A Matter of Perspective
| Architectural Agenda                      | 3 |
| Statements                                | 3 |
| Place François Mitterrand, a Symbol of Modernity | 9 |
| The Construction of a Blurred Image       | 15 |
| A Matter of Perspective                   | 25 |
| Pavilion 1                                | 31 |
| Pavilion 2                                | 34 |
| Pavilion 3                                | 38 |
| Bibliography                             | 42 |
Architectural Agenda

This thesis proposes the construction of three temporary pavilions at Place François Mitterrand in Lille, France. The pavilions will be part of the event “Lille World Design Capital” of 2020.

“Everything is a matter of perspective”. Place François Mitterrand, the public core of the 1989’s Euralille Masterplan by OMA, is seen by many as a residual and ordinary space, however the use of perspective can change its perception, and reveal it as the result of an innovative project that wanted to break with the traditional urban planning.

This project proposes interactive pavilions that work as classical optical devices, the goal is through framing relevant views of the site facilitate its reading as a symbol of urban design. The proposal is presented as a dialogue between the ambitions of Rem Koolhaas for Euralille and the pavilions. The selected views illustrate fragments of the architect discourse.

The superimposition of the classical perception of space in this postmodern project raises the confrontation of many ideas, such as: inertia x movement, simplicity x complexity, order x fragmentation, singularity x plurality, and reveal perspective as a matter of ideology.

Statements

1. The juxtaposition of different infrastructures gives the identity to Euralille. Place François Mitterrand, the public core of the masterplan, was designed to reveal all the complexity of the program. Despite its potential, the square is perceived by many as an ordinary space.

2. The coherence of Place François Mitterrand is not formal, but perceived through movement, opposing the classical principles of composition of space. The perception of this space is translated in a fragmented sequence of blurred images.

3. Rather than calling Place François Mitterrand an ordinary and residual space, the experience and perception of this space could be altered to reveal it as a symbol of post-modern design.

4. Linear perspective is used as a tool to change the role of the commuter to the observer of Place François Mitterrand. Through framing a unique and static view, the one-point perspective provides a linear understanding of a space.

5. Camera lenses are the new eyes, and photography is how we experience space and time.
Eyes² - *The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.*

Friday, 9 am, Place François Mitterrand

Picture by Ludo Groen.
Sketch of Euralille as a Piranesian Space formed by the many infrastructures and flows, sketch by OMA, analysis of focal points by student.
“(…) This thing is going to be so complicated that we are going to exacerbate the complication to reach incredible levels of complexity.” (1164)

“(…) so complex become all the interconnections, the mutual dependencies, the proliferation of interfaces, the superimposition of users and owners that together they form a group of prisoners, stacked by mutual obligation, exacerbated by the very complexity that you offered unwittingly. “(1208)

Complexity as a symbol:

“(…) montage of program and superimposition of buildings could restore both density and continuity. The return of complexity as a sign of the urban.” (1174)

About Place François Mitterrand:

“(…) in the infrastructurally most complicated area we decided that through a revenue process of creation we would simply eliminate a part – create a void, a hole – where we could reveal all the surrounding forces. “(1200)

“Initially, the residual triangle between the old and the new station was imagined, simply, as a plaza, a covered deck with commercial activity. But it was interpreted as a plane that could rotate along an axis, one point would emerge from the ground to become building while the other would descend far enough to expose the flank of the TGV tunnel (...)” (1166)


Modernity, the fleeting, ephemeral experience of life in the urban metropolis. The inconstant experience of the self and the place, characterized by movement, discontinuity, rupture, momentum, and an openness to the novelty of the future.

The essence of the Euralille has its roots on the maelstrom that is the Modern experience. The masterplan developed by OMA in 1989 had its foundation on the idea of Lille as the epicenter of a European Metropolitan Region formed by London, Paris, and Brussels. The hypothesis of a dissolution of national borders fostered the idea of a new and integrated European Experience, as well as a new and interconnected Lille.

The design solution was bold and clear; to evince the complexity of the program and highlight Lille’s position as the crossing point of an emerging European triad. Heavy infrastructural solutions enabled and characterized the design. Place François Mitterand, the public core of the masterplan, is the synthesis of the main ideas of OMA for Euralille. Designed as a void, this space reveals the force of the encounter of all the infrastructures that would support the new economy. Ramps, escalators, viaduct, station, towers, metro, and mall were superimposed, manifesting the intricacy of the program and dissecting the character of the modern experience: movement and discontinuity.

