



BANAL DREAMSCAPE

Reimagining
everyday spaces of
suburbia

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Research Paper

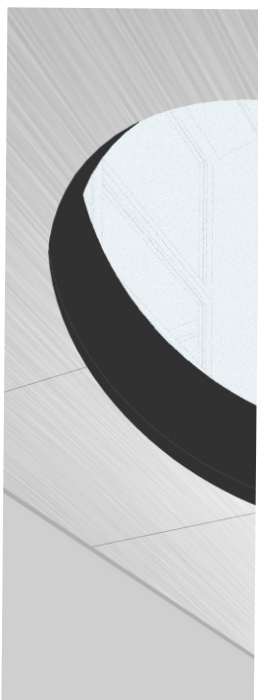
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Introduction



Banal and Normal

1

Nikolaus Pevsner,
An outline of
European architecture
(Harmondsworth,
Middlesex, Eng.:
Penguin Books
Harmondsworth,
Middlesex, Eng., 1942).

Over the course of a millennium, human cognition has been settled in dualities, navigating the realms of "good", "beautiful", and "evil", or "ugly". Contemporary thought urges us to scrutinize the motives and dynamics underlying the so-called "bad" phenomena and, more importantly, to emphasize a departure from binary categorizations toward an exploration of the spectrum. Within the spectrum of constructed edifices, there is an omnipresent academic tendency toward extreme ends. At one end lies; the glorious, monumental, or in general terms the "good architecture". On the other end, abandoned monuments are present. With a visible shift in aesthetic values and enhanced awareness, now more than ever reusing ruins are objects of study and intervention for architects. However, in the middle of the mentioned spectrum, an assessment of the mundane has been left unattended, or at least underdeveloped for a long.

In this scene of sublime, by classical definitions or under new aesthetics, the mundane and banal are left out. To the Architecture catalogs, next to the Lincoln Cathedral, we have added the FRAC Dunkerque. Yet, a question arises: can we rightfully dismiss the examination of a seemingly commonplace bicycle shed, merely labeled as a building?¹ The bicycle shed, marked by its banality, dullness, and mass producibility, often finds itself relegated to a realm of disinterest among architects, becoming a subject more prone to criticism, aversion, and avoidance than scrutiny. Nonetheless, banal, and mundane architecture constitutes the majority of the inhabited and constructed space. What initially seems mundane, hosts most of the human memories, dreams, and desires. Thus, the uncanny of banal settings like suburbia can be a byproduct of disregarding the mundane by architects.

Figure.1

Painting by Markus
Matthias Krüger.

Indeed, mass-produced houses, repetitive patterns, and ghostly qualities of working hours in suburbia and sprawls are frustrating. However, from unearthing meaning beneath the grey surface of the mundane; to domination and transformation of their spatial quality, or even in a subtle extraction of "unexploited" within the explored surface of events, architects and artists have outnumbered opportunities to study and respond to the banal and problematize what has been taken for granted under the unchallenging ease of a "normal" situation.

Regardless of the connotation of the norm, it can be defined, as "a pattern or trait taken to be typical in the behavior of a social group".² A group such as a group of residents in suburbia and their living habits in this sense is an example of "normal". The banality of such environments is thus a byproduct of their normality. Banal is defined as "the quality of lacking originality, freshness, or novelty". Therefore, mundane, banal, quotidian, everyday, and so on are nothing more evil than everyday patterns of typical behaviors and events within the everyday life of the majority of society. Life is dependent on banality since the extraordinary's meaning will vanish in the absence of the ordinary. Hence, the suburban dullness is a product of a monolithic, ordinary array of objects and shapes, patterns of behavior, and groups of inhabitants, that the observer can pass by them, without noticing anything extraordinary.

The banal is thus just a part of the flow, a mediocre being, including the everyday and the habitual, recurrent phenomena, making it quotidian, accustomed, unremarkable, banal, boring, average, and mundane. The undesigned, imperfect, and regular situations of suburbia or domesticity, in general, are thus standard situations opposing the extraordinary and unique. In Adolf Loos's viewpoint, the ordinary house is opposed to a tomb and a monument, making it a leftover of the design of a city. However, the banal is also a design without a thorough investigation of a naturally evolved

city, a return from the nature of evolution towards naïve, plastic innovations. Ordinary is derived from the Latin *Ordinarius*, rooted in *ordo*, or order. *Ordinarius* is the regular, orderly, and by right in the normal course of being.³ Not only ordinary is not harmful to society, but it is the orderly and accepted norm within this context, although it does not mean it is perfect and immune to questioning.

Everyday normal life penetrates society and smoothly brings order to the cities, a house is essentially a shelter. It is the functional merit of architecture that satisfies the initial needs of the users. Moreover, the house can be more than merely a shelter, as the needs of the user can surpass the basics. Home can be a place where imagination grows and flourishes, as Gaston Bachelard depicts, the attic and basement of the house can be the backbone of, horrors, terrors, imaginations, and daydreams of their inhabitants.⁴ Creativity, dreams, and desires are reliant on the physical and non-physical context of one. This is the frame in which architecture expands beyond norms and flourishes in favor of exploiting the yet unrealized potential.

This is not an essay against ordinary, and normal, it is a practice to get a deeper understanding of it, question it, and finally find gentle ways to alter details of these banal environments. It can be seen as a practice toward a defamiliarized normality that prolongs the process of perception in favor of the curiosity, by questioning and altering the norms. Hence, the aim is to investigate how the norm can be challenged by the introduction of intersecting patterns, that create priorly unrealized, or unexploited potential among banality. Considering the normal, as the shortest route between a question and its answer, the aim is to find yet unrealized answer through a prolonged journey, but also including desires without denying the previously defined boundaries of the quotidian.

3

Deborah Fausch,
"Can Architecture
Be Ordinary," *MAS
Context*, no. 23 (2014).

4

Gaston Bachelard,
M. Jolas, and John R.
Stilgoe, *The poetics of
space*, 1994 edition ed.
(Boston, Massachusetts:
Beacon Press Boston,
Massachusetts, 1994).

Historically, many thinkers, among them architects and artists have tried to question such norms, from the melancholic self-portraits of Jean-Jacques Lequeu in the realm of art; to the architecture of a house to die in, in *Oxygen House* by Douglas Darden from the sculptured urinal in *Fountain* by Marcel Duchamp; to The painted world of *Treachery of Images* by Rene Magritte; from *The Discrete Charm of The Bourgeoisie* by Louis Bunuel to *Mulholland Drive* by David Lynch in the cinematic language, the brilliant examples of this idea of going beyond the norm is present.

