

The background features a repeating geometric pattern. It consists of a grid of circles, each surrounded by four leaf-like shapes that point towards the corners of a square. The pattern is rendered in a lighter shade of blue against a darker blue background. The text is centered in the middle of the page.

VOID CAPITAL
TEXTS

THE CITY OF PERPETUAL MODERNITY

VOID CAPITAL

PROPOSES A NEW MODEL OF DENSIFICATION
FOR THE WESTERN METROPOLIS

VOID CAPITAL

IS A PROCESS WHICH INTERVENES IN THE
UNBUILT TO GENERATE ARCHITECTURE
FOR THE CITY

VOID CAPITAL

RECOGNIZES THE FUNDAMENTALS AS TOOLS
IN ARCHITECTURE'S LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE
TO HOUSE NOVEL DESIRES

VOID CAPITAL

QUESTIONS THE EXISTING GRADIENTS OF
OWNERSHIP AMONGST WORKSPACE, DOMESTIC
AND PUBLIC SPHERES IN THE EMERGING PE-
DESTRIAN-FRIENDLY URBAN CORE

VOID CAPITAL

CHALLENGES MUSÉIFICATION, BANAL URBAN
REMOVAL, THE INVENTION OF NEW FORMS
PER SE, PERIPHERY'S SOCIAL ISOLATION, THE
COMMODIFICATION OF LEISURE.

VOID CAPITAL

CLAIMS THAT THE ACCOMMODATION OF THE
CAPITALIST PROGRAM TO THE BUILT INFRA-
STRUCTURE IS A PROCESS IN WHICH THE VOID
HOLDS AN ESSENTIAL ROLE.

PROLOGUE

Today, the modernist ideal of a controllable city is not relevant anymore. The current urbanization rates have long rendered such visions obsolete. The developing world city with all its unpredictable qualities has become this century's primal concern. At the same time, the architectural state of the developed western metropolis seems to be yesterday's question. However, it is this type of city that thanks to its popular and established qualities, serves as a model that the emerging one strives to follow. The commodified scenery is the new urban ideal of our time.

The western metropolis incorporates a similar contradiction in its own flesh. On the one hand, the periphery, in deficit, always seems to lack the basic necessities of a good life. It is therefore condemned to perpetually re-organize and modernize itself. On the other hand, the center serves as an excellent showcase of exciting, added-value cultures. This dichotomy of the urban fabric naturally leads to a continuous flow from the first to the latter; a flow of people, of commodities, of desires. As a result, a housing crisis and a demand for further densification of the urban core is at place.

Paris is one of the most eloquent examples of such disparities. In an architectural scale however, it is possible,

to look at this question in a different way. A common ground between Paris and many other cities is that while the city center is desired, it becomes itself less and less, city-like. For it is because of its historically ideal status, that every change, is strictly prohibited. But in reality, it is a hollow kind of history that is preserved. Most of the buildings have been entirely made over, their façades kept intact. Furthermore, this Potemkin village seems to be another version of an isolated museum, where all unpredictable social practices are expelled. Only a specific group of people, with limited expectations, can be satisfied.

The possibility of a structure that embraces the urban complexity and satisfies all variants of our metropolitan condition is this project's first intention.

What is more specific to Paris is that the supposed inferiority of the periphery can be described with two concrete architectural icons. Born out of the separation of living and working, they were both initially designed as extremely positive proposals for the city's future. Grand Ensemble and Quartier d'Affaires: Their names alone are today perceived as frightening. How can this ephemeral modernity be held on to?

Preserving the modern character of a densified part of the city is this project's second intention.

ADDED VALUE SCENERIES

THE DESTRUCTIVE CHARACTER KNOWS ONLY ONE WATCHWORD: MAKE ROOM. AND ONLY ONE ACTIVITY: CLEARING AWAY. HIS NEED FOR FRESH AIR AND OPEN SPACE IS STRONGER THAN ANY HATRED. (...) HE HAS FEW NEEDS, AND THE LEAST OF THEM IS TO KNOW WHAT WILL REPLACE WHAT HAS BEEN DESTROYED. FIRST OF ALL, FOR A MOMENT AT LEAST, EMPTY SPACE -- THE PLACE WHERE THE THING STOOD OR THE VICTIM LIVED. SOMEONE IS SURE TO BE FOUND WHO NEEDS THIS SPACE WITHOUT OCCUPYING IT.

WALTER BENJAMIN, "THE DESTRUCTIVE CHARACTER" IN ONE-WAY STREET, AND OTHER WRITINGS, TRANS. E. JEPHCOTT, K. SHORTER, (LONDON: NLB, 1979), 157.

Parisian void never wholly was one, but was ever in process of becoming.

Void Capital makes a forthright use of the term void: a milieu where a physical absence of material is manifested, or by convention, at the architectural scale, the parts of the building or the urban fabric that present no constructions, allowing air, light, people to circulate towards multiple directions. Most commonly, those are courtyards, streets, atria etc. The project claims that, within the architectural realm, the void can be structurally and physically independent for study.

In the following essay I aim to explore the dialectical tension between two dimensions of the void which traverse the present body of work in its totality: The Form of the void and the Performance of the void. The first term refers to the phenotype, the nature of the observable

membrane that surrounds void. The second term refers to the genotype, the inherited, programmatic map which determines the working, or the impact that empty space can have on the user, at a given time (It's the architect who gave a material expression to the genome, the proposed brief). In capitalism, when "ideal" performance is attained, we may speak of the state of an "added value scenery". For the consumer, that is the space which satisfies his immanent need for contemporaneity. For Walter Benjamin, that was the locus of the phantasmagoria.

If the qualities of this last situation (of an "added value scenery") can be conditioned by the architectural form, a process -even a momentary one- that leads from the latter, to the former, may exist. The description of this process -if there is one- is the object of this essay. Benja-

min's study on the elementary linear voids found in Paris at the beginning of the nineteenth century was chosen as the guinea pig on which the validity of the project's hypothesis could be tested. This choice seemed valid regarding the completeness of Benjamin's work, as well as its cultural and geographic proximity to this project. Void Capital takes place at the site of the former Samaritaine department store. The origins of this typology's fundamental schema; the oblique shortcut (the hall, the escalator) were therefore considered as necessary to be explored. The analogy is going to seem complete upon study of the corresponding schema of the *passage couvert* typology, the horizontal shortcut (the arcade, the street).

Throughout the text, the reader will come across scattered textual fragments, loosely related to the essay itself. Those are brief historical accounts of radical transformations of voids, all being part of Samaritaine's immediate context, or of the building itself. They are easily identifiable as they are typewritten in italics and can be read independently from the essay.

It is not intended to draw a design system from the following pages.

Even from a first contact with Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*, there are some simple but justified questions that arise in the reader's mind. For example, the moment we grasp the work's very theme -the fetishist phantasmagoria-, we also wonder whether the Paris' arcades, is the most representative scenery to ground the writer's arguments. Besides, the short-lived development of the *passages* network, hardly covering a few decades' period, can be considered as a rather minor event in the course of the architectural history of the city. Instead, the first department stores for example, as the canonical descendant of the previous type, could easily be seen as the backbone of the research. Logically, this choice could make sense for a much larger audience, since it would trace the origins of an immediately perceptible cognitive experience for the readers; that of mass consumerism. The *grands magasins* had played a decisive role at the dawn of this market species, but most importantly, at the time of writing, they were in full development, still incarnating a true icon of modernity.

Some answers can be given in the "Epistemo-Critical Prologue" which introduces the *Ursprung des Deutschen Trauerspiels*, where Benja-

min gives a few helpful notes about his method. This text is also important to us because it had for its writer a certain equivalence, in the German context, to the *Passagen-Werk*:¹ The academic discourse which was developed to redefine the 18th century baroque *trauerspiel*, could now bring light to the ways we understand the built environment of the “Capital of the 19th century”². That said, the choice of the less known (then) type of the passage (like the study of unpopular writers of tragic dramas), already sets the tone of a work which is the counterpart of “an investigation which does not (...) commit itself to the inclusion of everything (...) but looks for that which is exemplary, even if this exemplary character can be admitted only in respect of the merest fragment”. Furthermore, there is no intention to identify properties which are shared by old and new phenomena of the capitalist program (like the *grand magasin*), as

1 Letter to Gerhard Scholem, January 30, 1928; Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, Theodor W. Adorno, Mazal Holocaust Collection, *The correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 322.

2 See: Letter to Gerhard Scholem, May 20, 1935; Benjamin, *Correspondence*, 482.

if the writer tried to build an all-embracing genealogy of the phantasmagoria. Such an attempt -despite being ostensibly correct- would lead to the creation of a rather externally imposed system of *knowledge*, in which *truth* would be ignored, while giving an impression of unity.³ For Benjamin, the only way to acquire truth is its own representation, which is “immanent in it as form”.⁴ Since the presentation of truth can only happen in its entirety (a Platonic kind of truth), it would be impossible to use restricted linguistic means; thus, images (“total” media) become the author’s most essential tool. The 19th century images proposed here, do not impose or receive meaning. As other *machines desirantes*, they function as momentary⁵, always new revelations of all our possible links to the past, all history that still matters in the present and in the future.⁶

3 Walter Benjamin, *The origin of German tragic drama*, trans. John Osborne (London, New York: Verso, 2003), 39.

4 Ibid., 30.

5 “(...) the images (...) attain to legibility only at a particular time.”

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 262.

6 Stéphane Symons, “Paris and Berlin: On

*The rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois, indicates simultaneously the city’s epicenter (Cour Carrée) and the city’s outer boundary (as the name signifies). Unfortunately, we are not aware of the nature of the limit, before this became dematerialized.*⁷ *The rose window that you come across when entering the rue Perrault -as they now call what was left behind- does not date back to either the eleventh century, Philippe Auguste’s reign or even the construction of the eponymous church. It’s an exemplary piece of “high-and-late classically flamboyant gothic”; a style invented by Hittorff because the Baron was a protestant.*

The present state of the *passages couverts* is another factor that makes their choice seem unclear. Today’s showcases of this typology, polished -and sometimes even falsified- tourist attractions, protected from decay by law, do not correspond to the image of imminent death which was given at the beginning of the previ-

City Streets and Loggias”, Footprint 10, no 1 (Spring/Summer 2016), 124.

7 André Chastel, Françoise Mallet, *L’îlot de la rue du Roule et ses abords*, (Fédération des sociétés historiques et archéologiques de Paris et de l’Île-de-France, 1967), 25.

ous century.⁸ It is therefore obvious that those structures had a radically different meaning and appropriation than the one in today’s society. That simple example shows that it is through a proper study of the material and architectural remains -ruins- of the past, that a true image of history can be revealed.⁹

It is difficult for someone not to pay attention to Benjamin’s continuous fascination about ruins.¹⁰ In a letter dated June 5 1917, the writer describes the Grands Boulevards district as a Potemkin village: “(...) those houses seem made, not to be

8 “La plupart de ces passages sont condamnés à disparaître dans l’intérêt de la santé publique, physique et morale. Ils meurent d’ailleurs d’anémie commerciale.” Commission du Vieux Paris, *Procès-verbaux / Commission municipale du Vieux Paris*, (Paris : Imprimerie municipale, 1916), 222.

9 Symons, “Paris and Berlin”, 122. See: “(...) you could unearth incomparably more convincing evidence from your material and define the specific form of the nineteenth-century object world (perhaps from the perspective of its seamy side, that is from its detritus, remains, ruins).” Benjamin, *Correspondence*, 501.

10 Benjamin even parallelizes himself and Pausanias.

Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 82,83.

lived in, but to be stone stage sets between which people stroll”.¹¹ Furthermore, in an essay of 1931, the writer pays tribute to Atget’s photographic archive, which documents a rapidly changing urban physiognomy at the turn of the century: decayed arcades, abandoned courtyards, ruinous landscapes and soon-to-be demolished buildings of the old Paris. Atget’s aesthetic result is not far from the photographic album entitled “Les Ruines de Paris et de ses Environs, 1870-1871”,¹² the pictorial testimony of the Commune’s catastrophic epilogue that followed the Empire’s “grandeur”. Benjamin does refer to this album,¹³ and seems almost pleased to insist on the ironic destiny of the boulevards: the moment they were completed, the detestable barricades made their appearance. We understand that such (proto)photographs are appreciated because they manage to translate complex phenomena into a piece of paper, presenting a realistic image to the eyes of the beholder. They be-

11 Benjamin, *Correspondence*, 27.

12 See: Alphonse Liébert, Alfred d’Aulnay, *Les ruines de Paris et de ses environs*, 1870-1871, (Paris: Photographie américaine A. Liébert, 1872).

13 Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute E, 138.

“Le Théâtre Lyrique Insensidé, Vue Interieure de la Salle.” N° 36, From: A. Liébert, A. d’Aulnay, *Les ruines de Paris et de ses environs*, 1870-1871, (Paris: Photographie américaine A. Liébert, 1872).Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département Estampes et Photographie.

come allegories.¹⁴

The Angel of History is one of the most widely known allegories of the German philosopher. Simultaneously, its essence could be related to the one mentioned above: Klee’s painted figure embodies the ephemeral character of any human “grandeur”, the inevitable demolition of every edifice. Besides, in Benjamin, all allégories lead us to the notion of the ruin: ¹⁵ “les allégories sont au domaine de la pensée, ce que sont les ruines au domaine des choses”.¹⁶ Here, thinking that Benjamin focuses on the contemplation of the ruin per se (as if he was possessed by a kind of excessive German romanticism), would be a mistake. As it was illustrated by making use of the pair construction/demolition in the example of Angelus Novus, allegories are culturally and historically, dialectical images. However, the two poles have by no means the usual

14 By the term allegory, Benjamin means: “expression, comme la langue, voire comme l’écriture”; Benjamin, *German tragic drama*, p.

15 Michel Makarius, “Dans la constellation des ruines” in Pierre Hyppolite, ed., *La Ruine et le geste architectural*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2015), 214.

16 Benjamin, *German tragic drama*, p.



positive and negative dimension.¹⁷ According to that remark for example, construction, demolition and their nuances can be seen as parts of a unified process, rather than being equivalent to terms like “progress” or “decline”. The “ruin” is just another transitory stage of a continuous “actualization” of history; it is a term that establishes a direct analogy between abstract thinking and pragmatic, material study of forms, organisms and their transformation.

Emptiness is complimentary to the image of the ruin. If, for the writer, Adget’s work is fascinating, that happens because “(...) all these pictures are empty (...) the city in these pictures looks to be cleared out, like a lodging that has not yet found a new tenant”.¹⁸ By emptying the scenery of the humans, and as a consequence, of the “aura” that covered the early photographic work, Benjamin believed that the architecture of the city could be understood

17 “Overcoming the concept of “progress” and overcoming the concept of “period of decline” are two sides of one and the same thing.” Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute N, 460.

18 Walter Benjamin, “A small history of photography” in *One-way street, and other writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Kingsley Shorter, (London: NLB, 1979), 251.

in a more objectified way. Now, the beholder was able, through those pictures, to re-approach the forms that surrounded him, in a way that was impossible to happen in his everyday life. Here, a newly invented product of technology -photography- becomes a vehicle to access regions of the material world, substantially alternated by capitalism (and its own technological means), yet previously known only by our unconscious. That was true for the full scope of architectural scales. Benjamin mentions the microscopic: “details of structure”, “cellular tissue”.¹⁹ I would also add the macroscopic: Nadar’s first aerial photographs in 1858 and 1868 offered a radically new way to map, evaluate and control the urban condition. The common denominator of those different scales, is that the subject was properly distanced from the object of study. By removing any kind of “aura” in the in-between distance, the forms are denuded and reduced to their primal, mineral, character: solids and voids.; they become *ruins*.

This “technique” of objectification of architecture (by, by framing, distancing the viewer, emptying the surrounding and eventually turning

19 Benjamin, “A small history”, 243.

it into a ruin) is an essential prerequisite in the process “awakening” of the contemporary citizen of his dream.²⁰ Such a *representation* of reality was an alternative for the architect of the nineteenth century.²¹ In reality, however, when the chance of physical emptying of the city was presented, the architect made the choice of “modernization”.

It is only the very attentive passer-by that can notice a certain unity in the facades of the rue du Roule, and its medieval-like character. However, even

20 “First dialectical stage: the arcade changes from a place of splendor to a place of decay Second dialectical stage: the arcade changes from an unconscious experience to something consciously penetrated. Not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been.” Benjamin, *Arcades*, Materials for the Exposé of 1935, 907.

21 I believe that this was partially achieved by the so-called “Revolutionary” architects, like Ledoux, whose “œuvre (...) est le témoignage tangible du devenir d’un monde nouveau” Emil Kaufmann, *De Ledoux à Le Corbusier: origine et développement de l’architecture autonome*, (Paris, Editions de la Villette, Textes fondamentaux modernes, 2015), 23. Benjamin is interested to this current and includes citations from Kaufmann’s book. See: Benjamin, *Arcades*, 143, 600, 601.

*the tourist could be troubled by the incompatible frontal perspective to Saint Eustache’s south gate, one of the first this kind in the eighteenth century Paris.*²² *Beyond the aesthetic, the street’s opening had utilitarian ends which were served as soon as the quarter ceased to be attractive to the aristocracy (and its domains had fallen into ruins): to establish for the vehicles a direct shortcut between the Pont-Neuf and the Halles market (until then obliged to deviate either by the rue Béthisy and the rue des Bourdonnais or by the rue Béthisy and the rue de l’Arbre-Sec).*²³

Modernity is the allegory’s underlying theme.²⁴ The image of the deserted ruin, as an urban landscape in transition which is ready to be updated to a state of appealing newness is a characteristic example. It is at this very moment of a new project’s *becoming* that the contradictions which were then adopted by architecture (and still apply) become evident: Being modern (attaining an ephemeral character of attraction), did not only depend on the incarnation of a cutting edge technological product of its time, but also on the ways it related

22 Chastel, Mallet, *Roule*, 45.

23 Chastel, Mallet, *Roule*, 30.

24 Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute J, 239.

itself to the past.²⁵ This bipolarism (suggested by Benjamin already at the first page of his 1939 exposé), became inevitable when architecture espoused the popular ideology that even a minor object is as a testimony of a scientifically identifiable stage of the human evolution: ²⁶ “Tradition henceforth assumes the character of a phantasmagoria in which primal history enters the scene in ultra-modern get-up.”²⁷

By accepting to work with the agenda of the modern, the architects were triumphally introduced to the realm of commodification²⁸ and, by definition, the race for perpetual newness. But while the latest mate-

rials and techniques were being appropriated by other disciplines, that game had to be played on the nature on the surface. Thus, as long as it has a legitimate apparatus (for example a “proper” classical decoration, even if it is made of stucco), the architectural project can be consumed, disassembled and then present a new, more desirable variation. Of course the appropriate arguments had still to be found in history. It was the only condition still missing to transform the void from an aleatory un-built landscape to an end in itself and -hopefully- to an added-value scenery.

*La Seine has not always been the city's largest void. It is not by chance that the gradual removal of its content (the harbor's vibrant economic activity) became possible during the First Empire (and after the completion of the Villette and the Arsenal Basins). The result was a triumphal axis of monumental proportions which articulated an incredible number of past and new monuments, an unsurpassable ensemble for any newly erected boulevard. The kilometers-long promenade was undoubtedly pleasant but at the same time, “étranger à la ville”*²⁹

²⁹ Simon Texier, “La Samaritaine et l'espace monumental de la Seine: chronique

The emptying of Paris had a precise aesthetic pretext. At the time when the first *passages couverts* were constructed³⁰, the city kept its organically developed, dense medieval structure largely intact. The most notable exceptions were a few elements of public infrastructure, the so-called *places royales* and a some carefully opened arteries.³¹ Despite the rather modest number of completed works, French architecture had an elaborated and specific proposal on the way that urban publicness should look like. While there is no doubt that classicism was imported from the Renaissance Italy, from the moment that a new set of codes was formulated locally (usually marked by Lescot's Louvre facade), the French architects followed an independent path. Even during the “grand” seventeenth century, at the time of the European adventure of the baroque, French classicism preferred to function as a

d'une mutation contemporaine”, in Jean-François Cabestan, H. Lempereur, ed., *La Samaritaine*, Paris, (Paris : Picard, DL 2015), 52.

