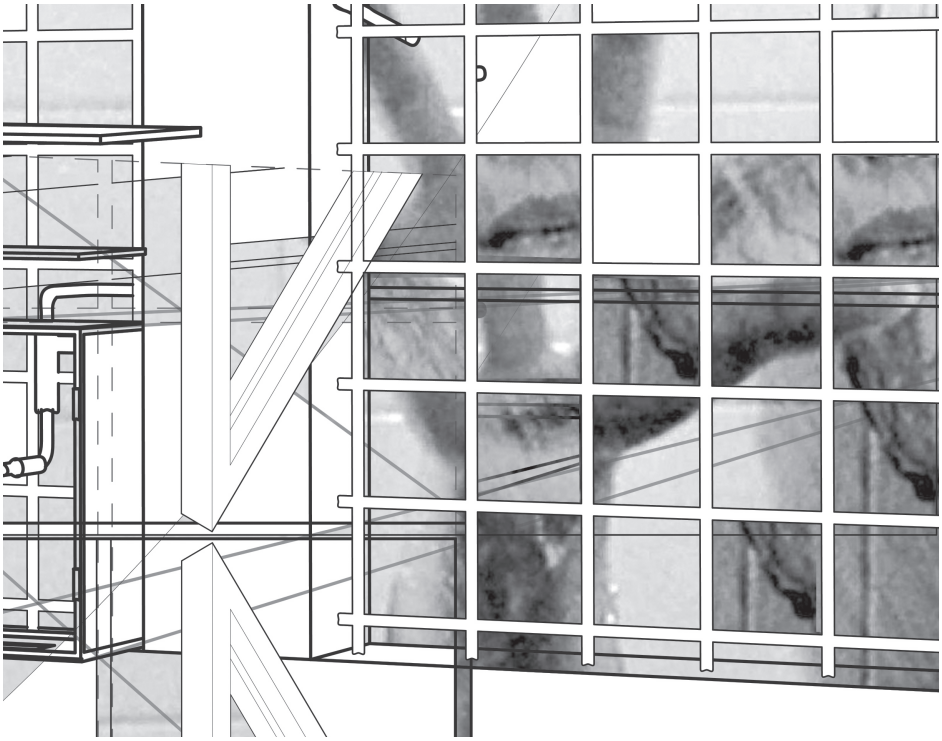


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Framing
An Architecture of Suspension

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There are perhaps many architectures of suspension. They manifest in many forms and compositions, yet they (as is my hypothesis) all possess similiar defining characteristics and attributes.

It is the attempt of the following writing to identify these attributes and characteristics, in hope that a revelation of these characteristics allows for the employment of their positive and contributive effects.

1
An architecture of suspension is not the mere manifestation of suspension as a physical state, i.e a string strung between two poles, it is a suggestion of a pause and cessation.

2
The architecture of suspension is related to Doron's discussion of *Transgressive zones*, but different: the architecture of suspension discussed here focuses in the relationships exposed in its creation and outcome, and are less interested in the formal appearance of the locality (Doron, 2000).

3
The architecture of suspension can be understood within the definition of *suspension semantically*, from a *space/time discontinuity*[1], where these spaces either transcend time, or remain fixed in a certain given time-period.

The architecture of suspension has the characteristics of '*urban artifacts*' as discussed by Aldo Rossi (Rossi, 1982) and Doron who terms them '*urban monuments*' (Doron, 2000). Yet it is neither in entirety.

The architecture of suspension is formed by any sort of negotiation or appropriation via spatial practices from their '*formal activity*[2]' (Doron, 2000) within a given frame or enclosure.

The frame or enclosure is important but not essential, it function limited to it's siting of all spatial practices within a boundary to be discussed. The frame however is not fixed geographically and it cannot be accurately defined in the traditional city planning ideal, but perhaps is defined best via its relationships and adjacencies.

Perhaps then, the architecture of suspension can be understood (amidst a varierty of other understandings) to be somewhat akin to suspension as defined in chemistry, where a suspension exists as a heterogeneous mixture containing

solid particles that are sufficiently large for sedimentation. These solid particles are thereby discernible and sufficiently different from the heterogenous solution that exists within. Similarly, the architecture of suspension is discernible from its surroundings, and is unlike the locality existing within.