The mentioned artists' intention has not been to simply deny the mundane, and disregard accepted techniques of their era, however, they have successfully managed to manifest the irony behind the norm, by embossing yet unrealized potential, that has been considered not suitable, nor welcomed in the timely normal categorization of trends or status-quo. Similarly in the banal architecture of suburbia, there can be a discovered or introduced melancholy for both architects and inhabitants. In order to move from the present rigidity of such environments towards more elasticity and resilience, the question asked in this essay and subsequently through the design can be framed as: *How can a blending of extra-ordinary, unforeseen, potential environments into the mundane, ordinary context of suburbia, introduce an alternative elasticity to the rigidity of such banal environments?*

In order to find playful alternatives to suburban settings, this essay aims to first explore the banal and the surreal through metaphorical examples of each, their correlation, and the forces behind them, with a perspective broader than the architecture discipline's scope. Initially, by exploring the mechanization and automatization processes and their power to make norms. Then, by investigating the Dadaists, Surrealists, and particularly David Lynch's response to these norms. Finally, after addressing the mass production and lost aura of objects of art, and investigation of uncanny, sympatric territories and elastic environments, the correlation and coexistence of the surreal and mundane is explored. The aim is to define examples and principles that can help shape the extraordinary, within ordinary environments per the investigated theories.



Figure.2

Movie scene from Twin
Peaks by David Lynch.



Beyond
Norms

The Mechanical Encrusted Upon the living

Any phenomena one encounters can be developed under an ontological lens, the phenomena can subsequently become a subject for rational questioning, a questioning that comes from the process of understanding, evaluated by the weight of the experienced life, immune from the predetermined norms. From fundamental questions to subtle tactile everyday subjects, all can be approached by such a lens. Such as the fundamental mechanism of laughter and Henry Bergson's unique investigation of it. The study of laughter does not simply investigate the physical act of laughing itself, but rightfully, explores the human as a social creature that communicates and reasons through the simple acts for instance laughter.

Laughter in Bergson's viewpoint is a social act, a reflex, or a response to what can be called a short-circuiting of reason, or more precisely "incongruous juxtaposition theory".⁵ Incongruity defines the paradoxical appearance of the events in the context they are least expected, or out of their normal context. Where events follow a normal appearance through the course of banality, the occurrence of extraordinary, unexpected events ends up eventually in surprise and thus in laughter. For example, the classical, stereotypical example of someone slipping on a banana peel can be described as an incongruous juxtaposition of the event of falling with no control over the body, on the mechanized pattern of subconsciously walking. The process of walking or subconsciously breathing, are basic forms of what Bergson defines under the term "mechanical encrusted upon the living". The mentioned is what shapes norms and normal modes of interaction in certain contexts. Any slight change in this situation will lead to an unexpected result, that triggers laughter as a communicative mechanism. Thus, laughter in Bergson's reading is not an individual act but it is a mechanism that brings individuals together in a collective response to a shock.

5

Henri Louis Bergson, *Laughter* (Read Books Ltd., 1900), <http://www.myilibrary.com?id=930589>, 1 online resource (208 pages).

Bergson believes natural phenomena we encounter as sequential are in fact not an automatized, categorized amalgamation of units, but they are a spectrum, consisting of an infinite fractal. It is the scope with which we inspect these fractals that makes the whole appear with such a quantifiable character. To put it simply, time is recognizable for most humans as a sequence of seconds, or at best sequences of milliseconds, combined to shape larger units of time. However, the concept of a millisecond is a humanmade categorization of a spectrum that cannot be limited to small fragments. As a response to the mentioned analogy, Bergson introduces the idea of "vitalism", which is the importance of process, and the spectrum in between the mechanized quantified units.⁶ Bergson's reading of laughter is crucial due to its focus on elasticity, as opposed to rigid categorizations. Eventually, the categorization triggers a response mechanism in the form of an ironic criticism of the easy automatism of acquired habits.

The easy automatism of acquired habits is what shapes the trend and status quo, in simplest form automatization can be seen in walking or breathing. Moreover, it can be seen in the dominance of basic modes of living of "normal" citizens in a classified region like suburbs far from the multilayered rich context of a historic city. However, more interwoven packages of information on a particular subject that we define as knowledge. Professionals in any field are masters of this acquired knowledge. Knowledge in this sense is a gathering of so-called subjective information in a categorized manner, to create a framework for a body of thought through a process of rationalization. Through gathering knowledge, one can create patterns of information and reference responses to the questions they face. However, new knowledge is developed through questioning the status quo and when facing a shortcoming or error, and it is not possible unless one masters the relevant literature.

6

Bergson, *Laughter*.

Aldous Huxley distinguishes knowledge and understanding as two methodological approaches toward unfolding, understanding, and approaching the phenomena one encounters.⁷ However, understanding only becomes valid after one gathers the knowledge and then deliberately puts it aside to evaluate it from a distance. Understanding in his viewpoint is the first-hand encounter with phenomena while the priorly gained knowledge is less constraining. Professionals often tend toward a gathering of information and the creation of patterns for their subject of study. Amateurs, on the other hand, face problems with curiosity-derived explorations. A professional amateur is thus someone who first gathers and tackles the knowledge and then starts the process of understanding. This is when the norms can be rightfully challenged and questioned.

By putting aside, the prior knowledge that the cognitive pattern has framed during the process of knowledge gathering, one can understand and face phenomena directly, liberated from judgments and predetermined responses.⁸ Phenomenology and existentialism cherish the human experience and perception and take it as a basis for our understanding, while positivism, believes the answers are behind the scientific methods and rational, analytical encounters with the phenomena, and through finding absolute answers to events. The rigidity of objective interpretations of phenomena, and events often has been proven to be naive in most cases, and this naivety often provoked artistic expressions that embrace fluidity, and unconventional practices, celebrating human perception, subjectiveness, and the subconscious mind, instead of finding the singular utopian essence behind every important questions.

7

Aldous Huxley, Knowledge and Understanding (Vedanta Society of Southern California, 1955).

8

Huxley, Knowledge and Understanding.

