

Mundanity and Spirituality

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Letter

What is the treasure in box?

A very old Chinese legend tells of a guy who bought jewellery and then returned it to the seller, but kept the ornate jewellery box. The original purpose of this fable was to teach people not to make inappropriate deals, which sounds a little ludicrous in today's world of over-packaging.

We could go on writing this story and imagine what would happen later. The man might use the box to store things he likes, which, of course, we know from the previous text, are certainly not jewellery. Or he might have used the box as a treasure. Just as many families display their antiques or jewellery on a bookshelf, he might make the furniture to specifically showcase this box.

Whatever happens in the future, the box will never be used for jewellery again. Rather, the eventual purpose of this box will be defined by the owner's particular preferences and experience. This story may be summarized in one sentence: it is about an object being used in a way that is not its "proper" use. The relationship between this story and the concept of bricoleur is immediately discernible. Storage or collection is a must for a bricoleur, and as Strauss says,

He ... have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions.*

In his book, he described travelling with a primitive man who was constantly collecting various plants and explaining their various functions to him. Strauss was amazed that seemingly unrelated plants were so closely linked to their lives. What is clear is that collecting, as an important part of bricolage, is a technique that is about mundanity. It has been relevant to our lives from the very beginning. Like Robinson going to the beach to find the wreckage of a wrecked ship and turning it into supplies for his own life.

Yet collecting is sometimes not just about living. In the second half of his book, The Wild Mind, Strauss concentrates on the relationship between bricolage and mythic thinking. At this point, gathering plant information becomes a precursor to witchcraft knowledge. What is not difficult to understand is that when the problem of sustenance is solved, a higher spiritual quest becomes apparent. As in the case of the "museum craze" that has been so popular since the 18th century, the collection of specimens or parts by museum scientists is seen as a symbol of the spirit of scientific enquiry.



A collage to show the spirituality and mundanity in collecting, which is a vital process for bricolage.

Letter

What is the treasure in box?

The above brief descriptions give an idea of the mundanity and spirituality behind the act of 'collecting'. It is worth noting that in today's age of over-packaging, it sounds a bit ridiculous to keep the packaging of a product. If people want to have a storage box, they mostly buy it from IKEA or Indy, even though their products are as simple as ordinary boxes. Also, the concept of FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) has been extended to all areas, from clothes to furniture. Many people don't even use storage boxes anymore. This is a huge waste of our resources and, at the same time, they lose out on the exciting process of filling the boxes with time and their accumulated experience.

Having followed the thread of bricolage to find spirituality and spirituality, I think we can once again ask some questions. Do these two abstract attributes still exist in modern society? And what is the point of bringing them back up here?





How Strauss explain the connection between mythical thought and bricolage:

The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repertoire, however, whatever the task in hand because it has nothing else at its disposal. Mythical thought is therefore a kind of intellectual 'bricolage'-which explains the relation which can be perceived between the two.

The Savage Mind by Claude Lévi-Strauss, P17

The disappearance of mundanity

Xiang Biao, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oxford, once introduced a concept to describe the changes in our society today, namely the 'absence of proximity'. He used the term 'proximity' to describe the main social environment in which people live, such as a neighbourhood or a town. It is closely related to our lives, but does not have the same direct impact on our lives as our home. Xiang Biao points out that with the development of the internet in this day and age, it is increasingly easy for people to access information from far away and ignore information from nearby. Socially organised relationships that would otherwise be done nearby can now be done on the internet without leaving home. Take, for example, the rise of takeaway software. Restaurants that are spatially distributed near and far used to give us a sense of how long a walk it was or which neighborhood they were close to; now, this sense of distance is replaced by price figures. He goes on to explain that this doesn't mean that 'proximity' has disappeared. Because the distance planning and price ordering of takeaway software is still based on logic. According to Xiang Biao, "near" is moving from the real world to the virtual world and is being digitised.*

This concept is not an accusation that digitalisation is destroying our traditional lives, but rather that a new medium of social relations is being formed, all due to the development of the Internet. We are now in a transitional phase: the internet is taking shape as a new medium for social relations, while real space will remain a traditional medium for a long time. The new "proximity" is not yet perceived in the traditional way.