4
The discussion is not limited to sites that are seemingly abandoned, and go beyond the labels of 'brownfield'[3] or 'abandoned'[4] sites as defined by traditional city planning departments.

5
The relationships exposed within an architecture of suspension often manifest themselves in a series of appropriations (depending on the type of appropriation, the context of the city in which it occurs and the effectiveness of the state). These are not necessarily always contested and reveal possible conclusions.

These conclusions include: The challenging of the Subject/Object relationship, and a suggestion that spaces can be understood beyond its localities.

6
One could argue that in the architecture of suspension, the ideas behind a building, site or plot are constantly (not misunderstood but) re-understood.

The re-understandings of the architecture of suspension are propelled by the presence and occupation of, as Lim terms, '*multiple modernities*'[5](Lim, 2007) within the society. These *multiple modernities*, regardless of the essence of their creation, carry with them vastly different interpretations of events.

In the architecture of suspension, the same 'instance' can be read, and re-read through the differing ideological discussions. Moore expresses his belief that "despite crucial differences in their conceptualization of resistance, both perspectives (*of the conflict for land in Zimbabwe*) share enduring spatial metaphors that obscure analysis and ironically eclipse the importance of the situated practices and grounded struggles of subaltern[6] actors.' (text in brackets added by author). In this reading, Moore highlights that the understanding of land has suddenly, through the departure and suspension of colonial influence, arisen, challenging both the previous readings and other readings of what that land is and ought to be (Moore, 1998).

The notion of the *Subaltern* and *Multiple modernities* as discussed reveals that the architecture of suspension, though discussed for more than the physical understanding of suspension, is still a constructed condition that involves and is affected by numerous poles which pull and exert forces upon it. This reinforces the idea that these spaces are then not homogenous, and occur within the relations which manifest between the poles.

In an architecture of suspension, a range of affordances and differing reading that occur between these relations. Lim repeats the previous sentiments of Eisenstadt, who, "*presumes that the best way to understand the contemporary world… is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs*" (Lim, 2007).

7
Re-readings and *reconstitutions of a multiplicity* are, I suggest in the architecture of suspension, carrying on the arguments of Merten's discussions of Hejduk's work in *The Shells of Architectural Thought* (Mertens),

where although these places were not in-fact designed in the traditional sense of the word, suggesting the possibility of translating the analysis of Hejduk's work onto that of the architecture of suspension.

8
Like the notion of an *Urban artifact*, the architecture of suspension is also a propelling element. Ironically, the architecture of suspension, created in cessation, the pause and deviation from intent, frees the architecture into becoming a total tool/vehicle, where the needs of environment manifest and coexist and advance.

9
"One takes an obscure and inexplicable thing more seriously than a clear and explicable one.... A matter that becomes clear ceases to concern us."
– Nietzsche

The architecture of suspension, when thought of in response to Merten's discussions evolves into an object of indefiniteness, which perpetuates a myriad of readings and interpretations that cannot and should not be defined in singularity.

The tease that the architecture of suspension expresses resonates with the idea of a mysticism that arises from the root word of suspense. The tease's physical manifestations are from actual practices within the frame, where evidence that has been left-behind, transcend the normal operation of time. While as *urban monument* they highlight the narrative of industry or common struggle, while within the object of daily life, they whisper that which has occurred or that which will occur.

Like the thrillers of today, they whisper half sentences and scream at villains off screen and teleport us across timelines and points-of-view, giving us the possibility of piecing together our own narratives of what must have occurred or what is to occur, as we watch and think in the now which is separate from the now of the film[7].

The *multiple modernities* of the architecture of suspension exist together within the frame, but operate from outside the frame, and in different realities. It is the architecture of suspension that allows these realities to meet and operate. The architecture of suspension is that which moderates and modulates.

10
An architecture of suspension, though defined within frame and enclosure then transcends issues of locality, possibly bridging places geographically distant into the same space.

An architecture of suspension is the possible origin point of the *flight line*[8] as Wallis de Vries discusses, away from the destruction of the city and landscape (de Vries, 2014). As the origin, the architecture of suspension provides both the frame from which the *flight line* begins from and the frame it alludes to.