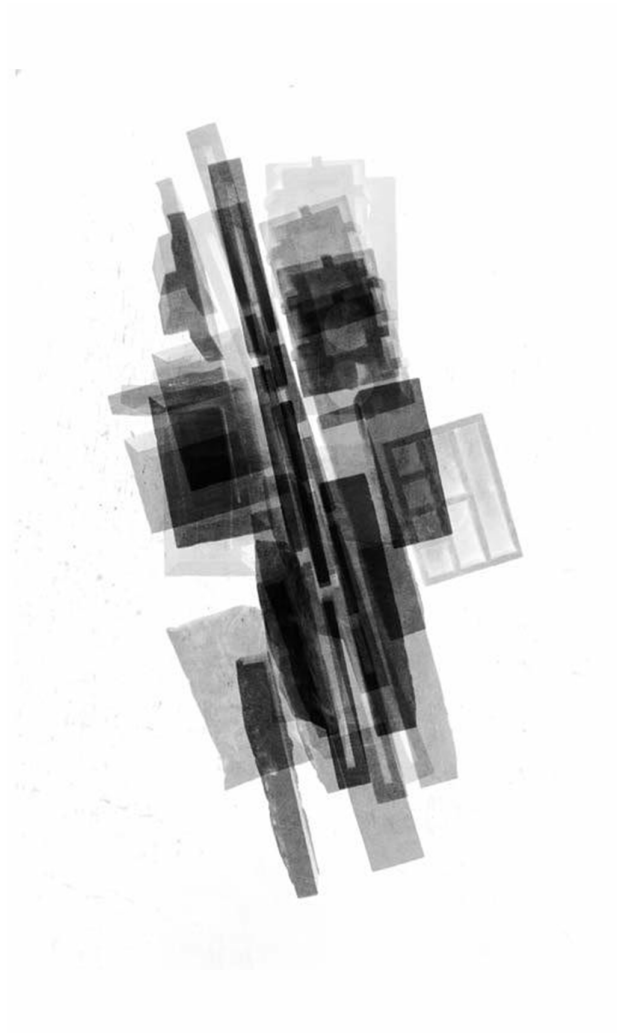
Surreal Irony of the Norm

9
Hans Richter et al.,
Dada : art and anti-art,
Dada centenary edition,
World of art, (New
York, New York, London:
Thames & Hudson Inc.
; Thames & Hudson Ltd
New York, New York,
London, 2016).

Dadaism and subsequently Surrealism were two movements reflecting on the norms and introducing alternative responses in facing the accepted standards, the process of empowering human perception as a response to the irony of knowledge is present in the motto of surrealism. The absurdity of post-First World War Europe helped the realization of Dadaism that later on flourished in Surrealism. Dadaists criticized the societal and artistic norms, mainly by criticizing the elitism and pretentiousness of traditional art. They were ironically criticizing the ideals that in their viewpoint led to the war, ideals inseparable from modern human nature like bourgeois culture, nationalism, rationality, and logic –that the post-enlightenment scientific approach was preaching– violence, and finally materialism and consumption. The physical appearance of this idea in their head was through creating a contradicting, complex form of formerly unknown art to the public.⁹

Figure.3

Automatism, one key technique of surrealism focuses on the importance of chance and subconscious in the creation of form and meaning.



Charles Cramer and
Kim Grant, *History of
modern art : painting,
sculpture, architecture,
photography*, vol.
14–Surrealism (Fourth
edition / Marla F.
Prather, revising author,
fourth edition. New
York : Harry N. Abrams,
Inc., 1998., 1998).
[https://search.library.
wisc.edu/ catalog/
999850684302421](https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/999850684302421).

This criticism of so-called rational norms, led Dadaists to go to the other extreme end, denying any form of relation to the history of their practice, similar to the modernism movement in architecture but with drastically different outcomes. Nihilism and rejection led to a term they coined anti-art to release the bounds of traditional art. The chaotic, irrational creations of randomness were a key factor in their work, embracing absurdity and nonsense. However, the key element was the rejection of the status quo and aiming to redefine the very nature of art and human cognition. The concept of readymades as the most widely known depiction of Dada intentions is a good example of such unconventional ideas, in readymades especially in the *Fountain*, through the use of incongruity and defamiliarization, Dadaist artist Marcel Duchamp dis-placed objects of everyday use, in an unconventional context, in order to criticize the rigidity and predeterminate function of the phenomena to the audience. The juxtaposition of a urinal in an alternated position in an art gallery, as an ironical response to the norms and conventions of society proved to be successful and became the new trend in a short time, a trend that is still immanent in the realm of art.

Surrealists as the successors of Dadaists, applied most of Dada values to their manifest. Andre Breton, the pioneer of Surrealism, quit the Dada circle to found Surrealism, with the same value based on irrationality, and subconscious, this time with a more methodological approach. In 1924 the *Surreal Manifesto* was introduced by a foundation based on Freud's ideas from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and the *Unconscious Mind*, which Surrealists believed could help gain a deeper understanding of human experience. Surrealism expanded the randomness and irrationality of Dada toward the creation of art using dream mechanism as a basis, unlike the notorious opinion on Surrealism graphics, the defamiliarization was not only in visuals, but also through the creation of art using the subconscious as the tool, by use of automatic drawing, writing, and making.¹⁰

Automatism in Surrealism, influenced by Freud's psychological methods to dive into the unconscious mind, is the use of automatic drawing or writing in order to reduce the hierarchical character of the conscious mind. It functions through the empowerment of a heterarchy of random shapes and phrases. Paintings of André Masson are good examples of the use of this technique, first by creating random scribbles and secondly through the extraction of forms and meaning within the randomness. Automatism in André Breton's view flourishes the hidden subconscious by reducing the effect of control and hierarchy of rationalism. Such a work of art can be exempt from aesthetic or moral concerns dictated by rationality.¹¹ A key feature of Automatism is the factor of chance in the design by using arbitrary methods, like in the artworks of Masson through the use of random drippings of gesso, paint, and sand on canvas. Moreover, through intentionally ambiguous making or leaving the ambiguity untreated in the artworks, artists make room for free and unpolluted interpretations of the piece by different viewers.

Frottage, Grattage, and Decalcomania were more random techniques in the work of surrealists. Frottage and Grattage emanant in the works of Max Ernst, are respectively the rubbing of charcoal on the texture of surfaces to transfer them to a piece of paper, and the use of pointy objects to remove the layer of paint from a palimpsest of colors on a canvas. Oscar Dominguez's Decalcomania is the random spreading of ink on a paper and pressing it with a second paper to make an unintentional distribution of paint, making it the most random and unrefined method adopted by surrealists.

11

André Breton, Richard Seaver, and Helen R. Lane, *Manifestoes of surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press Ann Arbor, 1969).

		<p>Surrealists used automatism to move toward the subconscious as a response to the absurdity of the conscious mind, by drawing and writing inspired by dreams, the use of the subconscious was cherished. However, early techniques of automatism were per Breton's manifest intentions, they were prone to criticism for being stylistic, thus shifting Surreal techniques toward more consciously appropriated techniques was the next step.¹²</p>
12	<p>Cramer and Grant, History of modern art : painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, 14–Surrealism.</p>	
13	<p>Cramer and Grant, History of modern art : painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, 14–Surrealism.</p>	<p>Joan Miro and Jean Arp were two Surrealists who first used automatized techniques to generate abstract visual forms and then to playfully create assemblages that revealed the rich possibilities of unconscious associations, for instance, in Miro's Maternity, the geometric forms ironically depict the abstraction of a mother and her two children. The act of reducing figures to the most basic signs and emphasizing the very cliché aspects of a woman's body is a sign of these abstractions, showcasing the babies holding onto the abstract image of the mother's breasts.¹³</p>
14	<p>Sigmund Freud and Joyce Crick, The interpretation of dreams, Oxford world's classics, (Oxford: Oxford University Press Oxford, 1999).</p>	
15	<p>Max Ernst, Dorothea Tanning, and Ralph Manheim, Beyond painting : and other writings, Documents of modern art, (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz New York, 1948).</p>	<p>The juxtaposition of contradicting and contrasting elements is another visible characteristic of Surreal artworks, that is borrowed from Freud's idea on the juxtaposition in dreams. Condensation or the juxtaposition of different feelings, thoughts, and ideas; displacement of feelings; symbolic representation juxtapositions; and character displacement juxtapositions,¹⁴ all are theories that Freud applies to dreams, and surrealists were inspired by and introduced to the world of art. Another surreal technique widely adopted is collage. Adopted from the process of juxtaposition in dreams, Surreal collages were mainly used in Surrealism by juxtaposing pre-existing elements into new creations. Of all the methods described the latter is most probably most acquired by architects. Surrealists believed that a union of disparate objects could lead to the creation of unexpected creations. Ernst describes collage as the coupling of multiple realities with incompatible appearances, in an incongruous context in favor of the creation of a previously unknown reality.¹⁵</p>

