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INTRODUCTION

“I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage”
Peter Brook - “Empty Theatre”

Around the idea of scenography related to architecture, there are a lot of aspects that could be taken into account when doing a research in that sense. However, I tried to underpass the classical understanding of scenography, and tried to investigate the scenographic elements that lead to an architecture which can be scenographic - scenographic architecture.

Although I did focus on some of the evident elements belonging to the world of scenography, perhaps what is interesting is the vantage point from which I looked at them and thus, eventually, related them to architecture. On one hand, I observed various ways in how light and shadow affect the spatiality of a place, or how a space has the capacity of unfolding through the depth of field various other possible or real spaces. On the other hand, I was interested in including the spectator in this process. Thus, I focused on comprehending the spectator as one of the determinant elements of the virtual realities outlined by scenography; an active receptor without which these spaces would not exist.

Scenographic architecture doesn't exist, we construct it.
Brussels - a scenographic sequence

ESSAY - research methods

How do we understand the space nowadays? What is the relevance of living in between different realities (Anne Friedberg’s virtual spaces, internet’s space, physical spaces – private and public etc.)? How the transitions from one reality to the other change the way we relate to space and how can architecture respond to this phenomenon?

The way we relate to space has to do with a mental construction of that space based on assembling experienced spatial fragments in a specific way, derived from the site’s specificities. I argue that this reading of space can be enabled through a scenographic gaze. This implies that scenographic elements (such as light/shadow and depth of field) come together as a mental assemblage, by means of cinematic techniques (transitions, focus, zoom – how we look at things and how we eventually put the fragments together). Architecture is capable of immortalizing the transformation of a series of fragments to a whole.

When applied to Brussels which is a city fragmented on multiple levels, this method of research speculates the architectural potentials that lie in the spatial elements scattered throughout the city and exploits the positive effect of fragmentation. Thus, throughout the research, possible alternatives will be formulated as answers of the research questions.

The intention of my graduation project is to put the basis of a research method that is able to investigate spatial potentials that are not evident, and yet, intrinsic within the specific conditions of the city – Brussels.

My project will try to define the vocabulary needed/able to spatialize the findings of my research. In this way, the final design should be a representation of the mental process that contains the dynamics of the mental operation of transforming and assembling the fragments into a whole, making the intrinsic spatial qualities of the fragments more visible, exploiting their potentials.

My research uses various methods of reading, re-reading, drawing and re-drawing the investigated spatial fragments, combining photographs, drawings, writings, models and mixed media.

The scenographic elements are observed and indexed in various scattered sites throughout the city of Brussels. They are further investigated by first, decontextualizing the sequences from which they take part; secondly, by ‘altering’ (abstraction, exaggeration, reduction) them and their narratives; then, I reassemble these fragments based on an interpretation of the previous steps; ultimately, each sequence, represented differently (according to its intrinsic specificities) is spatialized in models.

This method leads to multiple generations of drawings and models that use the cinematic techniques that derive from the site’s specifications and the way I approached them. Thus, we get a series of interpretations of the same object, enabling, thus a deeper understanding of the object itself. Finally, specific elements of all these fragments are assembled as a whole.

The relevance of my project lies in both the attacked subject and the method it tries to develop as an alternative answer to the raised questions. As Stefano Boeri mentioned in Eclectic Atlases, we are now in a particular position, facing a fast development of the society that results in urban phenomena that needs to be understood by using a new set of tools. My project tries to develop one new set of tools and use it in spatializing an answer for the specific case of Brussels within the formulated framework.
ESSAY
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Theoretical Framework - REFERENCES

Anne Friedberg - The Virtual Window - From Microsoft to Alberti

“VIRTUAL IMAGES RADICALLY TRANSFORMED THE 20TH CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF REALITY”

“THE ‘VIRTUAL WINDOW ‘OPENS ONTO A NEW LOGIC OF VISUALITY, A TIME-ARCHITECTURE, FRAMED AND VIRTUAL, ON A SCREEN”