The consequence of this phenomenon is an incomplete cognitive frame of reference. Because our perception is based on a frame of reference formed by the environment in which we live. As previously stated, we live in a traditional physical space, but our perception of our surroundings is becoming increasingly absent; we are exposed to cyberspace, but it remains abstract to us and cannot be comprehended using traditional cognition. The former is a more figurative frame of reference, where all our perceptions are formed according to the real world, while the latter is a more abstract frame of reference, where everything is based on digital arithmetic and logic. Metaphorically speaking, the relationship between the two is like that between the English language and a programming language. The differences and contradictions between the old and the new reference systems cut through our perceptions.





Diagram showing the Activity level of restaurant in different time in Beijing. Date comes from takeaway app. As we can see in this picture, active restaurant are moving in different times. Because people all eat delivery food in their office or home. So the traditional concept of restaurant is transforming.

Source from https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/73904507

The disappearance of mundanity

Perhaps we can thus say that physical mundanity is being replaced by a virtual one. But this replacement also tends to make us feel uneasy. As the author of Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work, the abstract work of writing summaries and summarising knowledge in a New York cubicle left him with a growing sense of emptiness and self-doubt. When he became a motorbike mechanic, he felt more and more enriched as he worked with his own hands to solve a visible and tangible problem. He once described how he struggled to unscrew a screw with all the tools at his disposal. At this point, the motorbike mechanic was more of a bricoleur than an engineer.*

Adhocism, a concept developed in the previous century and given fresh life in the early years of the third industrial revolution, when individual DIY creations competed with international corporations, was also broken by technological and social advances. Huaqiangbei was originally associated with Shanzhai mobile phones in China. You could find various kinds of assembled mobile phones here a decade or two ago, before Apple phones took the market. Some of them had radios built in, while others had an extendable antenna that could be used to watch TV shows. The sellers of Huaqiangbei lived according to the bricoleur's motto in a Frankensteinian style during the days of 2G networks.*







Once Huaqiangbei's mobile phones were known for their versatility. The first picture shows a phone that could be a microscope. In the second picture the phone is combined with a cigarette case. The phone in the third picture has the function of power bank(but don't known if it can charge itself). Around 2010, with the rise of Apple and Huawei and Samsung, these thousand and one strange mobile phones fell out of favour

The disappearance of mundanity

It is really vital to recall such great days once more. When the Internet was initially developed, the idea was that everyone could create their own website and that the web would connect people all over the world. The creators of the World Wide Web, on the other hand, could never have predicted that portals would evolve into information hubs and that the great bulk of data would be controlled by a few web corporations. The internet was no longer a boat travelling from one Robinsonian desert island to the next, but rather an enjoyable game that played the role of Robinson at a theme park. In contrast to the former, the latter, both in terms of access to information and in terms of channels, is dependent on the platform rather than the individual's will, which is opposed to the spirit of bricolage. It is clear that individual liberty is severely curtailed in today's society. We still have to go about our regular routines. What we've lost, on the other hand, is a mundaneness that truly mobilizes individual engagement and modifies lives according to one's subjective desires.



Percentage change since June 6, 2014 | Source: Reuters

One diagram shows data monopolies levels in some big net companies Source from article: The age of data monopolies https://www.mawer.com/the-art-of-boring/blog/the-age-of-data-monopolies/

Another kind of poetry - the mundanity path to freedom

The English translation of bricolage (DIY) is better known, as above I described the prevalence of adhocism, which represents a way of life that emphasises how important it is to be disposable and free of mundanity. And here a clue points insidiously to a more distant place. That is, why we live, and what it means to live.

For DIY, the most iconic character would be Defoe's Robinson. After being shipwrecked and stranded on a deserted island, he managed to survive and even live a better quality of life on the island by collecting various materials and tools floating in the sea. When we visit the cave where Robinson lived, we find that it was constantly being made more habitable by Robinson.

The cave is not Robinson's creation, but for his renovation and home furnishing, as Strauss says, the engineer asks questions to the world and the bricoleur deals with the remnants of human activity. It is at this point, then, that the concepts of habitation, reuse, remnants and the spontaneous arrangement of the occupant intersect.

