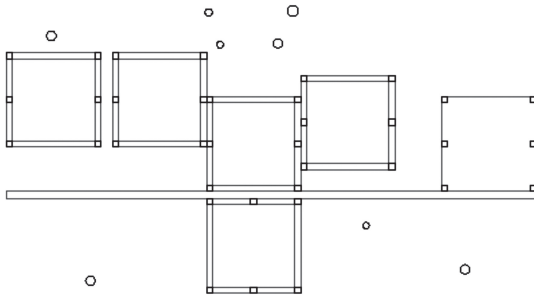
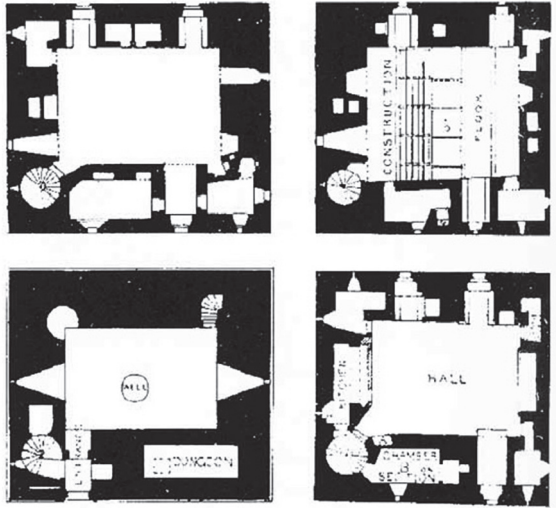
The typical room absorbs all services in the constructive elements in order to liberate the space. As a result, the services do not inhabit or structure the space. They frame it. It is something that we can observe in the Communal Villa ⁴ project (3) designed by Dogma, where all rooms are treated in the same manner, pushing the most intimate spaces to its borders, in order to free the space.

For a long time the most important factor of the room was its content. However, the typical room is devoid of content. It normally rejects any kind of program and is what remains after all functions leave. The typical room has the ability to provide a generic space, as response to ever shifting needs, leaving it open for use.

³ Housing & City Competition, Barcelona, organized by the magazine *Quaderns d'arquitectura i urbansime*, 1988.

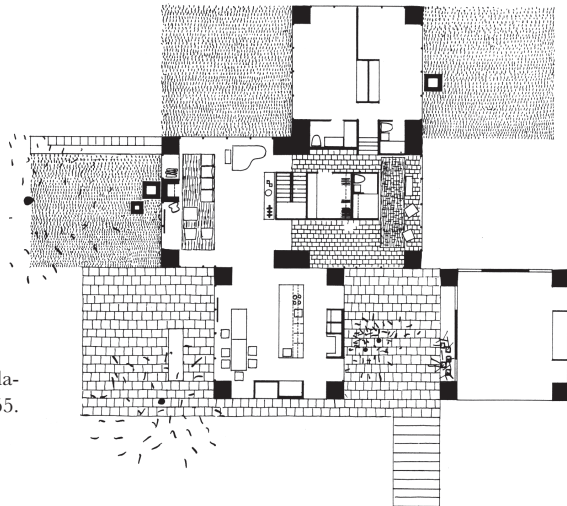
⁴ Dogma, Realism Working Group, *Communal Villa*, Spector Books & HKW, 2015.

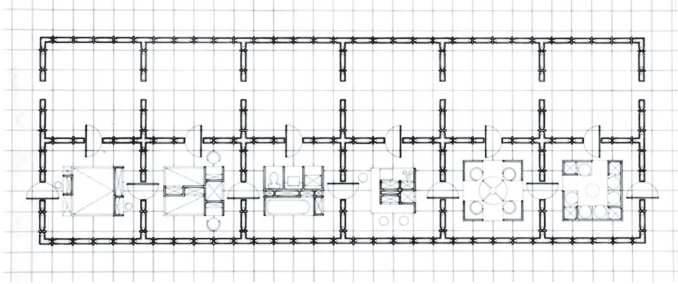
KAHN Louis, *Castle Comlogan drawings*, Dumfriesshire, Scotland.



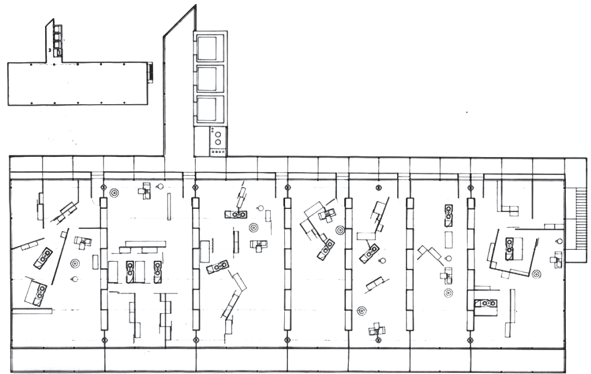
KAHN Louis, *DeVore House*, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, USA, 1954-1955.

KAHN Louis, *Adler House*, Philadelphia, USA, 1954-1955.



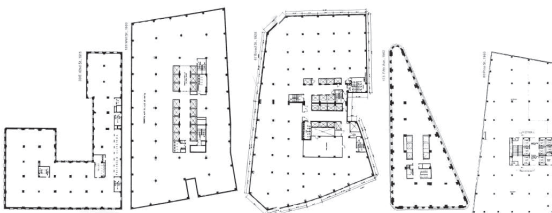
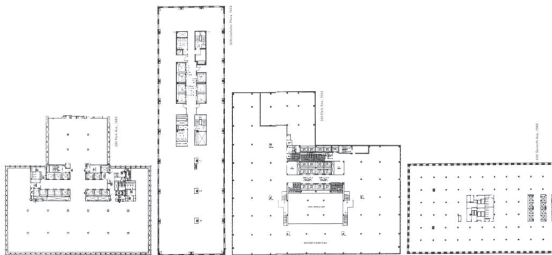


FUJI Hiromi, *Materializing Abstract Space: Project E-2*, 1968-1971.



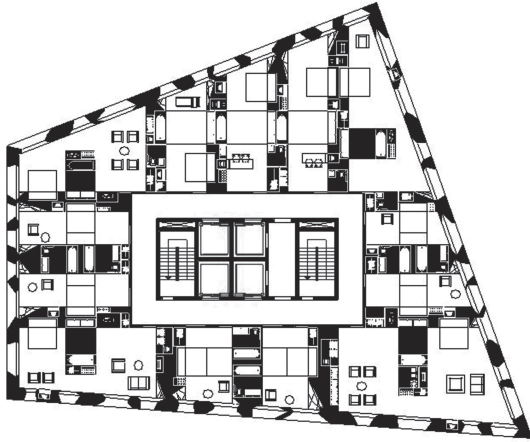
ABALOS HERREROS Architects, *Housing-City, Diagonal*, Barcelona, Spain, 1988.

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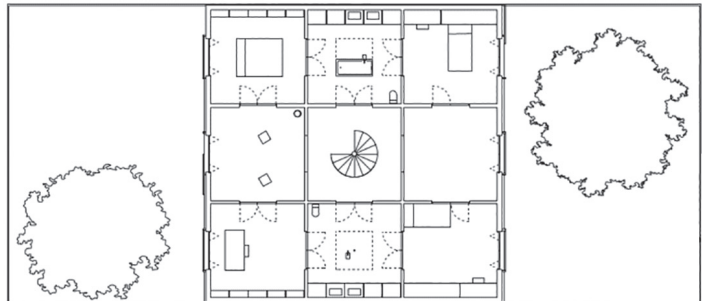


KOOLHAAS, MAU, WERLEMANN, *S, M, L, XL*, The Monacelli Press, 1997.

1



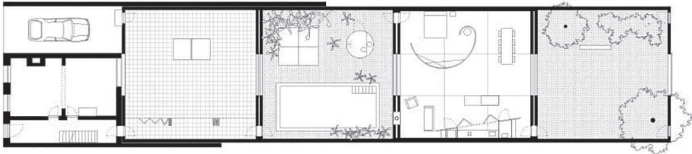
HERZOG DE MEURON & OMA,
Astor Place Hotel, New York,
USA, 2000-2001.



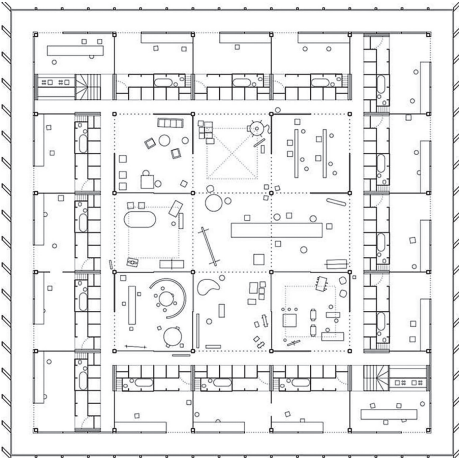
OFFICE KGDVS, *Villa Bugghout*,
Belgium, 2007-2012.



OFFICE KGDVS, *Weekend House*,
Merchtem, Belgium, 2009-2012.



3A



3B

DOGMA & REALISM WORKING
GROUP, *Communal Villa*, 2015.

PRIVATE ROOM

The room is the symbol of the roles we chose to play on the domestic scene, but it also allows us to escape by enabling us to order our own interiority.

The private room facilitates our negotiation between social pressure and the possibility or, better said, the need to be alone. The word private, despite its apparent straightforwardness, encapsulates a variety of nuances ranging from seclusion, concealment, secrecy, to isolation, concentration and reflection. What makes the private room so important today though, is its rapport to propriety. Before, it was tightly linked to a certain material and social resourcefulness and thus to the idea of property. Today, when the wish for property fluctuates between a capitalistic trap and a highly overestimated, hardly attainable ideal, privacy detaches itself from property to acquire another meaning.

In a world where productive and social ideals dominate, the time we actually spend alone is significantly decreasing and cannot be completely isolated from the reality of life. However, its effect is therapeutic and indispensable.

Throughout time, the private room has been known under different names according to the person using it, the activity it hosted or its cultural affiliations. All these names: cabinet, closet, *studiolo*, study, office or *boudoir*, define a space normally dedicated to the use of the individual. The cabinet, for example, originated from the need for increased privacy for reading and contemplation. It would usually sit next the bedchamber, as an even more private extension of it, and be accommodated with books and pieces of art. It is a space of retreat, of study and concentration. Here, the world is objectified, abstracted, and becomes the subject of multiple decompositions and recompositions. This interpretation of the room as a place that encourages thought and reflection, as a *place of the mind*, corresponds as well to the one advanced by Louis Kahn in his essay “The Room, The Street and The Human Agreement”¹.

Another reading of the private room is given by Virginia Woolf in an essay suggestively titled *A Room of One's Own*². For her, the private room is the symbol of personal and economic self-sufficiency. In the article bearing the same name, Aureli quotes her thesis that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if

¹ KAHN Louis, “The room, the street and the human agreement”, *A+U*, January: 25-30, 1973.

² WOOLF Virginia, *A room of one's own*, The Indo-European Publishing, 2011.

she is to write fiction”³. He highlights that, in addition to being the sheer prerequisite for concentration, solitude and reflection, for Woolf the private room is primarily an entity tightly knit into the economic and social web according to which society works.

The private room questions the very essence of domestic life. If in Antiquity only the wealthy *pater familias* had the right to a private space, in the 20th century it becomes ubiquitous as the too-romanticized retreat from the harshness of the city. The role of the modern room as a private space of withdrawal is to be understood in relation to the conventional reading of the city. If the city is the space for publicity, where the roughness of work unfolds, then the private room comes as an antidote by providing space and time for self-reconstruction, away from production.

Undeniably, the archetype of the modern, private, single-person room is the monastic cell (1). Monasticism, as a way of living in isolation, comes as an alternative to escape the constraints of the established social, economic and political system. A place to be alone with oneself *par excellence*, in the essay “A room of one’s own”⁴, Pier Vittorio Aureli states that such a form of life was unprecedented. He adds that it was possible only due to the nature of Christian religion, which implies that each individual carries a personal relationship with God. Therefore, the cell represents the private room in its purest form.

Wiped of all references to the exterior world, it leaves behind everything that is mundane. In its scarcity and austerity, it transforms emptiness into the most meaningful decor. Emptiness is not just an initial, temporal state, but a way of living. In the Certosa di Galluzzo near Florence, the sheer neutrality of the space does not reflect the identity of the monk. Moreover, the foldable table renders the space almost vacant. Inhabiting the emptiness is the art of asceticism, as a “radical practice of self-enactment”⁵. In the cell, one is in a continuous state of reflection and concentration on himself. With the invention of the cell, the idea of privacy, apart from its juridical definition, acquired an existential meaning.

Today, due to economic factors, to the strictly functional way, our domestic space is organized but also to the mobility of life and to the increasingly less amount of time that we spend alone, the most private room we own is arguably the room where we sleep. Therefore, the bedroom merged with the studio to support the intricate blend of “production and reproduction”⁶ in our contemporary ways of living.

The individual room plays an essential role in the domestic realm. It goes beyond the immediate and trivial matters of reproduction

³ AURELI Pier Vittorio, TATTARA Martino, “A Room of One’s Own: Preliminary Notes on the Architecture of the Room”, *Volume No 46*, Winter 2015, p.24.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ AURELI Pier Vittorio, “Less is enough”, conference held at the Strelka Institute, on the 03.09.2013. Consulted on the 01.11.2017 on www.vimeo.com.

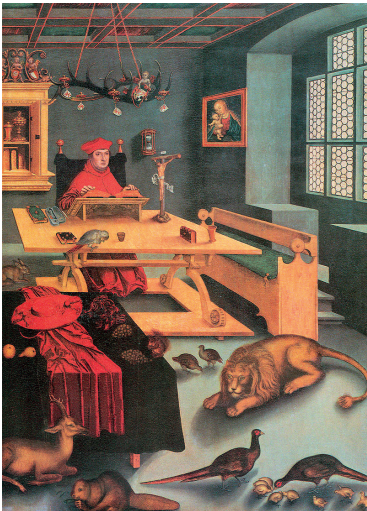
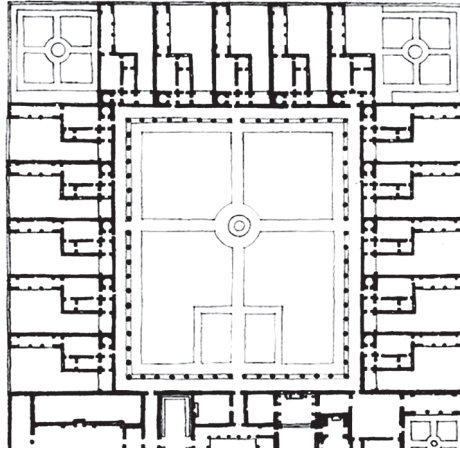
⁶ *Ibidem*.

of everyday life. It is the only place where we can concentrate on ourselves and elevate our lives to a “constantly refined practice”⁷. However, the private room is not auto-sufficient. It is always part of an infrastructure of communal spaces that support and enhance its quality. Therefore, through its performance inside a system, the private room alludes to an idea of communal living.

⁷ AURELI Pier Vittorio, Tattara Martino, “A Room of One’s Own: Preliminary Notes on the Architecture of the Room”, *Volume.No 46*, Winter 2015, p.27.

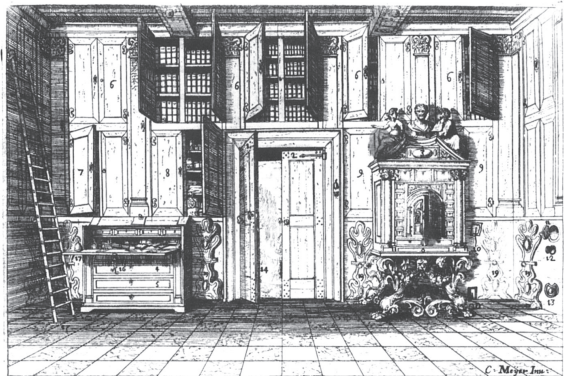
Certosa del Galluzzo, Charterhouse, Florence, Italy, 14th century.

1



CRANACH THE ELDER Lucas, Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg as Saint Jerome in his study, 1526.

MEIJER Cornelis, The One-Room Apartment, Rome, Italy, 1689.

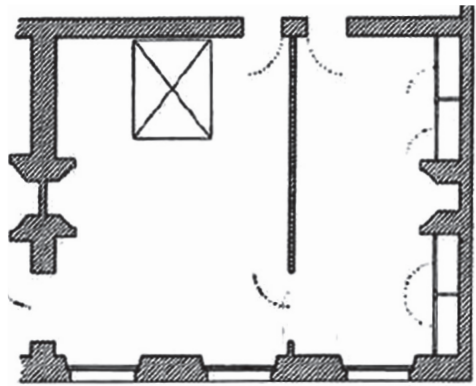




LEDOUX Claude Nicolas, *Hotel de Madame d'Evry*, Paris, France, 1770.

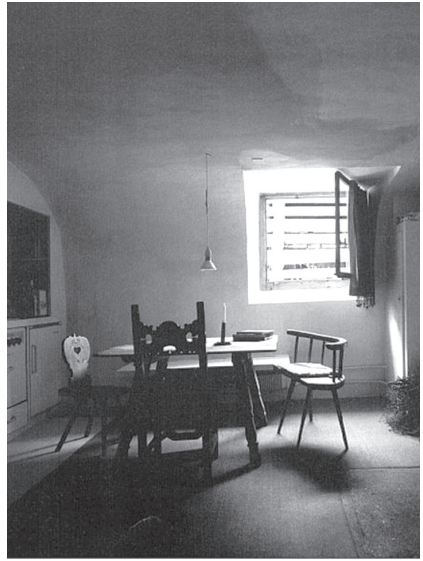


FREUDEBERG Sigismund, *Le Boudoir*, 1774.



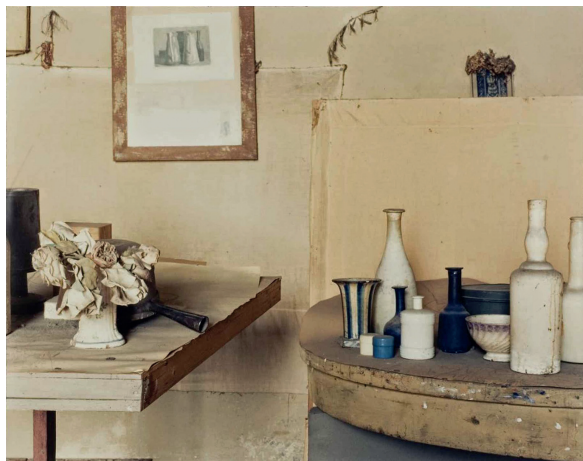
GUADET Julien, *Chambre principale et Cabinet de Toilette*, 1902.

OLGIATI Rudolf, *Dado Residential building*, Flims, Switzerland, 1931.



