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Architecture as Archimedial Event

A Discussion on the Substance of Architecture

The Emergence of the Discussion about Architecture as Media

Things and works are the result of a creative process. The Greeks speak of *poiesis*, of an act which is ordered in such a way that at the end – or rather – after the end of this activity, a real work is materialized. Since architecture has been understood as art (in the modern sense) for several centuries now¹, this made thing is also viewed as a work of art. The process of making is seen as a manifestation and materialization of spiritual conceptions or ideas. It is a point of debate to what extent the materiality of the work determines the process of creating.

¹ The criteria which clarify what art actually is, however, are very diverging and often not explicit.

On the one hand, there are the ›builders‹ or the ›construction engineers‹ (in the 19th century, this was, for example Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, 1814 - 1879), who develop architecture out of a material or out of the constructional technology which is to be used. On the other hand, there are the conceptualists (such as Étienne-Louis Boullée, 1728 - 1799 or Bruno Taut, 1880-1938 in his ›Glass Architecture‹ phase), who develop their design in as concept, and who will even accept their architecture remaining a drawing or a picture. For the one, the work is the concept, for the other, it is the building. In any case, both works are always thought of as final objects.

The perception of the works is not to be more (or less) than their unambiguous cognitive perception. Viewers and users of the works must leave annihilate (I find ›annihilate‹ very strong. Better would be ›lose‹) their subjectivity in order for this (true) perception to succeed. A decidedly subjective viewpoint on the part of the users, or an interpretation, are considered to be a disturbance or destruction of the actual work.

With the thesis of the openness of works of art (see for example Ingarden's *Indetermined aspects of the artwork*, 1931 or Umberto Eco's *The Open*

Work, 1962, engl. 1989) and through the development of reader-response aesthetics in the 20th century (an overview is given by R. Warning (ed.): *Rezeptionsästhetik* (reader-response aesthetics). Munich 1975), this notion is questioned. Furthermore, the aesthetic reference of recipients, i.e. of viewers and users, is highlighted and the theory of the genesis of the (art) work as the result of a productive process is replaced by the assertion that the work of art actually comes into existence by its reception. The making is secondary, architecture can thus be developed without an architect².

2 Rudofsky 1964 (ger. 1989).

However, this idea of a work without an author is as problematic as the idea of a work without a user/resident, which is why the discussion was justly extended³. With the development of communication theory in the 20th century and its adoption into the theory of architecture, the work comes to stand between the author and the user. With this, the work becomes the medium between the transmitter and the receiver and is henceforth only the means of transport (communication theory) or, as the case may be, the material/substantial basis (semiotics) for the essential intention, for that which is meant⁴.

3 Maybe Kemp, 1992.

4 There are, of course, different understandings. On the one hand, for almost three centuries, architecture is placed in relation (function) to the praxis of human life (Lodoli, Möser) and attention is directed at the intrinsic usefulness of the work and on its instrumentality. On the other hand, architecture is understood as space; while the materiality of architecture is dissolved in different ways, depending on the particular conception of space.

One speaks so readily of media and of new media – media theory refers to book printing, newspapers, television and the internet. But even in media theory, little is said about what the medium is exactly, is it a genre, is it a specimen, the specific copy that a particular person appropriates in a particular context, the ›text‹, the ›image‹?

Media theory largely avoids architecture. Architecture lacks that which makes the media so interesting these days: the ability to be digitally reproduced and the mass production based thereon, as well as – in new media – its phenomenality, with which I would like to describe its character as an apparition in a kind of dematerialized state beyond any phenomenological discussion. In architectural scholarship, one investigates the correlation to media, in this case referring to images, clips, and 2D or 3D renderings, and to a lesser degree, to the classical tools of architectural representations such as drawings, plans and models.

I know of no approach to architecture that decidedly allocates the writings on architecture from Vitruvius to Eisenman to the media, even though many such writings exist and are discussed in detail in architectural theory. The media-theoretical discourses in architecture revolve around the influence of media on architecture, the substitution of architecture through media, and occasionally also discuss architecture as medium⁵. Therefore, I only wish to conduct a specifically architectural discussion at this point, more than talk generally on media theory.

5 For example, Colomina 1994

Transcendence

The Medium is the Message

New media seems capable of taking over everything that, up to now, has had to be done physically, for which one originally had to move in real space and for which one needed built architecture. In this, it completely liberates people from any physical conditionality, bond and restriction. New media seems to enable a reality beyond any realness⁶, an actuality without any facts. Complete mediatization could thus gradually complete the ›enlightenment‹ and its quest for clear rationality, as well as people's yearning for freedom.

The publications by Herbert Marshall McLuhan were particularly influential in this regard. Through his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* he became internationally known in 1962. McLuhan analyzed the impact of the new medium of printing on the life and thoughts of people, adding that this era is now over and that an electronic age was emerging. In his following two books, he then developed his own theory on media.

With ›*Understanding Media*‹ (1964, German translation 1970) he initially released a book that dealt specifically with the media in a new age. The book begins with the statement that for millennia people have expanded their body into the surrounding space by means of technology. Now, he continues, they seem to have begun to weave their central nervous system into a worldwide web, thereby canceling out time and space (McLuhan 1964/1995, p. 15) and get people together to a global village (McLuhan 1964/1995, p. 17). McLuhan examines the medium itself, not its content. He sums up his position in the sentence, »The Medium is the Message.«

With this sentence, McLuhan wishes to express the ›personal and social impact of the medium‹ (ibid., p. 21). When a machine executes routine work – as in one of his examples – this determines the relationship amongst workers, as well as amongst workers and their self-image, regardless of whether the machine produces Cadillacs or cornflakes. A railway is a specific medium of transportation which might, for example, determine the shape of a city, regardless of what it transported (McLuhan 1964/2002, pp. 8).

A medium is, like a light, in itself without a message. However, it offers the possibility to take up messages and to communicate these as content, for example as an illuminated advertising text. Light makes it possible to perform brain surgery or to play a baseball game at night. »It could be argued that these activities are in some way the ›content‹ of electric light, since they could not exist without electric light.« (McLuhan 1964/2002, p. 8-9). Since the medium as such is devoid of content, we do not take notice of it (ibid., p. 9). Nevertheless, media carry out a formative power.

⁶ It seems sensible to me, to make a conceptual distinction here. ›Reality‹ describing that which is the constructed everyday environment and ›realness‹ as that which was constructed to this living environment, which can only be understood from the perspective of this environment, but which nevertheless has an innate sense which one could describe as their materiality or their physicality.

Independent of function, style and cut, a piece of clothing is a medium that, in its pure sense, projects tasks of the skin (thermal functions) to the outside. An apartment takes up exactly this mediality and extends it even further; which then, in a larger scale, also applies to the city. They also socialize these tasks: apartment and city become a collective skin, the ›dress‹ of a community (McLuhan 1964/2002, p. 133). Man is not a solipsistic individual anymore but part of a community. »Acting as an organ of the cosmos, tribal man accepted his bodily functions as modes of participation in the divine energies.« (McLuhan 1964/2002, p. 134)

Another example, which is favored in the discussions on media and which was also discussed by McLuhan, is the telephone. He notices how it changed the context in which it is used. Instructions could seemingly not be conveyed over the telephone with the same degree of authority as was possible through a written document. At the same time, telephones offered the possibility of direct informal contact with the most senior bosses without hierarchical barriers. They changed the speed of interaction between bosses and their employees and thus revolutionized the methods of management (McLuhan 1964/2002, p. 296). The transition from seeing and reading to listening and overcoming time and space by using the phone is important to McLuhan: »With the telephone, there occurs an extension of hearing and voice that is a kind of extra sensory perception.« (McLuhan 1964/2002, p. 289)

McLuhan sees media as agents, which, independent of their content, influence the constitution of people and of their surroundings. He sees them as prostheses. But while Adam Müller⁷ or Merleau-Ponty, for example, see prostheses (a blind person's cane, playing the piano) as an assimilation and thus as an extension or expansion of the body and as an embodiment of the environment (Merleau-Ponty 1945), McLuhan understands them as a dissolution of the self into the surrounding space and as disembodiment.

While the early works of McLuhan were still published as classical scholarly studies, the later publications appeared as media in the sense of McLuhan's media theory. In this way, a book published 1967 was titled *The Medium is the Massage* which is a play on the similar pronunciation and the difference in significance between the two words »message« and »massage«. Without wishing to overemphasize this, this also appears in Derrida's reflections on difference/differance. This kind of wordplay is continued in the annotations from *Finnegans Wake* in *War and Peace in the Global Village* (1968, German edition 1971). McLuhan's book is a collage his own text, of detailed quotations, and a lot of photographs. One of the double pages of the book is printed upside-down, another is printed as a mirror image. One must turn the book to read the pages or hold them to a mirror⁸.

7 »We cannot let the existence of man or his story start from the moment in which he leaves the womb of the mother, for, he himself, in his peculiarity, was prepared by the whole history of the world. For our or his own view of his individuality there are thus no limits in time. Even the most distant past event, duly transferred to him, enhances this individuality, every human being, every word, every plant, even in the remotest part of the earth, being duly applied to him, renders him clearer and more recognizable. He himself and our consideration of his nature therefore also has no limit in space. When he examines himself, i.e. his history, for without his history, he is nothing, the old limitations of inside and outside disappear on their own. ... This body comprises the common body ... also all those people, who have influenced our lives ... either directly or from a distance or from earlier periods of history ... « (Adam Müller, 1804, in a letter to Brinkmann; cited by Jakob Baxa (Ed.); Adam Müller's Lebenszeugnisse; Vol. 1, Paderborn, Munich, Vienna 1966, pp. 138-141.

8 A second page is turned upside down.



Fig. 1 H. Marshall McLuhan; The Medium is the Message, 1967/1996, pp. 56-57

The actual super-text of the book, which is conveyed through the ambivalence of the words and as a result of the collage, is unwritten, deliberately kept vague (here the difference to Derrida’s wordplay becomes obvious). The content disengages itself from the material on hand; it is only generated through reading and thus remains part of the desired and positively understood vagueness, openness and virtuality.

In the book, *War and Peace in the Global Village*, which was published one year later, the special understanding of prostheses and of the extension of people becomes clear once more. McLuhan sees this extension of people as a dissolution of boundaries and as a solution. The disappearance of clothing, for example the bikini and the mini skirt in the musical *Hair*, leads to a dissolution of personal boundaries and the formation of a new tribal community (McLuhan 1968, p. 175 and p.182/183). Similarly, the extension of the nervous system through electronic information does not bring forth a new, enhanced ego, but leads to the dissolution of people into a new environment (McLuhan 1968, p. 22). The goal is twofold, »to cleanse your human body, so that you go forth like a sylph« (McLuhan 1968, p. 192) and to produce a habitat that evolves into »the womb of this macro-cosmic connubial happiness« (McLuhan 1968, p. 213).