Wallis de Vries suggests the notion of *total deterritorialization as the absolute flight line*, which perhaps the architecture of suspension provides. As the perpetual other, the architecture of suspension creates the phenomena in which frames (which often in this case constitutes spatial appropriation) highlight the other. The acknowledgement of these frames and appropriations teleport us almost immediately into and out of the frame, suspending boundaries and localities, bridging places beyond geographical

constraints.

For example, in *Border Tours* (Cruz, 2005), Tijuana and San Diego are discussed as a connected geographical site suspended by national borders, yet the communities on either side reflect their opposite, creating little 'Tijuana' and 'San Diego'[9] spaces on either side. Entering these little enclaves denature the geographical locale demarcated by national boundaries, bringing one place into another and forming a reconstituted understanding of the urban condition that makes San Diego and Tijuana undefined by the simple border (or better yet the presence of the border suspending the indivdualness of the two cities themselves).

11
The ground floor of Singapore public housing flats[10], the void deck, is perhaps an example of the architecture of suspension, it has the characteristics of being discernible from its surroundings and the flats above, with its built form demarcating the apartments from the surrounding open space, its scenography does not shift with time of day, it's claim belongs to the public, which is everyone and no one, and its space can be partially appropriated, with the onset of event. To the Singaporean it is many things, it is entry space and lobby, playground and social space, wedding venue and funeral parlour. It is a space where simultaneously, individuals transit, gather, pass-by and congregate. Its predetermined-ness is overruled by the suspension that occurs. It facilitates the furtherance of the social fabric, where suspension reveals the intricacies of the social fabric between residents themselves, and visitors. Helping exhibit ritual and event in spaces eroded and erased by the rest of the built form.

12
Like the suspension systems of mechanical vehicles, an architecture of suspension exists to maintain the structural integrity of a locale, allowing certain appropriations a range of operation to manifest and exist, or hide and subvert.

13
The distilling of the cyclical nature of the argument of which came first, the range of existence or the *multiple modernities* is perhaps irrelevant, if the architecture of suspension allows for a multiplicity of rereading.

14
The suspense that occurs in the architecture of suspension undertakes the nature of a tool or vehicle, allowing us the leeway to choose our own rereading of the architectural object. It allows for a reconstitution of the physical elements at site, and a speculation of the possible alternative and speculative qualities that could be created from its rereading.

15
An architecture of suspension is *urban artifact* as it embodies the notions of Rossi as being *propelling* (Rossi, 1982). The architecture of suspension propels an alternate reality into play. In overtaking the original formal activity, the architecture of suspension allows the architecture itself to redefine itself as a new component within the city/plot, avoiding the destruction or removal of the object/place in question.

An architecture of suspension is *urban artifact* as it embodies the notions of Rossi as being *prevailing* (Rossi, 1982). The unique existing features of the item in question are prevailing, they carry with them a framework or structure that allows for the item to retain its essence while departing

from its initial *formal activity* (Doron, 2000).

16
The architecture of suspension is many things, but it is a readable discernible item that can be identified as a singular whole albeit one with colloidal like borders. I hypothesize that this identification is made possible by the quality of persistence that was discussed, where the visible formwork or structure is evident despite the shifting re-reading of the element.

17
The architecture of suspension is *urban monument* (Doron, 2000). It is commonly accepted that physical forms echoes the city's timeline, where industrial buildings highlight the industrial past, civic buildings and theatres – the city's artistic development.

Doron rightly advocates the title of *urban monument* to include brownfield and vacant sites. It is perhaps in the manifestation of these sites that we better view the city (Doron, 2000). These sites display the choices of not, where what wasn't built is as important as what has been or what is built.

But the architecture of suspension is greater than notions of brownfield and vacant sites, it is also the redefined



Fig 1.

Various events at the void deck, clockwise from top:
Senior Citizens corner,
Malay Wedding Feast,
Bird Singing/hobbies,
Chinese Funeral Service,
Children's Playground

historical zone, the conversion of square into market and street into fairground. It transcends notions of permeance, taking into consideration the event and temporal, putting *desire*[11] (as Deleuze understands it) as the foremost consideration.

18
The notion of a site's importance in the architecture of suspension differs greatly from the understandings of site in the tradition discipline. While the latter considers and values the *genius loci* and ideas of contextuality as of utmost importance, the architecture of suspension concerns itself more with what relationships the site manifest in relation to the other, itself and its immediate adjacencies.