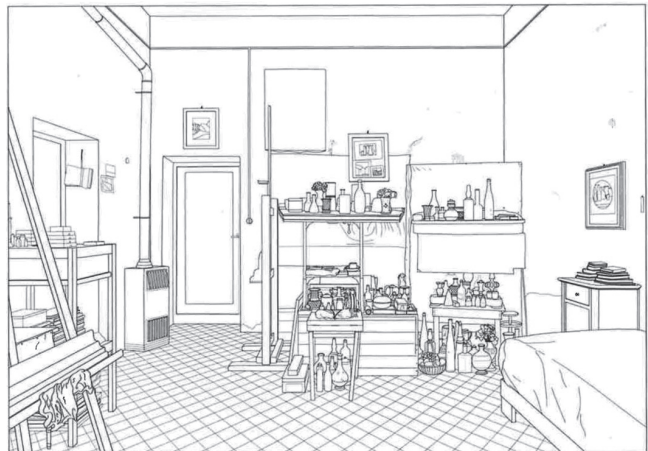
HOPPER Edward, *Morning in a city*, 1944.

GHIRRI Luigi, *Ars gratia artis IV*, Giorgio Morandi Studio, Bologna, Italy, 1982.

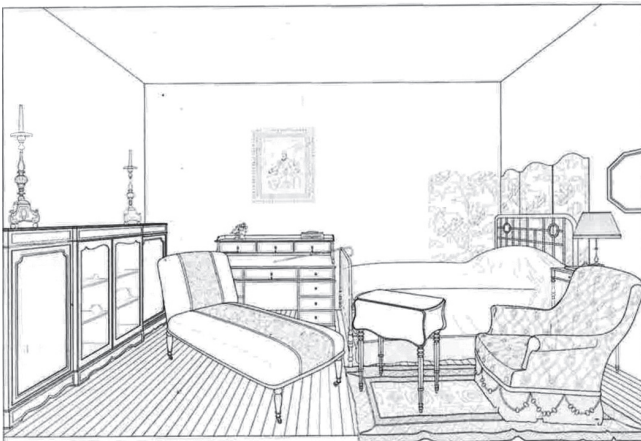




SCHAUB-ZWICKY Architects,
Cabin for writer, Maison de l'Écri-
ture, Montricher, Switzerland,
2017.



DOGMA, *Giorgio Morandi's room*,
Living and Working Project, 2017.



DOGMA, *Marcel Proust's room*,
Living and Working Project, 2017.

COMMUNAL ROOM

The communal room emerged as the core of family life. The very essence of the word communal implies the idea of sharing. A communal room is therefore the vital collective space for a group of people that share the same interests or ways of living.

In the case of a family, it represents the shared space where the activities of all members overlap. Throughout time, it constituted the epicenter of daily activities, shifting its position between the dining table, the kitchen and the living room. This way of using the room both for cooking and eating, as the nucleus for family meetings, recalls the ways of life of peasant families in the Middle Ages and constitutes a model for contemporary variations.

This theme has been skillfully reinterpreted by the architects Edelaar Mosayebi Inderbitzin, and turned into the central, departure point for the conception of the Avellana collective housing project (1). In the book *A l'Intérieur*¹, Christophe Joud refers to this project for its ability to bring together kitchen, dining and entrance into one fluid space. In this case, the communal room, located at the entrance, becomes the direct extension of the exterior into the interior, denoting its rural roots.

As far as collective housing is concerned, the communal room, as a room for encounter, dialogue and exchange has the potential to propose new ways for people to live together, while fostering social diversity. Today, a great number of young people live in shared flats. Although the way of life has changed, the organization of the apartment is still the same as the one having as reference the nuclear family. In this case, the communal room could play a decisive role as meeting point and shared infrastructure of spaces, as threshold between the most private areas, and as overall organizer. Understanding this space as one that allows people to live with varying degrees of privacy and autonomy is key to exploring new modes of planning and organization.

Arguably, one of the most radical examples of communal living in the history of housing was the Russian communal apartment. It emerged as a response to the housing crisis triggered by the massive migration of people from the rural areas to the city, due to the industrialization of economy. It is an extreme and forced togetherness where the room constitutes the living unit. Every family would

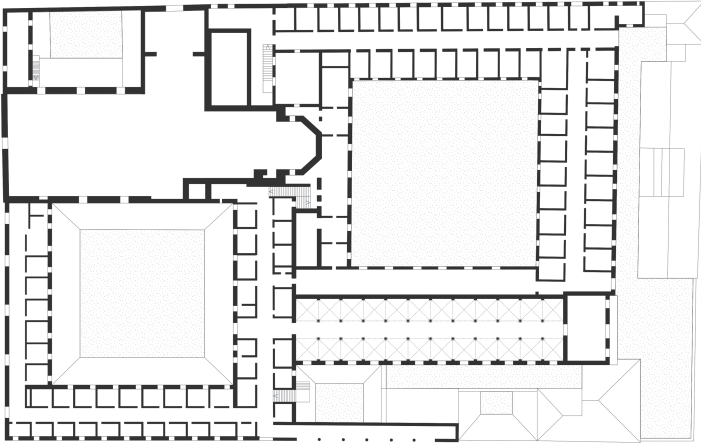
¹ JOD Christophe, *A l'intérieur, les espaces domestiques du logement collectif Suisse, Cahier de Théorie*, No 13, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2016.

be assigned only one room that served as living room, dining and bedroom. The more technical amenities, such as the kitchen and bathroom, would be shared with everybody and usually would be located in a separate volume, so as to emphasize the difference between the private and the collective parts. However, due to its particular political and economic context this model of communal living, apart from having failed under the weight of its own ideology, is not possible to be imported in other situations.

Nowadays, important steps are being made in the direction of collective housing. Each example has other target group and proposes a new reading of what communal means, rather than an infallible model to be followed. One radical example in this sense is the Hunziker Areal ² in Zürich. The project comprises an entire neighborhood and brings forward another type of urban living. For this, different architecture offices have proposed a variety of configurations supporting highly diversified forms of living, such as multi-generational. The solutions cover most life stages from students and young couples to singles and senior citizens. Of all the projects, the Block A (2), designed by Duplex Architects, provides the most relevant example of a contemporary communal room as a space to come together and socialize. In this case, the kitchen, living and dining merge into one fluid space that serves also as circulation, leading to the entrances of the apartments. Each apartment is a unit inhabited by a couple. It comprises two separate bedrooms, a bathroom and a small place to eat. Therefore, the communal room manages to reorganize communal life. Instead of being the shared space of only one family, it is the meeting point of all the people living on the floor. In this way, it breaks with the traditional notions of housing development.

If the private room is the antidote to the extremes of togetherness, it is also the prerequisite for the existence of the communal room. By the same token, the communal room is the *sine qua non* condition for the community life to unfold.

² HUGENTOBLER
Margrit, HOFER Andreas,
SIMMENDINGER Pia,
*More than housing: cooperative
planning - a case study in Zürich*,
Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015.



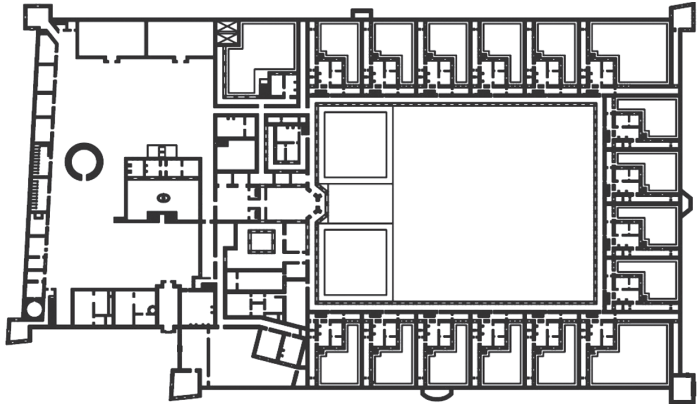
MICHELOZZO Michelozzi, *San Marco convent*, Florence, Italy, 1436-1446.



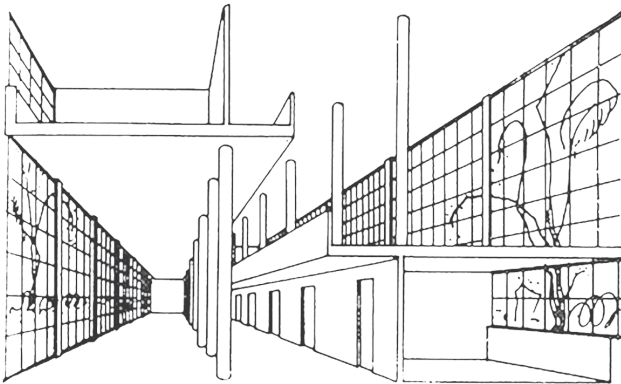
BOSSE Abraham, *La maîtresse d'école*, 1638.



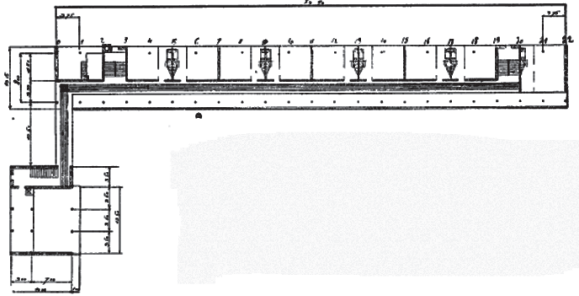
LE NAIN Louis, *Famille de paysans dans un intérieur*, 1642.



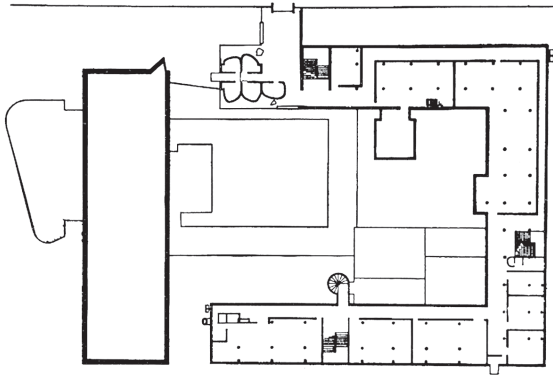
VIOLLET-LE-DUC Eugène, *Redrawing the Typical Carthusian plan*, Charterhouse, Clermont France, 1856.



BARSHCH VLADIMIROV Architects, *Communal House*, Moscow, URSS, 1929.



GINZBURG MILINIS Architects,
Narkomfin Building, Moscow,
 URSS 1928-1930.



LE CORBUSIER, *La Tourette*
Convent, Eveux, France, 1953-
 1960.

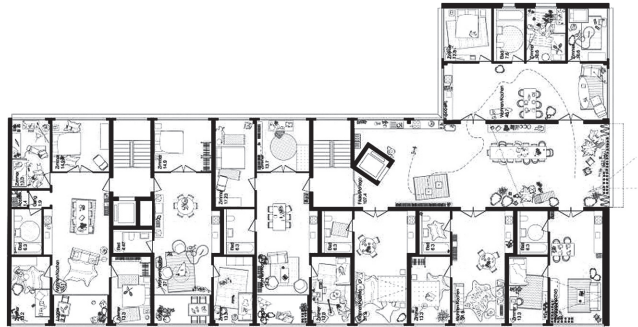
EDELAAR MOSAYEBI INDERBIT-
 ZIN Architects, *Avellana Housing*,
 Zürich-Schwamendingen,
 Switzerland, 2010-2012.





2

DUPLEX Architects, *House A*,
Hunziker Areal, Zürich, Switzerland,
 2009-2015.



77

LÜTJENS PADMANABHAN Archi-
 tects, *Collective housing Competition*,
 San Riemo, Munich, Germany,
 2017.



DUPLEX Architects, *Buchegg*
Siedlung, Zürich, Switzerland,
 2011-2018.

SHIELD ROOM

Subconsciously or not, we all long for a protective space. The shield room is the only one that can answer to our need for safety. It rejects to the outside all that is disturbing, unwanted or feared. It is an emergency room. When something becomes unbearable or, in extreme cases, threatens our very existence, it is here that we find retreat. The shield room is indestructible. It is built to withstand any kind of damage. The shield room is the sheer embodiment of permanence. However, its use is only temporary. Today, it stands as proof of our contemporary fears and attacks.

The shield room becomes a *survival machine* when it takes the shape of a bunker. An attentive study of it has been undertaken by Paul Virilio in his book *Bunker Archeology*¹. Here, the ghostly presence of the deserted bunkers (1) found along the French coast reveals an almost mythical side to warfare. The shield room becomes the silent witness of history and a veritable *monument of peril*, testimony and leftover of our most destructive acts against each other. Compared to a “concrete altar built to face the void of the horizon”², its grey, heavy, abstract appearance makes funeral and military architecture meet. Detached from the body of the building and directly rooted in the ground, it marks a strategic point in the vast landscape, standing as proof to the fact that “works of art exist in infinite solitude”³. With its reduced volume, thick walls, air filters and few accesses that open through heavy and carefully concealed iron doors, it conjures up another spatial reality. Due to its sheer massiveness and unexpectedly pure modernity, the bunker rises as an actual building, as “one of the rare modern monolithic architectures”⁴.

The isolated, abandoned bunkers spread across the territory are anachronistic in times of peace. However, they find their place in contemporary homes as final retreats in case of catastrophes or imminent threats. The movie *Panic Room* (2) features such a room as a critical element on the background of which the whole action unfolds. It is designed as a reinforced, highly secure room, with its own air electricity and water resources, cut away from the main network of the house. When locked, it is meant to keep the owners safe. Initially, the occupants find refuge inside it in order to get away from the robbers wondering around in the house and looking for trouble. As the action develops, the two sides exchange places and the robbers finish by being locked in the panic room. After a series

¹ VIRILIO Paul, *Bunker Archeology*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1994, p.10.

² *Ibidem*, p.12.

³ *Ibidem*, p.121.

⁴ VIRILIO Paul, *Bunker Archeology*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1994, p.37.

of hidden moves that recall those of chess masters, this unexpected twist make us question the very nature of danger, protection and safety.

Nowadays, due to the digital revolution, we face a major shift in the way we perceive and configure our space: its physical and virtual characteristics overlap. “The units of measurement [...] are no longer the meter, the kilometer or the decibel; they are the milliwatt, the hertz and the gigabyte”⁵. Peter Jellitsch’s various *Data Drawings* (3) attempt to materialize our immaterial, but still traceable, virtual interactions. It opens up new ways of interpreting space, as a mixture between real and virtual, where the distinction between public and private fades.

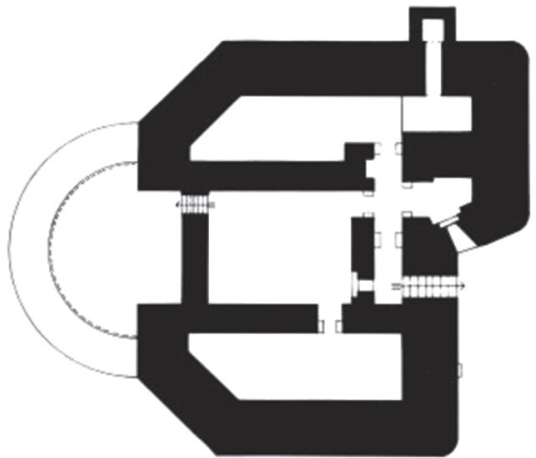
Today, while one accepts by default the omnipresence of technology invading all the aspects of our lives, the question of digital privacy must also be raised. As such, a contemporary interpretation of the shield room is an elusive space in the electromagnetic environment, a room deprived of technology that allows for selective electromagnetic autonomy. It recalls the Faraday cage, which was built to protect people or electric equipment from electric currents by using walls made of conductive materials that take on all the electric charges. Now, the potential role of the shield room would be to protect individuals from the information realm and handle the public – private, real – virtual.

Complementary to the virtual room, which is a node in the infinite virtual network, the shield room makes its users disappear by impeding all information exchange with the exterior.

⁵ Statement of Peter JELLITSCH on the *Electronic Topographies* project, 2009. From www.dprbcn.wordpress.com/2011/03/01/electronic-topographies/. Consulted on the 31.12.2017.



*Observation post with container,
1939-1945.*



*Opposite and above: Observation posts
revealed by the erosion of the dunes,
1939-1945.*



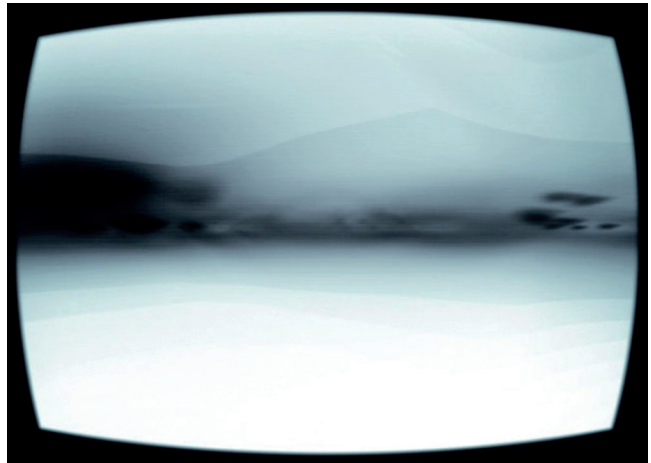
BUNSHAFT OMA, *Beinecke Library*, Yale, New Haven, USA, 1963.



LA PIETRA Ugo, *Sistema disequilibrante: Casa Telematica*, 1971.