In *Global Village*, the last publication in which McLuhan, who died in 1980, was still involved (1989/1995, curated and completed by Bruce R. Powers), McLuhan uses the example of the Apollo 8 mission to explain his understanding of media. He addresses a live broadcast from the capsule with a view of the Earth. McLuhan describes the effect as follows:

9 In his book *The Medium is the Message* (1967) he had already printed two pages as mirror images, so that they can only be read through a mirror.

»All of us who were watching had an enormous reflexive response. We ›outered‹ and ›innered‹ at the same. We were on the earth and the moon simultaneously. ... A resonating interval had been set.« (McLuhan 1989, p. 4)⁹

Using another example derived from the psychological gestalt theory, he reveals what he means with the term resonant interval. For McLuhan, it is the ground and its potentiality that generates a figure in an individual conception. The ground is a Nothingness that holds everything. Becoming conscious of this reason de-hierarchizes and decentralizes society. People are no longer individualized and isolated individuals; rather, now »the fragmentation of people into individuals is brought to an end.« Humanity succeeds in »transmitting his central nervous system into electronic networks ... [and] dispose[ing] his consciousness to the computer.« (McLuhan/Powers 1989/1995, p. 129) McLuhan summarizes:

»Let us pause for a moment. Where is this speedup in technology leading? How will people be affected psychologically? First of all, going back to our original analysis of the satellite; it has one prime characteristic - it decentralizes the user, like the telegraph and the telephone. The satellite turns the user into discarnate information. Once placed in relation to the computer/transponder, the user is everywhere at once. You are everywhere and so is everybody else using the system. What is really new about the satellite is that it intensifies the process of being everywhere at once. One can appear simultaneously at every terminal access point on earth or in outer space..« (McLuhan/Powers 1989 p. 117, 118)

People's a-locality/Human's (Man's? Humanity's?) a-locality? results from their universality, and from this, in turn, results the a-locality of the new, as McLuhan called it, sophisticated company »that has offices in different countries. [It] will not have a single irreplaceable location; it will be structured with many centers...« (McLuhan/Powers 1995, p. 125) The world is compared to a universal mind, the individual is part of this mind and dissolves him or herself through thinking into this spiritual unity. In this way the person is everywhere at once; the world implodes to become a village, a ›Global Village‹, in which everything is known to everybody. Life in a ›Global Village‹ is a simultaneous Happening, time has ended, space has disappeared (McLuhan 1967, p. 63). This will, amongst other things, bring about a new type of politics.

The Message

Let us look at the example of the Apollo 8 flight more closely. In 1989, when the book *Global Village*, which refers to Apollo 8, was released, the flight had already taken place 21 years before. Exactly 20 years before the

publication of the book, on 21 July 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had landed on the moon with Apollo 11. Why then Apollo 8?

Apollo 8 was the first manned flight which left earth's orbit and circled the moon ten times before returning happily to earth. The flight took place from 21 - 27 December 1968. During the flight, photographs were taken and a traditional film with a view of the earth was recorded and then shown after landing. While orbiting the moon on Dec. 24, additionally a digital live broadcast of the view through a window of the capsule onto the lunar surface was transmitted; this is mentioned in *Global Village*, but not shown – at least not in the editions that were available to me.



Fig. 2 Still image of the live broadcast from the Apollo 8 flight on 24.12.1968.

A recording of the broadcast, which is available on Youtube¹⁰ today, shows a section of the moon against the blackness of space (the shape of the section has to do with the size of the window in the capsule). The earth is not visible – at least not in the documents available on the internet. The transmission was coarse and interspersed with noise, which was due to the resolution of the camera and the TV monitors back then, and had to do with the great distance of the transmission. The (bad) intrinsic qualities of the medium ›live broadcast on television‹ are thus made visible and cause the barren, rocky and dusty (in a sense, our epitome of pure materials) surface of the moon to become a glimmering opaque surface of light.

The astronauts filmed the earth on 24 December, Christmas Eve. This of course, places the images in a particular context. But not only that. During the transmission, the astronauts¹¹ read out the first few lines of the Genesis from the First Book of Moses¹², which is part of the Jewish Tanakh and of the Old Testament and which presents God as the Creator of the earth¹³. This reading, in turn, seems to be a reaction to the rumored statement of Yuri Gagarin in 1961 that he had not seen God when he was in space¹⁴.

The religious symbolism is in this transmission not attributed to the real earth. This makes sense also in a religious context, because God created the world, not only this one earth. And, in Christian religions, God is in heaven, which is situated in the sky and not on earth. Nor can the symbolism be attributed to the real moon, because in the live broadcast, one can only

10 Perhaps best look at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aIf0G2PtHo> Note that there are fakes of this transmission in which a photo is shown, to which a recording of the reading from Genesis is added; e.g. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_hRRiXKdqc. Also the corresponding documents <https://archive.org/details/ReadingOfGenesisByApollo8> on www.archive.org (see <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/10/womack.php>) do not match the original, which is visible because several cuts were made.

11 Starts at 5:25 min in the CBS clip.

12 http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo_8

13 <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanach>

14 The U.S. Post Office had issued a corresponding stamp in 1969; see http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scott_1371,_Apollo_8.jpg

see a low resolution, noisy, blurred and gray surface of light. This shimmering translucent light of the moon in the live broadcast, is a kind of this grounding and founding Nothingness McLuhan had already addressed in the Gutenberg-Galaxy. It is also present in the windows of Gothic cathedrals and the medieval mysticism of light.

The mirror¹⁵, as a medium that makes his text readable and thus brings it into existence, also represents this Nothingness, this reason which nonetheless brings everything into existence (which incidentally is reminiscent of the mysticism of Meister Eckhart, who is also quoted by McLuhan¹⁶).

But, the mirror makes existing things visible. They don't create them as such, but as perceivable (perceived) phenomena. And light, to take up another of his examples, is of course not a medium which brings things and space into existence, as is claimed (McLuhan 1964/1995, p. 23; see above); it makes them visible. Through their materiality they have sensory qualities which are simultaneously audible, palpable, can be smelled and tasted. However, only through the socially based human conception of the world, do they constitute themselves in their structure and meaning. And a source of light - whether natural like the stars, sun and moon, or artificial - in each case sets things in a specific light (size of the light source, color temperature, lumen) and generates its own significant perspective. A mirror also interprets the mirrored content based on its materiality. It reflects them inversely, changes their color and negates all other sensory qualities of the object; we cannot interact with the virtual objects in the mirror.

All three examples cited by McLuhan, for one, serve as tools which rob things of their materiality, extract them from everyday life and give them a new existence. Secondly, they conceal exactly this activity and pretentiously turn the actual impoverishment of things and space into a virtual divine sphere. McLuhan's Theory of the Medium sounds quite Roman Catholic¹⁷. Surely, the 'Global Village' will need to have a cathedral in its center.

The live transmission shown in the living rooms, the mirror or the light, even the telephone, are examples used by McLuhan. He thinks that they are, as the ideal media of the message, nothing - one could just as well write - Nothing. McLuhan understands a medium as a grounding and founding Nothingness, which brings the being into existence. By using this medium, people immerse themselves into nothingness, thus dissolving their physicality and losing their footing in the world. The medium is understood as a power. A meta-physical virtuality is pursued, which emerges from the hereafter and displays itself in the physical sphere as Nothing. Thereby, it stands contrary to the transcendence which refers to the hereafter but still exists in the here and now¹⁸.

15 In >Understanding Media< McLuhan reports of a school experiment, in which the headmaster hung mirrors in a problematic class. With the result, that the students saw >how they became something<. (McLuhan 1964/1995, p. 197).

16 McLuhan by the way quoted him in >The Medium is the Massage< 1967/Singapore 1996, p. 147.

17 McLuhan had converted to Catholicism in the 30s and went to church almost daily for the rest of his life to pray the rosary (Coup-land 2011, p. 71).

18 Marshall McLuhan's quasi-theological interpretation of the being of the universe as a capable Nothing can already be found in alchemy (prima materia) and especially in the modern era, when - supported by scientific findings - the Divine is converted to mysterious panvitalistic forces. When we disregard the magical explanations of the world, and also the spiritualist and esoteric forms in modern civilizations, it was initially electricity, which can - as in Frankenstein - convert formerly dead human flesh into a living human creature. Also magnetism which found medical application, for example, in mesmerism (Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815)) or X-rays that, outside of their medical applications as early as the turn of the 20th century (Tesla), already inspired a wealth of fantasies in the middle decades of the 20th century (e.g. The Astounding Adventures of Olga Mesmer. The Girl with X-ray Eyes, in: Spicy Mystery Stories, 1937 or in Superman, 1938).

Architecture as (a means of) overcoming reality and physical being

One should think that a detachment of mind from matter, especially in architecture, is not possible. But it depends on the understanding of architecture; as an *idea*, as proportion, as style, as ›frozen music‹, as an architectural language. In the conversion of (practical and therefore incriminated in the spirit of idealistic aesthetics) architecture into spiritualized space or in the conversion of a building into aesthetic information, there is a tradition in which spirit is detached from matter and architecture is disassociated of building materials and then absolutized. Certainly this includes the theory of the ‘genius loci’ of Christian Norberg-Schulz (1976)¹⁹.

The New Media are ranked here. Since pictures are today viewed mostly over the internet and displayed on the monitor, a second aspect becomes important. For experts, this is nothing new. During their education and further training, they have been taught by means of slides as common substitutes for real architecture: slides, pictures on a monitor and video projections, show surrogates of architecture that are as translucent as Gothic stained-glass windows. The materiality of the displayed architecture is minimized, it becomes a luminous phenomenon of light. Architecture seems less virtual and rather more ethereal.

Most recently, it was ›Hertzianism‹ (Dunny 2005, Trüby 2009), a »specific sensibility« which means »any radiating knowledge in art, design and architectural contexts, which leads to invisible, but physically measurable results.« (Trüby 2009, p. 8)²⁰ »... with Hertzian architectures a brightly-immaterial non-architecture [is] part of the architectural conception.« (Trüby 2009, p. 16) With Wolfgang Hagen, Trüby speaks about the fact that Hertz’s research uncovered a new medium that has opened a pervasive space with a new geometry, which abolishes all boundaries and thereby also sets the distinction between inside and outside aside (Trüby 2009, p. 32 & 31)²¹.