Robinson is at once adhocism and bricoleur in the sense that he relates himself to his surroundings through his hands. Heidegger gives a deeper meaning to this act. In his book, "Building Dwelling Thinking", he writes that building is the true dwelling. In turn, he explains that construction as dwelling unfolds into the kind of construction that maintains growth and the construction that builds buildings. Ultimately, he writes, dwelling is the way in which man, who will eventually die, exists on the earth.*

Heidegger places the construction of maintenance and growth on a par with the construction of the main structure of a building in the first place. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the former is subject to frequent change, while the latter is almost constant. The former, with regard to furniture and objects, is part of the construction, as is the way we usually move and arrange them. And this is also the way we exist. At this point in the discourse we can also naturally clarify the question of whether the everyday life of a bricoleur is the same as the everyday life of a commodity society. The difference between the two is not whether the object is purchased or handmade, but whether the user actually incorporates the object into his or her own collection of life elements and is in a dynamic state of change. The word tinkering is of French origin and originally meant the unexpected, the act of bypassing. Thus, from the very beginning of the word, it had a connotation of irregular use.

And in the present day of a commodity society, the renewed invocation of the word mundanity is a conviction of individuality itself. In his opening statement, Adamson says,

'In a world that is over-full of commodities that seem to exert more and more psychological pressure on us, the ability of the individual citizen to intelligently adapt that which is served up by corporate culture and make it meaningful, make it particular, and then apply it to a purpose has never been more important.'*

^{*}Heidegger, Martin. "Building dwelling thinking." Poetry, language, thought 154 (1971): 1-26.

^{*}Adhocism: A Disputed Theory of Improvisation by James Haldane, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/exhibitions/adhocism-a-disputed-theory-of-improvisation



From movie The Piano in a Factory

1. Building is really dwelling.

2. Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth.

3. Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings.

Building Dwelling Thinking, Martin Heidegger , 1993

Another kind of poetry - the mundanity path to freedom

We can further imagine that when a space can be allowed to be used and changed so freely by the user, then the space itself no longer dominates the process of use. The boundaries between spatial separations in the traditional sense, such as walls and rooms, and objects of use such as furniture are increasingly blurred. This freer mundanity at this time suggests a notion of space where time and space change overlap, where everything is tied to the human body and grand narratives are abandoned.

This notion of space is perfectly embodied in the Chinese scroll painting The Night Revels of Han Xizai.* This long scroll depicts an upper-class dinner party during the Northern Song dynasty, with a playing orchestra and guests conversing and eating, from left to right. On closer inspection, we can notice two rather unusual points in this painting.

The first point is that Han Xizai, the host of the banquet, appears in different parts of the painting in different dresses. For example, on the far right he is fully clothed, but in the middle he begins to take off his coat and beat the drum, on the left he is drunk and unbuttoning, and finally he dresses again as he bids farewell to his guests. From this we can know that the scroll does not depict a single moment of the feast or a single scene, but rather a superimposition of scenes occurring at multiple times.

The second interesting point is that the usual architectural elements, such as columns or walls, are not present throughout the picture. The images are separated and the events take place through different pieces of furniture. At the same time, as in the previous point, the same furniture appears several times, as in the case of the huge black wooden bed, which at first serves as a seat for the banquet dinner and later as a resting room in the middle of the party. The screen behind the bed has more than a hint of a joke, for as well as being used to block the view, it is also used as a border for the collector's stamp.

I think these two interesting points not only coincide with Heidegger's ideas, but also illustrate mundanity as a property with a temporal character. We can therefore imagine a housing design in which all the services necessary for modern living (bath, kitchen and bathroom) are compressed into a living core, with the perimeter of the room completely freed up, like a blank section in a scroll painting, waiting to be filled in by the occupant at different times and in different ways with different furniture.

^{*}The Night Revels of Han Xizai painted by Gu Hongzhong, 980 AD, 28.7 cm × 335.5 cm (11.3 in × 132.1 in), Beijing Museum



The host Hanxi Zai in different clothes are showing on the painting at the same time.



The furniture as the main space for activities.



The furniture as the division of space and time.

Spirituality-Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?

We should not lack spirituality because we live in a city where modernist architecture is prevalent. Already in the early half of the twentieth century, in his classic article 'When the Cathedrals Were White'* Corbusier predicted that the white cathedrals that previously filled the city with human splendour would become the most important over time. The white churches, once filled with the light of humanity, had been polluted by time, and the new architecture of our new century had not yet arrived when they were white, according to Corbusier. The white church can also be viewed as a metaphor for the Ville Radieuse. Although the concept of the Ville Radieuse was much criticised in later years, when it was proposed it did envisage a comfortable, humane way of life.*

However, if one reads Corbusier's words carefully, one will discover that his prophecy extends beyond this. Corbusier went on to say that because America was a new world in comparison to Europe, would it be possible to design new architecture for a new period in America? He remarked with dismay after visiting cities such as Chicago and New York that the twentieth century (cities) were not built for people, they were built for money.