2 FINCHER David, *Panic room*, movie, 2002.

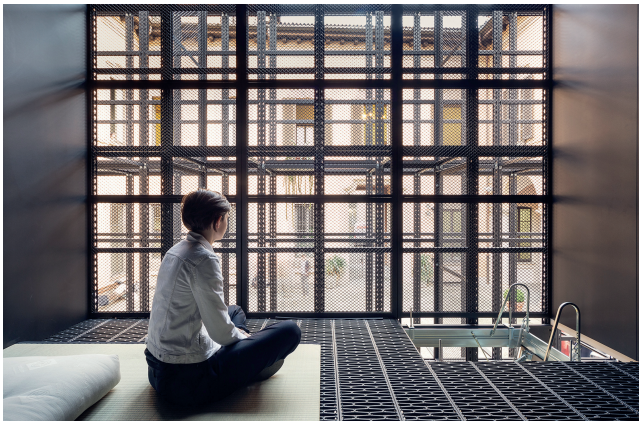
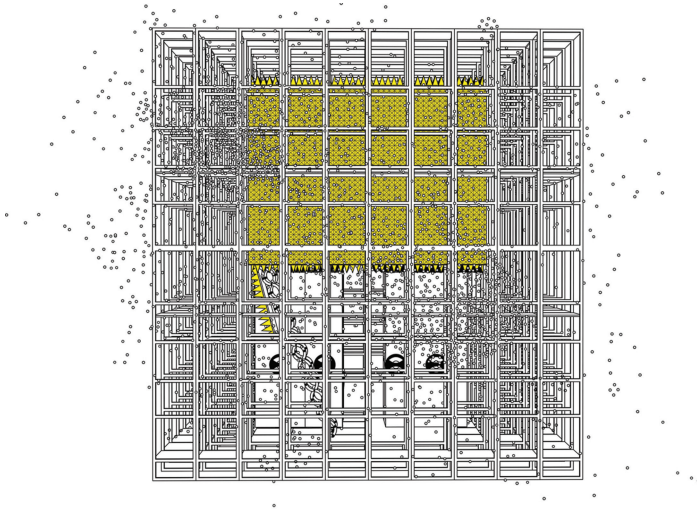
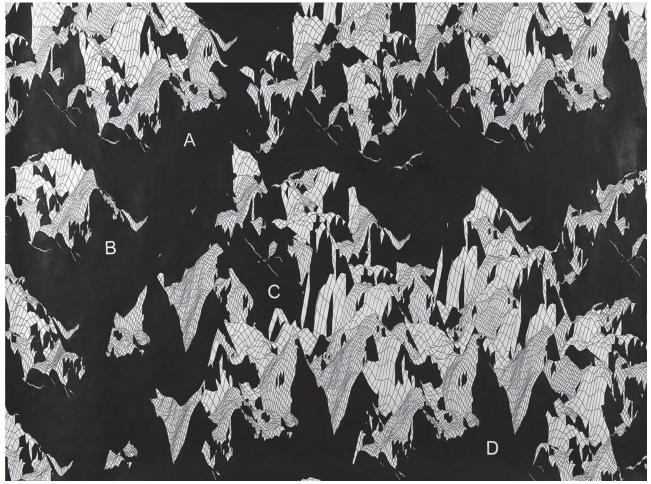


JELLITSCH Peter, *Coated Environment*, *Filmstill02*, *Electronic Topographies*, 2010.



45 DEGREES DESIGN, *Faraday Cage Installation*, *The Darkest Hour concept art*, Biennale Sydney House Faraday Cage, Sydney, Australia, 2010.

JELLITSCH Peter, *Data Drawing I*, 2013. 3



SPACE CAVIAR Studio, *Ram House*, Exhibition Genoa, Italy, 2015.

FOLDABLE ROOM

To fold implies movement. The most straightforward instance of the foldable room is the tent, an ephemeral room to carry around everywhere. It is the reminiscence of a nomadic life abandoned long ago, but which seems to pop in nowadays due to the ever-increasing mobility of modern life. It is a promise of autonomy and independence. It only exists while it is in use.

The tent, the elementary room, is used as a shelter to travel with. It can also serve in case of disaster or emergency. The tent is an ephemeral house, a temporary unit bringing privacy and protection to its occupant. It requests to be built in order to exist and disappears when it is moved. It outlines the nomadic need for mobility and the current interest for it, as Georges Teyssot writes: “the nomadic contrivances of our life are seductively alive today, stretching the contours of our egotistic spheres.”¹

An example of a modern tent responding to emergency needs is the Shiftpod system (1) designed by Weber Christian. He explores the possibilities of a shelter protecting occupants in extreme weather and living conditions. When combined, these shelters form an open system and, depending on its size, it can host more individuals or a family.

Covering with canvas a foldable structure recalls the shelter origins. To explore the nature of an ephemeral space, Toyo Ito developed a set of installations for the urban nomads. The *Pao I: Dwelling for Tokyo Nomad Women* and *Pao II: Electronic Tent* (2) speak about minimal shelter taking the form of a reduced living unit in the metropolis. He incorporates technologies in the materials that cover the tent as a screen mediating between the private tent and the city. Georges Teyssot says about Ito’s installations that: “The liberation of fluxes and flows in movement permits one to exit the old landscape and open up new territory, wherein old subjectivities collapse. Moreover, the nomadic reality offers a “High-speed” condition, even if one remains motionless.”² By inserting technologies into his Pao I and II, he questions the meaning of the enclosure in our relationship to the city.

The foldable room is able to overlap different activities in the same space, but at different times of the day, thanks to the use of foldable, movable walls or to the position of the furniture.

With his project for Moscow, Minimal dwelling competition, Alexander Klein studied the relation between the day and night

¹ TEYSSOT Georges, *A Topology of Everyday Constellations*, WritingArchitectureseries, MIT, 2013, p.277.

² *Ibidem*, pp.279-281.

functions in a flat. However, he adds a third part to the system, the services, used both during daytime and during nighttime, arranging the rooms around them as an organizational pivot – entrance, services or day rooms – then, night rooms. In the same way, the office von Ballmoos Krucker considers, in their project for Glattpark, the services as interface between day and night activities. The bedrooms are at the back, aligned whilst the daily room is on the other side. The services are in the middle, as a threshold, between them. Space informs about use. Coming in the flat, one immediately understands the separations day-night indicated by a tight path through services.

Arguably, the most well-known example of interior flexibility is Rietveld's Schröder House (3). It has no walls but through a set of sliding and revolving panels manages to subdivide the otherwise open area of the upper level. This turns the space into a dynamic, flexible, open area where the movable walls generate a collection of foldable rooms. The rooms open or close, shifting their values between day and night.

The idea of playing with foldable elements to make activities overlap has been proposed in the Weissenhof Siedlung (4) of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret. It can be considered in parallel with the minimum dwelling research if we see overlapping day and night activities as a way to save money and surface. Depending on the position of the foldable wall, the plan can be alternatively read as an entire, free space, or as separate entities, where the rooms are expressed.

Moreover, using furniture as a witness of use suggests that they are able to change the meaning of the room through their position.

The Silver Factory (5) that Andy Warhol designs in 1964 in Manhattan materializes this idea. This huge room is an open plan with only four columns, which offers the possibility to constantly reorganize the interior. It can alternatively be a studio, an exhibition, a projection, or a concert room. The room is thus able to get a specific use through the kind of furniture it hosts. All the walls and pillars are covered with a reflective aluminum foil, which conveys the image of a lunar background, abstracting the room. Based on the industrial typology, the studio space can be a place of production, encounter and exhibition.

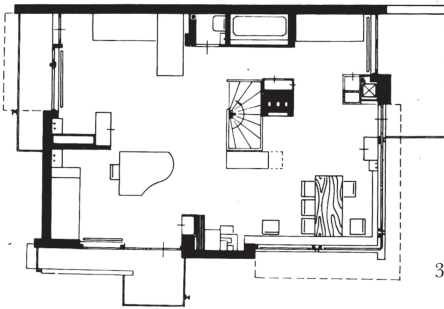
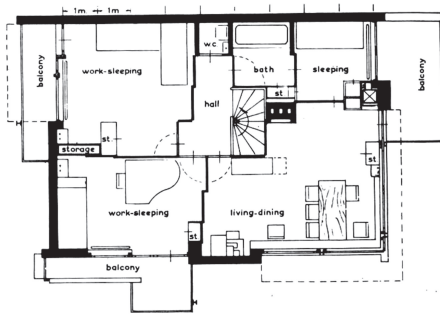
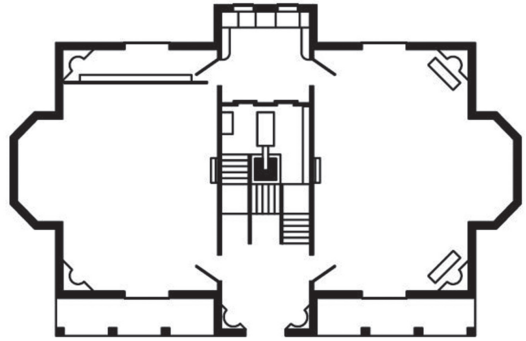
The ever-changing configuration of the space using a movable room, rather than partitions, brings back the tent as the first foldable room.

The boxes are the intimate “rooms” that, by their disposition, generate different configurations of the communal, neutral, big space, shared by all the members of the family in the Naked House (6) of Shigeru Ban. The floor is considered a common platform, a shared place, while boxes are private units. Each one is removable

into the entire flat and corresponds to a member of the family. Here, ephemerality results not from the structure of the rooms, but from their location in the big, shared space. As a fixed, intimate room in the dwelling, the example of another kind of a shared flat comes through a project of Ranaa Stern, the Q-Be Living Unit (7). This intimate, inhabited box, is no more able to move. The folds inside are as condensed fragments of a room. With this project, the foldable room starts to settle down.

The foldable room can be a space physically or metaphorically folded out when it is used. Therefore, it is always negotiating its existence with the surrounding elements or spaces, having the precious ability to move in space.

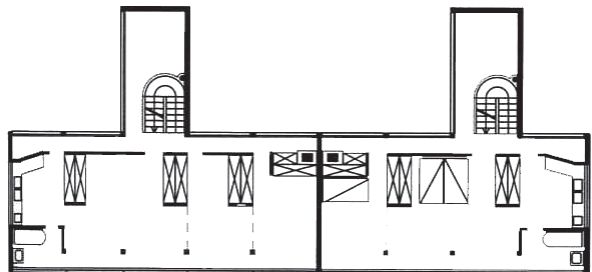
BEECHER Catherine and Harriet, *American Woman's Home: or, Principles of Domestic Science*, Ford and Company, New York, USA, 1869.

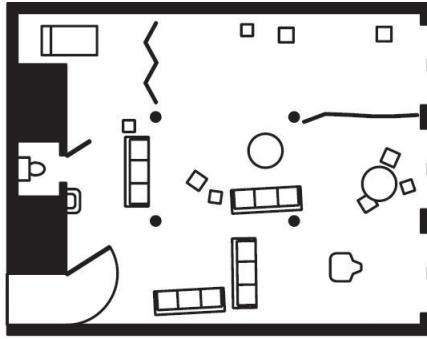


RIETVELD Gerrit, *Schröder House*, Utrecht, Netherlands, 1924.

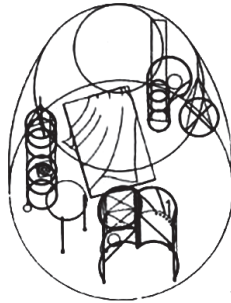
LE CORBUSIER & Jeanneret Pierre, *Weissenhof- Siedlung, Houses 14+15*, Stuttgart, Germany, 1927.

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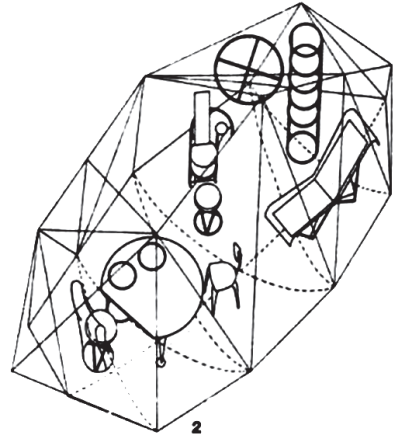




6 WARHOL Andy, *Silver Factory*,
Manhattan, USA, 1963-1968.



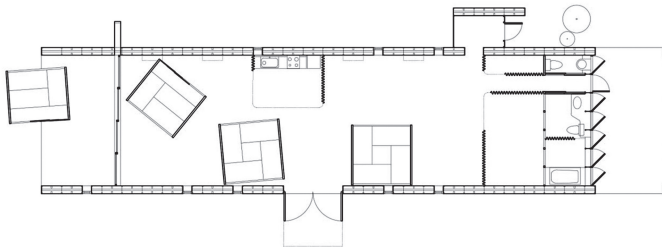
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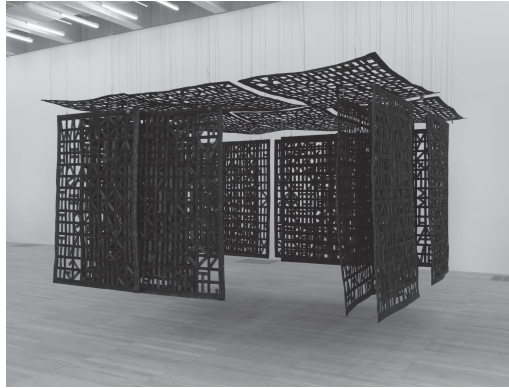
ITO Toyo, *Pao I: Dwelling for Tokyo*
Nomad Women, 1985 and *Pao*
II: Electronic Tent, 1989.

2



6 BAN Shigeru, *Naked House*,
Kawagoe, Japan, 2000.

IGLESIAS Cristina, *Pavilion Suspended in a Room I*, Tate Modern Gallery, London, UK, 2005.



MENDES RIBEIRO João, *Robalo Cordeiro House*, Coimbra, Portugal, 2009.



BAN Shigeru, *Emergency Paper Partition System*, Gymnasium, Japan, 2011.

BAN Shigeru, *Emergency Paper Partition System*, Gymnasium, Japan, 2011.



WEBER Christian, *Shiftpod System*, Bruning Man Festival, USA, 2017.

1



STERN Ranaan, *Q-BE Living Unit*, Tel Aviv, Israel, 2017.

7

IMPLODED ROOM

Inverted phenomena of explosion. It is the pressure of the outside that acts on the inside and thus, focuses on a reduced volume, on objects. The imploded room is condensed in the use of an object. It is born from the tight relationship formed between object and use.

Over time, objects may hardly change their configuration, but their use knows continuous mutations. There are two main categories of imploded rooms. The first one emerges when the space enclosed by the object is physically cut away from the rest and lives on its own. The second one is when the object changes its use and gains autonomy.

An example of the first sort is the bed. During the Renaissance period, the bed could be detached from the rest of the room to create a more intimate room in itself. Its structure was a canopy to which curtains were hung. By closing them, we achieved complete isolation from the rest of the room thus, creating different degrees of privacy within the space. The bed has always been the ultimate bastion of privacy, the symbol of retreat from the world and, as Georges Perec puts it in his book *Species of Spaces*, the bed is “the elementary space for the body”¹.

Another case of an object that isolates itself from the space where it is placed is the case of *St. Jerome's studio* (1). In the article “A room of one's own”², Aureli mentions it as an object that curiously merges a table, a chair, and a set of shelves all around. He bases his observations on the painting bearing the same name, by Antonello da Messina. As it is presented, the object appears to be placed in the generous space of a church. An elevated platform is accessed by means of stairs, which highlights the creation of another space, more private and dedicated to concentration and reflection. However, it is completely an autonomous object, as its use does not depend on the surrounding space, and its location can change.

The second category of imploded rooms comes forth as the objects keep their same appearance but, through a mutation in their use, they gain autonomy and tackles the exchange between the individual and the collective. The bed comes up again, but this time it is the contemporary one. Nowadays, despite its still familiar look, it has suffered an inner transformation, as it “condenses the living cell in an unexpected way”³. In the understanding of Aristide

¹ PEREC Georges, *Espèces d'espaces*, Editions Galilée, Paris, 1985, p.16.

² AURELI Pier Vittorio, TATTARA Martino, “A Room of One's Own: Preliminary Notes on the Architecture of the Room”, *Volume No 46*, Winter 2015.

³ ANTONAS Aristide, “The unhomely bed”, *Hannes Meyer: Co-op Interieur, Wohnungsfrage, Haus der Kulturen der Welt*, Berlin, 2016, p.45.

Antonas, its appearance stayed the same, but the meaning has changed. From the symbol of isolation and retreat, it has become, through the ubiquitous use of digital media, a place of exchange between the individual and the world. Moreover, he notes that our bodies in relation to the bed changed from a horizontal, passive position, to a more dynamic and engaged one. The bed has become an autonomous object, an isolated point in the virtual network of exchange of information. Witnessing the invasion of work into the domestic realm, the bed condenses the contraries: rest and action, sleep and work.

After having investigated the actual use of the bed, we arrive at the conclusion that, while connected to the invisible data infrastructure, the bed has become more than a mere object sitting in our bedrooms. It has arrived at a point where, merging with the chair and table, it condenses almost all of our domestic activities and has become the center of our private lives.

As in the case of the bed, the way we use mundane objects can give a good indication about the interactions between the individual and the collective. Robin Evans suggestively asserts in the beginning of his essay “Figure, Door, Passages”, that “ordinary things contain the deepest mysteries”⁴. Such other objects are the dining table and the closet. They are mentioned in the book entitled *The claim for a good life*⁵ as objects that contradict the idea of segregation between the collective and individual spheres, because they simultaneously relate to both.

Throughout history, collective meetings in the domestic realm have occurred around the table. It has become the symbol of conviviality and collectivity. When we sit at the table, the room disappears. The surrounding space vanishes and all is reduced to the minute scale of our gestures performed during the dining rituals. They influence and are influenced by the table’s parameters. Although the individual table is a common instance, it is only when it is shared with others that it is revealed in all its aspects. In the previously mentioned book, Pratyusha Suryakant and Ernesto Yelamos Quesada analyze how its configuration indicates the social relations between the participants. While the round table equally gathers people around, the rectangular one can organize them hierarchically. At the same time, the way the table is placed in the hall indicates the importance of the event taking place and the role of the table itself.

Thereafter, considering the closet as an exceedingly familiar object, often overlooked, either freestanding, walk-in or hidden, is the place to store our clothes, linen, dreams, fears or emotions. It is where we

⁴ EVANS Robin, “Figure, Door, Passages”, *Translations from Drawing to Building and other Essays*, MIT Press, 1997, p. 56.

⁵ ALEVRAS Andreas, AZEVEDO Joana, GROENENDIJK Erik, HONSA Jesse, PECORELLI Gregorio, YÉLAMOS QUESADA Ernesto, VAN RUITEN Donald Eric, SURYAKANT Pratyusha, VEGA Feliu, ZATTA Federica, AVERMAETE Tom, AVISSAR Ido, FRAUSTO Salomon, VAN GAMEREN Dick, KAAAN Kees, RIEDIJK Michiel, ROSBOTTOM Daniel, WEAVER Thomas, *The Claim for a Good Life, Ten projects claiming an architectural goodness*, The Berlage, Delft, 2017.

hide our most intimate and precious space. Usually equipped with a mirror it is the last moment when we look at ourselves before we present ourselves to others. For this reason, the closet represents the link between the private and the collective. It is the keeper of our public image and identity that we have built for ourselves.

The closet is the proof that even the most mundane objects hide a social and collective dimension. The implosion is thus a manner to condense the individual into a space but also allows the system to invert again. This inversion can be extended to the idea of breathing, which is an alternation of inspiration and expiration, a pure concentration on the inside and on the outside, one after the other.

DA MESSINA Antonello, *St. Jerome*
in his study, 1474-1475.

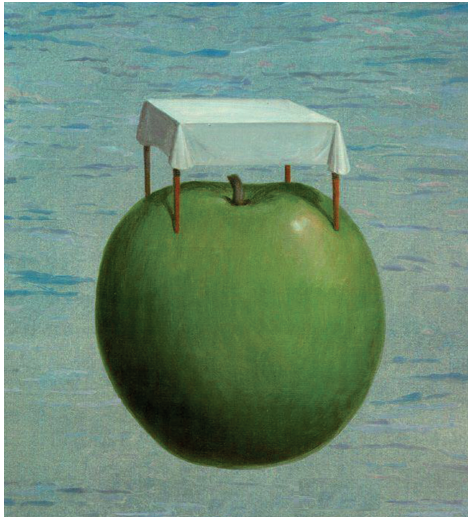
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BOISSART Robert, *Concordia*,
1590.