Trüby feels supported by Anthony Dunne, who had already in 2005 defined, »space as a complex mix of electromagnetic radiation,« (quoted after Dunne 2009, p. 79). The Hertzian space, to which he also refers, is not isotopic but has ›electrical climates‹. (Dunne 2009, p. 81) In addition, there are electromagnetic objects that are sort of disembodied machines²². Theorists see their ideas implemented as *electromagnetic architecture* (also the essay’s title in Trüby’s book) in the designs of Jean-Gilles Décosterd and Philippe Rahm. Space is dematerialised and becomes invisible, architecture turns into atmosphere into which a user actively immerses himself (Rahm 2009, p. 89).

As one example, ›Ghost Flat‹ is shown: an apartment of which the rooms are not Euclidean (height, depth, width) but are determined by Hertzian

19 http://www.cloud-cuckoo.net/openarchive/wolke/deu/Themen/982/Fuehr/fuehr_t.html

20 Trüby binds the technique closely to the war. The importance of ›Hertzianism‹ is accentuated with Wolfgang Hagen, who sees the two world wars in the 20th century mainly as radio wars. ... »this war will be decided ... by the high frequency battles of the British bomber-associations against German Night Fighters and the coastal radio in Ultra High Frequency.« (Trüby 2009, p. 11). I personally think that this is an enormous over-estimation of the effect of individual communication and intelligence techniques in the two wars.

21 At least, the corresponding explanation is formulated cryptically: »Henceforth, it will apply to all technical media ... namely that the medial carrier is the reality of space« (Trüby 2009, p. 32)

22 Only from a purely phenomenological point of view, is that what man can not perceive non-existent; outside this view, it is naive realism to denote that which is not experienced as immaterial. From the perspective of media theory, the concept of media for Dunne and Trüby remains unclear, but appears to be similar to that of McLuhan.



Fig. 4 Video-glasses and video wall
<http://www.voip-information.de/videobrillen-auf-dem-vormarsch-microsoft-patentiert-augensteuerung.php>

As inward direction, I would describe all efforts which seek to destroy the external reality and which endeavor to construct reality solely as immaterial vision. Currently, there is a strong (however, barely noted by architectural sciences) tendency of users, motivated by 3D movies, who seek to heighten and expand the substitutional power of images transported by media. This occurs through the immense enlargement of TV monitors in the living room and bedroom, through the use of projectors, through 3D movies in cinemas and, with the help of video-glasses, in the living room. In a permanent quest for a more refined resolution of images and films, the media-related world is expanded while everyday life, the real world and the human body are displaced.

This creates an overwhelming immediacy, which further contributes to the decomposition of the ego. It is also evident in the photo: the person presenting the video-glasses nearly seems to be a body- and faceless glowing apparition. Back in the early 50s of the last century, Ray Bradbury already warned about this:

»...His wife in the TV-parlour (at home, E.F.) paused long enough from reading (a, E.F.) script to glance up ... ›What's on this afternoon?‹ he asked tiredly. She didn't look up from her script again. ›Well, this is a play that comes on the wall-to-wall circuit in ten minutes. They mailed me my part this morning. ... They write the script with one part missing. It's a new idea. The home-maker, that's me, is the missing part. When it comes time for the missing lines, they all look at me out of the three walls. ... Here, for instance, the man says, ›What do you think of this whole idea, Helen?‹ And he looks at me sitting here centre stage, see? And I say, I say -. ›She paused her finger under a line in the script. ›I think that's fine!‹ And then they go on with the play ...‹ He stood in the hall looking at her. ... ›It's really fun. It'll be even more fun when we can afford to have the fourth wall installed. ...«
 Ray Bradbury: *Fahrenheit 451* (1953)²⁶

26 Bradbury (1953/1991, pp. 28-29)

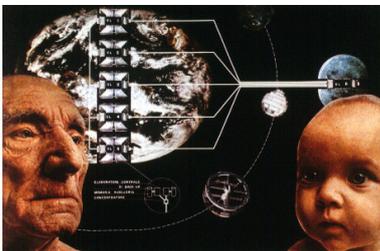


Fig. 5 Superstudio: The Continuous Monument, An Architectural Model For Total Urbanisation, Firenze 1969

For Bradbury, it was a matter of liberation from this mental immaturity devoid of consciousness, a dystopia. Today, this dystopia comes true and is, moreover, obviously perceived as Eutopia.

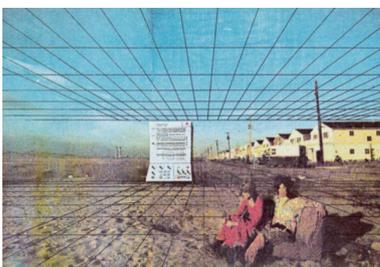


Fig. 6 Superstudio: The Continuous Monument, An Architectural Model For Total Urbanisation, Firenze 1969

As outward direction, I understand the elimination of all thresholds and boundaries between the subject and the real world. This only succeeds, when I trans-substantiate the tangible outside world into information or visions and thus bring the subjects to a state of pure consciousness. They no longer subsist off steaks and red wine, but off bytes and images and therefore have no body any longer, only looking like humans of flesh and blood, but actually being a picture of themselves. In my opinion, this becomes particularly evident in a concept of the Italian architectural firm Superstudio. They also nearly implemented the ideas of McLuhan 1:1.

Other offices and architects are also greatly inspired by his ideas; however, only some architects refer directly to his meta-physics ...²⁷ Beatriz Colomina formulated this aspiration as follows:

People » ... inhabit a space that is neither inside nor outside, public nor private ... It is a space that is not made by walls but of images. Images as walls. ... That is, the walls that define the space are no longer solid walls punctuated by small windows but have been dematerialized, thinned down with new building technologies and replaced by extended windows, lines of glass whose view now define the space ... The modern transformation of the house produces a space defined by walls of (moving) images.« (Colomina 1996, p. 6&7)

She already attributes this effort to the International Style of the 20s and 30s of the 20th century; the quoted phrases above are aimed at Le Corbusier. It is fitting if one – as she does – chooses individual implementations, such as the conversion of the roof of a 19th century house on the Champs-Élysées in Paris into a location for receptions and parties for Charles de Beistegui.

The conversion of the attic/roof – where possible – dispenses with walls, replacing them with the view of Paris. As seen from the penthouse – and also from the alook position and from the design of the penthouse – »Paris« is no more than an image, an animated background for the receptions and parties.

Colomina sees the design of this building, this substitution of walls with elevations, as a symptom (p. 297) for the systematic trans-disciplinary slide of architecture into a medium during the International Style. This, however, goes too far, because only very few buildings of Le Corbusier's complete body of work follow this pattern and it is hardly found in any other architects works, who are numbered among the International Style.

Next to this extreme understanding of medium as 'Being in Nothing', the dematerializing functions of media are being used for the displacement of architecture and for the production of »Ersatz«²⁸. Over millenia, illustrations (engravings in stone, descriptions, models, drawings with traditional media or by software) were used to produce structural plans, designs and constructional plans. By means of these aids, the building process could be thought through in a »make-believe mode« which resulted in secure construction. Because of this, the built architecture became more complex, the desire more feasible.

In contrast, drawings were already used in the 19th century to produce a single illusory and atmospheric representation, the content of which well surpassed the facticity of the built architecture. Photography and li-

27 See for example Coop Himmelblau: Architecture is Now; London 1983, p. 78



Fig. 7 and Fig. 8 Le Corbusier, Apartement Beistegui in Paris (1929) http://mondo-blogo.blogspot.de/2010_10_01_archive.html

28 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ersatz_%28disambiguation%29

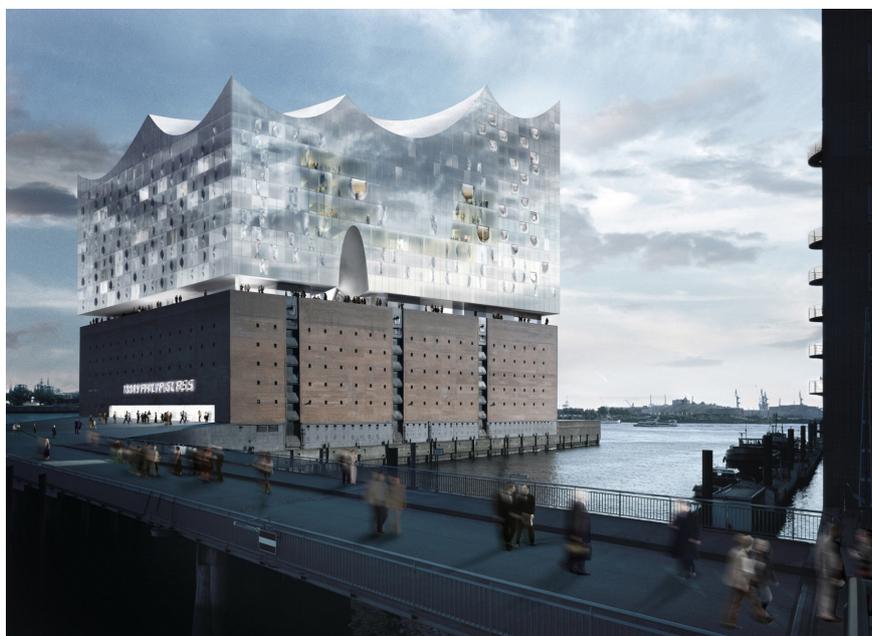
thography made these illusions technically reproducible and turned them into a mass phenomenon. In the second half of the 20th century – due to the potential in color photography and the enormous cheapening of color printing – the intensity of the illusion was increased. They heightened the conciseness of the images, which lead to an increasing confusion of illusion and reality.

This detailed nature of illusion experienced an exponential advancement through the digitization of the depictions and the shift of professional communication to the PC. The development of highly effective software (CAD, rendering, image processing), the further improvement and cheapening of printing techniques, as well as the improved resolution and color quality of monitors and the associated hardware and software influenced this significant change. This leads to the substitution of building with medial representation. A building becomes a perceptual image organized through photos and renderings.



Fig. 9 Photograph of the Chilehaus (Chile House) in Hamburg by Carl Dransfeld, 1924.

Fig. 10 Collage of a photograph of the Port of Hamburg and a rendered depiction of the design of the Elbphilharmonie (Elbe Philharmonic Hall) by Herzog & De Meuron.



The Chile House in Hamburg does not gain its architectural identity through the photograph of a corner, taken in 1924 by Carl Dragfeld, but through the elegant style of the urban layout in combination with its architectural design, through the aesthetic quality of the darkly burnt brick and through the fusion of metropolitan typology and regional tradition. Medially reducing the building to its corner by means of the photograph and then classifying the building as (Gothic) Expressionism based on this image, destroys the aesthetic perception of its true qualities. A self-confident look at the current state of the Elbe Philharmonic Hall suggests that the superstructure set on the warehouse will not be crystalline light-architecture, but a solid block of glass with a cloudily tinted facade, of which some panels curve outward and some produce drop-shaped balconies.

