

Chronicles of Mies van der Rohe Pavilion

Facts, Interpretations, Mistakes, Fictions and Myths

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Chronicles of Mies van der Rohe Pavilion: Facts, Interpretations, Mistakes, Fictions and Myths (dissertation)

Mies-en-scène (film), DVD PAL, 16:9, 25'35''

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Abstract

The Barcelona Pavilion (1986) was reconstructed after more than half a century of absence, causing an expected controversy in the architectural milieu. Some hailed its remarkable interpretation, while others bemoaned the destruction of the photographic aura from architectural history. Since then, there is dispute among scholars with regard to the reincarnated yet highly ambiguous structure of the Modern Movement.

This thesis sets out with a hypothetical situation based on the premise the actual pavilion has been obliterated once again. In so doing, it prompts a cultural study of the various contended sources which have arisen from this epiphany and are of completely different nature on the account of those preceding the reconstruction. The findings suggest a conjunction of chronicles comprised of chronological approaches, conflicting interpretations, factual inaccuracies, fictional narratives and conceptual constructs that have been, and continue to be, published while simultaneously stimulating artistic creations. This study provides a strong evidence that the cultural production around and about the pavilion derives from idiosyncratic recursions, displaying an intrinsic transdisciplinary nature.

Given the multitude of approaches, the methodology proposed is based on the argument of a schematic historiography that, from this particular contested place, is rendered as a manifold organic and cumulative structure, not just defined by the rigid facts and concise criticisms, but it also springs from conspicuously subjective interpretations, enriched by misunderstandings, which may ultimately reinvigorate past myths and perhaps create new ones. All these latter occurrences are usually discarded from architectural history. This dissertation argues their intrinsic value by drawing attention to their classified contribution. By so doing, it broadens the scope of historiographical understanding and prompts other hidden stories such as the ones related to the precedents of reconstruction and the strong relationship between film and architecture.

This thesis concludes with an artistic project formalized in a film experiment. This film, titled *Mies-en-scène*, is inspired by the multiplicity of readings and, at the same time, suggests my own interpretations on the subject matter, which were then translated into a sequence of moving images deployed in a calculated process of delirious associations. The chosen cinematic framework intentionally captures the viewer's attention and invites the audience to contemplate, through an aesthetic and experiential level, the implications of the proposed schematic model.

In this perspective, the film formulates a fictional narrative where truth, artifice and memory are all intertwined, suggestive of the way in which reality and fiction are shaping our experience of contemporary art, life, architecture, and after all, history. In the end, the whole body of work reiterates a contemporary interpretation of Mies van der Rohe Pavilion while attempting to expand its mythology.

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Opposite page - Manipulated photo by author, 2010.

1. Introduction

Hypothesis

Let us assume, for the sake of this argument that the German Pavilion ceased to exist from this moment on. I am certain that there are many people out there who would be glad and happy about it, due to the replication controversy and, probably, others who would slowly dilate their pupils while silently thinking: "I didn't see it." Despite both immediate responses, the audience's reaction is not the main issue here, although it inevitably relates to it. My position regarding the process of reproduction of the pavilion will try to be unbiased with only one purpose in mind, which is to examine the cultural manifestations aroused by its resurrection. Fundamentally, what concern this argument are the cultural remnants of such a hypothetical disappearance. If it were gone, one might start to think about how we perceived its presence since its reconstruction. What were the most relevant modes of registry? What has changed since the first fifty-six years of obliteration? Did we learn anything else by having it reconstructed besides being a highlight on the city's tourist map? Did its reconstructed physical presence have more or less historiographical impact than the legendary black & white photographs?

Given this postulation, the first part of this dissertation consists of a theoretical approach regarding other works that have been developed around the resurrected pavilion, which i have gathered and interpreted to constitute a body of knowledge with different intellectual preoccupations, addressing unrelated issues, exploring and expanding the field of architecture into other realms. In this respect, they form part of a bigger story revolving around this particular object of desire, which mysteriously continues to haunt us with attraction, repulsion and even indifference. The pavilion is, undoubtedly, a major cultural asset to the city of Barcelona. How could we conceive the city without it? Certainly that a memorabilia collection–larger than the actual pavilion itself– of facts and artefacts would, most

likely, emerge from all corners of the world to reinstate its post-replica importance and unparalleled significance.

Methodology and Literature Review

Before letting the reader plunge into the *chronicles* of this dissertation it is important to clarify the methodology used. First, given the fact that a multitude of sources corresponding to different natures were produced around and about the German Pavilion over the last eighty-years, i have conspicuously deployed the datum within a certain structure–depicted in the subheading of this thesis, which in turn becomes the reason for the main title–and delimited my scope of study from the time of its resurrection, that is, after 1986.

Then, this dissertation is comprised of seven chapters. Each chapter addresses the following topics: *Introduction, Stories, House, Installation, Narratives, Aura* and *(In)conclusions*. Each topic is approached through a repeated thematic development: *Facts, Interpretations, Misunderstandings, Fictions* and *Artistic Component of the Thesis*, hence based on this system of classification it stresses the topic in relation to its premise. It is a simple, yet elaborate scheme, engendered in a non-linear fashion, whereby the reader may find that the theme in one topic is related to a theme of another topic elsewhere, yet viewed from another perspective, which prompts parallel arguments subordinated to the same subject.

Subsequently, this thesis attempts to demonstrate the distinct sources–enriched by informational inaccuracies (Blaser, 1964, p. 27; Bonta, 1975, p.28), conflicting interpretations (Evans, 1990) and fictive narratives (Koolhaas, 1997)–which may constitute the manifolds of our understanding in reference to the contemporary fabric of history by proposing a fundamental relationship between *Chronicles*: their interconnectedness. In short, the methodology by its own right as illustrated in Figure 1, becomes embedded in the argument of this dissertation and, therefore, should be reviewed not as a critical but, schematic historiography of the German Pavilion since its resurrected inception.

TOPIC / THEME	FACTS	INTERPRETATIONS	MISUNDERSTANDINGS	FICTIONS	ARTISTIC COMPONENT OF THE THESIS
INTRODUCTION	AFTER BP	THERE ARE NO FACTS, ONLY INTERPRETATIONS	NON-DISCARDABLE FACTS	ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE	MIES-EN-SCÈNE
STORIES	(HI)STORY BRIEFING	ARTISTIC CREATION AFTER BP	BUILDINGS ARE NOT ENOUGH	HISTORY FOLLOWS FICTION	WHAT'S ZEN GOT TO DO WITH IT?
HOUSE	GP: POLITICAL HOUSE	BP: VIRTUAL HOUSE	CONUNDRUM	BODY BUILDING HOUSE	POOL HOUSE
INSTALLATION	INSTALLATION AS EXHIBITION DESIGN	DIALOGIC PREMISE OF INSTALLATION	LILLY REICH'S CONTRIBUTION	TOTAL EXPERIENCE	INSTRUMENTS OF THOUGHT
NARRATIVES	TAUTOLOGICAL MUSEUM	CAPTURING MODERN ANXIETY	MIES' LAPIDARY STATEMENTS	DELIRIOUS RECONSTRUCTIONS	INFRA-MINCE PRELUDE
AURA	CREATIVE ACT	CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY	IRONIC TWIST	REPLICAS: CAN'T LIVE WITH THEM, CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT THEM	CINEMATIC UNCONSCIOUS
(IN)CONCLUSIONS	JOURNEY OF HISTORICAL AWAKENING	DUCHAMP'S RIDDLE	SCHÖNING'S MANIFESTO	TEMPO DI VIAGGIO	TOKEN

Fig. 1 - Schematic historiography of the dissertation.

The following is the general description of each theme:

Facts

After B.P.

This thesis begins with two historical facts: the first one consists of the construction of the German Pavilion for the 1929 Barcelona World Exposition and, the second one, is related to the resurrection of the Barcelona Pavilion in 1986, which was carefully designed, planned and documented by the Catalan team of architects in Solá-Morales et al. (2002). From hereafter, it will be considered only this two historical times: before and after G. P. and B. P. accordingly. However, the latter is what concerns the most in this dissertation as posited in the above mentioned hypothesis.

This theme, titled *Facts,* outlines some of the high points of the Barcelona Pavilion considering Mies's career in the history of architecture (Johnson, 1978); reaffirms his strong working connection with Lilly Reich, known as the only female figure who encouraged a new sensibility to his designs (Droste, 1996); and finally, a short statement by Marcel Duchamp which can be seen as a premonition for the resurrected pavilion (Duchamp, 1997), implying a way to tackle the subject of replicas.

Interpretations

There are no Facts, only Interpretations

"To understand is to interpret. And to interpret is to restate the phenomenon, in effect to find an equivalent for it." [1]

Many scholars have investigated and interpreted the subject matter in order to understand it, i.e. the impact of the German Pavilion (after GP) in the history of architecture: some used an analytical approach to reconstitute the facts from available sources (e.g. Schulze, 1985; Neumeyer, 1991) and, by so doing, fill the missing links of factual historicity, correct the dissemination of certain inaccuracies (Tegethoff, 1985) and create more viable grounds for in-depth research; while others came along, after BP, with fresh interpretations giving rise to an expanded view of how architecture can be perceived by creating visual and linguistic metaphors and metonymies to explore associations with the media (Colomina, 1996, 2009), semiotics (Bonta, 1975), landscape (Constant, 1990), theater and drama (Quetglas, 1996), structures of desire (Dodds, 2005) and also artistic genres (Burgin, 2001; Ursel Berger et al. 2006).

Throughout this theme, it will be presented some of my own interpretations within each topic: regarding the sense of the Barcelona Pavilion as a virtual house (Rajchman, 2001); the benefits brought by the Fundació Mies van der Rohe in reference to its annual programme of housing installations (Blanch et al. 1999; Reiss, 1999; Cortés, 2007); how film became the experimental medium par excellence to capture anxiety of modern times (Freud, 1989; Simmel, 2000; Vidler 2000b; Ronen, 2009); how contemporary photography attempts to restore the aura of the structure (Schneider, 2002); and, lastly, the way in which Marcel Duchamp was a pivotal figure in the transgression and agitation of historical conventions with his general attitude of indifference (Tomkins, 1998).

This theme on *Interpretations,* demonstrates the relevance of the nominated process within the discipline of architecture which evokes the contemporary tendency to bring interpretative terms from other fields (e.g. arts) for the explanation of their own objects (Vidler 2000b: preface).

Mistakes

Non-Discardable Facts

While doing historical research there are times–and in this particular case there are often too many–when informational sources are overwhelming and contradictory, misread and even mistaken, but observed only by few (e.g. Evans, 1990; Solá-Morales et al. 2002; Dodds, 2005). Nonetheless, due to architectural form being subjected to individual interpretations, these multiple readings are understood to occur routinely and with benefit (Hays 1984: 16) and, paradoxically, it can be explored a hidden history out of them (Newton 2005: 66). However, the way in which a building as a cultural object in time is possessed, rejected or achieved is usually not addressed (Hays 1984: ibid.).

Furthermore, this theme aims at addressing film as a platform

The aim of this theme, *Misunderstandings,* proposes exactly to address certain aspects that have been in some way dislodged from the history of the pavilion after BP, such as Lilly Reich's long-term collaboration with Mies in his European years (Droste, 1996); the flagrant discrepancies generated around the pavilion's simple plan (Blaser, 1964, Bonta, 1975; Tegethoff, 1985; Quetglas, 1996; Solá-Morales et al. 2002; Guiras, 2005; author, 2010) and, other parallel events concerning the filmic format in which architecture could be taught nowadays (Schöning, 2009). All in all, this theme discusses a different nature of contribution to the aura of the Barcelona Pavilion (Ursel Berger, 2006; Benjamin, 2008).

Fictions

Anticipating the Future

Fiction may be regarded as the ultimate genre that is capable of combining all knowledge (science, technology and imagination) towards one specific goal, which is to anticipate the future for the betterment of humankind. It is by means of this fantasy that possible worlds–real and imaginary– may intentionally collide to disrupt a different one, not entirely new, but with different motivations. When this happens, it revolutionizes past dogmas and can permanently alter the way we perceive and understand the surrounding present and, therefore, opening the expectations for the coming community.

The primary purpose of this theme *Fictions* is to probe experiments that somehow were generated after BP. However, before doing so, it seemed necessary to forge ahead with an approximation of the science-fiction cinematography with the World's Fair (Solá-Morales et al. 2002; Kultermann, 2007) by establishing their close relationship in order to speculate about life in the future through the common usage of technological and science achievements, i.e. from literary novels to cinema and the experimental nature of international expositions to the impact of exposure between different cultures. Next, it delves into the installation proposed by OMA and Rem Koolhaas for the 1985 Milan Triennale, comprised of a clone of the German Pavilion and their reconstruction (Dodds, 2005) as a fictional narrative regarding the dismantlement of this iconic monument while raising awareness to the subverted beliefs of modern architecture (Koolhaas, 1997; Colomina, 2009). Then, the theme explores the concept of *total installation* developed by the Russian artist Ilya Kabakov (1995) subdued to the experiential

significance of the pavilion's space, after BP (Quetglas, 1996; Solá-Morales et al. 2002). Subsequently, it concludes with the inevitability of replicas in the history of things (Kubler, 1962), where interpretation and invention are contended as the two creative vectors that constitute human intervention in order to communicate the awareness of historicity, assuring its continuity and galvanizing change.

Myths

According to Whom?

Opposite page - Film still, onyx block sequence.



Opposite page - Video Still, Mies-en-scène, 2010.

2. Stories

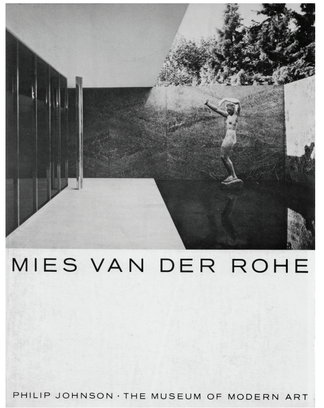


Fig. 3 - Mies first international exhibition, a retrospective, and the subsequent publication of a monograph with a comprehensive array of his major works and artistic statements written by Philip Johnson in *Mies van der Rohe*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947, 3rd edition 1978. The cover photograph is from Berliner Bild-Bericht, Berlin, Germany, 1929.

Facts

(Hi)story Briefing

Every building tells a story. Yet, only a few stories earn the right to posterity. When it happens, history becomes a potentially contestable place.

The German Pavilion designed by Mies van der Rohe for the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition is an example of this phenomenon. The turmoil from design process to its dismantlement became a contested narrative by scholars of the field. The case took an unexpected turn: they carried out the reconstruction of the pavilion in 1986: Behold the official resurrection of the Modern Movement! Subsequently, after BP, a conjunction of chronicles comprised of subjective interpretations, fictional narratives, conceptual constructs have been, and continue to be, published while simultaneously stimulating artistic creations. Adding to those before BP, which include chronological approaches, historiographies of modernism with factual inaccuracies in some of them and Mies' extensive monographs, they have all contributed to perpetuate the production of meaning channeled by a work which is in the end a transdisciplinary cultural legacy.