'*The box itself were the object of the gift, not what it contains*." (Barthes, 1983). A possible reading of the architecture of suspension lies in a Barthes like approach to *Packaging*. In focusing on the Japanese gift box, the way an item is packaged, one can begin to appreciate the delicacies of the manner of assembly, the relationships of the materials assembled, *postpone(ing)the discovery of the object it contains* (Chew, 2016) . This allows us to consider the elements based on their correlative positions, i.e. the relationships that form them, rather than their contents. The actuality of the site is relegated.

19
The architecture of suspension is comparable to Piranesi's reconstruction of Ancient Rome as '*Città Pensile',* which translates to *the hanging city*. He describes it as,

"*Città Pensile e navigabile al di sotto*",

describing the city as consisting of Pensile architecture, literally hanging down, and navigable infrastructure, which suggests an ease of mobility for vehicles (of waterway, track or road) (Wallis de Vriles, 2016). Yet the comparison goes beyond the immediate images that arise from picturing an architecture of suspension as that of a city literally hanging from and between points and poles.

20
The architecture of suspension is like *Città Pensile* in which its urban forms are both *polycentric* and *irregular* (de Vries, 2014, p. 51). The architecture of suspension is defined and understood via irregularity - as discussed akin to chemistry, it is the irregularity that precipitates within, and manifests itself as a break in the urban fabric, the negated, forgotten, hijacked and appropriated. It is *Polycentric*, from which multiple frames exist in relation to the not-other, like the splatters of paint or ink on canvas.

Like *Città Pensile*, its architectural form is composed of *fragmentation* and *complexity* (de Vries, 2014, p. 51). Because of the ephemeral nature of the appropriations that redefine, forms which constitute the architectural quality of the architecture of suspension are often fragmented across the same locality and are often intricate and complex, as the appropriation must exist to surpass the initial formal activity that defined the locale.

Unlike the *Città Pensile*, the architecture of suspension's interaction is not articulated in that of the *informal in-between spaces* that exist (de Vries, 2014, p. 51). The architecture of suspension is arguably already that manifestation (therefore not interaction) – it interacts via the negotiation of spatial practices within. Yet the effects are similar, they both result in a *desire and longing for spaces that are beyond the*

frame and thus beyond the site.

Like the outcome of the ideas of Barthes, the actuality of site secondary, and is only essential for its presence highlighting the desire for that which is beyond the site.

The architecture of suspension and *Città Pensile* both suggest an *integration of 'the outside' and 'the other' of the city within* (Wallis de Vries, 2014, p. 50).

21
The Highline in New York is perhaps an example of the architecture of suspension. As an object it carries with it a multiplicity of readings - it is a place of refuge, a place to be seen, a place to rest, a place to exercise, it is corridor and meeting point rolled into one. It is a piece of history, a monument to a city's early days of innovation and technological advances. Yet it is also a piece of the future, of what the city aspires to be. It propels and preserves the image of New York. It is clearly discernible as a feature in the city and sky, yet its borders melt into and merge with the localities that exist within, taking on the nature (in part) of the surroundings it passes through.

22
The architecture of suspension is like a *fugue*, a varying of the *ritournelle* (Wallis de Vries, 2014, p.34), where it offers the traces of all the lines of infinite variation, which produces moments of hysteria and epilepsy that removes one's awareness of identity and forces flight from his environment. Its complexity suggesting an abstraction of self and locality from self and locality.

23
"*Pure drawing is abstraction.*" (Cezanne, 1874)

"*On the contrary, it becomes prey to allegory, to this strange self-portrait of drawing given over to the speech and gaze of the other. The subtitle of all these scenes of the blind is thus: the origin of drawing. Or, if you prefer, the thought of drawing, a certain pensive pose, a memory of the trait that speculates, as in a dream, about its own possibility.*" (Derrida, 1993)
Cezanne and Derrida discuss drawings as the abstraction and negation of certain other elements to achieve the desired projection. While Derrida goes very much into the detail of the operation and processes of generating such a projection, it could be summarized as

"*Blindness becomes the sacrifice for seeing" and "blindness not only makes the truth, it embodies the truth*" (Zelechow, 1995).