TURNER Joseph Mallord
William, *A Bedroom with a Large
Four-Poster Bed: The Petworth State
Bed*, 1827.

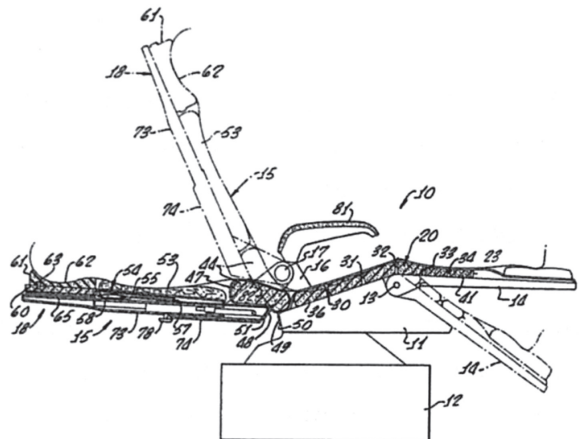




MAGRITTE René, *Fine realities*, 1964.



SOTTASS Ettore, *Mobile and Flexible Environment Module*, 1972.



Dental Chair, Unintitled, United States and Trademark Office, Alexandria, Virginia, USA, 2009.

PURE ROOM

The pure room is theoretical. It is the idea of a room that becomes the fundamental element in the transformation of the city. The pure room is an ideal, an abstract representation of space, and marks major turning points in the evolution of society.

In its materialized form, the pure room “aims to explore the true essence of living”¹ and thus, recalls the ascetic life in the monk’s cell (1). It is the expression of timelessness and permanence, and transcends all material expression. The cell’s purpose is to support a life turned into itself, where no element betrays any other preoccupations of the inhabitant. The cell asks for no appropriation, it deals directly with the essence, not with an image of it. For this reason, the monk’s cell is one of the instances of the pure room, as the place to elevate one’s spirit, completely disconnected from the triviality of life.

Two of the most emblematic and mysterious figurations of the pure room are the Hannes Meyer’s Co-op room (2) of 1926 and the Guest room of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm (3) at Charlottenhof designed by Schinkel in 1826. While the first comes as a modern declination of the monk’s room, the second is its classical counterpoint. Both examples have a surreal tone and bear no relation to any existing spaces. They are representations of a radical room that is supposed to be appropriated by successive nomad dwellers, living in isolation. With the Co-op room, Hannes Meyer defined a “tridimensional axis”² using the floor and the walls as perfectly white surfaces in order to create an abstract, idealized idea of a space. The Guest room designed by Schinkel, on the other hand, through its employment of stripped fabric that covers both the walls, the ceiling and the two beds, blurs the distinction between the constitutive elements of the room and the objects that inhabit it. In doing so, he creates a uniform space, alluding to an idea of ephemerality.

Both rooms are connected to the idea of scarcity, minimalism and austerity. The restricted number of objects employed in Meyer’s room has an almost sensual presence. They do not imply a reduction to the minimum according to functionalist criteria, on the contrary. The minimum cannot be understood anymore in terms of only satisfying basic human needs, eat, drink, sleep and breathe. Just as Pier Paolo Tamburelli notes in his article “Two rooms,

¹ HILLER Christian, FEZER Jesko, HIRSCH Nikolaus, KUEHN Wilfried, PELEG Hila, *Hannes Meyer: Co-op Interieur*, Wohnungsfrage, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2016, p.43-44.

² *Ibidem*, p.28.

one city”³, the presence of the gramophone at the center of the image illustrates a use of objects beyond what is strictly necessary and it proves that they are a reflection of our wishes, dreams, affections, fears and anxieties. He adds that, surprisingly enough, despite its radical economy of means, the room displays the wish for singularity and uniqueness, as well as for the superfluous as a symbol of wellbeing and pleasure. The selected objects speak the language of standardization, understood as the common language of the collectivity. At the same time, they open up the subject of the over-estimated value of property as opposed to the concept of use. They are objects of use, and belong to an architecture of use, where the absence of property is the “inhabitant’s realization of the possibility of happiness”⁴.

The aim of these rooms, as individual and generic cells, is not only to convey a space for the uprooted individual living in the metropolis. The room proposes also an idea of the city and informs us on how it works. With its lightness, the room relies on the steadiness of the city as a stable, resilient infrastructure. The room is not autonomous. The fragile enclosure shows the dweller is “always open to new forms of collective associations”⁵.

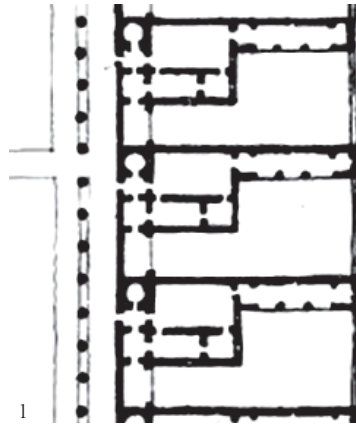
These radical figurations of the room question the very characteristics of the domestic culture. They incline either towards the attributes of a permanent abode, or to the properties of a replaceable base camp as part of a semi-nomadic existence.

Even if the city we live in today is different from the ones described by Meyer or Schinkel, their pure rooms survive as evidence of a society that could have been. Therefore, they serve as support for questioning our own city and reveal its critical aspects.

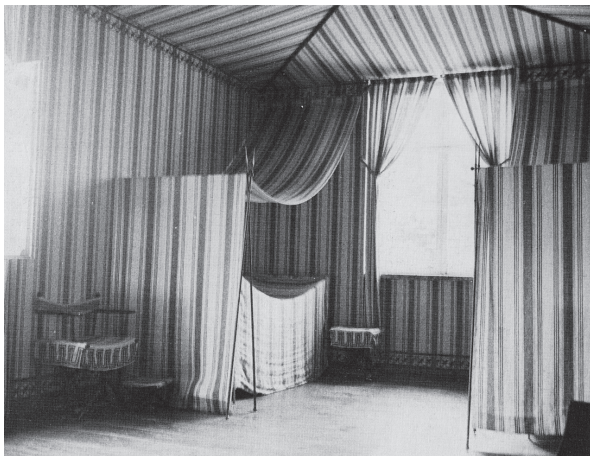
³ TAMBURELLI Pier Paolo, “Two rooms - one city”, *Atelier Kempe Thill, Projects and Buildings 1999-2011*, Hamburg: Hatje Kantz, 2012.

⁴ HILLER Christian, FEZER Jesko, HIRSCH Nikolaus, KUEHN Wilfried, PELEG Hila, *Hannes Meyer: Co-op Interieur, Wohnungsfrage*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2016, p.38.

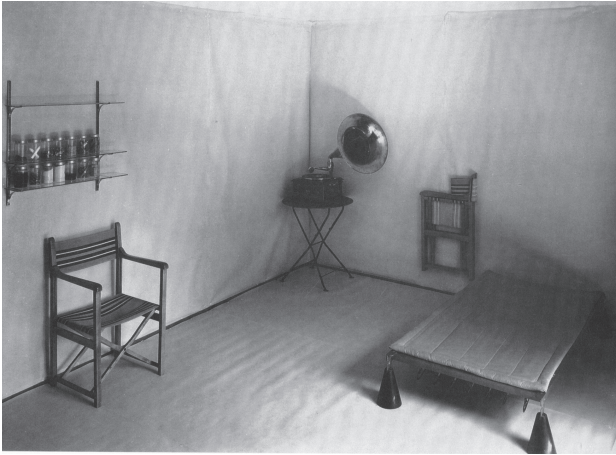
⁵ *Ibidem*, p.38.



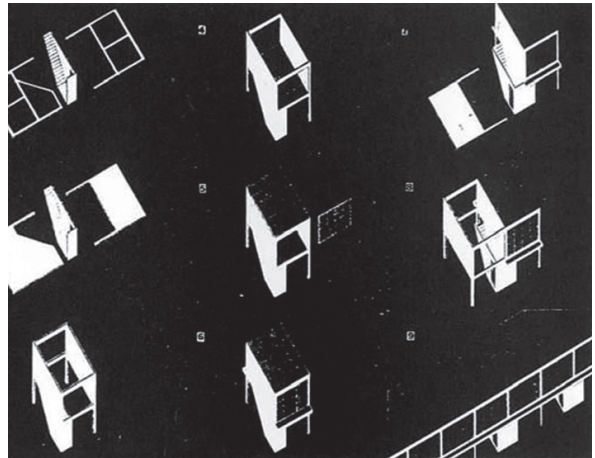
Certosa del Galluzzo, Charterhouse, Florence, Italy, 14th century.



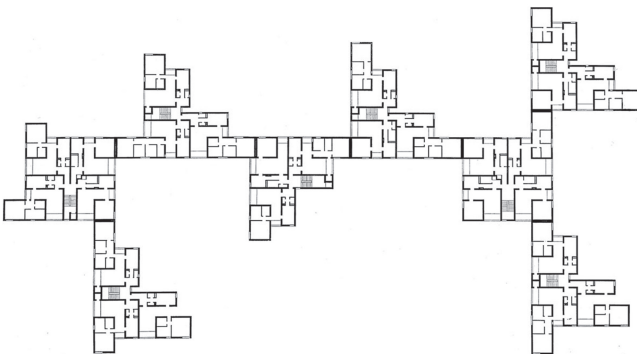
SCHINKEL Karl Friedrich, *Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm*, Charlottenhof, Germany, 1826.



2 MEYER Hannes, *Co-op room*, 1926.



GINZBURG BARSH Architect,
Dwelling Unit, Green City Plan,
Moscow, URSS, 1930.



UNGERS Oswald Mathias, *Neue Stadt (Die Weiße Siedlung)*, Cologne, Germany, 1961-1967.

SPARE ROOM

A free room that is unused can be spare. Un-useful does not have a defined use while useless is conceived to serve any specific function. The ability to spare involves having more than necessary, and free to use.

As the idea developed by Georges Perec in his book, *Species of Spaces*¹, use-less has a purpose in itself: to be *a-functional* and leaving the physical space open to possibilities. One can consider that function has an end because of its specificity while the *a-functional* space is flexible to change.

A spare room, as a use-less one, is not linked to furniture, it is a reserve.

Nevertheless, the absolute idea of the room cannot be described without giving it an outline to define its shape. As Georges Perec says, “how does one think of nothing? How to think of nothing without automatically putting something round that nothing, so turning it into a hole, into which one will hasten to put something, an activity, a function, a destiny, a gaze, a need, a lack, a surplus ...?”². Even the space is not observable, there is no emptiness and physically the void is not empty. *Ex nihilo* is about coming from nowhere or nothing. The nothing is not perceptible, but it exists. The spare room’s function is to actually have no function.

Starting with the Greek house (1), called *megaron*, the rooms are initially polyvalent but can get a specific function as well. The furniture is important and indicates the room’s function, as jars for the storage. The spare part of the Greek house is the *andrôn*, a room dedicated to the man, whose dimension shows the rank in the society. The family area is really closed and private and thus separated from the public outside, which is the unique place to meet with others and represents the political space.

Following this idea, the Roman *domus* owns public parts in its house and a garden at its core. It is a functional system of life, where the rooms are indicated by their name. The *vestibulum* is the hall, which welcomes guest to enter in the following atrium. The *atrium*, looking like the Greek one, brings light in the center of the house, and distributes it to the other rooms. The atrium has an altar devoted to the house and the divinity of the family. In front of the entrance, the room called *tablinum* is the personal room of the *pater familias*. This room becomes over time a threshold room between the public

¹ PEREC Georges, *Species of spaces and Other pieces*, Penguin Books, London, translated by Sturrock John, 1997 (2008).

² *Ibidem*, p.33.

part of the house, on the side of the street, and the private sphere. It serves to represent the social rank. The inhabitants also begin to invite guests into the private sphere and some rooms are furnished with tables proving their role as space for talks. The room is thus a tool to advance into the social hierarchy. Furthermore, we notice a dichotomy of use between private and public sphere. The rooms are organized with a gradient of intimacy from the street to the back and there are no openings on the surrounding walls. The system is closed, but later it becomes flexible with the spare room that can host a guest. The rooms do not always have a fixed function, so the occupants can use them depending on their current needs.

However, during the Middle Age, the destabilization of the economic system and the political system also had consequences on the organization of the interior. The walls are there to protect, they enclose rooms. All the domestic life takes place in communal rooms, which are polyfunctional. They can be as much private as public, through the presence of the baldachin bed, which is the intimate room within the room.

Subsequently, the room asks its independence and specialization. Since the 18th century, the inflow of energies comes into the house, breaks its intimate façade, enlarges the openings and brings light into the house. These changes are radical and convert undoubtedly the interior and its uses. It corresponds to the period when “the furniture becomes immovable and fixed”³. The spatial organization is thenceforth edited, separating the part of the room that is crossed from the part of it that is fixed.

The public character of the room is fully developed in the 19th century. The owner wants to show his social status to the guests, and he does it not only through the façade and the extension of the reception area with balconies or alcoves, but also through the interior. Every space or room is described according to its use, furniture, and decoration, and the spare room starts to disappear. Evoking the composition of the 19th century, the Housing of Uetlibergstrasse of Darlington Meier has a central distribution, which opens to the entrance of the apartment. As Alexandre Aviolat describes in the article “L’univers domestique de la pièce”⁴, this project illustrates that the “formal diversity of the rooms allows to escape the irregularities of the site and generate regular interiors”⁵.

In the *bourgeois* interior decoration becomes ubiquitous, as a sign of the regular visits and events it hosts apart from the family life, whose spaces are a lot more modest. The interior is put on stage and the sequence of rooms contributes to entertaining visitors. Reacting to this surplus of decoration that does not represent a

³ ELEB-VIDAL Monique, DEBARRE-BLANCHARD Anne, *Architectures de la vie privée, Maisons et mentalités, XVII^e-XIX^e siècles*, Archives d'Architecture Moderne, Bruxelles, 1989, p.127. From Bresler H., “Meubles, ameublement, immeuble”, *La maison. Espaces et intimités*, Ed. de l'École d'Architecture Paris-Villemin, Collection In Extension, No 9, 1986.

⁴ AVIOLAT Alexandre, “L’univers domestique de la pièce”, *Matières*, No 12, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2015.

⁵ Free translation from French (VB, MW), *Ibidem*, p.86.

social rank anymore, the late *bourgeoisie* begins to purge it. The abstraction of the domestic life dematerializes the rooms and the pure, naked inside becomes the new luxury. It introduces modernity and functionalism. The room is therefore efficient in its size and shape. There is a small spare room in the house, but it is reduced to the minimum and often placed next to the entrance or kitchen.

In the San Remo building, designed by Edward Ageli, “the key element in the flexible arrangements [...] was a room located between two apartments that was connected with both at the same time, allowing two apartments to be merged into one or either or them to be enlarged”⁶.

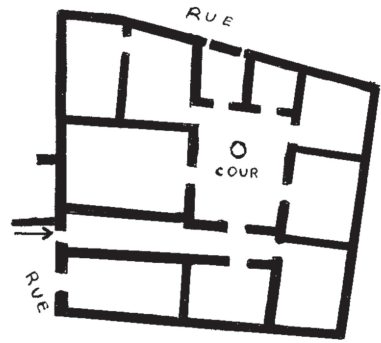
In the project designed by Miroslav Sik for the Hunziker Areal, some rooms are on the side of the corridor without any direct connection to the flats. These spare rooms are shared by the inhabitants and they are free to receive any function.

The last spare room is the entrance, which is not anymore a residual space and becomes significant in the apartment. The entrance is a threshold, a space that you always cross to go in or out. Some of the entrances do not have enough space to become a room in themselves and to contain furniture expressing a defined use.

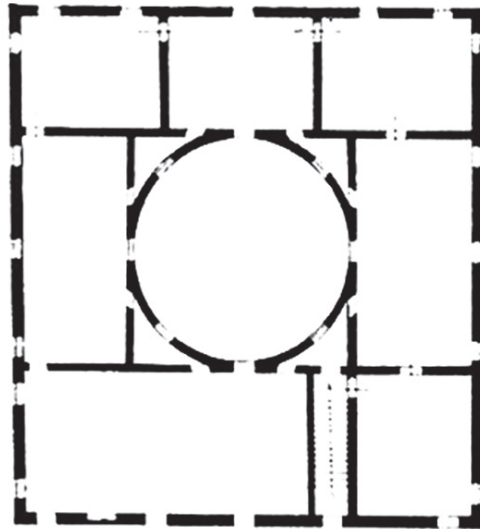
In this spare room welcoming you in the apartment, there is often a closet, as a residual piece of furniture, which has no place somewhere else and does not represent the idea of a room’s function. The housing of Caruso St-John for Letzibach presents this duality of having furniture but a neutral one, that does not serve a function.

The spare room questions the very idea of housing based on a finite number of rooms. It can answer to changing needs and allows the apartment to increase or decrease, according to these needs.

⁶ KRIES Mateo, *Together! The new architecture of the collective*, Ruby Press, Berlin, 2017, p.66.



Greek house, Athenes, *Typical megaron*, 5th century BC. 1

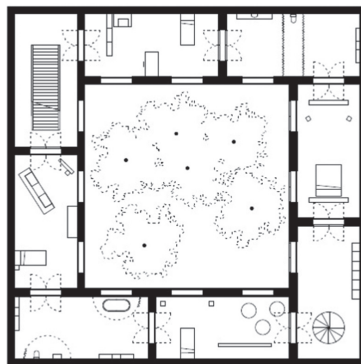


MANTEGNA Andrea, Villa Mantegna, Mantua, Italy, 1476.



GIGON GUYER Architects, *Brunnenhof Housing Complex*, Zürich, Switzerland, 2004-2007.

OFFICE KGDVS, *25 Rooms*,
Ordos, China, 2008-2009.



MÜLLER SIGRIST Architects,
Hunziker Areal, House D, Zü-
rich-Leutschenbach, Switzer-
land, 2009-2015.

SIK Miroslav, *Hunziker Areal*,
House B, Zürich-Leutschenbach,
Switzerland, 2009-2015.



VIRTUAL ROOM

The virtual room is immaterial and experimental. It is a room without physical borders or particular characteristics. It is an abstract space where the reference to reality is lost. The virtual can emerge anywhere. It is a product of technology, a spot in an invisible network. It explores the extremes, from the complete abstraction to the materialization of its borders.

An abstract space implies a loss of reference where one cannot rely anymore on the senses in order to perceive it. As a hypothetical space, it does not have a context. The infinite does not have context either. As depicted in Mila Kucher's RMM 11 photograph (1) from the series *La construcción de la Memoria*, it conveys the idea of memory. Through the use of the mirror, the effect of *mise-en-abîme* triggers the introspection of the viewer. The reflection in a mirror acts as a timeless actor in the present moment.