The combination of all passing forces would construct the image of the Modern Experience.

Map of Lille, France with intervention area of Euralille Master Plan, drawing by OMA.

http://oma.eu/projects/euralille; OMA, OMA;
original plan part of OMA’s archival material hold by the Netherlands Architecture Instituut - NAI.
Aerial view depicting the triangle between the train stations and the Euralille, Lille, France.

http://oma.eu/projects/euralille; OMA, OMA;

Map that illustrates the interpretation of Place François Mitterrand as a space composed through movement, drawing by Marcela Montalvão
Figure 1. Plate I

1. Gare Lille Europe
2. Euralille
3. Cultural Center WAAO
4. Place des Buisses
5. Place de la Garre
6. Gare Lille Flandres
7. Metro Gare Lille Europe
8. Metro Gare Lille Flandres
9. Park Henri Matisse

α. Angle captured by pavilion
f.c. Focal point

Plate 1
As stated by OMA, the coherence of this space is not formal, but perceived through movement, denying the classical principals of composition and perception of space. In the classical composition of space, it is usually considered a static viewer, or that his trajectory follows the direction of the focal point. Hierarchy and symmetry are essential elements, those strategies provide a linear understand of the space. The result of the reading of a space composed by classical principles is clear, in the end it is perceived a unique image that symbolizes its identity. (see image of the Esplanada dos Ministérios of Brasilia, Brazil)

The following sequence of drawings is an interpretation of the reading of Place François Mitterrand through movement. The selection of images represents the most relevant moments in the trajectory of the user. The drawings are inspired by etching, a style widely used in the Renaissance. However, in the presented drawings each type of line has a different meaning. While the direction of movement is represented by the thin lines, the heavy lines emphasize the speed and volume of the moving objects. The sequence of circles mimics the focal point, and the grid framing the drawing represents the space that the moving eyes cannot read. The absence of outlines emphasizes the idea of a space that is composed through movement. The result is a fragmented sequence of blurred images.

The memory of Place François Mitterrand is the product of this reading of space through movement. Although designed as a symbol, the project’s complexity and infrastructural approach rendered the perception of Place François Mitterrand blurred and fragmented. Despite it’s potential, the square has been reduced to a residual space; engulfed and bewildered by the ‘bigness’ of its surroundings.

1 “Photograph may be more memorable than moving images, because they are a neat slice of time, not a flow. Television is a stream of underselected images, each of which cancels its predecessor. Each still photograph is a privileged moment, turned into a slim object that one can keep and look again.”


Line types and its meanings

Direction of Movement

Speed and Volume

Focal Point

Residue of image that cannot be read
View from the Park Henri Matisse towards Place François Mitterrand.

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
Office tower designed by Portzamparc and the World Trade Center by Claude Vasconi

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
View from under the Avenue Le Corbusier
towards Gare Lille Europe.

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
View from Avenue Le Corbusier.

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
View from the stairs of Gare Lille Europe towards Euralille Shopping Mall.

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
Ramp that connects Gare Lille Flanders with Place François Mitterand. On the right, under the viaduct, the WAAO Cultural Center.

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
East corner of Place François Mitterrand.

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
Albrecht Dürer, 1525: Renaissance linear perspective studies, device by Dürer to reproduce an object in a plan.
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/
doi/10.4324/9780203401163.chTwo,
The user of Place François Mitterrand is considered as part of the infrastructural system, as an object in the scene, but never treated as the observer of the spectacle. The result, as stated in the previous topic, is the perception of this space through movement and the construction of a fragmented memory.

In this context, how can the fragmented image of Place François Mitterrand be manipulated to enable a coherent experience and perception of space? How can the human scale be imprinted into the square, without endangering its original design concepts?

According to Dürr, the linear perspective perfects an imperfect experience. This concept is used in this project as a tool to modify the perception of Place François Mitterrand. The viewer, in a linear perspective composition, is considered static, this principle confronts the main idea of perception of space proposed by OMA for Euralille.

Lille was entitled the World Design Capital of 2020, for this event it is suggested the construction of three pavilions that invite the audience to perceive this square through a different perspective, and to understand it as a symbol of post-modern design.

The pavilions are designed as classical optical apparatus which frame views that illustrate the discourse of OMA for Place François Mitterrand. Those pavilions aim to consolidate the understand of this space as an extension of the self. In other words, the bigness of the infrastructural scale is translated in each pavilion to the human scale. The image perceived of Place François Mitterrand acquires a more comprehensible size.