To this day, the pavilion continues to marvel and disturb the minds of those seduced by its mystic charms and cultural signification. The fact remains that this icon of the International Style has been canonized through the proliferation of a little more than a dozen black and white photographs and a simple key plan, when, in reality, only very few writers actually saw the original structure. This is explained by their permanent presence in relevant publications (Figure 3)and by which terms a canon is defined:

> The canon is what gets written about, collected, and taught; it is self-perpetuating, self-justifying and arbitrary; it is the gold standard against which the values of the new aesthetic currencies are measured. The canon is the discourse made flesh; the discourse is the spirit of the canon. [1]

Interpretations

Artists Sensing Architecture

Artistic creation after B. P., i.e. after the pavilion's resurrection in 1986,* have been expanding the boundaries of our understanding regarding to its historical presence. Artists who intervene, or take action, on architectural spaces usually take the standpoint of the user, because he is in fact the user in the sense that he will react to the spatial conditions as if he was the spectator, hence mediating the experience. By engendering rather sensible approaches artists immediately confront the user (themselves) with their own senses before any other intellectual or conceptual mechanisms. The immediacy of the senses precludes the ocularcentric experience which architecture has given primacy since the classical Greek thought (philosophy and vision were analogous to clear knowledge and metaphors of truth) and the development of linear perspective in the Renaissance. As rightly observed by Juhani Pallasmaa in *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, the dominance of vision over the other senses has continuously biased our cognition.[P7] The ocularcentric paradigm of our relation to the world is based on a vision centered interpretation of knowledge, truth, and reality, therefore arguing the necessity to survey the role of vision in relation to other senses in our understanding and practice of the art of architecture.[P8]

Since modernist design has privileged the intellect and the eye, leaving the body and other senses, as well as our memories and dreams homeless,[P10] it became the motto of some artists to reenact the sensory experience of the human body with the surroundings. In so doing, they bring forth the notion that architectural space is more than a collection of isolated pictures, in order to proclaim its full material and spiritual presence. In this respect, Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out that the sensation is as a unit of experience and exemplifies it with a phenomenological analysis: "To know what sense-experience is , then, it is not enough to have seen a red or to have heard an A? But red and green are not sensations, they are sensed, and quality is not an element of consciousness, but a property of the object."[P5] The sensory experience evinces the materiality that constitutes the fundamental properties of an architectural object. It is by means of this direct exposure to reality, by questioning its physicality and stimulating the user's cognition that architecture is enriched with its experiential meaning and opens up to the emotional participation of the inhabitant.



Fig. 2 - Carolyn Butterworth licking the MvdR Pavilion. Photo: Emma Cheatle, 2008.

In an idiosyncratic intervention Carolyn Butterworth proposed what she calls a *creative survey* of Mies van der Rohe Pavilion. It consisted on licking all the materials of the pavilion (Figure 2) and thus sensing, or rather tasting, a new corporeality of its presence. In her essay *Site-Seeing: Constructing the Creative Survey*, she demonstrates, not just by other successful examples but also through her own practice, an *alternate* kind of site surveying which aims at a relational art practice in order to provoke a new and potent relationship between the site, user and architect.[P125] In a deconstructive analysis of site surveying she questions the extent and limitations of normative site surveys–the standard procedure in which architects study and understand a site through the production of plans, sections and elevations, that is, the measurable aspects of the site. By focusing the attention on the tangible realm of the site, Butterworth augments our understanding of the place and establishes the unexpected sensual qualities of the pavilion, revealing in her own words that "this implacable, smooth building turned out to be extremely lickable, full of texture and taste. It's clean modernist lines are pitted, moss-ridden

and crumbly when licked."[P133] In the end of her survey–an architectural degustation–she draws the following conclusions with a unique palate appreciation:

> Up close the building is so lickable; sleek chromium, crunchy travertine, squeaky glass, luscious marble. I licked every material I could find including the water of the pond. I like to think the building enjoyed it despite the fact it sent me off with a wretched sore throat. So now I have a special relationship with the Barcelona Pavilion. I remember how it opened up its cracks, splits, smears, scratches and fissures to me and I think of it with fondness. It does a fine job of concealing its decay and flaws and stands impervious as an icon should. But I have licked it, and I know different. [P132]

Another more recent happening on the pavilion is Ai Weiwei's provocative intervention titled *With Milk, Find Something Everybody Can Use* (Figure 2), where both pools, large and small, were filled with milk and coffee respectively. Contradicting the commonly accepted notion of the pavilion as a modernist temple, "a place where only gods dwell,"* Weiwei reinterprets Mies's successful imposition of a new sensibility based on the *general solution* and *common language* in modern architecture, while aspiring equality in the era of mass reproduction.

By introducing everyday elementary substances of consumerism such as coffee and milk in the pools, the artist exalts the sensory experience of the user and establishes a direct relationship between architecture and the human body. In an interview elsewhere, Ai Weiwei explains his innermost aspects of inspiration for the coffee intervention in the small pool: "Yesterday we put the coffee in this pond and the whole room started to smell of coffee and i think that is very nice. I know Mies liked cigars, so he must loved the smell of this coffee. Also for this lady...you know...it is called the Lady of the Morning [referring to George Kolbe's *Morgen* sculpture] so, in the morning we all love the smell of coffee. So, i feel this is nice..."* In this sense, the odor of coffee pertains to Mies himself and, physically, affect the actual environment. The scent of coffee and the presence of milk renew the experiential meaning of the



Fig. 2 - Ai Weiwei's intervention at the MvdR Pavilion, titled *With Milk, Find Something Everybody Can Use, December 10-28.*2009. Large pool filled with milk, alluding to the pristine clean and freshness the pavilion has been kept over the years with the substances that upkeep a healthy human body: coffee and milk.

pavilion and introduces other possible readings. The result of this is that it reacts with the preconceived notion of the pavilion as a static building and, as Ai Weiwei states "the intervention explores the metabolism of the living machine."*

In sum, the sensory experience of architecture brings the world into a most intimate contact with the body.[P42] According to Roland Barthes, "it is the great tactile phase of discovery, the moment when visual wonder is about to receive the reasoned assault of touch (for the touch is the most demystifying of all senses, unlike sight, which is the most magical.)"[P90] The haptic experience brings back the intangible temple of gods to the tangible senses of human body. Both artists, Carolyn Butterworth and Ai Weiwei, have in their own way demystified the modern canon through a sensory approach but also created new possibilities in which architects and users may understand the built environment.

Mistakes

Buildings are not Enough

During the writing of this thesis i came upon a small black and square book in a bookstore in Lisbon, which had an interesting title: *Cinematic Architecture.* Unexpectedly fortunate, judging only by the title it related directly to the filmic work of my research. Not far from this one, spacing a few books ahead was another one with the same size, yet thinner and with a grayish cover, under the bold title of *Manifesto for a Cinematic Architecture,* whose author was Pascal Schöning, published by Architectural Association in London. Obviously, both books were from the same series with only a few years distancing each other's publication–three to be precise, 2009 and 2006 respectively–almost the way i had found them to be on the shelve.

Both books celebrate the work developed by Diploma 3 Unit of the school, which came to a definite closure after seventeen years of existence(1991-2008), addressing the medium of film to derive critical thinking while engaging with unconventional architectonic models. The unit rendered explorations of space in films and texts over the years and constructed a body of work embedded in history with a contemporary approach. Michael Weinstock, director of Emergent Technologies and Design Masters Programme at the school at the time, observed the unit's development during the last five years which evolved from the understanding of the space of architecture to the manipulation of the qualities of light on material boundaries and surfaces. Film in this experimental context, he remarks, "was the mode of thought, a genre production and critique that offered continuity with remote histories of architecture and a means of generating new spatial experiences of contemporary life." [4]

Relying on the Unit's published book, titled *Cinematic Architecture* (Figure 5), besides the description of some of the students best works and essays by a few tutors, at some point it alludes to the controversy with other professors during the final presentations in its early years. Due to the fact that student's work was mostly presented in filmic format–which even nowadays maybe considered an unconventional format at some progressive schools–, professors from other units and invited juries would claim their lack of architectural proposals and their incapacity to bring forward objective solutions, models, design concepts, etc. What they wanted and were used to see was the common format of the institutionalized architecture education. On the other hand, what Schöning alongside a team of co-tutors were aiming at was to create a teaching programme based on critical alternatives (film) that deviated from the overwhelming mediation of formal aesthetics and, ultimately, envisioned to recover architecture's former capacity as a genuine site of cultural memory, identity and continuity.[5] Currently, as unfortunate as it may sound is an extinct critical platform, i.e. film and architectural theory could not be accepted by those who teach, disseminate, produce and constitute the institution of the latter.



Fig. 5 - Schöning, Pascal et al., *Cinematic Architecture*, London: Architecture Association Publications, 2009, cover.



Fig. 6 - *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920). Set design with exaggerated vanishing points conveying the emotional charge of the narrative.

Given this past situation, the question posed here then, revolves around the possibility and acceptance of film to be a critical platform for the production of an architectural discourse. That has been the aim of my cinematic production, which will be judged by the audience, teachers and invited jury. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding that architecture is more than building design. It is a critical discourse that embraces many facets whose main concern is spatial critique, analysis and dissemination. In this respect, Beatriz Colomina asserts the following:

> [...] architecture, as distinct from building, is an interpretative, critical act. It has a linguistic condition different from the practical one of building. A building is interpreted when its rhetorical mechanism and principles are revealed. This analysis may be performed in a number of different ways, according to the forms of different types of discourse; among these are theory, criticism, history and manifesto. An act of interpretation is also present in the different modes of representational discourse: drawing, writing, model making and so on. Interpretation is also integral to the act of projecting.[P307]

According to this definition, the language and production of film incorporates all those characteristic, ranging from script writing that is the narrative, set design which definitely includes model making (scale dependable), human interaction (emotional relationships), creative vision (from visionary paintings to technical drawings), optical apparatus (cameras, view points and travelling sequences), location and site surveying, and the list goes on.

Furthermore, film and architecture had a starting point in cinematic debates as early as 1920s and 30s in Weimar, during which the German "Expressionist Cinema" (e.g. Figure 6) had its inception and established the new medium as an autonomous work of art. Bruno Taut immediately perceived its instructive qualities and published his theoretical observations in the article *Artistic Film Program,* proclaiming film's contribution to art in tree categories: "(1) the generally stimulating film, which kindles the artistic imagination; (2) the instructive film, produced as an aid to the teaching of art, craft,

or architecture; (3) the film as an autonomous work of art."[P183] Moreover, regarding the second category he states that "the student of architecture, like the layman, will thus acquire a lively notion of the true essence of architecture. He will free himself of the pictorial notions fostered hitherto by perspectival renderings and will learn to comprehend the building as a unified organism that grows inevitably out of the determinant factors of function, location, and the rest. The significance of details and fittings, right down to the furniture, is made evident within their total context."[P183] In fact, film and architecture has such similarities that there are cases of directors and architects who have had precedents from one and another field (e.g. Fritz Lang, Rem Koolhaas).

Jonathan Hill claims that critical architecture is "associated with words not drawings or buildings, and the writer not the designer, architectural criticism is widely known and understood. But it is assumed that few architects are critical. This assumption is itself open to criticism, however. First, because it relies on a limited understanding of what is architectural. Second, because it caricatures who and what is critical."[P165]

Fictions

History Follows Fiction

Science-fiction cinematography and World's Fair have in common the use of technological and science achievements to speculate about life in the future, which habitually promotes certain ideologies that are biased to political, economical and social issues of that particular time. These collective fantasies, made its early manifestations through literary novels whose capacity to envision possible worlds forged our imaginary freedom to go beyond the physical constraints of actuality while serving at the same



Fig. 6 - The first Great Exhibition of 1851, which culminated in the Crystal Palace designed by Joseph Paxton.

time as critical models to the tendencies of controversial realities (e.g. Jules Verne, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, 1864; Lewis Caroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865; Geroge Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949). Later on, with the technological advancements, came the cinematic experiments of urban schizophrenia and unconscious bewilderments (e.g. Fritz Lang, *Metropolis*, 1926; Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, *Un Chien Andalou*, 1929, and many others; this subject is further developed in chapter 5 under the topic *Narratives*, on the theme of *Capturing Modern Anxiety*), delivering a completely different set of social entertainment and visual stimulation which corresponded to the burgeoning of the urban milieu. In the same perspective, as observed by Stephen Van Dyk in the richly illustrated survey of the golden era of world's fairs book *Exit to Tomorrow: World's Fair Architecture, Design, Fashion 1933-2005*, the inception of the World's Fair in the mid nineteenth century (Figure 6) "have served in many roles as arenas of world commerce, as forums promoting advances in sciences and building construction showing the latest inventions, and displays of raw materials and industry"[6]–such was the case of the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition devoted to three aspects of technological progress: industry, sports and art. Then, he continues with the following insight:

> World's fairs were also opportunities for expressions of nationalism, to see and learn about exotic people and cultures, for showcases of architectural design, and for county fair-like amusement parks. At the same time, world's fairs were the forerunners of modern museums, in international trade shows, and global organizations concerned with world peace, economics, health, ecology, and the betterment of humankind.[7]

It was under this optimistic spirit that the organizers of the Barcelona International Exposition adopted a distributional system to present the participating countries which consisted in one main area based on a series of independent buildings constituted by grand palaces distributed along a coordinating axis–an ambitious urban plan designed specifically for this occasion took place from

the Plaça d'Espanya to culminate on the crest of the Montjuic in the dominating mass of the Palau Nacional building[8]–, which housed several branches of production from the different nations such as steel-making, transport, textiles, agriculture, graphic arts, electricity, etc. A secondary feature of the Catalonian International Exposition, not less important, but made in short-notice and therefore resulted in certain inadequacies regarding the general outcome with the surroundings, was the premiering of individual national pavilions which had to be inserted within the already implemented masterplan. Historiographically, the existence of a German Pavilion was only decided less than a year before the opening day which would be during the month of May, 1929.[9] Despite this unexpected haste, Udo Kultermann points out the appeal, and also the anxiety, of the concept behind the world's fairs being its ephemeral nature while, on the other hand, "the short international exposition gave architects, designers, composers, and artists an extraordinary amount of freedom to experiment, and it introduced the public to revolutionary art and design."[10]

An interesting participation which encapsulated the discrepancy of fictional vision with the utter reality mentioned before was the American National Exhibition in Moscow (1959). It was comprised of a multi-screen projection system (seven 9 x 6 meters screens) as the center piece of the exhibition produced by Charles and Ray Eames (Figure 7) titled, *Glimpses of the U.S.A.*, which illustrated the daily life of the United States with more than 2,200 changing images of people, buildings, technology, and automobiles.[11] The purpose of this visual exploitation was to engage the first cultural exchange between the two countries since the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) by portraying the American values of capitalism (egalitarian and consumerist) as opposed to Soviet Union's communist regime (authoritarian governments and centrally planned economies). This vision of the so called "American dream" played in huge screens, would probably have had a certain fictional sense of impact for the Russian spectators due to their extreme polarities in terms of cultural values and economic developments. Nonetheless, this dream seemed credible because of its cinematographic qualities (real-time recordings) which depicted

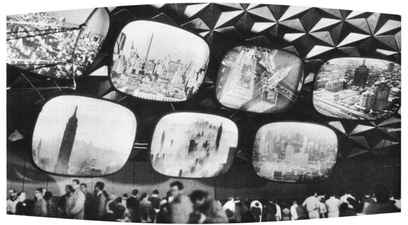


Fig. 7 - Geodesic dome by Buckminster Fuller, a film produced by Charles and Ray Eames played across seven large screens.

the exact phenomena of pure raw data of reality itself. In other words, the filmic episode turned reality into fiction because it transposed cultures with a totally different set of values.

Eventually, it is this capacity to fictionalize known realities by colliding different worlds and projecting unseen concepts that history becomes alive, an unpredictable future is erupted contrasting knowledges, a story yet to be unravelled, surprising, non-linear, where in the end fiction can become reality. In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Jacques Ranciére posits the following:

> The real must be fictionalized in order to be thought. [...] The notion of "narrative" lock us into oppositions between the real and the artifice where both the positivists and the deconstructionists are lost. It is not a matter of claiming that everything is fiction. It is a matter of stating that the fiction of the aesthetic age defined models for connecting the presentation of facts and forms of intelligibility that blurred the border between the logic of facts and the logic of fiction. [12]

In this line of thought, history once again is linked to a model for the fabrication of stories, where "politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct fictions, that is to say material rearrangements of signs and images, relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done."[13]

Myths

Change Your Name, Change Your Own Destiny

Where do myth come from? Can we create our own myth? Does architecture have myths? Science-fiction cinematography and World's Fair h



Opposite page - Video Still, Mies-en-scène, 2010.