³⁰ Mainly under the First Republic and the Restauration.

³¹ Until the reign of Henri IV, la Place de Grève (where the executions took place) and the Parvis of Notre-Dame were practically the only existing urban clearings.

closed system of recycling principles, developing a standardized pedagogy which “narrowed the gap between theory and practice.”³² Here, a vogue like the Italian Mannerism never occurred. The political stability of the absolute monarchy and the gradual emergence of the bourgeoisie (like the “noblesse de robe”), developed in parallel with ideal of the normalized, nation-state, had a direct influence in the image of the city. The main purpose was the establishment of an “average”, anonymous aesthetic of the classical language, uniformly applied in vast quarters, ideally in the whole city: A single urban order, “in which the project of empty space came before that of the built mass”.³³

The impossible character of the ambitious urban project, inevitably suggested its own artificial *telos*. However, as any scientific method would indicate, an experiment was necessary before the solution's systematic implementation. That role

³² Pier Vittorio Aureli, The possibility of an absolute architecture, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 148.

³³ Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, “Specific Spaces, Government and the Emergence of architecture d'accompagnement”, in Pier Vittorio Aureli, ed., *The City as project*, (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2013), 163.

²⁵ “It is very important that the modern, with Baudelaire, appear not only as the signature of an epoch but as an energy by which this epoch immediately transforms and appropriates antiquity.” Benjamin, Arcades, convolute J, 236.

²⁶ “(...) the course of the world is an endless series of facts congealed in the form of things.” Benjamin, Arcades, exposé 1939, 14.

²⁷ Benjamin, Arcades, convolute B, 116.

²⁸ “The commodity character specific to the nineteenth century, i.e. industrial commodity production, (...), because, of course, commodity character and alienation have existed ever since the beginning of capitalism (...)” Benjamin, Correspondence, 497.

was played by the arcades. Their roots are synchronic and syntopic with the ones of mass production,³⁴ and initially, they responded to a pragmatic need: At the street level, the city presented numerous difficulties for the pedestrians. It was designed to function, even from its darkest origins (“Galerie de Bois”)³⁵ as an artificial environment: away from the city’s difficult reality (climate, mud etc.), but still, presenting all the regular, architectural attributes that a street in an ideal city, constructed ex nihilo, was supposed to have. And this was where the ingenuity of the *passage couvert* laid: It was the site of estrangement of the

34 Manuel Delanda suggested that mass production was invented by Honoré Blanc, rather than Ford. At the end of the eighteenth century, Blanc’s idea about weapons made of interchangeable parts was developed within the French military production camps. Manuel DeLanda, lecture “The City and Capitalism. 2011”, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQNfNbES9oA>

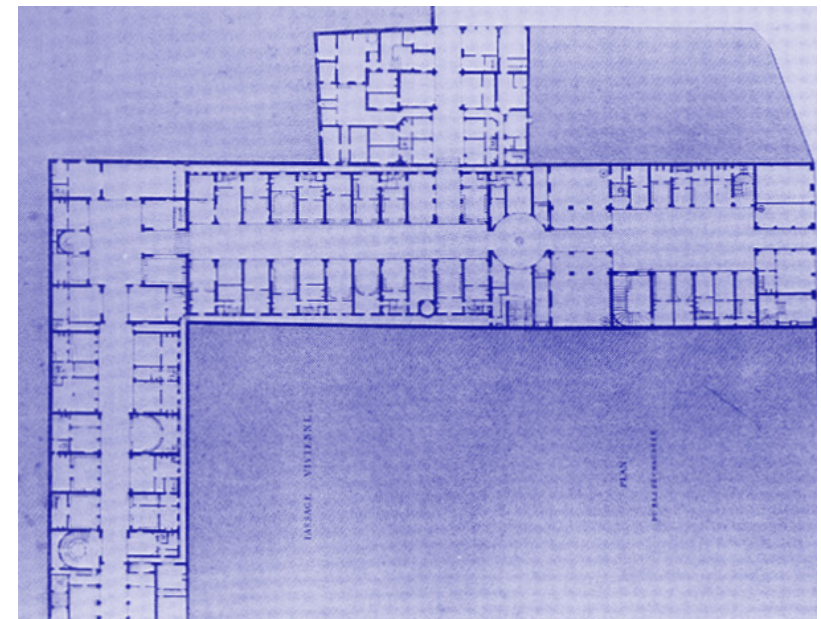
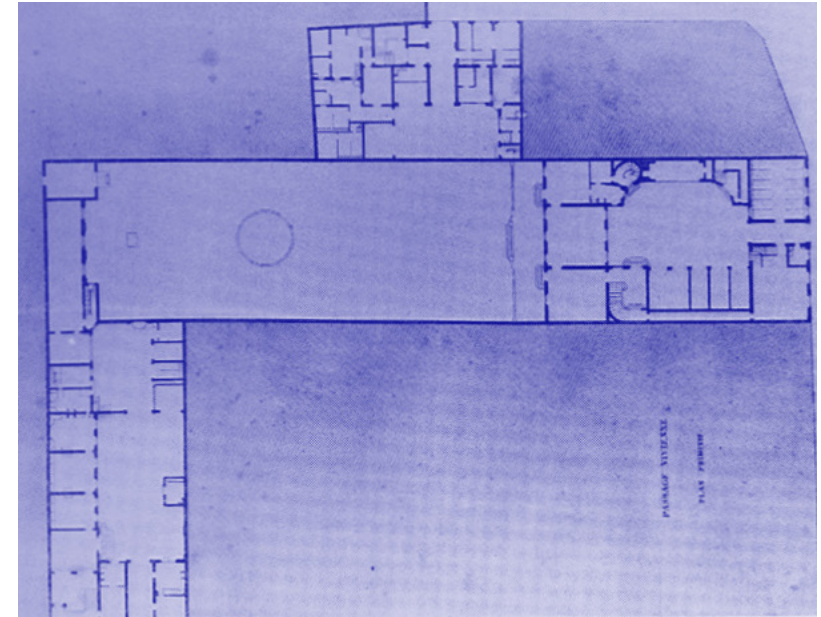
35 Benjamin explicitly mentions many times that the wood was used in architecture as an archaic version of contemporary materials, like iron (A parallelism with ancient Greek temples could be made here). For example: “(...) the image of its rustic prehistory.” Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute E, 87.

Galerie Vivienne, Site plan, before/after construction. Document retrieved from Carmen Calandra’s history courses, first semester, 2011-2012, ENSA Paris La Villette.

city *par excellence*, but it “objectively” presented many practical advantages. Based on them, none would ever blame the pedestrian, who effortlessly would find himself inside. The veritable kitsch of the industrially produced decoration, fake replica of older prototypes was quickly forgotten, since the rest of the -genuinely modern this time- features (displaying, lighting, advertising) created the festive atmosphere.

The *passage* is a story of a finite commodity (land) that produces infinite wealth thanks to the declared unbuilt zone that it encloses; this is the investment which ensures the project’s long-term viability. For its stakeholders, it was a solution for the densification of the urban block’s interior, until then essentially consisted of the remaining space between the surrounding buildings, or within old aristocratic properties. Obsolete courtyards or light wells could now be rendered profitable.³⁶ The simple opening, within the block, of an *enfilade* which connected two highly frequented streets, was the main instrument of the new *machine à vendre*. With the arcade,

36 The motives behind the creation of the Passage du Caire. Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute G, 188.



something extraordinary happened: It was now shown that if the city's "stock" of unbuilt fabric was properly reshaped (classicist architecture was the alibi), it could be put into work, and generate money. Additionally, the absence of free space for the realization of speculators' projects, was not an issue: *more* empty space could become available within the city's existing fabric, following an easy process of demolition/reconstruction. Eventually, the result of such surgical operations was a kind of interiorized void, which in terms of program, was exclusively devoted to the private individual's metropolitan hedonism.³⁷ In the urban context, this would become the breeding ground of a *modus vivendi* based on consumption.

At the origins of the arcade typology, (five years prior to the opening of

37 Even if the arcades started gradually to form a network, resulting in a pleasant continuity (the pedestrian could cross numerous blocks by following the course of the successive passages), speaking of *utilité publique* would be rather obscure. Their development functioned rather parasitically to the existing fabric. This primarily speculative character was an important difference to the older projects of royal urbanism.

*the Galerie de Bois du Palais Royal) the project of a passage with two octagonal courts appeared at the place where the Samaritaine's central hall stands today.*³⁸ *The project was abandoned, but the fusion of plots facilitated later interventions.*

In the market economy, the void is needed. Its role is to dissolve the private individual's identity in favor of that of the consumer. It does so by pictorial stimuli: It projects a dream-like lifestyle to the eyes of the clientele. This is achieved by presenting the commodity, the useful,³⁹ absolutely necessary object for the realization of the dream, and the tangible evidence that this can come to life. If the architecture of container (the void) presents the contained (the commodity) in appropriate conditions, then it looks "contemporary", appealing to the eyes of the individual. For example, natural light or an impressive viewpoint are qualities that distract from the shopping

38 Jean-François Cabestan, "La conquête du plein-pied ou la genèse des quatre magasins", in *La Samaritaine, Paris*, (Paris : Picard, DL 2015), 15-36.

39 The consumer as the another "collector who liberates things from the curse of being useful" Benjamin, *Correspondence*, 496.

experience itself which therefore becomes more pleasant. To such an extent, that it is more probable that, under those conditions, the client would actually proceed to the purchase. At this point, the void may be called an "added value scenery". (We know that in the department stores, the commodities' added value laid on the techniques of their display, rather than their quality.⁴⁰) Then, the greatest challenge for architecture would be to ensure appeal (its complicity) in perpetuity, by generating new versions of its former self. By doing so in well-established time increments (e.g. sales), a pedagogic relation with a the middle and upper classes may be developed. Gradually, the container becomes associated so strongly to the contained commodity, that their images merge into one. A step into the void becomes a yet unfulfilled promise.

La Samaritaine is a hybrid urban block; an exceptional monument born out of the banal residential fabric, and developed by gradually incorporating and modernizing its neighboring plots.

40 Geoffrey Crossick, *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850-1939*, ed. Serge Jaumain (Aldershot, VT: Ashgate, 1999), 27.

During the years of the development, the adaptation of the newly acquired apartment buildings to the commercial use became systematized: demolition of interior partitions, replacement of the load-bearing tectonic elements with prefabricated iron columns, fusion of buildings by propagating translucent floors of the same height, respect of the existing plot's limits. The old courtyards are usually directly transformed into glass-roofed halls. The intervention on the number 8 rue de l'Arbre Sec was the last of this kind.

With Haussmann, historical Paris as a city in the making comes to an end. The larger project of an irrelevant artificial city (seemingly classical and yet technologically modern), named after the old one, was put into place. Besides, it is true that Parisian's adaptation to the experiment of the arcade was successful: Approximately one hundred and fifty were opened. Even the impression that the actual city's unbuilt fabric could be entirely replaced by an extended linear network of arcades was given.⁴¹ Despite not being

41 "This was easily done by erecting covered walkways across every street. (...) a person could stroll through the entire city without ever being exposed to the elements (...) the streets of old-which, they often said, were

glass-roofed, Empire's boulevards (themselves realized thanks to the first construction prefabrication methods) did function as controlled environments, as in an analogy with the smaller *passages*. The vast arteries facilitated circulation and their standardized facades provided a neutral template that modern *boutiques* could colonize and use as a backdrop. The boulevard also denied the city's different localities (formal, social, economic etc.). It was *deterri- torialized*, it only satisfied the larger project of the new capital, rather than any of the vital needs of the neighboring quarters. Within that context, citizens and former neighbors, after being alienated from their own city, they got literally distanced from each other; thus, more likely to behave as individuals.⁴² It was that total schism between the new city and the archaeological detritus of the old one that made Benjamin to visualize the boulevard as a colossal

fit only for dogs." Tony Molin, cited by Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute A, 53.

Similar ambitions in London, soon give birth to projects like the Great Victorian Way of Joseph Paxton.

⁴² "Each passerby now avoids the others, or nods from afar". Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute E, 146.

trompe-l'œil.⁴³

The web of voids alone, was Paris. From the newly born city, what would remain unbuilt (streets, eclectic roundabouts etc) was the basic feature that was constructed. This superimposed structure most of the times seemed to be a product of pure logical luckiness. In reality, the evangelized "modernization" was a kind of "zoning"; the urban fabric was compartmentalized into thematic zones each one of which accommodated a part of the metropolitan program ("a city of study, a city of commerce" etc.). They looked to be divided by an entirely newly woven network of generic blank voids,⁴⁴ an imperfect but physical system of abstract coordinates, almost like a distorted grid. Really, was it *because* such a grid was generic or arbitrary that it was able to guide the radical

⁴³ Also: "Haussmann lays out an artificial city, like something in Canada or the Far West" Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute E, 132.

⁴⁴ Benjamin citing Fournel "distinct small cities within the capital (...) And this is what is being obliterated ... by the construction everywhere of the same geometrical and rectilinear street, with its unvarying milelong perspective and its continuous rows of houses that are always the same" Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute E, 146.

transformation of a city with such an architectural depth?

Elsewhere, hierarchies of grids were used as managerial tools to control the city's land use and mathematically regulate the built/unbuilt equilibrium, ensuring that enough room is made for the new constructions. In a certain way, the term *fashion* can describe what Koolhaas has called the "enabling force" of the grid. It is a tool that allows to easily rearrange, at regular intervals, the relation between the organic (the consumer) and the inorganic (architecture) so that the second doesn't lose its attractiveness. Preservation is antinomial to the grid, except if it is itself *in fashion*.

In Paris, on the contrary, the infrastructural network that was put into place only intended to ensure the continuity of fluxes: railways, vehicles, people.⁴⁵ Paradoxically enough though, at the street level, the resulted transitions could not be more brutal (This is obvious even for today's visitor). Pragmatically, even if such an intention was never consciously formulated, the random system of linear thresholds that was put into place, was proved to be more efficient as a kind of reg-

⁴⁵ Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute E, 126.

ulator of the variability of the urban experience. Benjamin describes his perception of this discontinuous urbanism: "The city is only apparently homogeneous. (...) To know them [the cities] means to understand those lines that, (...) function as limits; (...) together with the enclaves of the various districts. As threshold, the boundary stretches across streets; a new precinct begins like a step into the void -as though one had unexpectedly cleared a low step on a flight of stairs."⁴⁶ The idea that well-defined rules (like the grid) can consciously lead to a multitude of ways according to which the individual visualizes the city, seems unsettling (at least for the "modernists"). It is not the current's essay intention to elaborate on that, but what's essential in Benjamin's remark is that, with Haussmann's "distorted grid", the motivated by the void, individual's ephemeral self-disappearance, had been extrapolated to the scale of the city.

Would it be possible to imagine a system that merges the two species of grids into one?

With the tabula rasa in the southern part of Samaritaine's block,

⁴⁶ Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute C, 88.

Jourdain brings to life the department store that had roughly described to his friend Zola twenty years earlier.⁴⁷ Thus, a monumental interior void dominated the southern part, while in the northern one, a crowd of atria, diverse in size and shapes (“Hall de la Literie”, “Hall des Chapeaux”, “des Fleurs”, “Hall des Mouchoirs” etc.) created a more domestic atmosphere. The ensemble is completed by eliminating the rue des Prêtres-Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois and conforming to the City’s epidermic requirements. Throughout the decades of its intense reconstruction, Samaritaine did not close its doors to its clientele even for a single day.

The *grand magasin* is the simulacrum of Haussmann’s city, within a single building.⁴⁸ It is always strategically placed at the confluence of movements, since the mass is its audience.⁴⁹ Two are the main features

47 Marianne Clatin, “Du Bonheur des dames à la Samaritaine”, in J.-F. Cabestan, H. Lempereur, ed., *La Samaritaine, Paris*, 15-36.

48 Information for this paragraph was drawn from the history thesis of the author.

49 “(...) with the establishment of department stores, consumers begin to consider themselves a mass.” Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute A, 43.

Reconstruction of the building situated in 20, rue de l’Arbre Sec, around 1900, Samaritaine Archives.

of the department store: the façade and the interior hall. The client is attracted by the former (usually an eclectic masquerade that stands out from the blanc context), but is definitely kept inside by the latter. This role is important, because wandering in this territory of uninterrupted shopping is not pleasant by definition.⁵⁰ Here, the spatial qualities were rather limited, probably equivalent to those of a multi-storey car park. The hall was the only refuge from the typical commercial floor’s harsh horizontality (as another urban “clearing” in the dense medieval fabric). Here, instead of the horizontal shortcuts (boulevards) of the city, oblique shortcuts (welcoming stairs, then escalators) which flattened the floors, were adopted. It was the only element, thanks to its various benefits, that legitimated the outrageous size of the building. Additionally, the disposition of the shelving full of commodities was a direct response to the same principles that shaped the larger city: the perspectival *mise-en-scène* and the perception of circulation as the driving force of the whole system.⁵¹

50 “they take in all the floors are a glance”. Benjamin, *Arcades*, convolute A, 60.

51 Rafael Serrano Sasetta, *La création d’un*



Samaritaine's Sports Association, Samaritaine Archives.

With the opening of the rue de Rivoli and the rue du Pont-Neuf and their flourishing commercial activity, "all unbuilt space, courtyards, gardens, jardins, jeux de paume" have disappeared in Samaritaine's neighborhood.⁵² However, this was counterbalanced by a complete spectrum of much more "interesting" facilities inside Samaritaine. Besides the store itself, an observatory, a café, a nursery, a monumental kitchen (able to serve 9,000 people within three hours) and facilities of the employees' sports' association found their place within the building.

This essay focused on the new forms of void that emerged within an urban environment in course of modernization (in this case, the nineteenth century Paris). Today, those types are considered as commonplaces: the *passage*, the *boulevard*, the *hall*. Then, they were constructed as absolutely necessary features of a new, contemporary city. While it is difficult to claim the original character of such elementary urban figures (In reality, they were industrial derivatives of older types), the main novelty was the task that

type architectural: *Les grands magasins parisiens (1844–1930)*, (Lille: ANRT, 2004), 209.

52 Chastel, Mallet, *Roule*, 52.

they were assigned with: to perform as, what we have called "added-value sceneries". That new kind of ideal state that the city-dweller encountered was firstly tested in the arcade, later spread within the fabric with the boulevard, lastly trapped within the city's miniature, the department store. To the eyes of the consumer, form and performance successfully formed a whole, a dialectical image, which promised unconditional hedonism. This representational capacity, in the wider context of early capitalism's project which intended to change the city's population into a commodity-consuming mass (products and leisure)⁵³, was very important. It presented a reliable model for the accommodation of a newly born program in the already dense Western city. The typologies were copied and reproduced in Paris and elsewhere.

Since the *void as added value scenery* is a dialectical image, it vibrates; it appears and the next moment dissolves. As time goes by, the image is less likely to appear.⁵⁴ Re-stimulating that image is the fundament of the

53 What happens today in China.

54 This becomes evident when studying the attractiveness that the cases mentioned above had in the twentieth century.



ephemeral character of modernity. Ideally, that should happen at a low cost. An architecture of minimal intervention; an architecture that prefers to create conditions rather than imposing solutions; an architecture flexible enough to accommodate unpredictable future uses; those are all issues at the heart of today's discourse within the discipline. As long as *function* withdraws from the past's creeds, the experimentation on the openness of the *form*, which does not limit itself into white boxes, but also stimulates imagination (creates dream-like images), has to come into the fore. This is why, void's fundamental simplicity of form and potentially exciting performance can be of an interest for us today.

