

Moments of Spiritual Engagement
in Architecture

A Search for Awareness
of Life and Architecture

by
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AUTHOUR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

IN MY ENCOUNTER of Peter Zumthor's Seniors' Home and Kolumba Museum, I found architecture to affect well-being within the daily course of life. I saw the Seniors' Home contribute to the dwelling of the entire being of the elderly residents within the challenging yet hopeful season of life they face in aging, while at Kolumba Museum I encountered an experience of aesthetic embodying meaningful knowledge that addressed not only my mind but also my heart. Centered on the inherent operative dimensions of aesthetic at these two buildings—as an intervention, as a material reality, as an image, and as something we are positioned in and move in—and deepened by aesthetic philosophy and spiritual readings, I seek for an awareness of the way architectural decisions influence the human journey through space and time, and for principles and considerations that supplied and realized this architecture to be vitally contributive. The thesis is a meditation on the vitality of the medium, searching for a relevance that can justify architecture not as mere shelter that barely satisfies nor as inessential excess, but as an efficacious act that can satisfy the human being who encounters it and truly improve well-being in its existing. The thesis posits that architecture is fundamentally a craft and an act of giving a gift to the other. Its created existence in space and time is capable of producing lasting good in the world, if the design of architecture, through love, is primarily concerned about its affect on the other and the world rather than its object.

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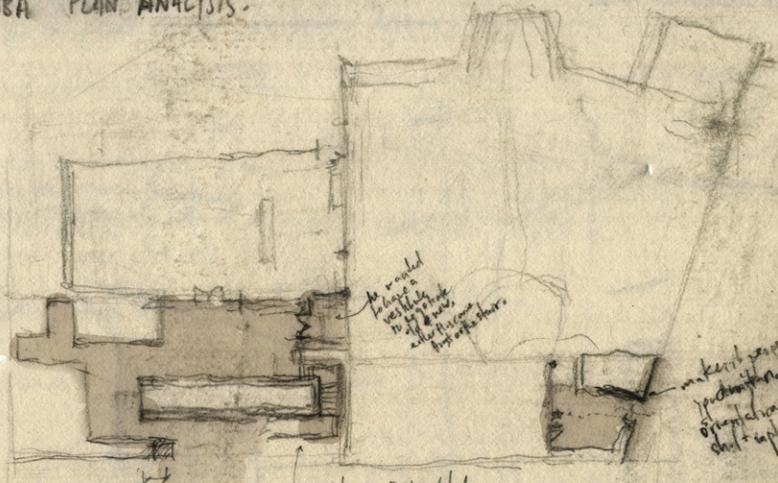
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http://kolumba.de/?language=ger&cat_select=1&category=14&artikle=235&preview=

A F F E C T E D

The images on the following pages of this chapter are produced by the authour: p. 213 (fig. 6.1), p. 214 (fig. 6.2), p. 215 (fig. 6.3), p. 216 (fig. 6.4), p. 217 (fig. 6.5), p. 218 (fig. 6.6), p. 219 (fig. 6.7), p. 220 (fig. 6.8), p. 222 (fig. 6.9), p. 224 (fig. 6.10), p. 232 (fig. 6.12), p. 234 (fig. 6.13, 6.14, and 6.15), and p. 239 (fig. 6.17, 6.18, and 6.19).

- 225 Fig. 6.11 Public Design Festival Installation at Milan Design Week 2011
 Image by Worapong Manupiatpong
 Via Blogspot: <http://wmanupiatpong.blogspot.ca/2010/11/2/i-got-invited-to-participate-public.html>

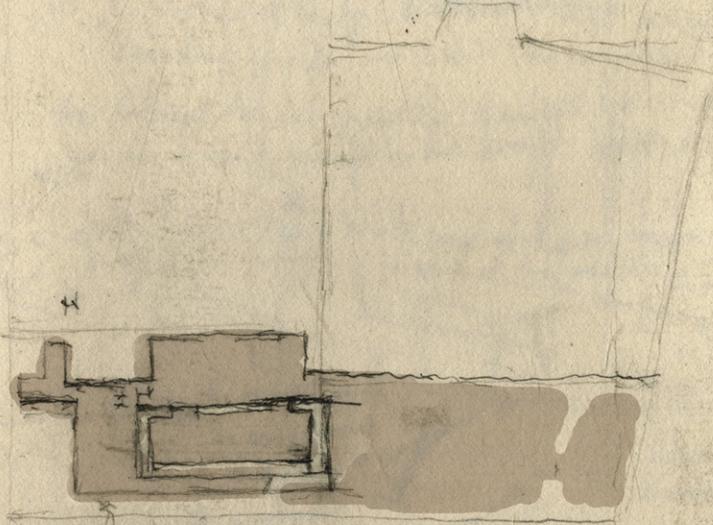
KOLUMBA PLAN ANALYSIS.



to create
a bridge
to the
main
space

modern
reintroducing
imperfect
geometry

might now I would have
missed the opportunity
how did they know to
introduce the turn?
stair leading you
through hidden corner.



he could have expanded the wall but
he chooses not to.

you should start your design
where people begin to
about how the space will
them as they move

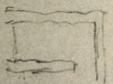


fig. 1.1: May 5, 2012. Notes on the Kolumba Museum plan

BEING IN THE WORLD

MY JOURNEY IN STUDYING architecture has become just as much a journey of self-discovery. I was coming from the suburbs to embark on my architectural education seven years ago when I was seventeen. I arrived with many unspoken but urgent questions and insecurities: who am I, what is my role in the world and what gifts do I have to share, or what can one person do in the world? I then found an element of the question, “who am I?” became wrapped up in finding out why I was studying architecture, and a measure of the question of “what can I do in the world?” became absorbed in the questions of what architecture could do in the world and how it operates, and the question of what is the responsibility I am being entrusted with this knowing inseparably became a question of what the responsibility of architecture is. I set out intentionally to use graduate studies to continue this journey, truthfully which has been a means of resolving issues between practicing architecture and my spiritual practice of following Christianity. Living rightly in the world, and creating aesthetic to be in the world, I discovered to be on the same continuum of doing good and affecting good.

In the first term of pursuing my graduate degree two years ago, I was based in Rome, and I collected a list of buildings that I wanted to visit and simply learn from. Among the buildings I visited, Peter Zumthor’s Seniors’ Home and Kolumba Museum relieved some of my questions. For the purpose of the thesis, I have condensed my questions to focus to inquire: how is the architecture that I make fundamentally tied-up with the way people live, and perhaps even a person’s destiny? I found in the buildings that their aesthetic was not an embellishment or an arbitrary style for a mere shelter, but was directly related to the building’s function and of critical relevance to the inhabitants’ being in the world in the experiential event they effect. This architecture was refined in its beauty and spirituality. It was engaged in people’s lives on a spiritual level by helping them to see, know, understand, experience in a very direct way the vitality of living within their precise activity within the course of their daily living.¹ There was a benediction to the life lived in them: a

1 Spirituality is considered in this thesis from an experiential lens as a person’s way of being. A moment of spirituality is an event where one’s spirit is moved (by a new consciousness) from a state of indifference to hope, to rejoice, to be thankful; causing a visceral change in their inclination and affection toward the divine, towards themselves, or towards others. This characterization of the spiritual pursuit is understood from Henri Nouwen’s book *Spiritual Direction* that defines three journeys that the soul must walk: the inward journey towards knowing themselves, the upward journey towards knowing the divine, and the outward journey towards knowing others (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2006, xvi).

life of music, a life of thoughtful and elegant efficiency, a life of simple pleasures and clarity in vision that invites one to slow down and participate in the moment. They revealed that craft could possibly not be for the purpose of exhibiting mental aptitude or technical prowess, nor primarily for the purpose of self-expression, but be made in the world for the efficacious living and vitality of the *Other*. The moments experienced uplifted my spirit and resonated with what I recognized to be True, Good, and Beautiful dwelling in the world in a tangible way. The two buildings thus became aesthetic phenomena to be experienced and felt, two visible symbols to be recognized and known, gates to be opened and entered to architecture's capacity in the world and how to create such.

The full reality of these two buildings became my book of instruction. The uniquely potent experiences they produced spurred particular moments of wonderment that developed naturally into essays that meditated upon their aesthetic reality. Through a process of looking and writing, I applied a logical imagination that seeks to parse the internal patterns, orders, and principles in the aesthetic to mentally cultivate a fertility for invention that would arrive at a building design with the aesthetic potency and efficacy found in these two buildings.² My aim, my childish zeal, was to grasp, measure, and understand their phenomenon, and not concede to their beauty being unexplainable and without pattern. At a point when the internally driven essays were nearing completion, the subject of each inquiry became clear, and I recognized that each was not describing idiosyncratic capacities specific only to their instance. While the essays were describing my experience of the buildings themselves, the focus of each essay was highlighting and illustrating a particular operation—a particular dimension of aesthetic reality—that was only especially potent in this building, but inherently present in all architecture. In order of appearance in the text, these include an aesthetic reality's operation as an *intervention in experience*, as a *material reality*, as something we *are positioned in*

2 This approach toward aesthetic was pioneered by the philosopher Susanne Langer who is regarded for her clear-headed texts on logic, aesthetics, and their intersection in the epistemological significance of cultural expression of all types. The conceptual framework she developed in her book *Feeling and Form* (1953), which focuses directly on the conceptual problems of aesthetic epistemology, allowed this thesis to see the nuances of the aesthetic surface in dynamic system with its internal dimensions and relationships to make available perception and understandings. Brian Massumi, a contemporary philosopher working on aesthetics, describes the legacy of her work, saying, "Langer has probably gone further than any other aesthetic philosopher toward analyzing art-forms not as 'media' but according to the type of experiential event they effect" (Massumi 2011, 83).

and that we *move in*, and as an *image*. I was surprised that the search led me not to some special aspect of architecture, but the fundamental means of space, matter, light, and time that architects begin to work with the moment they draw a line on the page. Each inherent aspect of aesthetic is unpacked in their individual essay, but can naturally be seen to be present in the other essays and building though they will not be re-addressed. If successful in unraveling the secret of how these operative moments in each building came to be, perhaps their phenomena may even come to be made into the world through my own architectural practice as well.

The following thesis is a the product of my journey to know, but is also indicative of my own lack of knowing. I consciously feel my own lack of knowing in the mysteries of the world and must confess that it is not my intention that you should struggle through the text along with me. Though every attempt will come up short, by an inward longing for Truth, Good, and Beauty; I am compelled to continue searching, which will be a life-long practice. The striving is to know the medium of architecture in greater and greater intimacy: to be more aware of what it can do, to be grasp further the intricacies of its operation, appreciate more its value and where it shines and where it does not, and to understand where and how it can be situationally deployed to affect true change in the world. However short I have come, I can confidently say that architectural practice can be fruitful in the process of becoming and knowing, and confidence can be derived from the struggle to know how to act rightly within the world.

Through the following text, I have come to consider that architecture's fundamental relationship to life and productivity is as something created to exist in the world, that in turn affects certain realities into the lives of people. Aesthetic, in its simply existing in space and in time, exists as a force as it interacts with a person's life. It is forceful to the degree that it affects the awareness, decisions, and choices, and ultimately the well-being of a person that encounters its particular existence. The two buildings suggest that, while all aesthetic affects a person in tangible ways, not all aesthetic is positive in its effect, and not all aesthetic is as fruitful in its reality in terms of how much it can *do*—create, re-frame, transform, etc.—for the life of a person by the mere function of how it composed. To the degree that aesthetic has an effect on reality, objective existence becomes not the most general characteristic of architecture, but the most essential as a medium that requires me to discern wisely as I act, and, apart from myself, by which I can affect the vitality in the world.



fig. II.1: The Seniors' Home is a two-storey bar building that is oriented practically due north. Depicted above is the East Elevation with the two main entrances and the communal hallways, and that receives the morning sun. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)



fig. II.2: The West Elevation has the individual living suites and balconies. It faces the valley as the terrain continues to slope down to the river, and it receives the light of the setting sun recognizing that the view from the site can do much for the person. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

HOMES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

THE SENIORS' HOME by Peter Zumthor is a 22 unit residence for seniors who are able to run their own household. It is located near the town of Chur, which although feels small according to North American standards with a population of 35 000, is considered a large town within the network of small towns that populate the mountainous region of south-eastern Switzerland. Nestled to the east and the west by mountains, the building sits in a small group of houses, known traditionally as the local place of Masans, which aggregate around the road that extends out of Chur. It happens to be about a 10 minute walk away from Peter Zumthor's own studio and home, and its design began in 1989 and was completed in 1993.

I come from a society that has largely forgotten the traditional position of the elderly. In my "multicultural" society, how the young and old relate is largely left to be determined on an individual level and a family to family basis, and it seems much of my society has forgotten how the generations can meaningfully relate to one another, and to a degree, how to meaningfully acknowledge our solidarity in aging, which is one of the most fundamental parts of the human journey. Many of the housing for seniors that are built reflect this confusion, and seem unsure about how to care for the elderly, and how to defend them against from being "ostracized from the community of the living" as they move to a seniors' home (Nouwen 1974, 15). Entire institutions created to care for the elderly seem to be, "primarily concerned with giving old people something to do, offering them entertainment and distractions, [and avoiding] the painful realization that most people do not want to be distracted but heard, not entertained but sustained," which is what psychologist and priest Henri Nouwen diagnoses as a lack of understanding of how to relate and care for our elderly (1974, 97). They aesthetically don't seem to acknowledge the season of life that the elderly are in other than with a framed image of a winding path that has been hung on the wall by a well-intentioned nurse to allay the lack of architectural response. They aesthetically seem characterizable by double loaded corridors, a clinical sanitation (that comes with a smell of rubbing alcohol and disinfectants), and dining halls that are only a semblance of life and dignity. With an un-homely environment embedded into the architecture, it is not surprising that our elderly lack a desire to dwell in such a place. This is especially tragic when the season of life for the elderly deserves to be one of life, hope, humor, and vision to borrow some of the beautiful vision that Nouwen finds in those who grow old carefully (1974, 61-82).

It is with the former characterization imprinted in my psyche that my encounter with Peter Zumthor's Seniors' Home rang with beauty, especially in a moment when I saw an elderly inhabitant smile. The architecture dignified its elderly in their life, in my eyes, and hopefully in the eyes of society. It does this even with such a simple form powerfully illustrating other ways that architecture can use to manifest a depth of spiritual engagement by understanding deeply its inhabitant's well-being. This building demonstrates how architecture can contribute to dwelling, and how beautiful architecture can be in centering itself around its inhabitant's truly living. It does this primarily through the potential of aesthetic as an *intervention* and by making present an experience of a larger reality through its *precise material-spatial reality* that directly negotiates the situation in life the inhabitant faces.

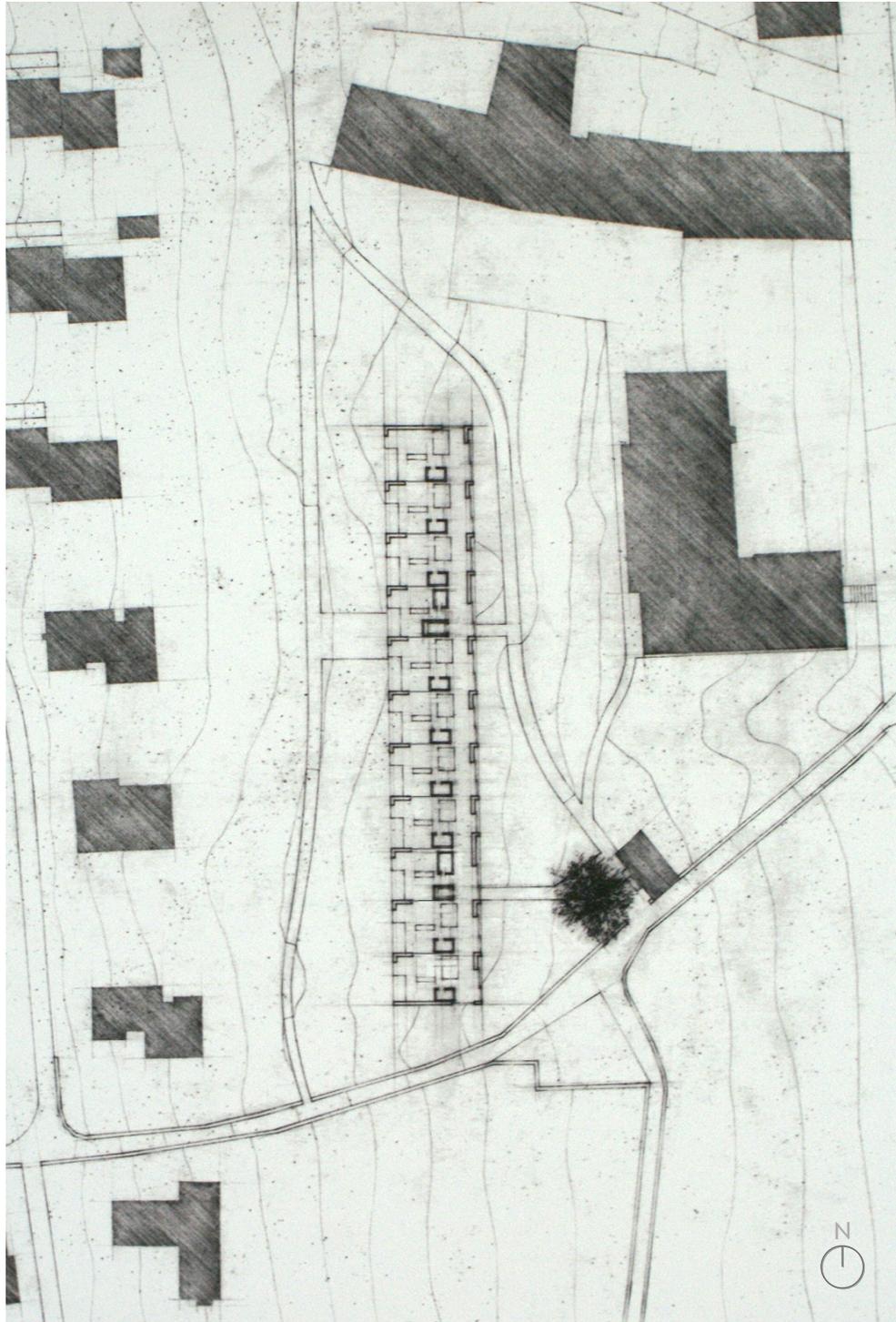


fig. II.3: 1:500 Site Plan by Aetelier Peter Zumthor, (photo credit: pep romero garcés)



fig. 1.1: An exterior view of the last window of the communal corridor. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

RETURNING DIGNITY TO THE ELDERLY THROUGH DETAILING

I SAW AN ELDERLY MAN open a floor to ceiling operable window with ease.

The detailing of the window gave the man precise control over the flow of air through his home. The man adjusted the frame to allow a breeze to enter his living suite via a communal corridor.

I was amazed; never before had I seen so clearly how detailing can directly empower and free a dignity for those who must so consciously feel their weakness. For them, the detailing of the door is a provision, an intervention, that recovers the memory of strength. Their strength is rewarded with the refreshment of a natural breeze on a mid-summer's day. A hot day becomes a comfortable day. The architecture makes possible a lived relation, an event, with that which is not possible otherwise.

It was surprising how such a simple intervention could directly influence a person's state: their comfort, their dexterity, and their dignity. The elderly man was smiling as he opened the door. It almost seemed like he only opened the door to demonstrate to us that he could open it. The smile tipped me off that he had a sense of pride in something so simple as opening a door, a tangible reminder of the very real feelings of what has been termed the "spirituality of aging."

I knew that the design of the window did not come into being accidentally because it was not an isolated moment. The frame was one particularly poignant aspect within a building that continually and quietly revealed an abiding sensitivity to the elderly. I was impressed by this architecture which supported its occupants so deeply and so naturally. As an architecture student, I was baffled by how the architect was able to realize such a provision that is rarely even encountered in the course of life, embedding it in his architecture. It seems that attempts to design deeply personal events often remain invisible, or are complicated and idiosyncratic. If detailing has this potential to be so impactful, what considerations allow a designer to recognize opportunities for such crafted moments capable even of significance as a personal experience? What considerations help a designer define and prioritize these moments while conceiving and developing a project?

A Deep Understanding of the Situation of the Other

The beauty in what I saw was architecture relieving another in a real and deep way: ennobling a man who was frail as it gave him access to the breeze and the mountains; changing his view of himself as it contributed to his enjoyment of the world. The architecture was incisive, penetrating superficial needs to provide for an inner cry. Deep need and transitory need were resolved like that of a thoughtful gift given. This type of provision may be encountered with a caring person, but here architecture was the medium through which this profound care was conveyed, fulfilling another post in caring by providing inner respite directly embedded into reality itself, even, to a person when they are alone in their thoughts.

Because the architecture was involved in addressing a spiritual burden of aging, I turned to texts that help me understand the situation of the elderly in a deeper way. Nouwen's book *Aging*, and Florida Scott-Maxwell's book *The Measure of My Days* were found, which explore the unique experience of one's later years and its challenges. I found that there is a great degree of understanding of someone's situation that can happen by referring to writers who have considered the spiritual needs of people's journey through time. While there is an obvious place for listening to the actual future inhabitant, this is not always an option during design, but also it is not always beneficial because it takes a special self-awareness and effort in reflection to be able to articulate our inner struggles beyond our ephemeral needs to ask for what we truly need.¹ Nouwen and Scott-Maxwell strive to reflect upon and understand the situation of the elderly, and put into words spiritual questions and challenges that not many people are able to express in words that they walk through life with. Their work reveals tensions that the elderly face in their situations, and how to care for the elderly, which not only sheds light on the relevancy of the window to the man, but actually begins to sketch out a home for a senior may be truly freeing in addressing.

1 Writers like Henri Nouwen and Florida Scott-Maxwell reflect on our common overarching journey through life, and our "common powerlessness inherent to the human condition and poverty," as John Green describes of Nouwen's writing. When the time-scale that architecture operates with is taken into consideration, many of their insights were sensed to be incredibly relevant to architecture as they try to characterize common spiritual patterns, barriers, and burdens. For me, Henri Nouwen's *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*, (New York: HarperOne, 2006) and *Spiritual Formation Following the Movements of the Spirit*, (New York: HarperOne, 2010) were very insightful.



fig. 1.2: John Singer Sargent's "Breakfast in the Loggia," (1910) depicts a vision of life-affirming space that helps one see the precious days of old age as a gift. The space allows a slowness of dwelling, that attracts lingering discussion to occur that opens a space of possibility that draws out important unplanned events. The event of the discussion will be far more valuable than the space itself in the end, but the space is the medium for these events to occur.

New limits are encountered in the deteriorating condition of the body: the loss of strength, memory, and appearance. One's spirit has little choice but to transition the way one lives with one's own body, even with their family, and their community. There is a growing dependency on others that can cause a loss of dignity or present a threat of immaturity, growing doubts from a loss of capacity to do even simple things can depreciate one's sense of self-worth, or the inability to do what they could do before may produce a mounting frustration. For the proud, who have lived their lives without learning to ask for help, they may very possibly not ask for help and retire into silence. These new predicaments can reinforce what becomes deeply rooted feelings that ultimately influence one's choices in the day and even the

outcome of their lives as the days accumulate if they are unchallenged. They are real and new challenges that naturally emerge, and they question how a person might emerge out of limitation, loss, and very real suffering that they may not have had to encounter before with a need for new wisdom.

The new struggles also bring up the necessity to renegotiate how to maintain their individuality within mass society as they are not able to contribute in the same way that they did before. With new limits, they must renegotiate their relations and their role in their society, community, and family. The way that people regard them changes, which in turn affects the way they want others to treat them or the way that they perceive themselves. It is their experience and wisdom that they must depend on, which may leave some uncomfortable in relying upon. With this change in role, many seniors face fears of neglect, and struggle to find vital relationships, communication, and meaningful activity.

In the final season of life, one must also come to terms with being mortal, which is overwhelming to consider on its own. They find themselves having to come to terms with unachieved hopes, goals, aspirations they may have once had, and are faced with the question of what they do with their remaining time. It is a time that Florida Scott-Maxwell, writing in her eighties, insightfully notes how all the issues that haunt us throughout our lives become immanent in the present and place an unwanted emphasis on our lifelong struggle to achieve goodness. One's accumulated worldview from a lifetime's experience becomes increasingly decisive in how they see the present, and how they act within the present.

Some of these feelings are unquestionably exasperated by the need to move to a new place to live, one that most consider will likely be the home where they spend the remainder of their life. Consideration of the spiritual condition of aging reveals many complexities of reality that they face and (experiential) tensions that may not even be apparent to them but that have a deep influence on their well-being as they move to their new home. Tragically, many do not overcome these pressures to find vitality and consign themselves to existing rather than to live. In a season of great need and anxiety, it seems wrong that seniors home built would be unresponsive towards these experiential tensions.

While these issues are real and immense, they do not take away from the opportunity of the present, the issues do not mean that one should consign their

fig. 1.3: (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

own lives away. In all of these cases of the challenges the elderly face as they age, they are issues of experience. What is presented is not an issue of whether one experiences these challenges in their being, but an issue of how one come to terms with it in their experience—ultimately, whether they live in a state of hope, malaise, or depression according to each change that arises because of their situation. In order for architecture to provide for the elderly, it must understand how this season of life can be one of life, beauty, and joy, and aesthetically negotiate the complexities of the reality that they face, which is not an issue of sentiment but one of vision of the mysterious gift of the present.

It is on this level that the intervening experience of Peter Zumthor's Homes for Seniors aesthetic is operating by giving dignity, comfort, and beauty through space. Vision, affirming the life of the inhabitant and aesthetically telling the soul that they are where they need to be within the present of reality, is supplied on an experiential level for them to appropriate in their lives. What we realize is that the architecture was firstly intimately understanding the other, then honing on tangible aesthetic, like the sliding window and two other architectural details, to provide for the person—a very targeted specific intervention of experience, that was directly materializing a specific aesthetic.



An Intervening Experience

Why the provision of the sliding window was felt to be an intervening is because the experience it was creating was one that viscerally interrupted the inhabitant's experience of life, with a different way of being. If architecture is to alter the present experience for the inhabitant, it must shift from asking *if* a provision has been provided, to question *how* a provision has been provided, and what this provision does for their person on a whole-level and the way they dwell. The window knowingly provided a moment of release from the deep sense of frustration, helplessness, and self-doubt that accompanies the process of aging, which is powerful because it tangibly relieves some of the tension in a person's experience of it within the present of their experience of reality. The detail was deeper than an initial view composed on a napkin sketch, more relevant than simply a matter of taste of the architect, and more operative as a custom construction than a pre-designed unit. The design evidenced a concentrated investigation that made its aesthetic manifestation self-evident to the person because of what it did for them in its experience. Along the same continuum, it can be seen that it is from understanding the inhabitant on a deep level that the designer was able to sense the opportunity for intervention, and aesthetically transforms itself to provide and engage on deeper and deeper levels.

A structure that offers such care must be authored by an architect who cares for the other, for without carefulness the architect would not have even sensed the opportunity to do something more for the inhabitant. This carefulness is more than an attempt to offer help. The detailing is not an outward motion/gesture of sympathy towards the other, but an inner movement to understand the other, such that the outward form is informed, and the person understood. In reflecting on his experiences caring for the elderly, Henri Nouwen, suggests that "Our first question is not how to go out and help the elderly, but how to allow the elderly into the center of our lives, how to create the space where they can be heard and listened to from within with careful attention" (Nouwen 1974, 95). One who cares needs to be thoughtful in how they care because some "reactions only reinforce prejudices while others are responses that free the other" (Nouwen 1974, 147).¹ True care results in architecture that is free of prejudice, and freeing.

¹ Henri Nouwen's book *Aging*, from which these insights were found, is written partially to bring to attention the need to care for the elderly, and secondly, to consider *how* we care for the other.



fig. 1.4.

Considering the aesthetic transformations of the sliding window, we can see firstly it was understanding the inhabitant that allowed the designer to sense the opportunity of including windows across the hall from the inhabitants rooms, realizing that natural ventilation can make a day special. The window could be large because the degree of comfort they may afford to an inhabitant, by itself can greatly improve one's quality of life, and become a source of great appreciation by the inhabitant. The windows are positioned outside of almost every individual suite, enabling easy control over cross-ventilation and thus comfort in each living suite. The sliding windows provided ventilation not merely as a dull and routine consideration, but demonstrated a concern for the quality of the ventilation and temperature.

Ordinary thoughtfulness towards the other made the experience of opening the window not one that is difficult to open such that the ease of window's ease of movement enabled the senior citizen to reach to the window without hesitation, despite its weight. But it is a deep cognizance of the inhabitant that sensed the opportunity within the normal experience of opening a window to make it an experience of release by intensifying the qualities already inherent in the design. Knowing how special and valuable the experience of moving something abnormally large could be to the elderly—not only within the immediate action of it but in their occupation of the building—intensified the scale of the window in relation to the body, the degree of its weight, and the degree of its ease in movement and thus the acuteness of control. Through the specifications of the window's size, scale, weight, mechanism, and motion, the designer embedded the special relations of moving something impossibly large in the window's aesthetic.

The monumental windows are made into an image of freedom. From its size, transparency, tall proportions, thick wood profiles, apparent material simplicity in construction that hides its construction well, and association as a window make it a potent image of freedom that is operative even when it is not in use but especially is the case when the window is ajar. Without any of these aspects, it could have brought forward a different perception. The tall rectilinear proportions and the thick wood profiles also make the window a pronounced visual frame, framing the landscape from the interior and framing their lives in the eyes of the public.

In each of these aspects of its detailing (function, quality of movement, and image), the sliding window embodies lived experience that is valuable to the inhabitant. Its function makes available more probable an experience of a perfect

day that invites one to live in the present; its quality of movement enables a lived-relation of not only control, but also doing the impossible; and its image of freedom is a “vision” of life and a visual reminder of the possibility of life. As a lived-event, the sliding window is a provision of intervention in the being of the inhabitant’s lives, and it continues to operate in time with repetition and repeated encounter.

We see the sliding window addresses the inner questions of the soul of a person completely through aesthetic means, but we also see that the detailing is not of material but a lived-event, and it is the lived event that is intervening within the course of their life. Also, we see in the process of designing this, the concentration is guided not by a committed to the aesthetic form, but by a commitment to knowing the other on a deep level and seeking for what they need. It is being detailed in its consideration of the person, which were being translated into aesthetic categories in order to provide relevant experience to the person. In other words, what is



fig. 1.5: (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

interesting about the architecture created by understanding the inhabitant is that focus of the design is not the aesthetic but the experience because what the person needs is a difference in experience, not in aesthetic *per se*. What was intervening was the experience and the feeling given, not the aesthetic object; though it was precisely the exact aesthetic that provided the experience to its exact nuance of quality, the aesthetic of the window was only the medium and situation for experience. The window was only the medium and situation for the larger and more vital experience; the aesthetic is only the medium of caring that effectively creates the condition of the space and time of a new quality for the inhabitant.

We see the same design insight in two other details, where the detailing is of an intervening experience in the lives of the elderly that is made more detailed and effective by understanding. One is the provision of a mobile awning in the balconies, and the second is a planter that can be installed to the balcony balustrade. While they may be dismissed by some architects as superfluous and not included in the contract of their design, from the perspective of what they do within the lives of the inhabitant, they are essential to the architecture, aesthetic interventions that produce effective realities.

With the design of the awning, the hinging system is intuitive and inviting in its operation. The most prominent feature of the awning is its designed range of motion, which like the sliding door, also empowers the inhabitant to have an acute control of their environment. Each mobile awning consists of a rotatable steel frame that draws a roll of shading fabric shade to extend and retract, while also changing the angle of its cantilever. Its motion is unusual in comparison to awnings that maintain a fixed angle, or retractable blinds that only move up and down. The double motion allows for greater control over shelter from direct solar gain to the interior from low western sun, and the motion even allows it to become an external blind to completely shelter the space from solar gain if desired. When under direct sunlight, the white fabric modulates the sun, bringing a soft light to the balcony space. The versatile awning effectively extends the outdoor balcony as a comfortable place of dwelling for the inhabitants.

The healing impact of watching things grow in the planters, and caring for them, should not be underestimated. Their mere inclusion in design by the architect makes it very easy for the residents to have them installed to be surrounded with life, while the detachable detail also recognizes that not all inhabitants want to care for

the plants. It also seems like it was a conscious decision that the planters would hang on the exterior of the balconies. By doing this, while the residents still benefit from them primarily, it also acts as a display for the public below because it hangs on the external side of the balcony, which forms a more direct relation to those that might use the walking path below.

The awnings and planters operate together in the individual balconies where there is a clear view of the mountains beyond the valley. By their inclusion and detailing, they effectively make the balcony a more pleasant, and extend the time that the balcony would likely be occupied. They intervene in the experience of the inhabitant by creating a calm place of pause. The encouraged time of stillness can be very significant, which in effect is creating, not only physical space, but a mental space—a quality of being—for the inhabitant to have certain thoughts, make certain realizations, and encounter certain occurrences in time.



fig. 1.6: The West Facade's typical mobile awnings provided in each balcony.



fig. 1.7: The West Elevation with the individual living suites and balconies. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

Because they make the space pleasant and attractive especially in the summer, they can possibly even encourage a ritual in the life of the inhabitant. The spaces themselves tend to be an afternoon and evening space because of the orientation of the building and the path of the sun. The translucent awnings place an emphasis on the invitation to inhabit as the sun moves passes over the line of the roof edge overhead, fills the space and time with the glow of the white awnings. The warmth and colour grow as the sun continues its arches over the building and sets over the mountains in the west. Along with the balcony's relation to the sun, view, and material enclosure, the spatial quality of the balcony prompts some relationship to the residents' schedule. It holds the possibility of becoming a sacred time spent alone or with family and friends, and rewards its appropriation with a stability and structure to the day. Whether it happens regularly or not, the space gives reason to spend time linger and to be present. The events that happen on the balcony will be far more valuable than the space in the end, but again the aesthetic details are the medium for the events to occur.



fig. 1.8: (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

The design of the three details of the monumental sliding window, the mobile awning, and detachable planters, show a deep and intimate consideration and a receptivity to the inhabitant's lives. They are provisions that not only provide shading, cross-ventilation, and natural surroundings, but also provide empowerment, comfort, and dignity to the space and time of the inhabitants. They are not only details in the sense of construction, as something made and precise, but they are more significantly precise in how the aesthetic acts in the inhabitant's life as targeted interventions of embedded relations that experientially interrupt a way of being in the present. The architect recognized the opportunity to do this because they expanded their consideration to understand the inhabitant's situation and desires, and found that tension exists within their life that impact their well-being. And thus with each additional aspect of design, the aesthetic is enabled to establish a deeper personal engagement and greater relevancy in the event of its being.

While I have only begun sketching some of the spiritual difficulties that the elderly face, we can realize a few things. For one, even a preliminary consideration of the spiritual condition of aging reveals many experiential tensions exist that may not even be apparent but have a deep influence on the well-being of the inhabitant. Also, looking further into how to spiritually care for the elderly reveals a fertile territory of action separate from existing forms, images, models of doing things firstly in the way I care for the elderly (apart from architecture), and secondly in the architecture I create, questioning how much architecture can do to improve their lives. Lastly, it reveals the insight that more is necessary to provide for the other than by caring. While caring is the first step, Nouwen gives the insight that one who cares needs to be thoughtful in how they care since some "reactions only reinforce prejudices while others are responses that free the other" (Nouwen 1974, 147). It is the latter that must become self-evident in the experience of the architecture in order to engage the inhabitant positively. Creating space is creating space for the person to rest, which means doing something for them that is specific in their lives and that tangibly improves their lives. Though these actions are not entirely obvious, they can be sought after if our aesthetic manifestation is inspired by a detailed awareness of their situation, and developed by a discerning concentration on what it does for their lived-condition.

What is at stake in aesthetic? Aesthetic intervenes in reality of a person's life whether it chooses or not. What might help us to define and prioritize these

moments accordingly while conceiving and detailing a project is by asking what the experience does for the other person's life. Does it make them some room to rest? Does it free a dignity for their life? Does it make them more secure in themselves? Does it affirm that their lives are where they need to be? Does it help them see the beauty of the present moment and invite them to live in the present?

What can one person do? What can single practice do to affect the society at large? The same questions pressed Walter Benjamin when he wrote his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* as he fled and wrote against his Nazi pursuers. Benjamin's historical materialist, the protagonist of the text very much like himself, is a lone agent operating within and against a system of oppression. The agent realizes firstly that the "material" of history is not something that is innocent or inert in our living and secondly that the material of history can be used—hence the title of the historical materialist. The historical materialist hones their craft and operates in the face of oppression by caring, thinking, and creating to potentialize change in society. To this lone agent he advises:

Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where



fig. 1.9.

thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives the configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad. A historical materialist [is one who]... recognizes the sign of messianic cessation of happening, or put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the era, or a specific work out of a lifework (Benjamin 1969, 262-263).

Aesthetic, once it exists within the world, operates within people's lives as an intervention apart from the architect's intentions, and it does so in the present of their lives as an experience. Like the historical materialist, Peter Zumthor's agency here arrested matter, configured its fluid substance into something concrete within the world. His manipulation was not accidental nor experimental, but rather his search was characterized by sensitivity, investigation, and recognition. From this careful search, he found the "revolutionary chance" where nothing was being done in the face of oppression, and he caused a situation to free the inhabitant from the oppression of aging—making possible that which is not otherwise possible. He positioned what he created within the world to make the most of the opportunity to rupture and establish a new space and new time.



fig. 1.10: "Spring Trees on Hedgerow." (photo credit: Colin Varndell)

“THINKING INVOLVES NOT ONLY THE FLOW OF
THOUGHTS, BUT THEIR ARREST AS WELL.

WHERE THINKING SUDDENLY STOPS IN A
CONFIGURATION PREGNANT WITH TENSIONS, IT
GIVES THE CONFIGURATION A SHOCK, BY WHICH IT
CRYSTALLIZES INTO A MONAD.

A HISTORICAL MATERIALIST [IS ONE WHO]...
RECOGNIZES THE SIGN OF A MESSIANIC CESSATION
OF HAPPENING, OR PUT DIFFERENTLY, A
REVOLUTIONARY CHANCE IN THE FIGHT FOR THE
OPPRESSED PAST.

HE TAKES COGNIZANCE OF IT IN ORDER TO BLAST
A SPECIFIC ERA OUT OF THE HOMOGENOUS COURSE
OF HISTORY—BLASTING A SPECIFIC LIFE OUT OF THE
ERA OR A SPECIFIC WORK OUT OF THE LIFEWORK.”

WALTER BENJAMIN (1968, 262-263)



fig. 1.11: An interior view of the last window of the communal corridor. (photo credit: Helene Binet)

REINTERPRETING THE PROCESS OF AGING THROUGH THE MATERIAL PALETTE "SIMPLY BEING"

SPATIALIZED MATERIALS WITH A SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

WALKING THROUGH Chur to the Seniors' Home, I could not help but notice the attentiveness to how materials are used and applied is quickly apparent, revealing a care and skill even at a cultural level. Simply walking in the town, one finds application of materials that are simultaneously functional and poetic with some of even the most common materials having a surprising expressiveness. For example, I was caught by the curiously alluring presence of a subtle paint that visually terminated the asphalt and is akin to a glaze that one might find on pottery. Thus, it was no surprise that the Seniors' Home is in keeping with this tradition, but what I found was that Peter Zumthor was able to control his material expression to an even greater level of sophistication.



fig. 2.1.

Rusting Steel

Having observed the local attention to detail and knowledge of craft, I was surprised when I arrived at the main entrance of the house for the elderly to find a large plate of rusting steel used for the door sill. The locals who stem from a seemingly craft-minded culture and Peter Zumthor who is especially exacting in his tectonics, would have foreseen that steel—in this location that is subject to continual abrasion and water—would eventually rust and require replacement. Was the presence of this rust, therefore, intentional? The rusting steel was hard to ignore and had a visceral affect. In addition to our human sensitivity to rust, the wood paneling of the threshold also



fig. 2.2.

shows visual cues of the location's exposure to water, and the eroded steel would be felt by anyone walking over the sill. Along with the elongated but weathered wooden door pull, the stainless steel door hinges and signage, the material setup naturally foregrounds the issue of aging in both feel and concept. The thought of making the entrance of a retirement home a relation of aging was a potent concept, but confused me in its execution because its emphasis on aging did not create the most welcoming of feelings for me. Furthering my wonderment was the large projecting larch overhang and built-in seat because the setup also clearly was not inattentive to my presence. Later, as I experienced more of the building, I considered that this somewhat frank and "unbeautiful" material reality at the threshold, could be in fact be intentional and be positive in its affect. When experienced in relation to the entire building, and from the perspective of the progression of encounters that the elderly residents' would have in the building, the unbeautiful relation felt at the threshold gained an appropriateness. The surprising presence of the rust at the threshold acts to confront our concept of aging in a time in society where the process of aging is something that is resisted rather than accepted simply in its being. As we enter, it directly asks our sentiment if we see the natural process as something to be rejected or as something to be welcomed on its own terms. By raising this issue at the threshold of the Seniors' Home, the presence of the rust even has a spiritual affect. Regardless of whether this effect was anticipated by the designer to this degree, the rust at the threshold brings the reality of aging to the fore. I would find later, that the tension raised here would become spiritually productive in how the material-spaces throughout the home resolve the tension.

fig. 2.3: (photo credit: Lairr Keiows)

Thereafter, I began to notice how all the materials, both in the way they are used and in the way they are applied spatially in the building, are contributing to a deep discussion of the aging process, even suggesting its experience as something beautiful. Far beyond a novel arrangement of materials, I found within my relation to the materials, a profound spiritual significance that I imagine would be truly spiritually beneficial and liberating for the elderly residents as they engaged with the building in their daily lives. As I considered the material palette in space, I noticed that the spiritual affect is derived from the material-spaces simply being as they truly are in time. This essay follows the general pervasiveness of the materials within the building, but the emphasis of the examination is on how Zumthor applied each individual material in response to the specific space and situation in which it is found. The structure of the essay aims to aggregate an overall impression of the material palette that is true to its experience over time, and explain its experiential relation to aging.