A scene from the film Fountainhead* vividly recreates this conclusion by Corbusier. You need this to adapt to the programme. This quote shows how fragile architecture is in the face of capital and how much power it has. The sprawling green spaces and fresh-air-filled balconies of the Ville Radieuse were not promoted, but replaced by overcrowded streets and repetitive housing. Modernist architecture thus seems to have lost its original ambition, being exploited by capital simply on the basis of the principles of the economy and profit.

*Corbusier, Le. "When the Cathedrals Were White. A Journey to the Country of Timid People." (1948).

*Le Corbusier. La Ville Radieuse : Éléments D'une Doctrine D'urbanisme Pour L'équipement De La Civilisation Machiniste. Collection De L'équipement De La Civilisation Machiniste. Boulogne (Seine): Éditions de l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1935. *The Fountainhead is a 1949 American black-and-white drama film from Warner Bros. produced by Henry Blanke, directed by King Vidor and starring Gary Cooper, Patricia Neal, Raymond Massey, Robert Douglas and Kent Smith.



Despite the fact that the high-rise is in the distance, Corbusier uses a human perspective to represent the green space and to convey a cosy atmosphere



Screen shot from the movie Fountainhead

Spirituality-Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?

Here I would like to cite two examples of buildings with the same fate, both of them from the American architect Minoru Yamasaki and both of them destroyed after they were built. But to me, these two buildings are like two sides of the same coin, symbolising the perverse relationship between modernism and capital.

The first is Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project in St Louis. People often refer to the demolition of this project as the death of modernism. Influenced by the idea of the Ville Radieuse , Yamasaki's initial design ideas had the project as a mix of high- and low-rise housing, with service infrastructure such as restrooms and playgrounds scattered among the high-rise buildings, and a series of landscape elements linking the various buildings. However, these ideas were not realised due to financial constraints. As a result of the inadequate infrastructure, the residents moved out and the community became increasingly mired in chaotic management, eventually becoming a high crime area.

The failure of the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project was caused by a combination of unfortunate design, deep-rooted racism, and confusing housing policies that led to the demolition of the project. But the biggest reason was the neglect of people. Cutting infrastructure in the early stages of a project because of insufficient funding is like performing only half of a surgical procedure because of insufficient contributions. The experience of the occupants seems to be worthless in the face of the financial budget. Also the use of too cheap materials makes post-project maintenance very difficult. The arrogance is even more evident at the policy level. The government department has many rules for the occupants which are more like norms and punishments in a prison. For example, men who do not have jobs are not allowed to live in the houses, so children must lie to government officials, who conduct random checks from time to time, that their fathers are not at home. In a documentary Pruitt's residents mentioned that it was as if they were being given handouts. "We give you money and we have the right to control your life".*

If we look back at this project, what is perhaps worthy of our praise is a spirit that tries to care for the users at the beginning of the design. This humanism is also at the heart of the spirit of modernist architecture. Rather than the architectural design leading to the failure of this project, it is the capital-driven society that has led to its ultimate fate.



After two decades of crime and increasing maintenance issues, Pruitt-Igoe was ultimately demolished between 1972 and 1977. ImageVia pruitt-igoe.com

Spirituality-Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?

The second building we are going to talk about is an entirely man-made tragedy. On 11 September 2001, two planes hijacked by Al-Qaeda terrorists crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York. This masterpiece, once seen as a symbol of America, was reduced to rubble in a short time. This event was the beginning of a change in the international situation that would be followed by numerous political events in the next two decades.

We can think of 9/11 as a rebellion from another voice in the world. Despite the tragic vicarious construction of the event, it is undeniable that the clash of multiple voices has intensified since then. Some of these conflicts are mild, some are violent, and they are gradually dissolving once universal spiritual ideas.

The same trend is reflected in the field of architecture. As olgiati repeatedly emphasises in his book Non-referential Architecture,* there is no longer a view like the "international style" that can be applied to all contexts. He further writes that the non-referential world is one that requires everyone to constantly re-align themselves with the world, as there is no fixed meaning that can be sustained.