Initially, one thinks that visual representations cannot relieve itself from realness, because the real building does exist. However, since the knowledge about a building is usually not gained by a visit, but through publications, and because the authors of the images are either the creators of the buildings or highly esteemed experts, one accepts the pictures as authentic representations. Additionally, the reality of the buildings is often much more mundane than the exciting illustrations. And so, one does oneself a favor and takes up the recommended view.



Sometimes the architects go one step further. Let us take the example of a project from an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (›The Un-Private House‹) from 1 July to 5 October 1999: the ›Digital House‹ by Hariri & Hariri. I shall, however, only enlarge upon one room, the kitchen.

Fig. 11 Pre-war photo of Chile House in Hamburg (Archive of the Chair of Theory of Architecture, BTU Cottbus).

Fig. 12 Detail of a photo taken during construction of the facade of the Elbe Philharmonic Hall; http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2d/Elbphilharmonie_Hamburg.jpg



Fig. 13 Hariri & Hariri; Kitchen, with chefs and a recipe projected onto the wall <http://www.haririandhariri.com/>

The kitchen of the Digital House by Hariri & Hariri (Fig. 12) consists – as far as visible in the picture – of a window, through which gray, leafless shrubbery can be seen, and of glass walls and screens. In the middle, there is a kitchen island with a hot plate in the small traditional format, on these two copper pots containing some vegetables. On the counter top there is a

plate with seven – let us say – canapés, a glass with red wine and a glass with an aperitif. There is no kitchen hood. A recipe for Pumpkin Pie is projected onto a wall, as well as two good-looking but cloned chefs. A feminine person in a strapless, long evening gown leans over and looks at the stove and the information on the wall. She wears no apron. There is no baking pan, no bowls, no spoons or real whisks (whether the virtual beaters can be of help here, is doubtful). Required groceries (flour, eggs, pumpkin) are not set out. The kitchen has no clutter, not even a trace of dirt, no signs of use. They present a sensuality that makes no sense, sensuality which basks in images, which no longer has anything in common with the sensuality (and naturalness) of food, with the joy (and the effort) of baking, the sensuality (and the risk of failure) of Pumpkin Pie and the anticipation of enjoying the food. The picture does not present us with a kitchen, but a lucid image, a location that one will show to one's guests, but where you no longer cook. A kitchen, where cooking is no longer necessary, because one probably no longer even eats (German word: *isst*) and exists (German word: *ist*).

Virtuality

On the concept of virtuality

The longing for a pure, apparently realness-free, i.e. world- and body-less, ›virtuality‹ in New Media, the yearning after immersion by dissolution (destruction of materiality and corporeality), after existence in Nothing, is a romantic²⁹ longing, which has religious (Christian mysticism, Taoism/ Daoism, currents in Hinduism) or pseudo-religious (esotericism, esoteric aspects of the hippie movement) character.

However, it seems to me that the concept of virtuality is misunderstood and misused. Virtuality is not transcendence into a reality without realness, but an active intervention (presentation/ clarification/ differentiation/ modification/ irritation/ destruction/ etc.) of one realized reality, conveyed by a specific medium, into another reality realized in a specific other media.

- In physics, particles which are referred to as ›virtual‹, are those which so far could not be proven to exist directly and empirically. Virtual things are thought to exist physically although they never were seen by a convincing conclusion because of their effects, or due to a coherent and empirically based scientific explanation.
- One also speaks of virtuality, when confronted with phenomena in which the effect they have cannot be justified by their concrete form. Take the example of a virtual disk. It is virtual insofar as it does not exist as hardware. Nevertheless, it is used in the same way as the corresponding hardware. Functions or (practical, semiotic, symbolic, etc.) meanings replace the thing or its factuality. A virtual disk does not hover

²⁹ See for example the very explicit request of Prince von Pückler-Muskau to have his body dissolved in hydrochloric acid after his death.

above the hardware. It is hardware (which means realness), a segment of a real hard disk that is formatted as though it were two hard drives. The undivided disk was already virtual (only not termed as such) because hardware only then becomes a hard drive when formatted accordingly.

When using that which is virtual beyond its function, it destroys itself. Should I want to remove the second virtual disk (that formatted sector of hardware), I would not find it. It is a virtual disk, not because it is virtual, but because it is a hard drive. It is not a hard drive which exists in virtual space. Rather, it is being accessed in real space (the real hardware) as a special function of that hardware, etc.. Virtuality is not a counter-concept to reality, but to physicality. The adjective ›virtual‹ does not denote an alternative state of existence in a completely different sphere (such as the adjective ›cosmic‹ would give evidence of existing in cosmos), but a mode of reality.

- Virtuality is a phenomenon of everyday life, not of the escape from everyday life.

Let us briefly look at our standard example again. One speaks on the telephone with one another, as though one had met for a talk. But the phone call is only a true exchange if one identifies the voice, when personality and emotion are evident and when a reaction to the issues raised is brought forth. When speaking to a computer or with an employee in a call center, one usually detects in the voice – although everything is done to conceal this – that it is not really a true conversation. As a rule, we recall the interlocutor as a concrete person, maybe remember the things experienced together in reality, keep his biography in mind. In a conversation over a mobile phone, one might ask where the person is at that moment – and this does not necessarily only mean the geographic location, but also their day-to-day situation – what time is it at the other end of the line and what weather prevails – once again meaning the situation. One tries talking to a real person in their real environment. This fills the conversation and makes it effective. In addition, by means of the voices, the call manages to transport the two remote speakers into the respective other world, enhancing it and giving it more meaning.

Virtuality of the world

World always denotes perceived world³⁰. In perception – and I shall confine myself to visual perception – images of objects in the visual field hit the retina, where they form a two-dimensional pattern (visual field), which is then converted into chemical-electrical impulses in the retina during the process of perception. They are then split (so that both left sides of the right and left retina are sent to the right brain hemisphere and the two

30 I will dispense with a more detailed derivation of this thesis, in favour of a more extensive discussion on the medial character of architecture.

right sides are sent to the left hemisphere of the brain), regrouped and then forwarded to different parts in the cerebral hemispheres as impulses of different strengths and nature (some impulses become active when light hits the retina, other pulses in turn become inactive). The visual field changes into the visual world when one identifies things, uses them to constitute time and space, gives them a position and determines their course of action. The elements of the visual world thus gain background and inner life in our perception, they have functions and meanings, they have history and they have intentional and temporal power (as a result of the process of perception) – even though this is not how these images entered our retina. Because things stand in a functional and operational context, this space is not only an abstract space, but a sphere of activity, a space which constitutes itself in its quality of existence on the basis of an expected scope for action³¹. With Jean-Paul Sartre, the transformation of the visual field to a visual world can be seen as the establishment of a situation, which in turn reveals the unity of construction and reconstruction in a subject and thus refers to the unity of truth and freedom.³²

31 Here I summarize the theory of perception by J. J. Gibson.

32 Sartre 1943.

A separation of factual empiricism and a superposed virtuality is not possible, because, without the draft of a probable world, there would be no empiricism, of which this world is constructed.

Virtuality of physicality

Body is always my body, an identity of body and self. This ›*Jemeinigkeit*‹ (in-each-case-mineness) is something other than possession. There is no ›self‹, that possesses a body separate from this self. Just as the mind naturally is the brain (in the biological sense), self-identity is always physical. It starts with the complex sensory orientation in the surrounding space, which always is ›praktognosis‹, a unity of action, perception and recognition. It then extends from the way one handles one's own physical capabilities through to the application of ingrained sets of social behavior and physically trained sequences.

The self-identity, the desires, plans and actions of a person, is not set in the brain alone. It is settled in the body, which is developed over the course of his life by his abilities, skills, gestures and Habitus, and in the specific anchoring of the body in its environment. Self-identity arises and persists in a process of re-reflection and social ties³³. The body is not a burden of the self, which one might and should eventually dispose of in order to set the self free. The body is one of the basic requirements of constitution, maintenance and performance of the self. Disposal of that body means extermination of the self. The body as a living creature has its biological demands, but it is also a thing amongst things in space and time, it has physical existence. Embedded in a physical/material environment, the body is always a perceived body³⁴; is always living body; Merleau-Ponty speaks of ›func-

33 In an earlier essay on this topic, I described a few specific scenarios; see Führ 2000.

tioning body«, G. Marcel of ›corps vivant«, Sartre of ›corps sujet«.

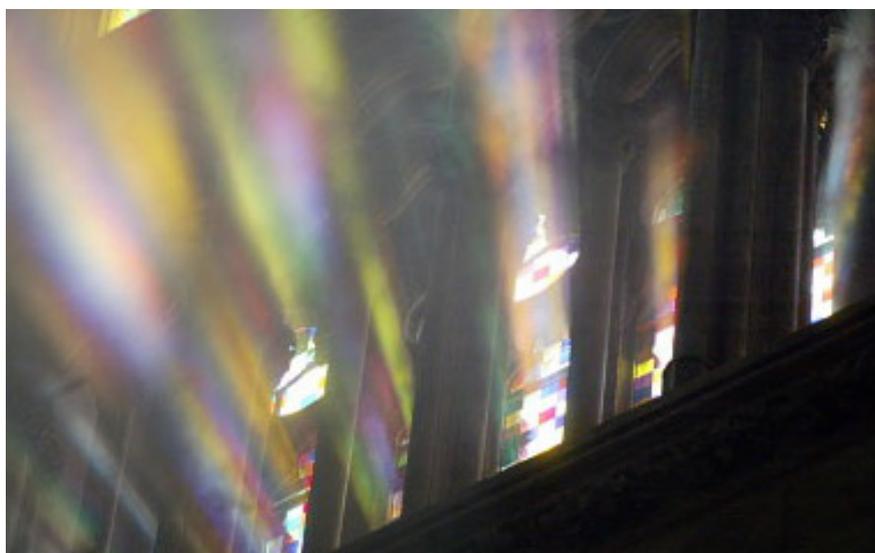
One is conscious of one's own body as 'body schema', which is generated by a virtual, cognitive self-definition of the nature of one's body depending on the situation. In the process, body-boundaries, intimacy, privacy and publicity are determined variably and dependent on the situation; whereas this is not a purely cognitive design. The concrete and biographically evolving biological capabilities, the fundamental and appropriated physiological and physical skills and those which were appropriated and trained subjectively, as well as one's capacity for action of which one becomes aware through success or failure, determine our self-image and influence both our awareness and our subjectivity. A separation of body and a superposed virtuality is not possible, because, without the body schema there would be no physicality, of which this schema is constructed.