If perspective is a matter of style, a diverging style for perception of space is being used as a tool to reveal the complexity of Place François Mitterrand as its identity.

1 Panofsky about perspective: “(…) a consolidation and systematization of the external world, as an extension of the domain of the self.”
Panofsky, Erwin. Perspective as symbolic form. New York: Zone, 1997: 67-68

2 “But if perspective is not a factor of value, it is surely a factor of style.”
“Photography has become one of the principal device for experiencing something, forgiving an appearance of participation.”

Plan of Place François Mitterrand with the three pavilions and demarcation of framed views (no scale)
drawing by Marcela Montalvão
A small camera obscura placed on Park Henri Matisse frames the intersection of towers, trains station and viaduct, exalting the idea of different states of the same system.¹

Inspired by the design of old cameras, this black pavilion is constructed with ordinary materials, such as plywood and canvas. To increase the interaction between users and space, the zoom of the camera obscura can be manually adjusted through a sequence of metal rails. The angles of the camera obscura vary from 98° when full contracted (in this position it is possible to frame the entire towers in the back of the image), to 51° when expanded.²

The main objective of this pavilion in to translate the infrastructural to a more comprehensible scale, and to foster the interaction of the user with Place François Mitterrand.

¹ "In this context, it is easy to see how perspective machines, camera obscuras and suchlike could simultaneously serve as entertaining diversions from the mainstream of perspective science and as genuine sources of intellectual excitement."
(Kemp, Martin. The science of art: optical themes in western art from Brunelleschi to Seurat. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.)

² "The ambition to invent a machine or device for the ‘perfect’ imitation of nature appears to have been virtually limited to Renaissance and post-Renaissance Western art – until the universal craze for photography."
(Kemp, Martin. The science of art: optical themes in western art from Brunelleschi to Seurat. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.)
A small camera obscura placed on York Street Maritime frames the intersection of tower, train station and tracks, capturing the idea of different states of the same system.

Inspired by the design of old cameras, this black pavilion is constructed with ordinary materials, such as plywood and canvas. To increase the interaction between users and space, the user of the camera obscura can manually adjust the zoom of the device through a sequence of metal rails. The angles of the camera obscura vary from 98° when full contracted (in this position it is possible to frame the entire towers in the back of the image), to 51° when expanded.

The main objective of this pavilion is to translate the infrastructural into a more comprehensible scale, and to foster the interaction of the user with Place François Mitterrand.

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**Plate V Camera Obscura, drawing by Marcela Montalvão**

"(…) some buildings would be constructed over the tracks to become part of the TGV network; building and train would become different states of the same system." Koolhaas, Rem, and Bruce Mau. S, M, L, XL. New York: Monacelli Press, 1998: 1170

"In this context, it is easy to see how perspective machines, camera obscuras and suchlike could simultaneously serve as entertaining diversions from the mainstream study, where the science of space tends to return from its Broadrick to its Brunelleschi, from the 18th century. In the case of the building, it is apparent that the architecture of the building is a part of the experience." Kemp, Martin. The science of art: optical themes in western art from Brunelleschi to Seurat. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.

"The ambition to invent a machine or device for the 'perfect' imitation of nature appears to have been limited. Instead Brunelleschi and perspectivists pursued a different goal. In the introduction to the book, Brunelleschi wrote: 'The purpose of a clear vision is not to see everything as it is, but as it appears to be by a machine that will make the space visible to the eye.'" Kemp, Martin. The science of art: optical themes in western art from Brunelleschi to Seurat. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.

"The ambition to invent a machine or device for the 'perfect' imitation of nature appears to have been limited. Instead Brunelleschi and perspectivists pursued a different goal. In the introduction to the book, Brunelleschi wrote: 'The purpose of a clear vision is not to see everything as it is, but as it appears to be by a machine that will make the space visible to the eye.'" Kemp, Martin. The science of art: optical themes in western art from Brunelleschi to Seurat. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.
a. Waterproof Awning Canvas Marine Fabric, color: black
b. Aluminum metal sheet with black matte finish. 2% inclination
c. Marine Plywood sheet with black matte finish
d. Handrail to adjust the focus
e. Metal rail
f. Rubber sheet
g. 1.5cm hole. Aluminum frame.
Blurred Image

drawing by Marcela Montalvão

Sharpen Image reproduced by the Camera
Obscura

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
“The train could be revealed through a 300 meters long “window”. The TGV would assume a physical presence in the city (...).”