Interestingly, however, in another of his books, The Images of Architects, he lists ancient architecture from countries such as Italy, India and Mexico as a source for his own architectural work. In his practice, we can see that in the classical images and forms, he reads an abstract order. Although the simplicity of the appearance is similar to that of modernist architecture, a form that is different from one that serves only function and efficiency often evokes certain historical fragments. (Why does he look to history for answers?)

*Ionel, Andra. "Non-Referential Architecture: ideated by Valerio Olgiati, written by Markus Breitschmid." (2019): 255-258. *Olgiati, Valerio. The Images of Architects: 44 Collections by Unique Architects. Quart Verlag, 2013.



A jet airliner is lined up on one of the World Trade Center towers in New York Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001. Picture: AP Photo/Carmen Taylor





Images from book The Images of Architects, Olgiati said he see them as the initial ideas of the design



Facade drawing of Torre San Felipe, designed by Valerio Olgiati, drawled by Xiaoyue Shi

Spirituality-Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?

The Norwegian architect Fehn once said ,

In pursuing the past one can never recapture it. Only by bringing forth the present can contact with the past be established.*

This statement may seem to be an objection to historical imitators, but it seems to me that Fehn wants to emphasise how we can make a connection with the past. What he is opposing is a direct copy that disregards the context of the present, rather than the possibility of creating a dialogue with history.

As Rossi says in his book The Architecture of The City,* the past is the partially perceived present and history is the fabric of the city. Perhaps in this day and age, faced with such a multiplicity of contradictions, we cannot respond to all in the same form. But history is as objective as a mirror reflecting the present. In my opinion architecture is not a tool for resolving contradictions, perhaps it can solve some of them, but after solving the basic needs of the users, moreover, the purpose of architecture is to present the contradictions themselves. And in order to present contradictions, neither modernity nor history can be absent.

At this point, we return to the beginning, where we can sort out the thread of spirituality. At the beginning of the modernist movement, the spirituality of architecture shifted from a religious concern to a humanitarian concern. However, this humanism did not go further and further with modernism in the following decades, but rather the intervention of capital and politics reduced modernist architecture to a machine of efficiency. Today, with globalisation and computerisation, the meaning of the so-called fixed is being redefined and ambivalence has become the new zeitgeist, with history becoming an important reference point.

^{*} Norberg-Schulz, 1986

^{*} Rossi, Aldo, and Peter Eisenman. The architecture of the city. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1982.

...the past is partly being experienced now, and this may be the meaning to give permanences: they are a past that we are still experiencing. P59

...The value of history seen as collective memory, as the relationship of the collective to its place, is that it helps us to grasp the significance of the urban structure, its individuality, and its architecture which is the form of this individuality. P131

The Architecture of the City by Aldo Rossi





City History

Nijmegen-Topography

Like many cities, Nijmegen's urban landscape is shaped by the special topography of the region. Back in glacial times, rivers flowed through Nijmegen into the Great River and washed out the low valleys, thus forming the seven hills. The early settlers built buildings along the banks of the ancient riverbed and they became the oldest streets in Nijmegen. The location of the main church, for example, which was once the absolute centre of the city, sits on high ground in the middle of the river. Later, as the city grew, more streets were extended from the main road to form the city as it is today. The unique topography of Nijmegen is marked by the river and the hills.

At the same time a large amount of clay comes to Nijmegen every year from upstream, thanks to the sedimentation of the river. Clay has been used since ancient times to make bricks, the traditional building material of the region. The river has therefore not only shaped the form of Nijmegen's streets, but also influenced the specific building materials and styles.







The river topography and the city street, made by Fleurtje Ruijs

City History

A Roman City

The first mention of Nijmegen in history is in the first century BCE, when the Romans built a military camp on the place where Nijmegen was to appear; the location had great strategic value because of the surrounding hills, which gave (and continue to give) a good view over the river Waal and Rhine valley.

By 69, when the Batavi, the original inhabitants of the Rhine and Meuse (Maas) delta, revolted, a village called Oppidum Batavorum had formed near the Roman camp. This village was destroyed in the revolt, but when it had ended the Romans built another, bigger camp where the Legio X Gemina was stationed. Soon after, another village formed around this camp.

In 98, Nijmegen was the first of two settlements in what is now the Kingdom of the Netherlands to receive Roman city rights.

In 103, the X Gemina was restationed in Vindobona, now Vienna, which may have been a major blow to the economy of the village around the camp, losing around 5000 inhabitants. In 104 Emperor Trajan renamed the town, which now became known as Ulpia Noviomagus Batavorum, Noviomagus for short, the ultimate origin of the current name.