One could argue that form should not have the intention to result in a sequence of temporary images. This is understandable,

however it is hard to imagine how architecture would be able to bypass the reality of the current economic model which does use similar tools (perhaps more intensely than ever). For the architect, constructing with the forms that already exist seems to be more demanding than inventing new ones. Representing architecture in its most primal qualities, namely as a ruin (in solids and voids), is a task that turns our focus to the form itself. Revisiting the role that the void can have in the emergence of images, presents a double potential: grasp the commodified character of the existing models, but instead of doing another tabula rasa (the destructive character), take advantage of them and *allow* modern ones to occur.



1.1
ROOMS

DESIRE FOR EVERYTHING, DESIRE FOR NOTHING

THE INTERIOR OF THE CUBE IS EMPTY, BUT YOUR INVENTIVE SPIRIT
WILL FILL IT WITH EVERYTHING YOU DREAM OF.

LE CORBUSIER IN CIAM VIII THE HEART OF THE CITY: TOWARDS THE HUMANISATION OF URBAN
LIFE ED SERT AND ROGERS TYWHITT (LUND HUMHRIES, 1952)

Emptiness and plentitude were complimentary for Le Corbusier. Three times had the architect the chance to make his model for a Museum of Unlimited Growth to come into being (Ahmedabad 1952, Tokyo 1959 and Chandigarh). In his usual enthusiasm to propose much more than what was predicted in the initial brief, his “boîte à miracles” makes its appearance.

The miracle box is a multifunctional white cube whose interior happens to be completely empty. It is thanks to its technical equipment that an infinite number of interior situations is possible: theatrical representation, dance, cinema, electronic games.¹ In principle, its dimensions

1 Cecilia O’Byrne “La boîte a miracles, de Tokyo à Ronchamp”, in *Annuaire 2012 de la Fondation Le Corbusier. La boîte à miracles- Le Corbusier et le théâtre.* (Marseille : Imbernon Editions 2012), 82.

were to be gigantic², however a rather modest size is adopted for the actual intervention (40x24m in Tokyo). The finality of its limits was uncontested. However, the box was not sealed: interior and exterior shared the scene, echoing Le Corbusier’s belief that “the outside is always an inside”.³

The much more famous model of a Museum of Unlimited Growth is exclusively devoted to exhibition. The highly standardized building components ensured an -overwhelmingly- equal treatment on all exhibits, while the lurking monotony of an endless catalogue was dealt with an ingenious flexibility of the internal fittings. Le Corbusier placed the building above a

2 In the iconic sketch, we remark the microscopic size of the entrance and the visitors.

3 Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture*, (Paris, G. Crès et cie. 1928), 154.

disguised ephemeral garden; in reality a continuous working site, since theoretically the prolongation works could resume at any moment.

Conceived as parts of the same cultural complex, the white cube (a receptacle of a new meaning every day) and the machine à exposer (which reconfigures its shape -but not its conditions- to accumulate *all* meanings) were supposed to work together. Le Corbusier explains about his “spontaneous theatre” concept: “Spontaneity means to erupt, not to record carefully.”⁴ Thus, as Huxley would put it,⁵ the first -empty- building stimulates *understanding* through experiences (for the French architect consciousness comes from within⁶), the second -full- building promotes *knowledge*, through the contemplation of objects.

The “boîte à miracles” becomes a secondary -but indispensable and

4 AA.VV., *CIAM VIII – The Heart of the City*, ed Sert et Rogers Tywhitt (Lund Humhries, 1952), 41-52.

5 A. Huxley, “Knowledge and Understanding”, in *Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow* (Signet Books, 1964), 11.

6 The Corbusian definition of the Spontaneous theatre is included in the CIAM VIII text: “To erupt from the depths of one’s being-which is consciousness”, Sert et Rogers Tywhitt, *The heart of the City*, 41-52.

fixed- feature of Le Corbusier’s Museum, only in his late career. This more elaborated configuration marks a transition of the his interest from the single building, to a complete art institute which functions as a destination in itself’. But by doing so, the French architect inevitably acknowledges the limitations of an architectural device whose existence was underpinned by its very all-embracing mission. Besides, as early as 1925, he wrote: “Museums.(...)Birth-date of the museum: 100 years, age of humanity: 40 or 400 000 years.(...) Certainly, they have their good sides, but let us risk a startling deduction: the museum permits a denial of everything because, when everything is certain, everything has a place and an explanation, and nothing from the past has a direct use, because our life on earth is a road that doesn’t return on the same track.”⁸ Furthermore, an ideal museum “would allow one to grasp the meaning of things and it would spur on environment”⁹. Under

7 In his letter to Zervos, the architect has expressed his intention to place the museum in a banlieue.

8 Le Corbusier, *L’Art décoratif d’aujourd’hui*, Collection de “L’Esprit Nouveau” (Paris, Éditions Vincent Fréal 1925)

9 Ibid.

that light, the much later empty box could be seen as a container of experiences that the old exhibition space, child of the encyclopedic culture of the French Enlightenment, missed.

The contrast with the architect's later concerns becomes even clearer when looking at both the very first version of the Musée à Croissance Illimitée, and its last one. The proposal for the Mundaneum/World Museum (1929) -with its ambitious mission to present all historical evidence of human evolution- was still in line with the preceding century of research on organization and display¹⁰. On the other hand, the architect's very last sketch, dated on June 29, 1965 (the day of his death) was a study for a Musée du XXe siècle, commissioned personally by André Malraux, minister of cultural affairs.¹¹ A few years earlier, Malraux's Musée Imaginaire followed a strategy of

10 The Mundaneum refers to Patrick Geddes' Index Museum (1900 Paris exposition). See Branda Ewan. (2012). *The Architecture of Information at Plateau Beaubourg*. UCLA: Architecture 0084. <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0ww309s3>, 37.

11 Alberto Boralevi, "The Architectural Conception of the Museum in the Work of Le Corbusier," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 2, no. 2 (June 1983): 177-89.

multiple mental collages, similar to Le Corbusier's Mundaneum (cross-referential tripartite structure), but this time challenging even the most fundamental formal legitimacy of a gallery space, even a modernist one. The museum melted to an immaterial state of a field of pictorial references. Judging by the only significant change that occurred in his museum model throughout that period, Le Corbusier had a simple answer: an additional cube, a "box enclosing all that your heart desires".

Le Corbusier, as we have seen above, invests on the profits of an inclusive disjunction: He juxtaposes a theatre to a museum. The two components function independently, but the experience is multiply enriching when the complete picture is given to the visitor. On the other hand, Mies' approach dictates an operation of logical intersection. The two previous principles could now be found within a single solution, where every property that is different to the ones of the union is rejected. As Monestiroli has highlighted, Mies' efforts were concentrated on the definition of a simplified typological prototype.¹²

12 Antonio Monestiroli "Forms and time", in "The Metope and the Triglyph: Nine Lectures on Architecture", Sun, 2005 p. 47

Here, the theatre and the museum are denuded of their usual attributes and then merged together. With architecture reduced to the state of a shed, an articulated structure is all that remains to be seen.

Mies' public building respects only the very minimal condition of its existence: people gathering. This feature was interpreted by the German architect as a desire for all-inclusiveness (or differently "universality"), which became a leitmotiv in his architecture of exhibition spaces. However, it soon became clear that those "elegant monuments of nothingness"¹³ as Mumford once stated, operated primarily by negation. The upper level of the New National Gallery of Berlin (1968) is a canonical example of that practice: a "neutral frame, in which men and artworks can carry on their own lives",¹⁴ which however imposes important limitations on the number and the nature of the exposed pieces of art (such as their scale and lighting). Richard Padovan comes

13 Lewis Mumford, *The highway and the city*, (New York : Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 156.

14 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe n C Norberg-Schulz "Ein Gespräch" in *Baukunst und Werkform*, November 1958 p. 615-616 reprinted in *Neumeyer Artless Word* p. 339

to the conclusion that "Perhaps, indeed, it would be best left entirely empty, as an extremely generous entrance hall."¹⁵ In that case, the image of a welcoming shed and the practice which results from the actual spatial qualities are contradictory; the full (the apparatus) and the void (the content) become incompatible.

Mies' project could be regarded by some as a fixable formal derailment. In that case, by alternating the initial plan (a refurbishment is underway), the museum would finally meet the contemporary standards of "visitor services". However, seeing the project under that lens, fails to acknowledge an agenda of a higher importance, that Mies successfully served. The architect has legitimized the urban dimension of the protomodernist empty space, born between the white-washed walls of the galleries and which now could finally present itself on a glass box.

In the typical scheme of a white cube, the wall creates a sealed environment: The context (exurban or inner cities) doesn't matter, since the matrix of space/time of the out-

15 R. Padovan, *Towards Universality: Le Corbusier, Mies, and De Stijl*, (Psychology Press, 2002), p. 172.

side world is annulled.¹⁶ Human bodies become volume-consuming obstacles, intrusions to the equilibrium of the existing architectural geometries, while only minimal human functions (such as sight) are still acceptable (one cannot eat or shout in an exhibition space). Nevertheless, one function is usually isolated and amplified to an extreme level (the sight most usually): for the rest the spectator is emptied, always in favor of the object of desire¹⁷.

Here, Mies has replaced cleverly the wall with a much subtler device, the pedestal. This not only isolates through the height differentiation and the considerable distance (the city becomes a cityscape), but also provides a politically interesting prestige, until then reserved to neo-classical architecture. The peripheral “non-aedificandi” zone (since it is not really made to be inhabited) and the surrounding greenery contribute as well to the timeless effect. The good intentions of the architect are beyond

16 “Their ungrubby surfaces are untouched by time and its vicissitudes”. Brian O’ Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1999). p.15

17 “here at last the spectator, oneself, is eliminated.” Ibid.

any suspicion, since the necessary formal honesty is provided by the structure of the shed -only apparent compositional element- which appears as nothing more than the representation of itself. Finally, throwing to the trash bin of history all typological richness of the past -each one with its own public realm- was this works’ most violent/modern aspect.

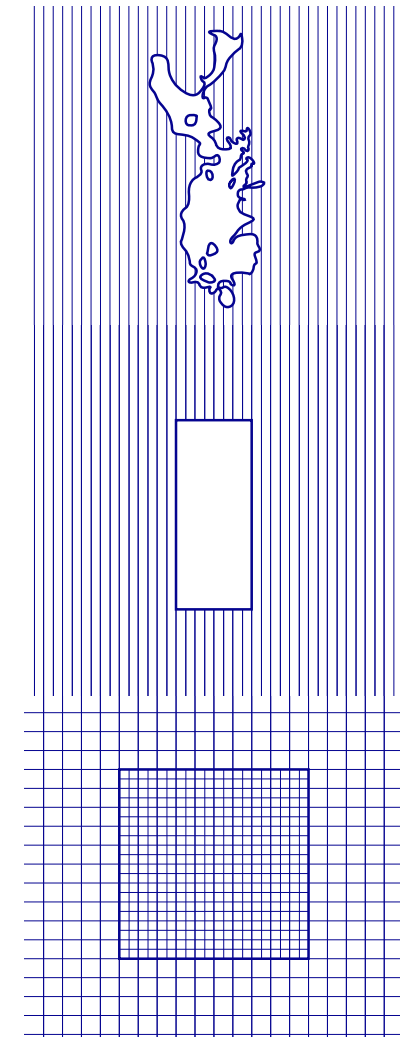
The starting point of the current thesis was a personal fascination about the opening night of April 28th, 1958 in Iris Clert Gallery. With “La spécialisation de la sensibilité à l’état matière première en sensibilité picturale stabilisée, Le Vide”, Yves Klein presented a work of art which consisted a room with white washed walls, left entirely empty. Even if the show was a triumph, Klein later regretted that those exhibitions never took place outside an art gallery. From this point onwards, the research was essentially oriented to the examination of Klein’s ascertainment. To what extend could the same qualities be found on architecture, beyond the artistic enclave of an exhibition space? In order to do so, a deeper understanding of Klein’s “Void” model, as incarnated by the modernist gallery, was necessary.

We understand that, right from the beginning, conceiving the empty

space as another “un-“, a mere absence of matter, constructing a discourse on the basis of a Nolli-like black and white abstraction was not of this thesis’ interest. Here, the “void” is defined positively: It obtains the status of an independent infrastructure (a separate project, not a residue of the surrounding context). Within the modernist agenda, it is not a place of long-term dwelling. Thanks to the fruits of technology, this boîte à miracles doesn’t need to contain anything. However, usually, those chambers appear mono-programmatic. Isolated from its urban context (essential precondition for the survival of art), the white-washed exhibition space becomes a place to consume exceptional situations which cannot be found elsewhere. Thanks to this particular advantage, some empty spaces (Klein’s is one of them) obtain a higher meaning within the city. Eventually, by becoming places to experience exceptional metropolitan desires, they can legitimize our urban condition. The accumulated capital of those architectures forms the test ground for the city’s dreams.

In the following pages, the possibility of identifying patterns of an urban dimension, according to which such exceptional “voids” may be organized, will be examined.

Preliminary work (p1) on enclosed “voids”: Chauvet Cave, France, The Void Room (Raum der Leere) Museum Haus Lange Krefeld (1961), New National Gallery, Berlin, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1968)





1.11
NETWORKS

CONSTANT INTERACTIONS

THE CITY IS ONLY APPARENTLY HOMOGENEOUS. (...)TO KNOW THEM (THE CITIES) MEANS TO UNDERSTAND THOSE LINES THAT, RUNNING ALONGSIDE RAILROAD CROSSINGS AND ACROSS PRIVATELY OWNED LOTS, WITHIN THE PARK AND ALONG THE RIVERBANK, FUNCTION AS LIMITS; IT MEANS TO KNOW THESE CONFINES, TOGETHER WITH THE ENCLAVES OF THE VARIOUS DISTRICTS. AS THRESHOLD, THE BOUNDARY STRETCHES ACROSS STREETS; A NEW PRECINCT BEGINS LIKE A STEP INTO THE VOID-AS THOUGH ONE HAD UNEXPECTEDLY CLEARED A LOW STEP ON A FLIGHT OF STAIRS.

WALTER BENJAMIN, *THE ARCADES PROJECT*, TRANS. HOWARD EILAND AND KEVIN MCLAUGHLIN (CAMBRIDGE, MA: BELKNAP PRESS, 1999), 88.

In a Parisian assemblage, the thresholds tend to follow hierarchies which are completely different to those of New York. In order to better understand those different networks, a reference to the urban dynamics which co-existed within a third city, on a given time frame, may be useful. London, with its binary nature of a continental capital (Westminster) and a mercantile (City), is our tool.

Robert Hooke published his *Micrographia* in January 1665. On page 114, he illustrated the sections of a piece of cork, cut both longitudinally and transversally. In the first case, the disposition of the “little boxes or cells”¹ seemed well-ordered, similar to a grid, while in the second, the cells follow a much more organic

1 R. Hooke, *Micrographia* (London: J. Martyn and J. Allestry, 1665), 113.

pattern. This observation probably wouldn't have much importance for us if the Great Fire of London hadn't happened the following year. The catastrophe was followed by two plans for the rebuilding of the city (amongst others), proposed by Hooke and Wren.

In reality, for its reconstruction, London should make a decision between two urban prototypes: Rome; and the maritime city of Amsterdam. That was true because the new plan of London represented not only the chance to replace a hazardous medieval assemblage with a well-ordered and geometrically aesthetic city, (which would be in conformity with the baroque utopian plans), but most importantly to lay the solid foundations of a rational, functional -and therefore potentially profitable and capitalist- “technologically

oriented city”². In that case, the city could become the template of a larger -and at that moment exploding- scientific agenda, built within the circles of the newly born Royal Society, which was aspiring to develop new philosophical systems, fed from the latest scientific discoveries. Sprat once clearly associated those two projects: “in raising a new philosophy, as we see it is in building a new London”³. Besides, a few years earlier, Descartes had famously opened his “*Discours de la Méthode*” (1637) with the metaphor of the architect: As an ideal city was supposed to be built by a single planner⁴ (in contrast to the old fragmented centers), in an analogous way, the body of Science should be thought according unitarian mathematic principles.

Micrographia should be read within that context. Hooke con-

2 Robert Peckham (2009) *The city of knowledge: rethinking the history of science and urban planning*, *Planning Perspectives*, 24:4, 521-534, DOI:10.1080/02665430903145762

3 T. Sprat, *The History of the Royal-Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge*, (London: T. Roycroft for J. Martyn and J. Allestry, 1667), 323.

4 René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode, seconde partie*, (Paris, Vrin, 1637, 1992), 59-60.

structed the instruments of Boyles' experiments on vacuum and later became an important member of the Royal Society, particularly respected for his work (after 1662) as the Curator of Experiments. He was equally competent in construction methods and more theoretical planning. In the preface of his book, the writer immediately suggests the appropriate scale of his work: “I hope, they may be in some measure useful to the main Design of reformation in Philosophy”. Here, the use of the word design illustrates well the osmosis between technical representations and theoretical models.⁵ Furthermore, Hooke's use of words related to real building components: “cells”, “instestitia”, “walls” are terms that suggested an affinity between natural forms and architecture.

Hooke was able to recognize immediately the correspondence that those cells' structures may had to larger organisms: “the channels or pipes through which the Succus nutritius, or natural juices of Vegetables are convey'd, and seem to correspond to the veins, arteries and other Vessels in sensible creatures, that these pores I say, which seem to be the Vessels of nutrition to the

5 Peckham, *The city of knowledge*, 524.

Transversal and longitudinal sections of a piece of cork. R. Hooke, *Micrographia* (London: J. Martyn and J. Allestry, 1665), 113.

vastest body in the World(...)"⁶. Furthermore, those cells "are yet so exceeding small, that the Atoms which Epicurus fancy'd would go neer to prove too big to enter them, much more to constitute a fluid body in them."⁷ Thus, he was not only interested on the formal aspect of the plant's structure, but also on their internal dynamic character. Each cell was not "finished"; it was a fluid body which constantly interacted with its environment reconfiguring itself.⁸ This is a key element to understand about Hooke's later regular plan and the nature of its building blocks. It is the same person, that after the Great Fire proposed to lay a blanket of Cartesian grid in the heart of the devastated London. The plan, resembled to "modern American cities, with the chief streets all straight and the cross streets at right angles."⁹ It was a pure grid (only four closed squares existed¹⁰), where the streets had all

6 Hooke, *Micrographia*, 116.

7 Hooke, *Micrographia*, 116.

8 This was understandable by Hooke, but remained largely unobservable, due to the technical limitations of the microscope.

9 Margaret 'Espinasse, *Robert Hooke*, (Berkeley, Calif., University of California Press, 1956), 84.

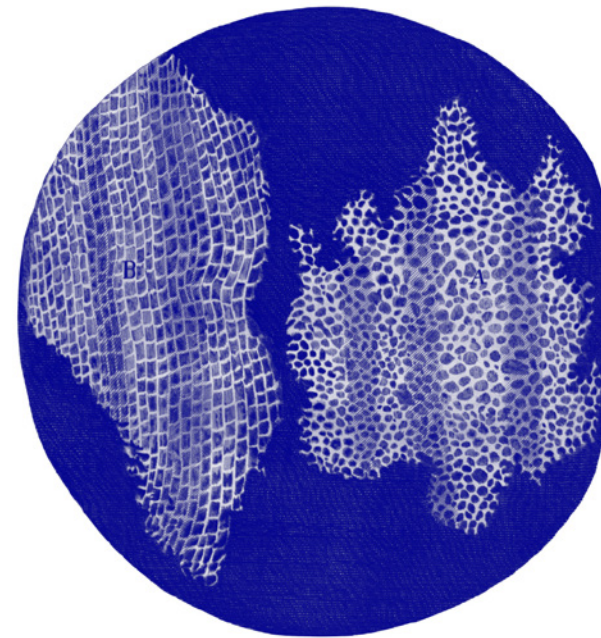
10 Pierre Lavedan, Jeanne Hugueneay,

the same width. Since no illustration of that project survives, and for the sake of the discussion, I will assume that this corresponded to the Manhattan (New Amsterdam) grid. Koolhaas' point of view on New York was based on the same internally enabling nature of the grid.