“The most important coherence is not formal, but programmatic – a continuous pedestrian trajectory: a viaduct leads to the train station, the station is conceived as a public arcade, a diagonal axis that connects the city to (...).”

Anamorphosis is a distorted perspective that can be corrected by using a device or by placing the observer in the right position.

This pavilion, placed under the viaduct, is composed by a sequence of three metal arches and its respective distortions printed on metal sheets. A sign with a camera pictogram painted on the ground indicate the position where the observer should stand to have the image corrected. The idea is to create a structure that when viewed through the correct position forms a sequence of circles. Those circles frame the entrance to Gare Lille Europe.

The goal is to invite the user to pause and look with new eyes a moment of his daily routine in Place François Mitterrand.¹

¹“Reality has come to seem more and more like we are shown by cameras.”

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Reinterpretation of Vignola studies drawing by Marcela Montalvão

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Key Plan with position of pavilion.
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“The most important coherence is not formal, but programmatic – a continuous pedestrian trajectory: a viaduct leads to the train station, the station is conceived as a public arcade, a diagonal axis that connects the city to…”


Axonometric Anamorphism scale: 1/50

a. Structure on anodized black steel profile
b. Black anodizer steel shett, t=2mm
Blurred Image

drawing by Marcela Montalvão

Sharpen Image reproduced by the Anamorphic Pavilion

drawing by Marcela Montalvão
“(…) the residual triangle was interpreted as a plane that would rotate along an axis, one point would emerge from the ground to become a building while the other would descend far enough to expose the flank of the TGV tunnel (…)”


A 360° Infinite Mirror plays with the OMA’s metaphor for Place François Mitterrand, in which he associates it to a plane that rotates along an axis.

The pavilion, located between Euralille and the viaduct, is made by two layers of acrylic mirror, a frame with LED strips in the between, and a metallic base that allows the rotation of the structure. The LED strips with RGB control change its color every 15 seconds, according to the most trend social media filters. The mirrors should have different gradient of reflection to create the infinite effect. The expected result is the endless reflection of the light creating a tunnel that frames Place François Mitterrand.

The aim is to design a pavilion that stimulate the perception of the space through the idea of the selfie. In a selfie the space is the stage of the self. A selfie can be also interpreted as the objectivation of the self, and the subjection of the space, the space is the element that will give the identity to self.

Panofsky about perspective:
“(…) a consolidation and systematization of the external world, as an extension of the domain of the self.” Panofsky about perspective.

Panofsky, Erwin. Perspective as symbolic form. New York: Zone, 1997: 67-68

Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola, 1524; Self-portrait in a convex mirror; https://www.wikiart.org/en/parmigianino/self-portrait-at-the-mirror;

Reinterpretation of Parmigianino’s self-portrait drawing by Marcela Montalvão

Key Plan with position of pavilion.
A 360° Infinite Mirror plays with the OMA’s metaphor for Place François Mitterrand, in which he associates it to a plane that rotates along an axis. The pavilion, located between Euralille and the viaduct, is made by two layers of acrylic mirror, a frame with LED strips in between, and a metallic base that allows the rotation of the structure. The LED strips with RGB control change its color every 15 seconds, according to the most trend social media filters. The mirrors should have different gradients of reflection to create the infinite effect. The expected result is the endless reflection of the light creating a tunnel that frames Place François Mitterrand.

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Materials:
1. Aluminium Structure to support LED strip
2. LED strip with RGB control calibrated according to trend filters.
3. 80% Reflective Acrylic Mirror
4. Acrylic Mirror
5. Rotating metallic base
6. Cellphone Camera

Panofsky about perspective:
“(…) a consolidation and systematization of the external world, as an extension of the domain of the self.” Panofsky about perspective.
Panofsky, Erwin. Perspective as symbolic form. New York: Zone, 1997: 67-68
Axonometric
360° Infinite Mirror
scale: 1/50

a. Aluminium Structure to support LED strips
b. LED strip with RGB control calibrates according to trend Social Media Filters
c. 80% Reflexive Acrylic Mirror
d. Acrylic Mirror
e. Rotating Metallic base
Blurred Image
drawing by Marcela Montalvão

Sharpen Image reproduced by the 360°
Infinite Mirror
drawing by Marcela Montalvão
Books:


Lectures:


Websites:

Reinterpretation of Vignola’s drawing on perception of space through devices.

drawing Marcela Montalvão
Title of the Image

Description of the Image, drawing by Marcela Montalvão