3. Aura



Fig. 40 - "Portrait multiple de Marcel Duchamp" (Five-Way Portrait of Marcel Duchamp). In 1917 Duchamp visited the Broadway Photo Shop in Manhattan, where he sat for the five-way portrait printed on a postcard shown here. The hinged-mirror setup, produced five images of the sitter–one being a portrait photographed with his back to the camera; the other four, reflections seen in the two hinged-mirrors. Carefully cropped, this combination of images produced confusion; a loss of identity. Which is the sitter and which are his reflections.

Facts

Creative Act

In April 1957, Marcel Duchamp was one of the invited guests to give a speech at the Convention of the American Federation of Arts in Houston, Texas, subordinated to the theme *Session on the Creative Act* which later on that summer was published in the magazine *Art News*, vol. 57, no. 4 entitled *Creative Act: Between Intention and Expression is the Art Coefficient.* Despite being a minute essay it caused enormous impact in the art field with his sporadic , yet incisive customary manner:

> All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act. This becomes even more obvious when posterity gives its final verdict and sometimes rehabilitates forgotten artists. [1]

From this point of view the resurrection of the German pavilion is, in fact, in total consonance with his definition. According to Duchamp's art coefficient it is once again the spectator's role to reevaluate and reinterpret this phenomenon in order to make their contribution to posterity. In a sense, it seems like we are stuck in a loop, with no way out; in a place where history repeats itself endlessly. Indeed, a horrifying recurring dream!

On the other hand, what can be considered to be happening is the convergence of the creative process towards an iteration. In the mathematical sense of the word, iteration means applying a function repeatedly using the output from one iteration as the input to the next until the desired result

is achieved. In this case, what is at stake is the production of meaning; in other words, the iteration of the pavilion's inner significance within a different cultural era. Every epoch has a different interpretation regarding certain issues, which depends on the aesthetic, cultural, economic and political agendas of that particular time. This particular architectural object was subjected to a historical iteration, so to speak, allowing the spectator to be reacquainted with the built environment and to construe as well as to define a new critical meaning. Therefore, the replica yields to a historical continuity and lends itself a way of furthering its meaningful production.

As depicted in Duchamp's *Five-Way Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (Figure 40) the hinged-mirror effect of this photograph may serve as a metaphorical reference for what has happened to the German pavilion. Recapitulating the postulation of this thesis, the reconstructed pavilion has disappeared, thence the object of desire in question is hypothetically extinct, subsequently, what we are dealing with is a loss of original identity as well as its double. The traces of the latter may be regarded as interpretative iterations that took place before the epiphany, which in turn may fulfill the historiographical gap of the missing double-object Gathered in a schematic manner, these are the cultural remnants addressed throughout the present dissertation.

Interpretations

Contemporary Photography

Several international renown artists have utilized, for different reasons, the medium of photography to exploit and develop their own conceptual work in relation to the reconstructed pavilion and, since then, expanded the meaning of the Modern Movement within the contemporary



Fig. 41 - Hiroshi Sugimoto, *German Pavilion*, photograph from *Architecture* series, 1998.

culture of the diffused image. The following artists, just to mention a few, are in chronological order regarding their works:

- Peter Fischli and David Weiss, from the series *Pictures, Views*, 1991
- Hiroshi Sugimoto, *German Pavilion* from the series *Architecture*, 1998
- Jeff Wall, *Morning Cleaning*, 1999
- Thomas Ruff, from the series *lm.v.d.r.* , 2000
- Victor Burgin, *Elective Affinities*, 2001
- Hannah Collins, *Mies van der Rohe Pavilion*, 2003
- Günther Förg: *Barcelona Pavilion*, 2007

For this argument, one particularly example stands out within the array of these visionary artists. In 1997, Hiroshi Sugimoto began with a photographic series entitled *Architecture* for the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art. Interested in the way modern architecture could resist the collective memory of its formal clarity and sharpness of lines, he set out to photograph the same canonic images, already recognizable by the wider public–without creating new compositions–of those landmarks. Forms are isolated to their most iconic feature (Figure 41), images are deliberately taken out of focus and the exposure is left sometimes for several hours, creating the finest gray scales on the surface of the large prints. The mute architectural details are compensated by the subtle noise evoked in the photographic grain. The blurred forms reminds us of the unfocused vision when one's sight is tired but it is still lured by the infinite thought of that particular magnetic field. This quality of vastness triggered by the contemplative gaze depicted in each hazy photograph seems to be reminiscent of his *Seascape* series; it is not an image captured in the common sense, but a refrained state of mind in which the viewer's attention is put into a halt in order to plunge into a mental perception–the first and lasting

impression. This soft-focus principle may suggest the way in which our memories preserve images and, as corroborated by Sugimoto, it emphasizes the architect's essential design idea.[2]

> Early twentieth-century modernism was a watershed moment in cultural history, a stripping away of superfluous decoration. The spread of democracy and the innovations of the Machine Age swept aside the ostentation that heretofore had been a signifier of power and wealth.
>
> I set out to trace the beginnings of modernism via architecture. Pushing out my old large-format camera's focal length to twice-infinity–with no stops on the bellows rail, the view through the lens was an utter blur–I discovered that superlative architecture survives the onslaught of blurred photography. Thus I began erosion-testing architecture for durability, melting away many of the buildings in the process.[3]

Relying on the artist's statement it seems to suggest that the purpose of this *melting away* is to override all the standard photos established in architectural history, which in turn had also been worn out by the thousands pictures taken by of tourists confronted with the same sight-seeing. According to Thomas Pavel in his interesting analysis on the *Barcelona Pavilion as a Media Event,* he sheds light on the formulation of this inner picture, affirming that Sugimoto "deliberately engages with the pioneers in photography by his positive, traditional attitude and makes a paradoxical attempt to win something of the aura back for the subject that has already been frozen into a cliché, by a process of repeated reproduction."[4]

The *Architecture* series exhibition have travelled to almost all of the high-profile institutions in the world and was presented under a certain type of installation (Figure 42). The large format prints are mounted on monolithic structures, specifically designed by the artist himself, and erected as individual columns which in turn become part of the architectural space, creating an all-encompassing installation that monumentalizes each modern building with its own tombstone. The passage of time is inscribed

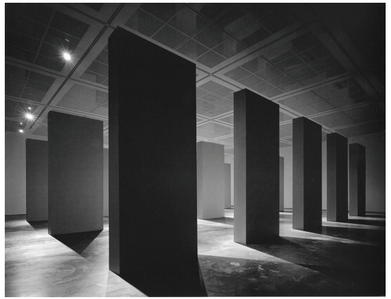


Fig. 42 - Sugimoto's installation view at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 2003.

in the singularity of each photograph and empowered by the spatial configuration that which evokes culture–architecture with the aid of art–as transcendental edifice of faith.[5] Paraphrasing Thomas Kellein in this respect, "culture and its maintenance are basic prerequisites if we are to suspend the inexorable decay of time and the ongoing extinction of cultural form."[6]

Modern architecture in many ways continue to haunt us with its courageous urbanism and machine driven aesthetics under the novel principle of reproduction, whose ground-breaking ideas are still being distilled and resonate in contemporary culture. A current exhibition held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, titled *Haunted*, addresses this issue of remembrance manifested by the reproductive media. Jennifer Blessing, the curator of photography in the show explains in her introduction:

> Often the photographic image is a literal document of the past that bears witness and thereby substantiates the very existence of experience otherwise only fleeting and troublingly maintained as elusive memories. This repetition of the past in the present is a defining characteristic of reproductive mediums such as photography, video, and film. Performance and theater are also reiterative in their re-creations of character or text, and repetition is inherent in the nature of rehearsals and repeated presentations of show. Reproductive mediums and performance are defined structurally by layered temporality they present: they viscerally refer to the past into the present, to metaphorically bring dead back to life, and thus suspend the viewer or audience between history and the immediate. It is because of this quality that photography, live performance, has been from its inception to have a kind of magical power, if not to transcend death then to constantly remind us, as a memento mori, of the inexorable passage of time. [7]

Mistakes

Conundrum

Countless versions of the pavilion's plan were published during its absent period, between GP and BP (1930-1986) from the year of its dismantlement to its reconstruction. However, none of them can be considered as the exact plan of the original design due to several reasons. First, is related to a nonexistent project that corresponds to the final constructed building, but only preliminary studies which do not coincide with the published exemplars. The scarcity of Mies's drawings available, most of them quick sketches of construction details, seem to suggest that they were rather produced on-site.[6] The reconstruction architects observed through their investigations that the process of design and building would have been "subject to much pressure, haste and last-minute change"[7] coupled with the provisional nature of the building, it added up to the absence of a final scheme. Next, they also realized the significant differences in dimensions and in detailing of the various published plans.[8] Each one of the plans presented a unique set of information which either filled the gap or contradicted the previous one as it can be seen in Figure 12 to 20 (following pages). Then, there is also the fact that Mies intentionally helped the fabrication of this conundrum, distributing to the press the plan he envisioned and not the one actually built and, later on, also manipulated some of the legendary photographs. This conscious action denotes his anticipation regarding the effects of the media from his past experience [9 a acrescentar] and its power to envision and disseminate architectural ideals.

Subsequently, given the historiographical discrepancies of the published plans the aim of this particular inquiry is to analyze, in an overt manner, the informational gaps, by spotting the differences and exposing the misreadings of some of the most recognizable footprints known to date.

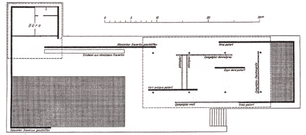


Fig. 12 - Pavilion's plan published by Walter Gezmer in *Zentralblatt y Die Baugilde*, August, 1929.

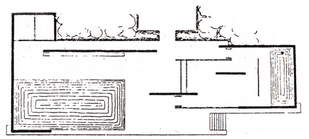


Fig. 13 - Pavilion's plan drawn by Rubió Tudurí and published in *Cahiers d'Art*, Vol. 8-9, Paris, 1929.

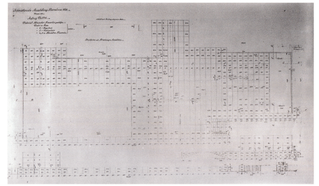


Fig. 14 - Plan and elevations of the pavings and claddings supplied by *Köstner und Gottshalk*, 1929.

Starting from Gezmer's plan (Figure 12), together with the *Berliner Bild-Bericht* photographs, were the first materials made available by Mies himself for the press release a few months after the inauguration of the German Pavilion.[8] Interestingly, as will be shown later on, although being attentive enough to indicate the general materials–one of pavilion's major accomplishments–and providing a graphic scale, the outline of the plan does not correspond to the actual built form and the sculpture is omitted. However, it may be inferred that it was the architect's tacit objective to submit such information in order to publish his initial design intentions; the tight-budget and time frame constraints may have altered the final outcome of the project.

Nicolás Rubió Tudurí belongs to those few critics that were actually in the original pavilion right after the inauguration, and published an article with his rather simplistic plan (Figure 13), drawn by himself. It depicts the basic spatial organization alluded by the thick and thin outlines and, most importantly, shows the real configuration of the platform, which is its perimeter (as built form) while including the awareness to the landscape on the pavilion's backside but, strangely misses the cruciform columns. Nevertheless, he adverts his readers to a precise and suggestive first-hand description with an acute sense of spatial inquisitiveness. The following is an excerpt of the article:

> The pavilion does not enclose anything but space, and even this is done in a way that is geometric and not real or physical. It has no doors, and each room is closed only imperfectly, on three sides [...] Some of these rooms lack a roof: these are true semi-patios, in which the space is bounded only by three walls and by the horizontal water in the basin, and yet they remain "contained" by geometry. [9]

May it be possible to infer that the experiential manner in which he engaged the tour combined with the chromium plated columns–dematerialized by its reflectiveness–would have distracted him to contemplate other formal qualities? One is attempted to suggest that this missing element, despite

being a scientific error, it may also be the evidence of Mies's spatiovisual mastering, which is the veridical testimony concerning the tectonics of disappearance.

In Figure 14 it can be seen a shop drawing made by the Berlin company *Köstner & Gottschalk*, which supplied all the slabs of Roman travertine for the project. This as-built drawing provides the exact floor plan of the platform complete with precise calculations of its slabs,[10] giving the overall dimension of the podium and the grid's correct modulation (1.10 meters and a double dimension of width for the vertical walls).

All of the previous plans are then again overridden by Mies van der Rohe's most acclaimed publication, which came along with his first major American retrospective curated by Philip Johnson and held at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, 1947 (Figure10, p. 3). This plan (Figure 15) stubbornly reaffirms his genuine design intentions about the perimeter of the platform while presenting it in the most abstract manner–without any of the surroundings, nor grid modulation and discarding the sculpture. This purely conceptual space is what Michael Hays claims in his article *Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form* as one of the three prevalent interpretative perspectives, which is the "wholly detached autonomy of an abstract formal system"[11]: *architecture as autonomous form*. He explains the following:

> The intent is precisely to dismiss any of the worldly, circumstantial, or socially contaminated content of history, because such subject matter would necessarily impinge upon the intellectual liberty of criticism and availability of the formal strategies for reuse.[12]

In this perspective, Caroline Constant observes:

> Mies recognized the potential for creative interpretation that accompanies a modern perspective of the limitations

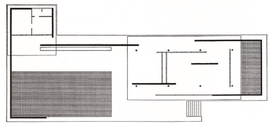


Fig. 15 - Pavilion's plan edited by Philip Johnson in *Mies van der Rohe*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947.

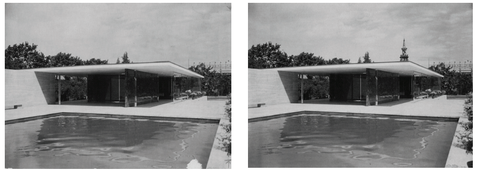


Fig. 16 - Pavilion's pool view edited by Philip Johnson in *Mies van der Rohe*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947, **(a)** painted and **(b)** unpainted versions.

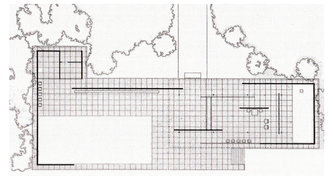


Fig. 17 - Reconstructed plan of the Barcelona Pavilion published by Werner Blaser in *Mies van der Rohe: The Art of Structure*, 1964.

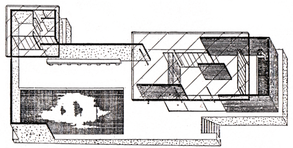


Fig. 18 - Axonometric reconstruction of the pavilion drawn by Juan Pablo Bonta and published in *Anatomy of Architectural Interpretation*, Barcelona, 1975.

> of knowledge. With Barcelona Pavilion, he modified our understanding [...] exemplifying the aim of modernism not simply to break with the historical past but, rather, to attempt to equal its highest achievements under new and difficult conditions."[13]

Moreover, in MoMA's publication some of *Berliner Bilt-Beritch* photographs were composed, cropped and painted under Mies's direction in order just to show his unique conceptual idea. For instance, it is known that the pool view (Figure 16) had been retouched so to eliminate the tower of the *Casaramona* textile factory, because it appeared on the background of the image and disturbed the horizontal line of the pavilion.[14]

Figure 17 shows a new plan drawn in Mies's Chicago Office by Werner Blaser in 1964. It illustrates an extraordinary precision in its render of details such as the natural surroundings, framed by trees and shrubbery, the indication of furnishings as integral components of the whole composition[15] and the presence of the paving grid. Yet, there are some obvious inaccuracies without even going to its precise measurements: the perimeter of the platform continues to embrace the whole project, which indicates Mies's preference in this idealized plan, rather, than the built form[16] and the hidden roofline that completely covers the small pool is by no comparison an unacceptable mistake. Or was it also intentional? Unfortunately, this plan was utilized by many of the following authors (e.g. Bonta, 1975; Tegethoff, 1985) whose certainty on Blaser's version–supposedly, an unquestionable scientific source–led them to focus the attention on their theoretical undertaking while stepping on the inconspicuous trap.