More simple juxtaposition of female nudes, bananas, and sexual elements within the unexpected environments also reinforces the sense of estrangement from reality especially in the works of Salvador Dali, all driven by Freud's emphasis on the central position of juxtaposition and sexuality in the mechanism of dreams and unconscious mind. The use of Subversive Realism helped painters like Giorgio de Chirico, introduce dream-like qualities and characteristics of Freud's interpretation of dreams into the visible and tangible canvas. The dream-like, barren landscapes of Chirico with arches and their strong architectural elements and use of vivid colors, monumental use of sculptures, and the liminality of the daytime situation make these paintings Surreal artworks that are heavily visual. Nonetheless, the surrealists found Chirico's style and his delivery irrelevant to their definitions and instead of his visual techniques, credited him for his ability to represent unconscious dreamscape, the strength of his works from the Surrealist's viewpoint was the subject and not the graphics.

Rene Magritte's work, on the other hand, was heavily reliant on the philosophical conundrums, through manipulation of human perception framing questions on the ontology of phenomena, visible in both famous paintings of the pipe. Magritte was indeed asking whether we acknowledge understanding what we hesitantly determine as knowledge, after all in his viewpoint all we have is a representation of the known subject, believable or not, virtual, or actual.¹⁶ Surrealism is an artistic response to the absurdity of modern life and the mechanized, normal ways of interaction with the world, The subconscious, or as Freud coins it unconscious is not only used in surrealism as the basis for the creation and investigation but also is a subject for problematizing in their works. Rene Magritte, questions human perception by questioning the existence of a pipe, or a picture of a pipe. In doing so, Magritte depicts the mystery and

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Michel Foucault, René Magritte, and J. A. Harkness, *This is not a pipe, An art quantum*, (Berkeley: University of California Press Berkeley, 1983).

alienness under the familiar surface of the world,¹⁷ his painting is a brilliant example of Surrealism lacking visual complexities and a subtly creative borrowing from dream mechanism. It is the simple dual coexistence between a text and the image above, that creates discourse and problematizes human perception and the unconscious. Such humble interactions with the norm are what make the art powerful in showing the audience the unrealized, and unexploited realities. In Freud's analysis of dreams, dreams are bridges to the unconscious mind where repressed desires, conflicts, and memories will be expressed symbolically. Juxtaposition in dreams refers to the simultaneous or sequential placement of contrasting or contradictory elements. Freud believed that these juxtapositions could hold significant meaning and shed light on the individual's inner conflicts and desires.

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Foucault, Magritte, and
Harkness, This is not
a pipe.

Lynchian Banal

Individual's inner conflicts and desires are the grand theme of David Lynch's movies, although Lynch is not officially nor periodically a member of the Surreal movement, he encourages the subjectivity, subconscious, dreams, desires, and personal perception of events and thus is associated with Surrealism. Lynch's movies are scenes of desires, a conflict between the virtual and actual of the inhabitants' lives, partially taking place in the most banal environments of suburbs, industrial towns, and small villages. Lynch's movies are another example of introducing alternative possibilities instead of sticking to the norm, the menacing, mysterious, and often confusing cinema of Lynch is a defamiliarized framing of the most familiar events and environments.

The bubble-like, multifunctional, and detailed locations in the films of Lynch, are engineered atmospheres shaped as concentrated environments reflecting the usually unseen face of the society.¹⁸ The atmospheric expression of Lynch and the techniques that he uses to make his films "Petri dishes for experiments in mood manipulation where conditions can be tweaked, variables changed, pressure heightened, and everyday assumptions tested to the limit."¹⁹ Thus, Lynch is a master at uncovering and introducing the extraordinary and unforeseen, within the most banal everyday environments.

Lynch in its essence, beyond technological methods that he develops through his filmography understands human desires and shows complexity and elasticity in life. The architecture of suburbs often classifies and generalizes its inhabitants and their needs, however, life in Lynch's dreamscape is complex, multilayered, and diverse. In the small town that Lynch depicts, surreal and sinister also exist and influence the mundane. In the Lynchian world, nothing is black and white or perfect, everything has a certain degree of melancholy, in all its aspects and directions. Thus, Lynch's movie is an irony of the rigidity

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Justus Nieland, David Lynch (University of Illinois Press, 2012). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt2ttf6c>.

19

Richard Martin, The Architecture of David Lynch (Tate, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019).

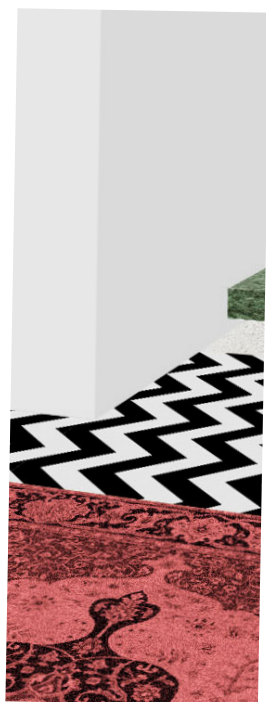
- Oxford English Dictionary, "Lynchian, adj," in Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2023).
- 20 that Bergson sees as the drive for the humans' laughter, the absurd neatness, homogeneity, and plasticity of such suburban environments is a naive interpretation of the complexity, a simplification produced by processes of mechanization and habitualization in favor of patternization of a norm.
- Martin, *The Architecture of David Lynch*.
- 21 Lynch according to Oxford English Dictionary "is noted for juxtaposing surreal or sinister elements with mundane, everyday environments, and for using compelling visual images to emphasize a dreamlike quality of mystery or menace."²⁰ The mentioned description depicts the artist's intention in juxtaposing two radically contradicting elements. Not only this is a mystery to the eyes of the observer, but also it draws attention to new possibilities, perspectives, and hidden layers of the society as a whole. *Blue Velvet* starts with an image of the white picket fence, a reference to Ronald Reagan's idea of a perfect suburban America where neighbors are the only virtuous social moderators for a just American city.²¹ Lynch admires the beauty in such environments although simultaneously observes the hidden sinister by bringing the audience's attention towards the sublayers of society. Lynch transforms the ordinary by depicting extraordinary narratives, often with fairy tale readings, especially in *Wild at Heart* and *Blue Velvet*; but also in works like *Mulholland Drive* or *Lost Highway*, he introduces the extraordinary by the virtue of complexities of the human mind, characters' inside and outside and finally desires.