Virtuality of theory

Theory, as the act of laboriously thinking reality through, prior to a strict systematization in science, is always virtual, because it observes things from a perspective, designs its past and future from the present, generalizes the concrete and places it in contexts. A separation of facts and thinking is not possible, because, without theory there are no facts, which theory endeavors to order.

Media as Virtualizers of Architecture

Media help to virtualize architecture; which is not an entirely new phenomenon. The stained-glass windows of Gothic cathedrals convert the invisible sunlight into visible colors and thus substantiate – in a theological understanding – God's metaphysical state of existence in a physical appearance.



34 There are, of course, reasons for a phenomenological understanding. They have been brought up by a number of authors in the most varied contexts. Here, I will limit myself to a summary.

35 The photograph (<http://www.ksta.de/koeln-uebersicht/ein-fantastisches-farbenspiel,16341264,13375134.html>) shows the window that was designed by Gerhard Richter, and installed in 2007, during a church service during which incense was burned. Today, one seldom sees the phenomenon so clearly, as the churches have become brighter today through the destruction of the old windows. Also, the churches are mostly illuminated electrically. The incident light has also become more diffuse due to the bright city lights. The phenomenon is also not so easily photographed.

Fig. 14 Window of the Cologne Cathedral; recent photography of the light streaming through the window designed by Gerhard Richter³⁵



Fig. 15 Andrea Palladio / Paolo Veronese; Villa Maser (image from the BTU archive).

In the eyes of the faithful, the colored light suffusing the interior – as well as the consecration of the church, the organ music and the singing, the incense, the movements of the people in the room during mass, the voice of the priest, the silent prayers of the faithful – virtualizes the architectural space, turns it into a sphere filled with God’s presence. This includes the virtualization of church interiors by illusionistic paintings on the ceilings of the nave and the domes, as well as that of residential and state rooms by means of *trompe-l’œil*.

Next to the visual media, verbal media have played a role in architecture since antiquity. This includes everything from laudatory descriptions (ekphrasis) to the architectural treatises accompanying works since Vitruvius to the so-called ›explanations‹ of designs, presentations on architectural works and publications in professional journals by and about the architects.

36 Schivelbusch 1983.

37 See Walter Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project*.

Taking a larger scale in contemplation, the same applies to the city. In this case, it will be the bells of the churches or the call to prayer by the muezzin. In the early modern period, it would be the city lights – to stay with the visual media – which were understood as presence of aristocracy. This is incidentally why its members, according to Schivelbusch³⁶, were hanged from the lanterns during the French Revolution. In the 19th century, city lighting was then extended and complemented by lit sales rooms of shops and the expansion onto the streets, in the process virtualizing the city³⁷.

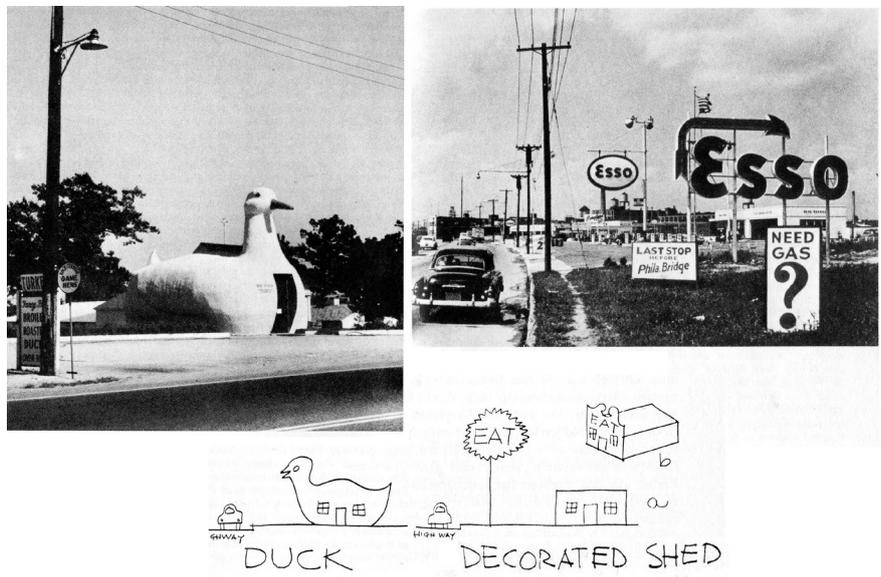


Fig. 16 Learning from Las Vegas (1978); Braunschweig-Wiesbaden, 1979

In the last quarter of the 20th century, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour theorized this by means of an extreme example in *Learning from Las Vegas* (1978). They do this by – I find – aptly analyzing the evocative allusions of signs on the ›Strip‹, the main axis of Las Vegas, and the effects of directed lighting in interior spaces. However, the authors also see a contradiction, which they describe as ›duck‹ and as ›Decorated

Shed« (ibid., p. 104). This, however, only superficially touches the corresponding buildings (ibid., pp. 106 - 107). ›Duck« is rather a term for architecture that overwhelms the viewer due to its (visual) forcefulness and in which the subject loses himself, as is the case in the interiors of casinos:

›... This disorients the occupant in space and time. He loses track of where he is and when it is. Time is limitless, because the light of noon and midnight are exactly the same. Space is limitless, because the artificial light obscures rather than defines its boundaries ... space is enclosed but limitless. (Venturi, Scott-Brown, Izenour 1972, p.44)³⁸

Enriching architecture by signs, as with the ›Decorated Shed«, on the other hand, is seen positively:

›... These show the vitality that may be achieved by an architecture of inclusion or, by contrast, the deadness that results from too great a preoccupation with tastefulness and total design. The Strip shows the value of symbolism and allusion in architecture ...« (Venturi, Scott-Brown, Izenour 1972, p.58)

›Decorated Shed« stands for architecture which enhances the subject in his/her intellectuality. It is an architecture of Enlightenment. The important distinction which Venturi, Scott-Brown and Izenour make, applies to all virtual media and their effect on architecture and its users, whereby this is not generally directed against visual media.

As Jean Nouvel has shown with the conversion of the opera in Lyon (1989), the autochthony of the users can be protected. The roof of the reconstructed opera projects the applause, produced by the audience of a performance in the building, into the city by means of colored light. Thereby, the performances are turned into virtual affairs of the city. Nouvel does not tear the citizens and visitors of Lyon from their daily lives, as is the goal of McLuhan's concept, but enriches these. In this tie with everyday life, the reason for their sovereignty lies opposite the information about the applause.

The concept of media in urban spaces extends and adopts the approach presented by Archigram with the ›Instant City« (1969 ff). Media in urban spaces were, for example, introduced at the Media Facades Festival in 2008 and 2010 in Berlin or implemented by the office ›Urban Screens« in different locations.

This not only addressed the virtualization of individual buildings and highlighted them in the real urban space in which they are located, but also activated an interactive online connection of people and events in the city in the international arena. This virtualization can also be done interactively, for example, when a person on the street is filmed and his gestures are

38 See for example Ötsch 2006.

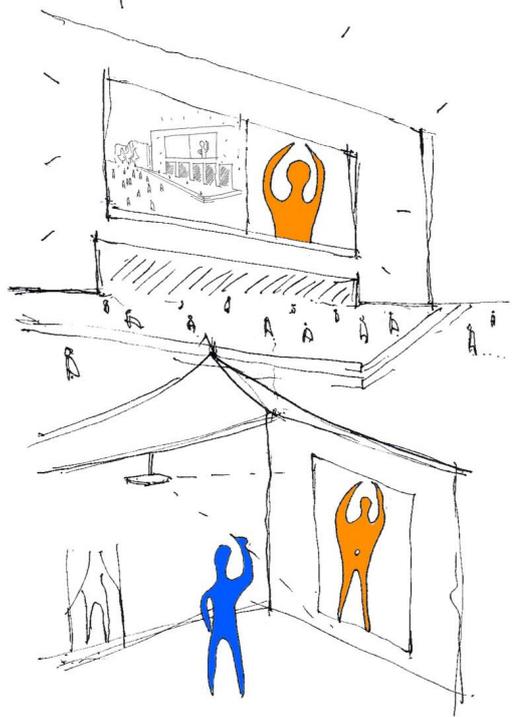


Fig. 17 Jean Nouvel, Opera in Lyon
<http://www.haustein-info.de/reise/cevennen2004/cev040604.html>.

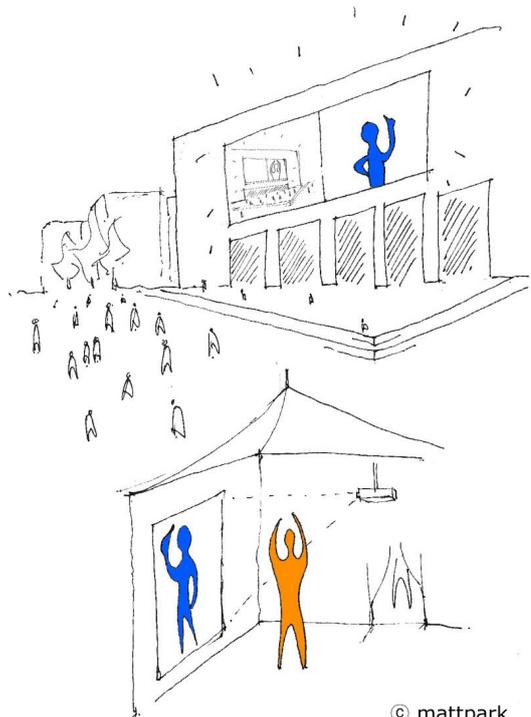


Fig. 18 Urban Screen, Virtualization of the student house of the Bauhaus Dessau on 5 Sept. 2009. <http://www.urbanscreen.com/usc/323>.

Melbourne Fed. Square



Seoul Arko Arts Theater



© mattpark

Fig. 19 HELLO 여보세요 Diagram (Matt Park) spatialaesthetics.unimelb.edu.au/events/event/hello. Diagram (Matt Park) <http://spatialaesthetics.unimelb.edu.au/events/event/hello/>

39 Research teaching project »dialogo_dialog« Kirschner (Leuphana Lüneburg)/Tramontano (Universidade de São Paulo) <http://www.leuphana.de/ueber-uns/personen/ursula-kirschner/forschung-projekte.html>

The interaction can be global. It can, incidentally, also be a shared dance event, such as the HELLO 여보세요 on 7 October 2011 at the Fed Square in Melbourne and at the Arko Arts Theatre in Seoul. Or a joint concert of two bands (on 18 Dec. 2011), one (Parashurama) in the train station in Lüneburg, Germany and the other (Aqurpa) in the old station of São Carlos, Brazil, playing together online³⁹.