The idea of abstraction implies also a loss of scale. To capture an image, Héléne Binet often zooms on the subject to catch details of material and light. Her work reveals lines and surfaces. Talking about her work, she says: "I think photography is about celebrating an instant. When I go to work it is like a performance"¹. Her images are abstract, they completely blur reality. In the picture she took of the Brick House (2) designed by Caruso St John, she captures a fragment of the ceiling and abstracts it to the point of losing all notion of scale. In doing so, the image is boundless, without context and thus able to transport us to other world.

Under the title *Sensing spaces, Architecture Reimagined*, the London Royal Academy of Arts asked architects to "reawake the visitor's sensibilities to the place around them"². This exhibition investigates the sensations and feelings conveyed by architecture through the involvement of all senses – hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch. The two rooms (3) built by Kengo Kuma are about merging sight and smell into one space. He proposes a forest room made of thin lines of bamboo that are lit by small sources of light. The rest of the room is all dark and gives a sense of uncertainty, while only the natural Japanese scents contribute to bringing back the idea of a safe room. However, there is no more scale, no more reference. The idea of a safety is only evoked by smell. The power of the virtual allows to the image, as a to a real room the availability to change infinitely its content.

¹ WINSTON Anna, Dezeen, interview of Héléne Binet, 23.03.2015. On www.dezeen.com/2015/03/23/helene-binet-interview-analogue-architectural-photography-film-fragments-of-light-exhibition-wuho/. Consulted on the 23.12.2017.

² London Royal Academy of Arts, *Sensing Spaces, Architecture reimagined* exhibition, 25.01-06.04.2014. On www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/sensing-spaces. Consulted on the 04.01.2018.

Combined, the senses give us references to understand our surrounding context. If isolated, the perception with only one sense distorts our understanding of space. A room where one hears nothing, as in the case of a room for acoustic studies (4), is only perceived through sight and brings out the loss of spatial reference. The walls, floor and ceiling are covered with a thick insulation. The floor is a metallic grid hung from the walls and detached from the ground. There is nothing to do but watch, the other senses vanish or are completely blurred. The virtual room studies technologies and blurs one relationship to reality and context.

Conceptualizing the idea of a virtual and experimental room, Ken Isaacs built an immersive Knowledge Box (5) in the 60s to deal with the transmission of information in a non-linear, interactive way, instead of the traditional “passive” manner. This installation is the expression of a virtual interior where the box, as a machine, translates knowledge into a collection of images. Isaacs describes his work as being *inside the matrix* of technologies.

Today’s technologies renew the conception of limit, independence and privacy. The ubiquitous invisible networks bring about a paradox in the way people interact with each other: on one hand they are physically disconnected, but on the other they are able to enter a shared virtual space and communicate at any time. Relationships change, they are not anymore only human-human, but they are mediated by a virtual interface. Georges Teyssot sums up this new kind of relationship as follows: “Today, one’s quotidian experience is effectively characterized by the notion of a virtual “ambient reality”, an expression that evokes the capacity to remain in contact with people by using different Web-based networks – a social practice that helps one to live a somewhat disembodied connectedness”³.

Actually, technologies stand in our sensorial perception and recreate our world into a virtual one. Our environment is about the pervasiveness of virtual windows: smartphones, laptops, televisions, beamers. They convert the real world to a virtual one, which can emerge everywhere. The smartphone is what keeps us constantly connected to the world. Marshall McLuhan, a media theoretician and philosopher, compares medias and the physiological system: “With our central nervous system strategically numbed, the tasks of conscious awareness and order are transferred to the physical life of man, so that for the first time he has become aware of technology as an extension of his physical body”⁴.

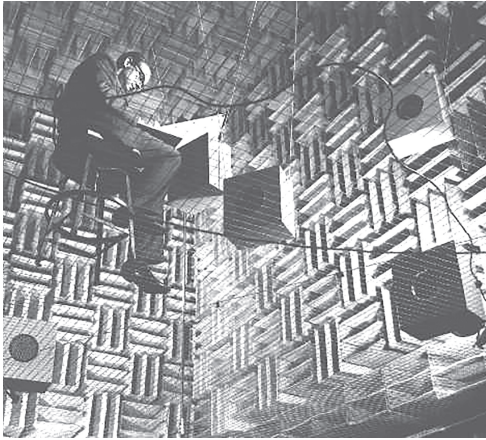
One of the first drafts of virtual glasses, as the extension of the body, is revealed in the movie *Disclosure*, of Levinson Barry and Crichton Michael released in 1994. These glasses create an environment around the user, which physically does not exist, but with which the user can interact. In doing so, the virtual screen recreates

³TEYSSOT Georges, *A Topology of Everyday Constellations*, WritingArchitecture series, MIT, 2013, p.283.

⁴MCLUHAN Marshall, *Understanding Media, The extensions of Man*, London and New York, p.58. On www.robynbacken.com. Consulted on the 05.01.2018.

reality through visual experience. The glasses designed by Google (6) explore the same idea and are still in process. They would project images on the retina via a system of prism and projector. The research aims to make us able to provide information, such as *yes* or *no*, by tracking the movement of our eyes.

When completely disconnected from its context, the virtual room can be the most private room. However, it is conceived with several ways to connect, and this profusion of connections brings about the vanishing of privacy. Depending on how we relate to the technology that defines it, the virtual room can also become the most public room.



4

BELL LABS, *Murray Hill Anechoic Chamber*, USA, 1940.



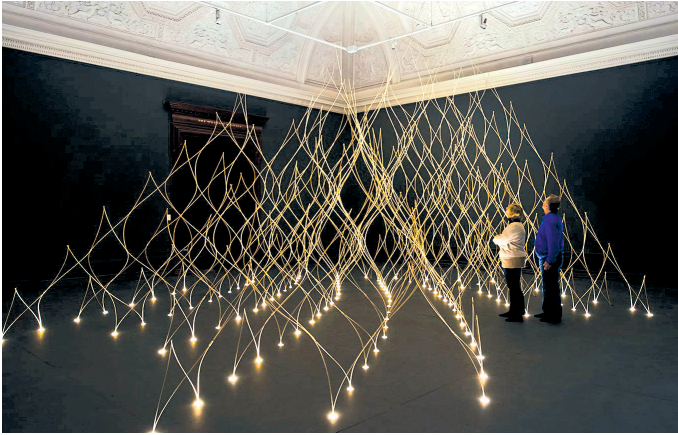
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ISAACS Ken, *Knowledge Box*, 1962.



2

CARUSO ST JOHN Architects, *Brick House*, London, UK, 2005.



3 KUMA Kengo, *Sensing Spaces, Architecture Reimagined Exhibition*, London Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK, 2014.



6 GOOGLE, *Googleglasses*, 2015.

117



1 KUCHER Mila, *RMM 11, La Construcción de la Memoria*, 2016.

EXTERIOR WITHOUT INTERIOR

The ideal expression of a pure outside liberated from the constraints of the interior. It can only materialize itself by the destruction of the room, the most prominent symbol of enclosure. Stripped from the body of the apartment, isolated and abstract, the room loses some of its elements in order to let the exterior in.

Modernity, as depicted in Tati's *Playtime* (1), displays a sort of shameless openness to the exterior. Once the mask is lost and the slideshow is turned on, there are no more secrets left, privacy is but a concept, interior ceases to exist and becomes a kind of staged exterior.

Only by deconstructing the room, can we understand the roles of the elements at play. A perimeter of walls without ceiling defines an irrational space, such as the Beistegui apartment (2) designed by Le Corbusier. Inhabited by precious furniture placed in an exterior setting, it recalls the surrealist painting *Personal Values* (3) by Magritte. There, the artist converts the walls into an image of boundless sky to suggest a notion of mental space, where the room is no longer defined by its physical limits. By the apparent randomness of the painted objects and their altered scale, Magritte's surrealist approach aims to deconstruct our comfortable image of the world. He blurs the notions of outside and inside in order to create a sensation of uneasiness and permanent questioning of reality. Likewise, the Beistegui apartment abandons all rationalist principles in order to explore the possibility of an exterior room, where the sky becomes the ceiling.

A complementary example is the *Chambre en plein air* (4) in the Noailles Villa, where the ceiling draws the perimeter of the room. The two existing walls are not enough to preserve the intimate character of the space as it is completely dissolved by the exterior. Only the presence of the bed retains its original character. Otherwise, by sliding the doors, this room could become a sort of enclosed exterior.

In its dematerialized form, the room is represented only by disparate elements into space. As fragments of a whole, they are nostalgic reminiscences of the room. Various artists, architects and photographers have referred to the whole only by handling some of its parts. Sottsass Jr.'s *Design Metaphors* installations series (5)

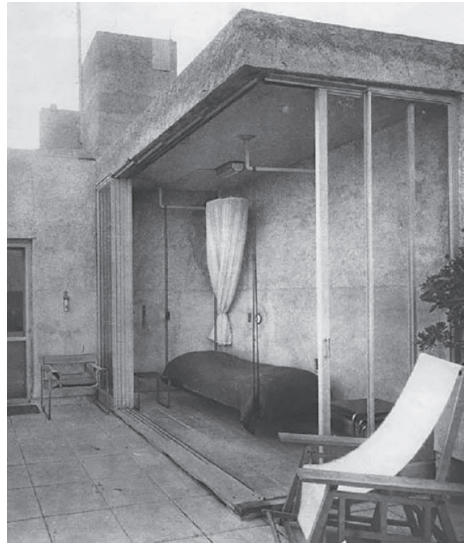
depicts elements that frame the landscape to give it human scale, houses with no walls, nor floor or ceiling, or beds where you cannot sleep. They are all expressions of a longing for an interior in an endless exterior. In the same manner, the 120 Doors installation does not clearly draw barriers or limits between spaces, but rather defines varying perimeters of interiority, at the exterior.

Just like at the interior, the existence of an element is indissolubly linked with the others and is constantly measured in relation to them. Richard Long's thin black frame (6) sitting in the landscape is conveyed through photography, as it favors some points of view over others. In doing so, and looking at these reclaimed fragments of landscape from a certain angle, we can establish the original intended connections between the constituent components. As we move through the space, the effects of proximity, distance, depth, superimposition, juxtaposition and adjacency of parts, remind us that even the vastness of exterior can be appropriated.

The way we define space has been a tool to question our own meaning and existence. The use of mirrors (7), in Luigi Ghirri's photos, illustrates the quest for finding a stable, fixed point to take as reference in the definition of new exteriorities. By reflecting what is outside of the frame of the photo, the mirror makes different spaces overlap and blurs the distinction between inside and outside.

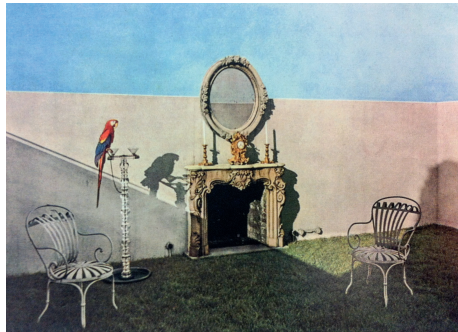
If in this case the mirror condenses the exterior onto one well-defined surface, in the case of the monadic, pure interior, the mirror is a device for the replication of the interior to the infinite.

MALLET-STEVENS Robert, *Villa Noailles*, Hyères, France, 1923-1925.



4

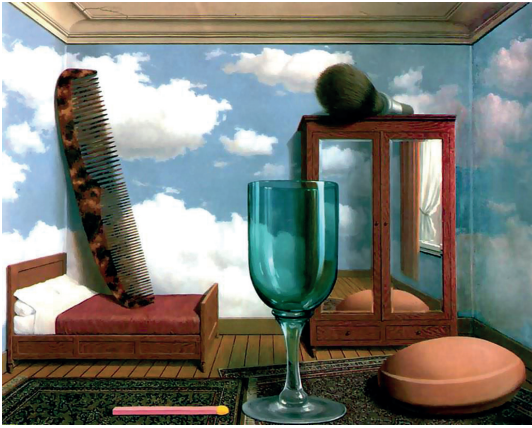
LE CORBUSIER, *Charles de Beistegui Apartment*, Paris, France, 1929-1931.



2



MAGRITTE René, *The victory*, 1939.



3 MAGRITTE René, *Personal Values*, 1952.



LONG Richard, *England 1967*, Ashton Park, Bristol, UK, 1967. 6

123



1 TATI Jacques, *Play Time*, movie, Specta Films, 1967.

SOTTASS Ettore Jr., *Architettura Virtuale, Design Metaphors serie,*

1973. 5A



SOTTASS Ettore Jr., *Vuoi guardare il muro..., Design Metaphors serie,* 1973.

5B



SOTTASS Ettore Jr., *Vuoi Dormire..., Design Metaphors serie,*

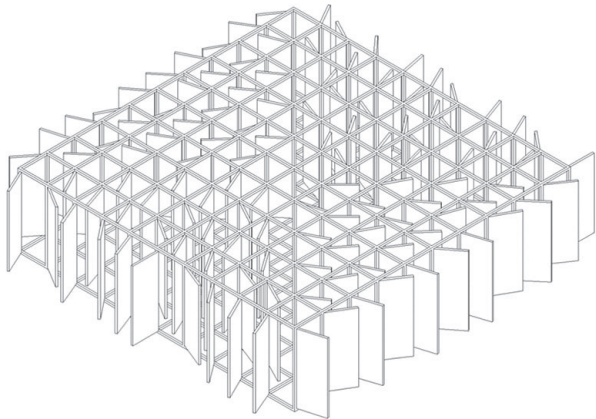
1976. 5C



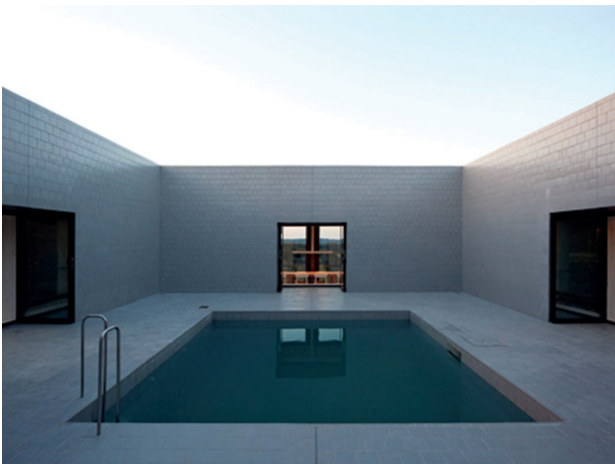


7 GHIRRI Luigi, *Ile Rousse, Kodachrome serie*, 1976.

PEZO VON ELLRICHSHAUSEN
Architects, *120 Doors*, Chile,
2003.



125



PEZO VON ELLRICHSHAUSEN
Architects, *Solo House Casa Pezo*,
Cretas, Spain, 2009-2012.

“To question the habitual. But that’s just it, we’re habituated to it. We don’t question it, it doesn’t question us, it doesn’t seem to pose a problem, we live it without thinking, as if carried within neither questions nor answers ... This is no longer even conditioning, it’s anesthesia. We sleep through our lives in a dreamless sleep. But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space?”

PEREC Georges, *Species of spaces and Other Pieces*,
Penguin Books, London, 1997, p.210.

FUNDAMENTAL ACTS

Today's domestic interiors are ruled by conventions. Standardized elements, chosen from a narrow palette of options, come together to make up a whole so well determined up to its most minute details, that it lacks any secret or ambiguity. This rather predictable nature of our interiors has led to its disappearance from architectural forms of representation. Reading the description of the winning proposal for the Swiss pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2018, we come to understand that : “within an image-based discipline – a lack of representation amounts to a tacit acknowledgment that these interior spaces fall outside the claim of architecture itself”¹. The collection of projects to be exhibited in the Swiss Pavilion show, through a series of recent studies and projects, a newly acquired fascination for interior images. They often depict empty spaces before being appropriated. In doing so, the interior gets objectified and, by focusing on the primordial elements of architecture: walls, openings, materials it recalls the investigations of minimalist sculpture.

The suggested elements perform on the architectural stage. They are able to alter and affect our perception by the use of form, space, scale, and material.

The fundamental acts that guide us in the design of a room are part of the same semantic field. They share similarities in the way they employ the basic elements of architecture: wall, door, window, stair, floor, ceiling but their effects are unexpectedly different. A performance, as well as an experience, implies action. It is why the names of the chapters are all verbs: to – frame – enter – open – connect – appropriate – mediate. The words and the elements influence our perception. To *frame* defines the boundaries of our surroundings. To *enter* indicates how spaces are interrelated through the act of opening or closing. To *open* reveals the associations between the urban and the private world. To *appropriate* is about the perception of scale, which creates new relations between the elements, the objects, and the room. To *connect* illustrates how the rooms communicate and how they are organized and hierarchized through the use of elements. And to *mediate* develops on the importance of the threshold managing the transition between collective and individual spaces. This set of acts, although not exhaustive, is fundamental in the design of the room. They are presented following a gradation of actions performed starting from the outside and arriving on the inside. In doing so, they link the

¹ TAVOR Li, BOSSHARD Alessandro, VAN DER PLOEG Mathew, *Svizzera 240, Architecture's invisible Object*, Proposal for the 16th International Architecture Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, 06 June 2017, p.11.

room to the city, mediate the transition outside-inside, and organize the interior.

One is continually going through spatial transition from the street to the living, becoming through thresholds a new character in our daily life: passerby or occupant, spectator or protagonist. The elements, which play on the architectural scene, are thus necessary to explore. On the occasion of the *Venice Biennale in 2014: Elements of Architecture*, Rem Koolhaas put under microscope the basic architectural elements in order to recreate their global history, through notable past, present and possible future versions: “A contemplation of architectural elements does not assemble an encyclopedia or reinforce a canon. It does the opposite. A prolonged look at each element presents puzzles about cultural habituation - something like architectural why - stories that defamiliarize, even upset conventions”². Deepening our understanding of the elements can help us learn how to approach, come in, leave, connect or divide, and finally create space.

The spatial setting is always framed by personal experience and knowledge. Rather than talking about their physical characteristics and evolution throughout time, the fundamental acts speak about the elements' performance in the domestic sphere. This performance results from changes in perception and mutations in use.

² KOOLHAAS Rem, *Elements of Architecture*: Floor.I, Marsilio, 2014, p.5.

FRAME

To frame is the first act to define a boundary. It is a way to focus on a particular detail or part of an environment. It outlines, even if it shows the emptiness. The framing is fixed, but the image is not. The movement of the observer generates a series of possible views, highlighting the relationship between the frame and the framed. The frame has two functions, to close and define its content while the other is “holding it together”¹.

A line is a frame for itself, selfish, which can however be a finite gesture without depth or width, just a border. A pure frame, without scale or reference, that surrounds an empty space, such as the Bellman's Map (1) in the *Hunting of the Snark, An Agony in 8 Fits*² by Lewis Carroll. This map brings in the idea of the absurd in showing only a part of the ocean without any reference to the land. Following a map of nothing allows one to go beyond the real, already explored world. A “perfect and absolute blank”³ investigates the possibilities of the image and its representations, where the empty space is therefore left to be filled with our own experience.