Juan Pablo Bonta (1975) repercusses the above mentioned flaws but, he eventually corrected the plan's inaccuracy in his second book, *Architecture and its Interpretations* (1979).[17] Nonetheless, he has been heavily criticized by other scholars (e.g. Quetglas, 1996; Dodds, 2005; Newton, 2005) specially due to his axonometric rendering of the pavilion (Figure 18). This drawing type, besides revealing

representational errors, is the antithesis of Mies's graphic philosophy.[18]

All in all, this forensic survey regarding the inaccuracies of the published plans before B. P. aims at the dissemination of a different kind of aura. Mislead information propagated by scholars and interested writers alike may completely distort the original source to the point of oblivion, were it not for those astute historians who from time to time exert their profound restlessness to these deviations. Nevertheless, it is this

Fictions

Myths

Black & White Mythology



Fig. 3 - Book cover of *This is Not Architecture: Media Constructions*, edited by Kester Rattenbury, London: Routledge, 2002.

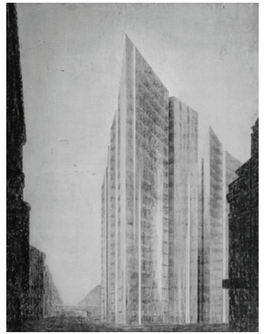


Fig. 3 - Book cover of *This is Not Architecture: Media Constructions*, edited by Kester Rattenbury, London: Routledge, 2002.



Opposite page - Video Still, Mies-en-scène, 2010.

3. House

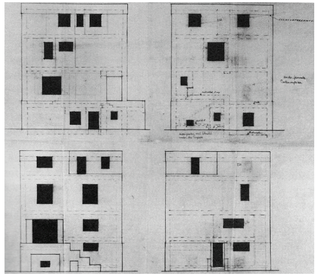


Fig. 10 - Rufer House by Adolf Loos, Vienna, 1922. Study drawing of the openings on the walls, windows and doors are represented as black squares without frames. The interior divisions are seen through the walls, with dotted lines, conveying a sense of tension between the program and the surroundings. This notion of porosity becomes evident when the walls are assumed as a membrane that envelops the four sides of the house.

Facts

German Pavilion: Political House

The modern house was the architect's predilection for experimentation. Due to its size, small and compact, it offered a controllable situation, which opened the possibilities to a rigorous statement of personal convictions, style, proportions, and ultimately, perceived as the role models to envision modern life. Le Corbusier's famous dictum proclaiming "the house [as] a machine for living in" [1] is a clear tendency of the cultural shift and historical upheaval which promoted a functional design, without any ornamentation, in order to attain the ultimate machine aesthetic. Such poignant suggestions were to elate the modern house into a kind of statutory significance; a continual laboratory for the investigation not just of architectural ideas but intellectual beliefs throughout the 20th century:

- Stonborough-Wittgenstein House by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Vienna, 1926-8;
- Lovell Health House by Richard Neutra, Los Angeles, 1929;
- Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier, Poissy, 1929;
- Muller House by Adolf Loos, Prague, 1929-30 (Figure 10);
- Tungendhat House by Mies van der Rohe, Brno, 1930;
- Falling Water by Frank Llyod Wright, Pittsburgh, 1935;
- Gropius house by Walter Gropius, Lincoln MA, 1938.

The German pavilion was no exception to this premise. It was conceived as a modern house to

host the ceremonial opening with the presence of royal guests and other dignitaries. This house, emptied from all sorts of decorative arts besides the sculpture situated in the small pool and the punctual furniture within the roofed space, had a strong political statement since it was the first time the young democracy of the Weimar Republic had the opportunity to present itself within the community of nations. The idea of self-presentation with an expression of progressiveness and distinctly international orientation was the government's sole intention as formalized in the opening speech by the commissioner general of the German division, Georg von Schnitzler:

> Here you see the spirit of the new Germany: simplicity and clarity of means and intentions all open to the wind, as well as to freedom–it goes straight to our hearts. A work made of honesty, without pride. Here is the peaceful house of an appeased Germany! [2]

Further ideas to develop: World Fairs, Art and Politics

Even if the site of the International Exposition could be considered a special an apolitical zone created for the prospects of knowledge by mankind, it has been already understood by the experimentations of arts in the 60s that

> Art is not a free space that exists outside ideology, but intrinsically contested and therefore political site, since how and what we validate as art is determined by institutional authority. [3]

Weimar and the Pavilion> A concrete expression of the democratic aspirations of the young Weimar Republic



Fig. 11 - Ignasi de Solà Morales, Cristian Circi, Fernando Ramos, *Mies van der Rohe: Barcelona Pavilion*, Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 1993, 6th Edition (english version) 2002. Book published after the reconstruction of the German Pavilion, consisting of a design report regarding the project. Since then, the structure has been known as the Barcelona Pavilion.

Interpretations

Barcelona Pavilion: Virtual House

Despite all political connotations brought about by its inception, the fact remains that the conceptual house, after B. P. (Figure 11), serves no practical purpose for it has no real program, therefore, this empty house may be assumed as a projection of the mind–a virtual house. In this regard, John Rajchman asserts "the virtual house becomes here the house of this less grounded condition of image and body, as though it were a house for an unreal, disembodied mind linked to all others in a virtual realm."[4] A house, he continues, "with the most possibilities might thus seem the one with the least specificities—the empty house of silence or absence, awaiting a revelation that never comes."[5] It becomes clear how this assertion conforms in its entirety to the Barcelona pavilion.

Further ideas to develop: Grid

Mistakes

Ipso Facto: Mies van der Rohe Pavilion

Seldom are the architects who retain a design with their own name, even posthumously celebrated; it is as if a citizen, by his/her own merit, was given a street with his/her name on it. A

distinction given by the municipality that inscribes a person's contribution to the history of that city and to be forever remembered in the public realm.

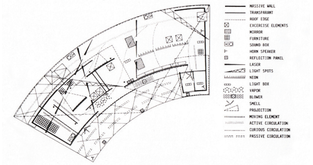
Lesser known is the pavilion's official Catalan name: *Pavelló Mies van der Rohe* ("Mies van der Rohe Pavilion"). This is due to the fact that both previous names–German and Barcelona Pavilion, the original and its architectural nickname respectively–have been continuously brought forward by historians, scholars and architects, whose distance often neglect the ordinary data in their survey. The pavilion's official name can be seen on either website: the Barcelona Tourism or the Fundació Mies van der Rohe. The latter is somewhat confusing when describing its history it appears under the title *1929. Barcelona Pavilion,* thus immediately relating the structure to the city instead to its creator, whereas the former it is consistently spread even on the touristic bus map as depicted in Figure 12.

What can be observed by this close-up phenomenon is that there is an informational discrepancy between popular culture–even if it is already official–and historians. The resistance shown by those who study, organize and construct the historiographical archive to integrate ordinary data, which is the actualization of the information available at the present time, indicates the formal level, or *stubbornness*[6], in which they operate. It seems necessary, at least in this specific case, to bring forth the popular culture as hard evidence in order to call upon the prevailing experience of the ground level, i.e. the current status of life itself.

Siegfried Giedion in his comprehensive synthesis in *Space, Time and Architecture* rightfully claims that "history is not static but dynamic [...] is not simply the repository of unchanging facts, but a process, a pattern of living and changing attitudes and interpretations. As such, it is deeply a part of our natures [...] The backward look transforms its object; every spectator at every period–at every moment, indeed–inevitably transforms the past according to his own nature."[FS] In this line of thought, if the nature and the name of the pavilion is changing according to its own time, it should be overtly notified that the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion is, hereafter, the trend of this epoch.



Fig. 12 - Partial section taken from the Barcelona Touristic Bus map depicting the Red Route, which has a stop at Caixa Foum - Pavelló Mies van der Rohe.



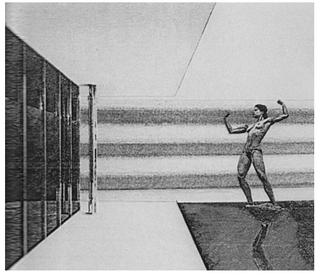


Fig. 21 - Plan, OMA reconstruction of the pavilion at the Milan Triennale, 1985.

Fig. 22 - Drawing, OMA suggesting the superimposition of the body culture with modern architecture..

Fictions

Body Building House

Rem Koolhaas and the Office Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) were invited to participate in the 1985 Milan Triennale. They decided to draw into the event by presenting their interpretation of the German pavilion, which they already had tried out on a previous occasion during the 1980 Venice Biennale under the theme "The Presence of the Past." It consisted of a clone of the original structure in the form of an installation with a major difference which was the warped plan to fit the curve of the allotted site within the Palazzo della Triennale (Figure 21). This construal prefigured the German Pavilion in terms of a Body Building House, which engaged the spectator on a synaesthetic experience within the exhibited space. In a manner of a critique, as opposed to the emptiness and pristine monochromatic prints, the Body Building House was inhabited by gymnasts (Figure 22), body builders and exercise equipment which complied with OMA's statement in reference to their belief regarding the Modern Movement:

> In the beginning of the 1980s modern architecture was always presented as lifeless, puritanical, empty and uninhabited. It has always been our intuition however, that modern architecture is in itself a hedonistic movement, that its severity, abstraction and rigor are in fact plots to create the most provocative settings for the experiment that is modern life. Our presentation was to illustrate this point by bending the Barcelona Pavilion and systematically develop a project of its all human occupancy related to physical culture in the widest possible sense of the word. The house will be both desecrated and inaugurated, and show its perfect appropriateness for even the most suggestive aspects of contemporary culture. Action suggested by projection and light-effects and an abstract soundtrack of the human voice – somewhere in the

ambiguous zone between exercise and sexual pleasure – will complete this spectacle, whose aim is to shock people into an awareness of the possible 'hidden' dimensions of modern architecture.[10]

As observed by Colomina in her recent essay about the work of Mies, in *Mies's House: Exhibitionism and Collectionism*, OMA's project takes reference from the tradition of the body building house in modern architecture such as "Marcel Breuer's bedroom for Erwin Piscator in Berlin (1927), Walter Gropius's gym in his apartment for the German Building Exhibition in Berlin (1931), Richard Döcker's in the the roof at the Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart (1927), the 1,000-metre running track that Le Corbusier proposes for the roof of this Immeuble Villas (1922), Richard Neutra's Lovell House (1929) and the transformation in the 1960s of Mies's Tugendhat House in Brno into a children's gym by Communist bureaucrats."[11] By colliding both realities, through the cult of the healthy body evinced by the convictions of modern architecture, OMA explored in an experimental fashion the capacity of architectural display to arouse an awareness in the general public, i.e. visitors of the triennale, even if it meant to scratch the ridicule by exaggerating and confronting the absurd. In so doing, they made clear the necessity to reinterpret the ideology of a given time in history by suggesting an alternative reading–a datum–of their cultural values in contemporary times.

Myths

Holy Smoke

It is known through several sources that Mies chain-smoked hand rolled cigars his entire professional career. In fact, Katherine Kuh's memoirs in *My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the*



Fig. 39- "Infrathin" a highly ambiguous poem was first published on the back cover of the New York magazine *View*, no. 1, March 1945, where Marcel Duchamp was invited to design both front and back covers.

Scenes with Legendary Curator give an insightful testimony of some modern masters who were close to her, registering an episode worth remembering here:

> Whatever time he could steal from his own work (he was then designing the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology), he spent at the museum, patiently mulling over alternative possibilities that only arduous hours of trial and error resolved. To watch him immersed in a final decision, always puffing away on a large cigar – the Art Institute arranged a special dispensation permitting him to smoke – revealed more about his working methods and his unremitting search for the ideal solution than all the analytical studies about him. [12]

There is a major difference between cigarettes and cigars besides its quality, price and social status, is the favorable condition in which one must seek in order to safeguard the entwinement: the intricate relationship between the smoker and the cigar. Time, environment and predisposition are essential elements to facilitate the osmosis between the intellect and the work itself. In Mies's case, more than an addiction, it would not be outrageous to argue that the cigar besides being part of his working process it was a medium of his creative mechanism–an instrument of thought to attain the desired state of mind. In other words, the same way as when one travels and brings along his favorite utensils, such as family photographs, pen, suit, portable case, sketchbook, books, etc, the entwinement that occurs with the cigar-smoker, in a mythical sense, may be regarded as a quasi religious experience that resembles the presence of incense seen in almost every religious institution. The smoke that cleanses the soul from the mundane world in order to enter into a spiritual mood is something that transcends any explanation due to its intangibility.

Another way to tackle this subject matter concerning the mythical substance of smoke and the creator is to evoke a poem written by Marcel Duchamp, titled *Infra-Mince* ("Infrathin", Figure 39):

When / the smoke of the tobacco / smells also of / the mouth / from which it comes, / the two smells / marry by / the infrathin.[23]

The reason for invoking Duchamp's poem pertains to the fact that both of them–Marcel and Mies–emanate an intellectual character in their approach to life in general and their work in particular. Their personas accompanied by the permanent presence of the cigar seems to portray a social figure with an intangible level of cerebral being and, therefore, an attitude of the spirit towards its civilizational time.

Moreover, with this specific poem Duchamp addresses a complex artistic notion, yet open-ended and far more reaching one, that is the liminal space. In a collection of interviews made by Pierre Cabanne, in 1966, the notion of interstitial space is defined as "capable of concentrating a poetic and expressive intensity, endowed with the power of maximum discovery, because it operates on the periphery of artistic, linguistic and scientific knowledge, that is, withdrawn from the centered fields and delimited by certainties."[24] A few years earlier, Duchamp had already proposed a "Transformer destined to utilize the small and dispersed energies like," between other mentioned ones, "the excess pressure over an electric button, the exhalation of the tobacco smoke, the fall of the urine and excrements, the inexpressive gestures of the hands, feet, and twitches, the ejaculation[...]"[25]

Just like the ready-mades, a found object operates in this interval of the *infrathin*, a delayed time attained in the transformation of those small dispersed energies. In this sense, the *Transformer* is a mechanism, unbounded by definition, aiming at the recuperation of entropy through a deviant proceeding to unify the energies and realities that had long been taken for granted. In a visual sense, this procedure attempts to reenact the optical procedure of an object, postulating that the things we perceive are vague memories of what they can signify in reality. In the case of the ready-mades, it transforms the same thing into its opposite, henceforth, Duchamp claims knowledge as the memory

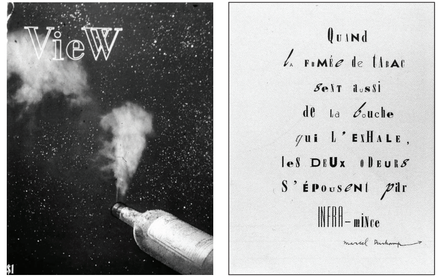


Fig. 39- "Infrathin" a highly ambiguous poem first published on the cover of the New York magazine *View*, no. 1, March 1945, edited by Charles H. Ford. An issue dedicated to Marcel Duchamp.

drive that comes after desire.[26]

In sum, the poem exalts the alchemic transformations of the tobacco smoke in an attempt to create an atmosphere of desire in which the narrative unfolds, i.e. the workflow or the mechanisms of the creative mind. This interlude embraces the creator's state of mind into a mood susceptible to the unknown possibilities of what might be coming. It is a smoke gate, a diffused threshold that cleanses the thought to lure the entrance to a mental landscape.