Immanence

The medium makes the message

There is a second movement of ›enlightenment‹ – a life-worldly view, standing historically alongside the rationalist – which understands ›enlightenment‹ as criticism (criticism in the sense of unfolding theory, raising consciousness, ethics) of that which is truly human, a basic position from which phenomenology then emerged in the 20th century.

A short note aside: freedom, in this context, is not a detachment but competence, it is not getting rid of the real world but getting really rid of the restrictions. Here, realness and physicality are understood as an essential condition for existence, for interaction, for localization in space and for worldly possession. They are not a hindrance, but the prerequisite for incarnation. Only by moving physically, a person creates a spatial world. Only when acting in this world, does the reality of a subjective world emerge,

40 I do not want to explain this here. There is a wealth of phenomenological literature on the topic - with different priorities and views.

does the world exist at all⁴⁰. *Reality has realness.*

In order to discuss this, I would like to give an example that is admittedly unusual in media theory and academic discussions: a soccer game⁴¹. I especially want to use such an example, because it shows that communication of meaning is secondary. The first priority is to generate sense in a medium.

A soccer game consists of a playing field of approximately 100 m x 50 m, which in turn is specifically structured: by a center line, by sidelines and goal lines and on each of the two sides a goal of a certain dimension, in front of which, in turn, are two topologically differentiated areas (goal area and penalty area). Further, the soccer game has a structured set of rules, a kind of grammar that determines how the game is executed and what counts as a ›goal‹, where the ›penalty area‹ lies, what counts as ›offside‹ and what as a ›foul‹ and so forth. Then there are the specifications regarding the teams (differentiation of player, goalkeeper and coach, determining the number of players, the number of substitutes, the player's age and sex, etc.).

A soccer game is neither completely rigid nor totally flexible, because, in both of these extreme situations, it would not be possible to make sense of any occurrences or actions. Soccer is a play. However, not in the same way as child's play, which is infantile imitation, not seriously meant, a practicing of doing and an uncritical, rather intuitive way of comprehending facts in a pretend-mode.

Soccer is a play in which the possibilities of an open system are unfolded. Within the statistical framework of rules and in the given structure of the system, a unique sequence of interactions are initiated, which cannot be repeated due to the unpredictability of physical processes, subjective actions and reactions. In its course, it is a true, one-off match. Additionally, the outcome of the match is based on skill and uncertainties. To be exact, the match is an approximately 90 minute long sequence (play) of events in the medium of the game.

Throughout the play, every position and movement of a single player has genuine meaning in relation to the positions and movements of the other players, to their sprinting skills, their technical ball as well as strategic soccer skills and to the location and trajectory of the ball. This meaning is the result of complex events in the medium of the soccer game. Should the players position themselves on a parking lot, forming the same pattern of player locations, it would still lack the sense generated in the medium.

Furthermore, soccer (game, play and match) is a spectator addressing performance, be it for the people in the stadium or in front of the screen. Now, not only the events in the medium of the game are important, but also

41 Exceptions are Frederik J. J. Buytendijk; *Das Fußballspiel*. Würzburg 1953 or Horst Bredekamp: *Florentine Soccer: The Renaissance of the Games*, Berlin 2006 edition.

events in the medium of everyday life. An event in the medium of the game, defined as a ›goal‹, for example, turns into a debate about the significance of my hometown and my regional identity, thus becomes an event in the medium of everyday life.

I would like to introduce painting as a second example. Specifically, I am referring to Max Imdahls *Ikonik*, published in 1984, in which he presents the independent medial character of paintings by intrinsically analyzing Giotto's works⁴². For Imdahl, a picture is a single, private and autochthonous art medium, of which the narrative must be uncovered in an act of unconditional, open-minded seeing that is not compromised by prescribed terms. For Imdahl, this is »seeing in process«.

On the one hand, Imdahl considers the methods and the image comprehension of iconography and iconology. He is, however, also influenced by the former discourses on Gestalt psychology and the representativeness of communication and cognition in everyday life. As in Rudolf Arnheim's books, which analyze the correlation of visual art and thinking, or that of visual perception and thought, and place conceptual thinking next to visual thinking (which is the title of his book *Visual Thinking* 1969, ger. 1972). John Berger took this up with his co-authors in 1972 and extended the topic to include advertising and everyday communication. Opposing these positions, Imdahl continued to assert the art-character of an image.

42 Also see Max Imdahl; Is it a Flag or is it a Painting? 1969.

43 The Iconic is also a method of analysis of non-figurative concrete art

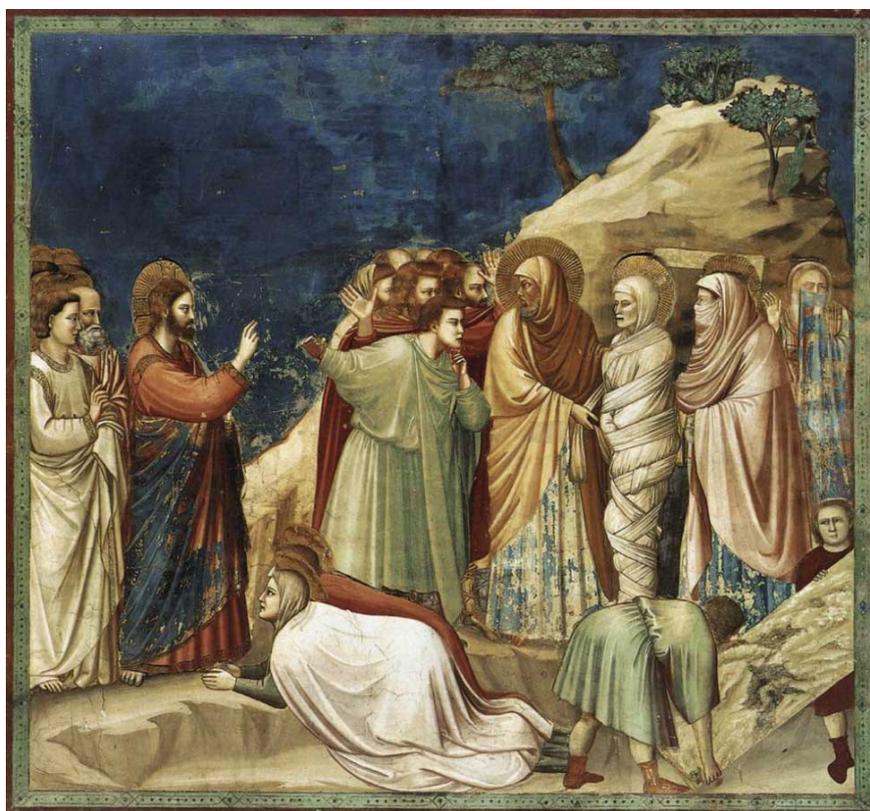


Fig. 20 Giotto, Raising of Lazarus, Padua
Fig. 21 and 22 Shifting the figure of Christ
 (as in Imdahl 1996: Vol. 3, pp. 440 - 441)

The special approach of »the Iconic« defines the image as a painted field, in which the specific meaning of a work of art is generated by the shape of

the field, the type of paint, the positioning on the field and, if applicable⁴³, the visible and interpreted⁴⁴ reproduction of that which is real. To quote only one example from Imdahl's writings: In Giotto's painting Raising of Lazarus in Padua, Christ gains his specific space for action only by his position in the painted field. Imdahl states:

»The character of Jesus is positioned in such a way that the emptiness in the painted field creates tension for itself. The emptiness comes to advantage as a vivid space for action of the figure and its gesture ... even a slight shift of the figure (see Fig. 21 and 22; E. F.) changes the relationship between figure and image field fundamentally. «(Imdahl, 1996, Vol. 3, pp. 440 - 441)

Information gains its meaning through its medium. In media theory and history, one can already find a similar position in the deliberations on language by Ernst Cassirer:

»For example, the process of language development shows how we can only process the chaos of all immediate impressions by »naming« it and thereby penetrate it through linguistic thought and linguistic expression. In this new world of linguistic signs, the world of impressions gains a whole new existence because a new mental articulation takes place. The distinction and separation, the fixation of certain aspects of content through a speech sound, not only indicates but also bestows a specific mental quality on them, by which they are indeed raised above the mere immediacy of the so-called sensible qualities. Thus, language is one of the fundamental spiritual means, by virtue of which it is possible for us to progress from a mere sensational world to a world of opinion and imagination.« (PsF I, p. 20)

According to Cassirer, the (word) sign in language already constitutes the first stage of objectification in the incessant altercation of qualities of content in the ›stream of consciousness‹, in the same way as any medium only makes the message by being a medium. In the third volume of ›Philosophy of Symbolic Forms‹, he speaks of the ›refractive index‹ of a medium through which we look at reality and which 'as much obscures as uncovers' realness (PsF III, p. 3). Thus, the medium, the symbolic form, is conceived as a type of glasses, magnifying glass or binoculars which allow a certain perception of a realness in which there is no realness without perception and no perception without realness. At the same time, Cassirer reveals the materiality of these glasses through the concept of the refractive index. Generalizing this, a medium is an open complex (whether it is a system, a configuration or any other kind of order) constituting meaning from determinacies and indeterminacies. A medium implies a topology and possibly a chronology: the place and time at which something happens, generates meaning. Without medium there is no meaning and no play.

44 Part of this is, for example, seeing the image of a half-naked bearded man nailed to two crossed beams and recognizing him as ›crucified Christ‹.

In his investigation on the conditions which a substance must fulfill to be a medium, Niklas Luhmann especially goes into detail about the correlation between openness and the constitutive possibility of determining meaning. First, he defines a medium as a substance with a high resolution ratio in which events or objects that communicate meaning can be formulated. Therein, he sees a reference to the original concept of matter, as something which is in itself indeterminate, which is susceptible to form. » ... Matter (was, E. F.) the medium of reality ... (and E. F.) the medium of a continuity of rationality through which perception is even made possible.« (Luhmann, p. 123). The medium is self-referential, however, by form turning into spirit (ibid.). A medium consists of events or of elements. When reading a message, one focuses on elements and events, not on the media. Similar as in visual perception, when one sees things and not the light. This difference between medium and form remains crucial (ibid., p. 125). In art, the form generates a medium for itself, »a space of meaningful compositional possibilities« (ibid., p. 127).