A collection of artifacts from Roman antiquity were compiled by Johannes Smetius in the 17th century, called the Smetius Collection.*

^{*} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nijmegen



A Roman relic in Njimegen

City History

The structure of Roman City



Pompeii Relic From this picture we can see the big public space and the small private space are mixed together. People can easily get access to a public space from their home.





The Nolli Map of Rome 1748 by Giambattista Nolli By the diagram we can see how the street connect housing area and main public space in an organic way.

City Mundanity

City Furniture

Due to the highly variable topography there are many steps in the city of Nijmegen, which play different roles. Here there is an interesting form of step that we call urban furniture. Although it is the product of a change in height, more often than not people use this change in height for other functions, such as sitting and resting, displaying or arranging plants and flowers. In the process, the staircase was adapted using the various tools at hand. In the picture to the right we can see that sometimes pillows are placed on the steps to make a sofa, sometimes a ramp is used as a slide, and sometimes objects are placed at the entrance to the home to show off the owner's personal preferences.



Sketches to show the texture and items on stairs. And how people use them.



Stairs in front of a ramen restaurant, be used as a waiting space.


Stairs in a small park, be used as seat.

City Mundanity

Molenpoort' s past and now

We have never had the Molenpoort. Once it was a symbol of chic as an American mall. But this abstract concept built on consumerism and exotic freshness soon fell into oblivion with the passage of time.

The people who really love Molenpoort are the shopkeepers who have been here for over a decade, the local residents who used to frequent the playground as young children. It is easy to see why; the shopkeepers decorated their shop daily by hand, the residents got pleasure from it when they were children themselves, and they all poured their hearts and souls into it.

But, strangely enough, molenpoort itself is trying to erase this sense of belonging or remembered closeness. The drawings show that it has been renovated several times, and that the signs of these renovations are hidden in the ceiling or in the partitions. Each time it appears in a new light, and each time it ages in the same way and at the same speed. And so on, three times over, until now. People still say they love the place, but the bustle of the streets outside and the coldness of the shopping mall speak for themselves. Perhaps it's not the look of the molenpoort that people love, but the stories they remember of what happened here. The plastic plants in the atrium of the mall are a microcosm of the difference between what we see here and what we really are.

The molenpoort is constantly renovating its appearance but is increasingly falling into clichés, anxious about its appearance because it was once the embodiment of its American spirit and represents its attractive past. But clearly there is nothing unusual about this architectural appearance or shopping format today. The spirit behind the molenpoort is foreign and has no intention of having any possible connection with local life (it did, dancing party for example, but then cancelled), and the cramped shopping space inside makes it incompatible with a traditional shopping street. So after the novelty wore off, it declined rapidly.



Resource: Booklet of Tracy Group, P1 Work

City Mundanity

Molenpoort's past and now



Resource: Movie made by Shopping Group, P1 Work



Top: Empty and cold shopping mall Down: Interviews from shopkeepers, from Movie made by Shopping Group, P1 Work

City Mundanity

Molenpoort

Like most of modernist architecture, Molenpoort is also a production of ocularcentrism. This makes such a deficit of senses in our site. Around Molenpoort, there are some streets where you can see the windows with old wood frames telling their stories, you can even feel the roughness without touching it. There are streets where you can see the glass of shop windows reflecting golden sunset and clouds, suddenly you smell the sweet of ice cream form the shop in next corner. But, there are also some streets, especially in Molenpoort, have tedious ceramic brick floor pattern continuing, huge entrance with non-human scale like a big mouth of a monster, tries to swallow everyone passing by.

This is an impression mapping of Molenpoort, from which we can see most of streets have a strong identity. When I left Nijmegen and made this drawing on train, I found that I even couldn't remember what is inside the shopping mall, because it didn't bring me a strong sensory stimulation.









Light Atmosphere in the Molenpoort, dark and unchanged







Light Atmosphere in the City, diversity between dark and bright

Reverse the passage

The original mall was too large, making the interior space rather homogeneous and resulting in a very poor shopping experience inside. We believe that street-facing shopping spaces are the most effective. The importance of the street is also evident from the previous study of the historic urban fabric. Therefore we propose the concept of reversing. We have reversed the location of the original passage to the building and the location covered by the original building to the street. In this way two new streets appear on the site, connecting the surrounding roads, increasing accessibility and returning the shopping space to the traditional streets.