Transforming the ordinary into novel creations is the final surreal technique adopted. From the use of leftover wallpapers in surreal artwork to create bizarre creatures, to the metamorphosis of Fred Madison into Pete Dayton in *Lost Highway* are examples of the transformation of the ordinary. In *Une Semaine de Bonte*, Max Ernst exploits the collage's potential to transform the order of reality to its extreme ends. Ernst created a prolonged visual narrative of collages of a surreal, hypothetically reordered reality based on an illogical series of juxtapositions and irrational re-integrations to showcase possibilities of unrealized potential. using priorly known elements in unexpected contexts and through exploiting unrealized narratives. However, through the creation of a seamless drawing, reduced the effect of borders of distinct materials and graphic languages in his work, making it consistent. He introduced the classical collage to the homogeneity of one method and language of presentation by fading the borders in between these parts of redefined ordinary objects and making them permanent in the context they are visible at the time.

Figure.4

Movie scene from Twin Peaks by David Lynch.





Coexistence of Dualities

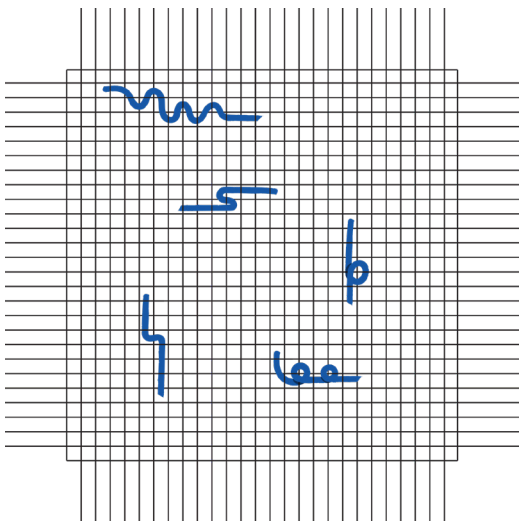


Figure.5

Juxtaposing
alternative patterns,
priorly unknown to
one context, in order
to intensify the
robustness of activity.

The Suburban Context

22

Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "Context," in Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2024). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/context>.

Context from the Latin word *Contextus* means "weaving of things together", contextualized is the "placement of entities in their appropriate coordinates".²² This weaving, in urban form and through the use that architects and urbanists desire, defines the weaving of similar patterns in an environment. In a suburban environment, context is a homogenous predetermined mesh of likewise elements, consisting of expected urban figures, everyday dwelling plans, speculation of the average user, expected normal functions, and predetermined patterns of use. In this habitual pattern of normal treads in a fabric of society, the lack of diversity and rigidity of the suburban context is omnipresent. Rigidity that makes it compatible with predetermined uses, and normal behaviors. Car-centered motorways, playing areas for children, and pedestrians-dog sidewalks are the most tangible event spaces within a successful suburban environment. However, this contextualized rigidity makes less room for a resilient, potential environment for diverse, unexpected, and unexamined relations to happen within and between the average users and other potential visitors.

Rigid planning of the suburbs and exurbs limits the flexibility of such areas and reinforces the actuation of a certain interaction with the environment. This reinforced closedness, and introversion gives a homogeneity to the neighborhood, and although makes it a pleasant environment for most of its inhabitants and underpins a sense of community among neighbors; nonetheless, conceals actualization of possibilities that are potent in bringing unforeseen and unexpected scenes. In such an environment the individual is encouraged to cease thinking about what exists, drop their critical abilities, and "give in to the structures imposed by industrialization and positivism". This viewpoint is no more than "Le Corbusier's average human being", the "statistical family", a categorization that enabled "orthodox architects" to standardize

social norms and quantify them.²³ On the other hand, "unorthodox" unforeseen events can aim for the creation of a multilayered environment with the spatial potential to help flourish their users' dreams and desires. In this essay, rigidity, and mechanized ways of living in such environments, are framed as the suburban dilemma, and the response to them is to be found through an implementation of flexible, elastic alternatives within this rigid planning to make room for further, unexpected, or even unrealized potential to happen under the influence of the references discussed in last chapter.

The American-inspired suburban settings with a post-Calvinist Western target audience are the average category for the "positivist architect". The realm of "square meter" and its optimization transposed by Architects' Data by Ernst Neufert to the realm of privacy is a mode of standardizing and easing production. The housing unit as an object of study has thus undergone to realm of mass production. The breakdown of movement into basic units has reorganized every move into coordinated diagrams lacking a sense of mystery.²⁴ The suburban environments with cookie-cutter houses and coordinated patterns of use also used to be a neighborhood for a specific group of people, racially segregated and impossible for certain groups to benefit from it,²⁵ today these segregations are less evident, due to global awareness however, the monotonous quality of space in banal environments is still immanent due to the mass production of these identical dwelling solutions.

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Inaki Abalos, *The Good Life: A Guided Visit to the Houses of Modernity* (Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2004). <https://books.google.nl/books?id=q6F9QgAACAAJ>.

24

Abalos, *The Good Life: A Guided Visit to the Houses of Modernity*.

25

Herbert J. Gans and Harvey Molotch, *The Levittowners : Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press New York, NY, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.7312/gans17884>, <https://doi.org/10.7312/gans17884>, 1 online resource.

Mass Produced Objects of Art

Abalos, *The Good Life: A Guided Visit to the Houses of Modernity*.

Theo Baart, *Bouwlust : the urbanization of a polder* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers Rotterdam, 1999).

Walter Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* (Penguin, 2008).

Mass production is the essence of our time, and affordability is often associated with the extent of mass-productibility of an object. The minimized labor cost and, the abundance of the material has led to large-scale productions from grocery products to clothes, cars, and even architecture; making tailored architecture almost unreachable for most for the time being. Today, the house is an available object in a market, quantified, and transformed into a product of a combination of movement and use, of geometry and habits. It does not have the sensory phenomenological touch to it, but is merely a "medicalized, hygienic, a disinfected space dependent on transparency, sunlight, and cleanness".²⁶ Interviews with residents of Hoofddorp in North-holland speak for the value of the house in their viewpoint: "In a Toolenburg neighborhood when residents finished the garden, they want to move house again"; this remark by a Toolenburger suggests that a house is a consumer product that can effortlessly be traded in for a better or a different model.²⁷ Such a house is a display model to the outside world, a universe with members segregated from others, and the family as its absolute unit. A mass-produced space without density; without memory.