»Music only functions as a form of communication for those who understand this dissimilarity of medium and form and who are able to communicate through it: only for those who can also hear the disconnected space in which the music plays; only for those who can hear that music, through its tonality, makes a lot more sound possible than was normally expected – and this in terms of turning it into a discipline through its form. In other words, *the* arts establish their own rules of inclusion, for which the difference between medium and form serves as a medium. And while noise is usually perceived as the opposite of silence and one thus becomes aware of it, music sees this attention a *prerequisite*, consequently forcing the listener to observe a second difference: that of medium and form. It is obvious, that this also applies to visual art. It also brings a medium into the natural world in order to break away from its distinctive features and to play with other peculiarities. Through art, new possibilities of the acoustic and visual world are discovered and made available and the result of this is: By means of resolution strategies, more opportunities to organize the world can be gained than would at first seem possible« (ibid., p. 128).

There are events and elements in an everyday medium (such as everyday sounds) and there they make specific sense (specific noises announce an approaching car, a specific melody reveals the presence of a particular bird, a word conveys information). They can also be events (notes) in the medium of music, where they in turn obtain their sense. Luhmann points out that the boundary between these two media must remain clear, in order to be able to assign the events to the respective media (everyday life, music) in which they came by their respective meaning (Luhmann 1995, p. 177)⁴⁵. That only seems true to me for a single acoustic event.

⁴⁵ Luhmann's theory renders the relationship between art and everyday life too simplistic. More detailed considerations can be found under the concept of »aesthetic boundaries« (ästhetische Grenze), for example by Ernst Michalski or Dagobert Frey.

However, a recognizable configuration of sounds also refers to the medium by their type of configuration, by the nature of their internal order. If you hear, for example while walking in the woods, a particular configuration of specifically modulated sounds in the distance echoing through the trees, you will perceive them as notes, i.e. as events in the field of music and assume that there is a musician somewhere. Just as the field determines the meaning of a specific event, the significance of the event implies what type of field it is. One can practically regard this as a succession of production and deduced appropriation or as a set of conditions.

Structural works as a medium

In architecture, one can classify or appropriate the medial ›field with high resolution potential‹ and a specific ›refractive index‹ in a design as technology, as classical architectural expression/style, aesthetic structure, as proportion, as typology, as shape or as everyday practice. There may well be discrepancies between design intent and appropriation.

As an example, I would like to discuss a »column«:

Just by looking, we would refer to both objects in Fig. 23 and Fig. 24 as ‘column’; we also do that in German with a ›Litfaßsäule‹ (advertising column) or with a ›Säulenkamin‹ (similar to a rounded, free standing fireplace), or in English with column as a separation in a list. When one, however, places scientific demands on using a precise term, one would have to stop referring to the chimney of the Austrian Parliament in Vienna as a ›column‹; it looks like a column, but it is not one. This is due to the fact that we are led astray by what is actually an event in a technical structure, a fireplace, but is suggested to being a stylistic event, a column.

The object in Fig. 24 also looks like a column. It is a column when we mentally add a series of copies to it, as well as three further perpendicularly added rows, of which the first and last column respectively are also the first and last column of the sequence which meets the others at a right angle. It is also only then a column, if we imagine an entablature which is supported by these columns. Only then is it not only a name, but also actually comprises that which is signified. However, we do not see this »being a column« in the object visible in Fig. 24, it is something that we know. One could say that the person in Fig. 20 is Jesus and the object in Fig. 24 is a column in the medium of knowledge.

If one is not an archaeologist who has studied the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, the knowledge in this regard is not specific, but general. It becomes concrete, when we know how many columns there are in a colonnade, what their distances to each other are, what the base and entablature look like and how the floor plan is organized. Then we understand the immanent specific sense of the object in Fig. 24. Then it is no longer only column, nor

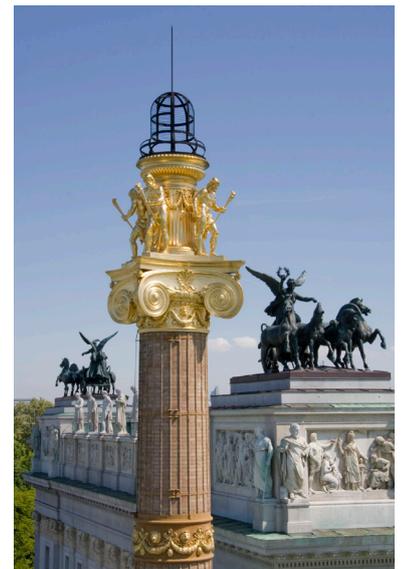


Fig. 23 Cast iron chimney of the Austrian Parliament, Picture: Parliamentary Administration / Bernhard Zofall⁴⁶



Fig. 24 Object (›column‹ in Olympia) http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/be/GR_08-04-23_Olympia_Zeustempel_neue_Saeule.JPG

⁴⁶ http://www.parlament.gv.at/POOL/BILDER/26514/2651412_500.shtml?backurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.parlament.gv.at%2FGEBOF%2FARGE%2FFARLAUSZEN%2FGeselleHephaistos%2F

only Doric column, but the corner column of the colonnade in front of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, a unique column in its true intrinsic meaning. In the further immanent interpretation we can focus on exactly that.

An object gains its specific meaning from the medium in which it was formulated as an event. If the medium is changed, the meaning shifts. The column can also be seen as an event in the medium of classical architectural language or style; it may be Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, etc. and thus receive a meaning from this localization in the medial field of classical architectural styles, where it could be masculine, feminine, virginal, or in the medium of style, where it could be elegant, French, anti-modern. Columns can also be events of a proportional medium and thus gain their meaning, or an understanding of architecture as proportion could be inferred from it.

Within a typological understanding of the architectural medium, they can contribute to the illustration of the purpose of a building. At the same time they can represent a contemporary, functional technical solution of construction tasks, which in turn stands in a social and societal context. In this regard, one should look at the palladian villas in the 17th century or at English landscape architecture in the 18th century⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ See for example Bentmann, Michael 1970 and von Buttlar 1989.



Fig. 25 Kunsthall Rotterdam
<http://reinierdejong.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/kunsthall2.jpg>

What a column is, depends on the intended referential system or on that which was assumed useful in its appropriation, depends on the medium into which it is bound and through which it is concretized in its being and its meaning. Also a single column can – as in the extension to the Allen Memorial Art Museum by Robert Venturi, otherwise built in the International Style – make sense (irony of their promise of stability). But then it is an event in another medium.

One can develop new orders, such as the French order discussed in Baroque or the – I shall call it – Dutch order of Rem Koolhaas at the Rotterdam art gallery, which are consciously to be considered as further alternatives in the understanding of columns, including the felled tree, the actual prototype of the column, which served here as a railing

One speaks of a column, as if only the column is important as such. But in immanence, it is not the identity of a thing as such and with its notion which is important. Important is its individual identity, which the object derives from its real concreteness, from its designation in the respective medium (and then in the subjective appropriation). The ›Karlskirche‹ (St. Charles's Church in Vienna) (built 1715-1739) was endowed by Karl VI and was, as a result of a competition, designed in its iconological program by C. G. Heraeus and architecturally by Fischer von Erlach. (see Sedlmayr 1959).



Fig. 26 Vienna, Karlskirche (St. Charles's Church) (picture by author).

As an example with which to illustrate the immanence of a medium, I would like to enlarge upon the chancel inside the church. From the nave you can see the altar and above this a gloriole of clouds, in the middle of which the character of the triune God is portrayed, which in turn emits golden rays. This scene is illuminated in a peculiar way. In sunshine, the dome forms a very bright space, whose walls, on the one hand, radiate light onto the gloriole, the golden rays and the divine triangle. On the other hand, they also illuminate the space behind the altar. Standing in the nave, one cannot see the windows in the tambour (which is possible from the altar) and therefore, one cannot see the source of the light. This leads to the impression, that, behind and above the structural climax of the chancel, the church and perception, there still exists another apex which only manifests itself as a diffuse, strongly luminous brightness. There is a hereafter that is shown in the here and now, and only in this here and now does this hereafter exist. Only a real staging makes the hereafter present. Only a person physically standing in the nave can perceive this; the priest celebrating mass cannot have this perception as well as a person which is not present in the church. Additionally, I would like to explain immanence by means of the two ›columns‹ in the facade of Karlskirche. Visually, they present themselves to a viewer as solitary structures standing outside the classical architectural



Fig. 27 Vienna, Karlskirche (St. Charles's Church) (picture by author)

48 I adopt Sedlmayr's findings, but formulate them according to media theory.

language (otherwise they would have to support something). This medial reference would thus have to be excluded. Looking for meaning within a medium, however, there are four possible alternatives⁴⁸:

- The ›columns‹ are understood as elements of a typological system. They become ›columns‹ in front of a church. ›Columns‹ of this kind, outside a church, can be found at the Temple of Solomon. The Karlskirche is thereby attributed with the self-sense of this temple. Vienna thus turns into a second Jerusalem, Karl VI. to Solomon.
- The viewer is lead to see the ›columns‹ as two very narrow and long tubes with a lantern-like conclusion. In this way, a creative reference is made to the form of the tambour and dome over the nave. Other design elements, such as the narthex and the two pavilions, also play on this correlation. Without elaborating any further, one can state that architecture is understood as a medium of sculptural design in this regard.
- The church is not – and here I go beyond Sedlmayr's understanding – built with the chancel directed to the east, as would be proper for a catholic church, but is situated approximately NNW (entrance) to SSO (chancel). The entrance is directed towards the Hofburg Palace, and the chancel possibl⁴⁹ towards Egypt. This generates meaning: on the one hand, Charles's Church is the church of the ruler. On the other hand, it binds the church as the origin (arche) or the destination (telos) to the Orient. Should this reference to Egypt be proven true, it would be somewhat blasphemous. The exterior of the church is thus an event that determines meaning through the medium of a space understood in a cultural-geographical context.
- The ›columns‹ are integrated into a theological system; they portray the deeds of Saint Charles Borromeo; he becomes a sort of guardian of the church.

49 It is not directed towards Rome, nor towards Jerusalem, but – subject to further scrutiny – towards Egypt. Since this does not lie in the center of interest, I've discovered this in OpenStreetMap <http://www.openstreetmap.de/karte.html>. The maps of OpenStreet-Map are reasonably accurate, but, of course, do not reflect the significant knowledge of the late Baroque. I have also not checked this assumption on the basis of secondary literature.

Furthermore, the ›columns‹ are used as a virtual historicizing medium. There are five allusions through which the building is enhanced for those who carry the knowledge: Jachin and Boaz / constantia et fortitudo, the columns of Hercules at the two ends of the world / universal claim to power of Charles VI., Salomon and Augustus / Charles VI. as emperor of peace, Trajan and Marcus Aurelius / claim of a new Roma aeterna. Thus architecture would be generally understood as a medium of historical comments.