So, there are now three streets surrounding the site, each with a different function and a different street atmosphere, according to the original context, and playing a different role in the city.







Reverse the passage

The first street is located between the new building and the old church. Behind the old church there is a hidden garden. It was not known before because it was enclosed by shopping malls. When the street space was opened up, the garden was also opened to the public. At the same time, the type of business on the street was decided to be cultural and leisure, such as cafes and vintage shops, in accordance with the relaxing atmosphere of the garden.



Reverse the passage

The second street is located in the heart of the site and is also the site of the original molenpoort shopping venue. We have therefore positioned it as the main commercial space. At the same time some commercial and cultural places are introduced, such as a hip museum, to increase the commercial attractiveness of the area.



Reverse the passage

The third street is located between the site and the original residential area and serves as a transition from commercial to residential space. We therefore set the function of this street to be mainly for community services, such as a community library, gym, etc. A green space has also been designed on this street as a public space for the residents' usual activities.





City Sec





tion 1:500



City Sec





tion 1:500



City Sec





tion 1:500









Architecture

Sequence

It is not enough to pay homage to history only in terms of structural form. Nijmegen, as an ancient Roman city, may find some points in this history that are instructive for housing. Roman houses are known for their rich spatial sequences. In a symmetrical layout, several courtyards were often laid out along a central axis. These courtyards were places where interaction took place and their function was not limited to gatherings and gardens, but could sometimes even be used for agricultural production. What it brings to my mind is the communal space as a point of transformation in the sequence, but also as a container for many possibilities.



House of the Silver Wedding, Pompeii, 2nd century BCE – 1st century CE / Wikimedia Commons



House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii, 62-79 CE / Wikimedia Commons



House of Pansa peristyle / Wikimedia Commons



The sapce sequence of the House of Pansa peristyle











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Separate Housing





Bakery





Impression of House of Pansa peristyle / From Wikimedia Commons



Impression of Housing project



Courtyard to Please, Brussels, Belgium 2013 Garden from Jan Minne



Serpentine Galle

Gar




ery Pavilion 2011 , Peter Zumthor den from Piet Oudolf



Garden House, Baracco + Wright Architects 2021



Section

References for three green space







Oecus



Section Comparison

Structure Form

Classical architecture has always had a sense of dignity and enclosure, and as the plan on the left shows, the symmetrical and orderly structure has absolute dominance in the space. But it is interesting to note that over time, after they have been reduced to ruins, they take on an openness, like the skeletons seen in the X-ray photographs. Visitors, wind and sunlight can come and go without any obstacles, and you can feel a sense of freedom behind the orderly structure.

When designing the main structural form, the open structure was the most suitable as a skeleton, considering that the interior space is, as I have described, free and uncertain in its mundanity. As you can see in the diagram of the structural design process on the next page, from the very beginning the scheme sought a sense of, well, order and openness. With practical use in mind, the facade and the load-bearing columns were finally integrated and the columns became flat. This led to a reflection on the size and style of the window openings. I deliberately designed all the windows in the style of balcony doors, so that when the sun is shining the occupants can open all the doors and the house will be completely open to the sky.



Parthenon in Athens, a combination of freedom and order



Plans of classical temples Source from book he Images of Architects, written by Olgiati



Structure Scheme in week 3.4



Structure Scheme in week 3.8



Final Structure Scheme









Facade

In this urban photograph, several children climb up a rather classicist gate. More interestingly, behind this gate is a stained brick wall, just like those back doors you and I see in shady alleys. I think this photograph is an extremely vivid portrait of a time when history no longer dominates, but is an important constituent element in a time of contradictions. If we replace it, then this ambivalence no longer exists and the spirituality I mentioned above is lost. In my design, therefore, the historical element acts as a mirror, appearing alongside the contemporary element to reflect the contradictory present.

Thus, in front of the main façade I have placed a greenhouse as the entrance to the house. The façade of the house, with its wall of hills and sloping roof, is derived from the classical style. The two form a contrast, the ordered and the disordered, the solid and the fragile, the heavy and the light, the permanent and the temporary, the inorganic and the organic. I wanted the conservatory to play the role of a child in a photographic work, to interact with the historical elements.