Mass production, in Walter Benjamin's study, is the mass-productibility of the objects of art and their decline during industrialization. Objects of art that used to be objects in and for a certain time and place, tailored to the "cultic values" of their context been transformed into products evaluated by their "display value".²⁸ A totem, as an object of art, is not only a sculpture, but it is a religious, cultural object that is shaped by the desires and horrors of a society, a compliment to their unique values. On the other hand, the creation of the same totem now, narrates a different story, with an intention, nonetheless, probably disconnected from the same cultic value. A domestic theatrical play used to be a performance in place and time with what Benjamin coins, an aura assigned to it. Aura is, however, lost in the

mass-produced pictures, or motion pictures. A movie nowadays is considered a form of entertainment for the majority. Thus, if we categorize moviegoers, from "petit bourgeois" consumers to "intellectual moviegoers" who interpret the assumed message behind a movie, to finally "professional moviegoers" who see the movie beyond messages and through their techniques;²⁹ only the latter might perceive a limited collection of movies as unique beings in their time and being, representing an aura intact by the dominance of "representational value".

Architecture as a form of art can have an aura or lack it, the mass-produced cloned houses in suburban settings are examples of these non-cultic objects, or subjects to what Benjamin calls a shift from cultic value towards display value, with a lost sense of melancholy and forgotten matchless beauty, towards objects in hand, or as political toolsets. The mass-produced objectified houses of such environments thus have lost their cultic roots and their personal, cultural bounds with their inhabitants, making them simultaneously a home and something unhomey, in their core identical to other suburban dwelling units in other territories.

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Jorge Mejía Hernández,
"Writing, Filming,
Building: Using
a Taxonomy of
Moviegoers to Appraise
Spatial Imagination
in Architecture,"
(09/01 2020), <https://doi.org/10.7480/writingplace.4>.

Learning from Vinex

In the Netherlands, some later suburbs are constructed under the grand theme of Vinex Wijk (neighborhood). VINEX is the abbreviated form of Vierde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening Extra (Forth Report on Spatial Planning Extra), which is a spatial planning memorandum issued by the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment in 1991, during the late 20th century, the need for affordable housing especially for higher, middle-class families, made way to the introduction of the Vinex plan. The aim was to find locations in any region of The Netherlands, to create newly made neighborhoods. The housing market at the time was affected by a phenomenon called "cheap skewness", due to the inhabitation of cheaper houses by higher-income families, the cheap houses were no longer available nor affordable for the people in need.³⁰ This intention was the basis for the creation of Vinex, each municipality was in charge of selecting a region within their territory, with an eye on several criteria fixed by the Dutch Ministry of Housing. The main criteria, was an approximation to the center of cities, with provision of accessible public transport in the newly built region. For 10 years, from 1995 to 2005, over 800,000 were homed in Vinex neighborhoods. Although plans finished after the mentioned period were also coined under the name of Vinex, mainly by the public.³¹

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Evaluatie
Verstedelijkend VINEX
1995 tot 2005 (The
Netherlands: Ministerie
van VROM, 2005).

31
Vinex-wijken zijn
relatief rijk en
kinderrijk," Central
Bureau voor de
Statistiek, 2016,
<https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2016/25/vinex-wijken-zijn-relatief-rijk-en-kinderrijk>.

32
"Opdoeken? Enschede
Eschmarke weer
rustigste station van
Nederland," Newsroom
Enschede, 2019,
<https://www.1trente.nl/artikel/2135572/opdoeken-enschede-eschmarke-weer-rustigste-station-van-nederland>.

However, soberly set Vinex plan with clear intentions, has its shortcomings, for instance, in reality, the newly made train stations, to facilitate the need for public transportation means with an eye on reduction of car-centered neighborhoods, were not received as warmly as planned. Making them ghost stations in most severe cases used for trading drugs in border situations in regions bordering Germany and Belgium. The Eschmarke train station, belonging to the Eschmarke, one of the Vinex districts in Enschede municipality, is being used by an average of less than 50 travelers per day, making it the least-used train station in the Netherlands, making officials think if it requires a closure.³²

Figure.6

Eschmarke, a Vinex neighborhood in the municipality of Enschede, bordering Germany.



Vinex neighborhoods, perceived by practitioners and the public as bland, soulless neighborhoods hosting repetitive architecture scenarios; in best cases ornamented through an increase in the diversity of types and through flashy designs like Ypenburg by MVRDV, remain rigidly commercial and mass-produced with almost always predetermined functionality. Nonetheless, by far is considered one of the most successful and influential housing plans of the contemporary Dutch landscape.³³ In severe cases such as Eschmarke, the limited body of architectural practitioners has led to the appearance of a row of identical façades immune from activities that are not pre-assigned to them. Thus, making the inhabitants aware and concerned about any form of alternative living conditions and alien uses, to be relegated to the realm of pollution. The uncanny of such a setting lies within the homely feelings integrated into the unhomely, rigidity of human activity. Nonetheless, the banal character of Vinex neighborhoods comes from more factors other than architectural investigations, combining a set of social, economic, and political factors behind their mass production. Hence, improvement and alteration of such large-scale plans seem far-fetched, and instead, an introduction of critical, sympatric, surreal, and meaningful sub-contexts juxtaposed on more elastic compartments of these neighborhoods is most reasonable. Instead of putting Dutch suburbia aside or aversion or destruction of it, smaller interventions can be apt to introduce more complex social layers, more flexible uses, and more diverse users; in favor of turning their rigidity towards elasticity and unhomeliness towards fertile uncanniness.

33

Jelte Boeijenga and Jeroen Mensink, *Vinex atlas* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers Rotterdam, 2008).

Uncanny of the Banal

Uncanny, as translated to unhomey from the German word *unheimlich*, is a notion contrasting the palpable sense of homely, the feeling of belonging to what can be called home or something related to home, or homey. Uncanny is generated by a subtle off-being in an object or place, that simultaneously, reminds one of something homely, and something extremely unhomey.³⁴ The empty corridors of schools during holidays are an architectural example of such uncanny, which reminds us of something off about the situation, however gently. Adorno cites Freud that "the uncanny is uncanny only because it is secretly all too familiar, which is why it is repressed",³⁵ the suburban image of home with the deserted streets, barren landscapes, and repetitions shapes an image of uncanny or liminality especially when it is not inhabited or busy by pedestrians in most cases an uncanny that is mostly unpleasant and a reminder of horror.

However, the uncanny is not always completely unpleasant, the uncanny was a potential instrument in the hand of modernist avant-gardes, for the process of defamiliarization. The unfamiliar, estranged, and distanced from nature, could be recalled by a deliberate tending towards shock, using defamiliarization, *ostranenie*, and deliberately strange-making processes. Modern uncanny has been the basis for outnumbered literature, and art moves, from Kafkaesque coexistence of banality and extraordinary within working-class everyday life in the *Trial*, to automatization, de-realization, and estrangement within works of Symbolists, Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists. The liminality of uncanny situations is one great motivation for exploring the world between dream and awakened, making uncanny an aesthetic object, or moreover, a method to achieve shock and disturbance.³⁶ Thus, not only does the uncanny already exist in the suburban environment of Vinex neighborhoods in the form of horror, but also it can be studied to

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Sigmund Freud, David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton, *The uncanny*, Penguin classics, (New York: Penguin Books New York, 2003).