“HE DID NOT NEED TO SAY OR DO ANYTHING;
HIS SIMPLY BEING THERE AS HE TRULY WAS
ACHIEVED THE SPIRITUAL END.”

DONALD SHEEHAN (1996, 17)



fig. 2.4: View at the end of the communal corridor. (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

In the context of the quoted passage Donald Sheehan, who translated and writes the brilliant introduction to Pavel Florensky's essay on medieval icons "Iconostasis" (1922), was observing how Friar Pavel Florensky's own image was like that of an icon; giving relation onto a larger reality (Sheehan 1996, 17). Sheehan describes how Florensky gave lectures, as he always had, in full priestly garb to crowded lecture halls at the volatile time of a burgeoning Communist Russia. The powerful atheistic authorities could not, on the one hand, ignore the scientific vigor of Friar Pavel's lectures, but also could not "eradicate the image [intrinsic to who he was] they saw before them for even the most rigid of atheists could not gainsay the iconic reality of his priesthood" (Sheehan 1996, 17). His external image: his appearance, his choices and actions, his deportment were simply the genuine expression of who he was; the aesthetic face of his being,

Larch (Wood)

Employed both on the interior and exterior, larch is the most prevalent material in the building and is most responsible for the relation of aging.

The wood's weakness, rather than the durability that allows it to appear on the exterior as well as the interior, is the most apparent feature one is likely to perceive. The exterior facade made apparent to me that Zumthor's design intended to consciously acknowledge aging using the wood, and that the wood's prominence in the exterior is meant to welcome aging as something positive. Larch makes the issue of aging almost unavoidable, though in a gentler way than the rusting threshold. The material vividly and unsubtly reveals the weathering it has undergone, as larch changes from its natural amber colour to a cool grey, and sometimes black colour in harsher conditions. The properties of larch which cause it to vividly register exposure to water, and which bring about a significant change in colour, make larch uniquely and naturally have the trait of genuine honesty in comparison to other woods. Applied to the building on all elevations and in various conditions of exposure, larch appears in varying degrees of weathering, and at each stage and each change in colour, it speaks differently about aging. Without the "self-conscious" need to appear a certain way confined to a certain aesthetic preconception of beauty, the facade is relaxed, and relaxing in its encounter: some parts are beautiful, some parts are not as beautiful; some parts are celebratory of its own colour change, other parts are less celebratory. The various parts of the building aggregate to convey an entire spectrum of these different narratives by its variation in the gradation of colour in larch due to various rates of change from various rates of exposure.

The wood's lightness in weight is also apparent on the exterior. The building's facade is set in a continual pattern of wood and a tufa (stone) cladding: it alternates between a wooden balcony and a vertical strip of tufa on the private suites, and between a wooden window and a tufa pillar in the communal corridor. This juxtaposition foregrounds the differences between the stone and wood: the muted marbled tones of the stone against the bold amber colour of the wood; the weight of the stone cladding compared to the wood's relative lightness; the geological time-scale of the tufa versus the living time-scale of the larch. The larch's own durability becomes more muted in perception, and rather its temporality foregrounds as ephemerality rather than durability. The material setup does not foreground the

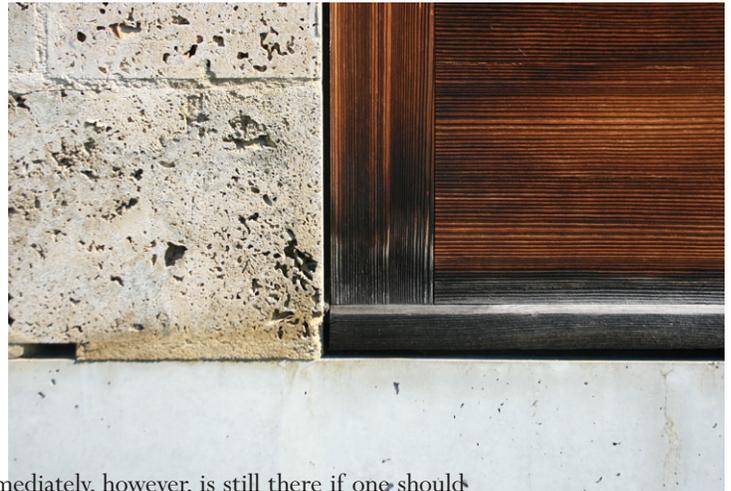


fig. 2.5: Weathering on east facade.

fig. 2.7: A quick transition in weathering due to water collecting on concrete base on west facade. (photo credit: Taehyung Richard Kim)



fig. 2.6: Weathering on sliding window from normal rain exposure on the east facade.



quality of durability in perception immediately, however, is still there if one should contemplate that aspect of its reality.

Taking into consideration its application, the wood's presence is a vivid manifestation of an *attitude* that welcomes the process of aging while also revealing its weakness. Its acknowledgement of the reality of aging shows a wide spectrum of realities from the happy to the sad, simply in the way that the building was, and is going to be in time. But beyond the aesthetic, the wood shows how beauty can happen in its own terms, not because of the aesthetic appearance only but because of its response it demonstrates to the inevitable and what its *response* can do for others. The felt beauty of the wood is consoling and humbling. It somehow manifests Nouwen's advice to those who care for the elderly, "...care for the elderly means, first of all, to make ourselves available to the experience of becoming old.... In that sense, caring is first a way to our own aging self, where we can find the healing powers for all those who share in the human condition (Nouwen 1974, 96).

Past the larch main doors with the worn handle, the material of the interior of the building stops foregrounding the presence of aging. Protected from water exposure, the rich amber wood is used for the hardwood flooring which gives a steady visual warmth throughout the building. Finished with oil, its natural colour is intensified while the surface of the wood boards is left exposed to be soft under the skin.

The building demonstrates in its aesthetic that the institution gives priority to the individual throughout the building, but the material takes on another presence entirely in the dwelling of the individual suites where its application is spatialized to surround the body as it clads and wraps the walls and ceiling. What comes across in this particular application is being surrounded by the affective warmth of the material sheltering the body. Visually the larch provides an atmosphere of bold warmth as the material consistency and visual careful uniformity in pattern also operates to backgrounds itself as something soothing. Simultaneously, the waxed finish of the walls and ceiling give a smooth sheen and more reflectivity that provides a more refined and less rustic quality to the space—a thoughtful difference that the inhabitant has likely not encountered and that welcomes them into this final season of life with something fresh. Haptically, the floor, while the uniformity in colour is maintained atmospherically, is differentiated in its finishes to affect its warmth directly through the natural wood floors. Though hypothetically larch could operate in each mentioned way if it were applied to only one surface (wall, floor, or ceiling), the design of the material as a space must be noted separately because it takes the effect of the material to another order, that of creating a relation to the body as a surrounding relation in reality. Finally, the material operates in a special way at sunset as the direct sunlight makes the rich amber wood resonate. In this surreal moment of warmth, the space feels almost like an embrace and that contributes greatly to manifesting a remarkable space of reflection at sunset. Somehow, the affective warmth of the space paired with this space of reflection is especially potent.

A certain reality of warmth is created and recognized: one that is soothing, friendly, and generous. And while being present and enlivening, it does not call for attention. It creates a suitable and appropriate backdrop that tones, affects, and fruitfully contributes to the reality they live in.



fig. 2.8: A view of the bedroom in the late afternoon. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

The *placement* of warmth in the individual suites of the building is also potently operative, and which further demonstrates Zumthor's application of material is sensitive not only toward the body, but more importantly, toward the individual. It is in the individual suites that the presence of warmth is not only most powerfully found in reality, but also most appropriately found "compositionally". Because of its depth and fullness of appearance here, ultimately the individual suite become a lived-relation of the innermost place of dwelling and intimacy. The aesthetic reinforces the fact that the suite is the elderly resident's own special place—an especially necessary, appropriate, and powerful reality. Additionally, it is the presence of warmth here that is operates towards "resolving" (reframing) the confrontational reality of the rusting steel at the threshold as something positive.¹ The two presences pair to establish a harmony, that is, they cohere in a way to offer a larger capacity that they both individually would not be produce. Through both presences, the building demonstrates tangibly to the inhabitant that their situation is intimately understood.

1 If the inhabitant is left unaffected by the presence of warmth in this space, or to this degree somewhere in the building, the confrontation of the reality of aging at the threshold that is contingent on some resolution would frame a negative lived-reality.

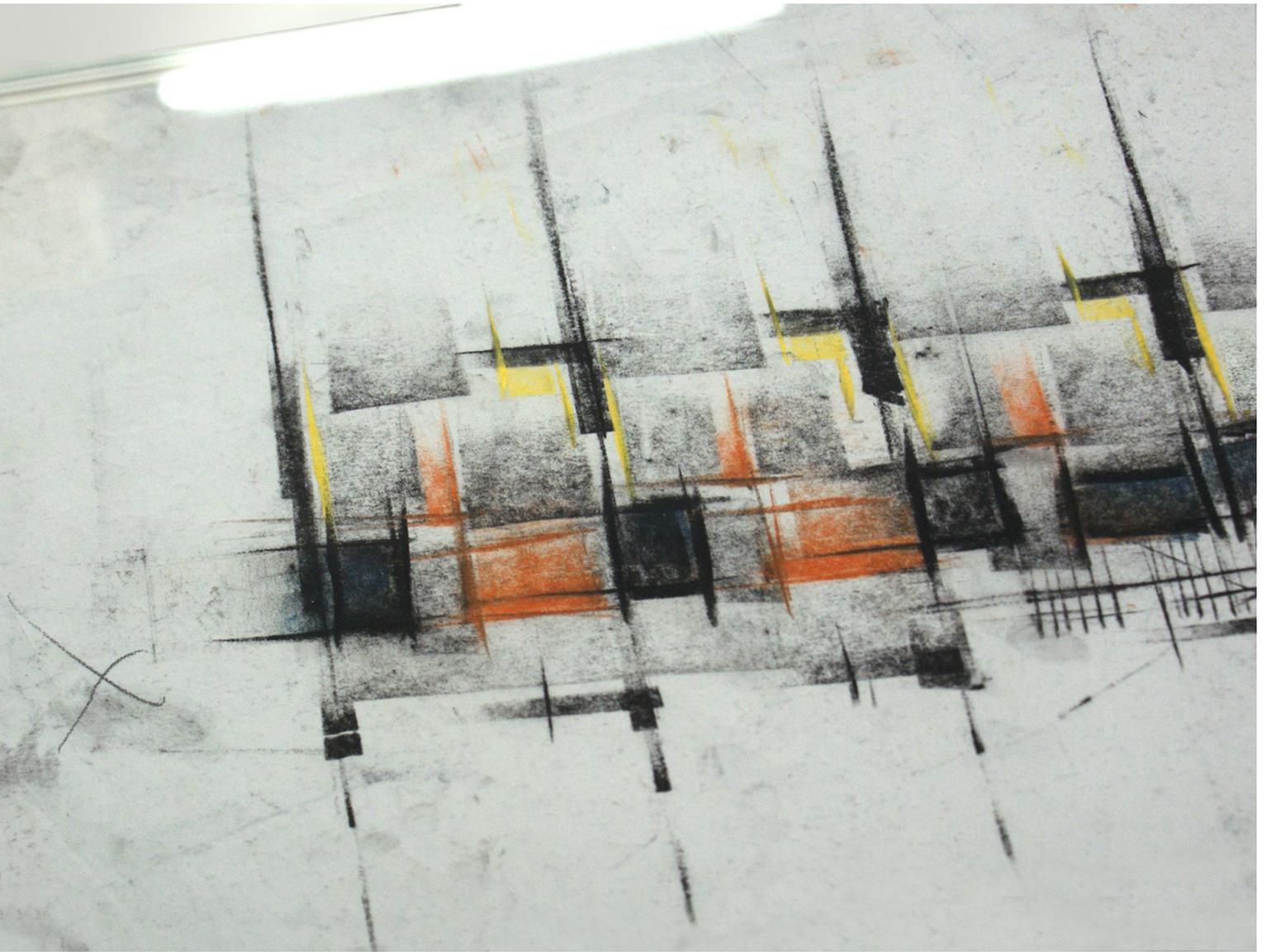
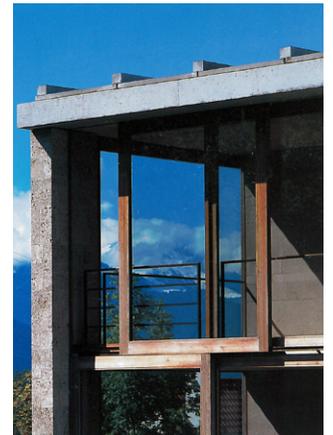


fig. 2.9: A conceptual image of the Seniors Home by Peter Zumthor. It is connotative of a spatialized being of rhythmic heavy masses and encompassing warmth. (photo credit: Pep Romero Garcés)

By shape, proportion, and rhythm, we see materials also gain qualities that they otherwise would not naturally bring forward in one's perception. The elongated balcony proportion and the robust larch balustrade gain a monumentality and dignity by their shape and proportion. The shape and proportion of the fixed glazing units and sliding windows invoke a monumentality out of the wood that allows the window to tailor the expression of its qualities to have more or less relation to the qualities of the Tufa columns (Fig. 2.13). The proportions of the sliding window's thick profile also give a more dignified look and a more powerful relation when seen ajar. The thin proportions of the larch mullions at the stairwell further emphasize the tall slender proportion, and when spatialized into a rhythm, it forms a relation of temporality at the stairwell by its cadence and by its emphatic play of light and shadows on its surfaces and that it draws in the space.



fig. 2.10, 2.11, 2.12: (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)



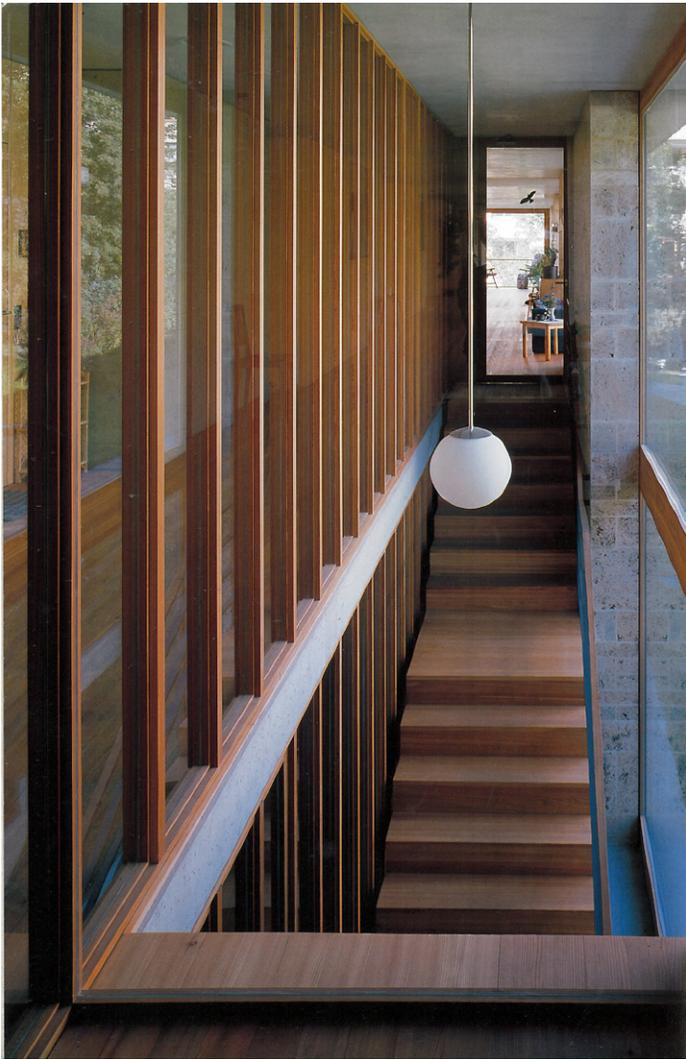
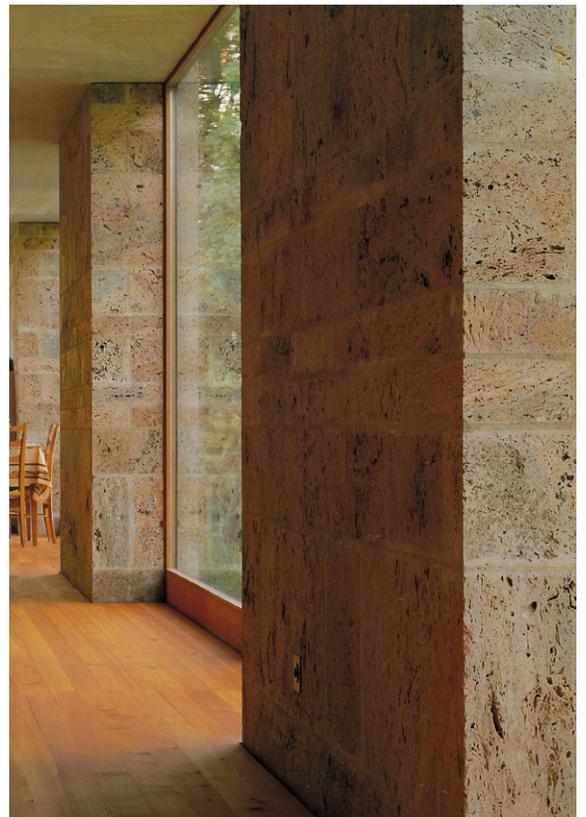


Fig. 2.13: The thickening of the proportions of the larch frame at its base allows the larch to appear with a relation of heaviness, which allows it to appear more appropriate next to the Tufa. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)





Tufa

The tufa cladding is the other material most prevalent in the Seniors Home. It is also employed on both the exterior and interior but the majority of it is found on the facade. Together with the larch, the presence of the tufa cladding cements the building's material relation to aging, which firstly is seen to generally "evoke an awareness of temporal depth and a continuum of time," by their materiality and hapticity to borrow some words from Juhani Pallasmaa (2005, 229).

Tufa operates more subtly than larch, but is nevertheless felt. What struck me first when I was on site, was that it was curious that tufa would be used in a region that is clearly made up of a different rock. The curiosity led me to see that the tufa had the same type of "honesty in weakness" as the larch, which only became more appreciated as I came to know the building more intimately. The honesty in weakness, again is inherent to the material properties, which is made especially apparent when seen with its

distant dialectical relationship with the dense material structure of the nearby mountains. The deeper embedded relation of the material is its felt presence of frailty, which is immediately apparent in the subtleties of its aesthetic surface. The deeply infused black pores that are characteristic to tufa make apparent its weathered look; and this quality is surprisingly contributive even from a distance. The volcanic rock that is famous for its use in Ancient Roman construction, though it is stone and evokes weight, volume, and density, does not seem to readily evoke the perception of eternal presence that other stone generally makes more readily apparent. While being solid, it is porous. Uniquely, its hard texture finds a simultaneous marriage with lightness. It is this simultaneity of the

fig. 2.14: Eastern Facade with Communal Corridor (photo credit: Dorothee Dubois)

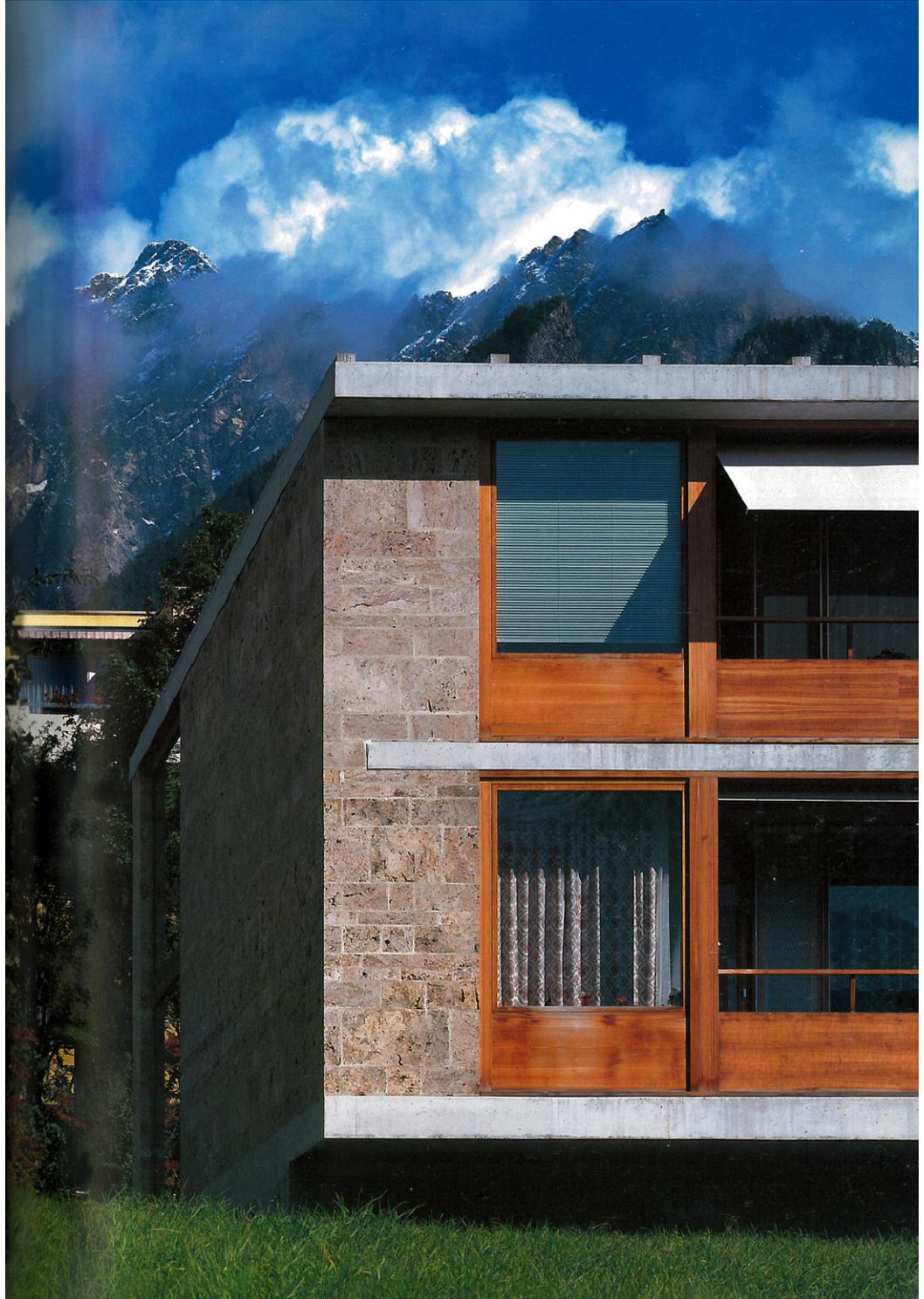


fig. 2.15: Tufa seen in context with the surrounding mountains. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

material that uniquely embodies a frailty and stability at the same time.

Adding to the complexity of the material, the way that the material is treated and applied in the building heightens its natural qualities of heaviness and strength. The mortar joints between the stone are the same colour as the stone, which makes the stone appear to be a monumental mass. On closer inspection, the stone cladding is an ashlar construction made up of various sizes of stone, some of which are very large and felt virtually to have some weight. The walls of tufa are also turned outwards, which makes them strike a rhythm with the shadows they produce in the morning and early afternoon, and emphasizes a depth and weightiness as well.

Perhaps it is our lack of categories for it that makes this relation difficult to articulate. The nature of the material can be known when one compares tufa with other stone, where its softness to the eyes is immediately apparent. When exposed to weathering, rather than the surface becoming more smooth with age, tufa would reveal its age while its general core would remain intact. While afflicted, it is not crushed easily. Its body endures with some hope at its core, while acknowledging the weakness of the mortal flesh on the outside. Although complex, the surface quality of its grain structure gives this away in an effective way, and all of these complexities can be felt embodied in the materials aesthetic surface simply being. Its coherence with the project is one that is felt, and it can be felt whether one can put their finger on the appropriateness and describe it with words or not.



fig. 2.16: Marble Sample, Cream
(photo credit: hhh316)



fig. 2.17: Marble Sample, Medium White
(photo credit: Pattersons Hospitality)



fig. 2.18: Tufa Detail
(photo credit: Dorothee Dubois)



fig. 2.19: Surface quality of tufa as seen from afar. (photo credit: R. N. Latvian)

The use of tufa on the interior brings the unique qualities of the material into the lives of the elderly residents. The material is encountered on a more intimate scale, and its monumentality is felt in a more direct way. The stone's qualities of time, weight, and durability are felt through thickened column-like walls, and what appears on the exterior as a visual rhythm visually is experienced by the body as mass and light. The edge of the material-columns hold a clean line, which reinforced a quality of sharpness to its weighty and dignified rhythm. From morning to afternoon, they give the space a softened shadow, and at sunset, an intense shadow with the various faces diversifying into heavy planes of light and darkness.

The tufa gives a soothing affect to the interior as well but in contrast to the all-wood cladding of the individual suites, the volcanic rock introduces a quality of time, and stability, and its porous aesthetic also affirms the dignity of age in the space of the corridor. A close interaction with the stone intensifies the experience of its wrinkled appearance and its variation and diversity in porosity that makes it so special. The colour of the stone is warmer on the interior of the building due to its protection from weathering, and the colours vary from a palette of pewter to a mute orange and radiate a soft tonality of warmth complementary to the warmth of larch. Together, their extensive application melds into a monochrome palette that surrounds you with warmth and wraps you in its life, and the The space of the communal corridor is especially soothing in combination with the soft shadows and warm green light reflected from the trees in the late morning and early afternoon.¹ With the addition of these spatial qualities, the two materials recasts the vision of aging positively with softness, gentleness, and warmth as they stand in the lives of the inhabitants.

1 The simultaneity of the tufa and larch on the interior appear more unified in comparison to the exterior, where they appear juxtaposed. This unity is perhaps due to the reflection of the light on the interior lending this appearance. The thickened proportions of the larch mullions also increase the coherence of the quality of weight, which may also factor in the merging of the two materials.



fig. 2.20: A view of the communal corridor. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)



fig. 2.21: South West Corner (photo credit: Dorothee Dubois)



fig. 2.23: West Elevation (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)



fig. 2.22: East Elevation (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

Concrete

The larch and the tufa are balanced by materials that are resilient to weathering; while these include concrete, the most resilient of all materials in the project is corten steel, whose rusted finish is paradoxically, its beauty, and stainless steel with its venerable persistence in shine.

Concrete is not normally perceived to have a relationship to temporality but in this case it seemed to. This may be due to its intelligible consistency with the rest of the materials, but it seems that the material itself also affords this perception by a combination of its smooth finish, its expression in what it does structurally in the building, and by its proportions in long lines on the front and back of the building. In regard to its material finish, the evocation of concrete in the building is as a white and ultra smooth concrete, which appears resistant to weathering with the exception of staining by water. Its surface quality is reminiscent of Tadao Ando's concrete of a smooth eternity, however its poetic eternity will become somewhat self-contradictory in appearance with prolonged weathering. In regard to its use, concrete embodies a relation to strength by its use as the base upon which the building sits, which is further revealed and articulated on the west elevation where its shape cantilevers to support the building. From there on the east and west elevation, its shape is drawn out in long bands that stretch across the entire length of the building. These lines, in a quiet way, the concrete and its form, introduces a "white" horizontality that simultaneously cut through and underlie the aesthetic of the more pronounced rhythm of the balconies and tufa bands.

The presence of concrete with the quality of temporality also acts in bridging a concept between aging and temporality. In this case, it foregrounds time more so than aging. Other materials that are temporal that hold a felt-relation to time are the fabric of the balcony awnings that register the wind and the sun, and a translucent exterior door on the back of the building. But temporality also finds a sense of evocation in formal proportions, rhythms, and shaping that cause shadows to be cast though they are not explicitly material.

fig. 2.24: Concrete Texture of the cantilevering base (photo credit: Emad Ghattas)

Stainless Steel

The most fascinating of all the material applications in this project were the small amounts of stainless steel used in the Seniors' Home. The material, that has come to be perceived as a "common" material, regained its value and became prized and beautiful to me.

Firstly, the material gained an affective capacity by the entire project framing it as the material that is most able to stand the test of time. However, beyond its being framed as such, it was incredibly beautiful and potent on its own, which in turn contributed back into the overall framing. This was stemming from its material properties, however it is by how it is *treated* with great dignity that makes it potent. Zumthor's design applied the stainless steel sparingly and with discernment to specific uses. The building lets the material shine for what it is, only letting the inhabitant see it for what it does beautifully and what it actually is, which in the case of stainless steel was to always return to the poetic potential of the quality of its actual lustre and enduring nature. There is an insight here that the way a material is treated can change the way people perceive it. This is not an inflation of value but a revelation of the material's inherent beauty and uniqueness.

Inhabitants find three moments of its use that each add value and dimensionality to its poetic expression. Firstly, in the building's signage that fronts the entrance; secondly for door handles and window latches, that which you engage directly with by action and touch; and thirdly for hardware such as hinges or the joints of operation. The three specific moments, frame the material conceptually within a virtual dimension of utility, by their application and with an endurance in use, that is local to the building.

Zumthor's decision to reserve the use of stainless steel for the building signage indicates the material's value and imparts it with a high position. Its moment of use in this significant location gives it a value, specific to the project, that in turn permeates to other instances of its use throughout the building where its treatment in each instance furthers reinforces its value. In a very direct way, the material's use here associates the material with a concept of aging. The material's inherent shine, persistence, and weight fuse with the thick bold lettering and do not frame aging from a neutral viewpoint. Together, the particular qualities of the sign cease to be stainless steel or a font-face but an emblem of the spirit of the place and the spirit



fig. 2.25: Stainless steel signage and hardware at the front doors.

of aging. In a singular occurrence the material-sign simultaneously affects a positive concept of aging that directly influences the way the resident's see themselves, the way people see the residents inside, and reminds the institution of its purpose. All this happens because it is carefully positioned here as an idea and because of the poetic direction of the concept. This is a vivid example of a materialization of a concept (of aging in this case) with a particular department manifested in the world in a particular situation.¹ Its physicality *in situ*, has the ability to stand on its own as a sensation that resists other concepts of aging simply by its occurrence in time and space and the way that it occurs. The sensation aims to produce a concept of aging

1 The significance of the design here suggests a larger implication on the possible role of aesthetics in influencing the concepts that we live with. Philosopher's Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari are famous for developing the philosophical relationship between the concepts that we live with and the way we act, insisting that our concepts are not innocent and are "inextricably... tied up with how we act and what we desire" (Colebrook 2002, xiii).

as a person experiences the sign, and *feels* the concept with a particular attitude and value *through* the qualities of the material lustre, resilience, and boldness.

The material is allowed to “be itself more” the smaller it is because of its ability to be brilliant and catch the eye despite its size. For example, the stainless steel window latches especially are quite small in comparison to the hand, yet while being small they are glimmer as something small but hopeful.

The idea of using stainless steel for hinges and hardware—that which turns—gives the poetic impetus of the material qualities of shine and persistence direction by its *usefulness*. Its moment of use here adds an association with it that is special, in that it is that which allows access to the balcony or to fresh air. Individually, here its poetry is in how smoothly it operates and the resilience of the operation because of the enduring material. The stainless steel hinges are the didactic felt-relation and reminder of the possible existence of the everlasting every time they are encountered. The eternal is experienced in the metal’s quality of “never-wearing out” and resilient operation, reinforced by its persistent shine.

Lastly, Zumthor’s decision to apply stainless steel for that which the elderly resident touches gives the material an additional moment of expression. This moment becomes special only because of the already perceived value of the material such that it is both something treasured and something that the person engages with directly. The perceived value translates into personal significance as it is shared with the resident. In a real way, the material is giving permission to engage with it, by nature of it being shaped into a door handle, and the resident is put in a position where they have to accept it. The brushed finish, that is softer to touch than a polished finish, reinforces the specialness of the interaction with its shine and by its soft finish.

The stainless steel in the project suggests that a specific material can add a potent layer of meaning in a building, regardless of its quantity, if it lends its qualities fittingly to a situation. Meaning can be further developed from its appearance and operation in a variety of settings that cohere with one another in certain way—signage, hardware, that which people touch in this case—that establishes a unique meaning to the material local to the project. By this framed meaning, the material can inspire every time it is encountered, or used by the inhabitant.



fig. 2.26: (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

Materials Aimed to Heal

There are few other materials as well: the glazing, the translucent door, the pine wood panels used to face the walls of living units and parts of the interior of the unit, and the white fabric awnings covered in the previous essay. They contribute less explicitly to the subtext of aging, but in a similar way they are equally expressive and do find a tangential cohesion in expressing a temporality and freedom.

The materials chosen were shaped to carry an affective message in their simply being. They expressed this message without degenerating into theatrics, which is a common problem when a designer focuses on communicating with their architecture. The architecture, in its being as it truly is, is unself-conscious in that it does not hide its flaws. It is not uptight about its own appearance, recognizing that its inner being and the countenance of that being, is of great value. Instead of hiding its flaws, it receives weathering so that its inhabitants can be comfortable with themselves. The materials in their simple being, culminate in being welcoming, consoling, soothing, comfortable, beautiful, and even confronting. They are powerful in aesthetically communicating to the residents that they are right where they need to be in this season, in this beautiful time.

I was surprised by their expressiveness and also the degree of control the designer had in manifesting it. Never had I seen architecture's concept so directly aimed to heal. I found that each element had a conscious reason for being there, and the reason was self-evident in its affect towards being there for elderly residents. The architecture is like a prescription medicine for an illness that targets the inner questions of the soul such as, "Who will care for me? What reason is there to live? What is the purpose of aging?" The designer's control finds some resolution in the being of the architecture itself.



fig. 2.27: Communal Corridor with Panels of Pine facing the individual living units. The detail of the large shadow gap between the wood paneled component and the ceiling foregrounds the notion of individuality within the communal space, and makes it seem almost as if the walls of their units were the extension of their individuality. (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)



fig. 2.29: Exterior door for the walk-out basement that leads to the walking path.



fig. 2.30.



fig. 2.28: Pine Paneling in individual living suites (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

ANALYSIS OF MATERIALS

THERE IS A PROFOUND WISDOM in this building in terms of the selection of its materials and the way they were applied that is worth analyzing and learning from. The architect manifested a controlled emergent coherency that allowed the materials to gain an affective capacity far greater in their simply being, than any of the materials naturally produce on their own. The depth and efficacious affect of the materials gained stem from these emergences from the substance of the materials, but in each case, the affect can be traced to three layers that build upon one another. Firstly, it comes from the reality of the materials themselves (i.e. which materials were used in the building; how they were treated; and thus how the materials' finished qualities interacted with my perception, which include such things as colour, porosity, how well it carries a precise edge, how it reacts to light, reflectivity, how it feels under the feet, etc.), in relation to how they were applied spatially (i.e. the scale of their application and their relationship to the body, their use, at what parts of the day they are engaged, how light will interact with it throughout the day, etc.). Secondly, the coherence that supersedes homogenous reality and that emerges because of the precise reality of the spatialized materiality, and that comes from a person's engagement with the material-space in time and situation. Thirdly, the manifest being of a wisdom that supersedes mere coherence that in-forms a "fruitful" way of living, and that shelters not only the inhabitant's body, but their being (Harries 2010, 59). It is this wisdom, which in itself is a way of living, and not some form of intellectual knowledge, but the embodied practice of what is positive and necessary on a whole level, that disciplines and guides the material manifestation inherent in the previous two phenomena so as to produce a controlled and positive affect. Each of these phenomena will be examined in order according to the following three questions: where did the expressive aspect of the materials come from; how did the designer evoke their expression in the controlled manner necessary to direct their expression towards a profound knowledge-vision of aging; and how did he make it positively affective instead of destructive? In regards to the last question, the concept of using materials that foreground the issue of aging in a Seniors' Home can become destructive, even disastrous, if manifested without discernment.

The three phenomena of reality, coherence, and wisdom, which summarize the aesthetic considerations in the previous paragraph, have been conceptualized as three layers of being that are superimposed within the building's materials.

fig. 2.31: The following diagram aims to reveal the degree to which the materials are curated. It is not meant to be a holistic representation of the building.

	Material Qualities Material Processes	Material Application	Coherence of combined Application. (Personal)	Potency in Being (Inner Feeling)
Steel	Smooth (Originally) Rust	Threshold (thick sheet)	<i>Prominent Placement of Issue at Threshold Natural Process</i>	<i>Acknowledging</i>
Larch	Warm Orange to Silver Soft to touch Durable	Exterior Balcony Window Frame Floor (unvarnished) Wall (waxed) Ceiling (waxed)	<i>Weighty frame Elongated Horizontality Aging Warmth</i>	<i>Beautiful Companion. Wrapping Warmth Relaxing Honesty</i>
Tufa	Weight Durable Warm colour Porous Product of Volcanic Activity	Column-Walls Blank Walls	<i>Geological Time-Scale Clean weighty verticals Durable yet Fragile Warmth Relation to Mountains</i>	<i>A dignified sense of time and rhythm Understanding</i>
Concrete	White, Smooth, Thick,	Roof Floor Slab Base and Foundation	<i>A Durable Long Through-Line</i>	<i>Monumentality</i>
Stainless Steel	Brilliant Shine Slightly Brushed Finish Durable Smooth	Signage Door Handles Window Latches (small size) Hinges	<i>Joints. Utility. Ease of use. Enduring use.</i>	<i>Inspiring spirit of resilience Venerability "Stainless"</i>
Corten Steel	Permanent Rusted Finish	Garden Landscape Trim	<i>Ground and Life</i>	<i>An association between rust and life</i>
Glazing	Transparent	Massive Windows Kitchen window to corridor	<i>Scale-Freedom</i>	<i>Dignity Minute control of massive cross-ventilation</i>
Translucent Glazing	Opaque Radiant in sun	Door	<i>Temporality</i>	<i>A materialization of time</i>
Fabric	Translucent in sun	Awning-Shading	<i>Thoughtful Temporal Carefree</i>	<i>Personal Control</i>
Wood Panel	Smooth in texture and colour	Giving face to individual units Large reveal between units	<i>Distinct Individuality yet Common Unity in Community</i>	<i>Community</i>



fig. 2.32: A communal room on the first floor.

The presence of reality does not necessarily mean that coherence is present, and the presence of coherence does not necessarily mean that wisdom guiding the coherence is present. Each layer depends on the previous layer to allow its self-evident emergence, and the presence of each layer sequentially allows the material-space to be more specific and become what it is intended to be. In the end, whether they are immediately observable or not, they are all condensed into the actual being of the building and it is all simply felt through self-evidence of reality (i.e. wisdom is dependent on specific coherences within the reality of the materials). The main source of the argument, which is about shaping aesthetic, is deduced from my analysis of the building itself. However these principles, especially the layers of reality and coherence, are applications from Zumthor's own writing about his methodology and terminology.

LAYER 1: REALITY - THE GROUNDS OF AFFECT

From my encounter with the building, I found the material's existence in time and space to be the grounds of the building's life-affirming message. The reality of materials is a force that shapes the aesthetic of the Seniors' Home, and corroborates the general progression of stages that Zumthor uses to give shape to his buildings:

Form is not something we work on—we apply ourselves to all other things. To sound, noises, materials, construction, anatomy, etc. The body of architecture, in the primary stages, is construction, anatomy: putting things together in a logical fashion.... We generally create a large model, or a drawing. Usually it's a model. And sometimes you can see at that stage that it feels right—things cohering. And then I might look at it and say: sure, it coheres, only it isn't beautiful. So at the end of the day I actually do look at things. What I find is that when things have come out well they tend to assume a form which surprises me. (Zumthor 2006a, 69-71)

Furthermore, it can be deduced that the depth of the materials' affect from their reality stems from Zumthor's deep consideration of their "full reality" resulting in the way he spatializes them to give them affective expression. From the Seniors' Home we can trace certain considerations that lead to this fullness. They fall under certain categories which will be described as the consideration of: material properties,

the spatialization of the material qualities, the relation between materials in space, the situational placement of materials, the materials in time, and the intrinsic individuality of material. Zumthor works with material reality with the purpose of ultimately forming coherent presences in reality, hence coherence is the next layer of material being.

Material Properties in Space and Time

The spatialization, place, and situation that a material is given completely alters a material's expression through its properties; however, at the surface of aesthetic being, I always found in the Seniors' Home that material properties had been considered. I saw that the materials were chosen, not as abstract names and theoretical ideas, but according to the fullness of their specific properties in reality. One senses the closeness of consideration of a material's individual *properties* when we consider, for example, that the architect's choice was not of wood and stone—which are generic categories of properties. Rather, it was larch's simultaneous durability and honesty reflected in its colour that was being chosen in relation to the building being a Seniors' Home. Tufa is so unique as a stone that foregrounds both a frailty and stability. It is the materials' specificity that strengthens the expression of honesty as the larch and tufa pair in appearance. This level of consideration defies habitual readings of materials and instead highlights their individuality as phenomena that we engage with.