The frame, as Georges Teyssot states, is a “metaphor for the border between social groups”⁴, that continually fluctuates, separating and unifying at the same time. It presents the situation of a society that is strongly conditioned by the political and economic context. The frame, as urban dwelling, encompasses the social needs of the individual as well as the society. It can take the shape of urban housing as perimeter blocks with clear boundaries, enclosing private courtyards that are cut off from the public realm.

Today, as “the urban context ranges from extremely dense metropolitan centers to extremely loose cityscapes with elements of the countryside”⁵, the borders of the city are becoming less and less defined. It is necessary to question how can one respond to the periphery and “the even covering of the field”⁶, an expression coined by Creswell, at the end of the 50s. The San Rocco Magazine no.2 will reinterpret this theme years later, and define the field as follows: “Even if it is not all the same, the field is one – a condition that has no alternatives”⁷. The field is a container for the urban, it is everything, except a void.

The Stop-City project (2), designed by Dogma in 2007, proposes an urban perimeter, a container that escapes the urban sprawl. It gives a new definition of the city within its limits. Partially marking the

¹ SIMMEL Georg, *Bridge and Door* (orig. pub. German in 1909). RITTER Mark, FRISBY David, FEATHERSTONE Mike, *Simmel on Culture: Selected writings*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997, p.141. 131

² CARROLL Lewis, *Hunting of the Snark, An Agony in 8 Fits*, Macmillan Publication, United Kingdom, 1876.

³ *Ibidem*, p.16.

⁴ TEYSSOT Georges, *A Topology of Everyday Constellations*, WritingArchitecture series, MIT, 2013, p.270.

⁵ WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+. On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.17.

⁶ CRESWELL K. A. C., *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, Penguin Books, London, 1958.

⁷ *San Rocco – The Even Covering of the Fields*, No 2, Summer 2011.

edges suggests the idea of a frame. The eight vertical walls, which are autonomous cities in themselves, mark the limit of the protected, empty site, not yet touched by urbanization. Together, they form a system where each entity can also work independently like islands in a lagoon, referring to the idea of the city as an archipelago. As the lagoon exists before the creation of the islands, the land exists before the city. Cities are just one possibility among others in the even covered field.

The idea of a framed space can be suggested through walls, parts of wall or pillars. Depending on their location, pillars can convey different meanings. Placed on the angle, they strongly recreate the frame, in comparison to a different effect given by a pillar in the middle of a space or on the edges. An example, placing pillars on the edges of a covered space so as to free the angles, is the project *Jardins des Quatre-Vents* (3) designed by Baukunst Architects in Brussels. The thin pillars are almost imperceptible, while still hinting to a framing of the space.

A more straightforward frame is an opening in a wall. However, the first goal of a wall is to enclose space, preventing views and access. As the wall divides and separates, the window connects by allowing the view to cross it. In the Villa Le Lac (4) of Le Corbusier, a window adorns the outside wall. The wall abstracts and limits the view next to the opening, while the frame focuses on the landscape and strengthens its relationship with the garden. The opening, together with the benches and the table attached to it, is designed as a place for contemplation.

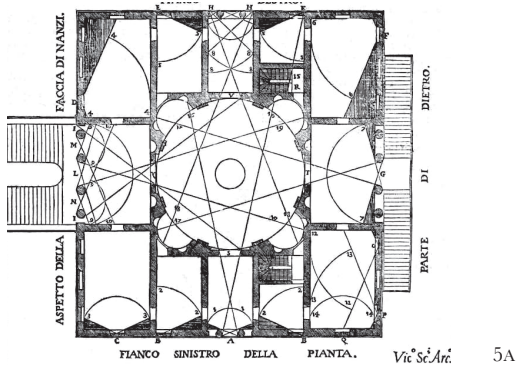
Admitting the first meaning of an opening is to connect the inside and the outside, openings also symbolize changes in society, and mark scientific and technical advancements. The door and the window frame the importance of the private, intimate inside and the public outside. Villa La Rocca (5), built in the 16th century by Scamozzi, Palladio's pupil, is an illustration of the play between the outside and the inside where the frame becomes the villa itself. The façade is framing the view to the other side of the building, allowing the gaze to enter and cross the private space. The dimension of the dwelling as a meeting and welcoming place is made tangible through this connection.

The idea exposed at the beginning of this chapter that the frame is tightly connected to motion is relevant because, while it usually links spaces, opens the view and brings light in, it can also exist as a non-physical, flexible, movable element. It appears that without a frame, perception is infinite and free, being completely liberated. Until now, motion was induced by our ability to move and to discover views. However, it can also be a moving frame, with continu-

ously oscillating borders. The tree acts as a cover (6), protecting us from the elements and symbolically creates a space with its foliage and shadow. Whereas the shadow creates a surface in perpetual motion, the tree is always-rooted in its position. It is an “anchored, covered and closed territory”⁸ that has, therefore, the attributes of a shelter, of a *first room*. Sitting under a tree, as in a room without a frame, is thus expressed by the shadow, as a free, movable and intangible element delimiting an outside space.

It is through the frame that we focus, guide our gaze and link different spaces. Consequently, its outline symbolizes the conscious perception of space. Our posture and our movements are meaningful, but they request a frame to structure our gaze and guide body through space.

⁸Free translation from French (VB, MW). DONNADIEU Brigitte, *L'apprentissage du regard, Leçons d'architecture de Dominique Spinetta*, Editions La Villette, 2002, p.22.



5A

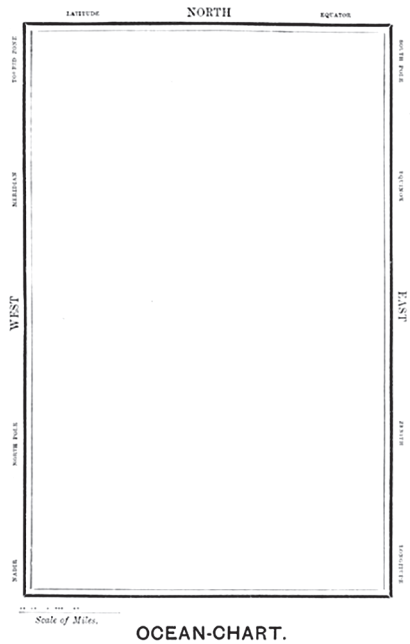


5B

SCAMOZZI Vincenzo, *Villa Pisano*
(*La Rocca*), Lonigo, Italy, 1574.

CARROLL Lewis, *Bellman's Map*,
Ocean Chart, Hunting of the Snark,
An Agony in 8 Fits, 1876.

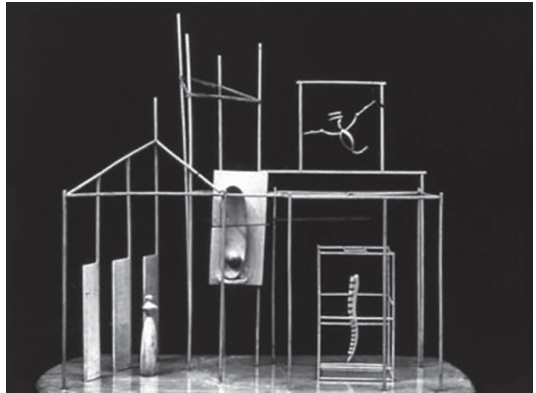
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LE CORBUSIER, *Villa Le Lac*,
Corseaux, Switzerland, 1923-
1924.

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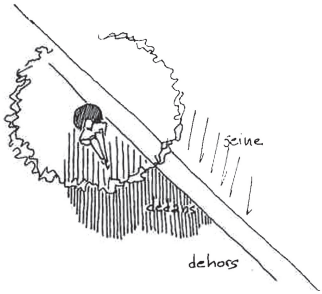


GIACOMETTI Alberto, *The Palace
at 4 a.m.*, 1933.

135



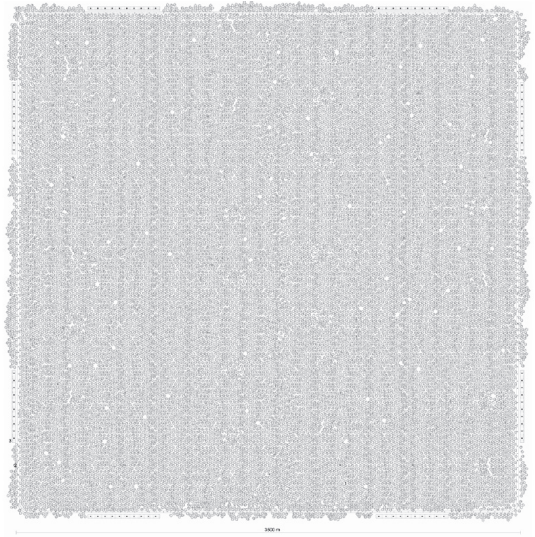
GHIRRI Luigi, *Marina di Ravenna*,
Kodachrome serie, 1972.



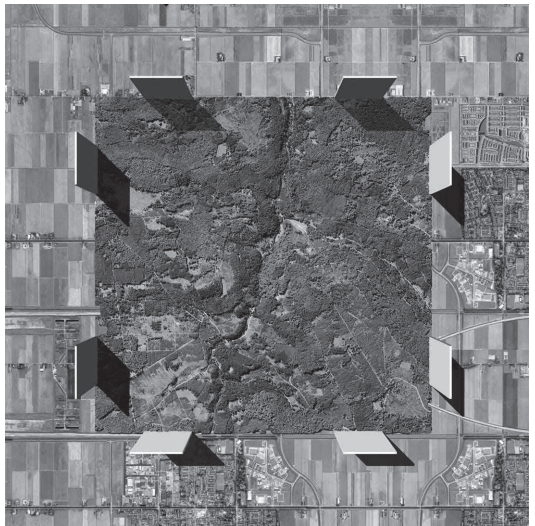
Quai de la Seine, Paris.

SPINETTA Dominique, *L'arbre et l'abri*, 2002.

6



2A



DOGMA, *Stop-City*, 2007-2008.

2B



OLGIATI Valerio, *Villa Alem*,
Alentejo, Portugal, 2013-2014.



SOUTO DE MOURA Eduardo,
*2nd room Exhibition, Sensing Spaces:
Architecture Reimagined Exhibition*,
London Royal Academy of Arts,
London, UK, 2014.



BAUKUNST Architect, *Jardins des
Quatre-Vents*, Brussels, Belgium,
2014.

ENTER

To come in or to go out, to separate and to unite are part of the constant dialectics of the entrance. In order to enter, an in-between space, neither inside nor outside is requested. It is where our role and behavior change, a space of transition where we become an *occupant* or a *passerby*. It represents the point where the dwelling meets the public space.

A door exists because of the wall. The opening of the door allows the access or forbids it. It announces another world that one cannot perceive if the door is closed. When the door opens, it introduces new paths and enables us to go further: “[the] space is not just what we perceive as physical space but also that which we project and imagine. The threshold, as the place where the thing hidden behind it is announced, takes on multiple meanings”¹. In *The poetics of space*, Gaston Bachelard describes *the dialectics of outside and inside* as follows: “It has the sharpness of the dialectic of yes and no, which decides everything”². The 5 Doors (I) painting (1), made by Gerhard Richter, carries the idea of a sequence of moments through which one discovers the hidden space behind. It questions the closing and opening effects of a door and the control it offers.

The portal, as the door, articulates spaces in order to get in, and introduces the upcoming space or room. Depending on its scale, it suggests a *rite of passage*³ sometimes associate to a spiritual dimension. The threshold it creates is a third space that can convey monumentality through its dimension. When it is not related to human scale, it illustrates an affiliation to another register. The portal of the Kolumba Museum (2), designed by Peter Zumthor, is attached to a sacred site. The museum is a palimpsest delicately built on the ruins of a church, at the same time preserving and exhibiting them. The entrance has the size of an old Gothic window, carrying a sacred meaning and greatness. The transition from the public sidewalk to the entrance is continuous, thanks to the generous glass doors. Even if he entered this space, the passerby faces a blind wall. He has to go through a narrow cavity in the wall in order to really arrive in the museum and to become a visitor. The entrance device is hidden and alludes to the holy content of the building.

Depending on its scale and design, the entrance also conveys the status of the building. It is a “threshold demarcating ownership of space”⁴ and creating an autonomous space in front of the building.

¹ WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+*. On *Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.16.

² BACHELARD Gaston, *The poetics of space*, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 1994, p.211.

³ VAN GENNEP Arnold, *Les rites de passage: Etude systématique des rites*, Emile Nourry, Paris, 1909 (1981).

⁴ BEER David, “Bridges and Doors: The Will to Connection”, *Threshold*, April 2017. On www.thresholdyork.wordpress.com. Consulted on the 26.12.2017.

The threshold between the public outside and the private inside begins where the threshold of the dwelling is expressed and continues on the inside. It is the case of the housing block *Clarté* (3) of Le Corbusier, where the two entrances open on a big hall that distributes the services and the vertical circulations to the flats. Due to their scale, they provide a monumental register to the building. The entrance is not just a simple door, the transition space stretches to the outside and becomes a portal.

In *Design Fundamentals in Architecture*⁵, Prammar lists the most used words to describe the elements. Here, the entrance doors is qualified as a space “where we say the most important things, [...], a social space, [...], still outside, made to be open”⁶. It is a space where the wall becomes movable and we can enter. As the act of entering involves the moving of the body into space, the door is connected to the gesture of opening and closing, represented by the door handle. It is necessary to move the handle and sometimes, before this, to knock: “By entering the building one becomes an occupant; by exiting it into the space of the city, one becomes a passerby”⁷. The need of a door is thus requested by the change of use and the user’s role. In the housing project of AFF Eleven Friends (4), the entrance is detached from the ground by two steps, and invites us to go inside through a concrete element extended to the outside.

The stairs can introduce another space, elevated and accessible through motion. This is illustrated by the Building for the Roman Ruins (5) in Chur designed by Peter Zumthor, where the entrance has a sculptural expression and extends to the outside in order to bring the visitor in. The stairs belong to the space of the door, they are covered and detached from the ground.

The act of going upstairs is an analogy to the one of entering. At the interior, the stairs differentiate the level of the rooms implying a distinct value for each of them. In the case of the Atelier Lewerentz, they make the connection with the other room while separating their functions. The stairs create a scenic situation where the inhabitant or visitor has to perform. In the 19th century, the stairs of the Garnier Opera are representative as a place where people exhibited their social status in society.

⁵ PRAMMAR V.S., *Design Fundamentals in Architecture*, Somaiya Publications, Bombay, 1973.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.184.

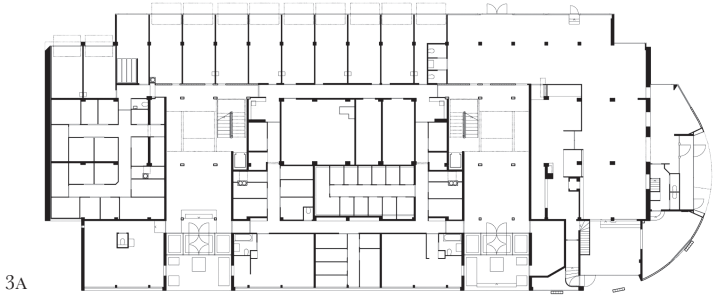
⁷ WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+. On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.16.

The doors are tools to create intimacy in a private space. However, they can also express a kind of monumentality as in the Villa Karma, designed by Loos. The double doors of the bathroom put hygiene forward as a luxury. They are like those of a temple, made of bronze and surrounded by black marble. They exalt the intimacy of the bathroom as the richest room of the house in term of material, size, and position. The room overlooks the lake and its size can be compared to the other rooms of the villa, such as the library.

The entrance is thus the screen of opposites, open and close, connect and disconnect, introducing a space that one wants to reach. It is an important function of space, a device that has become the stage in itself.



Temple Amon-Re, Louxor, Egypt,
between 16th and 13th centuries
BC.



3A

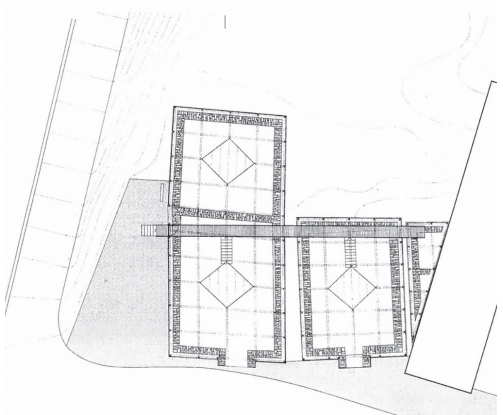


LE CORBUSIER & JEANNERET
Pierre, *Immeuble Clarté*, Geneva,
Switzerland, 1930-1932.

3B

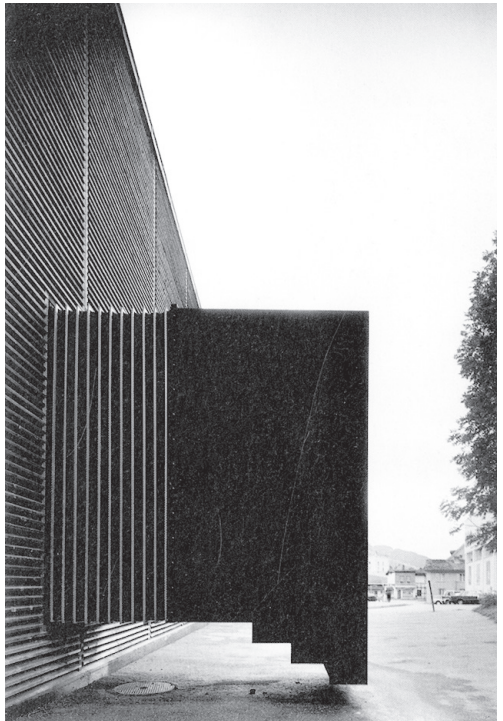


1 RICHTER Gerhard, *5 Doors (I)*, 1967.



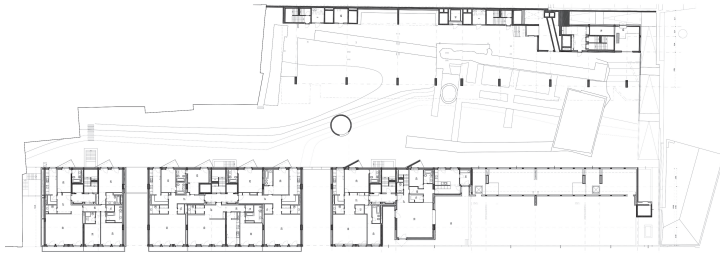
5A

143



ZUMTHOR Peter, *Shelter for Roman Ruins*, Chur, Switzerland, 1986.

5B



SIZA Alvaro, *Terraços de Bragança*,
Lisbon, Portugal, 1992-2004.