A column can also be manifested in the medium of praxis. It would then – contrary to a wall with windows – be a very strong opening between inside and outside. In contrast to a pier, which does create a strongly demarcated bay, the curved surface of the column gently transcends the threshold to both sides, inward and outward. This would be specified, depending on the

exact form of the columns, the distance between them, their material, the styling of the floor and the ceiling, the cardinal direction and the related degree of illumination in the threshold region.

With the column as an example of an element in the medium of praxis, it becomes clear, however, that this is only a primary layer. Since ›functionalism‹ (as a historical discourse of the 20s of the 20th century), praxis is already discussed at much higher hierarchical levels, such as at the level of familial living or at the level of urban life.

I am rather less concerned with the meaning (here I mean the process ›meaning‹ as an activity; in semiotics one would speak of semiosis) of individual structural elements in the medium of building and a specific sense (style, shape, classical architectural style, technology, etc.). I am more interested in the meaning of rooms in an apartment (I purposely avoid using the term ›space‹, in order to avoid misunderstandings: I mean rooms which were dimensioned, illuminated and set in context by architects, which were furnished partially by the owner and then fully by the tenants to create specific rooms and which are then specified to an even larger extent by the activity of the tenants in these units of an apartment) and of areas in a city or landscape. They acquire meaning in the context of the medium of practical life.

Let us look at the master bedroom for explanatory purposes. In Germany, in the petty bourgeoisie of the 20th century working-class families, it was the largest room of an apartment (one lived in the comparatively small kitchen, the small parlor (›Gute Stube‹) was not inhabited and only served a representational purpose and was used only in special cases, such as Christmas, birthday parties or for a socially higher standing visitor). In the aftermath of the Second World War it was then downgraded from the largest to the second largest room, giving way to the parlor. It was, however, still bigger than the children's rooms and bigger than the kitchen with its dining area. It was the room farthest from the front door and is, even to this day, highly taboo for visitors whom one shows around in the apartment. In the medium of praxis (everyday life), it thus obtains the highest privacy and a ritual character, which I would describe as the chancel of the family. In both places, foundations (of religion, or family) are laid and executed, in the chancel the foundation of faith, in the bedroom the foundation of family. Both places are ›veiled‹ by a taboo, which downright externalizes the mystery (not in the sense of ›secret‹ but of ›mysterious‹).

But even with these quite generally worded statements, the following still applies: the immanent medium is not *the* architecture or *the* Modern Architecture, immanent elements are not the column or the bedroom as such, not even the bedrooms of the petty bourgeoisie working families in Germany in the 20th century, but the bedroom of family XY at this time and in this place. Immanent sense is always concrete, specific, and differential.

If one wants to generalize, then one should do so inductively, on the basis of concrete analysis and comparison.

Architecture is a discipline in which events and elements allude to different media, contribute to different media and thus generate the meaning of the elements and the medium. These media have developed over time and are part of the established canon of architectural media. They are, amongst others, praxis, technology, also the order of being that could only ever be ordered in a certain way which is understood aesthetically, since the Middle Ages, as proportion, as the order of beauty, moreover the classical architectural language developed in antiquity, furthermore the style in the sequence or in the range of its characteristics.

At first, the various medial references cannot be rated ethically; all are equally possible. It is possible that the same real elements can refer to different media (a column can have a style, play an important role in practice, stand in a proportional system and have specific importance in a technical structure. Each of the emerging meanings can complement or contradict each other. This is partly a question of the intentions and the medial horizon of the architects, partly a question of the alertness and medial horizon of the occupants and then it is also a matter of artistic attitude.

In this way, the manifestation in the medium of style can be seen in opposition to praxis, thereby presenting the deconstruction of the medium of style as a positive architectural aim or highlighting the banality, conservativeness or inhumanity of praxis. The ethical decision cannot be justified in a general assessment of the medium, solely in the evaluation of the specific architectural statement.

Everything always revolves around a specific setting in a medium with a high resolution and refractive index – whether there is something to think about, whether the individuals are affected emotionally, whether they are confirmed or questioned in their identity, whether they are elevated or debased, how the people are organized socially in closeness or distance, whether it is beautiful or ugly – to name but a few instances of ascribing meaning to events and elements in a medium. An evaluation of the quality, successful performance, complexity, conciseness, presence) occurs in the medium, an ethical assessment is carried out in daily life.

Architectures as events in the archimedial

Architecture and architectures

In the preceding discussion about the relationship between architecture and media, I have here – especially in the chapter about immanence – emphasized that it only concerns specific buildings and structures. Thus, it

is not about architecture (discipline), but rather about architectures (concrete and specific architectural works).

So ›Architectures‹ is not the plural of ›architecture‹. ›Architectures‹ signifies specific buildings and structures, although the term itself is not entirely definite. Because, since Vitruvius, there is the distinction between *aedificatio* and *architectura*, where *aedificatio* stands for simple buildings (›casa‹) developed by imitation and prudence. *Architectura*, however, arises when these buildings are brought into a universal and true cosmic order, which is why it is so close to science, where one is also concerned with comprehending the cosmic order.

Formulated in a modern way, ›architectures‹ could on the one hand be understood as basically all palpable buildings and structures, on the other hand, it would apply only to buildings committed to surpassing general truth, art or quality standards.

In the context of architecture and media, one could secondly identify structures that have turned into a meaningful and incidental event through their integration in a medium as ›architecture‹, as opposed to a building (*aedificatio*). An ›architecture‹ might be the respective singular term. However, the word is rarely used in this manner.

In most cases, however, ›architecture‹ means something else. It is understood as:

- generalizing singular (that which is architectural about things, ›regarding this project I'm not interested in the cost, but in the architecture‹)
- collective singular (architecture as a generic term for construction, urban planning, landscaping, etc.)
- representative singular (Vorarlberg architecture, i.e., not every building, but the total specific architecture of a cultural region)

The term ›architecture‹ may, however, also refer to:

- the discipline (Institute of Architecture of the University of XY)
- the expertise (I'm studying architecture)
- the architectural trade (building laws, architects and their representatives, building industry, landlord and tenant associations, etc.)
- the internal structure and composition (the architecture of a computer) Creating a grammatical plural does not indicate a bigger number of structures, but a different meaning of the word ›architecture‹.

Media and medium

One is always inclined to reify a medium: the medium is a book, a magazine, the telephone, the television, the internet. Additionally, in the discussion of media one usually associates them with the communication process and sees media as tools of communication, as a mediating intermediate between an emitter and a recipient. More or less up until McLuhan, these media were seen as a type of ›white box‹ as a machine which should completely annihilate itself from the communication. A phone has to transmit the voice of the interlocutor as though there were no apparatus involved. Any excess or missing sound is perceived as noise or disturbance and is seen as a defect of the ›white box‹. To understand buildings as a medium of this type, leads us to its unimportance. That what the architect wants to express takes the place of the building. It only functions as the reminder that someone wants to say something. One could also put up a sign.

A material will of its own (›materialer Eigensinn‹), which goes beyond the intellectual message of the architect, would be taken as disturbance or noise. But every building gives an indication of its own will, insofar one can speak in the plural of media or architectures, the same as with books or magazines. In contrast to the latter, architecture is produced as a unique piece and is not a mass medium. This raises questions about whether a medium is a tool or a ›space‹.

Mc Luhan has changed this perception. He views the noise as a report of presence and as will of its own of the medium as such. However, as I wanted to make clear in the first chapter, this was understood as an epiphany of universal nothingness because he does not recognize that the former medium has now become an event in a new medium. One can imagine that architecture as a communicative medium is replaced by other communication media, which have the same function: namely, transmitting a message without revealing anything about themselves.

Taking McLuhan's insights, earlier and later theories on media into account, one recognizes that a medium is neither a ›white box‹ nor a tangible element. Architectures are not media, but events in a medium, thereby gaining their specific meaning. When McLuhan no longer attaches importance to the information which is mediated through a medium, but rather to the medium itself, and when he refers to this medium as the message, then this is nothing more than a repetition of the traditional understanding of media. Except that, as described earlier in the context of the soccer game and its reflection on the everyday life of the audience, the medium is no longer the medium in which events are formed, but transforms itself into an event in a broader medium, in the medium of everyday practices of the people. One would rightly have to change ›the medium is the message‹ to ›the medium turns into a message in a prior medium‹.

Archimedium

In the previous chapter, I had juxtaposed the correlations of events in different media and even considered possible a parallelism of their assignment to different media and the articulation of an artistic attitude therein. This is not entirely correct, though, because there is a medium which overrides all others, the medium of the everyday and practical world.

This is reality, to which the realness is subjectively and commonly weaved together, the reality, which one calls ›world‹ when referring to its systemic character. It is the basic medium, the archimedium, which structures events and elements into architecture. To this world other media and events in media can be placed in a supplementary, modifying and/ or conflicting way. World exists as singular and plural⁵⁰.

A real world is a medium with a high resolution and possesses a refractive index. Worlds are dynamic, Sartre understands them as situations. That which is architectural about architecture, that which lets architectures be architectural, gains its respective basic meaning in the system of the archimedium, the weaved reality of the world.

50 Most phenomenological theories talk about *the* world, because it is their aim to discuss ›world‹ in the first place. Occasionally there are also phenomenological theories that insist on 1 world; there it becomes very old-fashioned and sometimes even totalitarian.

Biographical Notes

Studies of History of Art, Sociology and Philosophy in Bochum and Bonn, PhD 1979 in Bochum, ›Habilitation‹ 1989 in Hannover. Worked as a preservationist in Bochum in the 1980s and was in charge of an upper preservation authority in Lüneburg, Lower Saxonia. Assistant Professor at the Hochschule der Künste, Westberlin. Professor of History and Theory of Architecture at the University of the Applied Arts in Stuttgart. Professor of Theory of Architecture at the Brandenburg Technical University, Cottbus.

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⁵¹ McLuhans book was titled *The Medium is the Massage*. In the text, message is also spelled with two >a<. Initially, this was a typing error, but they then accepted it because the aim of both a message (note) and a massage (medical therapy) is touching (someone).

Recommended Quotation

Führ, Eduard: Architecture as Archimedial Event. A Discussion on the Substance of Architecture. In: Cloud-Cuckoo-Land, International Journal of Architectural Theory. Vol. 19, Issue 32, 2014. cloud-cuckoo.net/fileadmin/issues_ru/issue_32/article_fuehr.pdf [1.10.2014]. p. 197–234.