Material is also not taken as is, as if a material always appears in the same generic way in its different *finishes*. The material's properties are considered in relation to how it reacts as an assembled material with a specifically constructed finish. The stainless steel was brushed and not polished to inspire its particular poetic expression of the resilient and welcoming spirit, and the floor was sanded and oiled instead of varnished in order to address the feet and give depth to the reality of warmth. It can also be seen this consideration also in the detailed nuance of how well the tufa in the communal hallway can hold a defined edge at its corner, and how much this finish quality contributes to qualifying the space. The material's exact finish is specified, tuned to deliver a specific quality and affect. In the case of tufa's edge, it is the cleanliness of the edge that contributes to a greater sense of dignity to the overall experience of the space.

Zumthor has also considered materials and finishes in their vulnerability, instead of assuming an unchanging stability. Their lack of artificiality comes from the architect's recognition that they are subject to processes such as time, use and chemical reactions. He considered how their properties would *change over time* and react to their specific environment. The entire narrative that the aging materials articulate was made possible naturally by this dimension of consideration. It is what allowed for the expression of the rusting steel threshold and the larch that constitute the project on the exterior, and it likely wasn't until after this consideration of larch that the tufa was employed as the other primary material to bring another aspect to the project. The depth of the narrative however comes from the attention to detail given to each instance of the material's application. For instance, the architect likely considered how the expression of the larch changes over time and whether this would be ok. For example, the larch of the east elevation that doesn't have much protection would likely all change in colour eventually, while the larch sheltered within the balconies would retain much more of its original colour. The larch door pull on the main doors, which influences the whole experience of the project, also contributes to this consideration.

Spatialization of Material Qualities

It is in this level of detailed consideration that is able to sense the situational opportunities of a material in reality that we find its particular affect on the inhabitant, and it is the fuller consideration of material properties that lend Zumthor's projects a greater sense of connection to reality. At this point, architects that are out of touch with the reality of their projects often apply a material across an entire project by an abstract system or they select a material for one particular aspect of a material's reality and so miss out on more affective opportunities. The insight that the Seniors' Home demonstrates is that, because affect stems from the experience of a material's full reality, Zumthor works with a material's full range of properties and finishes not from the abstract realm but from his inhabitation of the precise reality of the space of the site. From here, thinking in full-scale, a material's properties are only the beginning of the considerations, and their specific expressions are furthered, and are actually contingent on how they were being spatialized in relation to the inhabitants' bodies and situations. Their placement in space and time with shape, proportion,

scale and extent, placement and other relations to the body, tempers or reframes the material qualities by bringing forward qualities in the materials that otherwise are not found in a particular material naturally. In other words, the inhabitant can sense, as I did, that Peter Zumthor does not think of materials only as a surfaces; rather, he thinks about them spatially and situationally, inflecting and toning their expression according to their placement in space and time to form various affective presences in the nature of the space.

The spatialized consideration of a material's properties is what allows the larch on the exterior to operate completely distinctly from the larch on the interior, both to great affect. Zumthor must have realized that the varying conditions would allow the materials to contribute to experience in different ways. The same spatial sensitivity to a material's properties is what develops the idea of larch surrounding the body. Its affective potential is maximized so that it is not only a conceptual idea of being surrounded by the bold colour of the larch. The designer considered how smoothly the wood grain could visually transition from board to board to produce a visual uniformity to be soothing and not call too much attention to itself allowing the person to have their thoughts. They also tailored the larch to be oiled on the floor and waxed on the walls and ceiling, which is indicative of the consideration of how material is relating to the body in space. In the individual suite larch is seen, it is touched by the feet, it is smelled, it has a warm resonance of sound. It is the architect's understanding of the material that adjusts each surface and finish in relation to the body spatially to make a certain coherence even more so a felt reality. While this happens through material simply being in time, they also transcend what the material would naturally do.

At times material is simply being *shaped* in space to bring a presence forward to be lived in relation to. In the Seniors' Home, the surface quality of rusting steel, larch, and tufa naturally foregrounds a strong presence almost immediately by their aesthetic, concrete is an example of a material that gains its expression primarily by its shape in the building. Its shaping only further qualifies the material-space. The smooth, white surface is evocative but it is by union with the long monumental lines that tie together the building that gives the material its reading of more significant application. Together the factors create the precise reality of what is there. Each individual attenuation is important to the overall affect, and provides a depth of

significance in its engagement with the resident, altering the degree of encounter.

Concrete's material qualities also gain an expressiveness in the concrete base cantilevering (See fig. 2.21 on p. 47). The expressiveness is found in what the material's *shape is doing* in its particular form. The precise aesthetic setup determines the exact relation felt. It can be imagined, that the relation can easily be altered into a diverse spectrum of perceptions: stability, instability, courage, vigor, confidence, over-confidence. Each results in a different response from the percipient, depending on the situation and how poignantly it is felt in perception. In this case it brought forward a distant notion of strength supporting the building, which was not particularly affecting in my encounter but the technique remains interesting.

Another interesting illustration of material expression gained is where the material is shaped to bring out a relation by its shadow. I observed this in the cadence of tufa being turned outwards on the east facade in the communal corridor (See fig. 2.14 on p. 41). The shaping of the material may play a small structural role, but it mainly serves to bring forward a depth of reality in the blackness of shadow created. Zumthor has revealed that this is something he thinks about, saying, "I love placing materials, surfaces, and edges, shiny and matte, in the light of the sun, and generating deep solids and gradations of shading and darkness for the magic of light falling on things. Until everything is right" (2006b, 87). Because of the outward turn, the qualitative heaviness of tufa is not only found in its weight as a material, but also in the weight of its shadows, which are equally responsible for giving a sense of reality. More broadly, it is interesting to consider that a material can be paired qualitatively by its shape and what is brought out by its interaction with its environment.

The *size* and *scale* of the material's application also changes its affect. We can think of the small size of the stainless steel window latches that allow the materials to gain some poetic direction, and the size of the tufa blocks which make felt its material weight. And we can think of the scale of the panes of glass in relation to the body of both the sliding windows and the fixed window frames, giving the windows their relation of monumentality and dignified look. Not all large panes of glass that we encounter, for example in our common encounter of curtain wall, offer this relation. Along with the size of the window panes, the proportions of the larch profiles of the frames also intensifies the relation of monumentality by its thickness (See fig. 2.13 on p. 39). By not becoming too thick or too thin, the proportion of the

larch seems to be a delicate balancing between bringing forward both a feeling of monumentality and freedom.

I have also mentioned how *proportion* and *rhythm* bring forward qualities that are otherwise not found in a particular material. I found another poignant illustration of proportion in the way that a sense of dignity in the balcony is intensified by the strength of the horizontal line formed by the thickening of the larch balustrade (See fig. 2.10 on p. 39). The most poignant example of rhythm is in the quality of dignity and temporality that arises in the space of the communal hallway from the monumental cadence of equally spaced tufa columns. The space is especially poignant with these qualities at sunrise when the rhythm of shadows is more intense.

The Relation between Spatialized Materials

Suggested earlier was that the real work of choosing a material palette happens in the work of spatializing them. The consideration of how the materials relate to one another spatially is the next logical step. In the building, we find affect arising not only from the individual materials themselves in space, but also from the relation between materials, which can be an affect that does not necessarily belong to any of the individual materials alone. An example of a potent relationship between materials is the relationship between the small moments of stainless steel hardware and the wrapping of larch within the individual suites. The addition of the singular moment becomes special within the material consistency of the entire space. While one is an overall effect and the other a singular momentary engagement, they both make the overall affect more special. This does not discount the fact that both individual materials are significant relations in themselves when someone focuses on each part, but they elevate the space to be something greater in how they come together.

Peter Zumthor's writing offers great insight into working on the relation between materials, giving further understanding as to how he manifests the rich reality in space. The relation of materials is central to understanding what Zumthor is trying to do spatially. He is not only speaking about the relation of materials in terms of an overall conceptual palette of materials but about how these materials are encountered spatially. Firstly, in the relation of materials, he observes that materials "react" with one another when placed together in reality. He writes, "Materials react

with one another and have their radiance, so that the material composition gives rise to something unique. Material is endless” (2006a, 25). Secondly, he asserts that this reaction is based on how they are spatialized, making their relation something that is tuned, or in other words, a composition of material reactions. Zumthor explains, “There is a critical proximity between materials, depending on the type of material and its weight. You can combine different materials in a building, and there’s a certain point where you’ll find they’re too far away from each other to react, and there’s a point too where they’re too close together, and that kills them” (2006a, 27). These insights give further specificity to the work of choosing a material palette and spatializing it by carefully observing what happens when the materials are placed in relation to one another spatially with one another in their specific amounts, proximities, and locations (along with how it is treated, finished, shaped, what the shape was doing; its size, scale, proportion, rhythm; and other spatial relations to the body).¹ Zumthor speaks about this in the section of his book *Atmospheres* entitled *Material Compatibility*, where he speaks passionately about the exercise of combining materials and its mystery as “a grand secret, a great passion, a joy forever,” which he holds to be a rich ground for inventing affect in reality (2006a, 22).

Part of his point is that the way materials react with one another is unexpected. The full reality of materials as they come together or are placed in a certain proximity to one another, with their simultaneous complexities, cannot be fully abstractly planned or theoretically estimated. Following the previous passage, he explains how he can start with many reasons for selecting a certain finish material, but when he brings a sample to the construction site to see how it responds, he realizes the combination doesn’t do what he wants. His method of working on material relations allows for the depth and specificity of his project’s expressiveness because he is directly working on the experienced quality with all of its unexpected multiplicities in how they come together in the space that a person eventually engages directly with in reality.

A space that benefitted from being designed through studying material reactions is the communal hallway where four different materials are brought together. It can be seen in this space, that the larch hardwood floor gives the warm

1 An illustration he gives: “I take a certain amount of oak and different amount of tufa, and then add something else: three grams of silver, a key—anything else you’d like?” (2006a, 23)

base, the tufa is spatialized into the rhythm of columns, the cream coloured pine wood panels make up the exterior face of the individual suites, and the warm grey of the exposed concrete makes up the ceiling (See fig. 2.27 on p. 54). Their differences are clear, but they pair together to form a cohesive atmosphere, most apparent in their colouring and their properties as natural materials, that present a frail, yet soothing, yet dignified space in its inhabitation as a hallway where the residents encounter one another. This space would lack its cohesion and atmospheric clarity if the architect had not examined how the materials react with one another in the space and in their proportions.

Another illustration of a more detailed relation we can see is in fig. 2.33, which is one moment in the larger project. In the shadow, the addition of a strip of cedar sings boldly, appended to the colourful but muted expanse of Tufa, while the stainless steel spacer in the glazing unit catches the light in the midst of darkness. A seemingly meaningless window section detail and plan detail elicits the feeling of comfort because of fullness of each nuance in reality. It is unexpectedly pronounced because of how directly it engages the complexity of the relations as the quietness of each member. Contrasts in durability and proximity of densities react with one another in a precise moment of experience in the particularity of reality.

The Temporal Situation of Materials

The architect also considered materials in relation to the spatial situation in which they would be encountered by the inhabitant. He gave heed to the situations that unfold around the materials programmatically throughout the day that they inform. For example, in the full visceral presence of rust placed at the main thresholds to the building we see the placement of particular affect in a situation. This is projective of an architecture where material construction is not inert in informing the situation in which it is placed. The affect of rust on a person is different depending on whether it is only seen or whether it is something walked over. Its placement is clearly not meant to be inert within the situation of entering—nor something to only be processed intellectually—but something that is meant to affectively change the person as they enter or exit the building. We sense the same consideration at work in the awareness of situation in the individual suites where the application of larch is applied in a warm and embracing way. We also gain an understanding of materiality



fig. 2.33: (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

informing situation, in the use of stainless steel as the building's signage. In each case, there is a fusion of material, space, and the situation of a person using a given area, such that space is diversified into place: so that space is not generically the same and is not leaving the person the same.² It is in these circumstances that encounter of space becomes of greater relevance to their lives.

The Individuality of Materials

Expressive depth also comes from how Zumthor treats the materials, such that their inherent properties shine in a way that shows the materials' poeticism. This is exemplified in all the materials of the Seniors' Home, but perhaps especially in the stainless steel since it is used carefully in small amounts. I saw that this lends the material an incredible value in perception. The material is shown in a way so that its inherent properties become

appreciated. Peter Zumthor gives insight into how he understands this powerful dynamic writing, "I talked to a friend about Aki Kaurismäki's latest film. I admire the director's empathy and respect for his characters. He does not keep his actors on a leash; he does not exploit them to express a concept, but rather shows them in a light that lets us sense their dignity, and their secrets," (Zumthor 1998, 53). Zumthor is able to bring out the individuality of each material because he himself has become cognizant of their deeper realities, which is a consistent thread throughout all these

² It should be noted that this fusion of material, space, and situation in perception already happens naturally to some degree in the experience of space, but it needs to be intensified. In the cases where material is able to inform the situation, it also seems that the situation is mutually informing the perception of material as well. The deep consideration of situation in these instances uses the expression of materiality to bring relevant qualities into the life of each space.

considerations, and the grounds for their expressiveness in perception. He is aware of the materials qualities in space and how people encounter them. Zumthor admits that his understanding begins with recognizing his lack of knowing materials, saying, “We know them all. And yet we do not know them. In order to design, to invent architecture, we must learn to handle them with awareness. This is research; this is the work of remembering,” (1998, 66). In this way, Zumthor listens to the materials, allowing them to speak in the spaces in which they are used.

Zumthor has considered the reality of a material’s qualities, the reality of a material in space, the relation of materials to one another spatially, the reality of a material in time, and in a person’s life. The materials were selected and applied in the building in consideration of their full reality. There are various vantage points by which the architect can consider the fullness of reality, to which all material qualities contribute to simultaneously in each moment. What can be realized from these various categories is firstly how the specificity of what is there can change the affect of something entirely. For example a larch door pull or a generic door pull, or the material’s finish quality in response to the feet, to the hand, in smell, in sound; how it responds to the morning sun or the afternoon sun; whether it surrounds you, or how it pairs with the other materials to surround you with a particular atmosphere—all of these contribute to the experience of affect. Any affect, a thought inspired, vision understood, or response potentialized in the percipient, is achieved by how the materials are there exactly the way they are in space and time down to their properties. Once assembled as a building, the materials become part of the world and are simultaneously affective on all the dimensions of their reality, and people encounter them as they naturally go about their activities. Here, Zumthor employs the materials to create their own significations and to cause certain feelings by the way they are shaped, and by being sensitive to how they present themselves in different situations, environments and inhabitants’ lives. It can be said that what Peter Zumthor is shaping in the Seniors’ Home is a reality of directly linked affect so that materials cease to continue as formal elements. They instead have an ever-present association to time, space, situation and reality within people’s lives.



fig. 2.35: A view looking down the communal corridor showing the effect of the articulated gaps (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

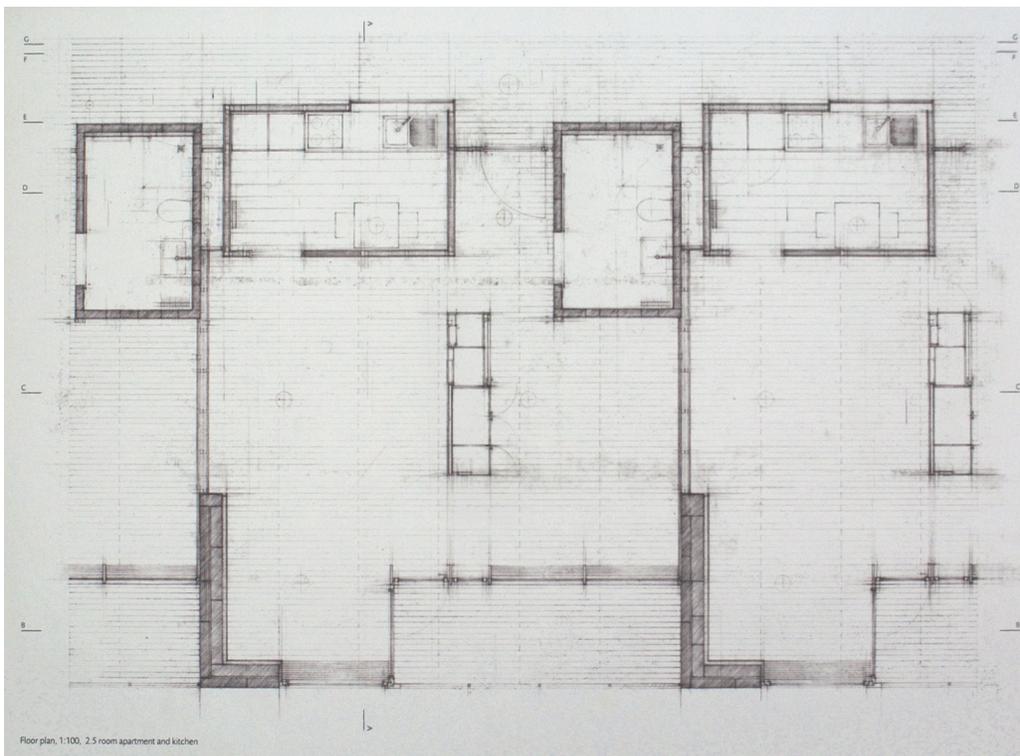


fig. 2.34: 1:100 Individual Suite Floor Plan by Aetelier Peter Zumthor (photo credit: pep romero garc  s)



fig. 2.36: A view of the living room of the individual living suite. Though it is typologically a "living room", its aesthetic reality in the lives of the elderly residents is more significant than the common usage of the descriptor implies because of what it is and does in their life. (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

“I BELIEVE THE REAL CORE OF ALL ARCHITECTURE WORK LIES IN THE ACT OF CONSTRUCTION. AT A POINT IN TIME WHEN CONCRETE MATERIALS ARE ASSEMBLED AND ERECTED, THE ARCHITECTURE WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR BECOMES PART OF THE REAL WORLD.”

PETER ZUMTHOR (1998, 11-12)

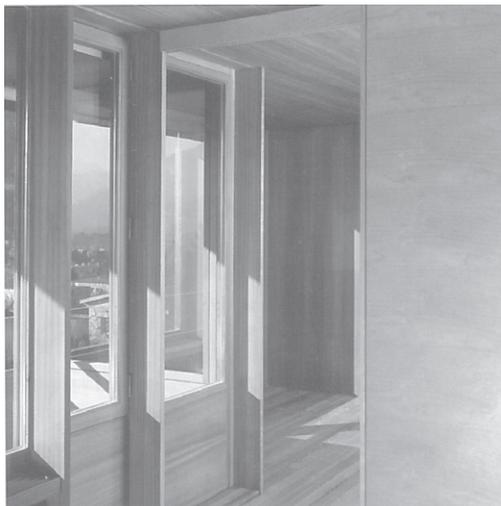


fig. 2.37: View looking from the bedroom into the corner nook (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

LAYER 2: COHERENCY WITHIN REALITY

While the entire affect can be explained from the specificity of what is there in reality, the way Peter Zumthor works with materials allows them to transcend their normal relation of their individual material qualities, to be perceived with larger and more significant relation in reality. We see in his building that the materials, while remaining completely natural, gain an otherness: an emotional quality of feeling, purposefulness, and receptivity towards a larger relation. These qualities do not naturally belong to material reality, and is the reason why people often remain indifferent towards them. Coherence is the word he uses to describe this phenomenon. Coherence is essential to Zumthor's process, and the understanding of this coherence is necessary to understand the affect of the building. He watches as he positions, spatializes, shapes, proportions and treats materials in order to transform the "arbitrary" natural properties that exist in raw material, into qualitative presences and *felt relations*. He watches his material transformations as they "cohere" with one another experientially to form a larger relation such that what exists in reality, and is responded to by the inhabitant, becomes a self-evident relation that influences the way the inhabitants live. He describes his search for this category of material existence as "the magic of the real":

The magic of the real: that to me is the 'alchemy' of transforming real substances into human sensations, of creating that special moment when matter, the substance and form of architectural space, can truly be emotionally appropriated or assimilated... I try to make sure that the materials are attuned to each other, that they radiate; I take a certain amount of oak and a different amount of *pietra serena* and add something to them: three grams of silver or a handle that turns or maybe surfaces of gleaming glass, so that every combination of materials yields a unique composition, becomes an original. (1998, 85-86)

While this happens in reality, this is also beyond material reality. From the grounds of shaped material reality, coherence emerges as a *force* when material-space not only comes together materially as an assembly, but also perceptually and ontologically as a presence that is experienced by the inhabitant. When material self-evidently achieves coherence, it exists in a distinct layer because its function as something emotional transcends the general category of the physicality of material things. This larger reality arises directly from what happens between the individual materials



fig. 2.38: A view into the communal corridor.

as they are placed in relation to one another. The role of coherence is: to make individual parts into something different and larger. Coherence is described in the Oxford English Dictionary as the occurrence of a reactive force in reality that brings separate individual entities together, by some inherent nature or relation, to begin to *act* as one substance and *remain firmly* as one new substance.¹ In this coming together, coherence also describes their new *intelligibility* as a new substance in perception.² This dynamic happens from the agreement of individual parts where “one part does not destroy or contradict the rest,” but parts work in harmony to form an entire system. (OED: Coherence, *n.*)

What coherence creates in reality, in Zumthor’s terminology, is “presence”. This term describes instances of emotional connection and meaningful living caused by being experientially related to something larger through aesthetic that he creates.³ Although the term “presence” carries a mystical air, Peter Zumthor considers the experience a real phenomenon that people experience in their day to day life without thinking, an understanding that becomes important while designing. “Presence” stems directly from the experience of what is there, and arises from the interaction between a person and an architectural object. In essence, Zumthor uses “presence” to describe the instances where architecture has an effect on a person’s life. It is presence that he wants; not only create coherence for the sake of coherence, nor emotion for the sake of emotion. Zumthor outlines his pursuit this way, asking himself, “Can I create that unique feeling of intensity and mood, of presence, well-being, rightness and beauty? Is it possible to give concrete shape to that which defines the magic of the real at a specific moment?” (Zumthor 1998, 85). It is by coherence in reality that Zumthor goes beyond simply providing space for people to live to create presence that defines relation, place, and significance; changing the way the inhabitant lives.

1 cohere: “co- together + haerere to stick, cleave” (OED: cohere, *v.*)

2 coherent: “Of thought, speech, reasoning, etc.: Of which all the parts are consistent, and hang well together.” (OED: coherent, *adj.* and *n.*)

3 In a lecture entitled *Presence in Architecture: Seven Personal Observations* he offers a phrasing of what he means by presence: “You’re in the world, and you’re part of the world in the moment, and there is something bigger in the world than you.” (Zumthor 2013b, YouTube video posted by 4757755, 55:00-57:00)

In the Seniors' Home, all the materials seem to cohere towards two main presences: the materials on the exterior manifest a presence of honesty towards aging and the materials on the interior manifest the presence of warmth.

The Coherent Presence of an Honest Attitude towards Aging

On the exterior, coherence creates the presence of an honest attitude towards aging, stemming primarily from Zumthor's selection of the two predominant cladding materials of larch and tufa. The two materials both seem to bring forward this relation naturally and almost immediately but they each do so in slightly different manners. Larch's striking change in colour due to water exposure brings forward the honest relation while tufa's unique combination of weight, solidity, and porosity brings forward a simultaneous quality of frailty and stability. These two materials would draw forward this presence of honesty even if the other materials in the project didn't cohere towards the same idea because of the degree of their receptivity to a larger relation and their ubiquitous use in the facade. The two materials' own ability to meld into the larger relation does not mean that Zumthor simply selected them and did nothing further with them. With the relation apparent, he uses it to draw forward presence that has not only artistic merit and interest, but one that had a profound being in having something relevant to contribute to the lives of the inhabitants. Zumthor was cognizant that through the reality of the properties of larch weathering in time in its spatially locations, and the natural response of the material to varying degrees of exposure to water, it self-evidently acknowledges the wide spectrum of realities, from happy to sad, of aging by the different rates of colour change that are found around the building. With tufa's unique and inherent embodied duality, Zumthor applies it in a mass with grout of the same colour, to aid its operation as a mass in perception and intensify the material's natural otherness. The individual realities of each material relate to aging in their own way, but placed together they acknowledge and dignify aging together, emphasizing the relation further. The fact that their colour palettes overlap and complement one another, and that they are both natural materials, also contribute to their coherence experientially.

The way that these materials were applied held these complex relations very apparently in their own material reality so that they were lived self-evidently, or immediately/naturally perceived, by the inhabitants. What is common is to only

find a mild or tangential connection if one reads closely into material being, usually only for people who have an eye or interest in looking for poetry in reality, which often is not profound or relevant to their situation. The profound and situationally appropriate acknowledgement of aging is, grounded in the reality of the material and made present so that it is lived in relation to without the inhabitant thinking. When I encountered the relation of aging on the exterior, the feeling of its appropriateness was a visceral one. The materials existing in the way they were, by foregrounding the issue of aging on its exterior, in a real way is confronting the reality of aging head on, and it is this confrontation that is felt to be appropriate, even right. They speak honestly about the reality of aging, yet they affirm a dignity in the natural process. In a real way, they make room for the resident to do the same, and it is at this point that the materials gain the quality of being serious and earnest. Materials are not usually “serious” or “earnest” in our encounter of them in nature, but it is these that make them emotionally appropriated in the building and which makes them transcend being just another material selection.

It is against the backdrop of the coherence of aging materials present, that the persistent shine and resilience of stainless steel and the other materials that are resilient to weathering are immediately felt when encountered. What makes the presence of these material cohere when their resistance to change seemingly does not reinforce the attitude of being receptive towards aging? In the same way that I was affected by the genuine earnestness of the larch and tufa’s acknowledgement of aging, I was affected with inspiration, far before I understood why I felt the way that I did about the presence of the stainless steel. Somehow I felt the degree of resistance as something inspiring because its materiality offers a moment of resilience against the powers of aging. This affected inspiration can only happen because the rusting steel threshold, weathered larch, and tufa, in their prevalence already convey a feeling of the “power of aging” so that the juxtaposition of small moments of stainless steel immediately highlight its quality of enduring relevancy. I noticed that the materials that are resistant to aging communicate this perception because of their relation to the whole. The material property of resistance only receives its poetic affect because there is first a relation between major material presences already being established as something to be resistant to. The rusting threshold demonstrates the same dynamic in the “opposing direction.” Individually, it draws forward a significant

moment of tension contrary to resilience and positive optimism of aging, and its confronting reality only finds “resolution” in the other materials. In the part-whole relationship, both presences are clearly felt individually, but they are not felt to be idiosyncratic because they have a clear relation to the whole. When one considers how the stainless steel is working, it coheres because of a part-whole relationship with the overall relation of aging, which though one would think is intellectual, is something felt by the inhabitant and derives its value as something felt in their lives.

Interestingly this illustration indicates two levels of coherence are occurring. The first level is in the reality of the individual materials as they are able to stand on their own with an expressiveness that reaches into the lives of the inhabitant. The secondly level, occurs in their agreement in an overall poetic narrative regarding the season of life the inhabitants face. This is indicative of the thoughtfulness of design both aesthetically and empathetically towards the inhabitants.

The Coherent Presence of Warmth

The other main coherence in the building brings forward warmth in reality, which happens with the materials on the interior, and is experienced in the greatest intensity in the individual suites. The presence of warmth appears because of the simultaneous occurrence of individual qualities in the space: from the wood floor being finished with a particular degree of tactile softness, the bold amber colour of the wood, the same material being applied on the floor, walls, and ceiling so that it wraps the space, the resonant warmth of the sound of wood, being provided generous and human proportions to live in, in being provided great cross-ventilation (that also is a presence that encompasses and embraces), in the caring presence of being understood in the honest attitude of aging that wraps the exterior of the building, and even in being provided dignity by the building framing the with dignity in the perception of society. Additionally, the presence of warmth has some relation with the presence of dignity in the felt relation that occurs in the building, a manifestation of their ontological connection as concepts. Dignity is present in the superior living quality of the spaces, in each suite having a personal balcony and personal view to the mountains beyond, in the allowance for minute personal control, in the use of natural materials with solid build quality, in the costly thick

proportions of solid larch, in the present qualities of weight and monumentality and in the way the entire composition of the building and its spaces frames its inhabitants with dignity in the perception of society. In degrees, Zumthor tempered materials and the different aspects of space towards achieving a deeper engagement of coherent presence as it naturally and immediately emerges in the percipient's experience. In the case of warmth and dignity, they are experienced by multiple senses (touch, vision, sound), and arise simultaneously from multiple facets of the space: spatially, materially, temporally, and even socially. As presences, they cut across all these multiple aspects of the reality of the space, and senses in order to bring themselves forward to exist— that is, being in the lives of those within that space, or, a presence within the dwelling of that space that is lived in relation to. These presences are experienced, not as concepts, but as felt affects and lived-realities.

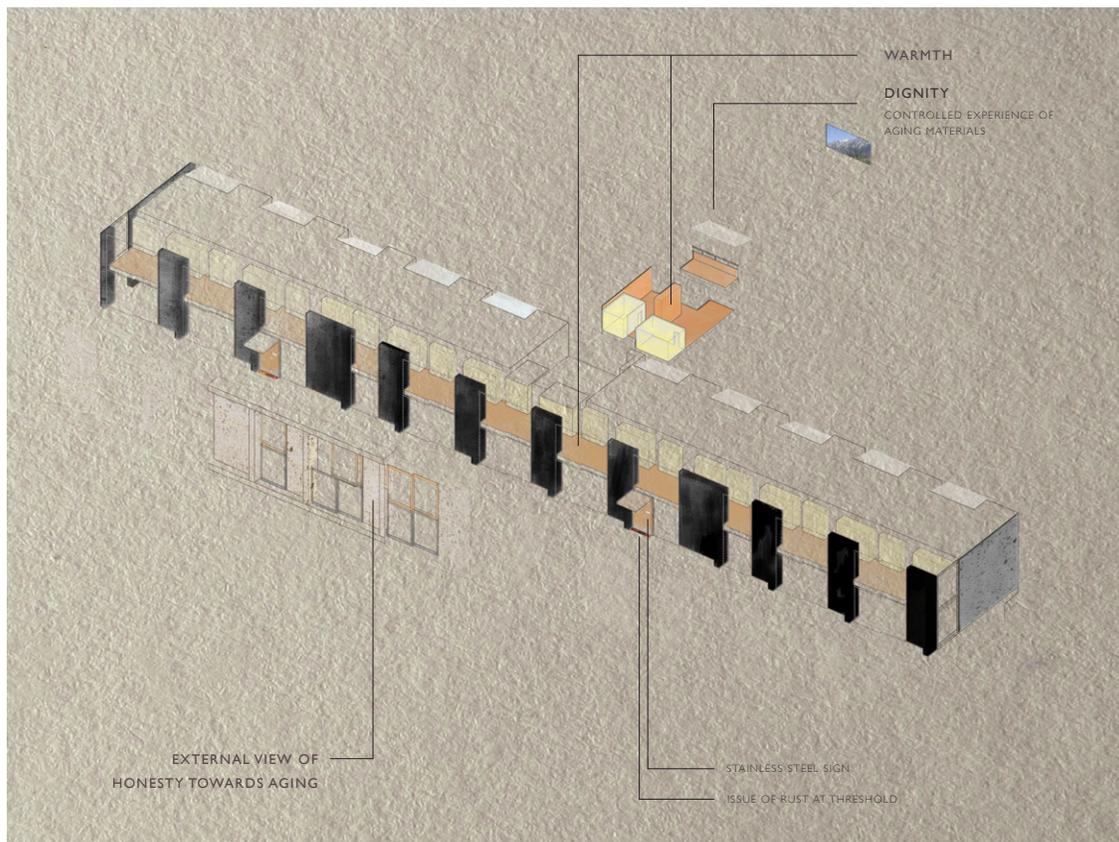


fig. 2.39: The positioning of presence.

Presence is not Rational but Fully Real

I found the value of coherence in its capacity to provide experience by reacting to form a larger substance while remaining completely material, as something that is firstly felt instead of than firstly intellectually grasped. In all the examples of the coherence of materials, no matter how complex the relation or dynamic coherence producing it from materials, they were self-evidently found in experience as a feeling far before I understood why I felt the way I did. The materials' reaction to each other give manifestation to presences in the building that stand up against the difficulties of aging that the inhabitants face, and are felt as warmth on the interior. In this way, as something real and present, they influence the manner that the inhabitants live their lives, their thoughts, their choices, and their awareness. When felt, and when relevant to the person's situation, their experience has the powerful possibility to influence the well-being of the inhabitant stemming from the materials (material-space) simply being in reality as something real.

We find that the affect of presence comes first because presence arises directly from the exact reality of materials, and thus each presence has an unique phenomenon that elicits a certain influence on the person. They are instantly felt, and is more than can be intellectually comprehended, operates and intervenes in reality, and is lived in experience where it then can be subject to intellectual analysis as an unique phenomenon. All of these can happen because the feeling is grounded in reality, and as long as presence establish a grounds for response, it doesn't matter if the inhabitant understands why they are responding the way they are. While the inhabitants experience this feeling almost inherently, this phenomenon was carefully crafted. The complexity of how coherence is created in reality emphasizes the point that the building was not designed abstractly but by being aware of how materials react experientially in their full reality. Because of the exacting study of the architect, the inhabitants are given the gift of feeling the building's presences. Because of the architect's sensitivity and care in design, the inhabitants can deeply engage with presence without having to be concerned with intellectual analysis.

According to Zumthor, he makes it his mission to design depth that is instantly communicated and that doesn't require the intellect. In his writing he almost comes across as rejecting the intellect in design.⁴ He explains his rationale

⁴ I found this position in text like the following where he considers that rhetoric

saying that he does this not as a stylistic choice, but because “...architecture is experienced by laymen without thinking. Our architecture is not about arguments in the end. I want an emotional reaction” (Zumthor 2013a).⁵ Interestingly, his designing to accommodate a lack of thinking does not mean he is rejecting the intellect of the inhabitant but means that he aims to design something real. In creating something real, it is only firstly felt, but because it is real it can then also be mindfully contemplated. A statement of Zumthor’s suggests this way of thinking as he says, “Our perception is visceral. Reason plays a secondary role... We see a form framed and condensed into an emblem, a shape or a design, which touches us, which has the quality of being a great deal and possibly everything in one: self-evident, profound, mysterious, stimulating, exciting, suspenseful...” (Zumthor 2006b, 77). Contrary to what one might think, it does not push him to simplify what he is trying to do in his architecture, but rather causes him to focus on designing and embedding pure emotion that can be immediately appropriated, that can truly influence and be necessary for the immediate present of the percipient.

Another pattern that we find in common with the two presences of dignity and warmth, whether it is visual (the honest facade) or spatial (the surrounding warmth), is that their common *raison d’être* can be traced to providing *real shelter* for the being of the residents. In their essence, the presences are intentionally aimed to affect healing in a real way, and their concern is to create *meaningful life* for the inhabitant. We find at the core of the presences is an immense care for the inhabitant. The presences were brought into being through the medium of architecture through toning and tailoring the affect by knowing what architecture can do in its situation for them. In other words, coherence was not an end itself, as some artistic merit, but as a means of affecting life by their being present. The subtle difference in

and theory can replace an understanding of how people will perceive a space in the end: “I think it is a pity that the education of architects is so academic and based on rhetoric: in many cases, it does not connect to the real work. Architects coming from the university make drawings, but they don’t really know what they are doing. They don’t know how it looks in reality, how it will be, how it sounds, and so forth.” (Zumthor, Havik, and Teliens 2013c, 74-75) Also see the illustrative example he gives of how he thinks through whether a particular detail should be produced in one way or another. (2013c, 75)

5 From “2013 RIBA Royal Gold Medal Winner Peter Zumthor in conversation with the RIBA’s Tony Chapman,” YouTube video posted by *RIBAarchitecture*, 1:25-1:45

conception here is between architecture as the end in itself, or in life as the end of the architecture. This difference leads to a completely different goal and impels the life-focused architect to be more specific in their search for coherence, and more controlled in shaping material in order to manifest the desired affect through their medium. This necessarily limiting but concentrated and guiding conduit in aesthetic manipulation leads us to our final principle of materiality found in the Seniors' Home that can both bring us closest to the source of the profound spiritual affect embedded in the material-space, and explain how Peter Zumthor had such control over the affect by having a guiding principle that shaped his aesthetic into being.



fig. 2.40: (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)



fig. 2.41: (photo credit: Shigeo Ogawa)

LAYER 3: WISDOM IN REALITY

The entire affect of the building can be explained by the shaping of material reality and by their dynamic of coherence as larger presences in reality that impacts the lived quality of the inhabitant. What must be further examined is the rationale of the choices at the root why these materials and presences were chosen. If we look at the choices behind the ideas for affect and the deep manifestations of presence we will discern that what was there was not a demonstration of the capacity for aesthetic to move the inhabitant, nor a sheer exercise in investigating the coherence of material-space as an arbitrary presence of interest to a select group of people set apart from the inhabitant. The beautiful poetic depth and reality crafted by Peter Zumthor was the means used to produce life-affirming and life-producing affect as a lived relation in aesthetic. The *raison d'être* of the aesthetic can be seen in the *particular affective presences*, and not the architecture itself. It was the positioning of particular spatial affect in the lives of the inhabitants that was the singular reason that guided the search for an aesthetic within reality and in terms of coherence. Architecture with this concern for the experiential end in people's lives can be characterized as being wise, where wisdom is attributed directly to the architecture and its aesthetic. One definition of wisdom renders it as the, "capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends;... and opposite to folly" (OED: wisdom, *n.*).

The principle of wisdom links aesthetic being to a particular type of affect that is life-affirming and life-producing, and finds a sufficient close for my original search on what makes aesthetic capable of sheltering not only the inhabitant's body, but their being (Harries 2010, 59). The primary concern of wisdom is of the *type of affect "necessary"*. It thus disciplines the aesthetic manifestation from its inception by placing concentration on the manipulation, while attention and discernment is applied to its eventual effect, questioning what the affect, and thus material, in that particular situation in reality is doing.⁶ Throughout process however, wisdom

6 Juhani Pallasmaa describes Zumthor's pursuit of shaping affect in life as the motivation behind Zumthor's insistence on working with physical models in his design process: "The way Zumthor works with models, almost naive ones... is quite interesting... I have asked Zumthor why he works this way. He responded that he simply wants to *get the sense of life* in connection with his projects. Architects usually work with precisely made abstract models, but Zumthor has them filled with people and furniture. Also the positioning of the models at eye level is quite unusual..." (Pallasmaa, Havik, and Tielens 2013, 47; emphasis added) The models allow him to imagine the situations that unfold, "get the sense

changes the entirety of the aesthetic, discerning firstly if there is something it can do, then guiding the exact manifestation of the idea as presence in reality: what presence would be beneficial, what should its content be, in what way should the content be delivered, and in what situation would it be fitting? It seeks to apply affect to an inhabitant's being in a way that is amiable to their lived situation. Wisdom guides aesthetic towards an end that is a particular affect that is needed in the life of the inhabitant. When wisdom successfully defines aesthetic being, reality itself is infused with wisdom—a lived-wisdom that is participated (known-lived) in, in the inhabitation of the space in a real way. With attention given to affect, it gives or holds back in order to meet the other where they are at, “in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the ear or a specific work out of the lifework,” (Benjamin 1968, 263). It is by the affect that we know that wisdom is present in the aesthetic. Wisdom creates variety as it works to manifest different affects according to every nuance of situation discerned with right judgment.

What the building suggests is that wisdom can be aesthetically manifested, though its aesthetic is likely not what one expects it to look like since it is situationally contingent. This is because wisdom is manifested by intimate knowing; and also because its substance is its affect and not its aesthetic. Wisdom can be said to be the substance of meaningful living. Its aesthetic can range from being highly poetic, to mundane—though its affect is always beautiful. It produces different aesthetic surfaces and at the end of its process, manifests affects that are completely different in every instance, but wisdom's core always has the same fundamental concern, which is not for itself but for well-being of the inhabitant. It is designed, not by

of life” closer to the reality of what he is proposing. His occupation and concentration at eye-level allows him to have a greater awareness of reality and to ask how the material-space makes him feel to create possibilities and situations while putting himself in the shoes of the inhabitant. Experientially-minded architects Klaske Havik and Gus Tielens relay to us in their essay written after their visit to Zumthor's office and interview with him that, “Each building is thoroughly studied on all scales by means of models.... [which] Zumthor explains... are crucial to achieve the precision he is aiming for,” (Zumthor, Havik, and Tielens 2013, 67). For one of the most illustrative inside-looks at Zumthor's method of thinking regarding how he approaches creating atmospheres see Peter Zumthor, Klaske Havik, and Gus Tielens, “Concentrated Confidence: A Visit to Peter Zumthor” in *OASE 91: Building Atmosphere: Material, Detail and Atmosphere in Architectural Practice* (Rotterdam: Nai010 Publishers, 2013), 59-82.

thinking about wisdom because its substance is not aesthetic but well-being, but by two categories of knowing intimately: firstly knowing architecture—knowing materials, and how they might be applied to attenuate affect—and secondly knowing the inhabitant having awareness of what their whole being needs. The Seniors’ Home demonstrates both an awareness of materials and a concentrated awareness of what they can do for the elderly. In both cases, the understanding of these aspects involves journeys of knowing; however after coming to this knowledge, they also require discernment in applying them situationally to the particular site. Wisdom is thus affect materialized in reality as a non-discursive symbol of lived-wisdom, or lived-knowledge of meaningful living. Or in Pavel Florensky’s terminology, it is a “self-manifestation of essence” emergent in reality of living-well in the situation of the inhabitant (Bychkov 1993, 48).⁷ The manifestation of wisdom requires a vision that stems from an intentional journey and deep meditation on what the aesthetic should be in that situation, what needs to be done, when to do it and how, and the union of all of these in the singular aesthetic being—a vision that is relevant firstly to the receiver in a way that they can appropriate for themselves with immediacy. What is manifested through these knowing of material and the inhabitant is an understanding that is directly embedded in the material that demonstrates that it understands how the being of the person can benefit from things being this way. And although it is an aesthetic surface like others, its surface hides a deep awareness of need, an exploration motivated by love, and has responded to the inhabitant perhaps without even making it known to the them. Its surface is the manifestation of an entire inward transformation of infinitely deep layers that achieves its end in the person’s being. The defining characteristics of wisdom in aesthetic are all seen in the aesthetic of the Seniors’ Home: its sensitivity towards the whole-being (awareness of need, priorities of responsiveness, and care for action), its motivation to care (discerned in the aesthetics’ *raison d’être*), ability (aesthetic control), the deployment of a situationally contingent idea, and situationally contingent toning of the aesthetic

⁷ It is a “synthetic image” or “symbolic” in that it is a condensation of reality into a single material-spatial form. It is not a symbol in that it is representative of life, but rather, its condensed image is affects of positive life. With the notion of the synthetic image, Florensky’s concept of the aesthetic face of being is also suggesting that “the being of wisdom” can be manifested so that it is not only momentary but an existence in the reality of time. More can be understood of this idea from Victor Bychkov, *The Aesthetic Face of Being: Art in the Theology of Pavel Florensky* (Crestwood: St. Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1993), 25-62.

such that its affect is good with emphasis and constant focus on the affect it causes.