ZUMTHOR Peter, *Museum
Kolumba*, Cologne, Germany,
1997-2007.

2



DONG Song, *Intelligence of the
Poor, Living with the Tree*, China,
2005-2011.

NEELOVA Nika, *untitled, Partings*,
The Crisis Commission Exhibi-
tion, Somerset House & Chris-
tie's, London, UK, 2012.



4

AFF Architects, *Eleven Friends
Townhouses*, Berlin, Germany,
2011-2013.

DONG Song, *Communal Courtyard
Exhibition*, Art Gallery of Ontar-
io, Toronto, Canada, 2016.



OPEN

To open means to see. It asks a support to exist, which is the façade. Windows and doors are the communication points between the private inside and the public outside. They are the “negotiation between the individual and the collective”¹ and incorporate a duality: watching and being watched.

Whether through the window, the balcony, or the loggia, it is possible to experience the façade as a space. The window and the wall are inseparable. Through the window, light enters, makes the wall appear, and allows the inside to exist. The light, as an intangible material, makes it possible to perceive and experience space. Through the openings of the facade, the rapport open-close represents the relation between the private and the public, between family and society. As Francis Ching explains in the book *Architecture, Form, Space, and Order*, “We perceive the size of each element in relation to the other parts or to the whole of a composition”².

The façade, as the encounter between the urban space and the interior, materializes the changes that occur throughout time in society. Thus, during the Middle Ages, the main purpose of the window was to bring light and to ensure ventilation. After, it starts to convey the social status of the inhabitants, as will do later the loggia and the balcony. In the castle, for instance, the window is dug into the thick wall containing benches. This is the place where one can sit, observe or discuss. Then, during the Baroque Period, the façade is autonomous and the exterior and interior are completely dissociated. One of the paintings of Collingwood, *An Antique Interior at West Hill House*, puts forward the heavy interior decoration, as well as the complete detachment from the outside, which generates two different façades. The external one uses the classical orders and responds to the urban conditions, whereas the interior puts the window forward as a decoration. Starting with the Haussmannian period, sections of Parisian apartment buildings start to reveal the inside as a façade. In appears, in this case, that inside and outside can be reversed, “like a sock”³.

A contemporary example of the window as a space of observation and communication is the boarding school (1) in Disentis, built by Gion Caminada. The window becomes a threshold and is able to welcome people in its thickness, while the bench overlooks the exterior and allows observing without being observed.

¹ WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+ On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.16.

² CHING Francis D.K., *Architecture, Form, Space, and Order*, A VNR Book, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996, p.314.

³ TEYSSOT Georges, “Mapping the Threshold: A Theory of Design and Interface”, *AA Files*, No 57, AA Publications, London, 2008, p.10.

The window reflects an image on both the inside and the outside as Ulrike Wietzorrek states in the book on threshold, transition, and transparency: “the window also makes the interior visible from the outside and makes private actions public.”⁴ The opening serves thus as a vehicle for understanding the complex relation between inside and outside. In Lenny Abrahamson’s movie, *Room* (2), released in 2015, a skylight shows the division between two worlds: even if it provides light, it has lost the role of visually connecting spaces. This image of a single, non-accessible window is the reminiscence of the freedom the characters are deprived of.

In the RiffRaff project (3) made by the offices Meili Peter and Stauffer Hasler, in Zürich, a large window connects the street and the living room of the apartment. It embodies the relationship between the public and the private space. It is the expression of a façade, which opens, extends, and reaches out. The example of the apartment house (4) in Sargans, designed by Peter Märkli, displays an open facade with loggias, that gives the idea of a public front, even though there are private apartments behind. Considering that loggias and columns are mostly dedicated to public buildings, giving a monumental character to housing is provocative, and also provides a solution for managing the transition between the street and the living spaces. Monumentality or domesticity brings up the social expression of a building.

A more extreme example connecting the street and the living, the One Wall house (5) of Kerez, is where the threshold disappears. The windows annihilate completely the idea of a façade, and its sheer absence exposes the naked interior. The inside space is strongly linked to the outside, reducing the transition from a space to just a surface. Because of this choice, the façade becomes a window display, unsettled and movable, using curtains to provide intimacy. “The facade is a surface that moves in space. It turns inward and outward and forms folds. The essence and meaning of these folds lie, according to Bernard Cache, in the questioning of relationships between inside and outside, between the building and urban space.”⁵ The façade does not have any more two sides. The opposite, a façade without windows recalls the idea of a monadic space, concentrated on its pure inside. Regarding this idea, one has to refer to Georges Teyssot, for whom, in this situation, “the true never looks out at the universe”⁶.

The relationship between the façade and the city is thus necessary to question. It conveys significance, both political and social. The façade is exposed to the public opinion. In the poem “Les Fenêtres”, Baudelaire depicts the role of the window and the arrival of the city in the dwelling: “There is nothing more profound, more

⁴ WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+. On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.354.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p.359.

⁶ TEYSSOT Georges, “Mapping the Threshold: A Theory of Design and Interface”, *AA Files*, No 57, AA Publications, London, 2008, p.10.

mysterious, more pregnant, more insidious and more dazzling than a window lit by a single candle. What one can see out in the sunlight is always less interesting than what goes on behind a window pane. In that black or luminous square life lives, life dreams, life suffers.”⁷ Anonymity disappears, the inhabitants become actors on the scene of the city.

The space of the façade, as the threshold between the public outside and the private inside in housing, is a social product. As the French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre professed in his book *La production de l'espace*⁸, space is *designed* but also *perceived and lived*.

To open allows to reveal certain features of life, where the public and the private meet. The façade is a threshold where one can see, take a sit, discuss. It is the intense act of communication. The window is a stage that one can live.

⁷ BAUDELAIRE Charles, “Les Fenêtres”, *Le Spleen de Paris, Oeuvres complètes*, p.288. See Paris Spleen, trans. Louis Varèse (New York: New Directions: 1947), p.77. From Teyssot Georges, “Mapping the Threshold: A Theory of Design and Interface”, *AA Files*, No 57, AA Publications, London, 2008, p.10.

⁸ LEFEBVRE Henri, *La production de l'espace*, Anthropos, Paris, 2000.

COLLINGWOOD William, *An
Antique Interior at West Hill House,
Hastings*, 1842.



HOPPER Edward, *Room in
Brooklyn, Katherine's Realm of
thought*, 1932.

JOSEF Frank & WLACH Oskar,
Villa Beer, Vienna, Austria,
1929-1930.



MÄRKLI Peter, *Apartments building*, Sargans, Switzerland, 1986.

4



3A



3B

MEILI PETER & STAUFFER
HASLER Architects, *RiffRaff
Housing*, Zürich, Switzerland,
2001-2002.



ARAVENA PEREZ Architects,
Medical School, Santiago, Chile,
2002-2004.



1A

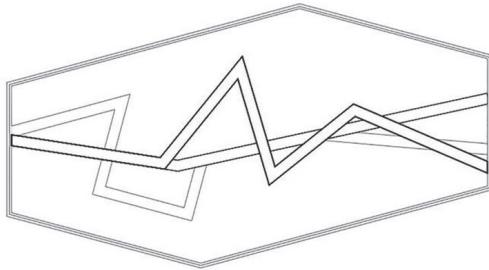


GION CAMINADA Architects,
Unterhaus Boarding School, Disen-
tis, Switzerland, 2001-2004.

1B



5A



5B

KEREZ Christian, *House with one wall*, Zürich, Switzerland, 2004-2007.

ABRAHAMSON Lenny, *The room*, "Day 22", movie, 2015. 2



CONNECT

To connect means to associate, to correlate, to link, to join. It allows the body and the gaze to move freely through space and is indissolubly related to the wall and the floor.

The wall is the first element that traces limits, frontiers in order to define a territory and the identity of its occupants. The enclosure is a multidisciplinary theme, but its anthropological functions are that of protection and definition. We define boundaries primarily by the use of sight “everything the eye can see, [...] everything within my gestural range, within my arm’s reach belongs to me”¹. The wall is the only element that guarantees total visual separation.

Thus, the most obvious way to connect spaces is through the absence of walls. As Georges Perec underlines in *Species of Spaces*², “we have to be able to forget there are walls”³, and the best way to do it is the door. A succession of aligned doors, an enfilade is arguably the most obvious device that connects the rooms. It transforms them into a sequence of layers of different intensities. The multiplication of the door gives depth to the space. We do not live in each room separately, but we live in the whole ensemble of rooms at once: “to live is to pass from one space to another [...]”⁴. The door connects and supports the dynamic associations between spaces. The Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi (1) has poetically represented this intricate relation established between the spaces, through a series of paintings featuring a continuous string of doors. Looking at them, our gaze is led, through the open doors, from one room to the next, allowing us to have a view of the whole that cancels the existence of the walls.

The idea of enfilade has been reinterpreted in many recent projects. One interpretation is given by E2A in the Werkbundstadt project (2), where the openings are repeated in both directions. This organizes the living spaces into an order of spatial equivalence. The number of doors varies from one to three for each room, as a way to hierarchize, highlighting the potential for seclusion or openness of each room. Therefore, the polyvalent, equal rooms do not predetermine the form of living but provide a basis for an individual interpretation. This organization allows for spaces not be typed for a specific resident or for a precisely defined form of living, but to develop independently of them. We can assume that with a higher degree of openness and connection comes a higher functional indeterminacy of the spaces.

155

¹ BARTHES Roland, *How to Live Together : Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, Columbia University Press, 2013, p79.

² PEREC Georges, *Species of spaces and Other pieces*, Penguin Books, London, translated by Sturrock John, 1997 (2008).

³ *Ibidem*, p.39.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.6.

However, the succession of perfectly aligned doors and rooms has a certain degree of anticipation and leads to a static perception. By disposing the doors differently, we can have a diagonal, more dynamic reading of the space, while fostering unexpected relations, such as in Esch Sinzel's Stähelimatt project (3). Relating to this same idea, Märkli speaks about his Apartment building in Sargans, highlighting that "[...] if there's no transparency in the space, if you can't see from one room to another - there's no feeling of life"⁵.

Although the door usually has the role of seclusion and protection, when it loses its frame, it alludes to an idea of continuity and movement through space. In the case of the Neudorfstrasse project (4) of Esch Sintzel, the frameless doors and the continuity of the floor and ceiling strengthens the connection between the rooms. By the same token, the transparent glass doors in the Hammerstrasse project by Diener and Diener, suggest an idea of unity where only the frame delimits the different spaces. We delimit in order to differentiate and hierarchize spaces. As a gesture, it is different from the act of enclosing, it deals with transparency, depth, visual perception of continuity and separation.

In order to connect, we have to first delimit the distinct spaces. Materials are a means of achieving this. In the 20th century, it was a common practice to represent the projection of the moldings in plan, as a way to indicate the importance of the room and to individualize it from the rest. This way of representation "gave materiality a spatial value"⁶. In a room that is not anymore designed for a specific function, materials can structure it and suggest its use. When a continuous floor treatment unfolds in various rooms as a unifying element, delimiting, singling out smaller areas out of it can be a way to differentiate and hierarchize, while keeping the quality of a visual continuity.

In this way, uses are suggested but can change and most importantly, they are not segregated anymore, they can interact as Rob Krier asserts: "the creation of small islands within a space, of informal borders underline the employment and structure of the room"⁷. By delimiting specific areas, we can define a room while keeping it connected to the other spaces. Just like in the multifamily house Felix Regula (5) designed by Loelinger Strub in Zürich, the most generous rooms of each apartment appear as a continuum. They stretch between two opposite facades giving the spaces a diagonal orientation. However, each room is individualized, delimited, defined, by the use of a wooden carpet-like area inserted into the continuous concrete surface: "no carpet covering the entire floor can have the effect which is so clearly achieved by separate beautiful rugs on a hard surface"⁸. While the idea of a continuity of material implies movement, flow, the islands become points of stability.

⁵ MÄRKLI Peter, MOSTAFAVI Mohsen, *Approximations: The architecture of Peter Märkli*, AA Publications, London, 2002, p.81.

⁶ AVIOLAT Alexandre, "L'univers domestique de la pièce", *Matières*, No 12, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2015, p.92.

⁷ KRIER Rob, *Architectural Composition*, Academy Editions, London, 1988, p.88.

Walls, structural or not, reinforce separation. Their reduction to a rhythm of columns, mere punctual structural elements, as in the City Villa project (6) of Office KGDVS, creates strong spatial connections between the rooms that are not functionally defined. There is no more need for doors. The tectonic elements create spatial hierarchies. Structure is translated into a fragmented and progressive continuity. The connection is thus done through space and materiality.

The disposition of the rooms, one in relation to the others, influences the way we perceive it and use it. The way it is connected to the whole or delimited, cut out from it, enhances the hierarchical organization of the space.



HAMMERSHOI Vilhelm, *Die vier Zimmer*, 1914.



DIENER DIENER Architects,
Hammerstrasse, Basel, Switzerland, 1981.



ZUMTHOR Peter, *Zumthor House Extension*, Haldenstein, Switzerland, 2005.



3A



3B

ESCH SINZEL Architects, *Housing Project Stähelimmatt*, Zürich-Seebach, Switzerland, 2004-2007.

159

LOELIGER STRUB, *Felix Regula Housing*, Zürich, Switzerland, 2012.

5

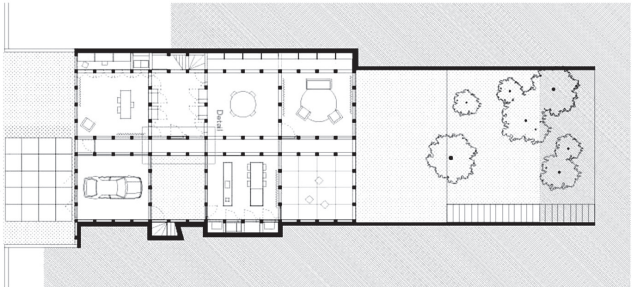


6A



OFFICE KGDVS, *City Villa*,
Brussels, Belgium, 2008-2012.

6B



EDELAAR MOSAYEBI INDER-
BITZIN Architects, *Wohnbauten*
Steinwies-/Irisstrasse, Zürich-Hot-
tingen, Switzerland, 2011-2015.



2A



2B

E2A Architects, *WerkBundStadt*
Housing Project, Berlin, Germany,
2016.

ESCH SINTZEL Architects,
Housing project Neudorfstrasse,
Wädenswil, Switzerland, 2015-
2017.

4



APPROPRIATE

To measure is the first step in appropriating a space. It is to establish a relation between our body and the surrounding space. Measuring implies the existence of a system of measurement.

However, measurements are more than an objective, rational system of knowledge. The “Measurements” series (1) of Mel Bochner, inscribed in the minimal investigations of the 60s, illustrate the transition from the paper to the wall and after, to the three-dimensional space of the gallery, in an act where the context of the work becomes the work in itself. In turn, it reveals that the reduction of the world to human understanding through measurement is a meaningless act.

To measure is, therefore, also a question of perception and it implies the existence of a reference. It is in relation to this reference that we measure our movement through space, or calibrate our gestures, our actions. In the article “De la perception de l’espace”, Martin Steinmann writes that “we perceive space as layers of elements that structure it: 1. Form, 2. Walls, doors, windows ... 3. Furniture”¹ and, as a consequence, “we live things corporally, as effects that relate to our body”².

There is a strong link between our perception of space and our behavior or how we relate to each other. This idea is perfectly illustrated by Kahn as follows: “in a small room, with just another person, what you say may never have been said before”³. In a big room, where the walls are far apart, we know that if we were to talk to another person, “the walls of the room would come together and the room would become intimate”⁴. As the room would dilate or contract according to how we behave in it, we could say that the way we perceive and use a space are strongly linked.

Our first encounter with the space is the door. Its form, proportions and scale are key elements that influence our perception of it. One intriguing scene that skillfully establishes a relation between the body and the door through the use of scale is the movie *The Trial* (2), an adaptation of Kafka’s text by Orson Welles, in 1962. In their article “La porte, une échelle de l’habitat”⁵, Elli Mosyaebi and Christian Inderbitzin bring forward the discrepancy between the scale of the door and its user. Although the proportions are right, the position of the handle makes the man seem ridiculously small

¹ Free translation from French (VB, MW), STEINMANN Martin, “De la perception de l’espace”, *Matières*, No 9, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2008, p.76.

² *Ibidem*, p.80.

³ KAHN Louis, “The room, the street and the human agreement”, *A+U*, January: 25-30, 1973, p.33.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.33.

⁵ MOSAYEBI Elli, INDERBITZIN Christian, “La porte, une échelle de l’habitat”, *Matières*, No 13, Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes, Lausanne, 2016.

next to it. This scenographic effect shows the protagonist's lack of power in front of an arbitrary juridical system. This example illustrates the importance of the door as a "processor of symbolic, epistemological and social processes and [...] bearer of cultural codes" ⁶.

The research into the differentiation of the doors within the house reveals a desire to hierarchize spaces, to structure the relationship between the different rooms, to alter their perception before we even enter them. One example in this sense is Margaret Wittgenstein's house (3) in Vienna, where two doors, of different proportions, open towards the salon. Their different dimensions and scale are adjusted to the spaces they introduce: one leads to the entrance hall, and the other to a lateral, smaller room. The same principle is found in the Brüggläckler Housing Project (4), where the two doors are differentiated in order to mark the distinction between a main and a secondary room. In the case of the Hiromi Fuji's Todoroki residence, the expression of the three-dimensional grid turns the entrance in (5) to a telescopic succession of layers that adjusts the opening to the scale of the interior.

There is a strong link between perception and the way we see. It is through seeing that we fix our place in the world. Seeing is not so straightforward and often subject to personal background. As John Berger explains in his book *Ways of seeing*, "the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled" ⁷. As a consequence, the way we see influences our perception of everyday objects, which in turn, through their dimensions and proportion, distort our perception of space.

⁶ Free translation from French (VB, MW), *Ibidem*, p.93.

⁷ BERGER John, BLOMBERG Sven, FOX Chris, DIBB Michael, HOLLIS Richard, *Ways of seeing*, Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1972, p.1.

ENGELMANN Paul & WIT-
TGENSTEIN Ludwig, *Wittgenstein*
House, Vienna, Austria, 1926-
1929.



3



JOSEF Frank & WLACH Oskar,
Villa Beer, Vienna, Austria,
1929-1930.

MAGRITTE René, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1936.





2 WELLES Orson, *The Trial*,
movie, 1962.



MICHALS Duane, *Things are
queer*, 1973.

167



5 FUJII Hiromi, *Todoroki Residence*,
House within a House, Ichikawa,
Japan, 1976.

MÄRKLI Peter, *Apartments building*, Sargans, Switzerland, 1986.



BOCHNER Mel, *Measurement: Room*, Domaine de Kerguéhennec, Kerguéhennec, France, 2007.