Further ideas to develop: Liminal Space

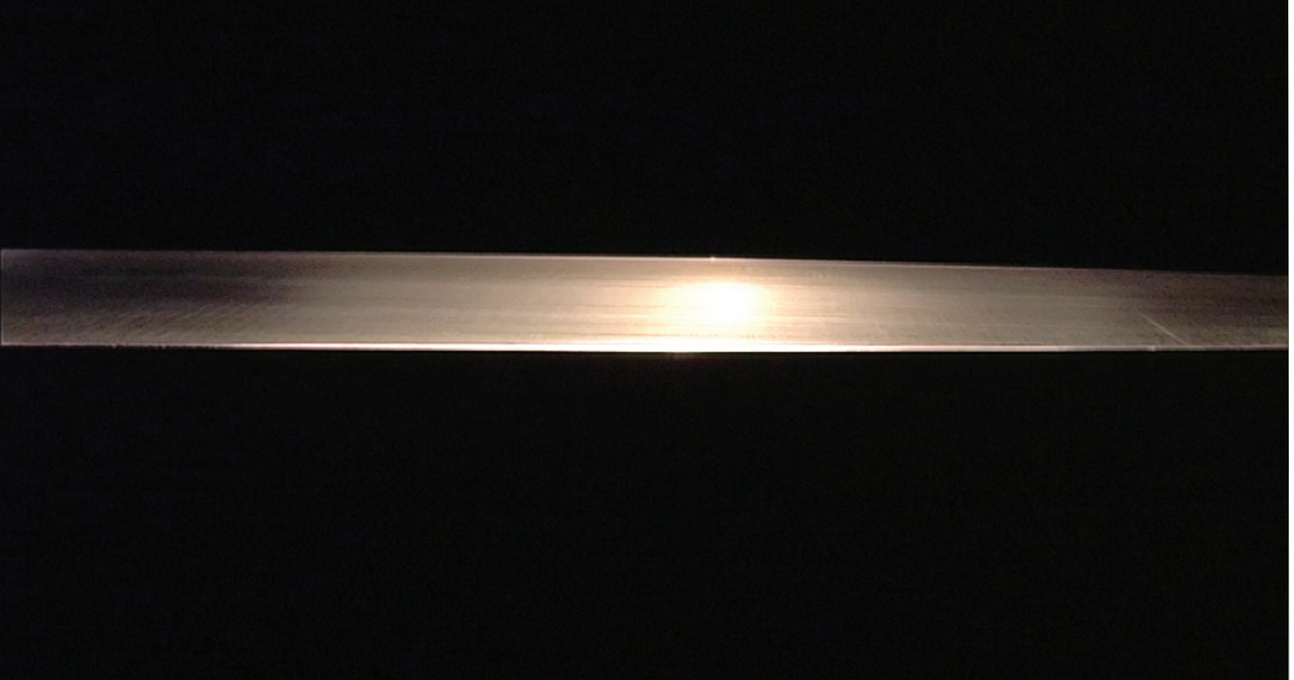
Pool House

P xv-xxxix - Gaston Bachelard, "Introduction", in *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994.

Further ideas to develop: Water and Reverie, Bachelard

Pool: Material and substance of imagination

Opposite page - Film still, pool sequence.



Opposite page - Video Still, Mies-en-scène, 2010.

4. Installation

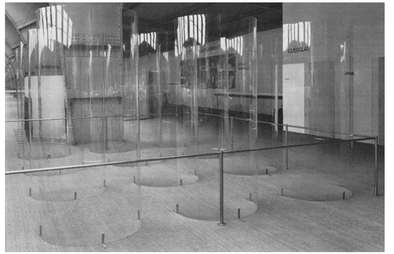


Fig. 24 - Vitrines consisted of glass cylinders designed by Lilly Reich for German People–German Work. Berlin, 1934. Glass exhibit.

Facts

Installation as Exhibition Design

In the early 1930s Lilly Reich designed the glass section (Figure 24) of a major exhibition show with a completely different aim. The *German People–German Work* was an exhibition organized with a strictly propagandistic reasons of the state and it was intended to be the first annual presentation of German work.[1] This part of the exhibit consisted of a hall on a mezzanine level where different types of glass were presented in a dramatic fashion: elliptically shaped glass supported by six chromed-plated tubular metal supports with wood on top and bottom, smaller vitrines of glass cylinders supported by chrome-plated tubular steel element in the middle and many other formats were displayed. Most of the actual arrangements had already been thoroughly tested in her past experience with *Werkbund* activities and other interior commissions. Her acute objective aesthetics and avant-garde approach led her unique exhibition display to stand out almost as works of art in an age where the mass-reproduced objects were the main focus of the industries. She became one of the few leading female figures of her generation to obtain a position as a teacher in the prestigious art school of Bauhaus in Dessau, 1932, by the invitation of Mies who became director of this institution in 1930.

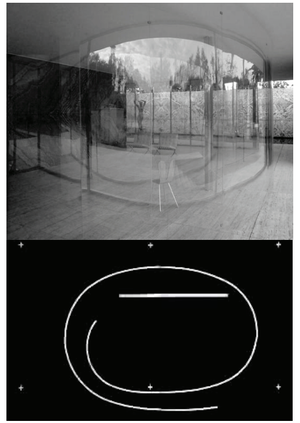
Interpretations

Dialogic Premise of Installation Art

Throughout the past decade, the Barcelona Pavilion has been the host of several international events ranging from conferences, exhibitions, festivals, and so on. Spanish and international architects as well as artists have been invited by the Fundació Mies van der Rohe to intervene in the actual pavilion, which has become an established programme of its cultural agenda. The following are only a few of them taken from the official website:

- Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue, *Less is More - Mies van der Rohe Pavilion*, 16.06 - 09.2001
- Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, *White Flags*, 16.09~27.10.2003
- Dennis Adams, *Freeload*, 08.09~30.10.2004
- Iñaki Bonillas, 10.11.2005~14.01.2006
- Antoni Muntadas, *On Translation: Paper BP/MVDR*, 05.03~05.05.2009
- SANAA - Kazuo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, 26.11.2008~18.01.2009
- Ai Wei Wei, *With Milk: Find Something Everybody Can Use*, 10.12~28.12.2010

These interventions in the form of installations, are conceived to be light, short-termed and have a particular attention not to affect the construction of the building itself, i.e. by means of permanently damaging the building, but instead they attempt to activate a dialogue with the architecture through spatial, historical, material like, or any other means engendered by the invited guest.



Flg. 25 - Top: SANAA's installation at the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion using the concept of acrylic curtains with a sinuous spiral form, 2009.

Fig. 26 - SANAA's plan taken from the exhibition poster.

SANAA's installation at the pavilion (Figure 25) is a direct reinterpretation of modernism with their subtle instigation on the subject of transparency with a contemporary twist. Their intervention consists on an elliptical shape (Figure 26) acrylic curtain which envelops the "center"–if we suppose to even exist one–of the pavilion where lies the legendary free standing Onyx-doré marble wall and the thrones (MR90, better known as the Barcelona Chair) for the royal guests. By so doing, they emphasize and protect this historical event while, at the same time, the natural qualities of the material itself propels the visitor into other dimensions.

SANAA's design usually strives for transparency (Figure 27), but sometimes the use of glass has other reasons than its habitual effects: "Recently, i am interested in non-transparency using glass... Actually, i am interested in reflection rather than just transparency in the glass."[2] In his insightful analysis Juan Antonio Cortés coins this spatial intensity as *atmospheric effects* in which "the curvature of the walls at the corners, undulating curves around the whole outer envelope, etc., create visual overlaps of the successive limits that make a decisive contribution to the complexity of the atmospheric effects, with the appearance of multiple, changing reflections and unexpected opacities." [3]

Their spiral installation creates a filtered gaze through the curved transparent curtain which distorts and reflects the architectural object while housing it. It is as if a soap bubble–inflated from floor to ceiling–had been created to allow the spectator to penetrate in a time-warp experience and devise a longing memory. With a simple gesture of containment they manage to arrest the spatial flow and trap the visitor in a place of preservation in contrast with those who cannot find the invisible entrance and, in this way, are repelled by their own distorted reflection. Hence, the subjective experience and the collective memory are confronted in a swirling collision.

The Fundació Mies van der Rohe's established programme of artistic interventions recalls one major event occurred in 1999, titled *Double Lives: Interventions at Barcelona Museums*, where a confluence of artists from all over the world–Spain, Latin America, Portugal, Great Britain, Nigeria, Eastern Europe,

Germany and Russia–were invited to intervene on fifteen of the city's museums around the theme of humanity in society and history. According to Teresa Blanch, one of the co-authors of the event, "the activity could be defined as a forceful territorial displacement of art towards a complete experience of 'reanimated interior' affecting an entire city" [4] while giving it a new visibility. She also describes the relevance of this interaction between artists from different cultural backgrounds, the historical idiosyncrasies possessed by each museum and, most important of all, this opening up of the world of art of the world of the citizen and therefore "establishing an open, plural dialogue with all classes of life." [5] In this way she asserts that "the past is presented as an open *continuum* in perpetual change" due, exactly, to this "interpenetration between times–historical discontinuity [...] the present frees the past of its stagnation." [6] Furthermore she explains:

> Free exchanges and transpositions, approximations and deviations are generated. Temporal modes are suspended, no more is there any distinction between the old and the new, the ancient and the modern. The importance lies in the interstices, in the opening up of time to the very core, in the imprints which are scattered all over the world. [7]

In general terms, installation art can be seen as an approach to a site specific which leans, unequivocally, towards a social event where art, architecture and the city converge towards a common denominator: to revive the city's stimuli by impeding its historical stagnation and opening an informal dialogue between the citizen and the world-city. It proposes a reflection on the production of meaning while actualizing the knowledge of urban culture.

As an ending note, it seems worthwhile to keep in mind that the heterogeneous practice of installation art as a genre makes it difficult for critics and historians to define their formal limits and, thus, establishing a precise linear language of habitual intervention. [8] Although the genre may present some common features and similar ideologies regarding the context based critique, it is, in fact, through



Fig. 27 - SANAA's Glass Pavilion at the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio, 2006.



Fig. 28 - Mies and Philip Johnson at *Mies van der Rohe* Retrospective, Museum of Modern Art Modern Art (MoMA), New York, 16 September 1947 to 25 January 1948.

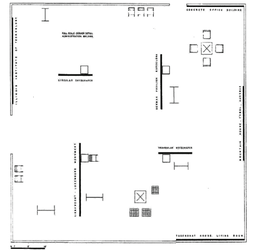


Fig. 29 - *Mies van der Rohe* Retrospective, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, 1947. Plan.

the non-linear narrative strategy defined by the exploration of different mediums to convey the core concept of the work on a specific site that emerges the resistance to historicization and its critique towards the institution which houses it.

Mistakes

Lilly Reich's Contribution

It is known that both Mies and Lilly Reich had worked together in several projects during the period between 1925 and 1938, the year he emigrated to the United States. Their collaboration were most notorious in major exhibition displays where the construction of installations derived from the elements displayed, simple and economical, they magnified the visibility of both the exhibit's content and its form.[9] Unfortunately, the credits given by journalists and critics weren't as fair as their individual contribution. In a male predominant design industry Mies' signature had always overshadowed Reich's name, living her invaluable contribution of exhibition design, furniture and textile displays to be nearly forgotten and therefore historically thrown to oblivion.

The decisive moment which catapulted Mies's name to international stardom and has ever since been recognized as one of the figures of modern architecture was his major retrospective in the Museum of Modern Art, in New York 1947, commissioned by Philip Johnson, which Mies himself designed and installed masterfully given his back experience with major design exhibitions. The exhibition marked a new approach to architecture display. A careful arrangement of panels with floor to ceiling sized photographs and objects such as his famous furniture designs placed strategically in the room gave the visual impression of actual building views (Figure 28, 29).

In sum, both Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich had influenced the concept of exhibition design parameters by transgressing the relationship of architecture with the media and expanding the field of installation design to a new level while impregnating its principles into modern architecture. In this respect, recapitulating the theme of the house mentioned in chapter 2, Beatriz Colomina postulates the exhibitionistic character of the modern house:

> Modern architecture became "modern" not as it is usually understood by using glass, steel, or reinforced concrete, but by engaging with the media: with publications, competitions, exhibitions. The materials of communication were used to rebuild the house.[...] [10]

Furthermore, she continues to remark this quality:

> It is not just that they are designed to be published, designed to photograph well. Rather, they are concerned with new forms of exposure, new forms of display, new forms of transparency. The modern house has been deeply affected by the fact that it is both constructed in the media and infiltrated by the media. Always on exhibition, it has become thoroughly exhibitionist. [11]

Fictions

Total Experience

With the reemergence of the pavilion came the possibility to experience the three-dimensional space without any media filtration, whereby the photographs may have captured a stylized essence, it could never substitute the veritable first-hand experience of the place. As stated by the team of Catalan architects responsible for the reconstruction of the Barcelona pavilion:



Fig. 30 - Color photograph of the interior courtyard with George Kolbe's *Mogen* statue taken by the author, 2009, with similar view as the plate documented by the photo agency *Berliner Bild-Bericht* ("Berlin Picture Bulletin") back in 1929.

> It is necessary to go there, to walk amidst and see the startling contrast between the building and its surroundings, to let your gaze be drawn into the calligraphy of the patterned marble and its kaleidoscopic figures, to feel yourself enmeshed in a system of planes in stone, glass and water that envelops and moves you through space, and contemplate the hard, emphatic play of Kolbe's bronze dancer over the water. [12]

In this sense, given the experiential significance of the space within the historical context (Figure 30), it undoubtedly overrides whatever explanation paper architecture may convey. It could be argued that because of this particular institutionalized condition, a complex engagement of various categories– an ambiguous state–makes this spatial structure to be simultaneously perceived as architecture, museum, foundation and work of art. In this respect, the meaningful experience of the pavilion may well be incorporated in the category of *total installation* defined by Ilya Kabakov, for the viewer of the piece becomes the main actor of the stage to whom everything is addressed and intended:

> The viewer, in dissipated concentration, wanders through it for a ling time, examines, moves away, thinks, passes through again. The atmosphere that surrounds him concentrates attention, forces him to submerge in recollections, to move in his thoughts from one level to another, after all, such correctly constructed installation should "function" on all levels: from the most banal, profane to the highly intellectual, "spiritual". [13]

The meticulous analysis of Kabakov's lecture on his own practice as an installation artist brings a consistent description on what he considers to be a definite, yet emergent, shift in the established hierarchy within the field of fine arts, such as drawing, painting, sculpture and also other genres,

literature, music, shows, etc. He asserts that all of them can be absorbed and utilized by the ubiquitous concept of *total installation* (Figure 31), i.e. *a* concept of interrelationship between objects and the surrounding space of the exhibition–like a stage in the theater–in order to intensify the experience of the viewer, recalling the *Gesamtkunstwerk* attributed in the beginning of the twentieth century by the German composer Richard Wagner who referred to the opera as the synthesis of the arts which encapsulated music, chant, theater, dance and visual arts. In the sense of the theatrical scenery, Josep Quetglas describes his first-hand experience of the reconstructed pavilion in the following manner:

> The visitor is on stage, between the walls and the floors that have sustained his illusion, induced disquietude in him, and denied any concession that was not a loss. He is the fleeting presence in the representation of the empty house. But to this theater without audience the stagehands are going to arrive.[14]

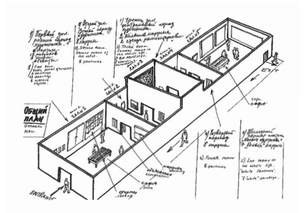


Fig. 31 - Ilya Kabakov's sketch depicting the concept of total installation...