Conveniently put under the simplistic label of "gridiron plans", the differences between Wren's and Hooke's plans are surprisingly ignored by the historiography today. Far from Hooke's rigid regularity, Wren proposes a plan which is composed by a (loosely) orthogonal plan, superimposed by diagonal axes and imposing radio concentric configurations departing from large squares – or "piazzas" as he names them – which echoed Domenico Fontana's plans for Sixtus V Rome¹¹. St Paul and the Royal Exchange were defined as neuralgic points of the city, focal accents of avenues with great prospects. It is important to note that the only for-

Philippe Henrat, *L'urbanisme à l'époque moderne : XVIe-XVIIIe siècles*, (Genève: Droz, 1982), Collection Bibliothèque de la Société française d'archéologie 13, 183.

11 P. Abercrombie, Wren's Plan for London after the Great Fire, *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May, 1923), 71-78.



The two urban prototypes which emerge according to London's reconstruction plans.

eign journey that Wren ever had was to Paris, one year before the Great Fire (1665). He has found the city in a state of exploding artistic and architectural production, the backbone of a "Grand Siècle" label. At the moment, the -now useless- city walls were still in place but many other monumental royal works (like the Louvre) were witnessed by Wren. I would assume that the will of the Sun-King (the "Grand Urbaniste" according to Le Corbusier) to replace the walls would have inflamed a debate quite earlier though. The construction of the "nouveau cours" (the boulevards) of Bullet started in 1668¹². The plan of Bullet and Blondel (1675) placed a new urbanism of an "open city", equipped with large boulevards, in the core of Louis' -very roman¹³- political propaganda. It is true that Wren does not mention the architects Bullet and Blondel in the sort text on the subject which is included in "Parentalia". However, I would propose to consider rather safely that Wren's Parisian experience has considerably influ-

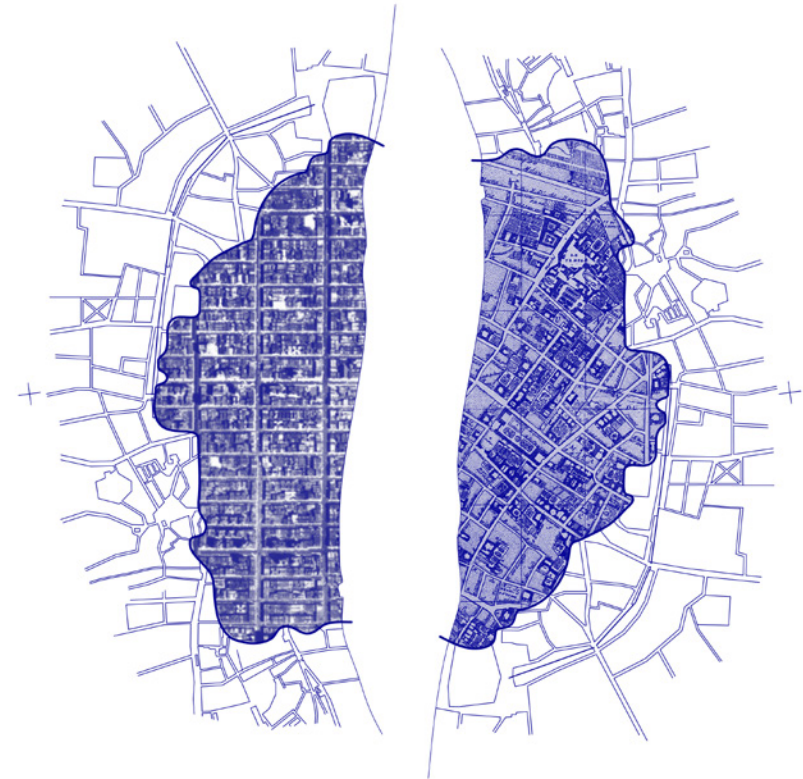
enced his plan. Furthermore, Wren's belief that "Building certainly ought to have the attribute of eternal"¹⁴ was much closer to the aesthetic preoccupations of an, as we've seen, politically restricted, centralized capital city, in comparison to Hooke's isotropic, enabling grid. After all, we know well that Wren had an easy access to the aristocracy (in 1669 he became the Kings' surveyor), while Hooke maintained many relationships with tradesmen¹⁵. A. E. J. Morris stated that "Wren's plan was totally irrelevant to the needs of the City. It is surely not possible to see Wren's plan as more than an overnight exercise based on the use of indigested continental Renaissance planmotifs"¹⁶

It is evident that by studying

14 Christopher Wren, *Life and works of Sir Christopher Wren. From the Parentalia; or memoirs*, (London, E. Arnold; New York, S. Buckley, 1903), 105.

15 Maria Zack, "Robert Hooke's Fire Monument: Architecture as a Scientific Instrument", 117-126 in *Nexus VII: Architecture and Mathematics*, ed. Kim Williams, Turin: Kim Williams Books, 2008.

16 A E J Morris, *History of Urban Form : before the industrial revolutions*, Harlow, Essex, England : Longman Scientific & Technical : New York : Wiley, 1994. p. 220



12 The demolition was ordered by the kind (ordonance 7 juin 1670)

13 See Diana Rowell, *Paris: The 'New Rome' of Napoleon I London* ; New York : Bloomsbury, 2012), 103

the cities' layout, we can identify different degrees of regularity or unevenness on the distribution of the built matter. Each configuration is a result of a different equilibrium of the forces exerted on site. DeLanda believes that there are two important decision making actors within the urban environment: The Institutions and the markets.¹⁷ Their ratio of power result in the basic processes of urban development: Conscious planning and spontaneous organic development.¹⁸ In the first case, urban networks are centrally manipulated, while in the second, a "heterogeneous group of people organize themselves in an interlocking urban pattern that interconnects without homogenizing them."¹⁹

Hooke, by drawing the longitudinal and the transversal section of the cork piece, has presented two efficient²⁰ ways that matter is organized, determining the network of energy flows within an organism. A first, epidermic and only aesthetic, reading of the drawings

17 DeLanda, *A Thousand years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 31.

18 Ibid. 32.

19 Ibid. 30.

20 Since there is a very small quantity of a solid body, extended into large dimensions.

The - quite propagandistic- Plan of Bullet and Blondel for Paris (1675). Note the new boulevards which have replaced the old city walls.

would lead to a simplistic assumption that Hooke's patterns present the well-ordered city as opposed to chaotic one, which according to DeLanda's approach, this pair could be explained in terms of "top-down" and "bottom-up" practices. Based on the analysis above, I would suggest that Hooke proposes a more elaborated model. His underlying theme has been the tension between different physical manifestations of the same, internally dynamic city. That practically means that only the urban patterns are controlled (the contour of the blocks) but the internal properties of the building blocks are not. Thus, the comparison should be made between the archetype of a spontaneous city (medieval European city) and a city of the minimal intervention (grid). The latter focuses on regulating the process of giving birth to the fabric, while the final form doesn't have much importance, since it is subject to constant reconfigurations. The first, simply reconfigures itself in an aleatory way. In both cases, the legitimacy of the juxtaposed and conflicting wills of smaller actors is never contested.

In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the nature of the building blocks found within those two models.





I.III
CLUSTERS

THE NATURE OF THRESHOLDS

THE METROPOLIS STRIVES TO REACH A MYTHICAL POINT WHERE THE WORLD IS COMPLETELY FABRICATED BY MAN, SO THAT IT ABSOLUTELY COINCIDES WITH HIS DESIRES. THE METROPOLIS IS AN ADDICTIVE MACHINE, FROM WHICH THERE IS NO ESCAPE, UNLESS IT OFFERS THAT, TOO...

REM KOOLHAAS, DELIRIOUS NEW YORK : A RETROACTIVE MANIFESTO FOR MANHATTAN, (LONDON, 1978), APPENDIX

In his “Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan”, Rem Koolhaas has submitted a whole urban culture in fragmentation. Heterogeneous and even contradictory episodes of history were stitched together in order to form a surrealist –but meaningful– screenplay, which seemed to logically “explain” the ostensibly chaotic materialization of Manhattan’s hedonistic urban agenda. This process can only be retained for further elaboration when seen within the framework of a Deleuzian, decomposable assemblage. In such a case, the parts are not fused to a seamless totality (Hegel), but, thanks to their forces of “exteriority”¹, can be detached, retaining

1 Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, (London ; New York : Continuum, 2006). See: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 71, 88-91, 323-37, 503-5.

their proper characteristics when plugged in a new assemblage. The sum of the properties which emerge as a result of the constant interaction amongst the parts (therefore properties which do not exist in the parts but they are inherent in them) in the Koolhaasian case was named “Manhattanism” or “Culture of Congestion”. It is clear that Koolhaas’ assemblage is an artificial construction (since it never truly existed), whose main *raison d’être* was to understand the mechanisms according to which the overabundance of programs that resulted from the advances of technology, is accommodated to architectural forms. It was a desperate effort to map the articulation of delights in the buildings of a capitalistic Celestial Jerusalem.

Unlike reading the city as an archipelago of urban blocks which “float on a void”, an assemblage is

a parametrized concept. The first suggests that a mere duality of solid and void, namely a black *poché* on a white background suffices to illustrate a complex urban condition, since its contemporary fragmentation (caused by the insertion of typically anti-urban elements) was supposed to justify such a treatment. The latter redirects our attention to the lines which separate the assemblage’s building blocks, or its *material* components (*expressive* components equally exist). Based on that, a possibility of a first categorization is possible: The degree of sharpness (territorialisation) or nebulousness (deterritorialisation) of those limits allows us to evaluate an assemblage accordingly.

In *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas fundamentally opposed himself to a deterritorialized vision of the built environment, an element which was clearly manifested by his single-scaled obsession: The Manhattan block. For the Dutch architect this unsurpassable perimeter defines the size of an –ideally singular– architectural entity which functions as a city in itself: a vertical intensification of the energy-matter surpluses, organized in superimposed, clearly separated and repeated plans which “reproduce all ‘situations’ – from the most natural

to the most artificial – wherever and whenever desired”.² The finding of the “1909 Theorem” and its materialized version, the Downtown Athletic Club (1931) were characteristic to that.³ (An alignment with the modernist ideal of an autonomous *Unité d’Habitation*-like structure thrown into a sea of greenery is evident.)

Thus, in this highly territorialized assemblage, any notion of interstitial space as a place where exciting events may occur is rejected, both vertically (within the block) and horizontally (between blocks). Paradoxically, in OMA’s proposal for the Parc de la Villette (a first solution to the Green Archipelago’s indeterminacy)⁴, the mono-programmatic bands «contaminate»⁵ each other, as their frontiers have been manipulated like

2 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York : a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan*, (New York : Monacelli Press, 1994.),125

3 Rem Koolhaas, “Precarious Entity”, in Cynthia C. Davidson, ed., *Anyone Corporation, Anyone* (Los Angeles: Rizzoli, 1991), 148

4 “The projects of La Villette and the Expo 89 have let us to define what this void could be”. 63 Interview with Rem Koolhaas, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 238, April 1985, 8. (translated by the author)

5 Presentation text of the project, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 238, Avril 1985, 46

“scenographic elements of a proscenium, being raised and lowered by the fly system”, as Zenghelis once stated. This retreat from the findings of New York perfectly illustrates that reducing the role of the in-between spaces to the level of blank space which surrounds an “autarkic” (since it functions as a complete world) architectural artefact, assuming that this is found in a state of energetic equilibrium, is a hindrance to our attempt to understand the block of the metropolitan assemblage as a dynamic, “fluid body” (to use Hooke’s words). Obviously, every living organism does present stable states internally, but more or less harsh transitions will inevitably occur as long as a varying flow of energy constantly changes the interactions amongst the building blocks of the assemblage.⁶

The Koolhaasian urban block was examined as an exemplary component of Hooke’s longitudinal section (well-ordered cells). That specimen’s particularity was its extreme degree of blindness to the surrounding or to the internal thresholds (territorialized). On the other hand, the medieval Rive Droite, as a complex,

non-hierarchized and nebulous constellation of minimal architectures, is an ideal urban manifestation of Hooke’s transversal section (organically-put cells). However, in Paris, the networks of voids were re-woven of a second principal pattern, the one dictated by “Haussmanization”, which as we will see, violently alienated (deterritorialized) the urban environment. I will now explain those two processes which have shaped the articulation of today’s Parisian building blocks to their internal of external unbuilt space.

The first was determined from the medieval era to the First Empire. Since Paris is the paradigm of a continental capital, this period’s formation of the urban fabric can largely be explained making use of Christaller’s Central Place theory, formulated in the 1930s. According to this, the abundance of the offered goods and services was at the origins of the emergence of a hierarchically superior urban cluster in the middle ages, since the bazaars of the surrounding towns or villages of the region (whose emplacement was always linked to the travel distances) could not ensure their access to the flows of more complex commodities. The city was not developed as a totality and it was formed by accumula-

tion of juxtaposed individual entities. The irregular state of urban fabric not only witnessed the fragmented historical development of the city’s core but also the annexation of several peripheral villages, whose structure is still visible. The development was defined by the successive defensive enclosures of the city: Each time before a new wall was constructed, a phase of extreme densification preceded. In this architectural palimpsest, there is only one certainty: It was during that period that the plot was defined as the uncontested minimal component of the assemblage, “the unit of intervention suitable for the erection of blocks”⁷. Thus, the block has no predefined form. It is simply made by addition of autonomous plots. That obviously means that each plot is vitally linked at least to a minimal entity of void, which ensures the absolutely necessary qualities for the survival (air and ventilation). This territorialized entity (satisfies the most basic needs of the site) is defined as the light well.

The second process corresponds to the period of an intense

policy of “Haussmanisation”, in practice until the first years of the Third Republic. Its raw material was the assemblage of blocks inherited by the previous city, whom it superimposed with a new pattern. It was in the intersection of those two patterns, in the violent passage from the old spontaneous conglomeration of villages to the new, artificial metropolis⁸ that Walter Benjamin has placed what he called the “phantasmagoria”. This stylized space of distraction functions thanks to the banalized, systematic materialization of history into architectural forms (beyond the parallel projection of the commodities).⁹ But how did that principle functioned concretely in the boulevard, the basic tool of intervention that Haussmann used; and which was its impact to the block? The new imposed façades of the blocks were “masks, hiding differences in social status, in districts, in activities.”¹⁰

8 “The new boulevards have introduced light and air into unwholesome districts but have done so by wiping out along their way, almost all the Courtyards and gardens” “Victor Fournel, *Paris nouveau et Paris futur* (Paris 1868), 224, quoted: Benjamin, *Arcades*, 146.

9 Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century, Exposé of 1939; Benjamin, *Arcades*, 14.

10 Panerai, Castex, *Urban forms*, 8

7 Philippe. Panerai, Jean. Castex, Jean-Charles. Depaule, Ivor. Samuels, Urban forms: death and life of the urban block, (Oxford England ; Boston : Architectural Press) 2004, 23.

6 DeLanda, *Nonlinear History*, 14.

A monotonous Potemkin village erased the variability of the previous blocks across the city, in the profit of undeniable aesthetic – “embellishments”- and functional values (As Benjamin states -citing Dubech and d’Espezel-: “Haussmann lays out an artificial city, like something in Canada or the Far West”)¹¹. This caused a “lobotomy” between the apparent and the invisible part of the housing units, disconnecting the front’s public realm which was transformed into a- very modernist- “desert”¹², empty of ideological intentions, from the pragmatic, hazardous city (better expressed in plan) which laid beyond the eclectic skins. The boulevard deterritorializes.

Bruno Latour has introduced the term “Oligopticon”¹³, (the antonym of Foucault’s “Panopticon”), referring to a “room”, which enables the understanding of the city in its

11 Benjamin, *Arcades*, 132.

12 Benjamin quotes Le Corbusier : “(...) they accused him of having created a desert in the very center of Paris! That desert was boulevard Sébastopol.” *Urbanisme*, Paris 1925 p. 149. Also see *Urbanisme*, 272.

13 Bruno Latour, “Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network-theory”, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

entirety. The boulevard, and the eternal, modernist, white-washed gallery, both operate outside the time/space matrix of the real city. In Paris, every single moment in a boulevard was designed to be an “oligopticon”: Once the image one of those “urban rooms”, or the façade of a single Haussmanien building, is comprehended, then there is nothing more to explain. And since there is no meaning in keep watching such an unbearably monotonous city (especially from a distance, where irregularities are even less visible), accidents of the topography (Seine) or monuments gain a particular interest. (Note that the monuments in Haussman’s Paris have the tendency to detach themselves from the rest of the urban fabric in isolated blocks). In that scenario, even the structures which once aspired to become “panopticons”, for example the Eiffel Tower – a pure structure- (or Mies’ shed), become much more interesting as images to be consumed.

The boulevard denies any localities. It primarily serves the agenda of the capital-city.¹⁴ In its way, the block is torn apart and most usually becomes triangular. Internally, the block is re-fragmented and re-con-

14 Panerai, Castex, *Urban forms*, 20

figures itself. The priority was given to the to the strategic axes (for example rue de Rivoli and Boulevard Sebastopol), because of their importance for the urban agenda.¹⁵ In the aftermath of “Haussmanization”, the urban community has found itself dispersed, much less dense. I would suggest that this absolutely deterritorialized boulevard, which has no effect-cause relation with the single plot, should be seen as the exact opposite of the light well (automy-scale). Thus, all the types of thresholds that I’m going to analyze later, will be considered as nuances between those two extremities.

If today’s Paris appears as an exceptionally deterritorialized assemblage, it is because of the constant interaction between the two different natures of thresholds I elaborated on. This was the “contamination” that Koolhaas didn’t accept in Delirious New York and thus Zenghelis proposed for the Parc de la Villette. Foucault in his “Espaces Autres”, explaining his “heterotopias”, I believe he has successfully synthesized those two antithetical components.

15 See Henri Malet, *Le Baron Haussmann et la rénovation de Paris*, (Paris, Les Éditions municipales 1973), 139-178.

The first, are the ones which are oriented towards the eternal, for example the museums. Foucault explains: “The idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity.”