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Theodor W. Adorno and C. Lenhardt, *Aesthetic theory*, The International library of phenomenology and moral sciences, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul London, 1986).

36

Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny : Essays in the Modern Unhomey*, 5. pr ed. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press Cambridge, Mass, 1999).



Figure.7

Suburban Interiors,
from the photobook
Bouwlust, by Theo
Baart.

achieve a greater sense of defamiliarization and estrangements with the normal, rigid situation.

The process of homely making, through personal manifestation and personalizing one's space, can be seen as an initial response to the existing suburban uncanny. Personal manifestation, as a method of "firmly attaching to a place, by a stable, hierarchical, and authoritarian family: a house that protects the inhabitant from an inauthentic, aggressive, external environment, and which is linked in time and memory to a subject whose origin and lineage completely explain him, so to speak. The house is the place of the authentic; it is the refuge that protects one from the outside, from inclement weather and from natural forces, but also from the mundane and the superficial."³⁷ Like the process of laughter, this manifestation is also a way to soften the rigidity of the environment make a space one's own, and communicate with others in terms of authenticity.

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, in their studio called Learning from Levittown, examined American suburbs, and explored how people personalize their space in mundane everyday environments. The result was that in such regions the front gardens and porches are a platform for the manifestation of their user's beliefs and ideals.³⁸ In Dutch Vinex neighborhoods such manifestations emerge in backyards and interiors. According to the inhabitants of Almere in the Netherlands, the neighborhood has become a collection of facilities whose users change. The form, layout, and furnishings of a house are the representation of a culture. The interior and the garden are the elastic parts by which people can make a statement about themselves.³⁹

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Abalos, *The Good Life: A Guided Visit to the Houses of Modernity*.

38

Beatriz Colomina, "Learning From Levittown: A Conversation With Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown," (2007).

39

Baart, *Bouwlust : the urbanization of a polder*.

Sympatric Territoriality

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Stanford Anderson,
"People in the physical
environment: the urban
ecology of streets"
(1975).

The human habitats can only be studied virtuously under the domain of complex human interactions, although an alternative methodology suggests a study of humanity through analogical scrutiny of biological territories. Even though the complexity and diversity of relations and interactions within the human habitat cannot be minimized to match the scope of biological habitats, it is still beneficial to study animals in the physical environments and compare them with paradigms which explore human habitats. Stanford Anderson in his essay *People in the Physical Environment: The Urban Ecology of Streets* describes the idea of Sympatric territoriality, which later builds the foundation of his ideal interpretation of a rich-in-event human habitat.

Sympatric territoriality refers to a situation in which two or more species occupy the same geographic area or range, without physical barriers preventing interbreeding between them. Sympatric refers to animal territories that are based on the co-habitation of different species, with diverse patterns of life, exploiting various resources within their territory. In such an environment, the interactions become rich due to the complex patterns of conflict and competition alongside cooperation within different species.⁴⁰ Contrary to sympatric territories, in allopatric territories certain groups of species have been adapted to function in segregated areas, in a lack of allies and competitors these species create mosaics of defined areas as their territory that is impermeable for others. Unlike sympatry, these territories have less diversity and richness, and less potential to adapt to the changes.

The sympatric territories within the ecological realm are like the center of historical cities within the human realm, which Anderson refers to as the "architectural environment as an artifact" unlike the "architectural environment as a design object". architectural environment as an artifact can be seen as organizations of form resulting from human actions while the deliberate result of a design creates a "design object". Thus a rich elastic environment should take its shape from the unencumbered actions of users and a community of users,⁴¹ not by developing models of a plastic society through a design of an environment untouched by the wear of time, and natural occurrence of events. The multilayered, complex structure of the old towns within are like sedimentary layers of history juxtaposed on one another. The combination of layers of history containing diverse viewpoints, uses of spaces, and standards have shaped the organic, complex relations within these regions. The coexistence of different norms and palimpsest of contradictory ideologies have made these centers regions for undefined activity to happen. Moreover, the population of such environments consists of diverse people using different resources, and interacting by different means, helping to enhance the robustness of their environment. On the other hand, the newly developed suburban environments are a byproduct of much narrower scopes defined by certain groups of governors and immune from the wear of time, sufficing the basic needs of crowds. hence, these regions will become more or less, allopatric territories, with a shallow, on-surface combination of events, pleasant to limited groups of people but also driving them into more isolation. Thus, in response to the physical planners who argue for the expansion and growth of suburbia to accommodate the so-called "societal norm", Anderson on behalf of Gans argues that many individuals appreciate high-density urbanism as the society does not follow a singular defined norm, but flourishes through a development of behavioral alternatives rich in contrasts.⁴²

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Stanford Anderson, "Environment as Artifact: Methodological Considerations," *Casabella* 35 (1971).

42

Herbert J. Gans, *People and plans: essays on urban problems and solutions*. Abridged ed, Pelican sociology, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Harmondsworth, 1972).

Anderson argues in the nonconforming setting, people can choose to act innovatively within their environment which provides a context for traditional and novel activities to happen. Nonetheless, segregation and isolation of people through ideologies and utopian understandings, are often proven to lead to failure of the speculated plans. Urban failures like the creation of ghettos are usually unpredicted byproduct of dividing people into groups and separating them from one another which eventually will lead to intensification of the gaps. For example, Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam being built to accommodate people with certain classes, in zones that are divided by their function –as an extension of the Corbusian functional zoning and urban villages– not only did not solve the problem but failed drastically after the failure of the functional zoning and segregation as a greater scheme.

The physical environment has the ability to determine, limit, or reinforce a range of activities regardless of the received social constraints, and the prewritten norms and flows within a society. Therefore, not also it is shaped by the dominant ideologies but also influential to them. The physical environment is a domain of potential and its robustness can determine the impact that it has on the users and to what extent it is capable of hosting unforeseen events. Thus, Anderson argues an ecological approach toward human settings is an allegory to avoid blind commitment to the norms and status quo to define space as a platform for the unforeseen to happen and for the planners to take in mind the resilience of space when designing and planning.

Towards Elasticity, Anti-rigid Design

Reflecting on the richness of sympatric human territories Anderson invites us to speculate on the future of the built environment and the domain of physical potential within it. The domestic environment for humans can be supportive of both traditional and innovative activities. This nonconforming space is the physical environment capable of allowing and reinforcing a range of liberating events beyond any system of norms, and social constraints. The sympatry and diversification of human interactions can lead to the robustness and resilience of an environment.

The physical human environment can be seen as an arena for potential, the interpretation of potential differs per individual, however, the effective and influential environment is associated with more than a single subjective interpretation, making an intersubjective field of potential.⁴³ The park is not merely a spatial organization and combination of matters, however, more importantly, it is a domain of potential that gains meaning and becomes an effective environment only in relation to the societal norms and culture of its users and the robustness of it is directly related to the diversity of these cultures and richness of the activity.

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Anderson, "People in the physical environment: the urban ecology of streets."