The Wisdom of an Honest Attitude towards Aging

The Seniors' Home negotiates the complexities of the inhabitants' lives and the building's physical situation at its site in order to influence meaningful living by the choices and shaping of its materials and by the presences it manifests. It will be seen how wisdom begins in sensitivity and ends with the situationally contingent toning of each manifested presence. The idea of each presence found in the building directly influences the material-form of what is there, and are all significantly and necessarily completely restructured because of its "drawing nearer" to know the elderly, and the materials themselves.

The idea of acknowledging aging through materials shows an awareness of the potential weight of the inner question of the process of aging that the elderly face and the possible freedom in living that can come from adequately addressing this question. The materials address the issue in the following way: by confronting the issue, and by firmly acknowledging its relevancy and affirming the dignity of the process, the architecture *creates* wisdom into the reality of the situation. The way that the aesthetic confronts the issue and affirms dignity does not happen automatically, but takes time and intentionality to resolve firstly in the architect's design process and secondly in the inhabitant's experience of the finished product. The process of design of material selection and application was used to "walk the journey" of creating wisdom. To firstly notice that the issue of aging should be addressed, that material can address it, and secondly that it should be addressed so directly requires incredible concentration, reflection, effort, and precise awareness of the aesthetic's reality and its ultimate effect.⁸ While I have described the design process in two steps

8 After the idea is had, all attention is then shifted to the created object itself to study how direct engagement with the object itself conceives affect. Somewhat counter-intuitively, in order to focus on affect, or "the interaction between people and objects", the designer must be focused wholly on the reality of the object. Havik and Tielens consider that this is what Zumthor has arrived at after their interview with him saying, "In his book *Atmospheres*, Zumthor holds that the very task of the architect is to address, by means of the building, the interaction between people and objects.... In our conversation, Peter Zumthor frequently emphasizes this aspect of reality: the physical object is more important than conceptual thought.... [Zumthor writes.] The task of creating atmosphere also comes down to craft and graft.' (2006a, 19)... In Peter Zumthor's office, the many different elements

and separated the idea from the manifestation, the two steps are a part of a continual process of reflection, awareness, and realization of material and its affect on the person—on the placing of aesthetic in reality, from which the affect on the person cannot be separated. What is different about a design process focused on affect is that the idea is not separate from its manifestation. This is the critical difference in the architecture that distinguishes it from “reflecting” a preconceived message of wisdom, to creating wisdom by its aesthetic through its affect (such that it is in its substance wise). In other words, the architect did not simply come up with an idea, and strive to achieve it, without looking at the object and questioning what the resulting affect would be. In the end, the aesthetic is able to offer shelter to the elderly precisely because it has intentionally undergone the transformation of seeking and it has come to some measure of resolution of what it can do for the residents in its being. Evident visibly in its aesthetic face, the building has determined to hide nothing, and that it exists to journey along with the other through the elderly season of life. Its being has the courage to raise the issue of aging, not brashly, but in a peaceful way that embodies the quality of an inherent quietness and being down to earth at the same time.⁹ Its being manifests an inner peace in the way that it stands for the elderly resident. It does not do this as an exercise, but is actually a comfortable place to be. While it is purposeful, it also addresses the issue of aging seemingly in passing. “All [of its] words are born of silence and constantly return to it,” (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2006, 97). This is demonstrated in its soft and peaceful muted colours, comforting quality, and its character that does not strive to

that together construct the ‘real things’ such as materiality, texture, sound, temperature, rhythm, light and shadow simultaneously, are being dealt with separately,” (2013c, 71). Peter Zumthor describes his design process by explaining that physical models are what afford him the degree of precision he wants, saying that without models, “This is too difficult to do... It is too complex and I am not a genius.... [The model] in turn gives me the measurements.... When I look at this construction model, Zumthor continues, pointing at different parts of the [1:10] roof construction, ‘I wonder whether this is already good. Should it be different? I think it is already better than before, but it still is not quite right yet. That is why these models are so utterly important: You have to see it. Look! Here it is a little bit too thin, we need to make it slightly thicker;’ (2013c, 61, 63).

⁹ It is evident from his texts that Zumthor tries to develop the quality of quietness in his buildings. He writes, “To me, buildings can have a beautiful silence that I associate with attributes such as composure, self-evidence, durability, presence and integrity, and with warmth and sensuousness as well; a building that is being itself, being a building, not representing anything, just being,” (1998, 32).

stand out. The one place where it is not silent is at the threshold with the rusting steel, where it foregrounds the issue of aging in a way that can't be ignored. This is what the aesthetic is *doing* by its simply being. From this a true sense of a wise way of acting in the situation is seen. Wisdom has transitioned into aesthetic qualities of being at this point because it is precisely this configuration of aesthetic qualities that are relevant and life affirming in this situation. Designing affect to create wisdom (the substance of meaningful living) is both the reason why it is able to achieve what it does for the inhabitant, and also the reason for its emotional potency.

This concentrated reflection is demonstrated in the facade manifesting the presence of aging demonstrates. It seems Peter Zumthor has used the facade as an opportunity for the situational placement of the issue of aging, which creates an affect for both the residents and also larger society simultaneously. Recognizing this opportunity changes the way the issue is raised aesthetically. The facade shows that acknowledging aging in an honest way is not only helpful for the residents, but is simultaneously relevant for society at large. For those that encounter the facade visually, the presence manifest through the weathering cedar and frail but enduring tufa allows for their participation as a vivid vision of the issue. The honest but dignified aesthetic opens a greater empathy and emotional knowing of the situation of the elderly, manifesting the issue that the residents are facing, and allowing society to contemplate the truth that they are in the same process of aging and that they will likely find themselves in this same situation one day. The building, for the most part, does not raise the issue in a confronting way, but rather it presents it in the beauty of genuineness, lack of pretense, and honesty towards the issue. The tone of the aesthetic shows awareness of how it can be appropriated within the context that it is in.¹⁰

10 Zumthor has a great quote that is very telling of the aesthetic choices made in the Seniors' Home in relation to society. His text speaks of the specific quality of the intervention he tries to achieve. It speaks of developing intervening presences, which at the same time, change the situation they are in, yet seem self-evident like they have been there forever: "Every new work of architecture intervenes in a specific historical situation. It is essential to the quality of the intervention that the new building should embrace qualities which can enter into a meaningful dialogue with the existing situation. For if the intervention is to find its place, it must make us see what already exists in a new light. We throw a stone in to the water. Sand swirls up and settles again. The stir was necessary. The stone has found its place. But the pond is no longer the same," (1998, 18).

The facade also qualitatively frames the elderly residents to be seen in dignity while being honest, and it is the need to achieve both simultaneously is what tones the aesthetic. As the mediator between those outside and those inside, the facade is used aesthetically as an opportunity to frame the elderly within and influence the way that society sees them. Although the residents may not encounter the facade themselves on a daily basis, any affect that changes the way society perceives them directly is operating on their well-being simultaneously. The building further demonstrates its material wisdom and insight with the place the residents come most directly in contact with the outward face being in their own individual balconies where the larch is for the most sheltered and retains its colour. With the same material, here the aesthetic presence is very different but shows its responsiveness in care for the residents with its comfort.

The Wisdom of the Presence of Warmth

The idea of manifesting wisdom in the interior as a surrounding presence of warmth and dignity embedded into the aesthetic is also a recognition that is deeply attentive to the desires of the elderly and what is relevant to their reality. The space demonstrates warmth in its being. The architect worked to materially manifest the presence of warmth, recognizing that what is important for the inhabitant is not just the image of warmth or dignity, but the creation of it as a feeling. The image of warmth is irrelevant to the elderly if it simply ends in a material of a warm colour, or dignifying proportions and materials, without actual comfort given to them in their lived experience of the space. This can explain why, in degrees, warmth and dignity are made to appear in multiple aspects of the reality of the space: spatially, materially, temporally, socially, and when experienced, arise in multiple senses simultaneously. In comparison to the presence of aging, which is felt through seeing, this presence emerges in the simultaneity of many aspects of space and reality, which emphasizes its felt experience rather than its concept.

By creating a presence of warmth in the interior, especially intensifying it in the individual suites, Zumthor is creating “the inner-most space”, a concept-feeling that doesn’t ordinarily exist without being set up; and in this case, it is set up as a space that looks out into the distance of the mountains. Again, the creation of the inner-most room is not valuable to the inhabitant if it remains a concept in the

space, but becomes powerfully influential when its presence manifests the concept's promise in the reality within the person's life. Additionally, the spatial relation of surrounding of the body is not a relation that is equivalent to other relations to the body, nor is its benefit firstly poetic. It first and foremost needs to be real and felt, from which poetry can be inspired. Although the space can be functionally described as an apartment, the significance of the inhabitant's experience of the space is much greater because of how it is "affectively" defined by the way the materials come together. Feeling warmth, and experiencing the space as the "inner-most" room, is critically important to making the Seniors' Home a true home rather than simply a housing in their perception. This is vital as it contributes to making the elderly resident's embrace the space as their own.

The presence of the warmth on the interior is not a separate "project" to that of the honest image of aging on the exterior. Not only are the two presences manifested by similar material palettes, the two presences are supportive of one another experientially, and both highly relevant for elderly residents. The ideas are connected in the building being a companion that shelters their being. The wisdom of both presences manifests itself as a wise companion. The wise companion offers wisdom that the person needs in their situation, not in an idealistic way, but in a way that they can receive it for themselves and allows them to live in freedom, but also recognizes that, "after everything is said and done, what we have to offer is our authentic selves in relation to others" (Nouwen, Christensen, and Laird 2006, 10). Behind the building's existence can be sensed a consistent underlying motivation of deep care of a companion whose willful honesty weakness and presence—provides shelter and makes space for the elderly residents to truly live. In many ways the building "creates some room for the person looking for a place to rest" (Nouwen 1974, 101). The building represents an honest aging a dignity in the process, and the warmth of a companion. The aesthetic can be said to be wise because it does these things, which achieve a great degree of provision for the inhabitant and those who encounter it. The aesthetic is not the mere external "form and motion" of understanding and giving, rather its aesthetic manifestation has truly understood and transformed itself internally and externally, its entire being, to provide for and change the lived of reality of each of its elderly residents.

In the End is Being

To bring some closure to my initial three questions I set out to answer, they seem to all find their resolution in Peter Zumthor's design process that is aware of reality, develops coherence, and that is primarily concerned for the life of the other, which requires wisdom and embeds wisdom. In regards the first of my three questions of where the expressive aspect of the materials in the building come from, I now consider that it comes from the full reality of the materials. The spiritual effect of the materials can be explained completely with the exact reality of the materials in space and time, which includes any reaction they have with one another. Zumthor's Seniors' Home is an especially potent building because of his close consideration of material reality, which allows him to apply them with a greater specificity and relevance to each situation, and also because of his close consideration of how these aesthetic reality might be significant to a person. His close consideration of reality results from Peter Zumthor's design process, and which turns out to also address my second question of how the designer controlled the manner of material expression toward a profoundly meaningful knowledge-vision. His design process allows him to test how materials react, and allows him to directly reflect upon how a person is caused to feel by what he does. He derives confidence about the affect he is creating from his awareness of the affect of the full reality of the aesthetic he is creating. From this awareness he is able to reflect, and make adjustments and directly tailor the specificity of what is there to a fine nuance, in essence directly craft productive affects. For this reason, Peter Zumthor was able to ensure that the affect of the material was positive instead of destructive, which was my last question. His design process does not allow him create without considering the reality of what he is creating, and brings himself directly into reality as another entire human being with feelings, with needs, and with a desire for life in their shoes and with his wisdom.

When I began this analysis, I was not expecting that the spiritual effect would be entirely explained by the full reality of space. I did not anticipate that the fundamental constituents of spatial experience: matter, light, space, and time, that architects normally work with would be responsible for the building's spiritual achievement. I thought, surely, that some special region of human spatial experience would be responsible, and not the experience of life and space itself. I thought that there was a pre-existing message being referenced, that could be isolated in a material and stand apart from the material. What I found was that the material

creates the “message” by its full reality confronting the reality of the situation we face that influences the way that we live our lives, our thoughts, our choices, our awareness. In this case, the material was mediating the inhabitant’s relation to aging. The aesthetic does and accomplishes more for the elderly in its sensitive gestures, its discernment and reserve in actions, its prudence in its simplicity in form, then it needs to say with a single word. However, it makes sense that the grounds of the spiritual effect would be the reality of what is there because all of our experiences occur in reality. This would suggest that what is being shaped by the materials and spaces is the reality that a person occupies and encounters.

What is most profoundly learned from the Seniors’ Home is that its capacity to affect spiritually, and all the aesthetic transformation that it underwent architecturally to do so, ultimately came from a concentrated focus on the being of the inhabitants. In the end, it does not matter if the wood is larch, but what matters is rather the phenomenon of larch in its precise appearance and precise reaction at that exist in reality. It is the phenomenon and the occurrence of the certain event within the course of a person’s life that matters. The material (its finish, its spatialization, how it reacts to light, processes, etc.) are only the medium by which and from which the events occur for the person—even the inner person because of their engagement with what is there and what happens. If the presence of warmth and being surrounded, the presence of dignity become self-evident in the space and are really felt; if the being of sitting still in peace, the occurrence of vibrant discussion—the affirmation of purpose in living—are really lived by the person, then space becomes significant in a person’s life. If these feelings become actions in the lives of the inhabitant, then space becomes meaningful. The significance I saw in the building was that, by material and its application, these transcendent ends are achieved for the inhabitants. The enduring question is: what does the aesthetic do in its simply being there?

“WHAT A DRAB WORLD WE WOULD LIVE IN WITHOUT FLOWERS.”

C.S. LEWIS



fig. 2.42: Marc Chagall's 'Bouquet de ferme'



fig. 2.4.3: Paris' Belleville Park (photo credit: Nichole Robertson)



fig. III.1: The monumental mass of grey brick exists occupying simultaneous complexities: bright yet dark, intense yet soft, mourning yet exemplifying the strength of joy in hope, and broken yet healing—especially in the experience that lives within it. (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)



fig. III.2: The institution operates behind the pseudonym it adopted from the ruins of St. Kolumba upon which the building was built. The pseudonym is revealing of the persona that the aesthetic and institution uses to relate to the city, which is ambiguous while distinctive, spiritual yet rooted, and contemporary yet historical. (photo credit: Atelier 29)

KOLUMBA

KOLUMBA IS A MUSEUM designed by Peter Zumthor from 1996 and opened to the public in 2007 in Cologne, Germany. It was commissioned by Cologne's Diözesanmuseum (The Museum of the Archbishopric of Cologne), as a competition to expand their exhibition space, to accommodate the needs of the museum and to reposition the institution's vision within contemporary society. The institution founded by the Christian Art Association for the Archbishopric of Cologne in 1853 is the second oldest museum in the city, and has garnered a reputation to be the most experimental, surprising considering its traditional task (Winnekes, 1995). It was established to preserve and restore ecclesiastical artefacts, encourage the study of art history, explore questions pertaining to ecclesiastic art, and spread "good taste and accomplished knowledge" by virtue of collecting, lectures, and publications (Winnekes, 1995).¹ It is clear from the essays written by the curators leading up to the architectural competition that the curators still see their mission as highly relevant and even necessary in contemporary society, and approach it with a mindful inspiration. However, it is also clear, that they are also keenly aware of the controversial territory they operate within. On the one hand, their work must contend and be perceived as relevant with an increasingly secular culture to survive, and on the other critics in the church who see their activity as an indulgent cultural endeavor and demand the church orient its charity elsewhere (Winnekes, 1995). As a single unit, the institution and the architecture do not avoid this complex and sensitive predicament. Aesthetically they navigate this complexity with awareness to mitigate many issues in deed before a single word needs to justify its value.

Kolumba demonstrates how space can be a medium of revelation. The architecture establishes a framework for the curators to employ and achieve their mission, effectuating the value of its own existence experientially. The *raison d'être* behind the aesthetic transformations of the spaces seems to be centered mainly around helping the visitor appreciate and understand the other, the artwork on its own terms. In some moments, the same operation extended to helping me understand other visitors more as well, and appreciate their individuality more. The aesthetic potentials of intervention and reality precisely integral to material substance are both dynamically operating in the space, but Kolumba primarily produces an experience of revelation through the *image* of its aesthetic, and as we are *positioned in* and *move in*.

1 The Christliche Kunstverein für das Erzbisthum Köln

Kolumba demonstrates the possible potency of space as an experience of *vision*—aesthetic revelation—in the “direct aesthetic quality” of its image.² Susanne Langer theorizes about the office of image inherent to aesthetic, which she classifies as “semblance” when “something arises from the process of arranging colours on a surface, something that is created, not just gathered” (Langer 1953, 47). The space firstly does this by what can be described as a process of abstracting its aesthetic from habitual perception and categories to be pure virtual qualities.³ Though made of very natural materials (that of loam plaster, ceramic brick, terrazzo, concrete, leather, wood), their spatial combination is perceived firstly not with the quality of their ‘naturalness,’ but rather in the “magic of the real”, by qualities such as quietness and peacefulness. This materiality, in unison with a fluid spatial arrangement, and observant placement of the art made each moment of experience of reality tend to abstract itself. The “magic of reality” in this case is the degree of its purposefulness and meaning it achieves, the distillation of aesthetic elements into pure operation, such that the experience of the space was vision—*aesthetic* completely “transparent” and articulate of its experiential meaning.⁴ I examine how this was happening in the second essay, and consider the transition from everyday perception into this imaginal space in the first essay. Whether art, material, or space, they were experienced not as separate functions but as a continuous experience of aesthetic as meaning. Some art pieces will be examined in the essays where the spatial function cannot be accurately expressed without describing the contribution of a specific artwork. The third essay highlights the precision of the aesthetic encounter to the image of meaning through examining the contribution of the particular qualities of light to the perception of the artwork and spaces, which added qualitative content or reformed the perception entirely.

2 Though this dynamic is present in the Seniors’ Home, the building shows us that there is much more to developing an aesthetic relevance and potency for its inhabitants than by foregrounding a cohesive image. The monumental sliding window is an illustration of the aesthetic potently utilizing its image.

3 I use the term abstract because its image doesn’t represent anything but yet it is completely “transparent” and articulate to its meaning.

4 This occurrence corroborates with how Langer describes the function of semblance. As an aesthetic reality, it provides a “new embodiment of forms in purely qualitative, unreal instances, setting the ordinary free from their normal embodiment in real things *so that* they may be recognized in their own right, and freely conceived and composed in the interest of the artist’s ultimate aim—significance, or logical expression” (1953, 50; emphasis added).

The spaces of Kolumba also give illustration to what might be called pure spatial potential as something that we corporeally are positioned in and that we move in. Its varied spaces that fluidly transition into one another along a linear experience provides an opportunity to see the space as a progressive revelation that happens as one moves through the spaces.⁵ It also gives an opportunity to see a space where even where one is positioned down to the step contains some greater revelation because of the exactitude of its aesthetic calibration of the space. Other such dynamics inherent to space were seen to be used effectively and investigated throughout the essays: the potential of sight lines, the potential of introducing and concluding, the potential of experiential motifs, the potential of leaving and re-entering, the potential of reinterpreting, the potential of spatial expansion and contraction, the potential of directional space in comparison to concentric space. The analysis of the four Kolumba essays have been structured generally as a sequential walkthrough of the building since the building operates in this way. This spatial variation had a direct relationship in affecting an emotional variation in me. I found myself anticipating the next space, being surprised, longing, and even grateful in certain instances, which will be examined throughout the essays where they occurred in the building, however, the issue of space and the response it causes will be addressed most directly in the last essay where I reached what I thought was the last space of the museum.

5 This tendency can be compared to the Seniors' Home where the primary source of an inhabitant's journey happens primarily through time.

DEPARTURE: THE THRESHOLD TO A PERSONAL JOURNEY

ARRIVING AT THE STAIRCASE was the next significant threshold condition after the front door. However, this condition was felt to be of greater significance and a “truer” threshold that evoked a feeling of departure. It tipped me to consider the spiritual dimension of the architectural and physical boundary of the threshold as a felt boundary that is not merely physical difference, but the crossing to something new, to a new lived condition.

Starting from the beginning of my experience, I had entered the museum the same way I have for first visits to other museums, that is, not with my hopes up but simultaneously hoping to be surprised. I bought my ticket, observed the first piece in the foyer, and moved onwards to the stair not finding any insight to comprehend the piece.



fig. 3.1.

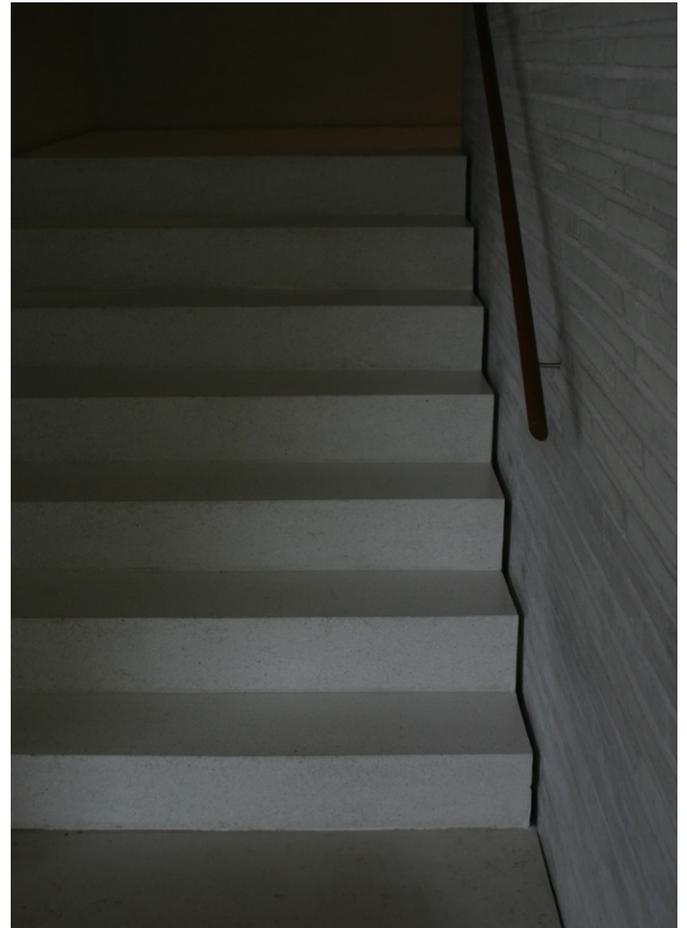


fig. 3.2.

Space and light were changing in quality as they gently receded into a tall, narrow and heavy crevice in the corner of the room. I still felt as I did earlier with my hopes very much reserved, but as I slipped into the space the nature of the transition of space was functioning to not give me the possibility of sensing what I might find at the other end.

A soft warm glow and a single wooden handrail from beyond the corner invited me inward, into the unknown. The profile of the handrail anticipated the direction of my grip and fitted my hand with unexpected comfort. The thin wood slightly deflected under my hand's weight, and drew me to a greater care than accustomed by its fragility.



fig. 3.3.



fig. 3.4.

“IT IS NOT THE PERCIPIENT WHO DISCOUNTS THE
SURROUNDINGS, BUT THE WORK OF ART WHICH, IF IT IS
SUCCESSFUL, DETACHES ITSELF FROM THE REST OF THE
WORLD; HE MERELY SEES IT AS IT IS PRESENTED TO HIM.”

SUSANNE LANGER (1953, 45)



fig. 3.5.

Confrontation

As I turned the corner at the first landing, there were another couple of risers before another turn on a longer landing and a single art piece. As I ascended, I could not help but notice that the image was partially covered but gradually came into a full view as the wall receded as I drew near. I felt a sensation of simultaneity as the space was translating my movement into the aesthetic emergence of the image in my view. This simple, obviously crafted, and effective sensation intrigued me to consider the space and the art as direct aesthetic extensions of one another as a singular experience. It brought me into my present corporeal moment and compelled me by the direct aesthetic experience of revealing itself to examine its contents more closely. The five card-sized photographs were quite small, so I needed to come face to face to them before I could examine them. I found no separate label that told me the title of the piece, so I had to look more intently at what is before me...

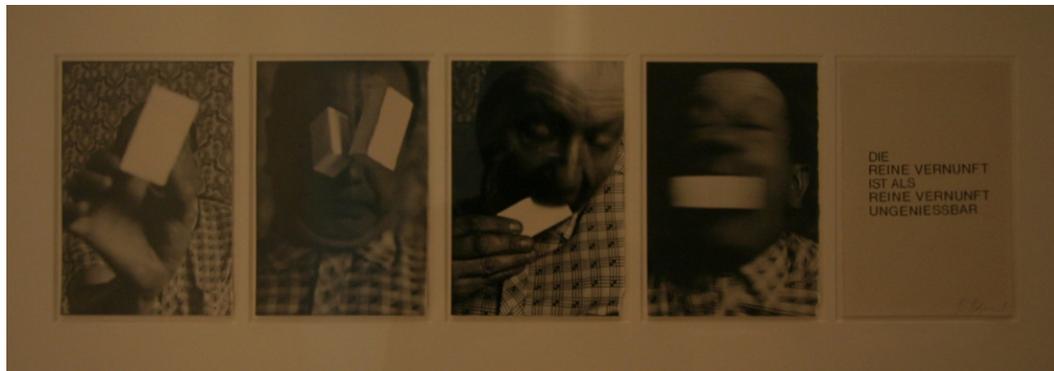


fig. 3.6.

What was the meaning of these white cubes? The photographs were powerful, more specifically confrontational in its visceral visuals that depicted so directly an interaction with the man's senses. The piece seemed to be set up to operate with a narrative structure as some sort of didactic commentary. In it, an aged man as depicted interacting with an abstract white cube that unsuspectingly elicits a strong affect, disturbing his senses, as he engaged it more intentionally. A stark juxtaposition between images was set up in the degree of the man's receptivity of the white object and the degree to which he refuses it, both as conveyed in his expression. The reason for this turn of events and the time between each event was left to the viewer to ponder, but the source of the rejection conveyed seemed to be a gut response like a pain-stimulus triggered in one of the senses as he began to sense it. I needed to understand what the white cube was, which the piece was setting up logically in the last card in the German text. I tried referring to the little guide book that the staff gave at entry...

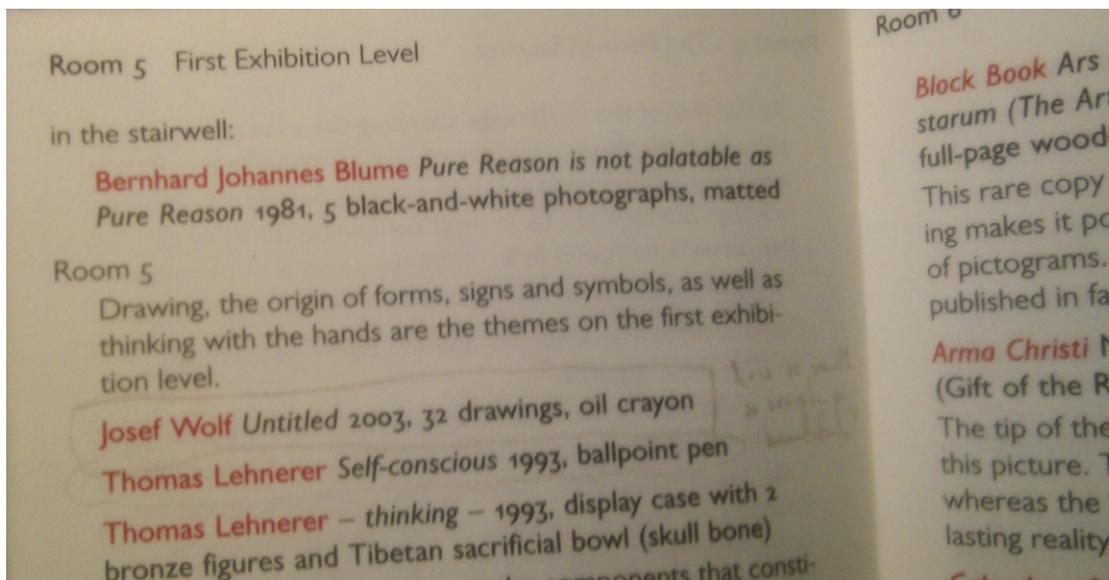


fig. 3.7: Excerpt from Exhibition Booklet: "in the stairwell..."

As the title of the piece asserts in tandem with its photographs, is it really true that “pure reason is not palatable as pure sanity?” The claim demanded my attention as something personally relevant at that moment especially because it was placed alone in this stairwell. The piece was like that of a deduction in a philosophical statement that in appearance is striking as a departure from conventional thought. Not only were questions coming in droves, but they were veering off in various diverging directions. What did the artist Bernhard Johannes Blume see in this world to make him make this provocative statement? What was the artist thinking was the reason for man rejecting pure reason? He was opening a box while seeming intentionally to say—or at least the curators were intentionally saying—too little to know what he or they meant for sure. I didn’t consider myself the person to refuse reason, but with the image directed so strongly towards conveying the sense of the repugnant gut reaction to the taste of pure reason, it made me consider if this was only because I perhaps was not tasting this pure reason?

The questions were being opened not only in regards to the piece itself but also in regards to the whole exhibition because of the *role* the piece was playing by nature of being placed at the beginning of the museum, in this stairwell without any of hint of what was to come. Its main aesthetic potency was coming from the positioning of its assertion in place. Encountering the image on its own, placed as it was, in this formal stairwell that felt so much of passage, and it acted in an *introductory nature*, setting an overarching tone to the gallery spaces that were to follow. In my mind, the image had naturally gained a significance and was acting to localize and place the mind within another context within the idea of reason and the reasonable; the grey pliable territory and the lens by which we evaluate and discern the world. At what angle would the curators continue from this piece? If they continue exploring the notion of reason thematically, what do they consider as pure reason in their employment of the piece? How deeply have they considered reason, how will they attempt to convince me of reason, and how will I respond if they are able to convince me of pure reason?

As I ascended closer to what awaited me, what I thought was closed within me was now rapidly opening, and what was fact was becoming question, and all done, through aesthetic. After my indifferent response to the first piece in the foyer, this experience was the first indication of what to expect from the institution. And they set it up marvelously, appropriately, with an awareness and almost bold question to our generation's suspicion towards reason as perhaps a *modus operandi*. Set up was intrigue bringing me fully into the present with my being poised for what was to come, and immanently ready to experience what was in the space beyond.



fig. 3.8.

Divergence

By this point, an intriguing and mysterious unknown were expanding rapidly in all dimensions, interestingly not only virtually, but also spatially with the positioned question, proposition, confrontation that was before me and the space that lay beyond at the top of the stair. Here was the feeling of going deeper into the unknown and being able to find advancement in the unknown. I think this was the point at which I felt departure—a truer beginning of a journey not only to the museum but in the potential of life itself.

My feeling of departure began as a premonition of departure. While opening rapidly, the beginning of my departure only existed as an anticipation, a “promise” of something yet to be fulfilled. I can distinguish two components to this feeling wrapped up in the premonition of the departure. Firstly, it was catching the glimpse of the opening of divergence, a potential new direction, a question and mystery of life that is larger than space itself. And secondly, a feeling that I would be guided in space, anticipating that when I reach the end of the museum I would arrive at different place not only spatially but in life itself. The beginning of the sense of promise in this case was the sensation given in the selection and placement of this first piece and that the curators through the museum would be able to guide me to this new conception with precision and excellence. They had shown their acute understanding of the operation of aesthetic affect—it might have been luck, but physically manifest here was both the sensation of both their means and their end before me that gave me confidence that the institution was cognizant of what they were doing in the world and how to accomplish it. At this point, whether the promise of the threshold would turn out to be artificial or not still remained to be determined, but the space here resonated with the reassurance in the sense of direction found here. My hopes were now embodied in the architecture, and they would either be satisfied or not by the end of the journey. The real threshold was the beginning of a fulfillment that could be described as the answering of the promise of divergence; the feeling of anticipation in the potential to live.

The merging of feeling and form

AT FIRST, THE STAIRWELL provided the spatial condition to begin, but it was not yet associated in my perception with departure, at least to this degree, until the point of the introductory image. It seems it was not the mere spatial assertion of difference that was sole contributor to the feeling of departure but also the spiritual difference (that of fact becoming question, and mystery expanding) that was also contributing. Not only this, the rapidly expanding unknown also constituted the strongest feeling of threshold with the magnitude of the event. Being primarily a virtual event happening here, the interesting thing is that the inner event was now synchronizing back with the dynamics of external space, not in a representative way, but in a resonant way where the dynamics directly experienced in space were tinged with virtuality of the question and coloured through with feelings of journey.

An actual-virtual smudging in quality and intensity of qualities was happening to make unclear where the actual ended and the virtual began and vice-versa. The magnitude of the inner event of the expanding unknown integral to the introductory photographs, coincided with the magnitude of the exaggerated proportions of the space and the unknown beyond me at the end of the stair. The length of the stair operated in being an outer event by fueling even more the anticipation of what was to come by providing a set delay. The spatial enclosure, did not give my eyes much elsewhere to look except upwards into the expanse and forward into the beyond, offering a sense of inward focus. The flares of light washing downwards increased the feeling of monumentality visually as I stood still, and then added a subtle rhythm as I progressed forward. The proportions were alloying with the inward intensity of contemplation to inform an impression of the journey being personal. The extreme proportions created a perceived narrowness while there actually existed more than enough room for two people to walk comfortably. The singular comfortable but deflecting handrail also externally affected a notion of journey. It led me upwards, visually and physically, and acted upon me in some attraction of comfort but not without an appearance of wooden frailty as I felt a predicted deflection and even some degree of fallibility.

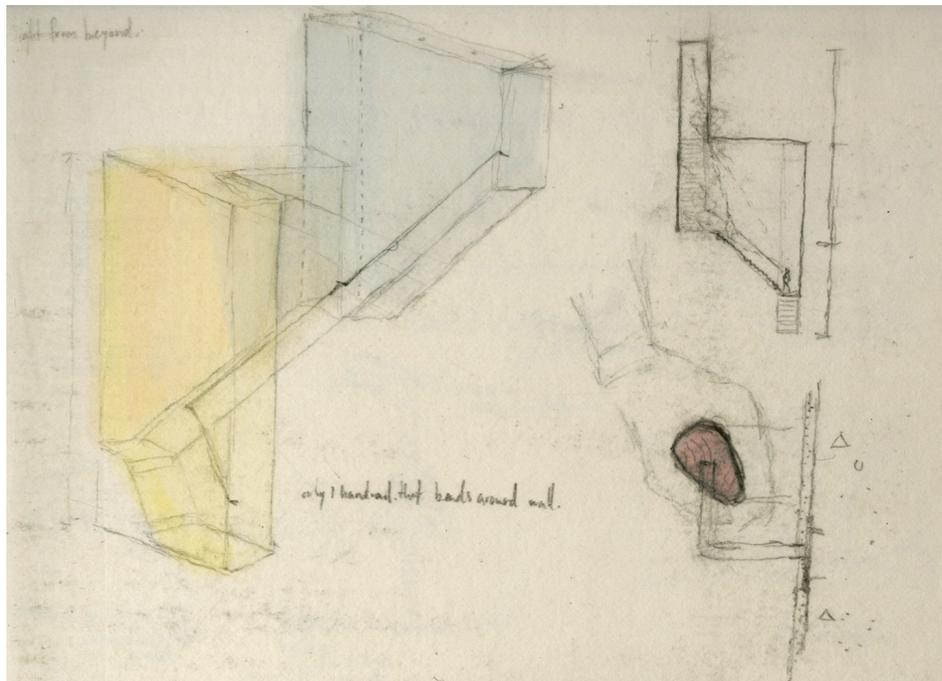


fig. 3.9: A stair that leads one through space.

But the event of form alone was not responsible for affecting the most personal aspect of the experience. The strongest idea of the personal journey was coming from the affect of contemplation that was arising from the virtual expansion. What was present was a feeling too ephemeral to risk distraction and happening in too many dimensions to be rationalized and risk reducing them to simplified terms for the sake of rationalization. While it was not caused by form, it was completely caused by aesthetic.

Setting up Divergence

While being one example of a spatial condition conveying a sense of threshold, this stairwell suggests that the threshold is more of a feeling than a mere definition of form that allows passage. A more significant existence of a threshold was experienced here in the ability of the space to manifest a sense of departure and journey that purports to end differently not only spatially but also one's appreciation of the potential of life. The occurrence here is that of a new beginning, which is the premonition of divergence in this case, but could be a more immediate manifestation of divergence in other cases. In the delay and hope of divergence, we also feel a sense of a promise being made in space, where the promise is that which is yet to be fulfilled, and that the inhabitant then expects it to be fulfilled. The threshold, both spatially, and theoretically, is the passage that both visualizes and allows access to this promise. The threshold will ever remain a promise until the person experiences, occupies, and lives within the form of fulfillment in the different context.

The museum benefits from this sense of anticipation coming from providing a foretaste. The delay provided by this particular setup especially heightens this sense of promise. The particular setup here is pairing the function of passage, a feeling of anticipation provided in the form of the stairwell, and alloying this with the first artwork's prompting for directed reflection, anticipation, and re-contextualization integral to the open-endedness in its opening of the question but not answering it.

The magnitude of the feeling of divergence and the quality of passage are seen to affect this feeling of threshold as well. The feeling of threshold is contingent on the quality and magnitude of the (actual and virtual) event and how it interacts with the inner self. Here the event is massive and primarily virtual, and it brings me to a completely divergent place but wholly integral to the actual. It seems that the degree of the newly lived condition determines the intensity of the threshold. If a threshold occurs by divergence in life, and happens in degrees, from a spiritual perspective, could an entire building not contain a single productive threshold to something significant, though it has many physical manifestations of difference?

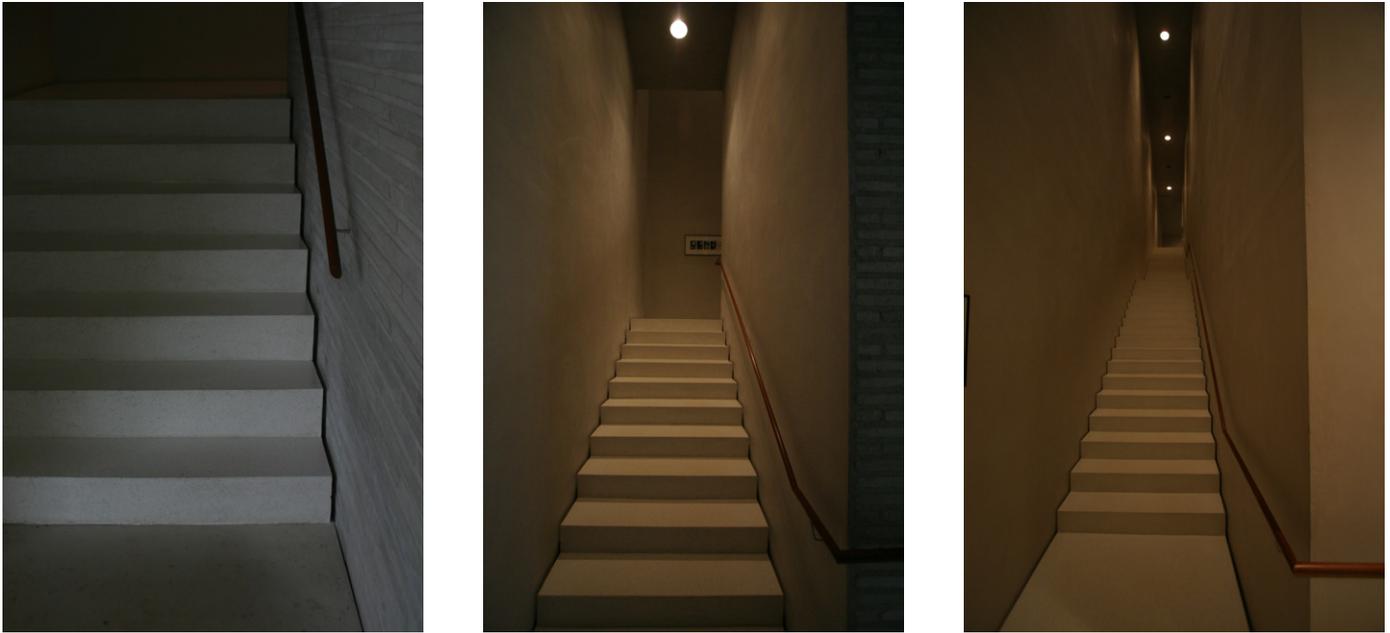


fig. 3.10.