Arguably it is in the suspension of reality that drawings (truth) occurs. However, in the case of the architecture of suspension, the drawing of the suspension implies a doubling of the notions of a reality suspended into the projection.
In the architecture of suspension, attempts at drawing or projection result in the doubling of a suspension of reality. The drawing attempts to suspend the realities of the condition in attempt to capture/represent/notate the architecture of suspension that occurs.

This tautology in drawing the architecture of suspension is possibly negated or neutralized (and thereby rendered as having no other impact in the drawing) as explained by Derrida's observations of Self Portraits (Derrida, 1993), but perhaps it is in the consideration of how the tautology could possibly create that the architecture of suspension suggests an alternative mode of expression or exploration in drawing.

24

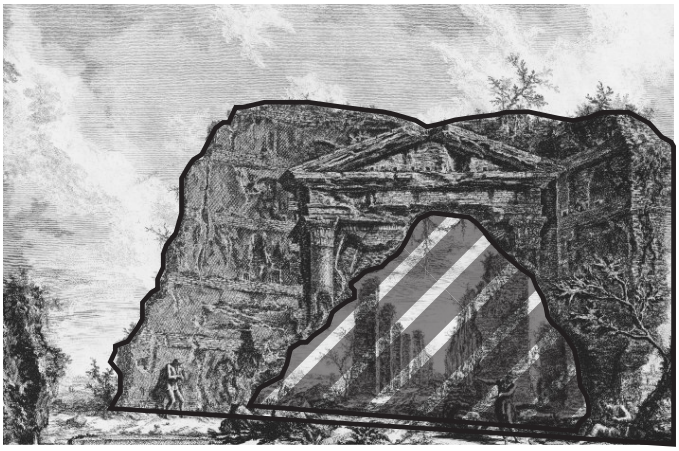


Fig 2.
Avanzi D'un Portico Coperto, O Criptoportico in Una Villa Di Domiziano Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1760-1778).

The shaded area is suggested as a teleported frame, from far away, into which we are brought in. This shaded area can be read as different from the other landscape in which the ruin sits in.

Perhaps in considering this tautology, Piranesi's drawings *Città Pensile* provide an inkling of the possibilities the tautology itself possesses.

In observing Piranesi's drawings, one notes that Piranesi often employs the use of ruins to frame the landscape, with the frames often literally been bounded by the inner and outer edges of the ruins. The application of the architectural element as ruin suggests a particular depiction of the suspension of time. With the drawing and juxtaposition of an alternative 'landscape' within the frame of the architecture, as suspended in time, physical distances are seemingly suspended, propelling the landscape into the immediate and the now. It reads as if the landscape was plastered into the edges of the frame, but accessible as if the frame were in itself a teleportation device.

25
While it seems that the architecture of suspension is perhaps more a recognition of a phenomena or condition, it perhaps offers interesting application into drawing. In considering the designing of an architecture of suspension however, the question perhaps shifts into ideas of what the form perhaps embodies.