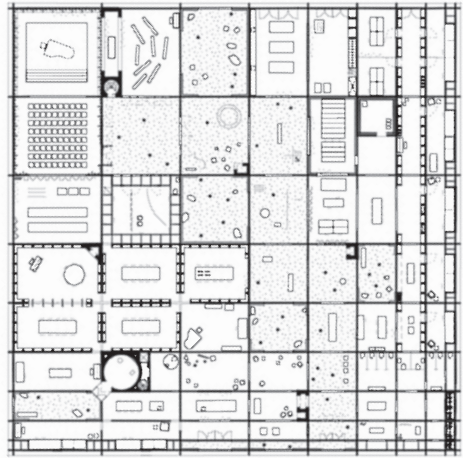
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4

BAUMBERGER STEGMEIER & EDELAAR MOSAYEBI INDERBITZIN Architects, *Brüggliacker Housing Estate*, Zürich, 2014.

OFFICE KGDVS, *Arvo Pärt Center*,
Laulasmaa, Finland, 2014.



EDELAAR MOSAYEBI INDER-
BITZIN Architects, *Housing*
Freihofstrasse, Zürich-Altstetten,
Switzerland, 2015.



BOSSHARD Alessandro, TAVOR
Li, VAN DER PLOEG Matthew,
Svizzera 240, *Swiss Pavilion*,
Venice Biennale, 2018.

MEDIATE

To mediate is to settle, to reconcile the differences between two entities. It means to divide and to connect at the same time, and implies the existence of a threshold.

The idea of an in-between as division is described by Samuel Beckett as follows: “I am the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside, on the other the inside, that can be as thin as foil, I’m neither one side nor the other, I’m in the middle, I’m the partition, I’ve two surfaces and no thickness”¹. To mediate is to acknowledge the existence of an in-between and to give it depth.

The elements that enable the mediation are ambiguous, and often subject to the duality described by Georg Simmel in the chapter “Bridge and Door” of the book *Simmel on Culture*: “the door represents in a more decisive manner how separating and connecting are only two sides of precisely the same act”². The same idea is expressed by Michel de Certeau in *The practice of Everyday life*³ where he divides the types of limits in two categories: the frontier, which separates, and the bridge, which connects. Following this logic, the doors, the windows, and any other threshold can work in either of the categories, proving their ambiguous, ambivalent nature.

The issue concerning the relationship between the inside and outside has been long debated in the architectural discourse. In his treatise on classical architecture “De re aedificatoria”, Alberti “described a house as consisting of a sequence of creation and removal of boundaries”⁴. The first element that mediates the transition from the public sphere to the private one is the door. It shows the social status of the owner as, “in former times, the door, as part of the whole, represented the entire house”⁵.

As an effect of industrialization, standardization brought about a loss in the symbolism of the door as a vehicle of identity. Residential buildings have to negotiate the dichotomy public – private at different scales. As the borders between them fluctuate, there are places where the two interweave, giving way to “highly differentiated thresholds between individual and collective”⁶. Such elements that regulate the transition are the stairs. In the case of the project Terraços de Bragança designed by Alvaro Siza, they mediate between the entrances from the public streets, situated at different levels, and the apartments situated on the upper floors. While

¹ BECKETT Samuel, *The Unnamable*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1953.

² SIMMEL Georg, RITTER Mark, FRISBY David, FEATHERSTONE Mike, *Simmel on Culture: Selected writings, Theory, Culture & Society*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997, p.172.

³ DE CERTEAU Michel, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Irving, CA: University of California Press, 2002.

⁴ WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+. On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.15.

⁵ KOOLHAAS Rem, BOOM Irma, *Door, Elements*, Amo, Harvard Graduate School of Design, Marsilio, 2014, p.13.

⁶ WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+. On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.18.

there the stairs serve only as a transitional space, in the project for the M Building (1), conceived by Duplex Architects, the generously designed space of the stairs is invested with the qualities of a communal, shared, appropriable space that acts as threshold both between the apartments situated on the same level and between the different floors.

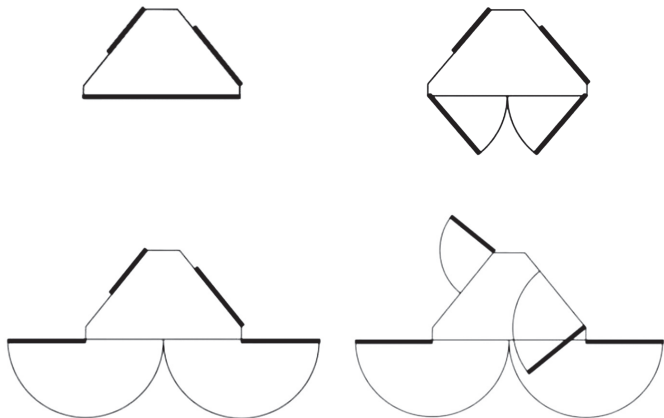
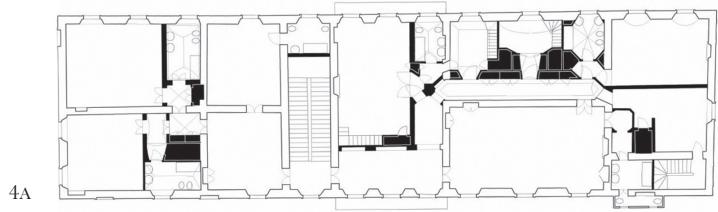
The function of mediation between interior spaces has been taken on also by windows. Although, normally, windows are opened towards the exterior and conceived for the circulation of air and light, many contemporary projects make use of internal windows. As openings, they are not meant to frame the outside and they are not bringing light or air in. However, they act as filters between the private space of the apartments and the communal and circulation areas.

As “borders are the spatial expression of social relationships”⁷, the presence of inner windows comes to blur them by creating visual connections between certain rooms of the apartment and the communal area. In other cases, such as the Jugends Hostel (2) in Basel, or the Senior home designed by Peter Zumthor in Chur, the interior openings mediate between the private spaces of the rooms and the collective distribution spaces. In doing so, they introduce different degrees of privacy in the room. One example where this relation is even more accentuated is Adrian Streich’s Werdwies housing development (3). Here, the entrance-study is completely open towards the circulation area, distributes the circulation within the apartment, and allows the view to grasp the activity within the apartment.

Divisions, signs that act to separate, usually mark the relation between the rooms. The intervention of Luigi Caccia Dominioni, on the 17th century Villa San Valerio (4), is the mark of his sophistication in reformulating baroque shapes that give depth to the transition between the major rooms. Through an elaborate composition of doorways, he creates a series of intermediary spaces that mediate these unusually shaped areas.

Mediation consists in the making of a third space. As a way to settle differences and to create an in-between, it occurs on many scales and is one of the fundamental acts in designing space.

⁷ WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+. On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.18.



CACCIA DOMINIONI Luigi,
Villa San Valerio, Albiate, Monza
 Brianza, Italy, 1957.

ZUMTHOR Peter, *Home for Senior Citizens*, Masans, Switzerland, 1993.



MEILI PETER Architects, *Zypressenstrasse Housing*, Zürich, Switzerland, 1996-1997.

175

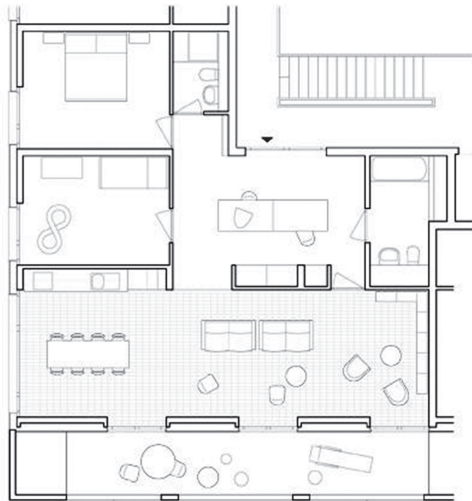
BUCHNER BRÜNDLER Architects, *Youth Hostel*, Basel, Switzerland, 2010.



2

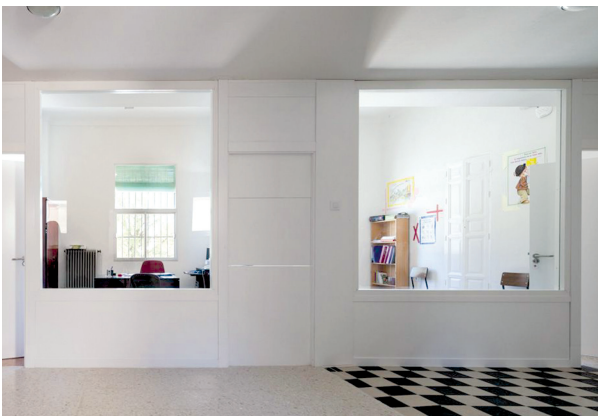


3A



3B

STREICH Adrian, *Werdwies*
Housing Development, Zürich-Alstet-
teten, Switzerland, 2001-2007.



VALERO RAMOS Elisa, *Colegio*
Santa María del Llano, Ogjares,
Granada, Spain, 2012.

MIROSLAV SIK Architects,
Elderly Home Neustadt, Zug, Swit-
zerland, 2007-2012.



MIROSLAV SIK Architects,
Hunziker Areal, House B, Zü-
rich-Leutschenbach, Switzerland
2012-2015.

DUPLEX Architects, *Hun-
ziker Areal, House M*, Zü-
rich-Leutschenbach, Switzerland
2012-2015.



“Today, residential architecture makes cities.”

WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+. On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*,
Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.26.

LIVING ALONE AND TOGETHER

Communal dwelling acquires a new potential when it sets out to address the dichotomies inside-outside, private-public, individual-collective, open-enclosed through a renewed set of tools. Following this line of thought, the basic unit of the residential building is not anymore the apartment for the nuclear family, it is the room. It constitutes the smallest unit capable of encapsulating and managing the complexity of living together. The previously presented collection of rooms explores the variety and richness of interior habitable spaces. Evading any references to housing typologies and avoiding strictly functional ties, the room is the element that can allow for the crossings of different models of living together. Only by challenging its interiority, can we truly explore the meaning of the room.

One important factor to be tackled when living together is privacy: “in liberal societies, privacy has the function of permitting and protecting an autonomous life.”¹ According to Hannah Arendt, during the modern era it was in the public realm that people became “fully human.”² Today, however, self-development and self-reconstruction are linked mostly to the private sphere, the symbol of autonomy and independence. It should not be overlooked that the high regard for the private has important consequences on the development of the city.

The sensitive rapport between the needs of the individual and the dynamic of the collective is at the core of Roland Barthes’ book *How to live together*. He sets out to investigate different forms of cohabitation, taking as reference two extremes: the complete solitude of the hermit and the total integration of living in a convent.

In basing his reflections on a couple of novels and by using a set of Greek words, he crystallizes the essential *traits* and aspects of living together: *monosis* – a life of solitude, *anachoresis* – a live away from the world, *koinobiosis* – a life in community. Although quite skeptic towards most types of cohabitation, he advanced idiorrhymy as the only valid model. The term originates from Greek orthodox monastic language. It proposes a utopian fantasy where the individual would live freely, at his own rhythm, without any constraints from the part of the collective. In order to achieve this, it is important to take into account that “living together, especially by following the idiorrhymic model, brings about an ethic of distance

¹ RÖSSLER Beate, *The value of Privacy*, trans Rupert Glasgow, Oxford, UK: Polity, 2005, p.1.

² WIETZORREK Ulrike, *Housing+. On Thresholds, Transitions and Transparencies*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.25.

between the people that cohabitate”³. The room proves fundamental for the development of idiorrhythmy. Moreover: “what is relevant in the room (*cella*) is the complete, absolute autonomy of its structure. [...] By room’s structure I mean a flexible, topological constellation of functional places: bed, work table, personal storage points”⁴. The previously presented argument on the possibilities of living together is relevant as a point of departure for investigating new, modern forms of life.

This idea is tightly knit to the kind of community it serves, to the way it works and to the needs of its members. The study we conducted on the different species of rooms, although not exhaustive, provides a diverse enough set of tools to be able to tackle these issues.

One recent project that provides a radical answer to a specific community is the Communal Villa designed by Dogma. While questioning the very essence of the private realm as disconnected from the place of production, it reformulates the dwelling model in order to suit the needs of a community of artists. The radical relationships it articulates between isolation and collectivity find their roots in earlier, revolutionary projects that marked the history of housing. One of these residential forms that emerged in the 19th century was the single-kitchen housing block, where a large communal kitchen would be shared by all residents and the housework was divided between residents or performed by employed staff. “The elimination of the kitchen from the home was central to the construction of the collective”⁵ and opened the way towards a new kind of typology, a mix between the apartment and the hotel. “Collective kitchens and kitchen-less living came to be associated with communism. [...] However, although it was sometimes used as a political tool, it was never limited to one ideological or economic system”⁶.

Even though models of residential buildings having at their core communal spaces ceased to be so popular for a while, new forms of communal dwelling are beginning to emerge. Recent groundbreaking projects such as the Hunziker Areal in Zürich or the Junction in Geneva show a crossing between the typology of the apartment and models based on shared spaces. Cooperatives today play quite an important role in challenging the age-old patterns of living and investigate new residential forms. Judging by the extent of the intervention, the goal of the projects is to become key prototypes in tackling the city at a larger scale than the one of the isolated building. In this way they aim to provide a model for change in the densification and transformation of the city.

³ BARTHES Roland, *How to Live Together : Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, Columbia University Press, 2013, p.110. Translated from French.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p.89.

⁵ KRIES Mateo, *Together! The new architecture of the collective*, Ruby Press, Berlin, 2017, p.65.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.69.

The dynamic evolution of society has brought about a highly eclectic range of lifestyles and ways of dwelling. An eloquent question is thus asked in the book about this new settlement in Zürich: "What would an apartment building look like that can do more than an old people's home, a single-family home, and a kindergarten combined?"⁷

Our project will develop on the background of the urgent need to tackle new emerging forms of living and rethink the idea of dwelling in relation to the city. As an answer to the faceless architecture of the suburbs, and the pressing questions raised by the even covered field, we will be investigating the possibility of housing to absorb public functions, and invest residential architecture with the qualities of a monument.

⁷ HUGENBLOER
Margrit, HOFER Andreas,
SIMMENDINGER Pia,
*More than Housing: Cooperative
planning - A case study in Zürich*,
Birkhäuser, Basel, 2015, p.18.

PREVIEW

The next steps we will take in the next semester will develop on the base we built with the research conducted until now.

The project would be situated in the Sébeillon-Sévelin neighbourhood of Lausanne, currently an industrial wasteland. This last, major urban void is strategically situated in close proximity to the city center and at the same time quite close to the fringes of Lausanne. Proposing a project here would be an opportunity to rethink the composition of the urban fabric, encourage the densification of the city and limit the urban sprawl.

The site is situated in a point where the center and the suburban area converge, where industries and docks meet schools and housing. Due to the historical and social significance of the neighbourhood, the project would maintain and further develop its cultural, social, educational and craft vocation. In order to achieve this, one idea would be to challenge the dwelling typology to the point where and acquires a public character by absorbing public functions.

The extent of the intervention would cover the design of two or three buildings, from their relation with the city fabric, to the expression of the materials at the interior.

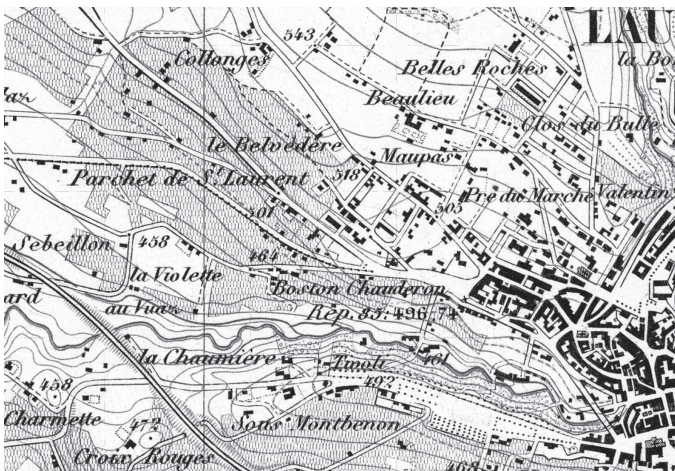
Basing our design process on the collection of projects we have gathered up to this moment and on the comprehension of the different species of rooms derived from it, the goal would be to formulate a solution that encourages communal living and social diversity.



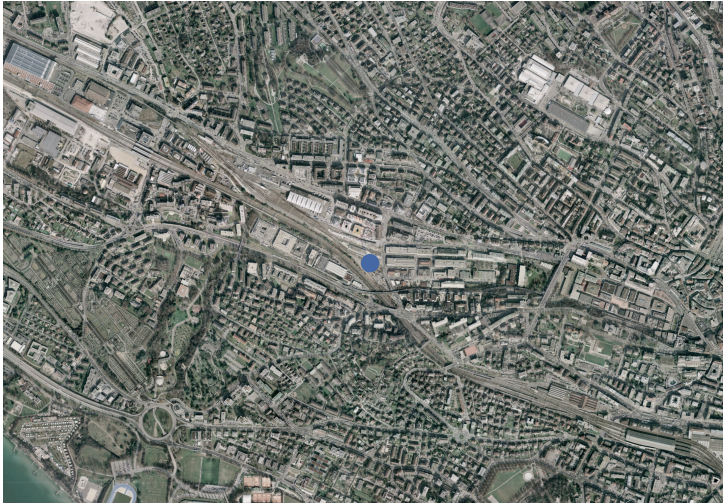
WÜRGLER Eugène, *Aerial view of Lausanne, Valley of Flon, June 1914.*



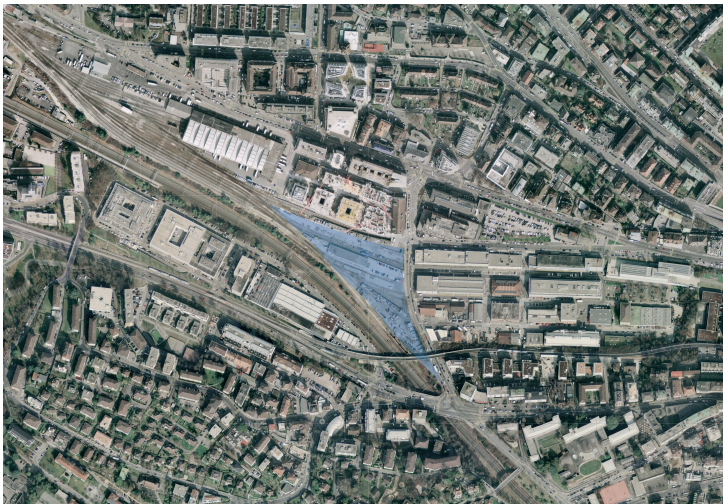
LAUSANNE, *Sèbeillon.*



SIEGFRIED Hermann, *Siegfried map, first Edition, Lausanne, 1926.*



Lausanne, *Sébeillon-Sévelin*, Site situation.



Lausanne, *Sébeillon-Sévelin*. Site.

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203

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