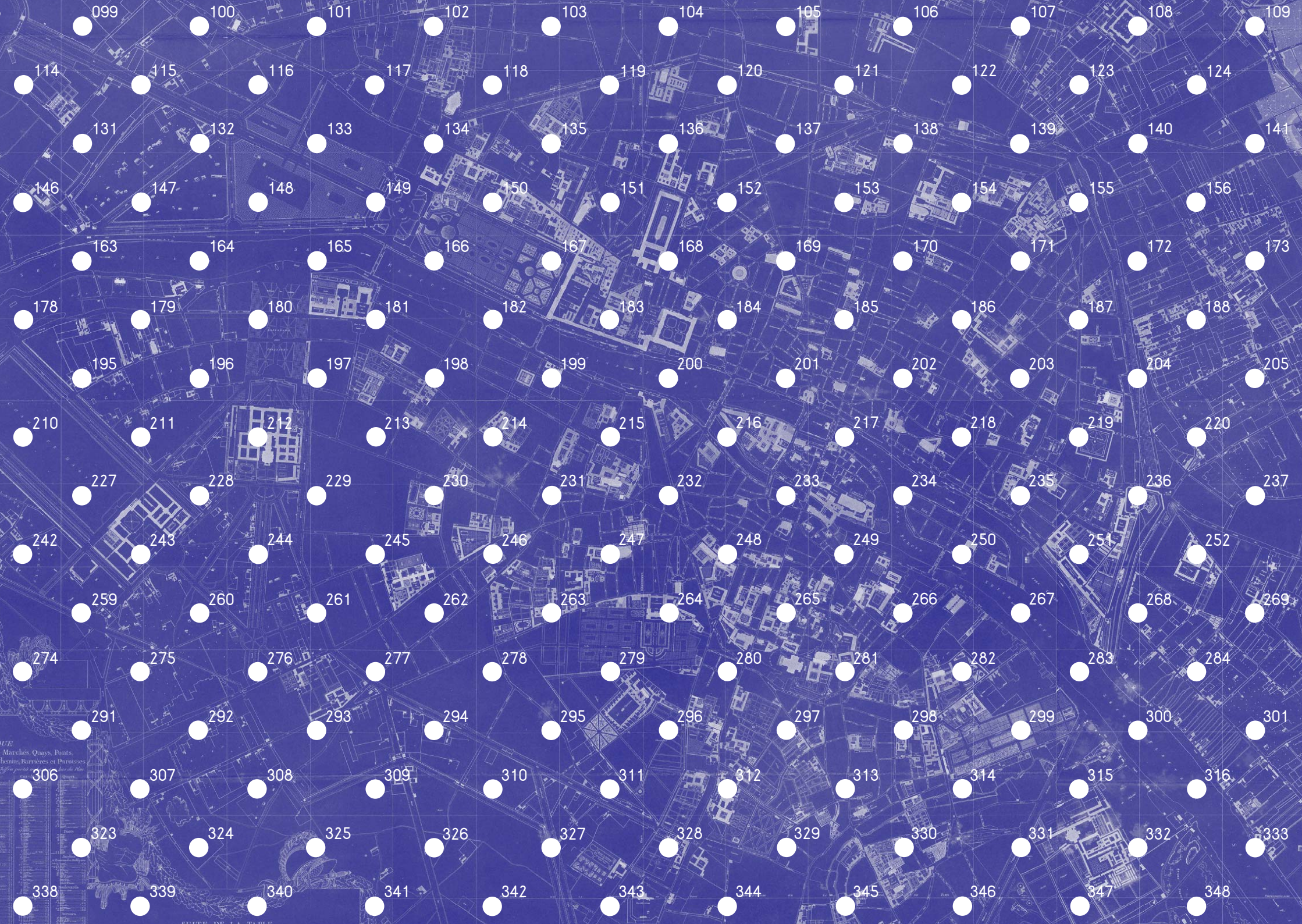
The second, are the “rather absolutely temporal”. Those are “linked, (...) to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival (...)” Such, for example, are the fairgrounds, these’ marvelous empty sites on the outskirts of cities that teem once or twice a year with stands, displays, heteroclitic objects, wrestlers, snakewomen, fortune-tellers, and so forth.”¹⁶

The question of temporality within the urban thresholds will be addressed in the following chapter.

16 Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias* From: *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* October, 1984; (“Des Espace Autres,” March 1967 Translated by Jay Miskowicz), 7.

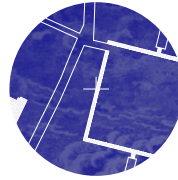


II
THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES:
AN ACCOUNT
OF BOURGEOIS RITUALS



STOCK EXCHANGE

5 APRIL 1612 (NOT REALISED)



The paradox of the Place Royale (Place de Vosges) is that it was never designed to be a “Place Royale” in the typological sense of the term.¹ (See the following pages for the morphogenesis of the square) Isolated by all the major circulation axes of the neighborhood and initially designed to be hermetically closed (only the Pavilion Royal was designed to allow exclusively pedestrian access through its arcade), it could be qualified as an “anti-square”, a silent cloister.

Thanks to this serenity, the square would become the appropriate scenery for intense economic transactions, a kind of primitive stock exchange in the vicinity of a new business and administrative district (la Place de France). Since this last project remained unbuilt, the program of the stock exchange never occupied the arcades of the square.

We realize that in its origins, this Parisian *promenade* was not designed to be all-inclusive. The project was never driven by any noble intention to create new urban “public space”, since the access would surely be highly restricted to particular members of an emerging high-middle class.² This was an addi-

tional layer of -social- serenity that the concentration to the high-class commerce required.

While initially the scenography of the square (the regular facades) were inhabited by members of the emerging *noblesse de robe*, their apartments (quite restrictive spatially) were soon sold to the aristocracy. This marked a transition from the isolated *hôtel* to a house apparent to the urban landscape (still highly regulated).

Eventually, the square became a favorite place for prostitution and gambling.³ When the Place Royale was officially inaugurated on April 5th 1612, affirming with a grandiose carousel its role in the theatricalization of the central political scene, the horizontal, sandy surface between the buildings was completely empty by additional elements. The typical royal statue was added only in 1639, ordered by Richelieu⁴ as a French equivalent of the Marc Aurelius’s statue at the Piazza del Campidoglio.

The scenario that the project would primarily function as a stock exchange market is illustrated here.

1 Jean-Pierre Babelon. “Histoire de l’architecture au XVII^e siècle.” In: École pratique des hautes études. 4e section, Sciences historiques et philologiques. An. 1975-1976, 712

2 This can be extracted from the way that

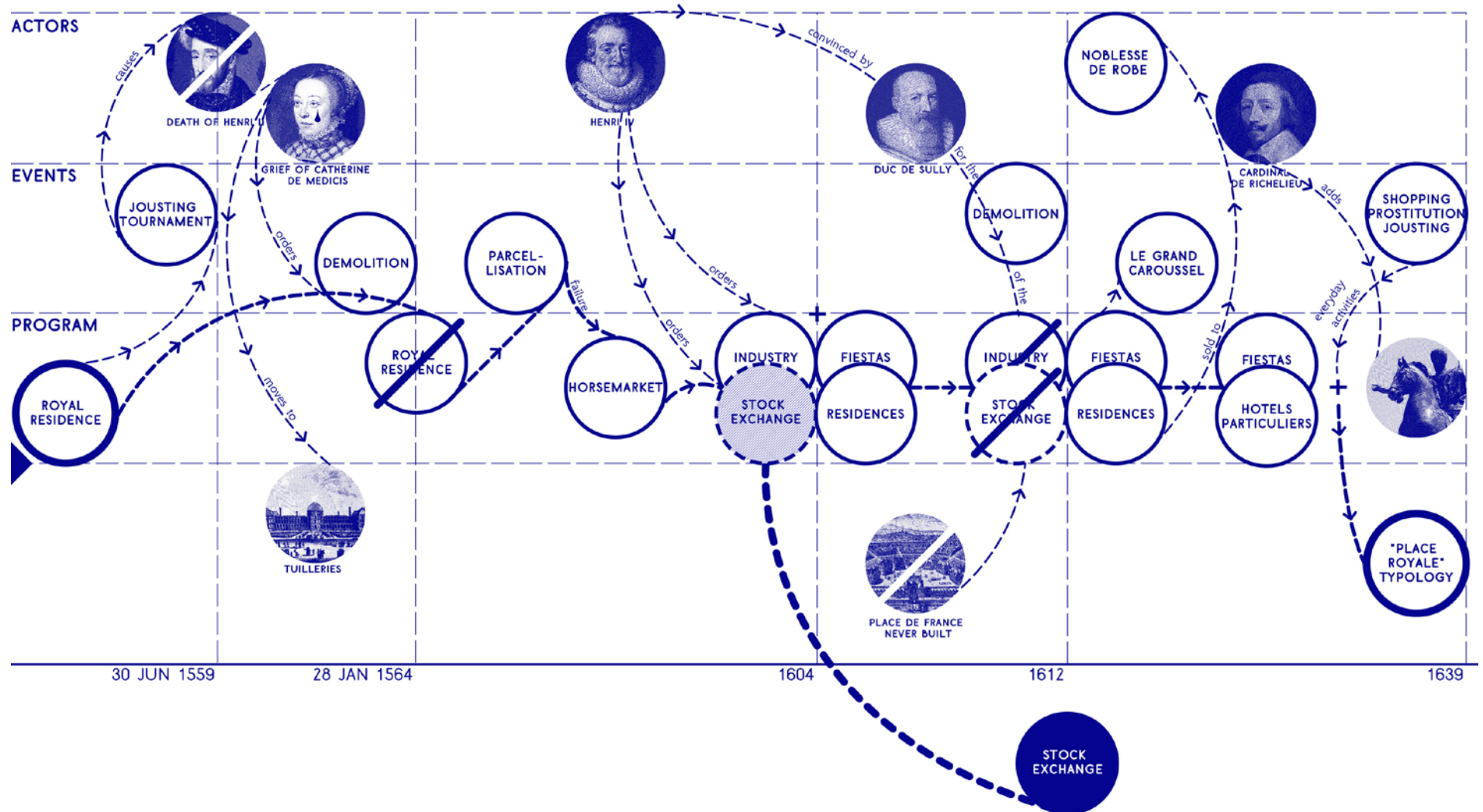
the Royal Exchange in London functioned.

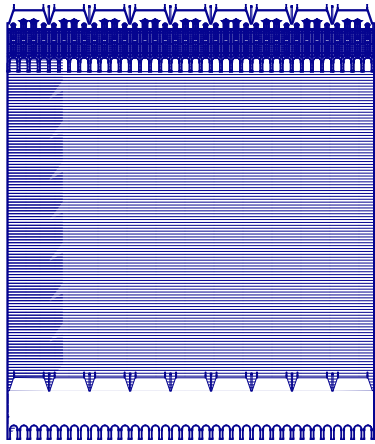
3 Eric Hazan, *L’invention de Paris : il n’y a pas de pas perdus*, (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 84.

4 *Ibid.*, 84.

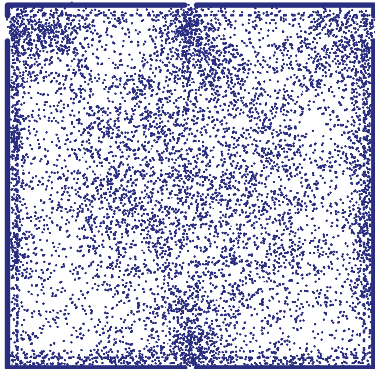


Diagram which places the Stock Exchange within its larger spatial/time framework. The forces which were exerted on the site are explained partially following Lombardi's networks illustrations.

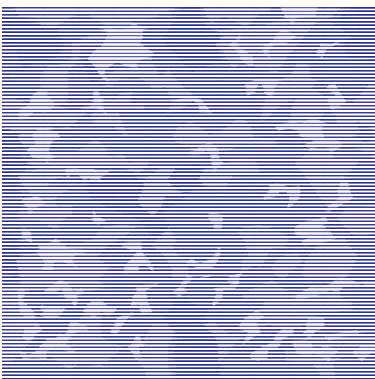




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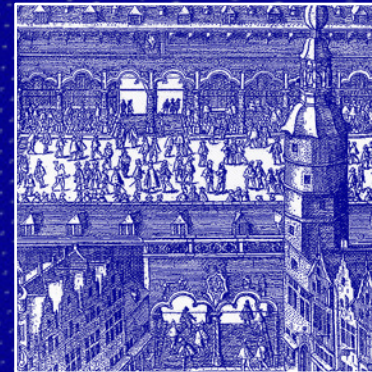
DISCOURSE
/DESIRE

"It is cloystered round, just after the fashion of the Royal Exchange in London."

(Peter Ileylyn, A Survey of the Estate of France., London, 1656, p. 78).



The illustrations of programmatically comparable operations (like the Beurs of Antwerp, 1531) have helped to map human movement to be found on site if the project was completed.



If the proximity of the human bodies corresponds to the potential transactions realized in situ, the physical presence of the exchanged money (intensities) can be shown here.



RUNWAY

00:34:41-00:35:01 SEPTEMBER 1997



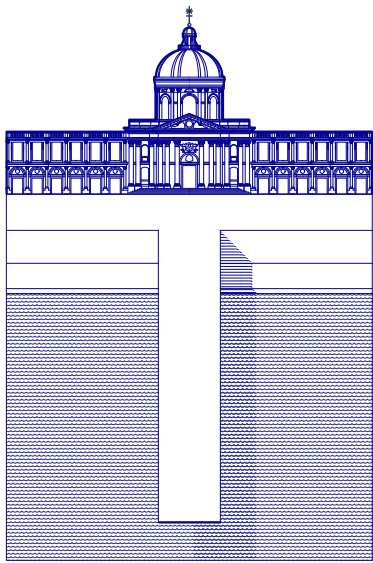
It is in the thirtieth fourth minute of the *Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (one of the most massive successes –at the box office– of the French film industry) that the main hero chooses to walk over the river Seine, crossing the Pont des Arts (reconstructed under Chirac as “identical” to an Napoleonic project conceived to link the newly established Institut de France and the Palais des Arts-Louvre).

However, it becomes rapidly clear that the usual landscape presents some necessary “distortions”. Behind Amélie’s right shoulder (the camera targets to the beautiful façade of Le Vau), the bridge presents itself completely empty of other pedestrians, in what it seems to be after all, a sunny, warm day. The definitely deceiving image (given the fact that this is one of the city’s most frequented tourist attractions), wouldn’t be so surprising for just another one of all the plethora of cinematic trashes which are shot every year using the French capital as a scenery, if it wasn’t for the next shot: The following second, while the camera turns towards the Louvre (the south façade of Claude Perrault), right next to the deserted deck of the passerelle, a coach makes its appearance. This is momentarily parked

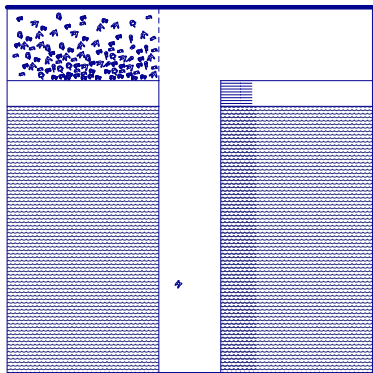
(or it is moving slowly) letting the group of foreign visitors inside to get a glimpse of the world outside, since the access to the footbridge is obviously closed because of the shooting.

The following drawings document that specific moment of tension between the group of tourists who devour the intriguing image of a smiling, typically French young girl who enjoys the Parisian landscape. The desire to follow her steps is born to the viewers. The use of a linear element such as a bridge is simply ideal (no alternatives are offered here), especially when this infrastructure crosses the most important void, the monumental spine of the city. The narrator finishes with the hypnotized victims: “*Amélie a soudain le sentiment étrange d’être en harmonie totale avec elle-même. Tout est parfait en cet instant : la douceur de la lumière, ce petit parfum dans l’air, la lumière tranquille de la ville. Elle l’inspire profondément. La vie lui paraît alors si simple qu’un élan d’amour, comme un désir d’aider l’humanité entière, la submerge tout à coup.*” It is the same Crossing-the-Red-Sea-like sentiment that is supposed to be projected to the audiences (potential visitors). The victims of the Paris Syndrome are simply considered as collateral damages.

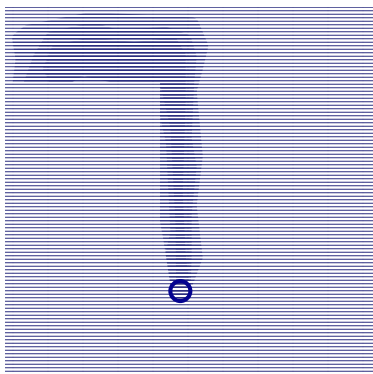




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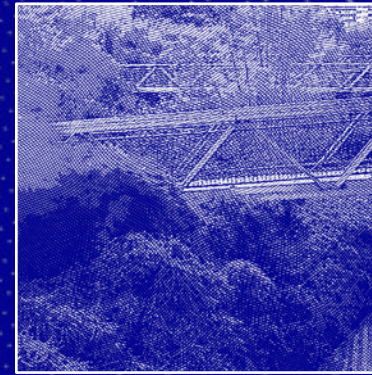


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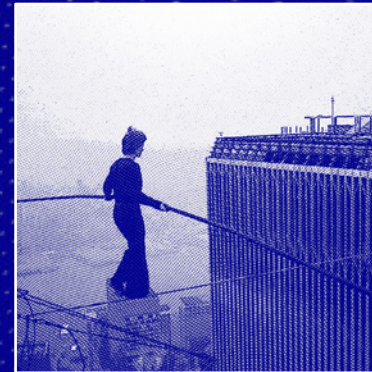


DISCOURSE
/DESIRE

There is hardly any utilitarian idea in the Pont des Arts' origins. The footbridge was initially conceived as a "hanging garden" (Wikipedia), a linear promenade above Seine. (the footbridges over the Jardin des Bambous in the Parc de la Villette; Tschumi, Chemetov)



The bridge as analogous to a tightrope: It makes a spectacle out of a single crossing, while the audience is restricted to passive observation.

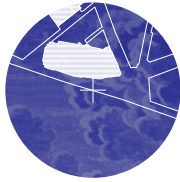


Following another human body (through imitation of the original act of crossing the bridge) is the objective here. This game has been successfully illustrated by Andrei Tarkovski in Stalker.



CAGE

19 DECEMBER 1977



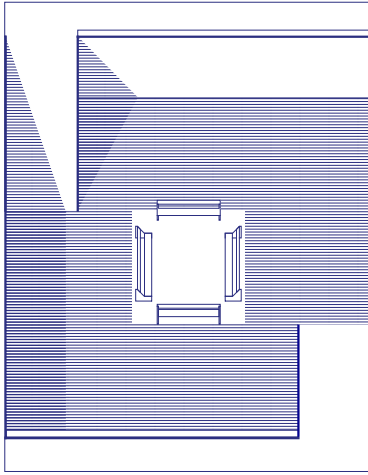
In 1977, the “Belly of Paris” was dominated by an enormous hole, what Parisians simply called “le trou”. The “halles de Baltard”, the old commercial core of the city and the most important trace of Haussmann on the neighborhood, were a few years earlier judged as structures that could not generate permanence and therefore they were obviously declared eliminable (demolished between 1971-74). However, the main problem was that for nearly a decade, there was no clear idea on what the site would look like in the future. Underground, there was only one certainty: the totality of the volume between the surface and the limestone layer, had to be exploited (partly for the underground train station). The projected image depended on the changing equilibrium of powers of the central and the local political scenes. It was the same year (1977) that Jacques Chirac, newly elected mayor declared that “The architect of Les Halles is me”, stopping the construction of Bofill’s already ongoing project.

The state of the working site was the object of a newscast of the

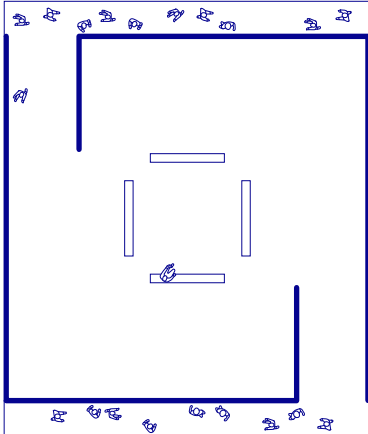
French (public) television, on December 19, 1977. While the camera follows a few passersby who contemplate the urban void, an ephemeral installation presents an exceptional interest. While the future of the pharaonic architectural projects seems uncertain, a small garden appears to be placed in front of St Eustache’s façade, inside le “trou”.

A person who has accepted to be filmed is playing for a few seconds the role of the flâneur, demonstrating to the audience of the newscast that relaxing inside an excavation ditch is considered as possible by the authorities. The spatial configuration resembles to a cage of a zoo. On the periphery, everyone can have a look at the user of the garden, while inside, no visual connection to the adjacent street is possible for our hero. The only chance to vibrate the still image is when a second person appears in the frame. He decides to descend the ramp which leads to the informal living room. Our flâneur is looking at him. This precise instance is translated into drawings here.

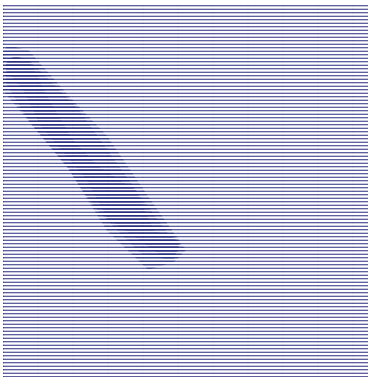




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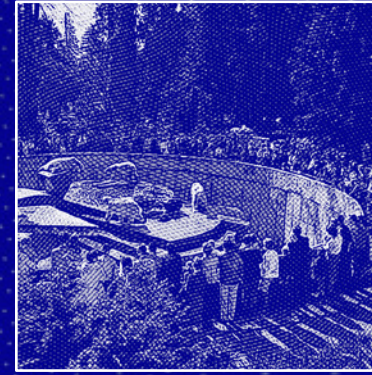


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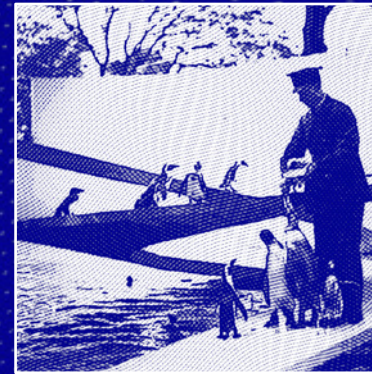


DISCOURSE
/DESIRE

The flâneurs who will find themselves inside the ditch become isolated observable species, presented to the eyes of the passersby as a proof of the intervention's success. (The polar bear pit at Vancouver zoo).