The being of space seen here is not as tangible characteristics like the honest presence of aging and warmth from which the aesthetic operates, as was the case in the operation of the Seniors Home, but as existence that sets itself up and shapes itself as the means of creating experience by its aesthetic operation. And in this operation of a backgrounding attitude, we find the aesthetic's generosity to the inhabitant. In both buildings however, I do not mean the aesthetic is some "representation" of being signifying some other existence, but the way the aesthetic operates in reality is its being—both opening and giving passage to necessary and vital experience in their existing there as they are.

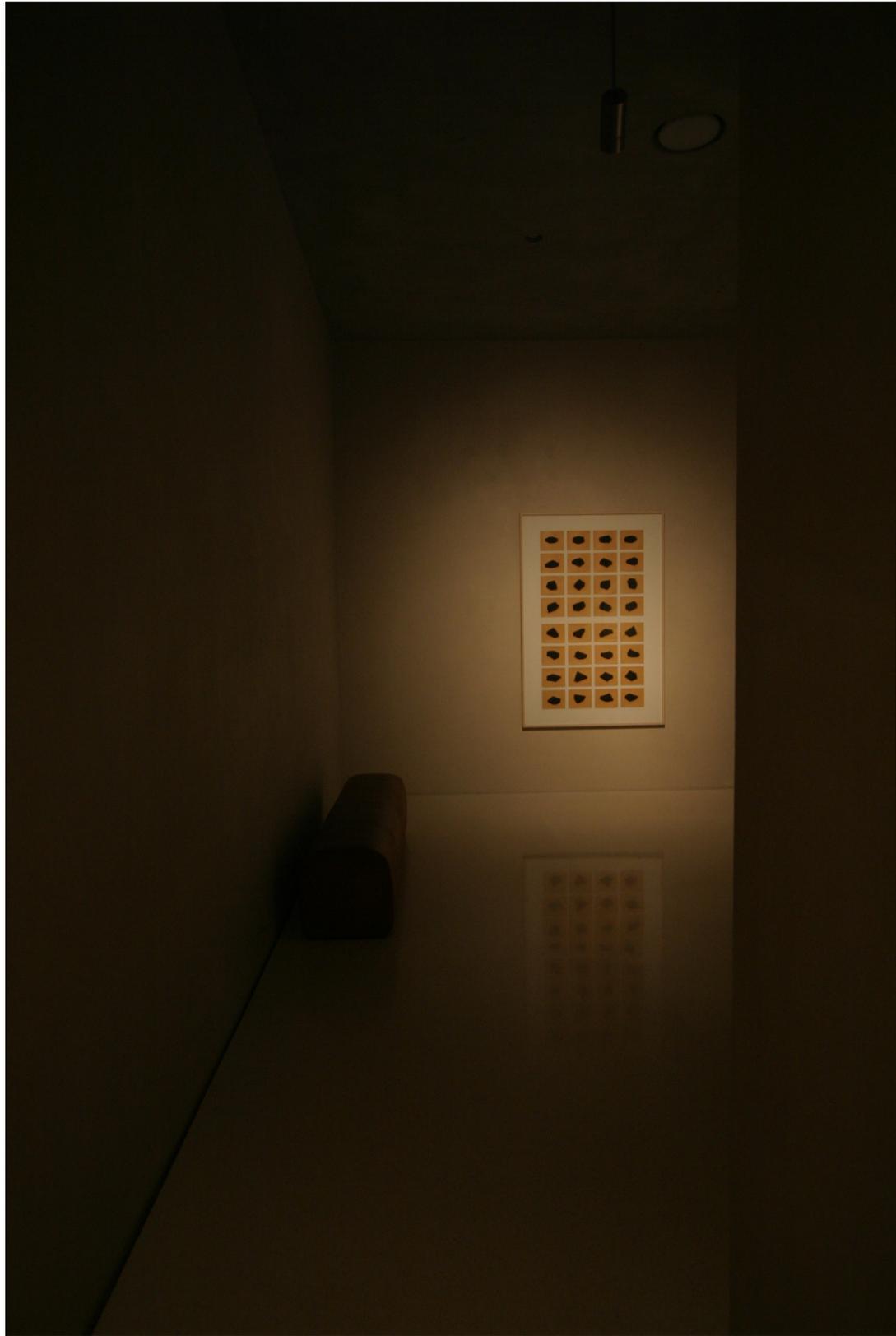


fig. 4.1.

CALIBRATED SPACE: A MEDIUM OF UNDERSTANDING

GALLERY EXPERIENCE

ARRIVING ON THE SECOND FLOOR, the semblance only became more clear. The dynamic movement from partial to full view that I just encountered while ascending the stair was not accidental. I soon realized that the lived-dynamic of the artwork coming into view was a pattern of experience, beginning from the level of the parti, organized by a motif where spaces slip past one another to form a threshold at their corner and a continuous natural flow of space. The *coming-into-view* principle simultaneously *composed* the spatial arrangement of galleries and *explained* the arrangement's characteristic function toward experience, its physical and qualitative requirements in space, and its claim of value on our esteem in the revelation it opens.

“A SEMBLANCE IN ITSELF IS A KIND OF
'LIVING-IN' OF POTENTIAL,
IN THE SENSE OF HOLDING LIFE POTENTIAL
IN IMMANENCE—WHOLLY IMMANENT TO
THE SEMBLANCE'S APPEARANCE.”

BRIAN MASSUMI (2011, 58)



fig. 4.2.



fig. 4.3.



fig. 4.4.



fig. 4.5.

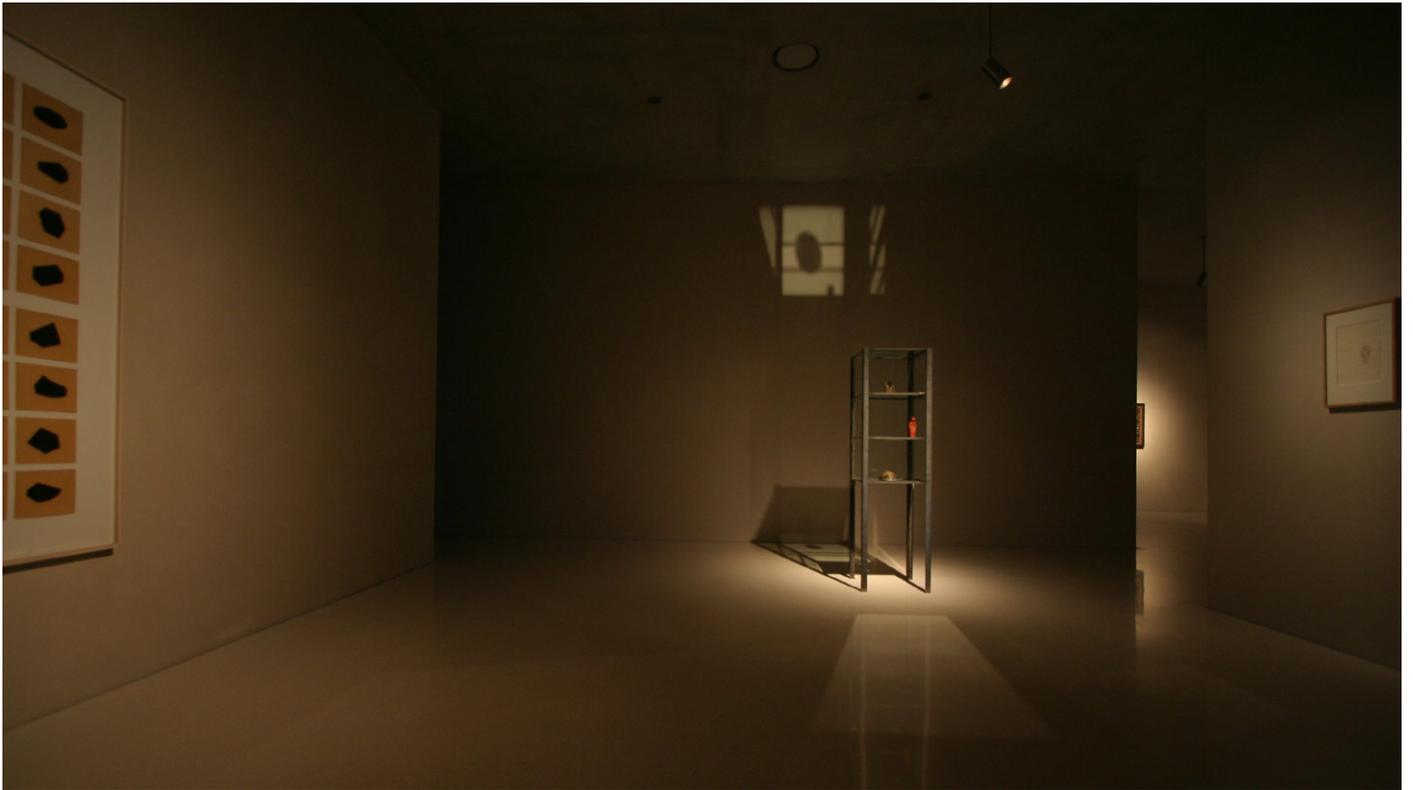


fig. 4.6: The first gallery space.

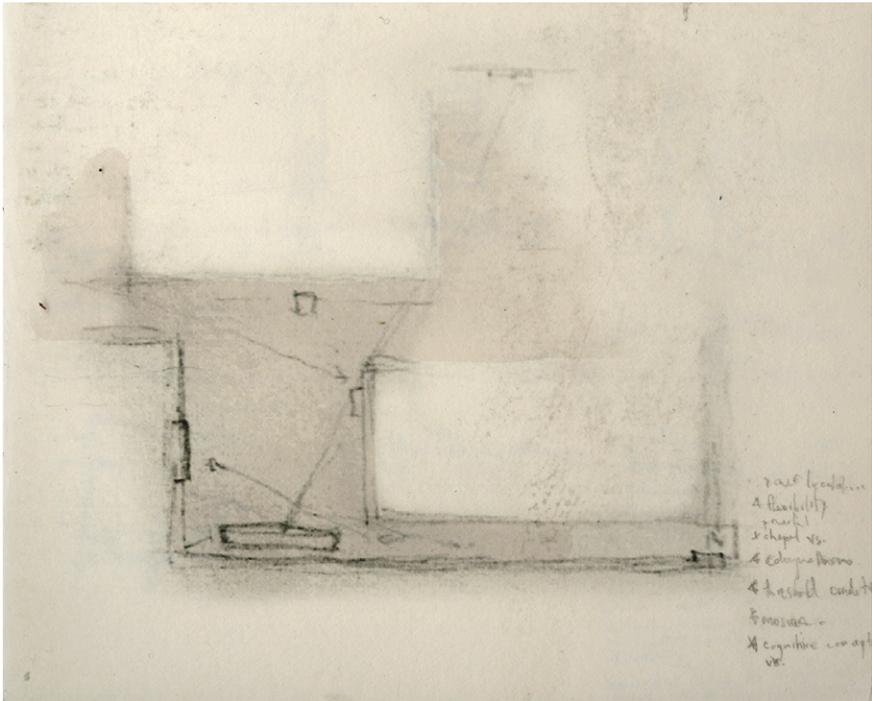


fig. 4.7: Sketch of experience of the first gallery space, and the operation of the primary spatial motif.

Primary Spatial Parti: The Architecture of the Slip

The basic spatial motif of this slipping arrangement operates in a few ways. For one, the threshold separating two spaces, controlled by its width and its depth, determines the visitor's ability to see any adjacent space, according to the viewer's own spatial coordinates. The arrangement also causes a diagonal traversal with respect to the walls, which creates the *a posteriori* space's opening-into-view upon approach of the threshold, while the space behind "closes". The percipient cannot expect the contents around each corner, lending a sense of unfolding revelation as artwork and space appear-into-view. Artwork and light are concurrently used to beckon one forward, coordinated such that a work would be seen but partially at a distance, or that a piece would remain hidden until the subject moves closer in space and it comes into view. At once apparent by the two pieces encountered at the stair, the curators were well aware of viewers' corporeal-spatial context and the sight lines afforded, making use of them to effect surprise and garner contextual relations between the works to, thus evincing greater revelation from each piece.

In the space and material, the metaphysics of revelation—that process of the partial "coming-into-view", the unknown becoming known, and vision being recognized—is experienced here, is immanent directly due to the architecture's material-spatial arrangement and the curators use of its inherent dynamics to affect greater understanding. Each art piece setup within the spatial framework was a visible symbol, an gate that the space was allowing me to enter, behind which was a marvelously open field of reflection. As I encountered each in its context, I quickly sensed beyond them a world of unknown gates, entered and traversed by contemplating the very nuances of their aesthetic, leading to hidden visions—the more important coming-into-view movement of the inner self. The experience of coming-into-view was a single continuum along life's path of discovery immanently lived in the aesthetic that did not distinguish between my journey in the space and my journey in the positioned art pieces, only emphasizing metaphysical movement from one moment to the next. The walls of space, and the aesthetic surface of the art was not the barrier for the dynamic of discovery but rather was only the physical interface allowing other worlds of understanding to enter.

The architecture was making my corporeal-spatial movement associate with an internal movement of becoming, through the wonderful metaphysics of coming-into-view, which occurs in a visitor through the experience of aesthetic and the attitude and activity of close-reading. Continuing onwards, and movement in general, was both a moving externally and internally from the partial to the full. The spatial arrangement cultivated an expectancy that grew within me as I walked the space, due to the relationship embedded in the architecture between seeing and not seeing, the hidden and the revealed; which are all spatial potentials embedded in the framework of the space and the way was giving these felt-relations associative content. As a result, I came to expect of things to happen and then architecture would respond with the appearance of a new objects, or perhaps in the creation of space I could not anticipate. Ultimately, the space cultivated an expectancy for growth within me as I progressed and as these events of true discovery that I could not expect but longed for happened in both space and art.

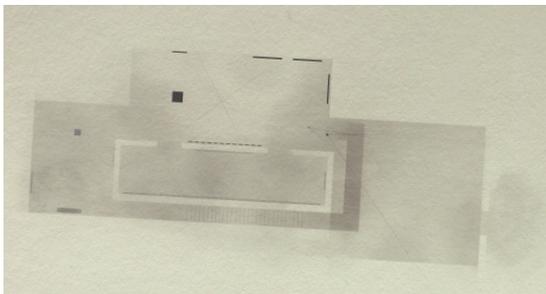
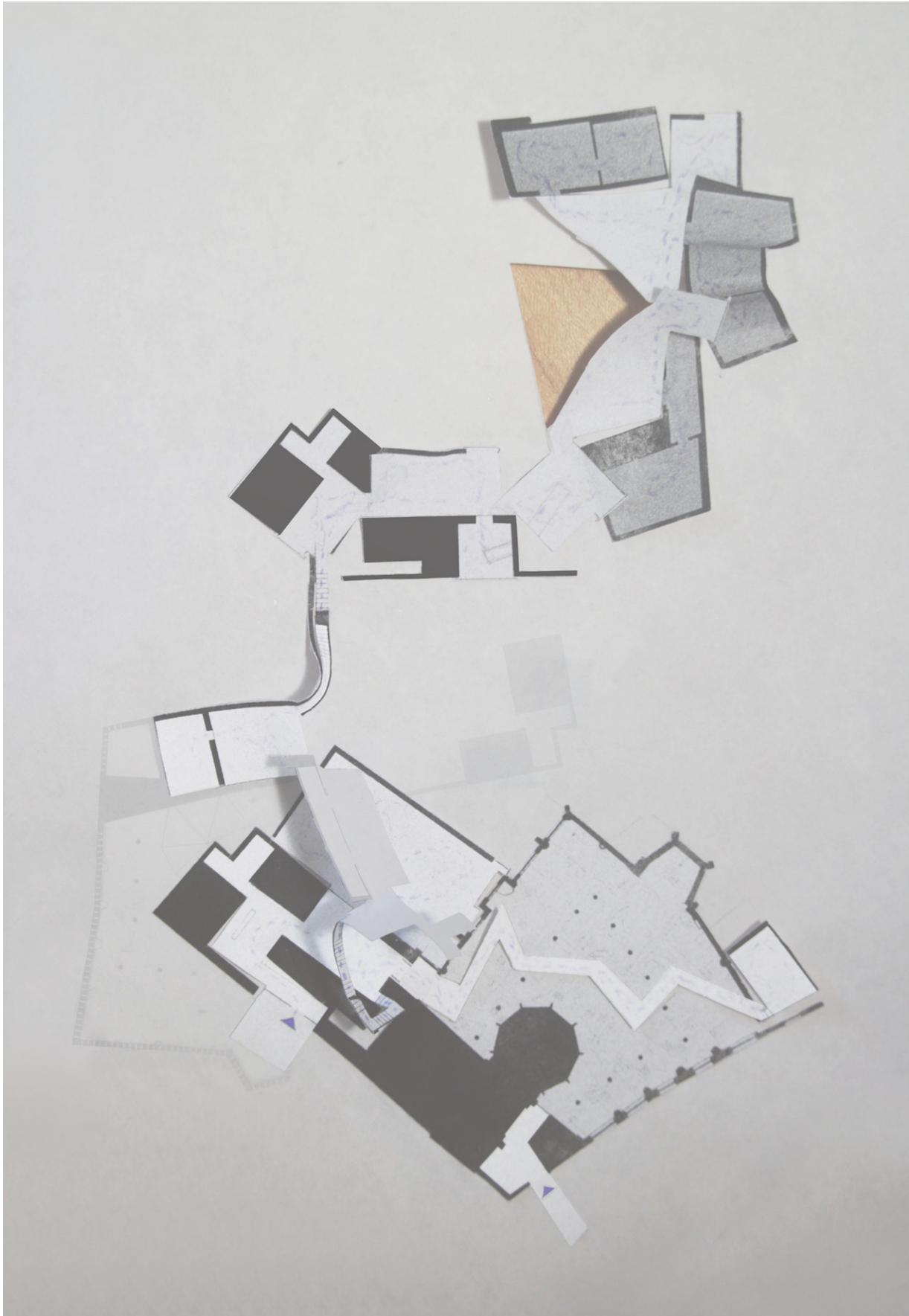


fig. 4.8: Spatial sequence diagram.

By the time I reached the third room of the second floor sequence and made a turn, I had no idea where new space emerged from. All I knew was, as I turned again, this long corridor should have overlapped with the volume of the stair that I had ascended earlier... I give this detail only to describe that spaces that were meaningful seemed to materialize plastically and nascently as I turned corners, giving a feeling of continually expanding infinity. This in turn added a quality of “personal discovery of something secret” to the perception of the artwork encountered thereafter. I felt was exploring progressing into the unknown, however not once did I feel lost. An examination of the floor plan reveals that the museum is a linear progression, explaining why I felt the space to be continually expansive yet never feeling a sense of having to choose directions and feeling confused or overwhelmed.

fig. 4.9: The drawing unfolds my movement through the plan of Kolumba.



The Second Spatial Motif:

A secondary spatial motif can be differentiated by appearance, but remains consistent with the experience of coming-into-view of the first. Interspersed in the quietness of the walls would appear openings—“pure appearances” of thresholds—into which a visitor could literally step, which seemed to be appended to the main spatial sequence in certain galleries.¹



fig. 4.10: A secondary gallery appears in relation to the main gallery.

This pure appearance of the threshold is reinforced and made felt by detailing, especially with the differentiation of the floor's being raised slightly and being of another texture that differentiates its appearance by way of lighting. The threshold that one steps into serves to heighten the felt relation of difference and operates to both separate in perception and add an additional layer of space with views

in and out of each other. The sub-galleries are designed in such a way that the precise experience could be mutable to appear and feel differently in perception and act differently by the curator's varying how they utilize the latent aesthetic and spatial qualities to create various potent virtual events that further a person's understanding.

The particular appearance depends firstly on each sub-gallery's embedded spatial qualities by nature of their deliberate dimensions, proportions, and scale, in comparison to the galleries they were associated with; the placement of the

¹ Pure appearance is a term used by Susanne Langer to describe an object appearing to perception, arresting one's perception and was an alternate way of explaining the perception of a semblance. The term carries the connotation of the thing seen for what it is, more fully than just being seen with habitual meanings and conventional assumptions brought upon it. Where something is seen as a pure appearance, it is understood in her text that an event has occurred upon the percipient where they have experienced the magnetic pull and the tendency of a work of art to have the power of disassociation. She explains, “it is not the percipient who discounts the surroundings, but the work of art which, if it is successful, detaches itself from the rest of the world; [they] now only see it as how it is presented to them, and thus disassociated from the mundane” (Langer 1953, 45).

entrances that determines views; and the number of entrances which influences a person's sequence of experience. The latent aesthetic potentials are the atmospheric qualities contained in comparison to the gallery—light qualities, material qualities, etc. The curators could then use foreground any of these in-built qualities to change the virtual event of the space significantly. For example, I can imagine a few scenarios for the sub-gallery depicted. Its spatial quality of its long and narrow proportions could potentially foregrounded as a felt compression. Depending on the art they put in the main gallery and the sub-gallery, the comparison can be made to virtually be perceived as an event of two colliding realms that has views in and out of each other, and where the magnitude of this collision depends on the frictive yet common dimensions of the juxtaposed art in the two. If the gallery's hierarchical relationship is most automatically felt, the same sub-space could be perceived as an appendix, containing information that would be supportive in relation to the “main” artwork. Another powerful relation could be the virtual distinction of whether the inhabitant feels to be “inside” or “outside”, which could be very powerful when the relation becomes associated with certain art pieces.



fig. 4.11: Secondary Spatial Motif Threshold Detail
(photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

The secondary spatial motif also delivers the dynamic of re-entrance by nature of the circulation weaving one back into the primary sequence of slipping spaces. Common to the secondary spaces was that they return the percipient to the previous space, rather than allowing entrance into a new room. Though it is not a new room one enters, the possibility of eventful newness exists by introducing the re-encounter of a work from an alternate frame of mind and another orientation. In my mind, this opportunity for newness virtually and exponentially expanded the possibility of the unexpected encounter, which translated in my being into feelings of excitement and absorption into the sublime medium of “possible-discovery”, one that became incomprehensibly deep by its layers of meaning.

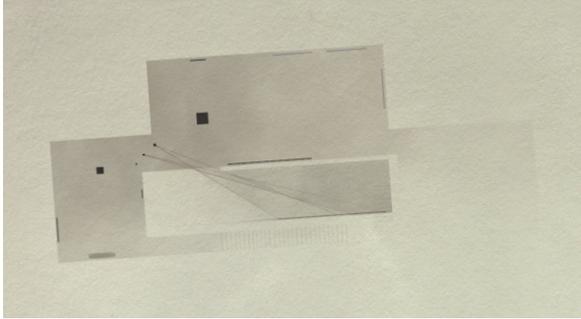


fig. 4.12: *Spatial discovery.*

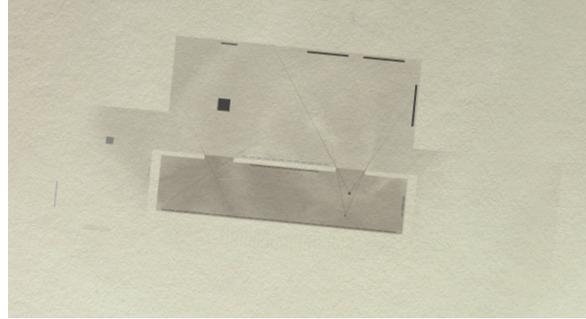


fig. 4.13: *Re-entering.*

There are a few secondary sub-galleries that are each quite different in character, and can be assigned simple descriptors according to their most defining difference: the long and narrow room, the black room, the radiant wooden room, and the pinwheel of secret galleries. Indeed, they did very different things in the continuum of my experience depending on how the curators used them, however they exist as a motif because of their shared functional dynamics and perceptually common qualities—especially the appearance of the unexpected threshold and their dynamic of causing re-entry into the main sequence of spaces. The gallery rooms of the main sequence that contain one of these secondary galleries are given an unique place-value in the exhibition, by nature of the unique events that they acquire by their particular setup.

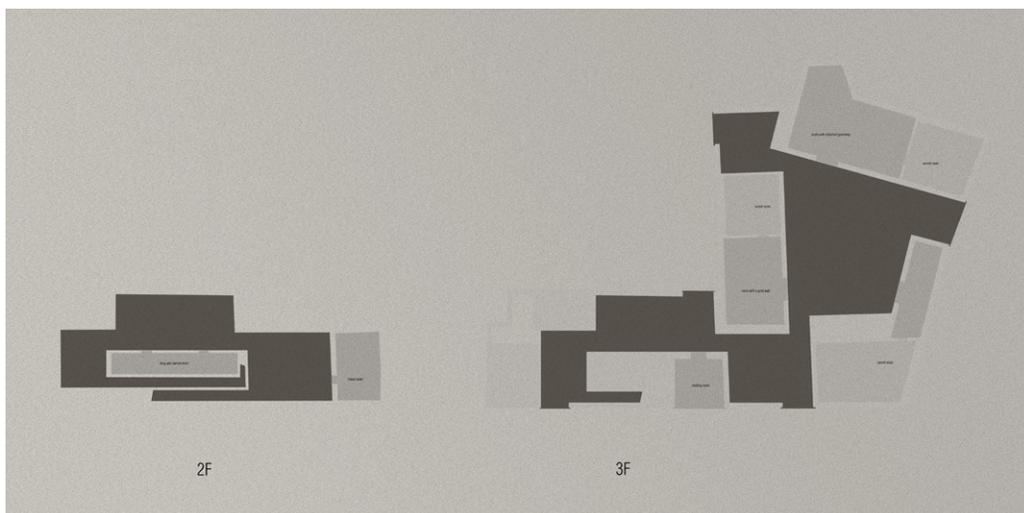


fig. 4.14: *The primary motif (dark grey) and secondary spatial motif (light grey) shown in plan.*

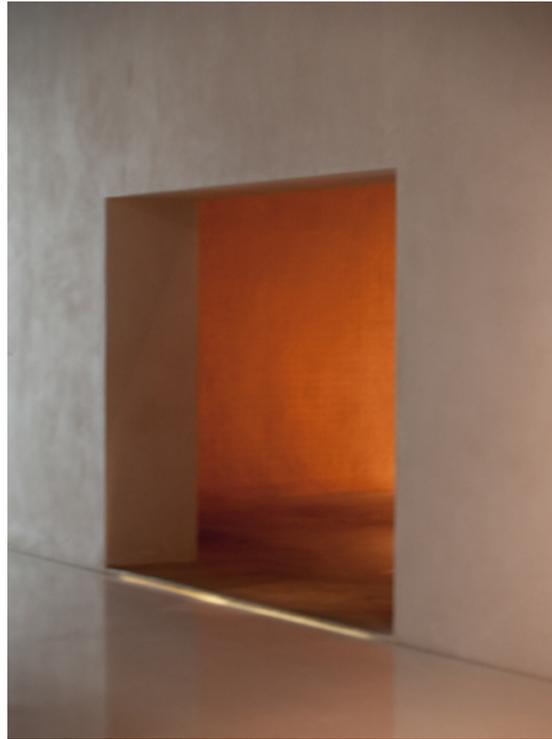


fig. 4.15: View into the room with a gold wall from the main gallery (photo credit: Thomas Krijnen)



fig. 4.16: The gold wall is paired with different pieces in each exhibition, forming different perceptions each encounter.



fig. 4.17: A view with the long and narrow room beyond. The series of 12 images on the exterior were medieval drawings of the months, paired with different a saint, and various iconography.



fig. 4.18: Inside the long and narrow room, were unassuming and careful drawings from the Renaissance that render how light sculpts space and geometry.



fig. 4.19: The black room.

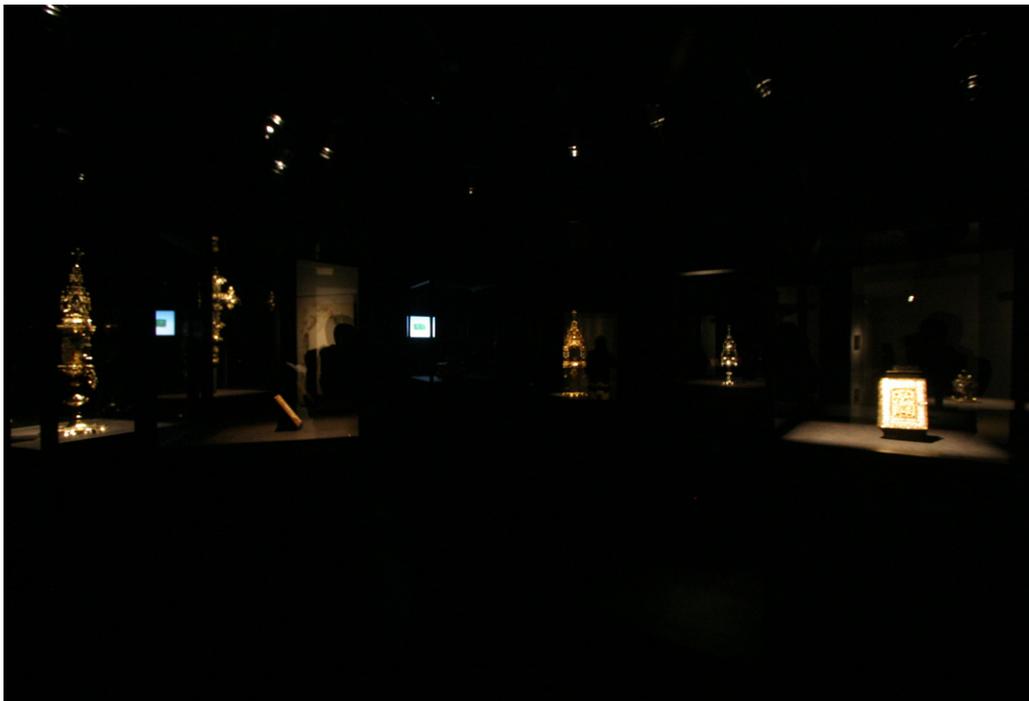


fig. 4.20: The black room contained ecclesiastical books and lampstands encrusted with gold and silver.



fig. 4.21: One of three galleries in the pinwheel of secondary motifs. From the main gallery, the planes of the odd geometry within, that are particular to this sub-gallery, were shifting as I moved in relation to my position by a different relationship to what I had encountered previously.



fig. 4.22: The physical display are related to the images on the wall by a completely abstract yet spatial-positional relationship, that translated into pure meaning being developed in-between them because of its thoughtful arrangement.



fig. 4.23: The wooden reading room.

In general, the introduction of the secondary motif exponentially multiplies the possibilities and the primary galleries' richness. Vastly different experiential possibilities were coming from a simple rearrangement of space. Each gallery is utilized in a way that makes significant use of the characteristic spatial or atmospheric difference. As a perceptible motif, they made each individual experience surprising, and in the most successful cases, the threshold separated its virtual event from the main gallery, and situated potent lived-relations that experientially brought me to a space of new understandings.

QUALITATIVELY BEYOND SPACE (ANALYSIS)

WITHOUT EVEN RECOGNIZING IT, I was inhabiting a space where the virtual was more present than the actual. Because of the heightened sense of it, the virtual was very different from, yet directly integral to, the space that was physically present. I experienced first-hand something of Brian Massumi's description of the semblance: "A semblance in itself is a kind of 'living-in' of potential, in the sense of holding life potential in immanence—wholly immanent to the semblance's appearance" (Massumi 2011, 58). The space was no longer "practical" space in my mind—useful only in a limited functional aspect—it was a fluid medium of appearance and understanding. It was only space in that it had all the dynamics of space, but there was so much more happening dynamically here than in space. The walls were no longer the practical device of such; instead, they were a pure appearance in which thresholds would appear out of the quietness. In this context of being, it made sense that there was an opening into another "world-realm" with sightlines into one another in the way that it did. I found no occasion to think of them as walls because their behaviour and dynamic were working beyond my normal association of a wall.

Susanne Langer's theory of semblance, and that which Brian Massumi later develops from Langer's work in relation to our moment to moment continuum of experience, are both capable of clarifying what is happening in the space. They explain the possibility of simple form gaining an operational dynamic greater than its constituent means, in more specific terms than Peter Zumthor's notion of coherence. This greater operational dynamic, Langer describes, as the quality of otherness in art, which she goes on to explain causes viewers to experience pure appearance. In describing how seeing pure appearance operates, Langer explains, "If we receive it as a completely visual thing, we abstract its appearance from its [practical] existence.... it detaches itself from its actual setting and acquires a different context.... they have a life that does belong to mere colours on a surface..." (Langer 1953, 47). Her example speaks to painting, but elsewhere considers the appearance of life with other forms of art, such as matter in form. Such form she considers to belong to a new order: "[Forms articulate of feeling] lie in a different dimension from physical objects as such. They belong to the same category as language, though their logical form is a different one... their function is not the same" (1953, 52). Langer places articulate form in the category of language only to describe the phenomenon and

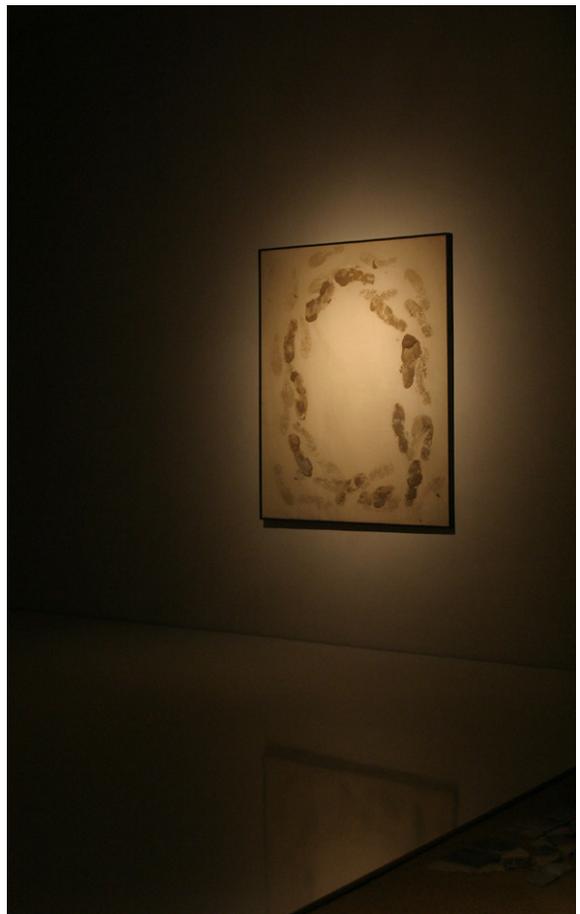
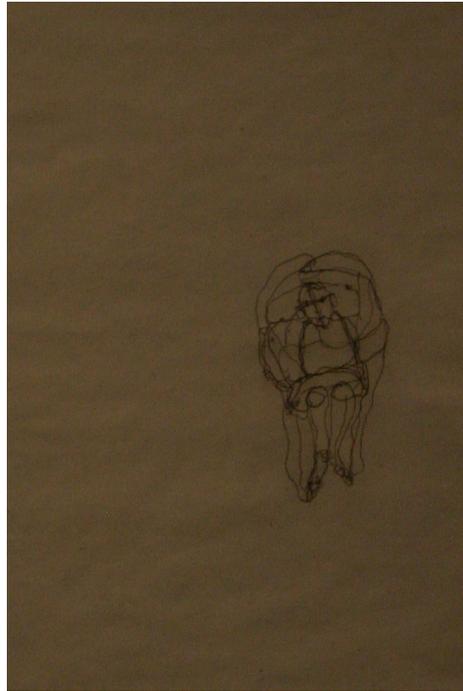


fig. 4.24, 4.25, 4.26: Whether image or spatial, their precise aesthetic qualities, abstract themselves into virtual events.

possibility of form having what some describe as “transparency”, where the form becomes invisible and only allows one to “see through”: to feel, experience, inhabit its integral context. Explaining transparency directly, Langer says thus:

The form is immediately given to perception and yet it reaches beyond itself; it is semblance, but seems to be charged with reality. Like speech that is physically nothing but little buzzing sounds, it is filled with its meaning, and its meaning is a reality. In an articulate symbol the symbolic import permeates the whole structure, because every articulation of that structure is an articulation of the idea it conveys; the meaning (or, to speak accurately of a non-discursive symbol, the vital import) is the content of the symbolic form, given with it, as it were, to perception. (1953, 52)

In the gallery spaces, semblance arises from the potential dynamics of *space*. Events happen qualitatively in the dynamics that constitute the experience progressively encountered with the specific spatial setups of the gallery, the sub-galleries, and the specific artefacts that were situated in them. At each moment, their dynamics operate as a singular, coherent experience, abstracting experience from reality to be recognized in perception as otherwise, such as a medium of understanding instead of as space recognized on the basis that its latent qualities were *doing more* in their articulation than “space”. From previous examples, in-built qualities such as stretched dimensions or texture differentials appear in perception virtually, as events entirely beyond their mere practical existence.

The potential dynamics of space, that were appearing in perception beyond their normal means are dynamics of space (position, orientation, movement). Every position, each step, and each orientation of the body is eventful in characterizing a unique situation due to the shape of the space and the art’s position relative to the threshold between two slipping spaces. Functionally, the position gains experiential significance in being the difference between seeing something or not, glimpsing and thereby anticipating something or not, edging towards discovering something or missing something. Additionally, as highlighted by the possibility of re-encountering a piece from another orientation, the sequence of experience is also a factor determining what is perceived. The order of experience brings about significantly different virtual events.

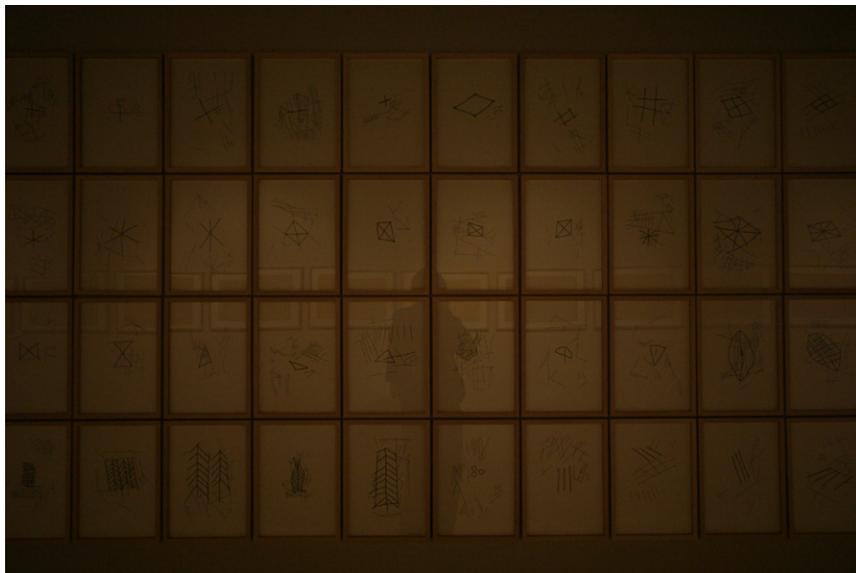


fig. 4.27, 4.28

Qualitative Meaning from Position and Movement

The architecture was a pure appearance making meaningful experience out of the position of my body in space and time, that is, there was an immediacy through a sense of relation to what was around me spatially. This dynamic is commonplace, but the reason the dynamic of position makes itself especially apparent in the galleries of Kolumba is that each object foregrounds itself as a virtual “world” unto itself. A viewer’s relation to a specific artwork (whether in up-close ascertainment or faraway viewership), as well as the relation between multiple pieces, held a certain power in accordance with their position.

Massumi describes the potent possibility of a relational field in his explanation of the semblance of an artwork as comparable to his understanding of Leibniz’s monad. He describes this in *Thinking-Feeling of What Happens*, when he says, “An artwork, understood in terms of its semblance, is a whole relational world...” (2011, 59), i.e. a world that “[connects] to the universe of other things...” (2011, 58). His perspective reveals the gallery spaces with its artefacts—and as I would later discover, all aesthetic existences (a door, door handles, a chair, even a garbage dispenser)—as a place of diverse monads cohabiting the present, where each has its own virtual centre and is autonomous while finding virtual overlap with others: “All formations, [pure monadic appearance saturated in their own virtual infinities, world-fragments, drops of experience, little absolutes, and semblances in their own right that are] cohabiting the present that are completely autonomous in actual relation to one another” (2011, 64). He insists that their aesthetic autonomy does not negate their potential for virtual perceptual interaction, as he goes on to explain: “...Leibniz’s monadic principle, are not ‘closed’ in the sense they are limited, [but] because they’re saturated, because they hold within themselves their own infinity.” (2011, 58) In addition, the “monadism of a semblance is the way a thing includes its outside in itself. . . . its identity ‘telescopes and diffuses into other reals’ ” (2011, 58). The artwork, little absolutes, or fragmentary totalities, in their own saturation virtually enfolds the subject who lives and unfolds the world through “its own singular perspective, and the ‘others’ that it includes reciprocally... equally telescoped and diffused into their singular worldly perspectives” (2011, 59).¹ With

¹ Massumi puts it as “virtually in-folding and out-folding” on p. 59 when he says: “The little absolute is not so much closed as it is virtually in-folding and out-folding. This

the monadic reality unfolded from each artwork the visitor encountered, every position in the gallery is as a virtual situation. The relations and juxtapositions of the artefacts, set up by the curators, began to build “virtual contexts” that would overlap to bring out certain themes and virtual events of very large realities.