According to Kabakov, it is exactly this apprehended falsity and artificiality that the viewer of the *total installation* should retain, knowing beforehand that this deception is purely intentional and made to create a profound impression. As he put it, "it is a place of halted action, where some sort of event was occurring, is occurring and may occur."[15] Furthermore, the Barcelona pavilion, by his definition, may be understood as an "alienated public space which by their very nature are predestined to be maintained in cleanliness and order, like a library, hospital, museum, etc., nevertheless, the presence of a person–that negligent custodian, librarian, doctor–should be felt".[16] In fact, this impeccable and pristine appearance of the actual pavilion as an institutional space over the years was foreseen since its resurrected inception[17] and will remain as such for the coming generations; ultimately, to bequeath the legacy of modern space through the natural history of things.



Fig. 8 - The Katsura Imperial Villa, located in Kyoto, is seen as the origin of one of Japan's great works of art and architecture. As early as the 14th century, the cultivated nobility of Japan had rejected ornate architecture in favor of a search for harmony with nature, and Katsura represents an apogee of this aesthetic sensibility called the *sukiya* style.

Myths

What's Zen Got To Do With It?

It is known from some sources, including statements, interviews and even sketches, that Mies himself had been influenced by the Japanese conception of space. The question remains to what extent was this knowledge a determining factor from which yielded his design principles? And from where, or whom did he got acquainted with the eastern culture? Naturally, as was his nature, he never assumed a straightforward position about anything. Despite this counterfeit, Philip Jodidio informs us about the appraisal of the Katsura Imperial Villa (Figure 8) by several modernists, like Le Corbusier, Gropius and Bruno Taut, who were fascinated by its modernity with the undecorated orthogonal and modular spaces where the rectilinear simplicity and emptiness of the architecture resembled Mondrian's formal synthesis of certain designs.[14]

One of the first ideas that immediately prompted a direct, yet highly personal, association to the Barcelona pavilion, when i revisited it, was its strong atmospheric connection to the Japanese zen gardens. Having myself been in Kyoto many years ago and contemplated the famous rock gardens i found a resemblance in terms of immersive experience when strolling the travertine courtyard of the pavilion where the large rectangle shaped pool is situated. This non-swimmable, therefore, inhabitable space occupies almost half of the entire structure. The ancient Ryōan-ji Garden (Figure 9) known as *karesansui*[15] ("dry landscape"), also presents similar proportions and formal qualities of a semi enclosed compound and a flat space but with a major difference: strategically positioned rocks appear to be floating over a horizontal plane made of white gravel with an apparent bas-relief of ripples. This striking image of serenity evokes a duality between opposites, which can be summoned up with concepts

such as eternity and epiphany, permanence and change, space and time, and so on. The dry landscape deliberately triggers a pre-emptive condition for philosophical thinking through visual provocation, which in turn activates the inner mechanisms (e.g. sound) of the mind. Despite being immersed in silence, one is drawn by the powers of imagination to hear the echoes of the water caressing the contours of the rocks. Indeed, a masterwork demonstrating a highly sophisticated knowledge of visual aesthetics.

The Barcelona Pavilion in particular and Mies' designs in general share a fundamental property with Japanese design principles which involves, in terms of composition, the cultivation of economy of means based, essentially, on a progressive reduction in the number of elements used and a greater ease and subtlety in their arrangements.[16] In his thorough research published under the title *Ma: The Japanese sense of place* , Günther Nitschke at some point analyses the process of planning of the zen precincts which is called *shin-gyo-so* composition:

> In all Zen precincts there is a tension between the *garan* and *tatchu* areas. The *garan* is the public area, made-up of a *somon* of first gate [...] The *tatchu* area is the private living enclosure fo the priest and their disciples. Their quarters surrounded by high walls, are arranged at odd and irregular intervals on either side of the open *garan* area. [...] The garan area, with its axial planning, is arranged in a formal manner; the *tatchu* area, with its complex living quarters and enclosed gardens for contemplation is informal, the space between the two, that is the entrance court between the gates and the living quarters themselves, is semi-formal. This transition from formal through semi-formal to informal is known in Japanese as the system of *shin-gyo-so*. [17]

In the Barcelona pavilion this tension is replaced with a continuum flux of space with an open planning scheme. Each space is seemingly separated from the previous one, like the flight of stairs that mark the entrance of the precinct; green Tinos marble that apparently slides out of the roofed space



Fig. 9 - Ryōan-ji Garden, Kyoto. The garden has an elongated white sand space, laid out with 15 stones in groups of five, two, three, two and three. The overall stone formation is in a 7:5:3 layout, and stands entirely on its own, without a single tree of plant to augment it. The *karesansui* garden is the expression of a vast landscape in a small space and generally reveals the beauty of a flat space.

inviting the guests to the inside;

The Japanese analogy seems implicit in its principle, but not formally explicit in utilizing the techniques. It does not mimic, learns from it and emulates it into his own architectural language. Is it compulsory to literally put a *bonsai* in order to claim this aesthetic quality? Werner Blaser, in *West Meets East – Mies van der Rohe* attempts, with some degree of success, to establish this oriental influence in many of Mies's projects. Nonetheless, it is always

Laotse, and the void

This aspiration, in going beyond artificially confined space, approaches the Chinese philosopher Laotse's idea of visibly defined and invisibly empty space from which a permanent transformation arises, innovated by the human desire for organization as an answer to the needs of the epoch: "Thirty spokes meet at the hub, and the space between creates the wheel; clay is formed by the potter to create the pitcher, but the pitcher is created by the space within. Windows and doors are set into walls; the space between makes the home, The visible material form; the invisible gives it value."* (quoted from Wilhelm Richard, Laotse, ibid., chapter 11.)

Further ideas to develop: Concept of *Ma*, void and ritual

This "unanimous" assumption posits the universality of the perception of space as one unified entity better conveyed and augmented by its spatial negativity, as Lao Tse, a Taoist philosopher, describes in a poem entitled The Uses of Not:

Thirty spokes meet in the hub, / but the empty space between them / is the essence of the wheel. / Pots are formed from clay, / but the empty space between it / is the essence of the pot. / Walls with windows and doors form the house, / but the empty space within it / is the essence of the house. [18]

Opposite page - Film stills, ceremonial sequence.



Opposite page - Video Still, Mies-en-scène, 2010.

5. Narratives

Facts

Capturing Modern Anxiety

The 1920s was the time when the burgeoning of the modern city bursting with speed, light and mechanicalism found in film an equivalent medium capable of capturing its frantic development, mass movements and extreme urban vistas. In the essay *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, the German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel had already anticipated with the diagnosis of this particular symptom: an urban anxiety provoked by the "intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli." [3] The form of life in the metropolis created a psychological condition which caused the loss of the subject's individuality (Figure 34). Simmel claimed the mental tendencies of the modern mind to become more and more calculating one:



Fig. 34 - The metronomic sense of urban life, *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1929). Frame enlargments.

> The technique of metropolitan life in general is not conceivable without all of its activities and reciprocal relationships being organized and coordinated in the most punctual way into a firmly fixed framework of time which transcends all subjective elements. [...] Punctuality, calculability and exactness, which are required by the complications and extensiveness of metropolitan life, are not only intimately connected with its capitalistic and intellectualistic character but also color the content of life and are conducive to the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign human traits and impulses which originally seek to determine the form of life from within instead of receiving it from the outside in a general, schematically precise form. [4]

The outcome of this overwhelming nervous stimulation was, according to Simmel, the blasé

attitude–a defence mechanism which resulted in the rejection of reactivity, i.e. a profound indifference towards the distinction between things by concealing evermore the spontaneous emotions. The result is a *mental dullness,* or apathy, in which the experience of all things become meaningless and therefore the blasé person appears to be "homogeneous, flat grey color with no one of them worthy of being preferred to another." [5]

Given this discouraging urban symptom, the problem posed before the artistic realm was to find the means to reenact the subjective sensibility in revealing the suppressed desires and evoking new ways of perceiving the urban milieu; in other words, metropolis life should be a form of consciousness, inspiration and individual aspirations as opposed to what was really happening. In this sense, as Michael Hays observes in his critical analysis of architecture and urban culture that the filmic art provided the exact "cognitive mechanisms with which to register the intense changes continually experienced in the modern city." [6] The new eye was born! A non-human one, a cyborg eye constructed specifically to enhance our perception of the new machine world. Vertov's cine-eye (Figure 35) is the definition of objectivity, it penetrates directly to the core of space and time without subjectivities, ceasing the moment and capturing the raw and naked reality. In this regard, Gilles Deleuze points out that "it is pure vision of a non-human eye, of an eye which would be in things [...] it is the eye of matter, the eye in matter, not subject to time, which has conquered time [...] and which knows no other whole than the material universe and its extension [...] it is, first, a machine assemblage of movement-image." [7] Thereafter, static and contemplative images of romantic landscape from the countryside were superseded by the notion of duration solicited through rhythm and speed as fundamental characteristics of urban space. The unique quality of the moving picture brought about by technological advancements established the new medium for artistic experimentation that could capture the mass attention–with the emergence of movie houses–and yielded a collective experience while delivering a certain degree of social life which enabled individuals to temporarily escape from their own isolation. The following are only a few of the



Fig. 35 - The new eye of the movie camera reflecting the urban agitation, from the *The Man with the Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929).

mainstream cinema produced in the early twentieth century:

- Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler, *Manhatta*, 1921
- René Clair, *Paris qui dort,* 1923
- Sergei Einstein, *The Battleship Potemkin,* 1925
- Fritz Lang, *Metropolis,* 1926
- Walter Ruttmann, *Berlin, Symphony of the Big City,* 1927
- King Vidor, *The Crowd*, 1928
- Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, *Un Chien Andalou,* 1929
- Dziga Vertov, *The Man with the Movie Camera*, 1929
- Jean Vigo, *A Propos de Nice*, 1930

The city is the natural environment for the modern artist who is inspired by the chaos and also abstract nature of the mechanically driven, thus reproducible world. Recalling Piet Mondrian, one of the key figures of De Stijl art movement, who saw the city as the ultimate abstract form stated that "the genuinely Modern artist sees the metropolis as Abstract living converted into form; it is nearer to him than nature."[8] Under this premise, film becomes the most adequate medium to convey the veritable message of the urban setting, which is the representation of the age of the mechanical reproduction: the concept of reproducibility is embedded in the cinematic apparatus.

> Here, metropolis and film interface as a distinctly modern production in which a correspondence between the city space and the film space, between the motion of the city and the moving image, exists. The machine of modernity that fabricated the city is also the "fabric" of film. [...] As a new type of artwork and a new scientific invention, film was manufactured reproducibly. Such reproducibility having become a cultural dream of the modern age, the ultimate dream now became

reproduction itself.[9]

The close affinity between film and architecture has a mutual classical inspiration and is made manifest by their modernist representatives. First, Le Corbusier alludes to the notion of *promenade architecturale* in *Towards a New Architecture* by emphasizing the importance of the plan to generate the spatial impression, stating: "Mass and surface are the elements by which architecture manifest itself. Mass and surface are determined by the plan. The plan is the generator. [...] The plan carries in itself the very essence of sensation." [10] Next, following Auguste Choisy's perspective views of the Acropolis, Le Corbusier establishes the spatial arrangement of the several architectural volumes (Temple of Nike, Propylea, Parthenon, Erectheion and Athen Promakhos) in relation to an axis (Figure 36) whose destination, or line of direction, is "assigned by the walls, light and space for a sensorial sensation."[11]

Then, Sergei Einstein exposes his phenomenological analysis in the article *Montage and Architecture*, claiming that architecture embodies the principles of montage effect, i.e. the sequential juxtaposition of the perspective view as in a film-shot.[12] Relying on a rigourous study from a walking path around the Acropolis–appropriating Le Corbusier analysis on Choisy's drawings–, Einstein suggests that the filmic origins derives from the mobilization of the observer's gaze in relation to the sequence of architectural objects; their spatial arrangement is in such manner that creates a favorable first impression, resulting in a cinematic path, which he calls the "perfect example of one the most ancient films."[13] Thus suggesting that architecture is the predecessor of film.

In summary, architecture and film can be considered the two spatial narratives (spatiovisual arts and picture space) bound together by several principles intrinsic to their practices: optical relations (eye and camera), urban condition (inhabitable form and city), sensitivity to light (natural illumination and projection screen), spectatorial mobilization (experiential and imaginary) and spatialization of time (path and duration). Joining the practice of both mediums results in the ultimate fiction which captures

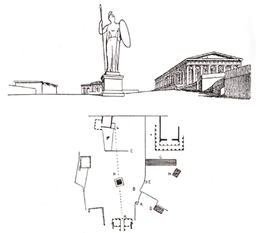


Fig 36 - Plan and perspective of the Acropolis at Athens from Choisy: L'Histoire de l'Art Grecque.



Fig. 2 - Victor Burgin, *Elective Affinities*, 2000-2001, image still from video projection.

the actualization of the present and probes the near future. As Giuliana Bruno points out: "The perfect architectural dream is a filmic dream. Pictures become an environment. Architecture becomes film."[14]

Interpretations

Haunted

Victor Burgin, a prominent writer and renown artist who utilizes the medium of film and photography was invited to work on his retrospective for the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in 2001 (Figure 4). He chose to work on the site of the Barcelona Pavilion and confessed to be *haunted* by this particular building, probably due to its accumulated historiography–a phantasmagoria before BP. In the preliminary writings of his undertaking he acknowledged that "an essay or a video begins with a presentiment, something that cannot be known in advance of research and writing, shooting and editing".[2] In this line of thought, the obsession caused by the canons of architecture galvanized his artistic impetus to work upon this specific structure within the whole city of Barcelona–a city which is pulverized by acclaimed architectural icons from both recent and historical times. More than a presentiment, it could be suggested that he was impelled to do so by the constructs of the media. Then, he writes about his looping experience on the site:

> I enter the pavilion only to find myself leaving. The space behaves like a moebius strip. I feel i am in one of those folds in space-time dear to science fiction-writers. [...] I fell i might emerge from the reconstructed pavilion into the Barcelona of 1929 [after GP], with history poised almost motionless before the vertiginous descent that leads to the Fascist occupation of the city a decade later. I take another turn through the building. No point of rest in this elusive space [...]" [3]

From his first-hand description, it is clear that what he experienced has a bifurcation of meaning. The first and foremost, which can easily put forward by an objective explanation is that he encountered one of the main spatial features of the architect's intention: the spatial flux which enables a total continuity without any interruption of the different areas–both courtyards and the roofed space–where the glass doors are kept open and closed only for security purpose at night and thereby it flows seemingly.

Further ideas to develop: Spatial Unconscious

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writes Vidler, he developed a series of studies which implied the "existence of a spatial unconscious susceptible to analysis and interpretation."

From his retrospective in Barcelona, Burgin has generously shared a detailed view of his motivating preoccupations. While such articulation should not be taken as narrowly definite of the work–the work itself being more robust than what the artist has to say about it–it gives a rare chance to understand in depth one artist's relationship to his chosen profession. Those who love photography are fortunate to have such a record at our disposal.

Mistakes

Schöning's Manifesto

Picking up on the work developed by the AA Diploma Unit 3 during the previous writings in chapter 2 on *Stories*. I must acknowledge my profound respect towards their initiative and persistence of beliefs, as if i could have been part of this film unit with my current thesis, but to be honest, there are

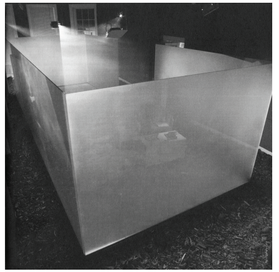


Fig. 46 - Pascal Schöning's Cinematic House installation at the Georgian gallery of Architecture Association in London, which coincided with the publication of his *Manifesto for a Cinematic House* in 2006.

many subject matters which one reads and feels empathy with and yet, are never brought into formal communication.