The ramp is the only element which connects inside with outside world. New information brought via this element is of vital importance for those who occupy the living room. (Lubetkin's Penguin Pool at London Zoo).

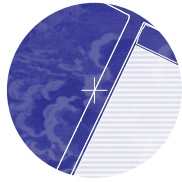


Whoever, by descending the ramp, enters the scene animates decisively our image and inevitably becomes the center of our attention. (Eadweard Muybridge Animal Locomotion. Plate 114, Boston Public Library)



FOUNTAIN

05 MARCH 1662



Due to three consecutive years of poor harvests, at the beginning of 1662, Parisians were confronted to serious shortages of wheat and phenomena of speculation on the remaining cereals. In view of that situation, Louis XIV, has ordered the partial deregulation of the wheat imports of the city. However, it soon became clear that those measures were not sufficient. In March, the municipal authorities have organized public distributions of bread. We understand the gravity of the situation by the violent actions which were committed by the hysterical crowd against the staff who distributed the goods.¹

The documents of that period² inform us that those events took place, at what it is called today the Place du Carrousel. As we see, for the needs of

the operation, a temporary pavilion was constructed in front of the Tuileries, (at that moment still inhabited by the king). Back then, the architectural milieu where that pavilion was implanted was contradictory: The king's regular facade which respected the guidelines of the Italian Renaissance was directly facing "a forest with its inextricable mess of wooden shacks"³. That pavilion, placed in the middle of an empty sandy plateau functioned like an intermediate between two distinct worlds, physically manifested by the existing architectural forms: Charity was important but with the right scenery. The structure momentarily polarized the empty space, by the free distribution of the people's object of desire: bread, then carried to the city's neighborhoods.

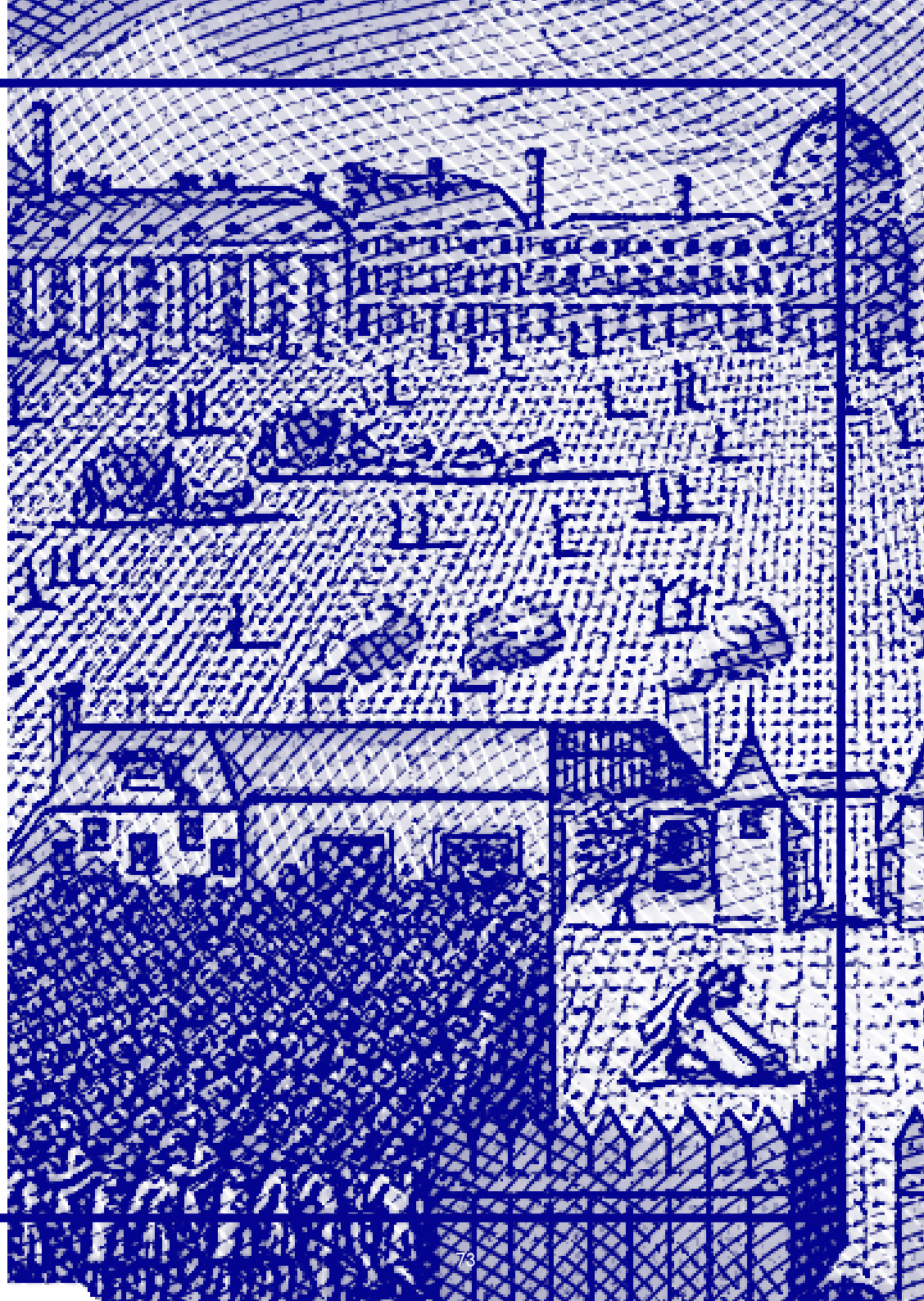
The insufficiency of the monarch to solve the crisis was a posteriori erased by the official iconography, most notably in the painted ceilings of Versailles (Le Brun's *Soulagement du peuple pendant la famine*)⁴, however this act of visual canonization was already performed by architecture itself: The fountain was presented as the king's helpful hand to his people.

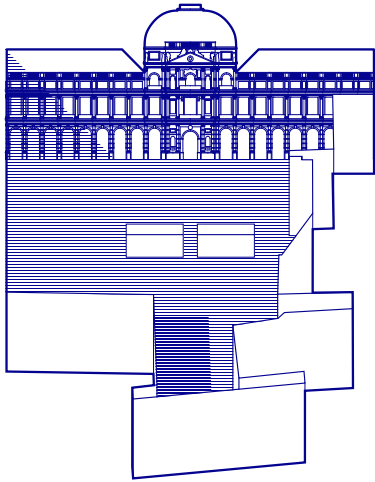
¹ Hazan, *L'invention de Paris*, 42.

² Alexandra Woolley, *L'œuvre de miséricorde du Roi*, 27

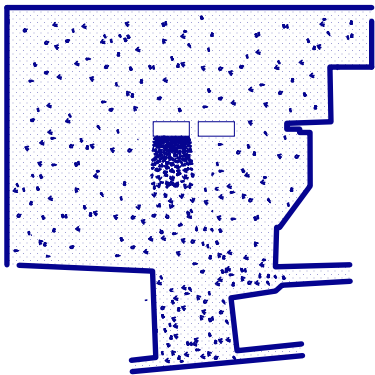
¹ Alexandra Woolley, "L'œuvre de miséricorde du Roi : la statue de Louis XIV pour l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris par Antoine Coysevox, 1687-1689", *Les Cahiers de Framespa*, 11 | 2012, <http://framespa.revues.org/1965>; DOI: 10.4000/framespa.1965

² The image presented here is retrieved by: Fernand Braudel, Camille Ernest Labrousse, André. Armengaud, *Histoire économique et sociale de la France / T. 2, Des derniers temps de l'âge seigneurial aux préludes de l'âge industriel, (1660-1789)*, (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France 1970), 81.

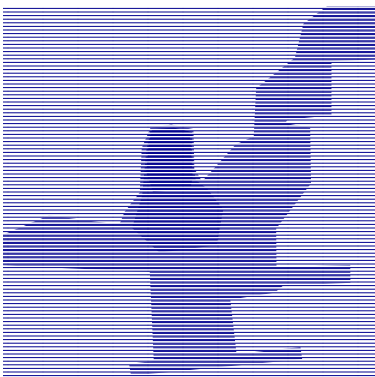




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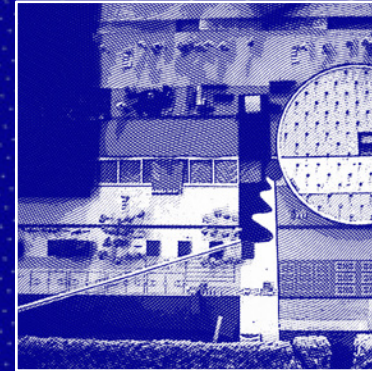


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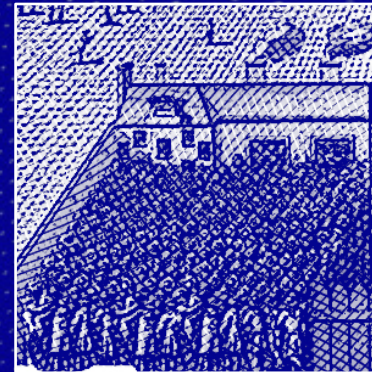


DISCOURSE
/DESIRE

As in happened in the Louvre, Zenghelis' confetti of pavilions in for la Villette, was used as an intermediate between two distinct urban landscapes. La Villette was according to Koolhaas the "terrain vague between the historical city and the plankton of the banlieue".



The urban void becomes a theatre of violent disputes over the urgent regulation of flows of energy in the city.

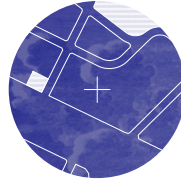


The pavilion momentarily polarized the empty square by satisfying the most basic desire. The bread was distributed in situ and then carried to the rest of the city.



BALLROOM

MARCH 1936



De Beistegui's most personal ballroom, the "chambre à ciel ouvert" of his apartment in Champs Elysees, is an exemplary case study whose complexity ceases to be describable by binary terms like "public" and "private", "inside" or "outside". In order to understand this, the striking photograph of the fireplace (an element which usually performs as an undeniable device of intimacy, an icon of the hearth), along its living room accessories, should be interpreted in its specific context.

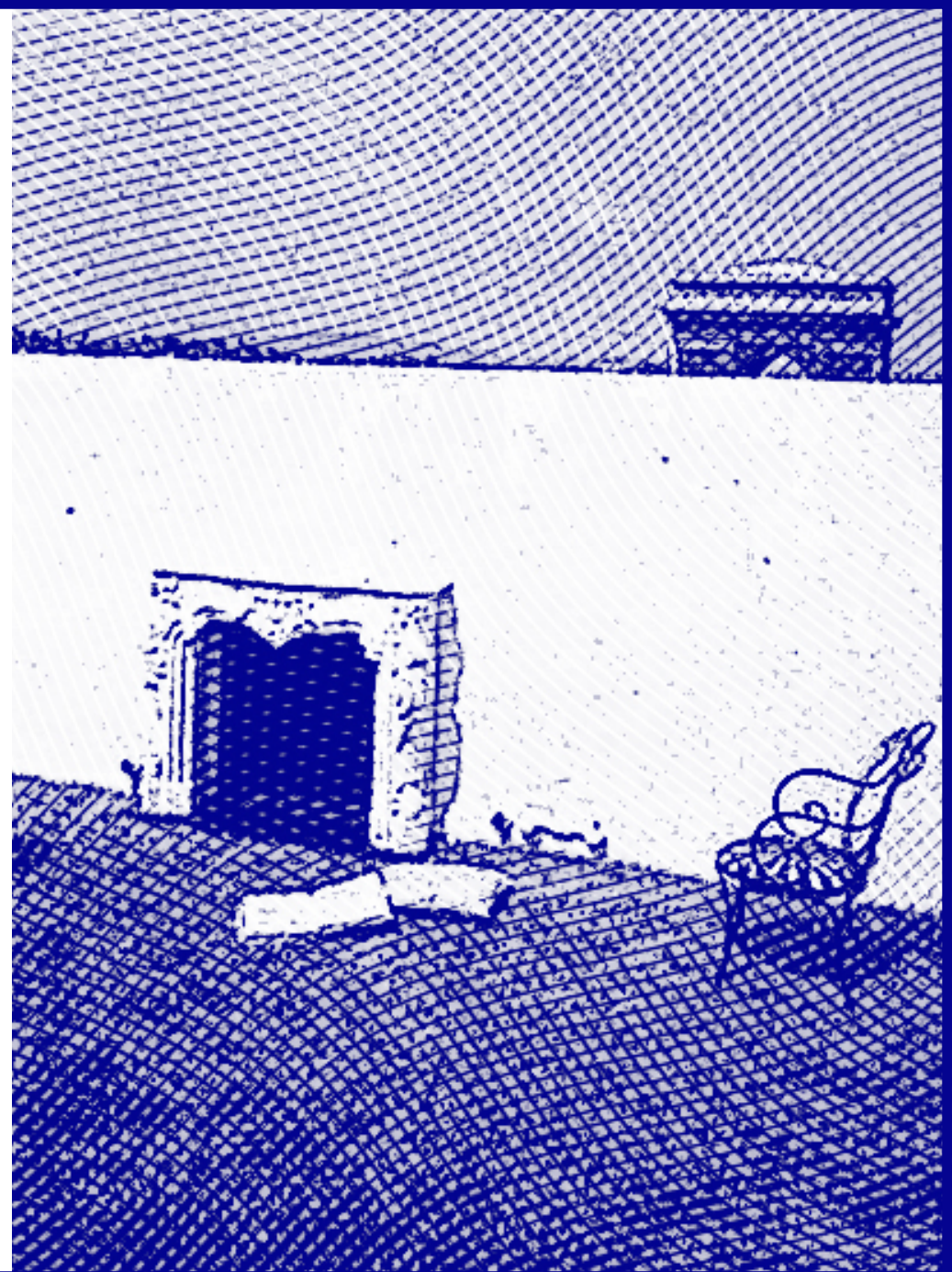
The penthouse was conceived from the beginning not as a place to be inhabited on a daily basis, but as a "résidence d'un soir", a "décor de fête"¹. It can be said that such a program is far from becoming a "machine à habiter". However, in this case, the machinic character of the corbusian composition is to be found on the systematic and diverse way of capturing images of the urban landscape (also thanks to the use of new technological tools). Besides, as Beatriz Colomina has highlighted, the apartment functioned as "a mechanism for classification. It collects views, and in doing so, it clas-

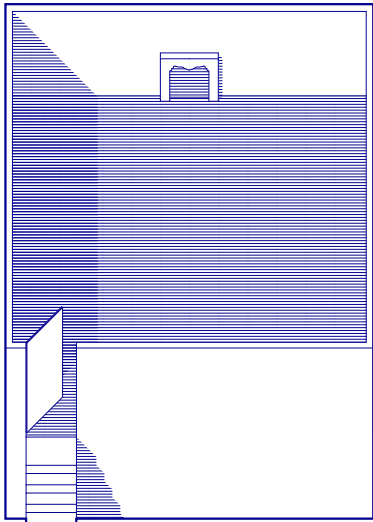
sifies them."² This visual compilation (together with the owner's work of arts) was supposed to serve as the scenography for de Beistegui's fêtes. The white cube with its open-air grassed salon has to be seen as the culminating point of this -personal- cinematic promenade offered to the visitors. The particularity is that, once the marble door is closed, the convives had the chance to found themselves on a simultaneously intimate and physically exposed (being in the city center) space

The second function that the enclosed terrace had, was that of the gallery space. The upper edges of four typical monuments (la tour Eiffel, le Arc de Triomphe, la Sacré Coeur, the Invalides' dome – which corresponded to the four walls) were intentionally left visible. From a distance, they become precious microscopical models in the owner's collection, like objects of art which were not to be possessed differently. Thus, no matter where a discussion would take place, each person would surely be able to satisfy visual boredom, while talking, by simply looking by the shoulder of his friend.

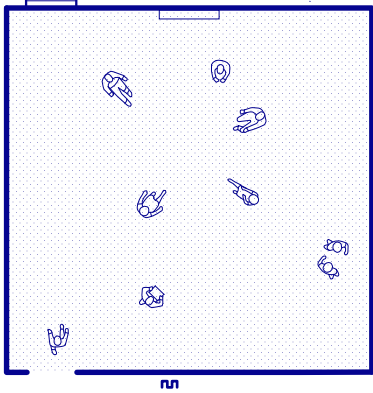
1 See: "Une Décor de Fête", in: *Décoration de France, Plaisir de France* (Paris: Les Publications de France), mentioned in Wim van den Bergh, "Charles de Beistegui Autobiography and Patronage" *Oase* 83, 17

2 Beatriz Colomina "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyerism" in *Raumplan Versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier*, ed. Max Risselada, (Rotterdam, 010Publishers, 2008), 46.

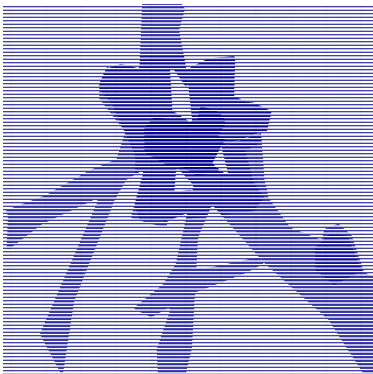




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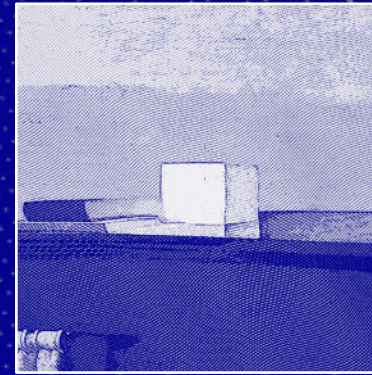
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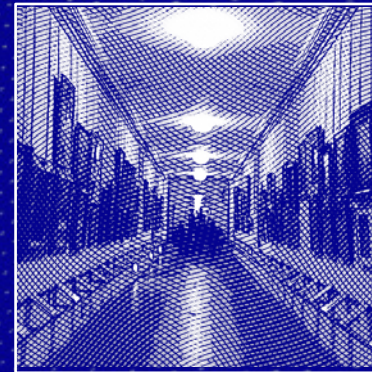
The ballroom is another way to occupy the interior of the white cube.

Right: La cheminée, 1918 Oil on canvas, Signed at bottom right Jeanneret, not dated, executed in 1918, FLC 134 Paris. Fondation Le Corbusier.



An intimate galerie space with monuments instead of works of art.

Right: Inside view of the Vasari Corridor (Corridoio Vasariano) in Florence, Italy



Discussion with the appropriate visual background. In the case of the de Beistegui's apartment, the monuments function as the carpet of the picture.

Right: image taken during Beistegui's Bal du Siècle in Venice



DISMANTLING YARD

27 MAY 1610



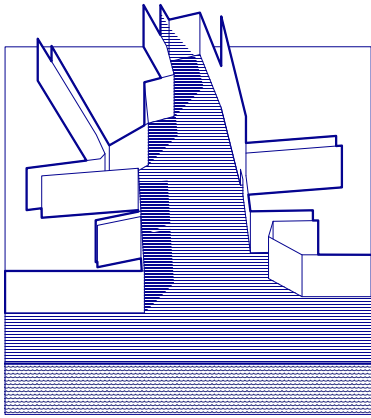
The disassembly of living matter is not a rare experience for the Metropolitan assemblage. Actually, this is how the urban clusters survive. The solar energy materialized in animals and vegetables flows from the surrounding countryside to the city. Those, chopped down into pieces, make the energy consumption easier to the citizens. If this process is reversed, it can create an exciting spectacle, which equally ensures the survival of the city, in terms of order.