Given the artefacts’ functionality through the virtual contexts established with one another, the slipping spatial arrangement provided by Peter Zumthor is necessary in order to give the artefacts placed by the curators enough intentionality to let the works be seen as related to one another in position. The fluid space provides the framework upon which the virtual contexts coagulate to form territories while still remaining flexible enough to allow for the possibility of slippage in cross-relations between rooms. The loosely connected rooms functions as a soft, mutable virtual territories that gives placement and firmer relations of the monadic existences of the artwork to one another; it imbues the measure of intentionality by the works’ positioning within the calibrated spaces. Within the loose rooms, the artworks’ presence and placement use the embedded dynamics afforded by the specificity of each space, including its specific relation to previous and subsequent galleries, allow the coagulation of the virtual territories. The placement of each artwork brings up several questions: why is it on its own or part of a series? Why is it placed in this part of the room? Why is it employed here, in relation to the other pieces? How is this room’s art relatable to pieces in the previous room, or in relation to the introductory piece? Through their specific positioning, more



fig. 4.29.

makes it a fragmentary totality, because it folds from its own singular perspective, and the ‘others’ that it includes reciprocally include it, equally telescoped and diffused into their singular worldly perspectives.”

questions were automatically being given to the percipient as they examined each piece in relation.

In regards to cross-relations between the rooms, artwork previously encountered primarily exists in memory, but as percipients move about and change their relation to the threshold, a view of one of the works might resurface. Percipients cannot discount discovery of a relation that otherwise hovers just outside their awareness; there arises a question of the situation's broader significance: is there an extensive relation that allows cohesivity on some virtual dimension? These viewers are beckoned to sift for an association that might be the key to these monads' being perceived in the same "room", a new room in cognition, a new room in being?

Fathoming more closely Kolumba's interior, we see pure appearance made out of even the dynamics of corporeal movement. Being the means by which the body locates itself at one point (position) and then another (sequence), progression through space—or more generally, the natural characteristics belonging to physical travel that do not necessarily belong to the virtual—itsself is made into a semblance, thereby making transparent some greater relation. In other words, a meaningful experience emerges from the diverse relations that arise out of the body's translation in space, meaning often unnoticed as we occupy space: coming-into-view, the broad term denoting a correlation between the occurrence of discovery and movement; visual expansion upon close proximity; progression unto now-not-seeing as an object moves out of view; anticipating-view, becoming larger or smaller, becoming closer or farther, etc. These dynamics were bringing forward certain qualities and perceptions within individual pieces of artwork.

When pure appearance is made out of movement, reality is felt hyper realistically. For example, when a door becomes larger in view as one exerts energy to move closer, or as one anticipates and truly wants to discover a thing's significance, presence in the body is underlined. Each of these occurrences combine dynamics that have innate qualities, and each of these factors can be foregrounded or isolated further when presented to perception. Its particular intensity of how forcefully it appears influence their affect. Kolumba's making meaning of the qualities that come from movement reveals our unaccustomedness to perceiving the full range of events that constitute our perceptions. These latent dynamics are "slipping behind" the living and we only see "shorthands" without perceiving what is constituting each display (2011, 43-45).

Virtual Contexts

The architecture of the galleries and the curators work in tandem exquisitely. The architecture provides a framework of certain in-built dynamics that allows for certain engagements and encounters, but the curators' choices of artwork begin to utilize these dynamics for the purpose of presentation. The content and events of the virtual contexts are entirely dependent on the specificity of each art piece. I sensed a vast degree of intentionality behind their selections in order to offer the events that were occurring, but it was not until I later read essays written by the curators describing their vision for Kolumba that I discovered how virtual juxtaposition was fundamental to their institution as their mode of operation. Describing their curatorial model and intention in an essay written one year before the architectural competition was organized for their new building, they write as such:

Selective juxtapositions of old and new works of art can help question conventional patterns of seeing and thinking, thus helping to detect the alien element in the familiar one and vice versa... Small exhibitions, which are changed quarterly, hence feature juxtapositions of few works, thereby continuously offering new questions in reference to perceiving the world. (Winnekes 1995)

The curators are clearly not content with habitual divisions in art and conventional patterns of seeing and thinking. They juxtapose categories that aren't normally seen together, such as an ecclesiastical artefact and contemporary minimal art; however, they were doing this not as uncontrolled experiment, but as can be deduced not only from their writing but more importantly from the content and events arising from the experience of their curation. They were doing so as specific experiments in monadic interactions. An example of their view of one selected juxtaposition follows:

One such contrast is the comparison of the 15th/16th century Cologne tapestry *Mystische Jagd im verschlossenen Garten* (i.e. *Mystical Hunt in the Enclosed Garden*) with Richard Tuttle's drawn-and-painted diary cycle *Forty Days* (1989), which he executed while travelling with his then-pregnant wife. Both examples may be understood as approximations concerning the enigma of incarnation. If the same textile is confronted with Rune Mield's *Zeichnungen zur Steinzeitgeometrie* (i.e. *Drawings concerning stone age geometry*), then different perceptions and

considerations surface. For instance, the means by which a universe can be comprehended which escapes the grasp of humankind, and how this universe can then become available again may be called into question. (Winnekes 1995)

The example is indicative of their ambition and the depth of the content they wish to bring into question in the visitor. Note how the content for consideration is brought forward as a completely virtual event happening in between two individual pieces, while also originating completely from the actuality of the works themselves and reinforcing the individual latent qualities particular to each in itself. The visitor is left as a spectator of how these juxtapositions collide and unfold in relation to one another.

The question the model begs is then if the visitor comprehend and find their content in the juxtaposition to which they answer, “with regards to this open concept of presentation, some visitors initially feel abandoned, even left in chaos. However, the visitor is only taken seriously as a being with sensations, dreams, and thoughts. Neither a chronological hanging nor labels force him or her into the pattern of a well-conceived order created using objective criteria” (Winnekes 1995). The project and craft of their work as curators is thus to make the content apparent. They experiment with sensations that are reliant on form gaining a transparency in perception purely by the force of gestalt to the various sensations. In Susanne Langer’s terms, in pure appearance, “...symbolic import permeates the whole structure, because every articulation of that structure is an articulation of the idea it conveys the meaning (or, to speak accurately of a non-discursive symbol, the vital import) is the content of the symbolic form, given with it, as it were, to perception” (1953, 52). By purely visual force, curators are poisoning the body through experiences that carry over, overlap, reassert, and develop from the perception of one artefact to another.



fig. 4.30: Photo of Madonna and Child with an installation by Stefan Wewerka. From the exhibition: "Stefan Wewerka - Old and New Work" in Fall 2009 (photo credit: Kolumba)



fig. 4.31: The Madonna and Child in the same room in a different exhibition juxtaposed with a paper cut out by contemporary artist Volker Saul



ATMOSPHERIC QUALITIES

THE GALLERY EXPERIENCE at Kolumba can be said to be a space where semblances are held to visual form. In the actual-virtual configuration of perception, the percipient realizes how automatically virtually configured the experience is when they realize what they perceive more apparently is the virtual semblance through the actual, than the actual itself, and that they cannot explain the virtual event away. In fact, the virtual contexts developed by the overlap between works is wholly virtual and finds no actual presence apart from the particular position and the objective qualities of each artefact. Yet, the virtual contexts were causing events, which explains how what happened to me experientially in the virtual contexts finds no explanation in the actual in this case, only virtually. But beyond the virtuality of the art's aesthetic reality, there was the virtuality of the building's aesthetic reality as well contributing to my experience as well.

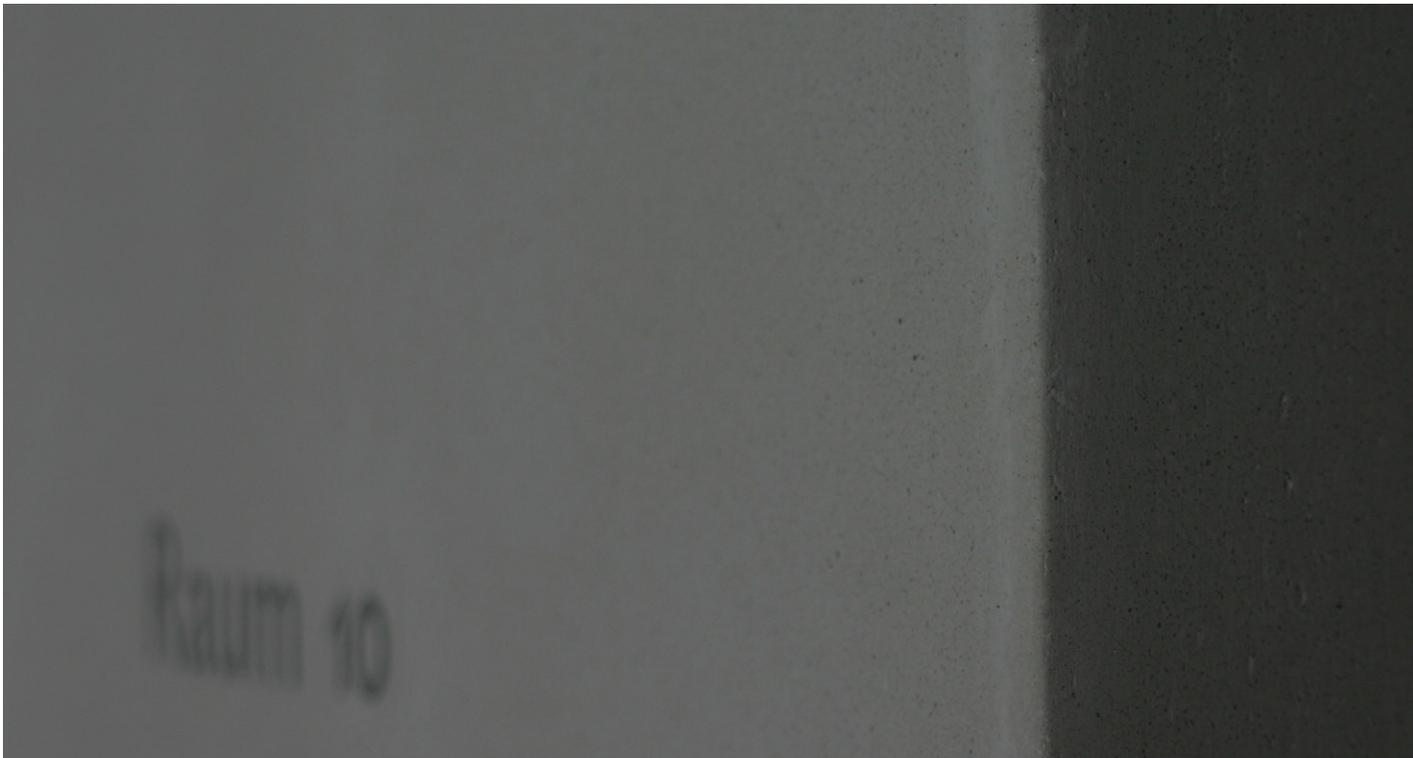


fig. 4.32: The corner condition of the loam plaster.

Quietness

What can explain how a wall is perceived before anything else to be, for example, quiet? Walls in themselves will not foreground this quality automatically, nor hold qualities factually as one observes them. When one experiences the qualities of space, perhaps most qualitatively apparent is that one notices an immense sense of quietness and muteness. This calm is sensed ubiquitously: the actual aural quietness, the materiality of the wall, the reductive intentionality of the choice and placement of artwork without accompaniment of any name and date placard, the flowing, meandering arrangement of space, the darkness, the stillness...

Perhaps, the launching pad for the perception of quietness is the actual aural quietness. The museum was not crowded and doors were found with rubber gaskets to soften doors' impacts. Aural quietness begins to colour and appear with and through everything as it did not exist alone.

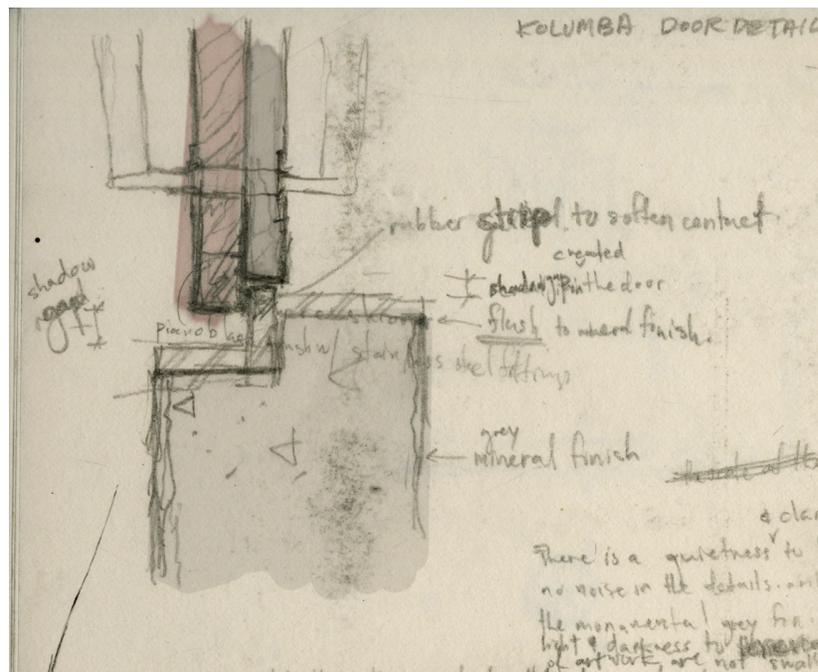


fig. 4.33: The door detail.

The phenomenon that begins aurally continues in the visual reductiveness that really “holds” the quality present in the economy of foregrounding. As a result, peripients live in relation to this quality throughout and that brings quietness to a level where it was affecting me. Another qualitative level is reached via virtual cohesion with the quiet quality of the materiality of the expansive walls. At a distance, the material is perceived as monumental, and one is confronted with the overwhelmingly blank walls by the degree of their blankness or muteness of character. Attributable to the generous proportions of the space, the aesthetic reductiveness pervades the space in its details, and crystallizes monadically into a limited number of art pieces in well situated positions. But as one draws closer, one realizes the walls have a fine mineral finish, speckled subtly with a darker mineral. In this instance, the very act of moving closer is perceptual embodiment of actively focusing, akin to



fig. 4.34: The loam plaster texture in the shadow.

the realization of white noise only perceptible when one listens wholly intently. The synaesthetic mineral noise comes-into-view with such soft grain in the subtleness and the fineness of the material. The materiality embodies an explicit sense of depth, foregrounding further a particular quality by the contrast between the sizes of the black grains that gradually become more minute until only the grey medium is discernible. Here was a peacefulness permeating the walls, held as a qualitative potential and semblant relation in the precise hapticity of the material—a coloured loam plaster likely made up of an aluminum silicate mixed with sand and black glass silicate—depending on viewing distance. The finely textured grain catches both light and shadow and renders a soft quality to the entire wall. The vast scale of the monumental application found both in the focal and peripheral vision, in combination with the few number of minimal art pieces, fill the galleries with a virtual silence.

Note that this presence of semblance does not replace or appear in spite of what is there; it only appears with and through the actual. Like a painting, the virtual dimension is directly a contingent upon what is actual in conjunction with one's situation. They are integral to the material but also adding more experientially, through perceptual encounters, to the actual space.



fig. 4.35: The same plaster on the adjacent wall with light.



fig. 4.36: The second floor atmosphere

Peacefulness

The quality of peacefulness was reinforced by the particular reflectivity of the polished terrazzo floor that appears in the likeness of still water and likely, to a degree, from the loose meandering expansion and flowing nature of the slipping spatial spaces. In combination with the quietness and warm dimmed lighting, there was a living-in relation with even a semblance of serenity. The living-in relation to this pure appearance of stillness was calming internally, especially when I encountered a reflection of a piece with its high degree of reproductive clarity or saw people walk peacefully across it. The light was warm, intense, but not blaring, and it would fade out into a general and calm darkness. The light was coming from and being positioned by pivoting spotlights, and it fell whether on walls or floors in pools, bringing the artwork to light in soft but defined gradients. The reflectivity of the floor allowed the radial



fig. 4.37.



fig. 4.38: *The third floor atmosphere*

gradients of light to achieve ambiguity by mixing reflected light from elsewhere, which gave complexity to the pure appearance at all times. Dynamically, I was most aware of the artwork which received the most light and thus emerged solely. There were certain instances where the gradient of light fell so well with a certain quality on the artwork that there was an incredibly palpable semblance of a monadic vision emerging-out-of-light from this quiet medium. This system of lighting also meant some parts of the space became quite dark. It drew me from space to space and from art piece to art piece. Not knowing what I'd discover, the experience was a peaceful and surprising exploration (spatial arrangement), in contrast to possibilities of fearful or shocking exploration—though this can be changed depending on the artefacts encountered. The space itself was akin to that of finding and exploring a peaceful lake in a forest clearing. It is a scene that one always imagines to exist but never finds, until now.

Intentionality

Intention also appears visually in the pure appearance of space, as a perceivable and factual quality. Interestingly, it becomes present with the quality of quietness as a pure appearance of quiet clarity.

One is first struck visually by the overwhelming degree of blankness in the space, and can question its emptiness, and intention first appears in this pervading sense of carefulness. In a very careful way a reveal always gives subtle clarity to the pure appearance of the space by separating the materials that visually blend the walls, floors, and ceilings. When I began to discover a pattern of sentience behind both what was there and what was not there, I saw that intention began to be visually suspended before me as a semblance. Intention appeared where something did not appear, instead remaining silent; and intention also appeared where something did appear with a deliberateness. When I discovered the extent of calibration in the space, the quality was fixed so apparently that its force beckoned me to question everything's relevance as symbols, even those which I did not understand readily.

As a pure appearance, what is behind the intention is not always readily discernible. This gives the medium of appearance a feeling of the uncanny, as if intention were so powerful that it could materialize fluidly as an object (a symbol); and which asks viewers to discover its secret.

Where intent begins to cohere and become suffused with quietness in the pure appearance is in the degree to which the space remains blank and expansively so. It is the degree of blankness, careful restraint, and reductive effect to which one just sees these quiet walls, that intentionality merges with the quality of quietness. Visually, it appears overwhelmingly silent, choosing not to speak. When omission becomes intentional, quietness is foregrounded in that duration. While the quality of quietness is foregrounded by the visual muteness, the large expanses of blank wall also achieve experiential effect in giving time between the art pieces' encounters, building in an allowance for various virtual or actual events to catch one's attention. When the walls do change, when materials change even subtly, when a detail appears, and when an object does appear, one notices the traces of intention in the aesthetic articulation itself. The emptiness of the room and the lack of other distractions become evident not as a purposeless emptiness. They provide a framework and backdrop of discovery.



fig. 4.39.

The overall aesthetic, while filled with quietness, doesn't remain mute altogether. Intention appears clearly in each situational placement of artwork and their framing in light (emergence from darkness). One would think that the work would be overwhelmed by the amount of wall space, however sparseness was found only to reinforce the clarity of each piece in its reductiveness, while the foregrounded quality of reductiveness serves to give a qualitative consistency to the objects themselves that unifies them.

The aesthetic of restraint and reductive in the degree of blankness is not due to it having nothing to say resulting in the degree of blankness, or reductive as in simplifying, nor as a pre-determined aesthetic stance, it was doing so to make everything that it said more effective, more deliberate, and more clear in small and seemingly simple gestures.

It might even be said that qualitatively, intention is responsible for much of the affective force behind the semblance of quietness. Intentionality potentializes quietness with an active bent. Visually, the intention appears as a simultaneous aesthetic restraint and deliberateness. This was what struck me heavily in the galleries. I wrote while still in the museum, “There is a quietness and clarity to the architecture. No noise in the details, only understanding.” The ability to “see understanding” attests to Susanne Langer’s description of pure appearances that are transparent in their aesthetic. Intention begins to find not only visual clarity but clarity in understanding. Visually, each gesture and articulation finds sense; object placement not only made sense, but highlights intention so deep and intense that the thread of relationships leads one virtually to an abstract locus, which had always had a quality of intention. Quietly, it was “[giving to perception] directly through the force of gestalt alone,” and more than any descriptive words could express (1953, 59).

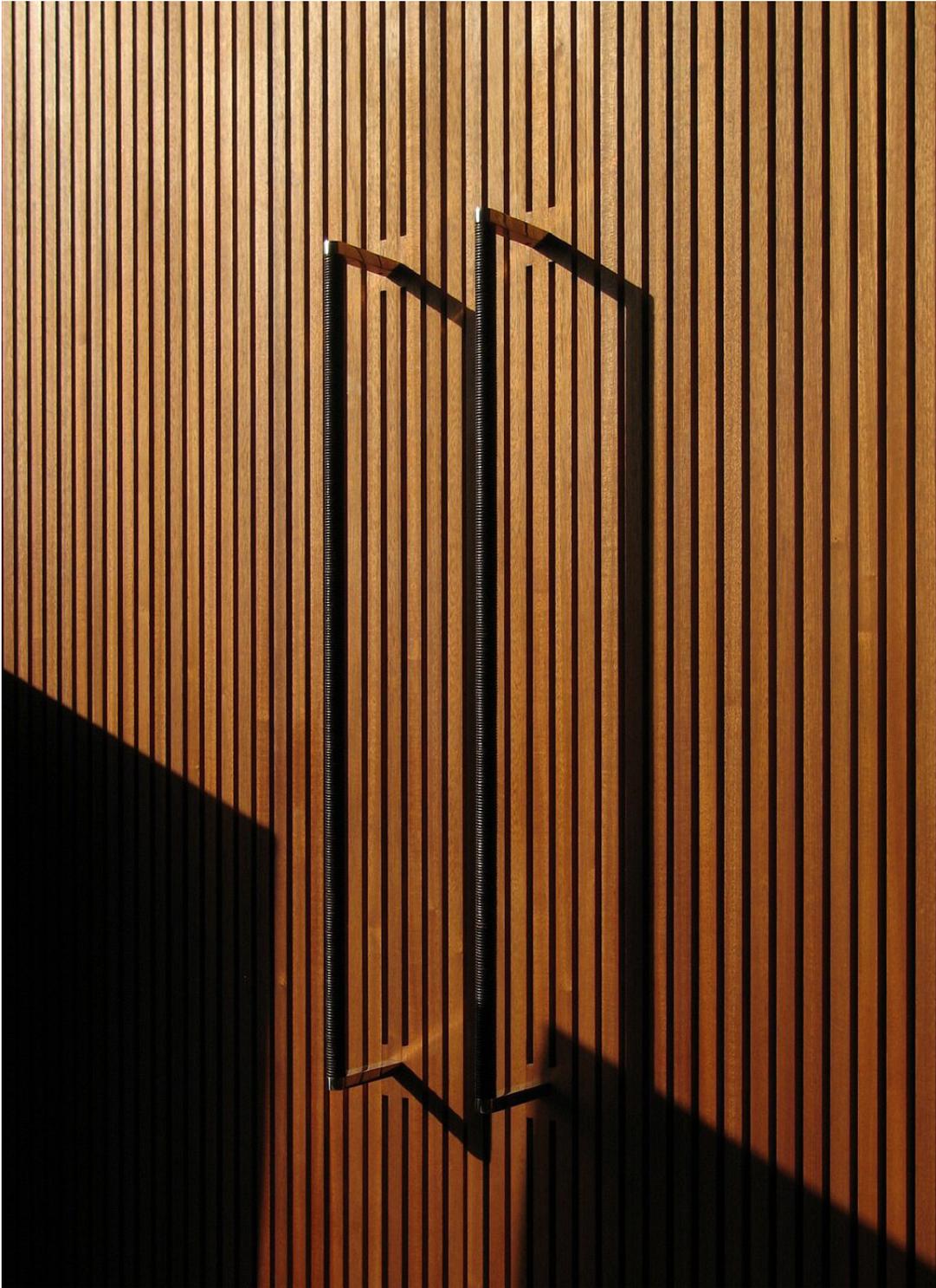


fig. 4.40: Wooden reading room door detail (photo credit: Chris Schroeer-Heiermann)

Expansiveness

It seems that a semblance made of an abstract quality does many things, which makes it difficult to discern where one affect becomes another affect. For example, the expansive quality present in the proportions of the room that offers a levity to the space, beyond the limits of its actual dimensions, contributes to an affect of ease in combination with the peacefulness, while it can even be seen to contributing towards an aspect of humility.

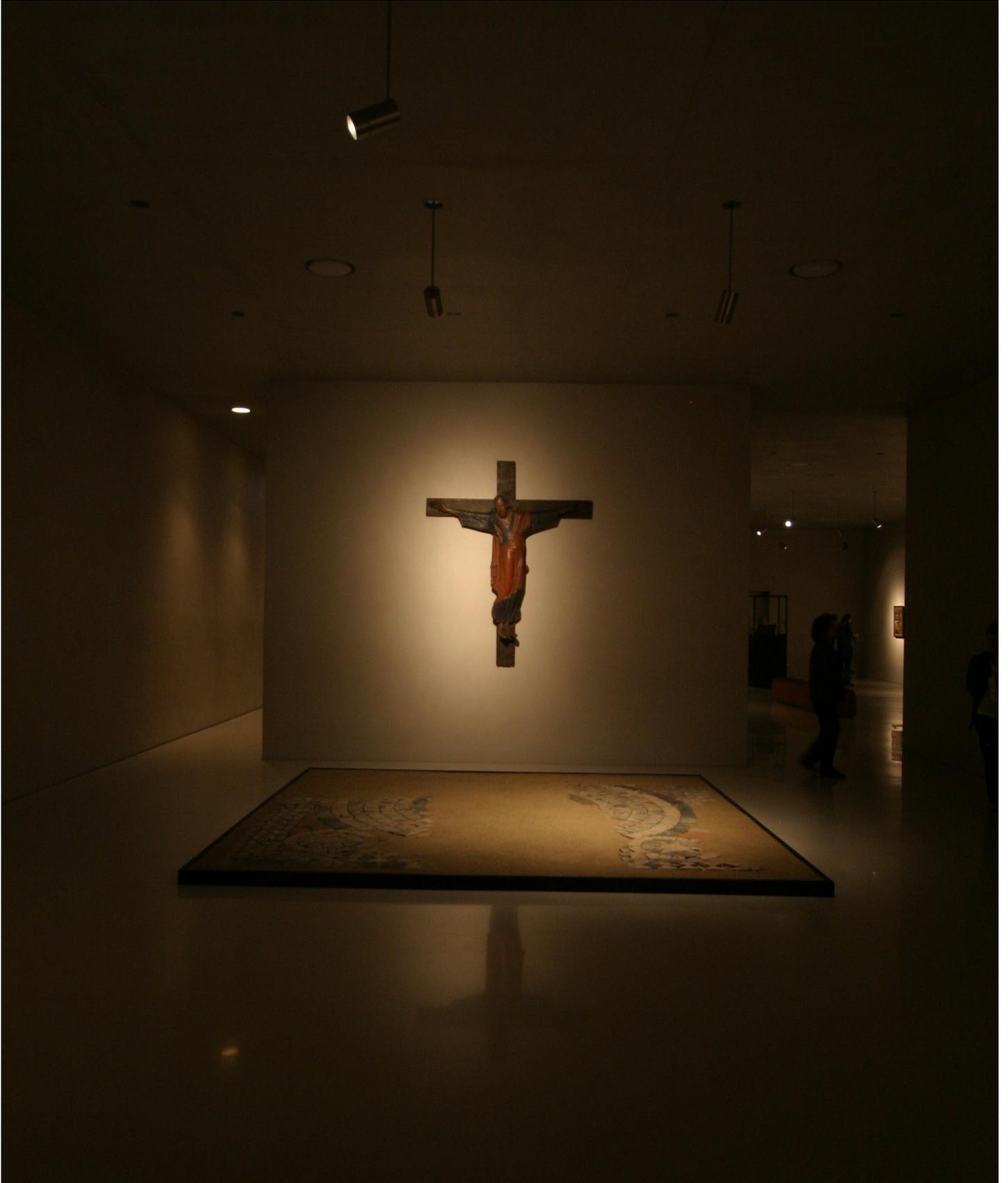
The expansiveness present in the proportions can be seen to offer a levity to the space beyond the limits of the actual dimensions, which merges with the quality of quietness and peacefulness to affect an ease of pace.

A visual blending of the wall material and of the floor provides a dynamic that is at once a diffuse expanse, visually quiet and settling into the background as well. One will note that this careful selection of colours for all surfaces happens throughout the museum. The colours are similar enough that they form a qualitative aesthetic cohesion in terms of appearance, while also allowing each material to clarify and separate itself and acquire its own individual qualities for contribution and performance.

The sight of the meandering paths flowing from space to space is potentializing of expansiveness, which suggests a feeling of the space infinitely expanding in unknowable overlaps with the affect of generating expectancy. It is a semblance of infinite expansion.

The expanse of space between artwork is expressive of the aesthetic reductiveness, which is already contributive to the quality of quietness. At first, the small number of art pieces appeared negatively as a lack, however it begins to imbue a sense of generosity towards the artwork once the intentionality is seen and the work itself is allowed to speak volumes.

fig. 4.41.



Simplicity

The final quality I want to mention is a type of simplicity, which was unavoidably being brought forward by both the ecclesiastical art objects and contemporary, minimalistic artwork. The museum presents art objects that have been seen many times before. They are largely not seen through their individual nuances as works of art but glanced over and mentally associated with their category, especially the ecclesiastical pieces that are part of their permanent collection: a Madonna and Child, an altar piece, a liturgical manuscript... If many of these were presented in a museum like the MOMA, they would likely be overlooked, prejudiced against, and lost. Whereas in Kolumba, they are presented with great dignity, where individual latent qualities are foregrounded and brought to attention in one's perception, and their beings come to be admired for their own characters.

One finds that even the minimalistic artwork, while equally on display and mutually foregrounding, is chosen and operative as a supportive relation towards the permanent pieces. The curators state their position that the permanent pieces belong here and they are housed as the "main residents". Such sentiment is expressed towards the Madonna and Child—with which the Museum especially has a special relationship—a statement in the personal guide given to each visitor: "In Room 10, each year several temporary exhibitions are held, which show works by contemporary artists. A firm component is the Madonna and Child who 'lives' here."

The apparent simplicity and understated aesthetic of the artwork finds a beautiful qualitative overlap with the restrained, reductive, and "subtly magnificent" aesthetic of the building. There is the possibility that the aesthetic came about as a mimicry of the qualities of the art objects, but it shows itself continually to be far deeper in intent and supportive through its qualitative dynamics.

This is to say that the beauty of the building is operative, and it becomes more factually beautiful as a viewer comes to know its being more intimately. At the bottom of the aesthetic being of the gallery, one finds operative relationships enforced and not arbitrary, stylistic or qualitative fancy: that which is overlooked is displayed, that which is understated lifted up high, and that which is humble celebrated. With these relationships throughout, as a whole, the exhibition communicates a different understanding of beauty that knows the virtues of the understated while not disregarding the beauties of the more directly assertive. In relation to the understated and easily dismissed artwork, each piece is treated with individual respect. They are given ample space, in most cases, with only one piece or one series displayed



fig. 4.42: Jermias Geisselbrunn, *Madonna & Child*, ca. 1650 (p.c.: Kolumba)

on an entire wall to assert more firmly that there is something to discover though they could otherwise be easily dismissed. Simultaneously, the presence of intention draws your attention to the objects and beckons one to not dismiss artworks without consideration; the quietness of the medium begins to slip itself behind these artefacts in perception as they emerge, and there is nothing else to look at except the pure force of their appearance; the material finesse in their visual quietness, subtle magnificence, “activate” as the grain of the plaster appears when one comes close and they sparkle with light from a certain angle. The space shows itself to be actively and intentionally celebrating the artwork, and offering an appropriate and necessary re-examination of understated qualities that one would have never thought possible.

What first appears as simplicity, in the end, is an understatement not without purpose; not because of a lack but belonging to a “style” all its own. The building and the curators create a place where this is brought to light completely visually. Beyond the active backgrounding operative relationships (qualitative dynamics) mentioned above, this affect can also be attributed to the active qualitative economy of foregrounding—the lack of inertness in foregrounding qualitative potentials—by both the space itself and the artwork. Their combined active foregrounding perceptively opens one to see beyond the surface of these art pieces and artefacts, or to be more precise, to disassociate preconceptions of what is expected from the sheer individuality of what is there actually before you.

In order to do this, the qualities foregrounded in the work, in the case of

the main collection especially, were necessary qualities for their appreciation. The richness of the experience is almost entirely contingent on the depth of the content that is brought forward. Though operative, the architecture, the curatorial model, and the virtuality of the space are only the medium and framework providing a substrate for the individuality of the artwork to appear. Though contextual aspects facilitate and offer a framework of experience, they in themselves are not the purpose of the experience—though what is clear is that there would not be the same experience of the artwork itself without their setup. The content is entirely based on what is being brought out by the juxtapositions of artwork itself, the framework and medium of discovery, and what is discovered.

From the building, a backdrop and framework of many qualities grant a virtual fullness to the experience by qualitatively intersecting perception of these art pieces with the apparent qualitative potentials at various moments of quietness, peacefulness, tranquility, and expansiveness. The intersection draws forth these embedded qualities in the artwork themselves—qualitatively meshing the work to not seem foreign to the space—or showing their lack and making them appear more distinct in vision. Along with the qualitative foregrounding of the artwork via the virtual contexts, they were drawing out beautiful dimensions and a richness of content in the artefacts by their qualitative overlaps where simplicity became valourized.

Though the contemporary artwork displayed is also decidedly simple, this fact is only the first of many relationships drawn between their universe of differences. So vastly different are the categories that the pure appearance plunges one quickly beyond the surface to where one encounters the curator's keen sense bringing forward unconsidered values latent within both the art pieces and artefacts, that span across their universes. Aesthetically, each monad finds productive relations on a variety of their in-built dimensions far beyond its surface and the richness derives from the depth of insight each communicates: the juxtaposed example that the curators gave brings about such deep considerations as “the means by which a universe can be comprehended which escapes the grasp of humankind, and how this universe can then become available again [which] may be called into question” (Winnekes 1995). Each relationship foregrounded and held something new there virtually in appearance.



fig. 4.43: The second paper cut out by contemporary artist Volker Saul juxtaposed with the Madonna and Child

AFFECT

THE CULMINATION OF SPATIAL QUALITIES operatively effective and efficient gestures that work generously for the objects; they perform directly and in a selfless way, tied to what the objects need. The intentionality of the space is seen to be celebrating these pieces. The building performs extravagantly to induce these art pieces' appreciation to be seen with such esteem in the perception of the visitors. So calibrated, so qualitatively contributive is the space that it is able to be explained in terms of what it offers the object. The architecture does so with grace, readily, as the backdrop, and it does so effectively, actually bringing forward a fuller perception of the individual natures of these works. It shows a powerfully humble intention, so powerful that it reforms the architecture through this motive force. The presence of this aspect of humility is poignant. It is truly dynamic and eventful as a lived relation in its presence, as an incredible vision of beauty in the realm of life's potential. Seeing it filled me with a feeling of admiration, but even more importantly is that it left me with an experience of appreciating the unappreciated.

The space, "boot-strapping on its own in-built tendencies", with these qualities that amounted to the semblance of medium of appearance along with the highly suspended virtual framework would seem to tend towards causing in perception and experience a greater appreciation of the work and actual discovery. For me, this was the experience of the metaphysics of discovery, an appreciation of the unappreciated, and the celebration of the simple (2011, 54).

I noticed I even began to see people differently, which I consider to be because of the space. I was seeing more, not only in being more attentive to the



fig. 4.44.

pure appearance, but also because knowing there was something past the surface of these people having become accustomed to seeing more virtually and constantly forced to look beyond the surface. But also it wasn't only because I was accustomed to doing this, but also that the qualities of the space was doing this by celebrating these qualities.

I realized there was a change in me because multiple times I was moved by encountering a person, feeling and responding to them differently. The first was an elderly woman in blue who I encountered as I ascended the stair to the third floor. She was standing directly next to a large picture window which was illuminating her with a brilliant white light. In that moment, she had an angelic image to her, her hair was white as snow and the powder blue in the white light was so appropriate in its sharp coolness and glorious heavenly azure.

The second was a man with un-kept hair and wearing a rugged overbearing coat much too large for him who was gazing contemplatively out of another one of the a large picture windows. My gut sentiment was that somehow he belonged to the place. He fit the paradoxical aesthetic of the unexpected that “belonged” and became expected in the museum. His presence was poignant celebration of the simple and what was beyond the material. Seeing his presence triggered a relation for me of seeing an image of Lazarus, a character in one of the parables of Jesus. I was feeling as the rich man in the parable who missed his opportunity to loose Lazarus’ suffering in the ways he could. My lack of compassion became so apparent in the compassion I was now so present in seeing him “as he was” (in a pure appearance) in a peaceful decontextualized place.

The third man was the man in the wheel chair, which just foregrounded the latent potential of ruin as a burdening weight on man himself. However, I think seeing his reclaimed dignity yet humble stature peacefully gliding across this reflective floor was to be witness to incredible life potential. For me his was an image of overcoming a season of incredible hardship while yet being in the midst of the hardship. He was an aesthetic testimony to the found possibility of a sweet victory and peaceful resolution in the midst of brokenness. Seeing him in relation to the artwork and reappear in my vision at certain points was only intensifying the semblance, with this dynamic and perhaps richest layer of making semblance of people directly in the “Gestalt of living experience” (Langer 1953, 66).

Seen was an image, but certainly also a looking past the image. Perhaps, from

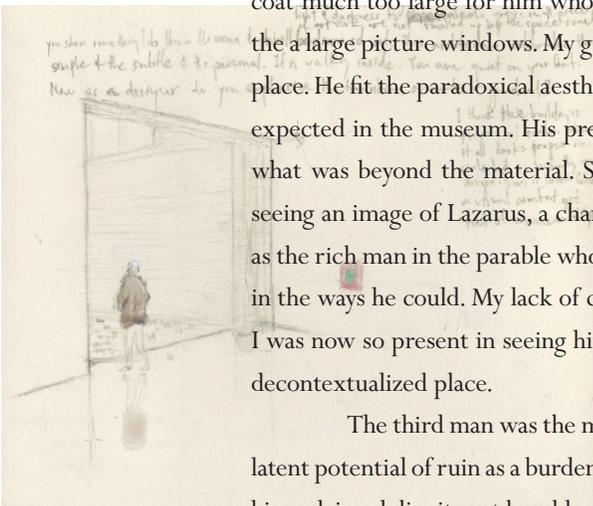


fig. 4.45.

qualitative overlaps, it afforded a glimpse of the purity of simplicity, genuineness, individualness, a sheltered warmth residing at the depth of their core integral to their being and expressions; or perhaps, as expressed through inquisitiveness and their “search” in the space. I did not know their story that brought them here, nor did I feel presume to know something about them. They were being perceived by me as pure appearances integral to their individual being and expression. What you got was a glimpse of what their story might be but overwhelmingly the sense was that there was more there, a fullness to their personhood. When you approach one knowing that they have a unique story, you approach them with a genuine respect for the full depth of their being.

It needs to be noted that these people were not the only people I encountered in the museum. I think there were particular things about these people that caused me to be moved: what the place was—especially the feeling that this was a space abstracted from reality—where I encountered them; the quality of light that was falling on them; the rugged jacket, the elderly, the wheelchair; and this atmosphere of peacefulness and tranquility that was not only environmental but was present within each individual, coming across through their own individuality and actions... it was forcefully making the perceptions appear, even momentarily, to be felt, contemplated, and lived in.



fig. 4.47.

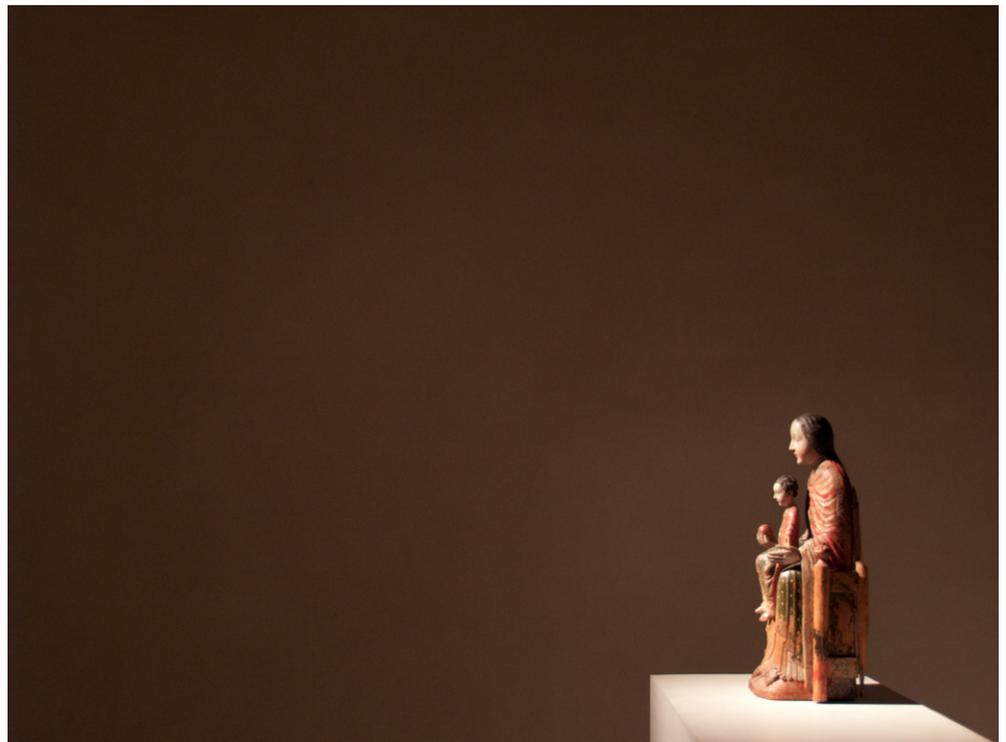
Within the immanent lived-relation of its combined semblance, I was walking more softly, respectful of others' presence, not wanting to disturb another's experience of what I was experiencing. I deeply wanted them to have the same experience. I remember smiling at all the guards. If it were not that they spoke German, I wanted to ask them, are you seeing this?! This is amazing!) I was walking more comfortably, enjoying the freedom and luxury of the generous expanse and the uplifting quality of the expansive proportions. I was walking more peacefully, enjoying the comfort of the shadow and the serene environment. I was walking more expectantly, because I did not want the richness of the virtual and discovery to end. I thought to myself that I had stumbled upon something valuable and found a treasure of a place. I was walking more humbly, humbled by the presence of a true humility knowing that it was generously giving to me.