-dynamic interaction between the place of the viewing subject and the framed view

IMAGES SOURCES:
http://photo.goodreads.com/books/1177650548l/724270.jpg

Stefano Boeri - Eclectic Atlases

In this essay, Boeri points out that we are now in a particular position, facing a fast development of the society that results in urban phenomena that needs to be understood by using a new set of tools. This approach needs to be understood as a separate device from the zenithal view and understanding of teh territory, a device where the top-dow view is not sufficient anymore, fact which leads towards an investigation of the subject from within. Thus, the finality is couagulating a new vocabulary and a new set of tools, tools helpful for facing the new urban phenomena of our days.


Bernard Tschumi - Mahattan Transcripts

With the Manhattan Transcripts, Tschumi proposes a new way of investigating specific locations in Manhattan. His technique uses a series of re-readings of the subject in cause that eventua

http://www.tschumi.com/media/files/00201.jpg
The German based office Bruckner has at the basis of their practice a scenography-related philosophy, which offered me the first insight about what could be a direct relationship between scenography-space-architecture. In their diagram, the central focus is on scenography which is the one providing the context for the space, the object and the concept to address the recipient.

Bob Wilson, an avantgarde contemporary director and scenographer, promoting a minimalist stage design, considers that light is an essential tool in theatre. His work is a good example of how light/shadow and exaggeration come together in creating spaces. Looking into his work offered me a complex insight into how shadow and light have such an impact on what spaces you want to create.

An audience of 24 sits inside a 5m square wooden box. On each side of the box are windows, doors, hatches and openings. Throughout the piece a series of actions leading to a violent act is repeated from different points of view. It may happen behind you if you sit before the window, or opposite you in full view. At the end of the performance the whole set is taken to pieces behind the audience, revealing the sequence in its entirety. In this case I was interested in the relationship between the created space, the relationship between the spectator, the actor, their movement and the space in which everything happens.
Since the beginning, one of the focus points of my research was related to the group work coagulated around the notion of the periphery of Brussels.
One of the vantage points from which I tried to continue the investigation on my own was related to the notion of the fragmented periphery, the periphery found within the city. What is the scale of this phenomenon inside of the city and whether its spatial manifestation is visible and how.
The way I approached the notion of scenography in relation to architecture had very much to do with the diagram of Atelier Bruckner. If they considered that the recipient is the collector of the dynamics between the concept, content, space and context, my first interpretation understood the recipient as part of the dynamic process between these elements, placing him inside of it, and thus assuming that he becomes one of the contributing elements in the creation process. Therefore, my focus directed towards the relationship between the recipient as being inside of the process, and the fragments of the process. Thus, I defined some elements of interest that would enable the decodification of Brussels within the periphery gaze that would eventually allow me to read the various manifestations of the periphery in terms of scenography.
**Theoretical Framework - SCENOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS + SEQUENCE**

**ELEMENTS OF INTEREST**

**DEPTH OF FIELD**
The real and mental perception of a space in terms of its depth. Thus, what became interesting was to observe how the spaces which had a certain depth configured in terms of blocked and unblocked perception of this depth. Moreover, I was curious to investigate as well the spaces that were not necessarily having a specific tangible depth, but which presented specific spatial elements that condued in recreating a possible different depth - something happening further, where you couldn’t see.

**LIGHT/SHADOW**
The games between light and shadow became interesting the moment they described spaces which also presented certain depths of field. It became intriguing to notice how light and shadow play a soft visual role, yet powerful in configuring a certain spatial depth just by alternating from light to shadow, and from lower to higher intensities.

**GATES**
The gates are the elements that frame the following spatial manifestation of either the depth of field or a different sequence of light/shadow game. In this case, the gates might be similar to Anne Friedberg’s window frames. However, the main differentiation is that the gates are interrelated to the space that they announce, and they cannot exist on their own. Moreover, the focus of the gates is not on themselves, but more on the break between spatial sequences and on what they are capable of announcing. The gates open a different, possible reality, like the transitional moments from Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland.