A regicide is probably the most unfortunate event that can happen to a Monarchie de droit divin. Therefore, the punishment for such a crime was the appropriate. It is evident that in such cases, the more ingenious the execution method is, the more attractive the spectacle will be for the citizens. Having those considerations in mind, the choice of the Place de Grève (nowadays la Place de l' Hôtel de Ville), political epicenter of the city and one of the few important urban clearings (together with the parvis de l' églises) to be found in medieval Paris, to serve as a scenery for a dismemberment is rather justified. The square didn't present today's known regularity; born out of economic considerations (like its easy access to water transport), the contour of the unbuilt territory is

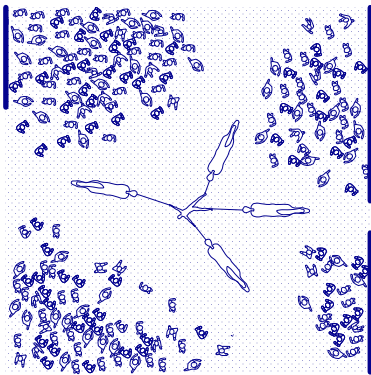
simply defined by the surrounding random constructions. On May 27th 1610, Francois Ravailac, murderer of Henri IV, is taken in front of the Hotel de Ville. His death is brought by chaining four horses to his arms and legs, thus making them pull him apart. The operation lasted for more than two hours, even causing severe fatigue to one of the horses which had to be replaced. Some last few cross sections by the executioner and the body was finally torn apart. Nevertheless, what followed was not planned: the hysterical crowd burst towards the fragments of the corpse. Everyone wanted his own piece –no matter the size- of the condemned remains. Within a few hours, the neighborhoods of the city (components of the bigger urban assemble) and the surrounding villages would possess their own parts to burn, clearly expressing their faith to the ruling class.¹

1 “(...)il n'y eut fils de bonne mère qui n'en voulût avoir sa pièce, jusqu'aux enfants qui en firent du feu aux coins des rues. Quelques villageois même d'alentour de Paris, ayant trouvé moyen d'en avoir quelques lopins et entrailles, les traînèrent brûler jusqu'en leurs villages.” Pierre de l' Estoile, *Mémoires-journaux de Pierre de L'Estoile*, (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles, 1881), 414 supplement mai 1610

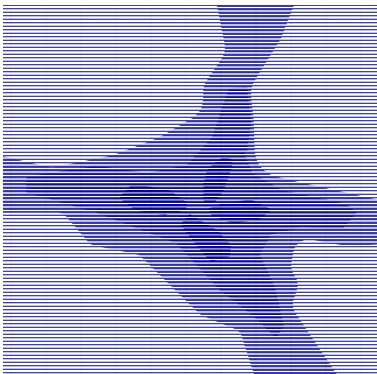




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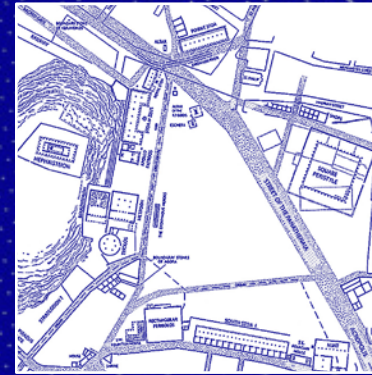


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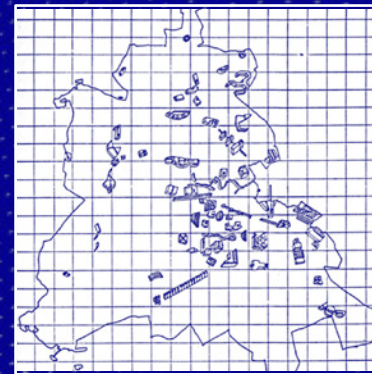
The Place de Grève followed a spontaneous development thanks to the facility of transporting the goods through the water. (The Agora of Athens followed a similar development)



The dismantling yard is the place where the dismemberment of matter becomes a public spectacle

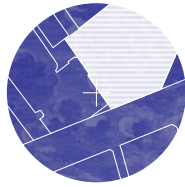


By expressing the need of obtaining small pieces of the fragmented body, the neighborhoods manifest their autonomous character within the chaotic urban assemblage.



PLAYGROUND

1980



Koolhaas once stated, “The projects of La Villette and Expo ’89 have let us define what this void could be.”¹ In this statement, the Dutch architect linking OMA’s first Parisian project to a well-known experience from the past in Berlin. Koolhaas and Ungers, with their Green Archipelago manifesto (1977) envisioned the preservation of prototypical urban blocks “so as to isolate them, make them float in a void, a nothing, in which all of the modern elements we can no longer live without – highways, supermarkets, drive-in cinemas” – would be located. However, this project did not offer a model explaining the geometric arrangement of this still undetermined “void”. This was to be achieved in the “silent artificial landscape”² of La Villette, or what Maria Goodman would call the “empty stage waiting for public life to begin”.³

What is less known is that,

1 Interview with Rem Koolhaas, “La deuxième chance de l’architecture moderne”, *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui*, no. 238 (April 1985), 8; translation by the author.

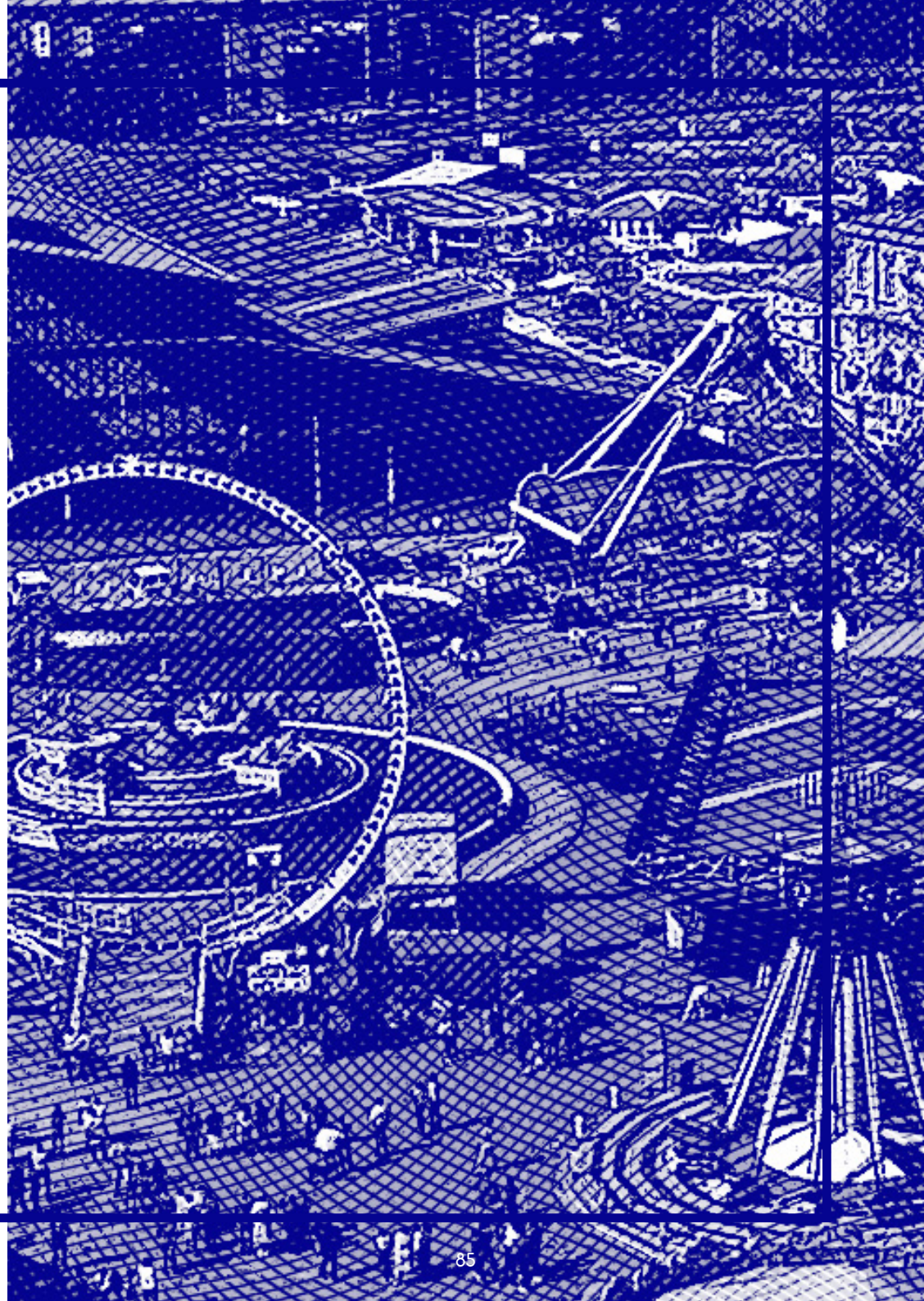
2 Ignasi de Solà-Morales i Rubió, *Terrain Vagues, Anyplace*, p. 121

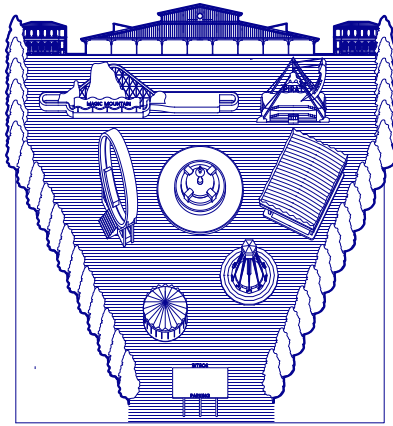
3 Richard Sennet: Thomas Struth’s City, in “Common Ground” 2012 Venice Biennale of Architecture, the Critical Reader, p. 52

parallel to the organization of the international competitions for the park, (between 1975 and 1981), numerous installations were constructed, as a sort of research conducted to test their impact on the future. Those temporary architectures were simpler versions of the program that the authorities desired to build when conquering this new piece of land. This became apparent in the competition brief itself, which was supposed to embody a spectacular incarnation of the new metropolitan pleasures of the 21st century (“le plaisir: le corps et l’esprit”⁴). Amongst all those ephemeral structures; a skatepark and an amusement park found their place on site.

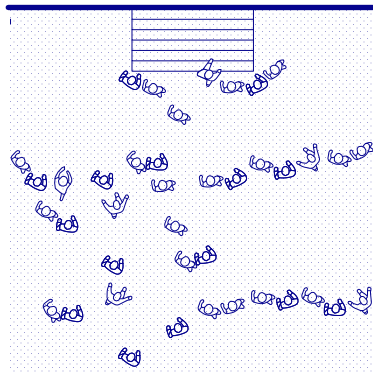
The ephemeral amusement park shown here, mainly occupied the Place de la Fontaine-aux-Lions. The different ephemeral “territories” are installed accordingly, following the perspectives formed by the existing ruins which enclose the square. Those autonomous islands form an complete and artificial world, challenging the established experience of the Parisian urban clearings.

4 EPPV (Établissement Public du Parc de la Villette), *Parc de la Villette: Concours international; Rapport d’objectifs* (Paris: EPPV, 1982), 5.

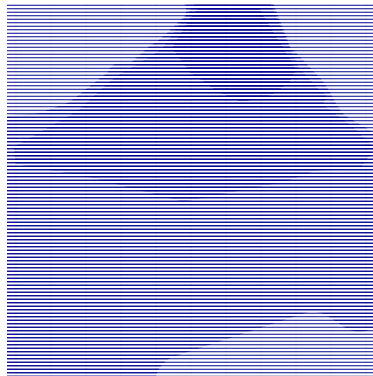




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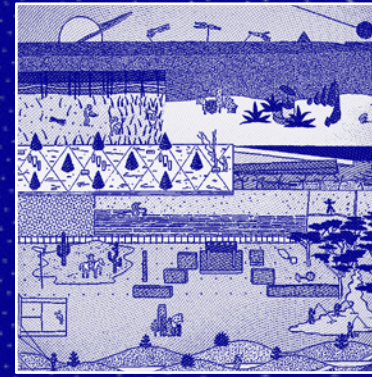


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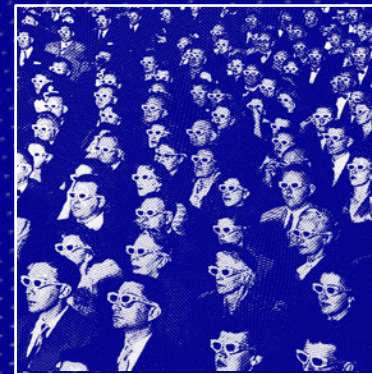
A park for the breathtaking Metropolis. A "Pleasure of Architecture". Alex Wall, OMA, 1983. Poster based on competition drawings for Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1982-83. Color screen print on paper. Photograph taken by the author at the Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam (OMA archive).



Stratification: The spontaneous space of waiting. The audience naturally forms rows while observing at the spectacle.



For the excited visitor of La Villette, a dynamic of passivity and an absence of any intention to activate a sense of social engagement were the main characteristics of the park's approach to knowledge transmission.



DEPARTMENT STORE

1887



In the Bon Marché, (which had been perceived from the beginning as a philanthropic institution¹ where “shopping” and republican ideals were compatible)², architecture had to do much more than to satisfy the obvious purposes of the establishment: it had to invent a new kind of urban monumentality. By 1887, the store dominated the entirety of its urban block and the adjacent streets.

While working on the project, the architect Louis-Charles Boileau arrived at the conclusion that we “should no longer consider the “solids” of the building, but rather the “void” that these enclose”,³ an approach which resulted in a modern building typology whose interior is articulated by “object-like” voids. Those communicating interior halls, thanks to their important height, penetrated the upper floors and –even if it was against the owner’s interest– could, thanks to their various functional benefits (light, ventilation, orientation, etc.), legitimize the outrageous size of

the building. The grand magasin was a scaled-down model of Haussmann’s Paris (“internal haussmanisation”), as its design was a response to the same aesthetic and functional principles that shaped the larger city: the visual mise-en-scène of the isolated monuments, and the perception of circulation as the driving force of the whole system.⁴

OMA recognized that the “void” was the only spatial tool that could sublimate our confrontation with an otherwise generic enormous monolithic block. In the scheme for the Two Libraries at Jussieu, the competition team, instead of “shaping” the voids, those ended up being the leftovers of a laboriously composed “pliable surface”. Even if Koolhaas directly referred to a typical Parisian urban typology, (“wrapped vertical boulevard”), Alain Guiheux has proposed that the project actually echoes the kind of circulation that existed in the grands magasins⁵.

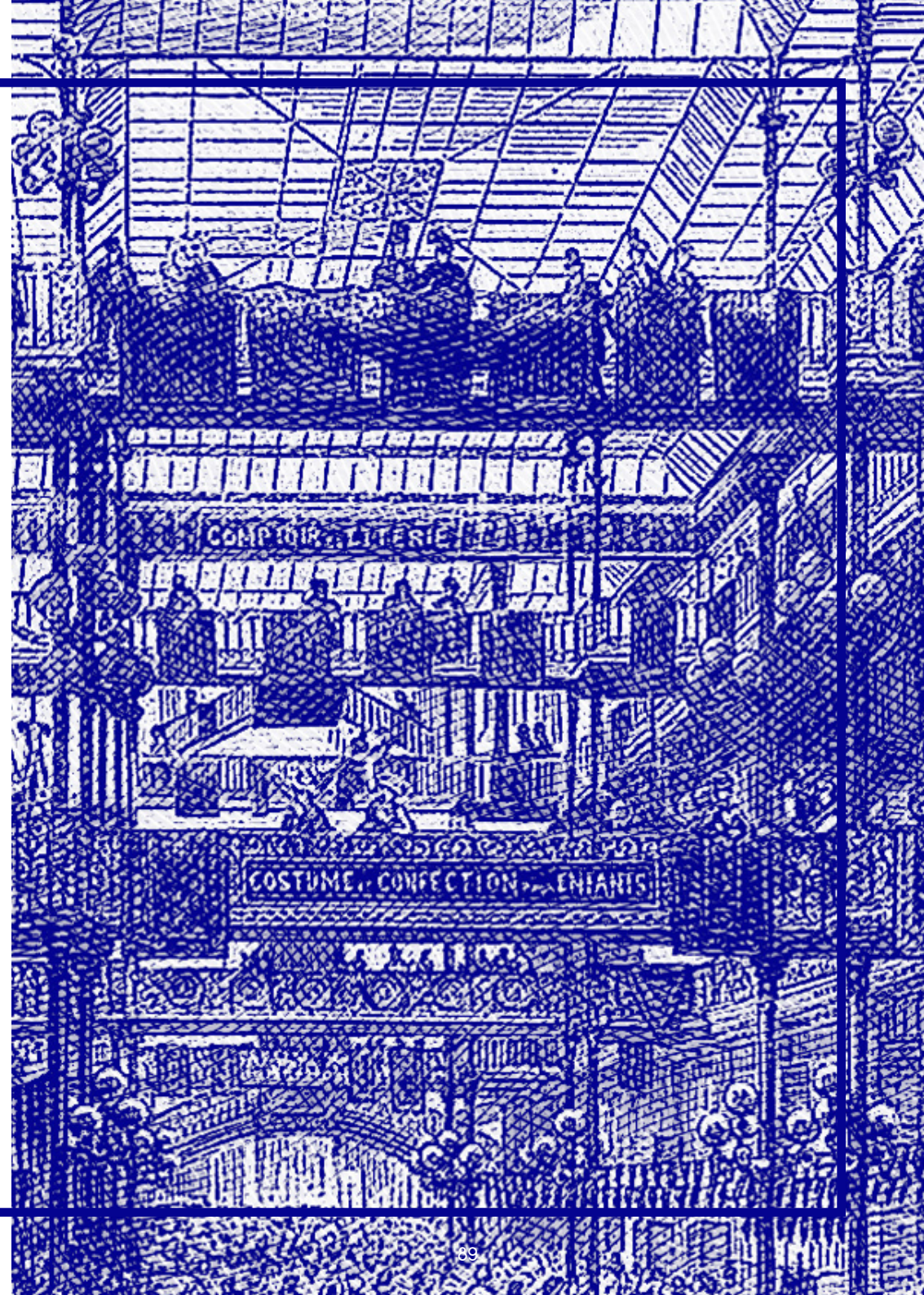
1 Bernard Marrey, *Les grands magasins des origines à 1939*, (Paris: Picard, 1979), 70.

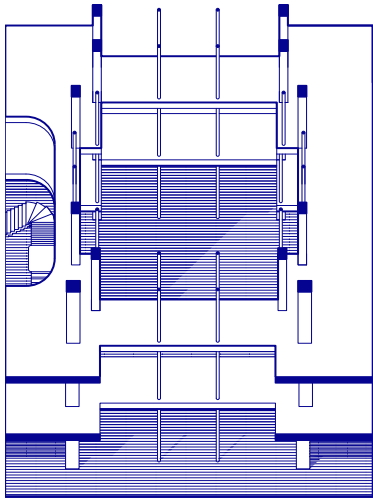
2 See Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 229.

3 Encyclopédie d’architecture : revue mensuelle des travaux publics et particuliers, volume 5 (1876), 120; translated by the author.

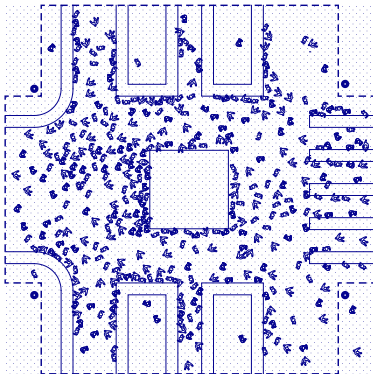
4 Rafael Serrano Saseta, *La création d’un type architectural: Les grands magasins parisiens (1844–1930)*, (Lille: ANRT, 2004), 134.