Helen Levitt / New York, c.1940 (kids over doorway)



Photoshoped by Xiaoyue Shi



Facade of classical temple

Facade of housing project



Facade with greenhouse







Facade







Facade

Housing

We can imagine that when a space can be allowed to be used and changed so freely by the user, then the space itself no longer dominates the process of use. The boundaries between spatial separations in the traditional sense, such as walls and rooms, and objects of use such as furniture are increasingly blurred. This freer mundanity at this time suggests a notion of space where time and space change overlap, where everything is tied to the human body and grand narratives are abandoned.

The Heidegger's ideas illustrate mundanity as a property with a temporal character. We can therefore get a permission of a housing design in which all the services necessary for modern living (bath, kitchen and bathroom) are compressed into a living core, with the perimeter of the room completely freed up, like a blank section in a scroll painting, waiting to be filled in by the occupant at different times and in different ways with different furniture.



Photo by Jiang Tong, Guangzhou, China, 2019















86 m² Family Housing















Staircase-Balcony Seats to the City

Even in the fast-paced city of New York, there's something romantic about slowing down, stepping out of the fast-moving crowds, and looking up. Few places will let you down. Look up high in the city, particularly in Manhattan, and you'll see the city's built history play out in architectural features and ornate facades of buildings, awnings and balconies standing out like grooves in a record, ready to unveil the story of each block. You can see the pinnacles of gigantic towers and the cranes of even greater structures in the skyscraper canyons of Midtown. Look a bit lower, around the corners and into the alleyways, and you'll discover a structure with a romantic connection to an older New York City zigzagging down towards the streets.

Fire escapes have a simple goal, as their name implies: to protect people from fire. However, for much of their history, they've played quite different roles in cities all around the world. Tenement residents used them to sleep on, squabble on, and transform them into genuine community grapevines. Wrote playwright Arthur Miller about growing up on 110th Street); a flower pot was as good as a garden, and the stairs offered an easy way to the roof, "tar beach" during hot summer days. "The greatest thing I remember about wintertime," Chicagoan Bill Bailey once told Studs Terkel, "you'd reach out on the fire escape and pull in some snow, put condensed milk on it, and you had great ice cream!"*

^{*} https://archive.curbed.com/2016/3/28/11313110/fire-escapes-history-new-york-city



A newly arrived immigrant eats noodles on the fire escape in New York City. © Chien-Chi Chang/Magnum Photos 1988



Rear Window; James Stewart, Grace Kelly, 1954. Mary Evans/Ronald Grant/Everett Collection












Impression

Architecture

Pulpit

A pulpit is a raised stand for preachers in a Christian church. The origin of the word is the Latin pulpitum (platform or staging).[1] The traditional pulpit is raised well above the surrounding floor for audibility and visibility, accessed by steps, with sides coming to about waist height. From the late medieval period onwards, pulpits have often had a canopy known as the sounding board, tester or abat-voix above and sometimes also behind the speaker, normally in wood. [2] Though sometimes highly decorated, this is not purely decorative, but can have a useful acoustic effect in projecting the preacher's voice to the congregation below. Most pulpits have one or more book-stands for the preacher to rest his or her bible, notes or texts upon.*

But as a foreigner, what I felt when I first saw the pulpit was how a heterogeneous object in a large space could bring a wonderful atmosphere to the whole space. It is like a house within a house, a street within a building. So at the end of the central axis of the project I have similarly set up a space like this as a connection between the gym and the library. After several tests of the form, a translucent window was finally settled on. When the users of the library pass under this window, they can see light coming through it.

^{*} From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulpit























Architecture

Greenhouse

The greenhouse, once the atrium of the molenpoort, is now used as the entrance hall to the project. It is not only a greenhouse, but also a place for community activities. People can sit on the sofas in the greenhouse after work to chat and drink or to hold parties. At the same time the façade of the conservatory has been designed to be openable, allowing a mechanically controlled breeze to pass through and bring coolness in the hot summer months.







Architecture

Library





Gift from the shoae-big to samll



Building Technology

Sandwich Panel System













Heating and Cooling System



Mechanical Ventilation



Living Core with Ventilation System



Natural Ventilation





Ventilator integrate with facade



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Detailing and Facade 1:20













Detailing 1:20 and 1:5







Detailing 1:20 and 1:5







Horizontal and Vertical Section Detail for Housing

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Horizontal and Vertical Section Detail for Unitised Glazing

Other Drawings



Secret Garden, Concern Hall for cricket bug An impression from housing



Mundanity space-Courtyard









































Ground Floor Plan