**TOOLS**

**WALKING**
Walking as a tool for investigating the territory. Related to the practice of Francesco Careri’s Stalker group, walking defined the main tool of observing the territory of Brussels from within and subsequently, one of the basic tools for the future mapping.

**DÉRIVE**
If the Situationist International group used the dérive as a way of re-reading a previously supposed known territory in a way that allowed the happening of the unexpected, in my case the dérive allowed me to get away from established trajectories in function of how the elements of interest unveil themselves along the routes.

**SEQUENCE**
The notion of sequence, designating the arrangement of fragments in a specific way, in my case the sequence referred to how the way I walked and mapped the investigated territories arranged in a specific way/sequence, very much dependent on the way I walked through those places. The mapping method of using the photo camera, immortalized fragments of my walks that were eventually assembled in a sequence based on the way I passed through certain places.
OTHER TOOLS

One of the tools I used while walking through Brussels was the photo camera. Using it enabled visually accessing what was sometimes physically unaccessible. Besides the possibility of zooming in and out, changing the focus, or using different types of lenses, it helped me in the end in indexing more spatial elements than normally.

Another tool I used in-situ and after coming back from Brussels was the drawing of sketches. This technique allowed for immortalizing essential observations about aspects surprised while walking through the city.

The advantage of having used notations along the sketches, and short writings about places I have seen and observed is very much related to the specificities captured in-situ, elements that might have passed unnoticed if tried to be remembered after coming back from the trip. The notations allowed a more complex way of observing as they completed some of the sketches.
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Mapping - STAGE 1

The way I walked is related to the first level of understanding the periphery as only manifesting itself in the outskirts of the city. By walking as shown - I was questioning the administrative border of the city and at the same time observing how the periphery actually penetrates the city and manifests itself fragmented, as initially speculated, within the city, and not only at its edges.
Within this walk, the first stage of mapping presupposed the indexing of the encountered scenographic elements that appeared throughout different forms - whether they were interesting games of light and shadow, gates or blocked/unblocked depths of fields.
These elements manifested in punctual places such as: garages, wastelands, or around the infrastructure.
BRIDGES

The encountered bridges offered a relevant series of spaces, all defined by either contrasting shadowed or lightened spaces, either by a certain level of blocked/unblocked depth of field. The bridges proved to be some of the architectural elements around which the dialogue between the city and the periphery became more obvious and manifested spatially under various forms.
GARAGES
While walkign through banal streets in Brussels, it seemed very interesting how sporadically building were opening up, revealing unexpected spaces whenever a garage was opening. If while walking on a street one could determine the typology of the spaces hidden behind the facades, the visually accessible garages proved the variety of architectural configuration, invisible form the outside. The garages unfolded a series of spaces characterized by a certain depth of field and a very specific and individual game of light and shadow.

ANTIQUE SHOP
The antique shop, found in the centre of the city seemed to be the crystalization of all the spatial phenomena previously observed in scattered locations throughout the city. It contained a metaphorical smaller version of all the investigated elements and more.
These series of photos indexed the spaces I considered interesting while observed through a scenographic gaze. The research crystallized in a clear interpretation, emphasizing the scenographic elements of focus, exemplified in one location which seemed to be complex enough to capture all the relevant spaces that deal with the idea of scenography.
STRUCTURE

BASE SEQUENCE

[SEQUENCE OF PHOTOS TAKEN WHILE I WAS WALKING THROUGH A SPACE]

NARRATIVE

[WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS FOLLOWING THE NARRATIVE OF THE WALK]

NARRATIVE DIAGRAM

LIGHT/SHADOW

GATES

[FRAMING ELEMENTS ENABLING THE PERCEPTION OF A DIFFERENT SPACE FROM THE ONE WHERE YOU ARE]

UN/BLOCKED DEPTH OF FIELD
BASE SEQUENCE - showed fragment

NARRATIVE

begininging I stood at the end of a steep slope. The cars sounds smoothly decrease. The dead end is not an end. I can go left or right. Both ways open up pedestrian dark tunnels which allow me to see the end and also what happens after them.