5 Alain Guiheux, “Science and Humanities Libraries, Jussieu University”, in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Denis Hollier and Anthony Vidler, eds., *Premises: Invested Spaces in Visual Arts, Architecture, and Design from France, 1958–1998* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1998), 484.

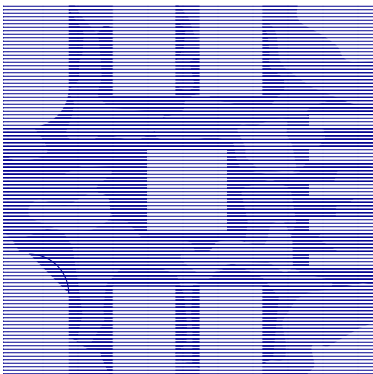




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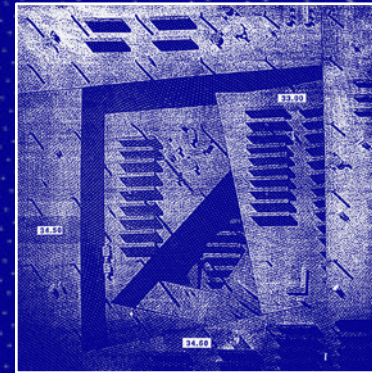


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Alain Guiheux has OMA's Jussieu library echoes the kind of circulation that existed in the grands magasins. Right: Model, Photograph taken by the author; at the Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam (OMA archive).



The "internal haussmanisation": visual isolation of the stacks; peripheral circulation becomes the driving force of the system.

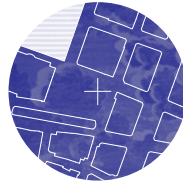


The arrangement of the merchandise, became to the clientele of the Bon Marché a spectacle to behold. It was in the image of well-ordered accumulation that commodities' added value would lie. See: Louis Hautecoeur, "De l'échoppe aux grands magasins", La Revue de Paris (July/August 1933), 838.



LABYRINTH

SEPTEMBER 1959



A few seconds of his 1959 film “Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps” (“On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time”), were enough for Guy Debord to present the interest that Les Halles’ “labyrinth”(as it is labelled in the film) had for the International Situationists. Besides, as it became clear in the “Essai de description psychogéographique des Halles” (A. Khatib), published a few months earlier,¹ Les Halles was seen as an island of fascinating complexity on the polished, continuous surface of the bourgeois city.

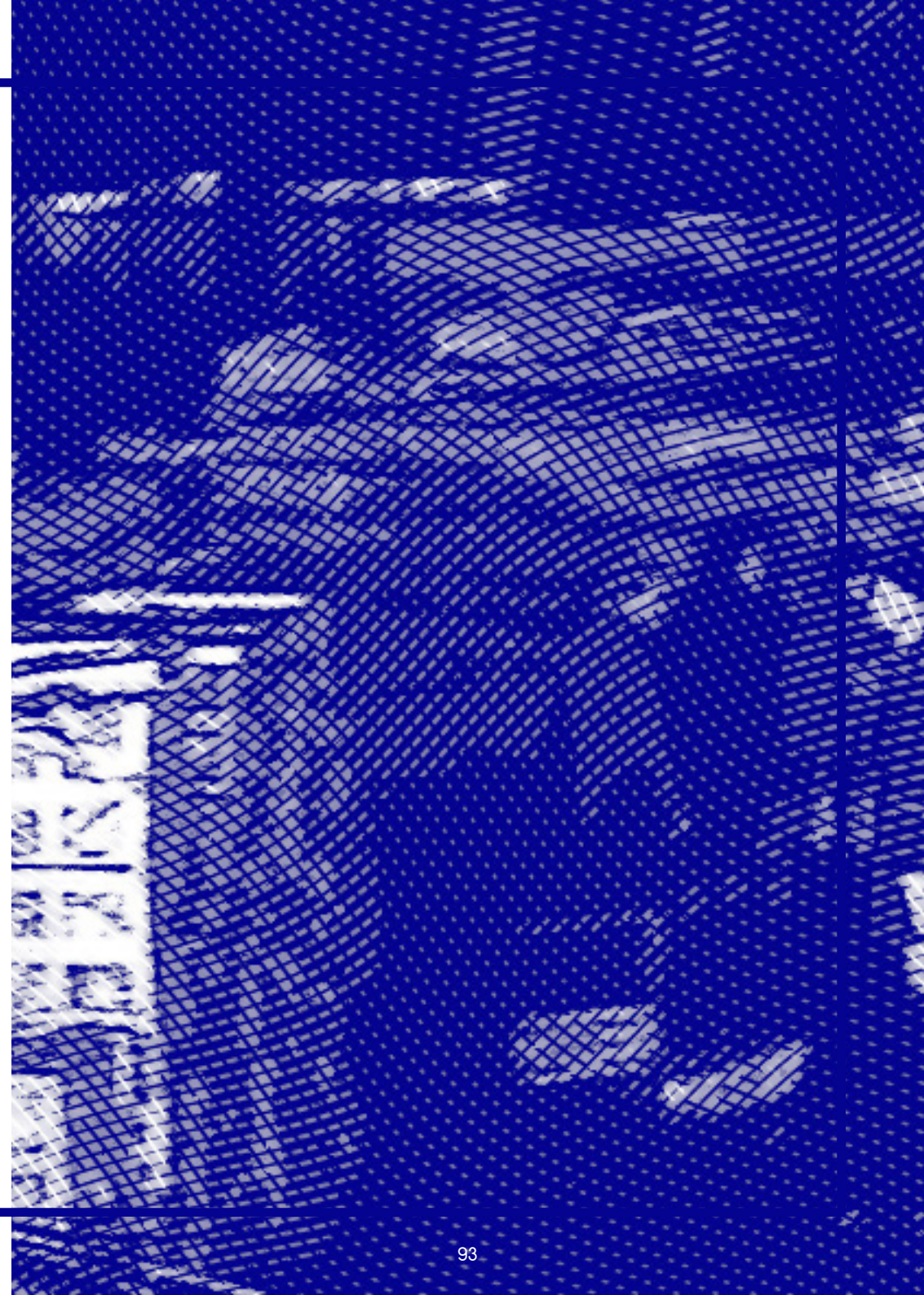
Shot during the night and the dawn (when the life of the workers is to be seen), they are the marginal instances of the neighborhood -rather than the bustling circulation of midday- that find their place in Debord’s images. Furthermore, the film witness a particular interest in some repetitive parallelipedic forms, which -by forming irregular niches- seem to frame worker’s activities: the crate stacks. The modular

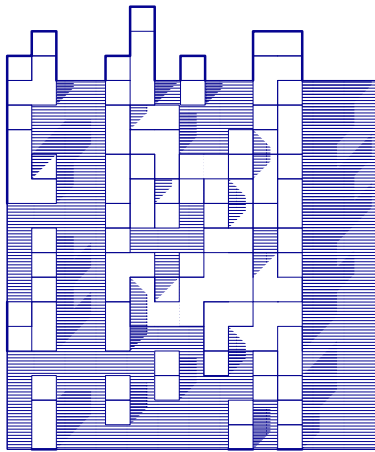
1 “Essai de description psychogéographique des Halles” Internationale situationniste, Bulletin central édité par les sections de l’Internationale situationniste N° 2 Décembre 1958

character of what is perceived as a possible architectural devise, assures its ephemerality. The crates have the ability to reshape every day, every hour, the contour of the street, creating new porous spaces of encounter, circulation corridors, spontaneous gathering places, between the asphalt and the built backdrop. The limits of the typical Parisian pavement are blurred. In Khatib’s text, a more elaborated Situationist agenda is manifested: The “barricades de cageots”² directly represent here the last stronghold of the working classes facing the upcoming radical and hygienic transformation of the area. The architectural solution which is counter proposed only suggests the solidification of the existing device : “(...)on devrait édifier des labyrinthes perpétuellement changeants à l’aide d’objets plus adéquats que les cageots de fruits et légumes qui sont la matière des seules barricades d’aujourd’hui”.

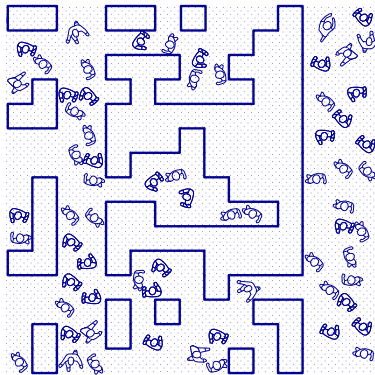
A fragment of such a “labyrinthic” network has been selected for the following drawings, acknowledging the potential which the ephemeral niches may present as informal meeting places amongst larger circulation axes.

2 Ibid.

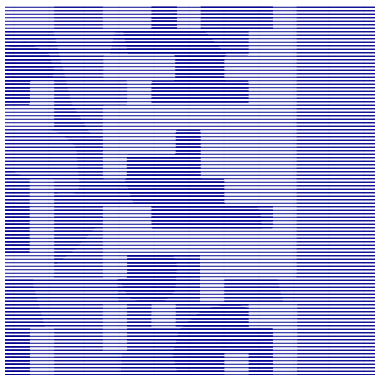




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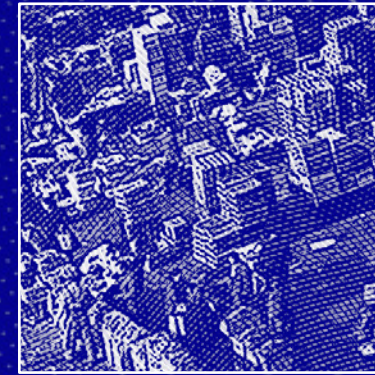


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The context is under constant reconfiguration. Right: Doisneau, Les Halles (1953)



In an open flea market, the crate functions as the "common" intermediate element which allows a more informal relation between salesman and buyer. Right: shot (detail) from Debord's film

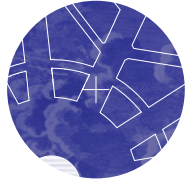


When a niche forms the appropriate scenery for human interaction. Right: niche in Pont Neuf (R. Doisneau, Les Amoureux du Pont Neuf, Paris, 1950)



WINTER GARDEN

19 FEBRUARY 1748



The “*Fôret Enchantée*” was the most interesting feature of Ribart’s zoomorphic pavilion, conceived for the *Étoile*. This is a conclusion derived from the architect’s meticulous description of the room¹, done at the expense of the supposedly more important throne/reception hall. Furthermore, since the dining room (the room’s functional pretext) is equal in terms of square meters to the throne hall, it is clear that, for the architect, the role that this room played, on this “*machine à fêter*”² was crucial.

The room’s “magical” performance is achieved thanks to the simultaneous use of two antithetical elements. Firstly, the hermetic room (no openings) was seen as a “*rendez-vous sauvage*”, faithful copy of a forest’s clearing. The selected scenography featured irregular fully-carved treelike columns, paintings of rural landscapes and false rocks. However, the scenery is completed with a key component which could not be less artificial: All the necessary equipment for a meal, a table, chairs and kitchenware, were designed to appear through the floor and the walls.³

1 Charles François Ribart, *Architecture singulière: l’éléphant triomphal: grand kiosque à la gloire du roi*, (Paris : Chez P. Patte, 1758) 7,8.

2 “Ces pièces(...) réunissent (...)tout ce qui concerne (...) les fêtes et les plaisirs.” Ibid., 5.

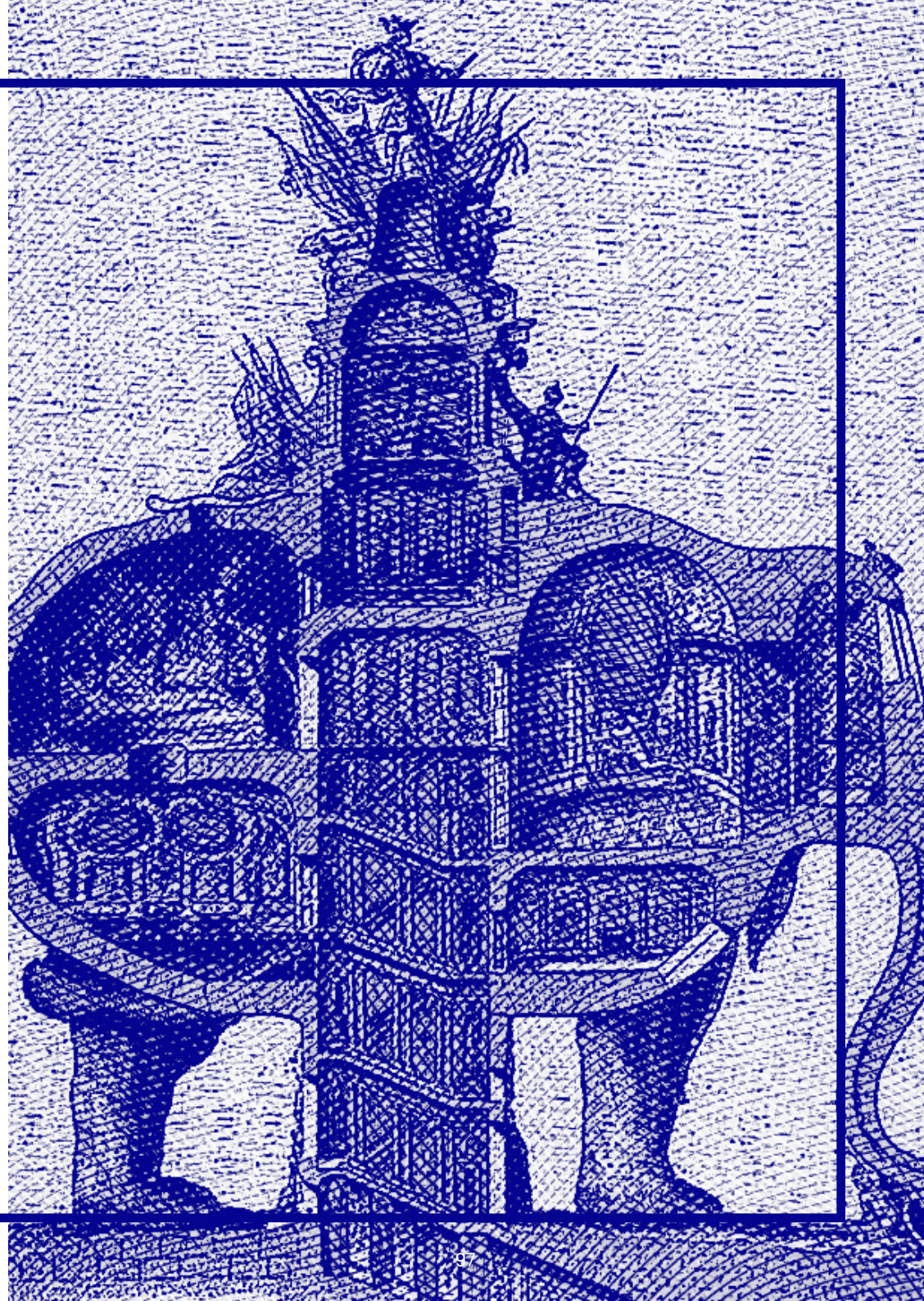
3 “The table will alternately satisfy as many

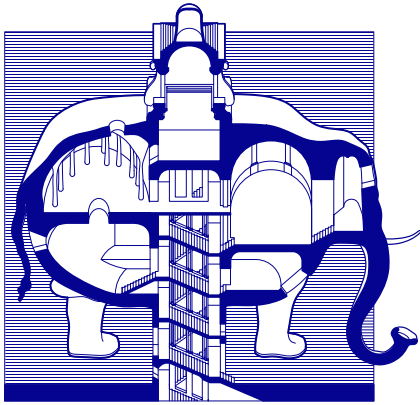
Furthermore, the temperature is kept constant by an hydraulic, air-conditioning system.

Ribart’s project creates an environment which gives the chance to its noble visitors to live joyfully (cooked meals miraculously appear) on a place where they would never survive differently, in the middle of a Vitruvian, hostile nature⁴, where every invention is a product of the human genius. The construction of a little fragment of a utopian garden of earthly delights was now possible thanks to the fruits of modernity (automatizms). The architect chooses a stereotomic approach: he curves this room out of a larger, singular mass and places inside a variety of different uses which render the building an autonomous world of indulgence. The success of the proposal relies on the successive surprising contrasts between container and contained element (animal, garden, food).

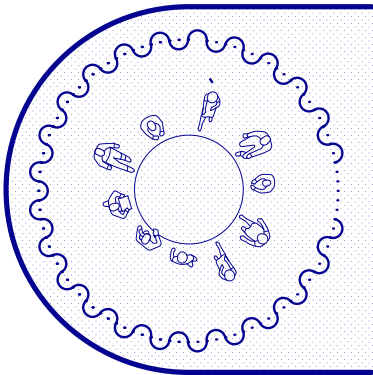
services as we may desire; and (...) will (...) bring to us anything we need (...)” Ibid., 8.

4 “Les hommes dans leur antique état naissaient, comme les animaux sauvages, dans des forêts et des cavernes (...)” Vitruve, *De Architectura*, Auguste Choisy ed., 1910; Livre II, I, The architect is in knowledge of this excerpt since, in the accompanying text of the project, he refers to the Book II.

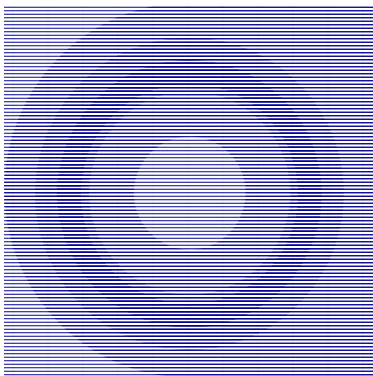




FORM
/INFRASTRUCTURE



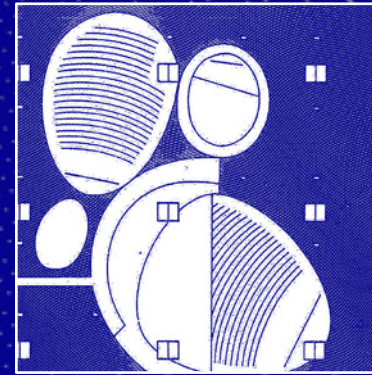
USE
/PROGRAM



DISCOURSE
/DESIRE

The architect has a stereotomic approach: he curves rooms out of a larger mass and places inside a variety of different uses; the building functions as a world in itself.

Right: OMA entry for the TGB competition, 1989



Beyond a regular dining room, the "Magic Forest" suggests that the without-pain satisfaction of human needs on a primitive context is possible

Right: The Garden of Earthly Delights by H. Bosch, end of the 15th century (detail).



The successive "lobotomy" between container and contained, (animal-forest, forest-cooked meal respectively) provokes the necessary excitement to the users. Right: a matryoshka doll.





AGRANDISSEMENT
DE LA
SAMARITAINE
DÉMOLITION

AGRANDISSEMENT
DE LA SAMARITAINE

AGRANDISSEMENT DE LA SAMARITAINE
DÉMOLITION DE 23 MAISONS

Lundi 20 Février Grande Mise en Vente
ARTICLES de MENAGE à 65¢
1 RUE BAILLET 1

CHEMISES
PARFUMERIE
GANTS

GANTS
DENTELLES
FLEURS PLUMES

LINCE CONFECTIONNE
PARFUMERIE
TROUSSEAUX

SAMARITAINE
PARFUMERIE

GANTS
LINCE de TABLE
CHEMISES
POUR HOMMES

TROUSSEAUX
GANTS
DENTELLES

CHEMISES
PARFUMERIE
ELLES

PARFUMERIE
FLEURS PLUMES
GANTS

TOILESS
DENTELLES
GANTS

TROUSSEAUX
GANTS
FLEURS PLUMES

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