Having myself been through this particular process of research, analysis and proposal, not knowing before-hand the existence of this Unit, its credos and pioneering educational *modus operandi* and values, i am still intrigued by the inexistence and possible disapproval of many architecture institutions to such approach and working methods. Architecture and film have had since the nineteenth century a continuous flirt and provocative relationship but never got a marital settlement, so to speak, by assuming a mutual compromised in which both would become the language basis for a critical production.

The argument of this thesis is to permeate the language of architecture with the narrative language of film, which needs to adapt and expand its scope of action with technology. This action doesn't necessarily mean to end with a design proposal, but as stated before in the introduction, it is meant to embrace the idiosyncrasies of interpretation. Their elusive joint ventures and mutual cross referencing have always appeal to both disciplines. As Anthony Vidler put it, architects "are exploring the processes and forms of art, often on the terms set out by artists, in order to escape the rigid codes of functionalism and formalism. This intersection has engendered a kind of intermediary art, comprised of objects that, while situated ostensibly in one practice, require the interpretative terms of another for their explanation." [2]

Furthermore, i would like to leave, in a written format, my appreciation to such critical alternatives for thinking architecture with Schöning's *Manifesto for a Cinematic Architecture*:

> The very essence of cinematic architecture is nothing less than the complete transformation of solid state materialistic architecture into an energized ever changing process of illuminating and enlightening event appearances where past present and future activate a time spatiality defined by the duration perceptible through our senses and structured by

our mental ability where the effect of independent movement of matter in space which is the physical kinematics is illuminated by the often contradictory revelation of filmic cinematic sequences of narrative memory procedures thus attaining the otherwise impossible simultaneity of space and time.[3]

It would be a tremendous loss of sight if the discipline of architecture educated all over the world wouldn't recognize film as a possible alternative critical medium to be taught with.

Further ideas to develop: Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time Sculpting in Time: Reflections on Cinema*

Cinema should be a means of exploring the most complex problems of our time, as vital as those which for centuries have been the subject of literature, music and painting. It is only a question of searching, each time out afresh the path, the channel, to be followed by cinema. I am convinced that for any one of us our film-making will turn out to be a fruitless and hopeless affair if we fail to grasp precisely and unequivocally the specific character of cinema, and if we fail to find in ourselves our own key to it. "P80

Fictions

Delirious Reconstructions

Picking up on the topic addressed in chapter 3, *House*, under the subject *Body Building House* (page

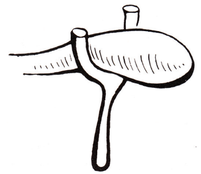


Fig. 37 - Salvador Dalí's diagram of the inner workings of the Paranoid-Critical Method, 1929: limp, unprovable conjectures generated through the deliberate simulation of the paranoiac thought process.

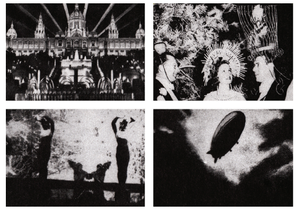


Fig. 38 - OMA's image sample of the story board regarding the Barcelona Pavilion mythology and mythography reinterpreted through the "Paranoiac Critical Method".

30), Rem Koolhaas and OMA's installation at the 1985 Milan Triennale, which comprised of a clone of the German Pavilion at the same time that the real building was in a process of reconstruction. In reaction to what was happening they felt the urge to give their stance in response to the then fashionable practice of installing temporary classicized pavilions in major international exhibitions.[15]

Inspired by Salvador Dalí's "Paranoid-Critical Method" (PCM) already approached by Koolhaas' acclaimed book *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* in his early years, it meant a conscious exploitation of the unconscious through the PCM (Figure 37), whose motto is "The Conquest of the Irrational".[16] By understanding the fact that paranoia is a *delirium of interpretation* where "each fact, event, force, observation is caught in one system of speculation and 'understood' by the afflicted individual in such a way that it absolutely confirms and reinforces his thesis—that is, the initial delusion that is his point of departure",[17] OMA deliberately takes this initiative to propose a fictive narrative (Figure 38) describing the "true history of the pavilion after the closing of the 1929 World's Fair and collected whatever archeological remnants it had left across Europe on its return journey."[18] The following is an excerpt of the story board:

The crowds were gone. The King and Queen had signed the book. The pools were empty. Back home, Germany was in confusion.[...] The political situation became tense in Spain and issues other than architecture became more important. [...] The pavilion was now an architectural orphan, its creator had just departed for the USA, and the new government was extremely different, now everyone was against modernism.[...] One day, a western scientist investigating the rebirth of classicism in the east recognized a fragment that seemed vaguely familiar; he entered the showers, which smelled as bad as the inside of the pyramids and found more. He became convinced that he had discovered the elements of the mythical structure. Negotiations were initiated by his party, and after ten years success. In the context of cultural exchange, the elements were exported in return for one medium sized computer and the secret design of a machine gun.[19]

These delirious associations and irrational beliefs, which are based on Dali's PCM "proposes a tourism of sanity into the realm of paranoia"[20] while at the same time prefigures a didactic model of a critical operation. In so doing, OMA's installation attempts to demonstrate not just the dynamic nature of both the photographic and narrative histories of the pavilion but also give a new significance to the past: a representational paradox between a critique of reproduction and a homage to the pavilion and the modern movement.

Following OMA's predicament and knowing that the reconstructed pavilion could only assume a resemblance to the original building due to the scarcity of available documentation and the impossibility of the authentic reproduction, it became evident that the critical task was thereafter on the hands of the spectators.

Mies once said elsewhere regarding the contemplation of nature from a distance was far greater than to experiencing it directly: "When you see nature through the glass walls of the Fansworth House, it gets a deeper meaning than [from] outside. More is asked for from nature, because it becomes part of a larger whole."[21] The distance enacted by OMA's PCM application seems to reinsert the contested story of the pavilion's dismantlement in a larger picture of architecture history. Therefore, this time, *more is asked from* the viewer, for they are the ones who had been offered the opportunity to approach the built environment with a critical stance. As Caroline Constant observes the idea of the picturesque circuit as the route to knowledge, in which "meaning is initiated rather than imposed",[22] the delirious route proposed by OMA allows the potential for creative interpretation and poses itself as an *alternative reality*.

Cinematic Unconscious

> Distraction and immersion constitute opposites, enabling us to say this: The person who stands in contemplation before a work of art immerses himself in it; he enters that work[...] The distracted mass, on the other hand, absorbs the work of art into itself. Buildings, most obviously. Architecture has always provided the prototype of a work of art that is received in a state of distraction and by the collective.[20]

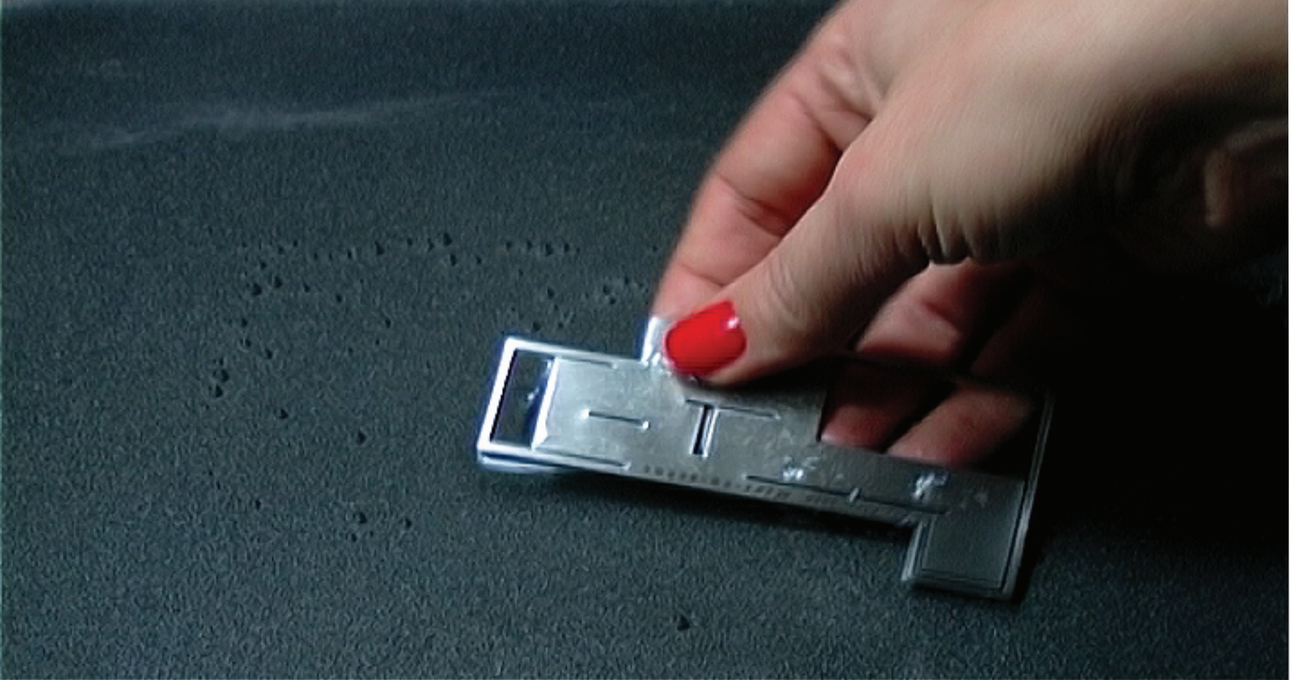
By understanding the effect on how architecture and the city's dynamic imagery was being utterly changed and, therefore, perceived by the modern man in his hectic life, Walter Benjamin posited film as the new medium for a critical aesthetic in his acclaimed book *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Paraphrasing Anthony Vidler in this regard, "film is the modernist art par excellence, it has also served as a point of departure for the redefinition of other arts, as paradigm by which the different practices of theater, photography, literature, and painting might be distinguished from each other. [Film is] an obvious role model for spatial experimentation." [21] He asserts the close yet turbulent relationship between film and architecture since the late nineteenth century and had been a laboratory for the definition of modernism in theory and technique.

In the modern age the traditional way of perceiving a work of art–i.e., visual contemplation–would not suffice to capture the public's state of diverted attention. More was in demand for the human perceptual apparatus to perform the instructions of an haptic experience. Being the modern man essentially a distracted one (e.g., tourists starring at famous buildings), it would be the task of art to mobilize this unconscious mass. For it is the film's *shock effect* that meets the audience's distracted form of reception by persuading them to "adopt an appraising stance but also by ensuring that this appraising stance in the cinema does not include attentiveness. The audience is an examiner, but a

distracted one."[22] It is this modern unconscious gaze–a different kind of sensory perception brought about by technology–through the lens of the filmic art that the public regains its critical posture, the *appraising stance*.

> Then film came along and exploded all these dungeons with the dynamite of its tenths of a second, leaving us free, now, to undertake adventurous journeys amid their widely scattered ruins. The close-up expands space as the slow-motion sequence dilates movement. [It] brings out wholly new structural formations in matter, [and] reveals in them others that are quite unfamiliar and that bear no resemblance to decelerations of rapid movements but are like strangely gliding, floating, supernatural ones. Palpably, then, this is a different nature that addresses the camera than the one that speaks to the eye. Different above all in that the space permeated by human consciousness is replaced by the one that is unconsciously permeated.[23]

Benjamin's analysis regarding the cinematic framework is comparable to Freud's psychoanalysis work in *The Psychopathology of the Everyday Life* (1901), whereas "only the camera can show the optical unconscious, as it is only through psychoanalysis that we learn of the compulsive unconscious."[24] Thenceforth, technological apparatus focused, deepened and enriched our perceptual world, which would otherwise pass unnoticed. Thus, cinema could be regarded as the twenty-first century psychiatrist's couch!



Opposite page - Video Still, Mies-en-scène, 2010.

7. Clones

Facts

Tautological Museum

Having been commissioned the design of an ephemeral structure to house the ceremonial opening of Germany - then the Weimar Republic - in the World Exposition, Mies van der Rohe asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the contents of the exhibition, to which he was told that nothing was to be exhibited but the pavilion itself.[1] In retrospect, it is worth noticing that, as far as the architect is concerned, in the making of an iconic building such as the German Pavilion came to be, how important is the client's unusual requirement to stimulate the architect's latent imagination and forge his ability to overcome circumstantial conditions. Having myself read countless authors about the pavilion's design process i slowly began to see it with different eyes, because only afterwards was it logical to foresee his *leitmotif*. Under the condition of having nothing to exhibit but the space itself, Mies took this challenge as an advantage to concentrate on the development of certain design principles and spatial order which he continued to refine and apply thereafter on other major projects. This intensification on design features propelled the affirmation of his unique style: open space planning, tectonics of disappearance comprised by the free standing wall and dematerialized cruciform columns, reflective surfaces evoking a draw into spatial depth, glass walls that turn the outside view into a display, and most strikingly, the exquisite attention to detail. In his own writings Mies declares the aim of this exhibition:

> We are in a period of transition--a transition that will change the world. To explain and help along this transition will be the responsibility of future expositions, and they will be successful only in so far as they concentrate on this task and treat

the central problem of our time–the intensification of our life. [2]

In this perspective, the spectator is immersed in a spatial narrative of cultural annunciation. The museum is its own exhibit hence the tautology, which ultimately raises the question of this particular built environment as an autonomous work of art.

Interpretations

Replicas: Can't Live with Them, Can't Live without Them.

How do people, as spectators, view the phenomenon of the actual Barcelona pavilion being a replica on the same site of the original one? What is the relevance of this issue? Despite the pavilion being an official reproduction with the consent of reputed institutions, Mies scholars and other modernist historians all over the world, there is still a minority who have a saying on the subject matter and, therefore, it cannot be ignored.

The confessions by those responsible for the process of reconstruction, Solá-Morales et al. (2002), were described to be as a *traumatic undertaking*, given the fact that a replica is always a reinterpretation, the Catalan team of architects were undoubtedly conscious of the distance that existed from the original structure.[8] To surpass this dreadful task they based their beliefs on similar historical examples, one of which marked a decisive shift in the art world. The *Grand Verre* ("Large Glass", Figure 43), that was reproduced and approved as a copy by Marcel Duchamp himself for the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, in 1961.[9] Several *ready-mades* were also duplicated with his explicit approval.



Fig. 43 - The original "Large Glass", 1915-1923, held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Nowadays, besides the illegal reproductions of famous designer's chairs and other easily reproducible commercial commodities, such as hardwares, softwares, books, fashion items and the list goes on, in most cases if the proper agent finds the means to acquire the right certification for the serial copy, what is at stake then, is the lowering of the market price in which the object can be sold and therefore a higher number of buyers can afford it. However, this *commercialism*[10] has its qualitative degradations in terms of diminishing the quality of the product in question.

Conversely, there seems to be a human unconscious need for the possession of the object of desire which directly relates to remembrance , and therefore, memory. It can be exemplified with the mediatic phenomenon of demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Right after the event, small sized rocks–although not being replicas but constituents pieces of the historical event–were being sold as souvenirs in kiosks all over the German country. Given this fleeting but repeated occurrences, one is tempted to make a generalized assumption that everyone wants to possess part of history somehow, in order to remember it. Nevertheless, this urge comes with a price.

In the case of the Barcelona pavilion, a project of statutory remembrance had a real cost for the construction and at the time had an estimated value of 105,337,446 pesetas (≈ 633,100 euros)–a sum that would be financed by the public resources. Artur Drexler, the head of the Architecture and Design section of MoMA at the time, when hearing this number exclaimed "It's a Bargain!".[11] This real value, observed the Catalan architects, ultimately revealed the technical and economical viability of the reconstruction and the general approval of the proceedings by all those involved and confirmed the undertaking to be in the right track.

Despite official consensus about the whole process, Rem Koolhaas, at the time an emergent architect with international recognition, commented his obvious condemnation:

[...] a clone of Mies's pavilion was being built in Barcelona. How fundamentally did it differ from Disney? [12]

This quote was part of a statement regarding his and OMA's participation in the Milan Triennale, which is addressed in the previous chapter 6 subordinated to the topic on *Narratives*.