SHADOW/LIGHT

GATES

BLOCKED/UNBLOCKED DEPTH OF FIELD
In the next step, another layer of interpretation was added. Among the investigated aspects of the base sequence, the depth of field seemed to be the most promising, therefore, I decided to combine it with the movement determined by the way I walked, and understand what did that mean. Basically, the result was to apply a series of transformations to the existing sequence of the depth of field, related to the way I moved through the space.

Thus, there were parts which needed to be condensed/compressed, because they only made sense together. In other parts there were series of zoom in, which allowed a more closer observation point of the specific place. Some of the places were approached through a smooth pan movement, and thus, observed sequentially, one move after the other, or by sudden 180 degrees turns.

Along these applied operations that happened during the walk, and surprised by the way the sequence was eventually photographed, it also happened to have jump-cuts, which appeared when there wasn’t relevant to take pictures anymore and thus, by following the sequence, there are moments when there is a sudden jump cut from one part of the site to another, and then, moving forward from that point on. All these cinematic techniques appeared as subsidiary for the investigated scenographic elements, allowing the mapping to coagulate in rearranging the components of the sequence accordingly as follows. This technique led eventually to the crystallization of the entire research into a map that decodifies the location in cause through the investigated scenographic elements.
Mapping - RULES

COMPRESSSION

PAN

ZOOM IN

JUMP-CUT

180° TURN

MOVE FORWARD
MAPPING
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Models - spatial abstractions and interpretations of the mapping

The spatial abstractions tried to critically reflect on the presented mapping. The findings from the mapping were interpreted in spatial terms. This has been done by applying various operations of transforming the investigated space from 2D into 3D.

The process used both simple extrusion or cutting operations, as well as less predictable ones, such as carving.

The main focus while making the 3D research was to be able to surprise in the 3D mapping, what has been investigated and found in the 2D mapping. These elements had to do with spatial qualities derived from the investigated scenographic elements and the way they related to each other.
First generation of translating the mapping into a model - extrusion of the lines from the map
Study models investigating different techniques of surprising both depth of field and light/shadow games
Study models investigating different techniques of reassembling fragments that deal with light, shadow and depth
Study models investigating different techniques of surprising both depth of field and light/shadow games
Second generation of translating the mapping into a model
Third generation of translating the mapping into a model - cutting the lines from one fragment of the map
Third generation of translating the mapping into a model - cutting the lines from one fragment of the map
Fourth generation of translating the mapping into a model
The spatial qualities shown in these two pictures emphasize aspecific relations between the potential building’s components and the scenographic elements such as light/shadow or depth of space.
POTENTIAL PROGRAMS

1 CONTEMPORARY DANCE CENTRE
2 ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS

The choice of the programme related the research and the tone of it to a specific relationship between the body and the space, between the light, the body and the space; Thus, the potential programs allowing for an easy adaptation of spaces that embedd such qualities, seemed at the moment to be either a contemporary dance centre, either an academy of performing arts. These specific activities seemed to be flexible enough in embedding and making use of the quality of the spaces in favor of their own interest.
TOUR ET TAXI

This site’s potentials have to do with qualities that arose from the peripheric atmosphere which derived from the specific relationship among various scales found on site and interesting adaptation of the environment.
“The history of the theatre is the history of the transfiguration of the human form. It is the history of the man as an actor of physical and spiritual events, on a scale that works from naivety to reflection, from natural to artificial. (...) The arena of this transfiguration is found in the constructive fusion of the space and of the building, the territory of architecture.”

Oskar Schlemmer