As amazing as the affect was, in changing the way I was inhabiting, the primary success of the museum is in how it contributes to and makes the artwork it houses more understood. It needs to be noted that the semblance only adds to the function of the exhibition and not detract from it by indeed qualitatively potentializing a change in my own response, but contributing to understanding both in its spatial quality and spatial arrangement.

Together, the presence of quietness, peacefulness, expansiveness, and quiet intentionality (aesthetic reductiveness) were virtually relating and adding to the semblance of the medium of appearance. If it were not for these quality, the medium of appearance begun with the spatial arrangement that foregrounded the qualities of position and movement would not have been as fully encompassing as it was. One can imagine, the medium of appearance would not have perceived so much with its otherness in likeness as a *medium*. The suspension of the position and movement seems to be contributing more to the massive deterritorialized feeling of the space, but the synergies it finds in the materiality, lighting, and the overall aesthetic to form the semblance were certainly adding more to its otherness. We see it alloy with the spatial arrangement coherently in order to make the semblance more intense, more set free from normal embodiment. But beyond the affects of expectancy of the hiding and revealing of views of the spatial arrangement, and the focus that it affects, the materiality of the space and the aesthetic quality was furthering intensifying the focus and expectancy within me by the semblance, while

also adding the affect of instilling a quiet within me. The expectancy setup by the form in combination with quietness, peacefulness, expansiveness, intention, would not have been without the presence of these qualities. Together, they functionally do more than space, as one lives in immanence within the semblance. Note the qualities finding coherence together as the semblance seems to reveal the aim of the space semblance to be *filled with the virtual events*. The virtual events primarily stemmed from the artefacts themselves, but the qualities themselves also were contributing a very pure and intense layer of qualities to the virtual contexts of qualities. We can see how the perceived quality of space contributes to the built metaphysics of discovery by its lack of noise, its medium-ness, its spatial arrangement all foreground what is virtual to be experienced more fully, which is the role of every museum, but it fulfills this in a more directly virtual way.

The quality of simplicity, while finding qualitative overlap with the aesthetic of quietness, contributed separately to another affect that has no relation to spatial arrangement. Because of the qualitative presence of simplicity set up in a relationship



where it was celebrated, by its simultaneous backgrounding of the architecture itself and the emphasis on the wonderful virtual beauties of the style of the work itself, there came the event of coming to appreciate that which I would have otherwise overlooked. In combination with the rich intentionality of all the actual aesthetic I was paying respect to others and the artefacts. I was taking the time to look past the surface aided by the virtuality that allowed me to penetrate deeper than regularly, but also I was taking the time to look at that which I did not immediately understand. I noticed myself paying attention to the most minute details and small gestures because there was care placed into it, but most importantly something to find behind it. The space was not allowing me to assume something was accidental, assume I already knew, and assume there was nothing behind the surface.

According to Massumi's theory, this experience all are affected from qualitative expression or relational setups as they intersected myself moment to moment to create an evolving unfolding situation. This makes sense to me because I would not have felt this way, done these things, and experienced the understanding I received if the aesthetic had not been setup the way that it was, if the museum would have been different, and if I was not living immanently related to what was there. The specific set of encounters and events that intersected each momentary situation, potentialized a whole set of new responses within architecture that I would not otherwise has experienced without the occurrence of these events.

We realize that the "quality of space" is a much broader topic than what is commonly thought of as spatial quality. It includes any quality that can be foregrounded and held in perception in the experience of space setup by the architecture. For example, the quality of spatial arrangement, the quality of the materials, the quality of space itself like position and movement, quality of artwork, quality of people (their expressions, their gestures), quality of movement, and their all dynamic progression in time come together in perception can all contribute to alter experience. But it is not only suspension of individual qualities but their unity together as semblance. Kolumba demonstrates that what moves us can be much larger than any of the individual parts and details, and that everything together can find virtual cohesion. The semblance is much richer a thought, much more nuanced a thought, than any individual piece, yet they all individually contributed to this semblance from disparate operations of the architecture.

fig. 4.48: (photo credit: Thomas Krijnen)

APPLICATIONS

Virtual Mutability

It must be noted that the presence of these qualities and the presence of virtual semblance does not replace the actual, nor does it appear separate and in-spite of what is there, it only appears “with and through” the actual (2011, 41). Take for example, the specificity of the plaster or the quality of the reflectivity that brings up the ephemeral perception of tranquility in my situation. The presence of semblance, in the same way as a painting, is directly integral on what is there actually in conjunction with one’s situation. What do is add more experientially, through perceptual encounters, to the actual space.

Another qualification that must be noted because these qualities were perceived virtually with and through the actual, is that they may not appear the next time I visit, nor if they appear again may not affect the same thing again because they only appeared because of the exact encounters during my visit and the situation I myself was in. For example, if the curators decided to not set up the artwork with the generous spacing or if virtual contexts were not finding qualitative overlaps that were engaging, if the exhibition simply changes its content to be for example a fearful content, or even if I return to museum another time during the same exhibition; what appeared as qualitative quiet would begin to alloy differently, be perceptually different, and poise the body differently. Likewise, a change actually has implications virtually, and exponentially so. A change in material or any variable in quality or the intensity of a quality can result in a major change in semblance. Or another example: the change in the quality and dimness of the lights is capable of altering the semblance and the artefacts as well so that their appearance they tend-towards something else entirely.

The theory of semblance presents objects as less fixed and more mutable in perception than we often consider of our perceptions that always appears so factually in the situation of encounter. Because of virtuality, the actual always has a “margin of creative indeterminacy” (2011, 64), and can be reconceptualized as something entirely different than what it might have been perceived as. The virtual portion of perception allows for difference in perception and also for qualitative cohesion. What qualities are foregrounded in perception can change drastically, as with the example of something changing in perception from generous to poor, to arrogant. We know appearance of the same object can change even to the point of

qualitative pungency. Depending on what has happened to the object, knowing it more intimately, or experiencing it in another situation, it might become so virtually repulsive that we outright reject it. Conversely a thing can also become qualitatively beautiful that it becomes an object of desire.

Because of the virtual, the “smudging” of perception can occur, which is a term Massumi uses to describe utilizing virtual mutability that describes how we can make something tend-towards something else and appear in a different context in one’s perception. “[The perception of] ‘likeness’ will smudge strictly logical categories [operations] to the extent that the body tends-to, moves on, transfers habits, reflexes, competencies, and thinking-feelings from one thing to the next, expands its repertory of dynamic postures by mixing, matching and alloying them, explores its own living potential, strikes new postures—invents new ways of affording itself of the world, in collaboration with the world, with what the world throws before it.” (2011, 50)

An important application of the mutability of perception in the virtual occurring in the museum is the dynamic experienced of how a perception would change in appearance over time. The few number of pieces of art was firstly perceived



fig. 4.49, 4.50, 4.51: The three hidden double height rooms on the third floor, hidden in the secondary motif spaces (photo credit: Yuri Palmin)

as a poorness but over experience it came to be perceived as a generosity toward my understanding in the end, or with the example of how the minimal aesthetic demonstrated itself to be wholly other than self-serving by it contributing to a fuller perception of the work itself. The change in these perceptions over time had a drastically different affect—they are both examples of the drastic shift in affect possible depending on what appears in perception. Whether generosity is perceived, poorness, or arrogance is perceived changes ones response to the same object drastically. The possible visceral emotional response that appearance is able to elicit, though the particular emotional response may vary from person to person. The presence of the quality of humility was poignant. It is truly dynamic and eventful as a lived relation in its presence as an incredible vision of beauty in the seeing of life potential that filled me with a variety of emotion, including admiration, which would have been very different if I continued to perceive the architecture as self-serving in its being. In both cases, different than the previous qualities which were sensed more readily, the perception of generosity and humble intention was a perception that only developed over time; a presence that only becomes apparent and fuller as I observed the nature, the gestures, the character, of the building reinforcing the presence of the quality until it appeared factually. Perhaps this reading will change with an even more intimate knowledge of the character of the space, however this was the impression that I received from my visit for the following reasons. The factual presence of humility that I could not explain away. This suggests a beauty that is more resilient, whose beauty does not fade with careful observation over time but that becomes more beautiful over time as you get to know it.

The virtual contexts and the virtuality of the gallery spaces operate by this principle. It was literally fluid as a medium of perceptions. They incipiently developed, layered, and reinterpreted perception from moment to moment. The qualities foregrounded by one object poised you, and as they intersected and overlapped with others, they suspended various events in perception, some sublime.

Virtual Cohesion

The same virtuality that allows for difference in perceived actual appearance, also allows for qualitative cohesion that can unify actually discrete objects and disparate operations.

It is after the qualitative analysis of the gallery space that when we look back at the origin of the semblances in the actual that we realize the qualities of Kolumba are arising from disparate operative monadic elements (even that of the artefacts and people) and finding an operative cohesion as the perceptible qualities noted. Kolumba demonstrates that quality and semblance can not only come across divergent origins—a singular monadic entity. For example, the quality of peacefulness was discernible from the material reflectivity floor, the material quality of the walls, and the artwork; and virtually, at times, the fringe of peacefulness was indistinguishable from the quality of the quietness and expansiveness though their individuality remains distinguishable. But not only does it show the possibility of such a principle but also that quality and semblance cohering across divergent origins is a technique almost necessary to manifest semblance in architecture, and ultimately what Massumi considers making semblance out of situation.

One thing so clearly happening in the eventful experience of Kolumba was *the quality of space* was appearing through the cohesion and contribution of various elements. The elements that I am referring to are diverse. Anything that contributes to experience in the medium of architecture, which in Kolumba show us to include the events coming unconventionally from the dynamics of spatial arrangement (coming-into-view), but it also had eventful contributions by the more commonly recognized as qualitative contributors: the quality of material, light, details, temperature, sound, etc., which were happening simultaneously with and through the unique dynamics that can only belong to the nature of the specific spatial objects they made up such as walls, floors, ceilings, curvature, stairs, frames, door handles, artwork etc. The often disparate operations (qualitative dynamics) of the medium of architecture were cohering with a unity as articulations transparent in pure appearance towards a *greater* unfolding semblance, which I have nominally described as the “medium of appearance,” “medium of expectancy,” or “medium of encounter,” which I will explain later, is a semblance made out of situation.

Within the mental framework of the principle of virtual qualitative cohesion, architecture is made up of divergent origins, discrete autonomous objects, disparate operations, different categories, and various elements, which are all alternative ways of alluding to the multitude of architectural existences contributing qualitative dynamics shape our continuum of experience of architecture. After all, architecture is built out of various materials in various forms and arrangements, but nonetheless can be called disparate operations. This fact places greater emphasis on Massumi's understanding that the "object" is shorthand for qualitative events that can be said to operate in our perception over time—though that operation is subject to change over time and operates differently according to each individual. Disparate operations is also an advantageous term because it does not exclude



fig. 4.52: (photo credit: Bart van den Hoven)

aesthetic events that are not “objective” yet nonetheless are dynamic in affecting pure appearance, such as movement and time. Each experiential moment of architecture is made up a multitude of simultaneous disparate operations. In any particular building, the multitude is always in operation and appears fused in perception as qualitative dynamics, contributing to our experience of not limited to the medium of architecture. Experiences also always unfold in unison, but often as a cacophony (each doing as it pleases) , with no comprehensible artistic potential foregrounded outside of its quotidian nature that might deterritorialize and bring out the sheer individuality—and perhaps purposefulness—of that moment. They operate with different embedded dynamics rendering them recognizable as discrete monads in their pattern of phenomenon and dynamics, but this pattern does not limit the monad to have qualities that it might share with another monad. They cannot be identical because their distinctness allows them to adapt to different functions and fulfill the divergent requirements of a building, but again, does not limit the sharing of qualities. The analysis suggests that it is in the qualities shared by disparate operations that, if heightened, can virtually allow discrete elements to belong in appearance. Conversely, the suspension of the shared quality also furthers suspending the virtual in one’s perception.

Cohesion between autonomous operations results from the qualities disparate operations share. It is the perception of a greater qualitative likeness which explains divergent origins: the experience of the spatial organization, the experience of the material, the quality of light, the temperature of the space, the sound of the space, what was still in mind as a lived-relation virtually, and everything that was “really there”. All of these qualities could alloy for the sake of coherency as an experience belonging to the same semblance—could do so coherently, or even possibly, be immanently lived in as an experience. Massumi argues that there is no actual relation and “that all formations cohabiting the present are completely autonomous in relation to each other” (2011, 64). As a result, they only relate virtually, which finds expression at Kolumba. Autonomous operations find certain qualities that are similar in likeness and therefore appear with a certain cohesiveness, causing two autonomous dynamics that otherwise appear with no relation, to gel together. Here at Kolumba, various divergent and similar dynamics are being used as opportunities to cohere, overlap, and contribute to make the same semblance appear with an exponentially greater force of presence.

Kolumba is an example of pushing these overlaps to the degree that their apparent virtual qualitative overlaps are more apparent than their apparent monadic differences. It is arguable that they are more recognizable as a whole than as a discrete monads and their discreteness does not appear until one brings their full attention to one entity. Disparate objects (and operations) appear unified; they bring forward and reinforce one abstract quality with greater and greater intensity. We finally discover that these effects can explain how the galleries at Kolumba operate so effectively and why it is so virtually configured.

Kolumba finds virtual coherence in an intricate way. The qualities happening in the gallery spaces find unity, but where they differ, they can begin to speak of larger and richer realities. An example of two distinct qualities harmonizing could be that of expansiveness and simplicity. Here they find in the building their fusion that seems to pair well with one another. It is difficult to tell the threshold where one ends the other begins, but at their centres, they are clearly distinct from one another. An example of coherence across disparate operations is the operations that bring up the semblance of coming-into-view. It is only the form of the walls and the materiality together that draw out a quiet fluidity and a semblance of a medium rather than space. The objective realities operate along with movement of the body to bring forward movement in perception. The similarity in colour between the floor, walls, and ceiling is a property that draws a measure of relation, yet they each differentiate from one another qualitatively, somewhat subtly at first appearance, but vastly more upon further consideration. The floor attenuates to become reflective, while remaining similar in colour, intensifying a perception of peaceful tranquility. Qualities can be layered, overlapped, and used in harmonies, or they might be used to develop a more nuanced theme, reinterpreted towards the goal of a more factual semblance in their totality and more powerful, lived relation.



fig. 4.53: (photo credit: Dominic Roberts)

“...ART PRACTICE IS A TECHNIQUE OF COMPOSING
POTENTIALS OF EXISTENCE, INVENTING EXPERIENTIAL STYLES,
COAXING NEW FORMS OF LIFE TO EMERGE ACROSS DIFFERENTIALS.
ART IS INVENTIVE, LITERALLY CREATIVE OF VITALITY AFFECT.”

BRIAN MASSUMI (2011, 73-74)

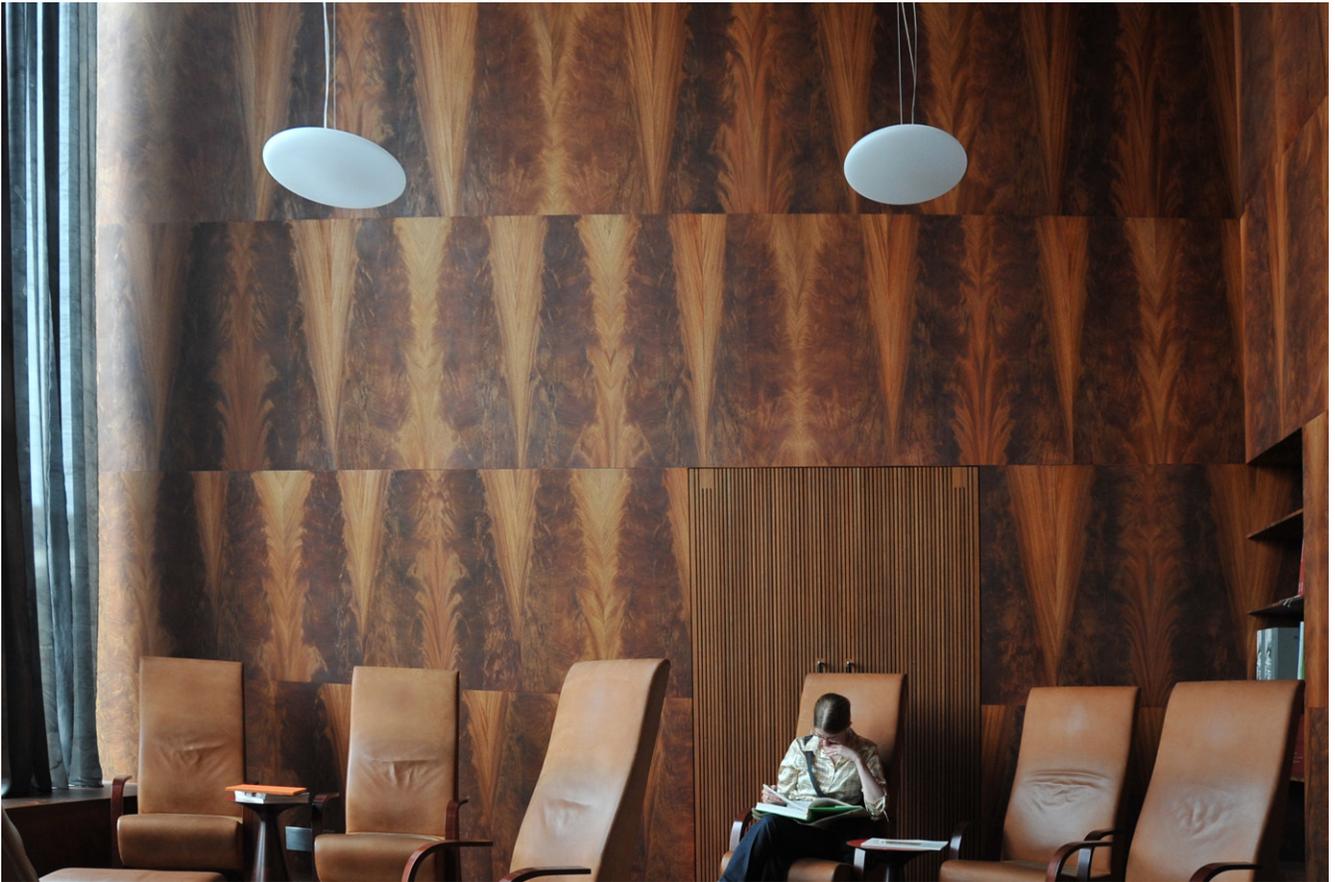


fig. 4.54: (photo credit: Tomo Yasu)



FROM PECULIAR LIGHT TO VIRTUAL LIGHT

AN ASPECT contributing largely to the aesthetic operation of Kolumba's spaces, was the light within both the second floor and third floor galleries.

Emerging on the third floor, I now realized the second floor was completely artificially lit as I ascended into the magnificent radiance of full-spectrum white sunlight. The exceptional beauty of the light is so perceptible here that it filled everything it touched with a moreness to life. What I thought had been a rich and full experience already, was now taken into a different dimension purely through the operation of light.

The diverse variation of contrast between light and shadow was what struck my eye first. It was a shock especially coming from consistency of lighting on the second floor—an experience that can be likened to the splendor of dawn that reveals the brilliance of the sun's full spectrum of colours. Due to the grain of the plaster, the quality of light here that fills the room is soft and blurry. At the brightest points, it is as brilliant and as soft as a cloud. Where it is darker, it is like the misty cover of a black rain cloud with gradual gradients of subtle but profound change. These slight nuances of light provide an inherent sense of depth, density and heaviness. Draping over every surface in gradation, the light that fills the space spills over into the shadows, giving the space a virtual density.

fig. 5.1.

The warm grey of the plastered walls receiving the light rendered the blue of the diffuse light with virtual colour. This effect is augmented by the slightly lighter grey of the terrazzo floor, subtly reinterpreting the light with a clean line, preventing the space from being an amorphous gray soup. Embodied in these peculiar qualities of light, the combination with materiality, and with the specificity of the art, was an entire mood that situated the occupant to perceive the design in a certain way. This was not the only instance that light was used to shape my experience of the museum.

Zumthor's Notion of Light

In looking at Peter Zumthor's writing on how he works with light, we can both gain an understanding of how this encounter of light was not accidental, but a product of a calculated method to show the meaningful relationship between light and space. Zumthor's astute discretion towards the nuanced peculiarities of light can be sensed in this statement:

Thinking about daylight and artificial light I have to admit that daylight, the light on things, is so moving to me that I feel it almost as a spiritual quality. When the sun comes up in the morning—which I always find so marvelous, absolutely fantastic the way it comes back every morning—and casts its light on things, it doesn't feel as if it quite belongs in this world. I don't understand light. It gives me the feeling there's something beyond me, something beyond all understanding. And I am very glad, very grateful that there is such a thing. (Zumthor 2006a, 61)

Zumthor's respect and humility towards light is likely what causes him to express specific qualities in the full spectrum of light in his composition of space.

In Zumthor's opinion, light is not so much a derivative but something deeply intentional, evident in his vision of the space depicted in his vignettes. Light can fill a space; light can lead one around corners—one of the images showing not much more than just light and shadow stretching across a room in a soft glow, that gives the wall a different place. In his book *Atmospheres*, Zumthor describes two methods he uses to think about light while designing:

I have two favourite ideas about this and I always come back to them... [he works



fig. 5.2.

backwards] the first of my favourite ideas is this: to plan the building as a pure mass of shadow then, afterwards, to put in light as if you were hollowing out the darkness, as if the light were a new mass seeping in... The second idea I like is this: to go about lighting materials and surfaces systematically and to look at the way they reflect the light. In other words, to choose the materials in the knowledge of the way they reflect and to fit everything together on the basis of that knowledge. (2006a, 59)

Presented in this statement are two ways of thinking about design completely in terms of light: one on a spatial level (working backwards from light) and the second on a qualitative material level.

In the first portion of the statement, he considers the light's specific relationship to space: and also what the quality of light is doing for the space. This method contrasts the consideration of light only after the invention of the design. Instead, for Zumthor, light *is* what you are drawing and conceptually, it is what is *producing* the space (literally, a hollowing out of a mass of darkness and shadow). This idea of light sees light as a spatial volume—a virtual matter—that unfolds as it leads the occupant from through space while also differentiating one space from another. It predisposes the space to be interpreted as light emerging from darkness. In addition to the voluminous nature of light, the heaviness or mass of the shadow is simultaneously evoked. Again, the concept of light and dark as volumes predisposes the experience of shadow as the mass left uncarved by light. Rather than fabricated environments made up only of a surface of finish, Zumthor suggests a unification of light and material in a semblance that yields varying contents. This way of intrinsically linking light to place and dwelling tinges, infects, and inflects the meaning of living.

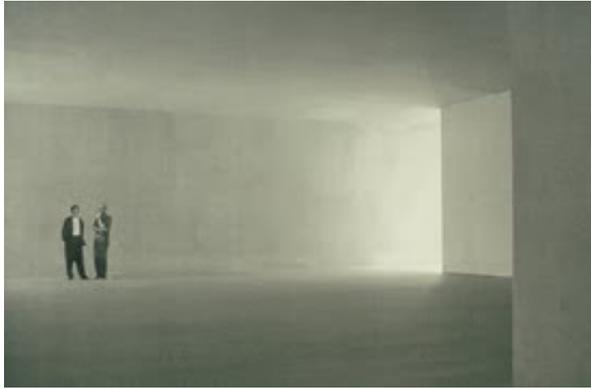


fig. 5.4, 5.4: Renderings of the Space
(Image Credit: Atelier Peter Zumthor)

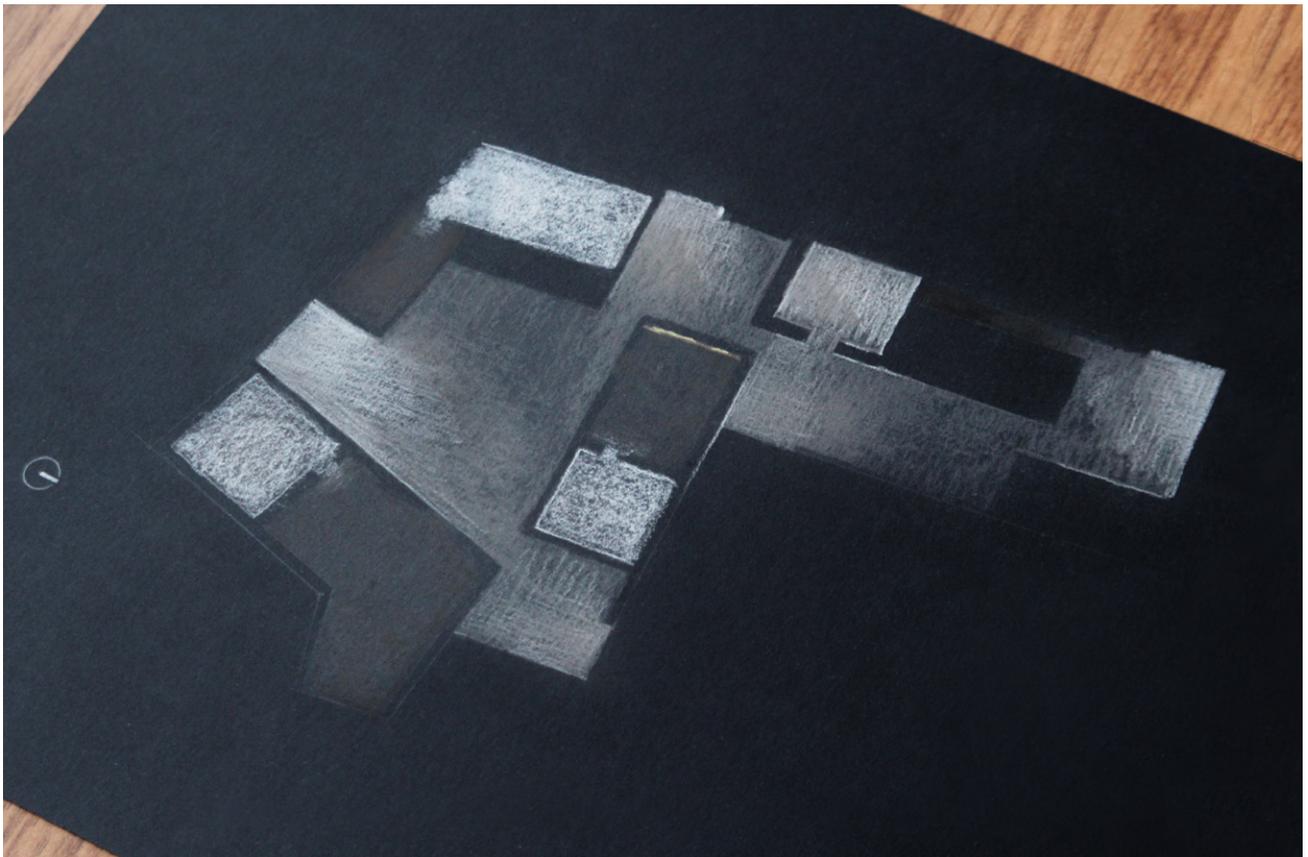


fig. 5.5: Light on the third floor on an overcast day.

In the second idea about light, Zumthor introduces another way of approaching materiality by considering the light's specific relationship to material surfaces and details systematically. This recognizes the intimacy of the relationship between the quality of light and the quality of material. Zumthor systematically subjects each material, object, and surface to a qualitative analysis, considering how they contribute to the semblance of a space. How does light surround it, reflect off it? How do the qualities of light react to qualities of material? And ultimately, how does light change and fill the object with "content" and moreness? The filling is virtual, almost as if the light is rendering, illuminating, or colouring the forms and spaces to change its perception. This investigation might be fruitfully done with materials, details, and art pieces individually; but Zumthor suggests working each surface with the spatialized light (of the first exercise) with reciprocating influence. For example, the correct scale and expanse of material must be used for each object since this would affect the light volume interacting with every other object's surface. The correct relationship to the body of the inhabitant is essential, along with a consideration of when in time they would encounter the object and how they would engage the surface. The exercise is another way of questioning a material detail. Notice the designing is happening by imagining at full-scale, every behavior of material surface and its interaction in detail. This is how the plaster texture becomes so interesting at its various scales of encounter because it had to fulfill many different functions from different vantage points. The design culminates in the qualitative specificity in plaster and specificity in light. By his careful examination, Zumthor is letting the light "colour" every nuance and quality intrinsic to an object or material, in order to unveil new content that wouldn't have otherwise appeared without that specific light. This exercise fills everything the light touches with a moreness by virtue of the pure appearance of how it is rendered by light. Another way of saying colour, is to say inflect the meaning by the overlaying another layer of qualitative dynamics on its pure appearance.



fig. 5.6.

Filling Aesthetic Virtually

This notion of adding content with the specificity of color and light can be conceptualized as a process of “*filling*” the actual. “Filling” happens virtually, as the light renders, illuminates, or colours the forms and spaces “transparently”—in Susanne Langer’s terminology—with content to change its perception. You can’t help but see the light with the form as a pure appearance with content. Susanne Langer gives us a further insight into allowing content to be *transparent* in this outline:

“The first thing is to estrange it from actuality, to give it ‘otherness,’ ‘self-sufficiency’; this is done by creating a realm of illusion, in which it functions as [pure appearance], mere semblance, free from worldly offices. The second thing is to make it plastic, so it may be manipulated in the interests of expression instead of practical signification. This is achieved by the same means—uncoupling it from practical life, abstracting it as a free conceptual figment. Only such forms can be plastic, subject to deliberate torsion, modification, and composition for the sake of expressiveness. And finally, it must become ‘transparent’— which it does when insight into the reality expressed, the Gestalt of living experience, guides its author in creating it.” (Langer 1953, 59-60)

This notion of “filling” with the virtual is demonstrated by Marc Chagall, especially in his mature painted canvases. Each element, surface, object is given form, place, scale, and colour in order to be filled with virtual narrative while contributing to expression in the larger semblance of the image. He was influenced by the symbolist painters because of the degree to which each element was filled with the virtual. Form, place, scale, and colour are not discordant elements in his images but they each add their own dimension to the work, working together synergistically to fuse the quality of emotion and the image-story. The filling is a depth and fullness of expression.

In Chagall, a strong demonstration of adding layer of content to form and place is found. This is achieved using specific quality of light, which fuses with the given form by virtual means. A good example of “colouring”—saturating form with light, and also the subsequent “filling” nature of light—is found in Marc Chagall’s Songs of Solomon paintings. These paintings find an added depth of content with the specific qualities of the colours. In this series, the filling is making perceptible the

degree and strength of his love that colours all things and all moments.

In the series of paintings depicting the Songs of Solomon he dedicated to his own wife at Musée National Marc Chagall in Nice, France, a hand written message on a plaque accompanies the series: “A Vara ma femme, ma joie et mon allégresse.” (“For Vara my wife, my joy and happiness”). One instantly notices that the paintings are bathed in all shades and intensities of red, many soft chiffon layers of pink and a few moments that break out into other colours. Even when other colours are introduced, the virtual content of love still permeates and fuses even these colours to nuance the narrative.

In the second painting of the series, the city, the night sky, and even the moon becomes pink because it is bathed in red. These forms bathed in red is not simply red, but filled virtually with all sorts of expressive contents of “redness”. In the overall semblance, colour is making perceptible of all types of virtual appearances. The work is unified by the colour while dynamism is achieved by the virtual intensity of his love for his wife. He is linking the actual saturation of colour to the virtual saturation of his feelings.

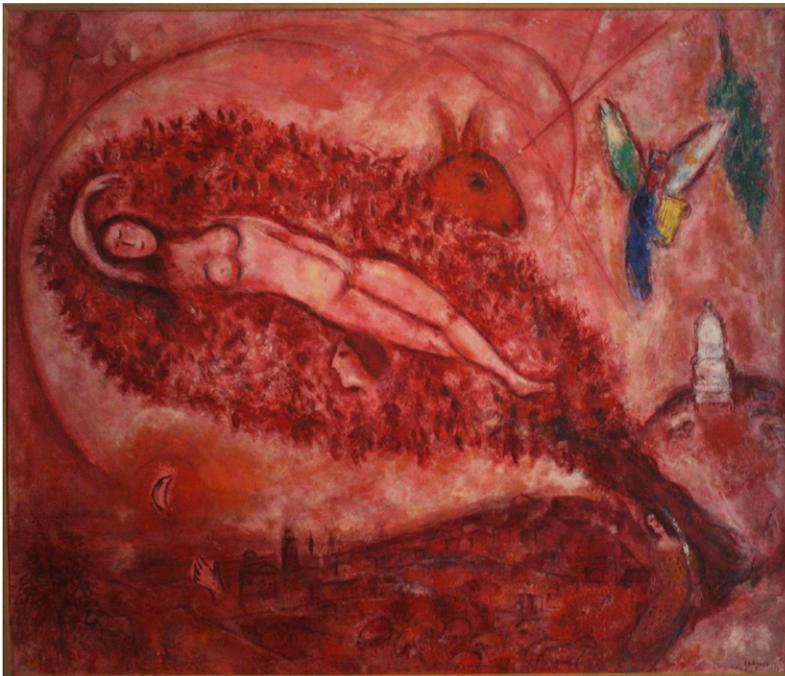


fig. 5.7: Marc Chagall: Canticle 2 (Songs of Songs 2), 1957, on display at Musée Marc Chagall Nice, France. It is an example of Chagall's style of painting that develops form, place, and colour in simultaneous union.

WHEN VISITING KOLUMBA, no one tells you to interpret the meaning of the light, yet the meaningful nature of light presents itself evidently in the architectural experience. This is the meaning behind Susanne Langer's transparency of light's virtual filling of a space. The specificity in the organization of light quality and the material detail subtly creates a sense of place, while expressing added layers of content. It is also apparent in the organization of the artwork that the curators employed light to effect meaning in the artwork. Through careful selection and placement of each piece in relationship to light, the architectural experience is tied closely to the artwork contained within it.

Filling happens in Kolumba firstly by disassociating the provision of light from natural light. Using targeted artificial light and curtains direct light is mitigated. The placement of the windows and the size of the spaces are very specific to further give to the expression of the place. The diverse variation in light quality is then used to colour specific objects and surfaces, to complete the filling of the place. For example, the placement of the sculptures uses the specific quality of light in each of their resting places. The light is estranged from its practical significations of visual accessibility and, "uncoupling it from practical life, abstracting it as a free conceptual figment" (1953, 60). These two factors in Kolumba together allow its specific qualities of light to become virtual light.

Kolumba asserts and highlights the diverse qualities of light and shadow as having great potential that is rich with meaning. Directionalities, speed of transitions, density, weight, of light and shadow is deeply considered. With such questions as how heavy the shadows lie, how quickly the shadow come in, how gently it is draped or weighed down, light in this museum brings forward another element by which a visitor could engage with the work. It influences the interpretation of the work and offers new meanings to the work itself. Peter Zumthor and the curators of the museum use light as a means of introducing greater variability and greater questions to arise in relation to the work. This dynamic is similar to the museum adopting the pseudonym "Kolumba", which was a conscious choice to allow the history of the site of the ruined St. Kolumba Cathedral to bring to the museum -value and new meaning to the work that is housed here.

Utilizing the variability of the shadows cast and the specific condition of light in each room, the curators were able to use light as a potentializing force rather than disregarding its qualities with a uniform treatment. This way, the placement of

fig. 5.8: Here, we see shadow embraced as a hopeful divine light.



the artwork was given an additional layer of meaning by the “transparency” of the pure appearance to additional content. The curators had to associate the perception of light to the particular artwork. They intentionally use the particular qualities of light at the moment of perception of each piece to suspend “the potentials [to make] them all the more apparent by holding them to visual form [as a pure appearance]” (Massumi 2011, 43-44). Each piece is carefully placed to work within the framework of qualities that the architecture creates.



fig. 5.9: The soft shadow of the overcast day came across as a peaceful as it alloyed with the restful expression of the body of the Crucifix.

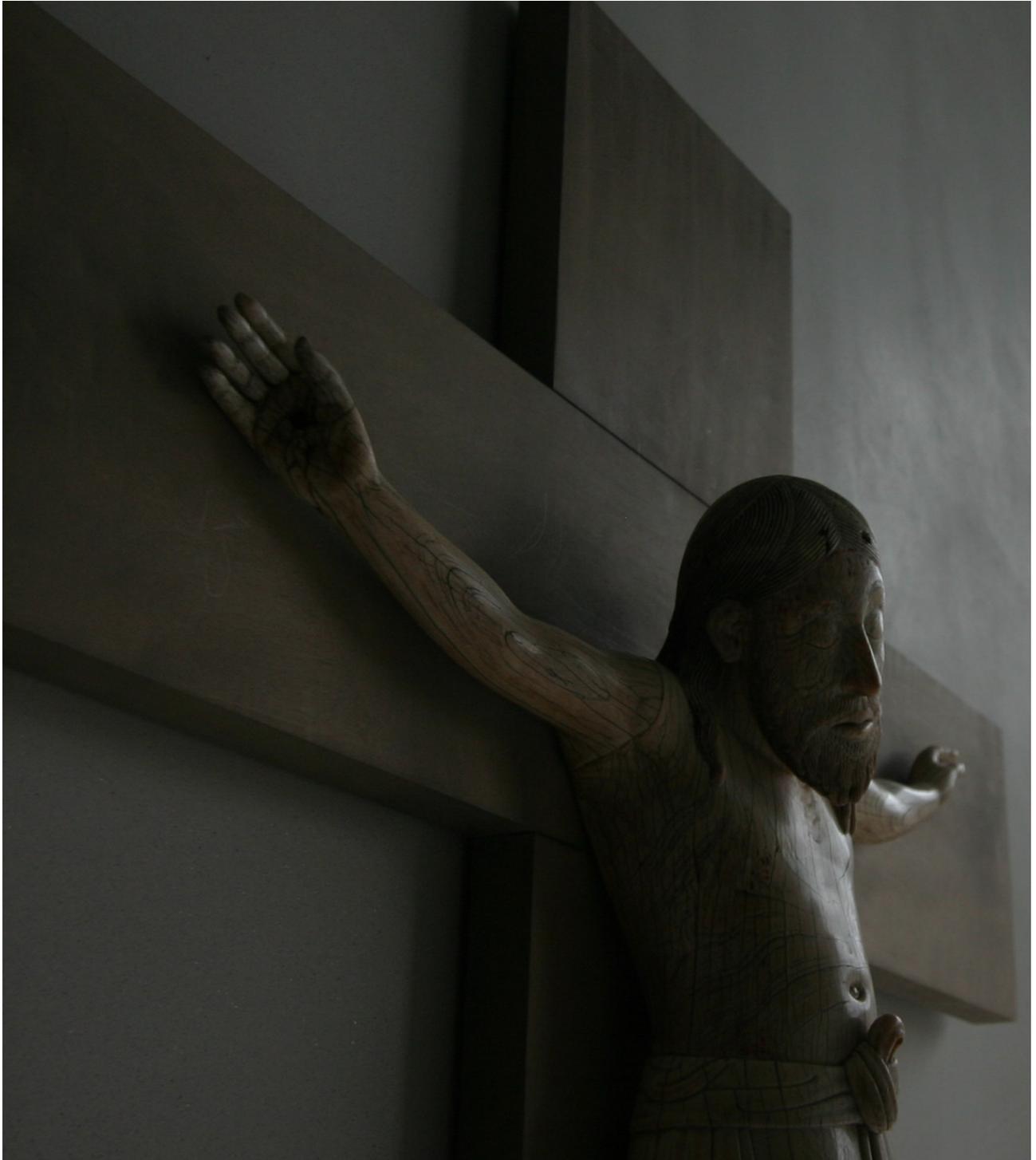


fig. 5.10: The veins and fractures of the wood powerfully speak of the pain of the cross simultaneously along with this peace.



fig. 5.11: (photo credit: Henz Klein)

fig. 5.12: (photo credit: Michiel van Raaij)



The following are examples of other ways the curators employed the same place in previous exhibitions, or how the space reacts to different conditions of light.



fig. 5.13: (photo credit: authour)



fig. 5.14: (photo credit: seier+seier)



fig. 5.15: On the second floor, the quality of darkness is expressed as a calmness with its warm light and reflective floor.

Lighting is only placed on the area of the artwork, drawing attention to the artwork, while everything else remains in a warm darkness.