Later on, he tenaciously restated his position in an article:

> In 1986, the Barcelona Pavilion was reconstructed in color. Through its resurrection, its aura was killed. (In architectural history, it remains stubbornly black and white.)[13]

His personal reaction, and probably adhered by many other unheard voices, is due to the fact that the legendary images are assumed as a cultural heritage that for decades had been accumulated around the *Berliner Bild-Bericht* prints and still continues to be proliferated nowadays. A fact remains that the images were for a long time the locus of an inexistent "body," channeled only through the media they have ever since been part of our collective visual memory and prevailed as a convention.

Another kind of observation was alluded by Robin Evans in an ending note of an essay regarding his interpretative analysis on the Barcelona Pavilion:

> I refrain from commenting on the reconstruction of the pavilion, except to applaud those responsible. Others regard the issues of its authenticity and reproducibility as significant, but i am unable to see why.[14]

It seems that by settling his position under a passive acceptance of the reconstruction Evans deliberately dismissed the aspect of the reconstruction. The resurrected structure enabled the confrontation of his curiosity to some of the writings he had read. Bonta's (1975) critical history provoked his inquisitiveness to see the reconstructed pavilion with his own eyes. He then, wrote an insightful essay entitled *Mies van der Rohe's Paradoxical Symmetries*, in which it is also published a couple



Fig. 44 - Robin Evans, *Barcelona Pavilion (reconstruction)*, 1986. The caption of this photograph is written: "The small pool court. Four kinds of reflective symmetry can be observed here. The pool court itself is bilaterally symmetrical. When reflected in the green-tinted glass (left), it is duplicated into quadrilateral symmetry. The horizontal symmetry is emphatic. The pool makes another reflection, below, from the resulting eight-part symmetry.

of observational photographs as shown in Figure 44. The caption of this particular photograph taken from the small pool confirms the authenticity of his first-hand observations, which otherwise wouldn't be as precise in the experiential manner, i.e. the aesthetic experience, as seen from the *Berliner Bild-Bericht* and other photographic registries. Several critical observations were drawn from his essay that reinstated some of the issues already approached by other authors subordinated to the theme of the mirror-effect, symmetry, horizon, physicality, lightness and so on, but were definitely transposed by his own interpretative act which were carefully developed sustained a convincing argument opposing to that of Hays's (1984).

George Kubler in *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* posits that "replicas vary from their archetypes by small discoveries based upon simple confrontations of what has already been done."[15] In this light, interpretations and replicas can be understood as the flip side of the same coin: they provide an awareness to the actual meaning of the archetypes and may suggest other readings that may fulfill the cultural perspectives of that particular time. They form a *new outer expression*, corresponding to the "new interpretations of the psyche, to a new attitude of society, and to new conceptions of nature."[16] On the other hand, aesthetic invention, he asserts, "enlarge human awareness directly with new ways of experiencing the universe, rather than with new objective interpretations."[17] Subsequently, interpretation, replica and invention are the creative vectors that constitute human intervention by way of communicating the awareness of historicity, assuring continuity and pushing towards the inevitable change.

> [...] a series of true inventions excluding all intervening replicas would approach chaos, and an all-embracing infinity of replicas without variation would approach formlessness. The replica relates to regularity and to time; the invention relates to variation and to history."[18]

A visual example pertaining to the dynamics of history addressed here may be observed in Figure 45, which shows one of Hiroshi Sugimoto's work consisting of a photographic replica of Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-230), better known as *The Large Glass,* held at the Tokyo University. However, the photographed masterpiece is also a version of the original authorized by the artist himself (there are four in total–two in Stockholm, one in London and in Tokyo), therefore, Sugimoto's strategy is, redundantly, a replica of a replica echoing the idea of the multiple pioneered by Duchamp. This third-generation duplicate epitomizes the recursive information mediated through photography. What he engages with this gesture, writes Kerry Brougher in an essay elsewhere, is a double meaning: first, he pays homage to Duchamp's way of perceiving the world and, second, he brings forth the desire to photograph the idea of photography by placing the negative between thick glass planes, thus putting the camera and himself inside the work.[19] The photographer becomes the medium, his gaze becomes the spectator's gaze arrested in a time machine with crystalline transparency.



Fig. 45 - Hiroshi Sugimoto, *La Boîte En Bois* ("The Wooden Box"), 2004. Original unique negatives by the artist paired with black and white contact prints on fiber paper, placed between glass in a Japanese wooden boxaction.

Mistakes

The Berlin Case of Recovering History

Picking up on the work developed by the .

Fictions

I see land! It's Disneyland!

I would like to end this dissertation

Myths

Ise Jingu: A Mechanism of Renewal

Within the richness of Japanese myths, legends and folk tales there is a fundamental purpose to explain the origins of a world in which man's development and dwelling is an integral part of this discourse. This mythology is a belief formalized in rituals and in religious festivals, taking place at specific sacred precincts, which serve as the foundation to bridge the gap between the empirical reality and the unknown forces of nature. Since ancient times, the absence of precise knowledge has lead mankind to pursue, in an adaptive manner, the most abstract thoughts manifested through art, architecture and religion.

In Japan there is an ancestral custom that has been practised for more than a thousand years, which is based on the regular reconstruction of shrines in a time span of twenty to thirty years. There are about thirty shrines scattered in all the country that are subjected to such mechanisms of renewal. One in particular, is the *Jingu* Shrine in *Ise*, popularly known as the *Ise Jingu* ("Ise Shrine"). It is located on the coast about one-hundred kilometers southeast of Kyoto and is considered to be Japan's primary Shinto Shrines, for over 6 million worshippers undertake the pilgrimage to this site annually. It has been listed for UNESCO World Heritage site since 2004.

The *Ise* Shrine is a complex of many buildings within the sacred forest of cypress trees covering 5,500 hectares, most of which is used to the ritual reconstruction of the shrine structures. It mainly

consists of two parcels of land six kilometers apart, with the two major Shinto sanctuaries named *Naiku* and *Geku*, thus forming a pilgrim road between them. From ancient times, it is a custom for worshipers to visit the latter first and then the former.

The *Naiku* ("Inner Shrine", Figure 9) is dedicated to *Amaterasu Omikami*, the Sun Deity, a myth rested on a divine rule from which the imperial family claimed descent. The Inner Shrine houses Amaterasu's Sacred Mirror, which is one of the three sacred treasures of Japan–a sacred object in which a Shinto god resides or is manifested. The ceremonial transfer of the sacred mirror marks the ending of the renewal rite, which is performed by the supreme priestess with a blood relative of the emperor, allowing the exclusive entrance to the Inner Shrine by the emperor himself or his family members.

The *Geku* ("Outer Shrine"), is dedicated to *Toyoke Omikami*, the Food Deity, goddess of clothing, agriculture and shelter, who oversees the offering of sacred food to the Sun Deity. The dedication of the sacred food occurs twice each day both in the morning and evening since its foundation.

These sacred structures are built in a plain style of unfinished Japanese cypress with thatched miscanthus roofing, using ancient techniques and tools of design. It follows the style of grain warehouses that people used to store seed rice and food for the next year in case of famines. Thence, the warehouses were vital for protecting people's lives and for that reason Ise Shrine symbolizes this ancient custom of life protection which took the form of a sacred architecture.

The structures are gradually replaced during an eight-year process, in which every stage of the building is marked by rites and the next one will be completed in 2013 for the sixty-third time. This ritual is called *Shikinen Sengu* ("Periodic Renewal of the Imperial Grand Shrine") and is held every twenty years. According to the *Ise Jingu* official website, the *Sengu* ceremonial system has been established since the late seventh century A. D. by Emperor *Temnu* who installed Ise as the primary Shinto shrine of imperial Japan and built the first temple on the site. The first rebuilding ceremony took place under his wife, Empress *Jito*, in 692.[web1]



Fig. 9 - View into the inner Shrine of Ise.

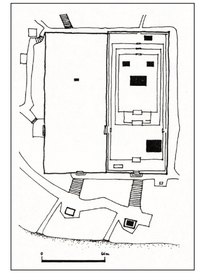


Fig. 9 - Plan view of the *naiku* at Ise Jingu. Right: the current sanctuary or *godoshen*. Left: the *kodenchi*, the empty site of the next *godoshen*, to be completed in 2013.

Next to each existing sanctuary at Inner and Outer Shrines there is an adjacent vacant plot with exactly the same size–a duplicate site–where the next rebuilding takes place as Figure 9 shows, the *godoshen* and *kodenchi* swap sites cyclically. In the essay *Daijosi and Shikinen Sengu: First Fruit Twice Tasted,* Günther Nitschke outlines his thorough study on the Japanese culture and explains that the "succession in time displayed ritually in space results in side-by-side placement of two dwellings,"[p14] wherein the last stage of *Shikinen Sengu* both structures, old and new, co-exist. The relocation system based on spatial duplication coupled with the performance of ancient rites are the "spatial representations of the most sacred of Japanese values, imperial sovereignty and ancestor worship,"[p10] portraying the essential characteristics of the Japanese duplex mechanism of renewal. Nitschke argues that this renewal, manifested as a phenomenon in time, "resolves the ultimate disease of time, both historical and natural: the yearning for sacred authority and sacred architecture to be extremely ancient, yet always pristinely fresh [...] and has served as a quasi re-enactment of the prehistoric custom."[p10]

The *Sengu* ceremonial system includes various ceremonies related to rebuilding the shrines and transferring the deities from the old to the new buildings, playing an important role in preserving and handing down traditional crafts to the next generation, and conveying the roots of Japanese culture.[web2] The sustainability of the whole system it is rather unique in the world , i.e. from the supply and recycling of raw materials (the old lumber is distributed to other shrines all over the country that need their own rebuilding parts) to its pivotal role in maintaining the nation's culture, has perpetuated in a cyclical manner the ancient spirit into modern times. In this respect, Dominic McIver Lopes in *Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan* observes that despite "Japanese vernacular architecture characteristically features wood, paper, and other relatively ephemeral building materials, which are allowed to weather [...] tourists in Japan are struck by the absence of old town centers [...] almost all the historic sites that attract visitors have been rebuilt several times."[p80]

Interestingly enough, it is exactly this duality in time that Dominic Lopes exposes the ontological

paradox in the following two propositions when appreciating the attributes of a building as old and young: (O) *Ise Jingu* is more that one thousand years old; (Y) *Ise Jingu* is no more than twenty years old. Lopes recalls that, as an example, seeing a replica of the Seagram Building is not the same as seeing the Seagram Building, inasmuch as to see a reconstruction of the Parthenon as it was in 300 BCE is not to see the Parthenon.[P81] He then, ingeniously develops a logical play of consistent propositions which seems to solve this oxymoron by analyzing the constitutive properties of *Ise Jingu* and proposing a unified model based on an ontological reconciliation between (O) and (Y).

The ontology of architecture in general and Japan in particular is bound to cross-cultural studies, and for that reason one cannot reflect upon Japanese architecture without first understanding its cultural inheritance. In inscribing the shrine within a larger Japanese architectural practice such as the contemporary architecture of Shigeru Ban and Toyo Ito–the use of recycled materials such as paper and membranes and ephemeral structures accordingly–, it delineates a constitutive feature of buildings in a strand of Japanese architectural practice which embraces change and perishability instead of resistance to the decay in time as understood in the western culture. Therefore, inferring that the constitutive features are temporal ones,[P82] the same way as the *Sengu* system embodies the awareness of the transience in life, nature and artifacts observed by Nitschke.

Furthermore, Lopes borrows David Davies's principle in regards to the ontological category of an artwork, i.e. the nature and value of art is considered as performances by artists, rather than objects made by artists. Thus reflecting upon the properties of an appreciative practice, rather than the preponderance of the actual outcome; in other words, the process, or act, is the reason for the existence of the artwork. In his monist ontology Davies identifies the following:

> The work of art [is] a token event, namely, the artist's act of specifying a focus of appreciation. The focus of appreciation comprises a content, a vehicle for expressing the content, and a set of understandings by means of which the vehicle expresses the content.[P78]



Fig. 9 - *Sengu* Ceremony, the transfer ceremony of the symbol of *Amaterasu Omikami*, Sun Deity.

In this perspective, the *Ise Jingu* mechanism of renewal is manifested by means of its ceremonial system (Figure 9), a ritualistic performance whose outcome is the sacred object in the shape of a building. The whole process is a vehicle to express the contents of Japanese traditional values: imperial sovereignty and ancestor worship. The generalization of this principle regards "all works of art from all times and places belong to the same ontological category: all are token events."[P78] As a result, the ontological reconciliation of (O) and (Y) propositions is that Ise Jingu is a token event with a duration of twenty years in which a structure is built, weathers, decays and perishes.[P82]



Opposite page - Video Still, Mise-en-scène, 2010.

8. (In)conclusions

Facts

Journey of Historical Awakening

Drawing the conclusions of the whole thesis.

Interpretations

Duchamp's Riddle

There is no solution because there is no problem. [1]

At some point in my research i continually stumble across Marcel Duchamp's interventions, may it be in the form of installation (Large Glass), ambiguous writings (Infra-Mince) or imagery (Five-Way Portrait). I believe it is because of the highly ambiguous nature of these interventions, in which his conceptual mechanisms, ranging from modes of intellectual approach to art and generic rehearsals–ready mades–, always superseded the institutionalized convention. In fact, it is this ambiguous conjecture, unbounded by definition, that has given longevity and reason to my impromptu tendency.

The MvdR Pavilion, in detriment of authenticity–let's not forget that it is still a replica!–, can be inserted in this category of duchampesque uncertainty: a chess game of the mind, between the public and the creator, the maker and the interpreter. Yet, in this game, irony has double weight since it is not the result that matters but the way one plays it, bending the rules of the game through a schematic illusion of thought.

Once we understand the slippery ground that pertains to the intertwining complexity of both phenomena, one continues to unravel a way in which the proximity to this "non-problem" becomes possible to interiorize such a vertiginous and tricky leap.

Is it a joke on all of us, or is the subject matter too serious to be addressed, to the point that it is fossilized into a cultural taboo? The question remains airy and unanswered, due probably to two reasons: the first is that no one cares about whether the pavilion is an official fake or unprejudiced reproduction: spectators are conspicuously *distracted* by its presence. The second reason, leans on the fact that this continuity establishes not just a physical but also a conceptual bridge, allowing anew the interpretation of history itself. This feasibility reinvigorates the complex dynamics of historical reenactment by adding a warped layer to its amorphous state of sedimentation.

Mistakes

Fictions

Tempo di Viaggio

I would like to end this dissertation with a small poem by Tonino Guerra. He was the co-writer of Andrei Tarkovsky, the great Russian filmmaker, in the film *Nostalgia*. Guerra wrote this specific poem during their brainstorming on the set for Tarkovsky's Italian film. *Tempo di Viaggio* or, "Voyage in Time", is the footage behind-the-scenes while travelling through different locations looking for places to shoot the main film, and it goes as follows:

I don't know what a house is.
Is it a coat, or an umbrella if it rains?
I have filled it with bottles, rags, wooden ducks, curtains, fans.
It seems I never want to leave it.
Then, it's a cage that imprisons whoever passes by,
Even a bird like you dirty with snow.
But what we told each other
Is so light that it cannot be kept in.

Myths

Token

The artistic project of this thesis is a token of my contribution to the cultural production around the pavilion's mythology by configuring its adaptability to contemporary thought and expanding its meaning through the filmic medium in our time.

Opposite page - Film stills, defrost sequence.

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Chapter 7. (In)conclusions

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2. Anthony Vidler, "Preface", in *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000, p. iv.

3. Op. cit., London: Architecture Association, 2006, p. i.

4. Andrei Tarkovsky, "Imprinted Time", in *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on Cinema*, trans. Kkitty Hunter-Blair, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008, p. 80.

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