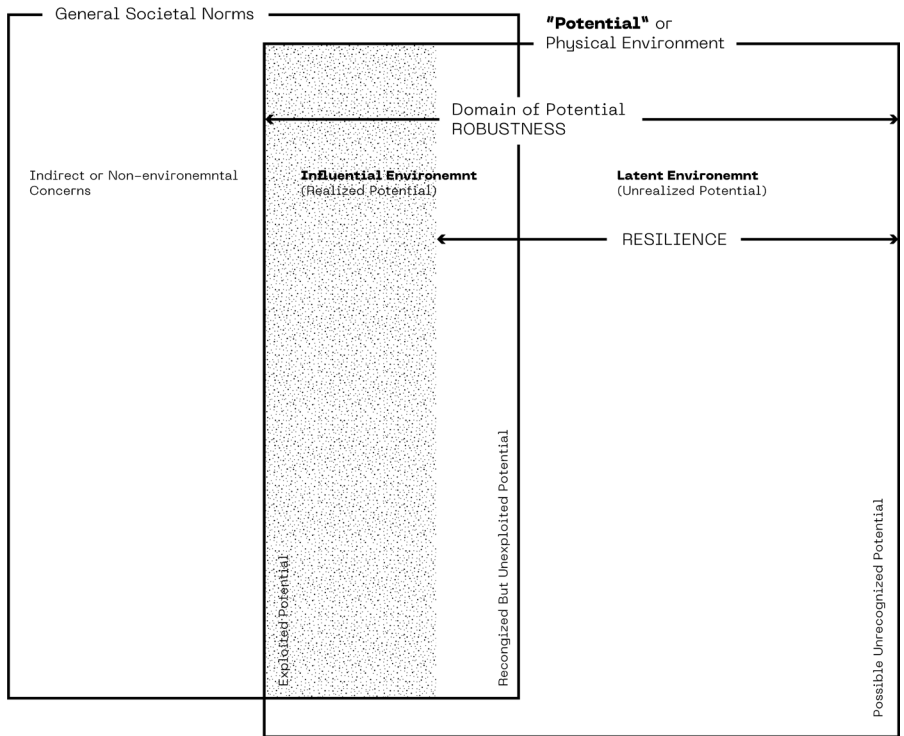


Figure.8

Diagram of the field of potential within the built environment, redrawn by an author, from Stanford Anderson's People in The Physical Environment.

The physical environment that is shaped around the societal norms creates the "potential environment" and the extent of the potential determines the robustness of it. From suburban settings to historic city centers this robustness increases drastically. As the speculation on the domain of potential envisioned by the architects and planners gets richer, the higher the robustness will be within an environment, this can be culminated over long periods or by planning and observing the already existing rich environments. Within this domain of robustness, there are "influential" and "latent" environments. The influential environment refers to the realized potential whether it is exploited or not. On the other hand, the latent environment is the domain of unrealized and unexploited potential, latency in this environment is heavily reliant on the change in the physical environment itself. The two domains of realized but unexploited and unrealized potential together coin the resilience of the environment.

44
Anderson, "People
in the physical
environment: the urban
ecology of streets."

Joseph Abram,
Tschumi Le Fresnoy
: architecture in/
between (New York:
Monacelli Press New
York, 2012).

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On one hand the diversity of influential environment for different individuals within the same potential environment, and on the other the change of influential environment over decades without a need for a necessary change in the physical form creates a nondeterministic and elastic environment that is richer than any rigidly fixed and utterly crafted space.⁴⁴ The intent is not to create unprogrammed spaces supporting possible inventive and unforeseen options for the use of places, the very fact that we can visit a chapel as a museum, or concert hall nowadays does not sign toward the design of non-places but suggests the initial design of potential spaces that can be exploited in an alternative way after a shift in the sacred nature of it happens.⁴⁵ This does not encourage the design of undetermined spaces with no function attached to them, or spaces that do not serve any particular purpose, but it suggests designing with an elasticity in mind that facilitates further change due to the norm changes demanding minimal spatial transformation. Unlike a normal coffin that is restricted within the defined boundaries of space, a nonconforming architecture is mostly defined by the patterns of use and action and not the design.

Conclusion

Authenticity and Inauthenticity reveal the extent to which individuality is cherished, authentic beings, are nonconforming by virtue of not following the norm and the trend blindly, not merely revolting against any norm, by just being anti-norm, but questioning it, reflecting on the meaning of phenomena to one's unique existence, accepting the challenge of individual responsibility. "It is, in that respect, a technique for suspending time, for "bracketing" the historicity of knowledge and the human being in favor of an idealist return to "the things themselves", Whose essence is revealed to us through "purified experience". This purified experience is nothing other than the total supremacy of perception over the remaining forms of approximation to reality."⁴⁶

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Abalos, *The Good Life: A Guided Visit to the Houses of Modernity*.

The norm and ordinary are the reality of the banal, and no less than surreal needed in our societies. In their absence the meaning behind the extraordinary, is gone, making it a failed parody of strange within strange. Nonetheless, the most powerful surreal can only be found among the banal, and not through the existence of it out of any context. The foundation of Lynch's cinema is based on the powerful technique of the coexistence of subtlety, and bizarreness, of mundane, and surreal.

The process of mechanization and automatization is a norm-making machine, inevitably and rightfully in accordance with human evolution, the norm is that of not much critical reflection. The capacity of human thought is limited enough for the reflection, and creation of meaning. Thus automatization processes help by making norms when it seems necessary. In this mechanical sequence of events, a moment of detachment is the most precious moment. Although the extent can vary, the necessity of this moment is inevitable, life is in general capable of finding the moment, however, the physical environment is heavily influential on it, by at least easing the happening of it.

The historic city is a place with strong characters assigned to it, layers on top of layers, of history, beliefs, and conflicts of cultures have made them rich and elastic. The bizarreness in such an environment is not boldly visible but exists in every corner. Alternatively, the design objects of suburbia, contain fewer layers of events, fewer conflicts or coexistence of cultures, and are more rigid. With less sense of belonging to a place or time, with a lost or better to say never existing aura, it is not feasible nor achievable, to expect the same richness and eventfulness in such environments as we expect from historic cities, however, where architectural space exists, the architect can introduce a field of potential for extraordinary to find its way, although subtly.

The physical environment of suburbia can become a platform for a much richer activity, by the introduction of alternative ideologies, more diversity of users, and openness towards further change. The response developed in this essay is based on enhancing the sympatry within Dutch suburbia by designing alternative spaces, for yet unfamiliar users to Vinex neighborhoods. Moreover, by introducing the surreal interventions, within the homogenous context of the neighborhood, and through defamiliarizing, and exploring the uncanny of the Vinex. With a great desire to see more dreamscapes, within the most banal environments, not only in favor of more elastic, rich-in-event Dutch suburban landscapes but also in any other situation when the aura is lost; starting from the very modest scale of a bicycle shed, but this time hopefully the bicycle shed not only as a building but as Architecture.

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