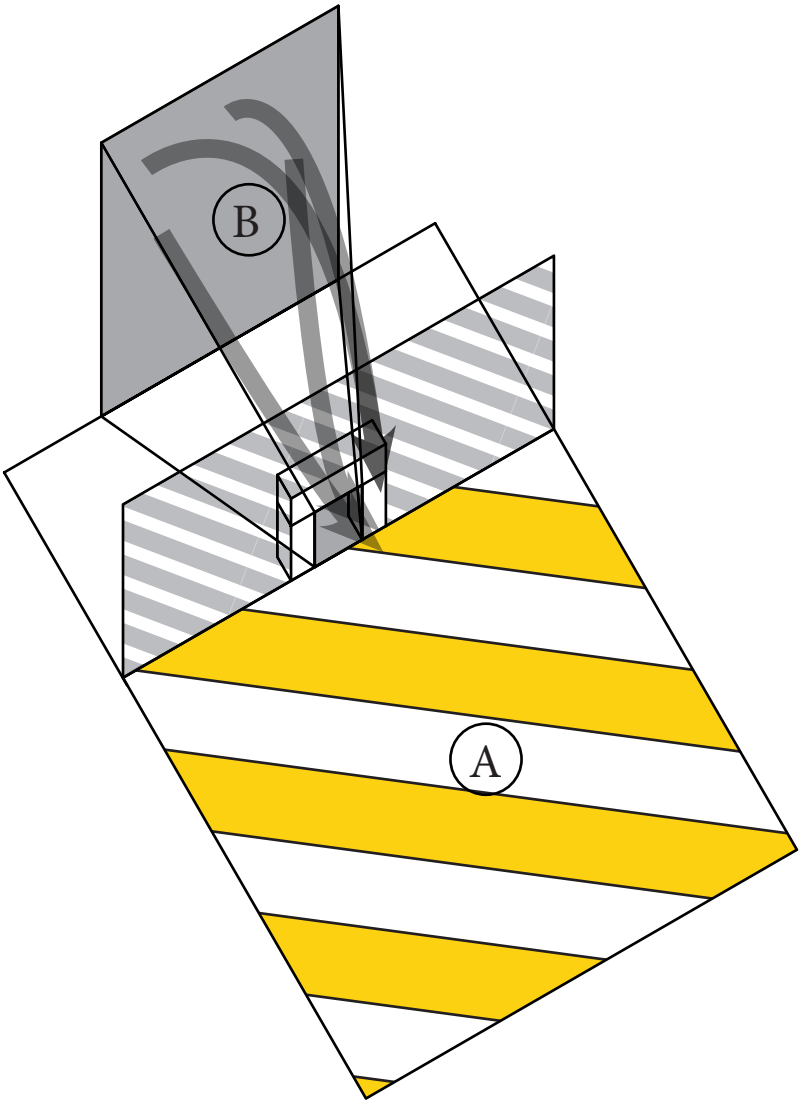
An Architecture of suspension should then exist beyond stylistic considerations, it should and could take on (m)any forms and more often than not is inclusive of diversity and heterogenity. It abhors the homogenous, challenges the unthinking dominance of the projected identity. It should provide an almost escapist like quality for the users bringing individuals to different times, based on their desires and wants. It should, on varying levels and intensities, suspend reality and time, allowing for constant reunderstandings of place, locality and time.
00
Designed as:

Event, Temporal, Fragmented, Complex, Irregular, Expression of Desire for that which is beyond its Frame(s), Propelling the city's urban history and identity, Discernible from adjacencies, Multiplicity of reading, Hints at and Teases. Incomplete, in the perpetual process of compl e t i o . . .

Fig 3.

Interpretation of Piranesi's Avanzi D'un Portico Coperto, O Criptoportico in Una Villa Di Domiziano

As drawn before in Fig 3, the image within the frame of the ruin is transported/teleported into the frame, as if the landscape itself were not a distant thing, but part of the immediate space, bringing B into the place of A.



ENDNOTES

Notes

[1]Understandings of Space time Discontinuity as understood in compairison to gradual shifts in time and abrupt changes.

[2]Formal Activity - the program, use and purpose of the plot, site or architecture as determined by the individual body/bodies who, in economic terms, own the site.

[3]Brownfield - a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2000)

[4]Abandoned – often deserted, forsaken, decaying places, lacking moral (in this instance morality is also imbued with notions of civil society and governance) restraints (Dictionary.com, 2010), with no predefined formal activity (Doron, 2000).

[5]Multiple Modernities as presented by Lim are described as varying communities interacting and competing/complementing each other in the public realm.

[6]The subaltern as disccused by Moore concerns itself with the often marginalized or sidelined communities that lack power or influence to formally challenge decisions made by those in power.

[7]Alfred Hitchcock's thrillers are perhaps a good example of how this is manifested.

[8]Flight Line - as Wallis de Vriles describes is the exploration of the inbetween. It is an abstract line that depicts the connection or segmentation. See Archescape - on the tracks of Piranesi for more.

[9]Little Tijuana and Little San Diego - enclave communities similiar to the many chinatowns in cosmopolitan cities.

[10]Public Housing in Singapore, commonly known and reffered to HDB Flats, where HDB stands for Housing Developmental Board. Thees apartments/flats house up to 80% of the population and are shared by all ethnicities and races.

[11]Desire as Deleuze disccuses not a psychic existence, not lack, but an active and positive reality, an affirmative vital force. Desire has neither object, nor fixed subject. It is like labour in essence, productive and actualisable only through practice (Gao, J. ,2013).

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