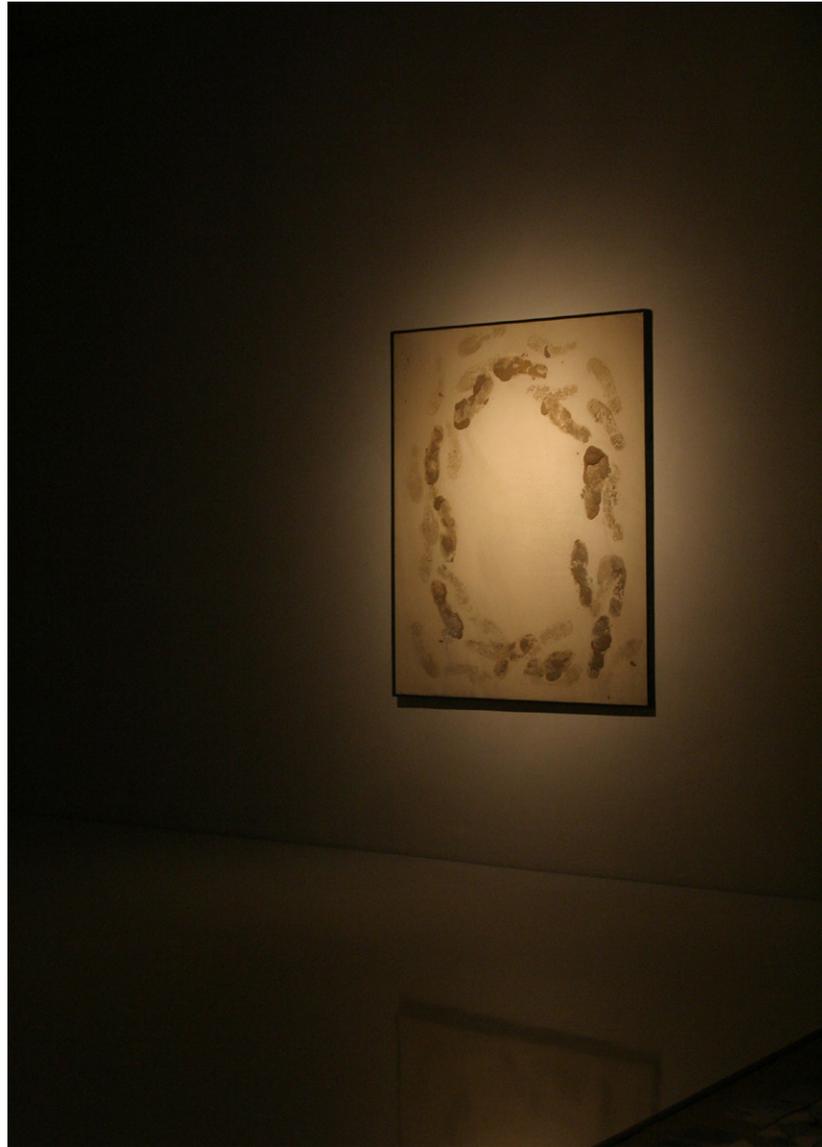


fig. 5.16: The embrace of shadow allows for an aesthetic of emerging-from-light.

The size of lighting and warmth of the lighting heighten the effect.



fig. 5.17: Darkness is evoked as a removal of senses in the "dark room"—a void of sensation.



fig. 5.18: The lighting of the objects intensifies the content of the objects in its material value and perhaps even the use-value of its pure appearance. To a degree, one is living a relation of past the distortions of anachronism in this piece.



fig. 5.19: On the third floor, the galleries negotiate between light and shadow, each in their own way depending on the window in relation to the space.

The softness of the light quality on the surface of the Madonna and Child brings out a quality of tenderness from the work, while the blue light gives it a quality of sadness.



fig. 5.20: Positioned at the window looking out, this sculpture of the Three face (Holy Trinity), Southern Germany, 17th Century. (photo credit: Tomo Yasu)



fig. 5.21: Up close, you realized that the curators are not only utilizing the figure's looking out by placing the statue close to the window, but also the directionality of light. Possibly relevant qualities include: how quickly the light transitions; how quickly the shadow come; how thin, how dense, how heavy is the quality of the shadow's draping? Does it gently drape it or weigh it down? Does it overwhelm the other side in darkness? (photo credit: Ilenia Pontel)

Each quality of how the light falls change the pure appearance and are potentially rich with meaning.

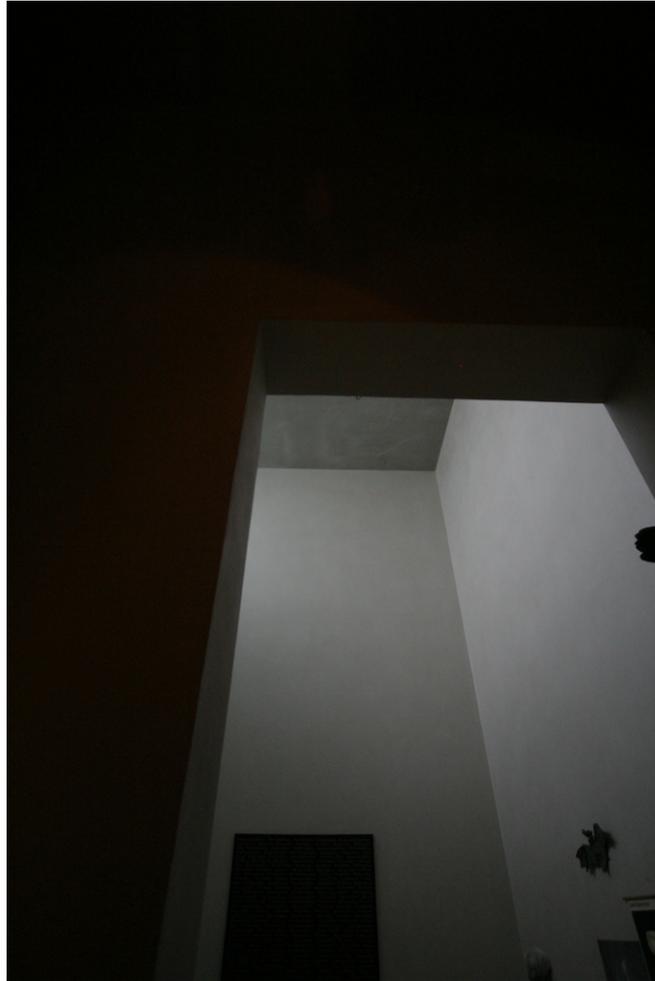


fig. 5.22: The secret rooms of the third floor, also uses light to evoke mystery. The unknown expanse of space is made more mysterious by an unknown source of light. The contrast in the moving into a different type of light makes the experience more poignant.

Light is given the quality of the unknown and mystery by its source coming as an unknown surprise.



fig. 5.23: In this instance, the quality of the unknown light and space one of the "secret rooms" is further foregrounded by the collection of curiosities on the wall.



fig. 5.24.



fig. 5.25: From another exhibition, the light makes the space a heavenly estranged space in combination with the objects. The diffuse but bright light and the space is voluminous. (photo credit: Raimond Spekking)



fig. 5.26: (photo credit: Raimond Spekking)



fig. 5.27: *Making visible Sound*. (photo credit: Raimond Spekking)



fig. 5.28, 5.29: In the abstracted space, these two pieces were experienced as a reflection on the constructions of man, in relation to the divine, which is expressed with the sculpture in terms of light, and in the painting with the motherly and child-like figures.





fig. 5.30, 5.31: As one approaches the final room of the museum, one sees the steeple of a church through the framing of the threshold and the window.



fig. 5.32: The church comes into view as one approaches, and at a certain point, the monumental twin steeples of the Cologne Cathedral appear.



*fig. 5.33: The experience is a lived relation on the dynamic of seeing. This is somehow reinforced by the situational placement of Josef Alber's series *Homage to the Square* on the wall adjacent to the window (fig. 5.34). The situation frames a new perspective on the famous abstract series of paintings and loads the abstraction with diverse content.*





fig. 5.35: Light streams in through the window and reflects off of the gold leaf as one views the icon. It gives emphasis to a purpose of the traditional technique and relates Mary and the Christ-child back with the church as they watch over their church in the distance.



fig. 5.36: Functionally the curtains provide a little shade from the sometimes harsh intensity of direct light, but instead of the “denial” of light, which in itself affects a sensation, they opt to use light through modulating it to foreground it by bringing up a new sensation to the atmosphere. (photo credit: H  l  ne Binet)

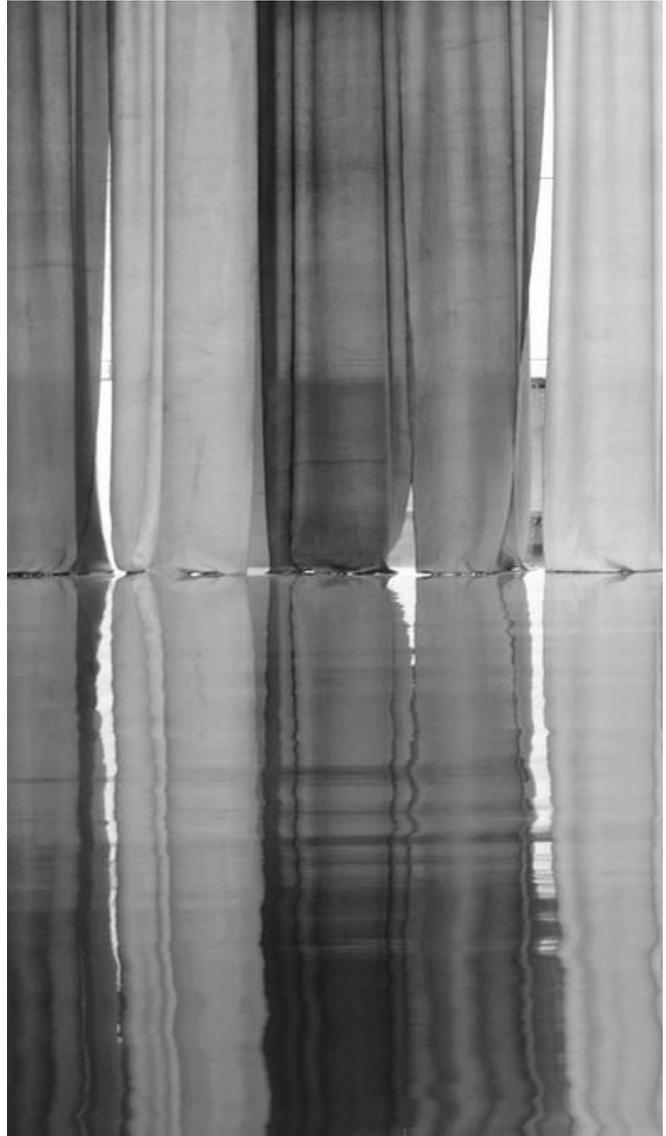


fig. 5.37: Sheerness, softening, smoke-like airiness are all examples of potentials that blend with the intensity of the sunlight: hot light, warm light, distant light, etc., to bring up new sensations. (photo credit: Georg Hörmann)

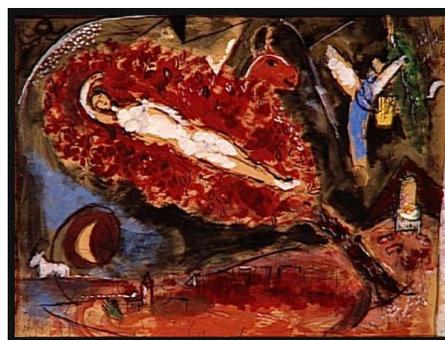
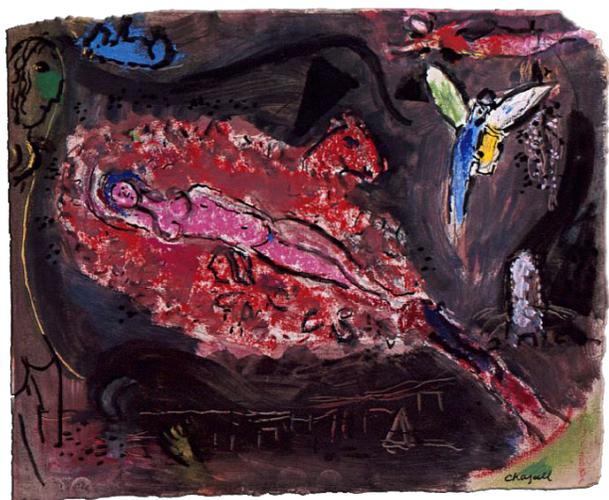
"HARMONIES ARE AFFECTS. CONSONANCE AND DISSONANCE, HARMONIES OF TONE OR COLOR, ARE AFFECTS OF MUSIC OR PAINTING. RAMEAU EMPHASIZED THE IDENTITY OF HARMONY AND AFFECT. THE ARTIST CREATES BLOCS OF PERCEPTS AND AFFECTS, BUT THE ONLY LAW OF CREATION IS THAT THE COMPOUND MUST STAND UP ON ITS OWN. THE ARTIST'S GREATEST DIFFICULTY IS TO MAKE IT STAND UP ON ITS OWN."

DELEUZE AND GUATTARI (1994, 164)



CALIBRATION OF AESTHETIC BEING

FROM THE REALITY what is there, we see the curators are seeking after and creating affect in how they place and use the architecture in the way to communicate content transparently, in turn to evoke a sense of place within architecture. This act is not accidental, but purposeful. We see that the created artifact, the dimensions intrinsic to them, and the framework of potentials provided by the architecture are brought together in unity. The unity creates affects not only with each piece but also in such a way that each piece contributes to an overall affect of the exhibition. Deleuze and Guattari might describe this process and search another way, as making compounds stand up on their own. Their terms bring up the concepts of harmonies, consonance, and dissonance, which provide another way of understanding how aesthetic naturally push us to respond viscerally. When an object stands up on its own, it catches one's



attention. It is not dismissed easily. It suspends itself in perception with a force of attraction or repulsion. The union within Chagall's work is found in the same way. Chagall's sketches for *Song of Songs 2* illuminate something of the same search for powerful affects. If the first image contains the forms he has dreamed of, similar to the framework that the curators at Kolumba have to work with, he is experimenting with colour and the nuances of the formal expression to create varying "blocs of sensation" or "compounds of percepts and affects." He wants to create a piece that communicates appropriately this poetry of love.

fig. 5.38, 5.39, 5.40, 5.41, 5.42, 5.43, 5.44: Marc Chagall's sketches for his 1957 "Songs of Songs 2"

This last image is a detailed expression of the moon and the hand of longing that he ended with.

The poet Ted Hughes, in his book *Poetry in the Making*, helpfully points at the rich life intrinsic within qualitative dynamics that are made to stand. He describes the search for affect analogous to catching life within his poetry:

"[MOST WORDS] BELONG TO SEVERAL OF THE SENSES AT ONCE, AS IF EACH ONE HAD EYES, EARS AND TONGUE, OR EARS AND FINGERS AND A BODY TO MOVE WITH. IT IS THIS LITTLE GOBLIN IN A WORD WHICH IS ITS LIFE AND ITS POETRY, AND IT IS THIS GOBLIN WHICH THE POET HAS TO HAVE UNDER CONTROL.

'CLICK' NOT ONLY GIVES YOU A SOUND, IT GIVES YOU THE NOTION OF A SHARP MOVEMENT... SUCH AS YOUR TONGUE MAKES IN TSAYING 'CLICK'. IT ALSO GIVES YOU THE FEEL OF SOMETHING LIGHT AND BRITTLE, LIKE A SNAPPING TWIG. HEAVY THINGS DO NOT CLICK, NOR DO SOFT BENDABLE ONES. IN THE SAME WAY, TAR NOT ONLY SMELLS STRONGLY. IT IS STICKY TO TOUCH, WITH A PARTICULAR THICK AND CHOKING STICKINESS. ALSO IT MOVES, WHEN IT IS SOFT, LIKE A BLACK SNAKE, AND HAS A BEAUTIFUL BLACK GLOSS."

TED HUGHES ([1967] 1982, 18)



fig. 5.45: A detail from Marc Chagall's "Songs of Songs 2", 1957.

"COLOR IS ALL. WHEN COLOR IS RIGHT, FORM IS RIGHT."

MARC CHAGALL



A Pursuit

The search to make perceptible the virtual potential of light takes the intrinsic qualities of the object and the specific qualities of light, and allows them to fuse in pure appearance to bring up contents not found in either on its own. Zumthor leads us to two methods of investigating design purely in terms of light. As presented in this study, it is filling what is there to a degree of virtuality. The greater the degree, the more suspended in perception the content will be. Chagall is noted to have once said, "Colour is all. When colour is right, form is right." This is a helpful guide in the search for specific qualitative dynamics of light that colour and render every object and surface in architecture. His work attests to the virtual potential that light can have when fused with form, manifesting a fullness and moreness to every sight of what is there. Feeling and content are not right when the material form and light are not right.

Incomprehensibly more qualitative dynamics exist in the nuances of light—shadow, darkness, lightness, heaviness, softness, hotness, coolness, of day, of night, of the seasons. Billions more specific contents individual to varying situations exist, capable of affecting powerful life dynamics on people. The encounters at the Kolumba museum described in this essay begin to point towards a direction of a pursuit, one where the light becomes perceptible as potent virtual events by a close consideration of its precise qualities.



fig. 5.46: Marc Chagall, "Costume for a Fish (Aleko Scene IV)", 1942

fig. 5.47: Marc Chagall, "A Clown Playing the Violin", 1941-42

fig. 5.48: Marc Chagall, Study for "Spring Time", 1942

fig. 5.49: Marc Chagall, Model for the curtain in the first act of "The Firebird" by Stravinsky: The Enchanted Forest, 1945



fig. 5.50: Marc Chagall, *A Wheatfield on a Summer's Afternoon*.
Study for backdrop for Scene III of the ballet *Aleko*, 1942

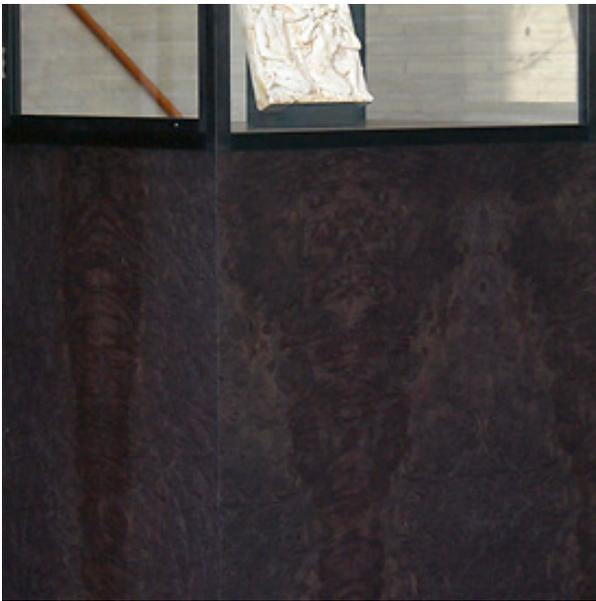
fig. 5.51: Marc Chagall, *Final study for the ceiling of the Opera Garnier*, 1963

fig. 5.52: Peter Zumthor, *Benches*, Leather

fig. 5.53: Peter Zumthor, *Postcard Rack*, Rose oak veneer (*Quercus spp.*)

fig. 5.54: Peter Zumthor, *Display Cases*, Stained laurel grain veneer (*Laurelia aromatica*)

fig. 5.55: Peter Zumthor, *Door Handle*, Stainless steel wrapped with leather straps



AFFECTED

4 ACCOUNTS OF GENEROSITY PERCEIVED

Generosity was perceived in the sudden expansion of space when I reached what I thought to be the end of the museum. Moments earlier, I had thought to myself while anticipating the conclusion of my journey that the museum had been too brief, like a song that finds a good motif, but ends before exploring its full potential. Preparing myself to accept this perceived end to the experience, I acknowledged that I was already satisfied with the rich abundance of what I had discovered in the museum.



fig. 6.1.

To my delight, as I reached the back of the room, a space was opening into view in the corner—gladness—it was almost as if I had wished the space into existence. Its reality was even better than my wish as I realized that now before me was the largest room I had encountered and one that was unlike anything that had come before. While being a vertically compressed space, it took an open form with the room's seams dynamically opening into more spaces. Also, three thresholds of pure appearances revealed at least three more additional rooms beyond.



fig. 6.2.

The suddenness in the appearance of such a large space was striking. I had no idea it was there, and I was not anticipating it. The lack of anticipation combined with the scale and dynamism made the suddenness have such force that it brought the feeling of a sudden appearance of whole new range of beautiful opportunities. Where was this space coming from? How did Peter Zumthor conceal this?

I realized later while looking at the floor plans of the building that I had subconsciously thought I had reached the end because there was not this opportunity on the first or second floors. Additionally, the subconscious conclusion arises from the strikingly different atmospheres of the dark archaeological excavation of the first floor. I genuinely did not know where it was coming from.

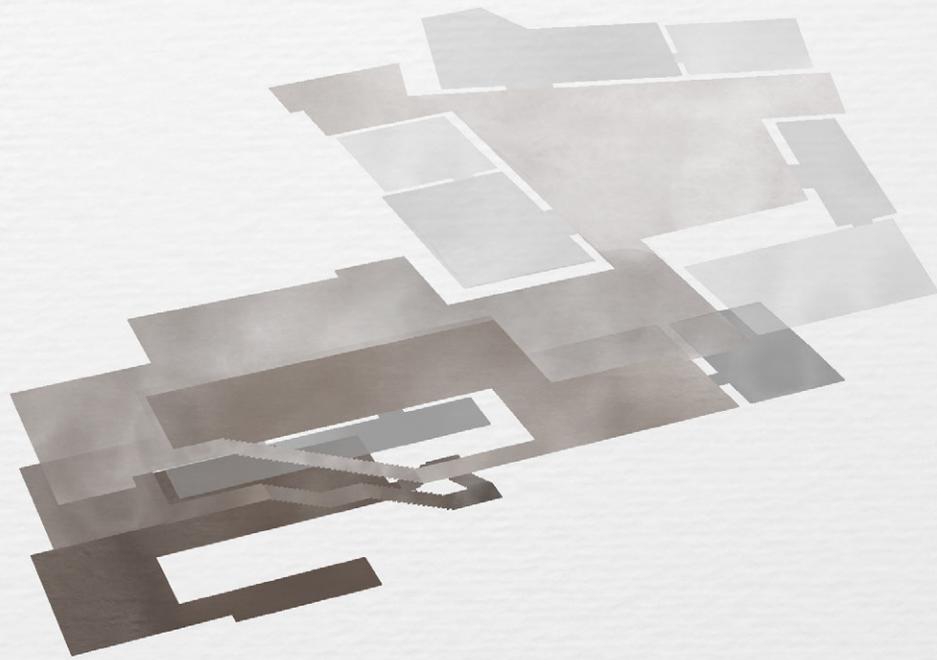


fig. 6.3. A surprising expansion as space is progressively revealed

At this point, everything felt like an extra; I had felt satisfied with what I had already experienced and its impromptu ending, and what an extra this was! This space was the premonition of my experience being now in a dramatic conclusion: “would it continue further?” I wishfully thought.

As I was walking into the room, monumental paintings clearly of the same series faced me on all sides. This was the final movement of a symphony where semblances of motifs from prior movements found a way of returning into the present moment to form a climactic intensity of eventfulness.



fig. 6.4.

Generosity in this case caused a visceral change in my entire response in spirit, tone, and posture, because what was extra here was truly valuable, something that I wanted and found not only abundant but rich. I became more appreciative of the space because I was receiving something I couldn't ask for. In this mode, I ceased taking, but began receiving with a spirit of gratitude, not taking the moments afforded for granted.

Generosity was perceived in the way the building provides for the artwork. This generosity is unique in the way that the building foregrounds the artwork and disappears behind it. As described in a previous essay, *Calibrated Space*, space is calibrated to offer greater insight into each piece by nature of the arrangement of the artwork. The space becomes operatively supportive in role, tending not to exist for itself but with a giving nature to the artwork it houses.

In fact, form and material not only directly contribute to the perception of the artifacts and artwork it gives place to, but it also does so with great attention and intentionality paid to transforming itself. It can be perceived that space is given form and materiality for the very purpose of giving and setting up certain conditions to bring out certain aspects of the artwork. This becomes very apparent in a room such as the “dark room”, one of the rooms of the secondary spatial motif.



fig. 6.5, 6.6.



One steps into this entirely black room with books encrusted with gold and silver and intricate golden lampstands in sizeable display cases enclosed by glass, scattered in the room in different orientations. One becomes aware that the darkness resulted from black felt covering the walls which soaks up all the light and muffles sound, and a black floor and ceiling. A single source of light for each display case illuminates the object directly into the centre of the display case, without light ever reaching the floor. The five surfaces of glass that encase each object project reflected images of the object infinitely dimming into the darkness as one enters the particular incident of reflection of the various planes. The effect is a datum of hovering objects illuminated in pure darkness that relay a sea of simultaneously moving images cutting sharp planes in and out of view as one enters and exits their particular angle of reflection. The viewer's appreciation of the brilliance and value of these objects became magnified because of the setup, which results to take away the patina of anachronism that would be found in the perception of these objects otherwise.

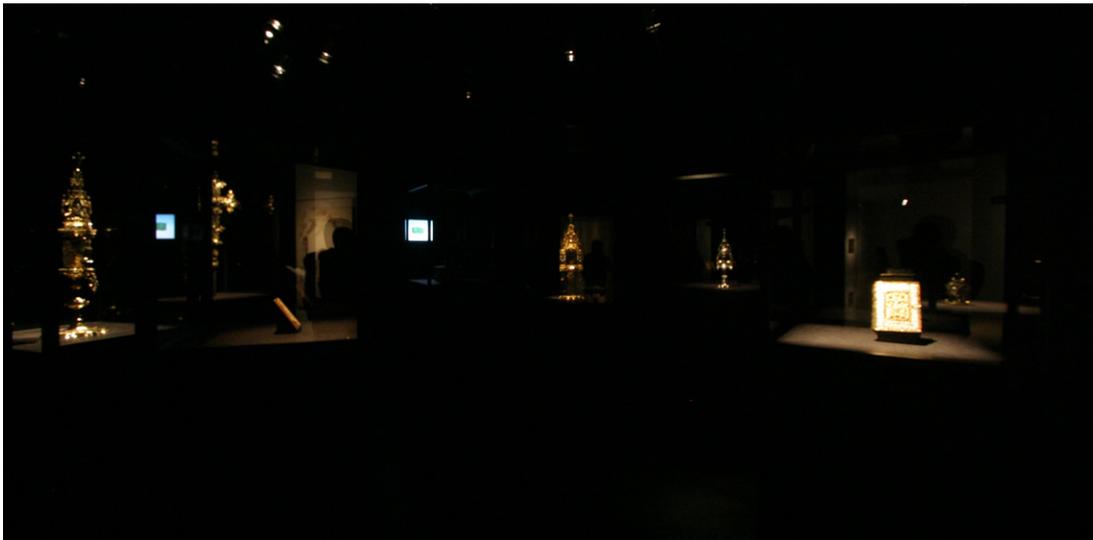


fig. 6.7.



fig. 6.8.

In terms of the architecture contributing to the artwork, I felt like they were more intimately coming in contact with the individuality of the artwork itself. When I felt that the architecture was dutifully supporting the activity for which it is built, especially when it was formed to effectively do so on multiple levels, there was a sensation of a purposefulness in every decision. I responded with a mixed feeling that was partly a resonance with a vital museum experience that made these objects known, and partly an admiration for the architect and institution's accomplishment of so much.

Generosity was perceived in the spacing of artwork. The curators are responsible for the generosity and respect for each object as they allow for the work to not crowd one another and to be contemplated on their own while still being related to other pieces. In some instances, the scale and expanse of the space surrounding the object seemed to enter the work to dignify and monumentalize the piece itself. Such a lived-relation is an indication that objects are not being displayed according to the display space they occupy but rather according to heightening various other qualitative potentials they hold. What risks itself to be comprehended as a minimal poorness in a lack of work to display or not enough creativity on the part of the curators to execute the exhibition theme, to a degree, is reversed to become generous and necessary cost to display a work properly. The farther spacing also has an effect of slowing the pace for viewing the exhibition, and allows for contemplation to occur as one moves from piece to piece and from room to room.

Unfortunately, the large spacing could very much be seen as the opposite—a waste of space—which in fact I initially perceived, that is until the experience of the exhibit's intentionality, the benefit potentially derivable from it, and that one finds at the end of their consideration. The beauty of the spacing of the artwork is ultimately in service of a generosity towards the visitor in aiding their understanding of the artwork. I became appreciative of the work itself, appreciative of the abundance offered me, and anticipatory of deeper understanding being unveiled.



fig. 6.9.

Generosity was lastly perceived in the materiality of the building. I found it easy to imagine the exquisite material and craftsmanship that the designer chose came at a heavy price. Again, my first perception saw the materiality as an unnecessary luxury, but I eventually saw it differently after understanding the way costly materials were operating.

As I described on page 151, I caught wind that the museum collected and displayed works in aesthetically reductive way that was rare in other museums. The “simple” artwork looked so incredibly beautiful in these reductive and expansive spaces, overlapping one another qualitatively. The medium of appearance also caused me to pay attention to the smallest details, like the small nail holding up a paper cutout that together added meaning to the aesthetic of the “everyday means”.

The reversal of my conception was very extreme. I began with the perception that the place was unnecessarily lavish when I first arrived at the building, but I left the building perceiving that the location reflected a desire to lavishly celebrate the simple, the understated, and the undervalued, which I confess I may have overlooked in other circumstances. I perceived that Kolumba was generous in celebrating the simple by completely submitting itself to do so, truly making the artworks’ simple beauty appreciated in its being. They were achieving the attention they deserved after years of quiet service, a situation of the humble being lifted up. What I assessed earlier as unwise material lavishness became extremely worthwhile.

A powerful aesthetic thus motivated my spiritual change. This lavish fullness commended simplicity with its beauty made manifest in an equally simple but beautiful material palette, that does not hold back cost in its celebration. A relationship was established such that the material palette became related to the work on display. Once the ethos of giving was established, presentational cost and value would not detract from the work but amplify it. The beauty of the material here is operational, a beauty of character that runs far deeper than the surface and becomes contributive to the particular work. The presence of humility is poignant, and like I mentioned earlier, is truly dynamic and eventful as a lived relation aiding in the realization of life’s subtler potential. The affect of humility transpired to me, and I gained an admiration for how readily, generously, and effectively it was giving to the artefacts.

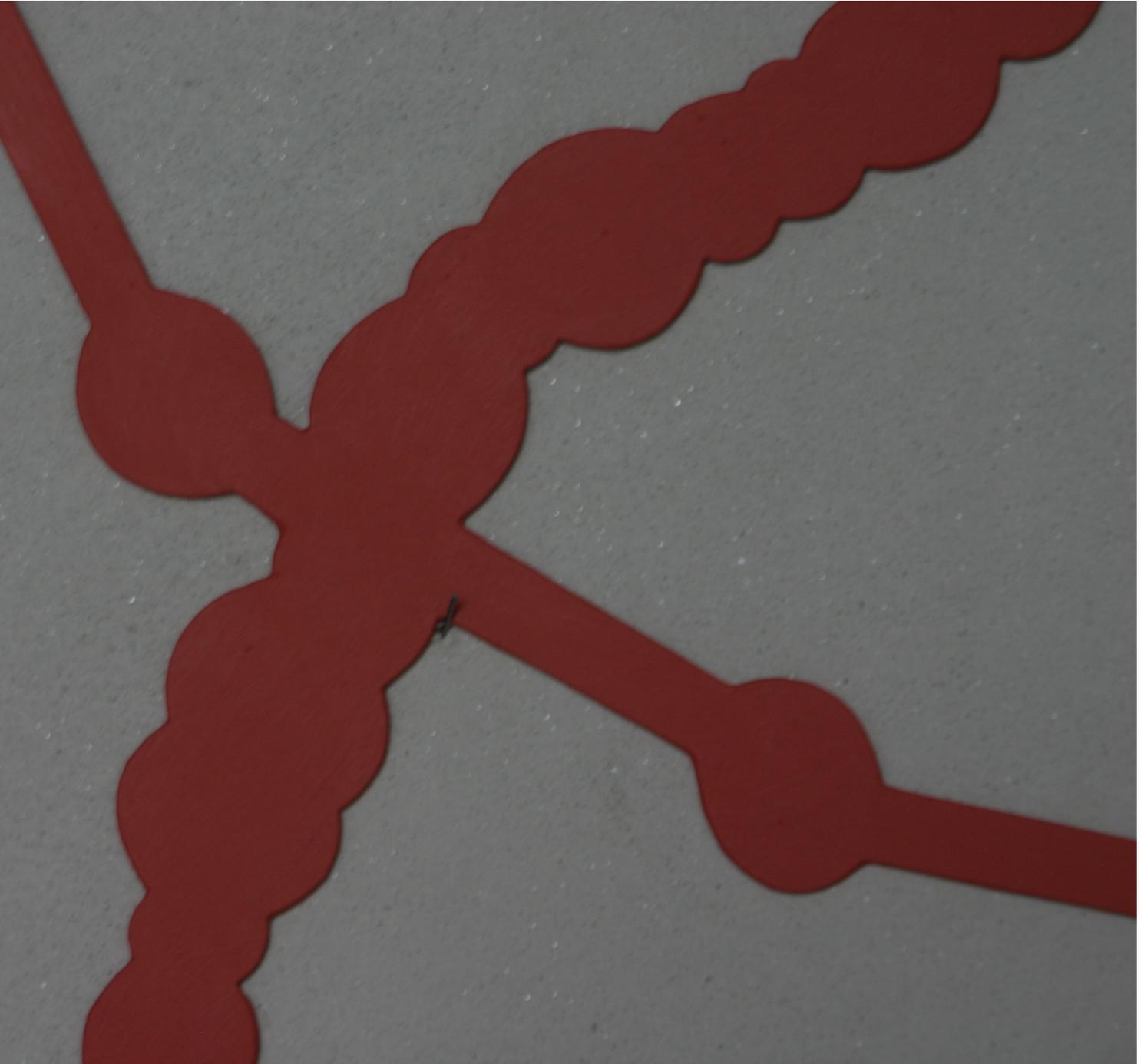


fig. 6.10.

Why Generosity?

What has been described are four different experiences of generosity and my response. In the first account, I was the recipient of generosity, and in the other three instances, the direct recipient was the artwork. I am not trying to persuade the reader of the necessity of responding similarly, but am conveying the experience of generosity, and that it, like other relations, can change the way you respond in those situations.

For me, I was moved especially by the occurrences of the first and last accounts, but they were each were profound that they were occurring, leaving me wondering how architecture relates to the particular affective response it produces. I could identify their generosity as well, but they each caused me different responses. These issues will form a basis for investigating affect in architecture that can be categorized in the following ways: nature, response, and design method. Firstly, there was the issue of the manner in which the space was generous: was it the likeness of generosity, did it contain qualities of generosity, or was its action generous in what it did? Is it a varying degree of generosity that caused the differing responses? How does the recipient of generosity factor in? Secondly in regards to response, I wondered what caused me to be moved so strongly in the first and last case especially, and how the architecture was capable of interrupting me with feeling. What could explain the difference in response, and to what degree of the response? Lastly, how can architecture be designed to potentialize response and “have feeling”?



Identifying Generosity

I began this essay without knowing why I felt the space to be generous. It had always been the case that I identified it by feel upon either receiving something, seeing someone or something being generous to another, or having been in the position to be generous. In any case, I identified it not because I knew its concept. To discern how generosity affected me variously, we must first understand the nature of generosity.

Perhaps the elementary thing that can be said about generosity is that it is a relation of giving, one type of relation out of many. It is most automatically identifiable as an eventive act of giving, which can be singular in instance or as a pattern of behavior befitting a generous person. It is discernible and felt in varying strengths to the degree someone gives, altered by the fact of giving plentifully in large amount, or with the quality of giving extra beyond what is “necessary or expected.”

Generosity is a quality usually associated with the giver, whether the donor is a person, animal, or an object exhibiting a pattern of plenty. Originally, the adjective was used to describe noble lineage, but it later described more widely those noble in character or conduct. It also found technical application in describing horses who both in stock and in breeding were more courageous, more willing, and more responsive. The term now finds various disparate applications describing such states as fertile soil, an effective remedy, or space, where the Oxford English Dictionary renders the term as describing a proportionately large and liberal space (OED: generosity, *n.*).

Generosity has the connotation of something higher and of morally excellent behaviour, whether this excellence stems from circumstantial action or inner strength of a person’s spirit. A generous spirit exhibits qualities such as giving readily, ungrudgingly and without reluctance, being understanding and tolerant, or being sensitive and providing for another’s needs and desires—I can sense how these qualities can be humanly motivating.

Beyond the matter of giving plentifully and abundantly, and regardless of the giver, the appraisal of generosity is influenced by the cost and value of what is being given, and also the situation that causes the act. A decision to give, whether a significant amount or not, calls into question its own source and motive. Both of these aspects can act separately from cost and value to alter perception. As espoused

fig. 6.11: Public Design Festival by Worapong Manupatpong

by biblical narrative, the widow giving her only copper coin is more significant than the rich giving a large amount of wealth. The source can be questioned as to their scope and capacity to be generous, and regarding motive, their attempt to achieve an end for either the giver or recipient. In architecture, like in all giving, the motive for giving can be deduced by situational details, and the gestures accompanying the giving can be traced via intuitive feeling.

To the recipient of generosity, the act is felt and effects a response in feeling and action. The aspect of accomplishment of the giving is an especially important aspect of generosity for the recipient. It qualifies the giving so as to not be about the giver but about the individuality of the recipient, and determines what is appropriate or prudent to be given. What the giving accomplishes highlights how generosity is a relation specific to the particular giver (what they have the capacity to give), and particular receiver (what the recipient can benefit from). What may be generous and deeply affective to one may not be generous and have little affect or even adverse affects to another. Due to this, the aspect of the sensitivity or thoughtfulness of the giver to the needs and desires of the recipient becomes one of the most important qualities—a quality that can even increase the value of what is being given. Sensitivity was first mentioned as a quality of a generous character; here it is being mentioned as a means of accomplishing something. The difference between the two is seen when the giver is sensitive without accomplishment. An affect of gratitude can still emerge from the generous effort and what it accomplishes, but the recipient finds themselves still lacking.

In regards to a generosity that accomplishes a result, a “truer” generosity can be observed with the Oxford English Dictionary’s usage of the word, describing a generous remedy as a solution that is “strong, powerful, efficacious.” In this description, we see an expression of a powerful generosity that yields results. Along with the qualities of plenty, readiness, and going above and beyond, we sense an efficiency and sense of duty in the initiated giving. The sense of duty is due to a remedy’s purpose being its efficacy. It wants to give what is good to the other so that they will have and be satisfied—from having nothing to having, and from being empty to being filled.

Being Moved.

From defining generosity, it makes it easy to imagine how seeing generosity or the experience of receiving can not only be “moving emotionally, but also possibly affect a whole spectrum of responses. It also explains why, as a situation of a special degree of giving, it doesn’t have to be my receiving that evokes emotion, since I was only the recipient in the first case and was the witness of the space, curators, and materiality giving to the artwork in the other cases. The sight of someone receiving something or the act of receiving something can both evidently be an event of beauty that beckons our soul to emerge from indifference. The factors of quantity, the extra-ness, the spirit of giving, cost, value, situation, source, and motive: all constitute perception and culminate in an affective response from the recipient. Depending on the particular act of generosity, it can hypothetically bring up anything in a vast range of emotions such as warmth, appreciation, inspiration, trust, gratitude, joy, indifference, unpleasantness, disapproval, offense, anger, repulsion, insecurity, or vindictiveness. We can even speculate as to the great potential that generosity has to affect the spirit, especially when it begins to accomplish much for its recipient whether they recognize it or not.

What can be surmised at this point is that the architecture was being generous in each case in contrast to what I thought was only a likeness of generosity. Architecture can be generous in the same way that people, animals, soil, remedies can be generous and moving. Also, it can be seen that my response is due to the specific acts of generosity, coming naturally from the exact nature of how I perceived each situation. It seems affect, response, and feeling elicited by aesthetic is not something elusively mystical; and is much more simpler dynamic to understand and anticipate than I began this essay thinking. Affect is response to a particular situation: action and response; occurrence and emotion. A person becomes grateful by something causing them to become grateful or a person becomes appreciative when there is something to appreciate. Our response, of which emotion is only a part, happens because of the nature of what we are presented with, whether that is seeing or encountering something, arising in the same manner we respond to seeing and encountering anything else.¹ But that something is specific, and is something particular happening

1 In regards to feeling, Brian Massumi insists how natural emotion happens as something we don’t conclude but rather something we find ourselves *in*. It happens apart from our reason it is as a part of response, but while remaining separate from gestures and words themselves. To explain this he uses an example used by the philosopher Albert North

like that of a situation of giving or finding the understated celebrated. As such, response is not something that we have to “get” into our work, because some sort response to aesthetic always happens whether the architect chooses or not where indifference is a type of response. The better question is to ask how we can move someone from indifference towards beneficial, productive, and positive action. In response to that situation—in response to the being of that person, aesthetic in reality, event--we feel a certain a way, which happens naturally in our interaction with what we encounter.

While affect something we know internally through our own responses, it is still difficult to imagine how the architecture was aesthetically establishing a condition for response that was so powerfully moving me from indifference. I suspect what makes it difficult to imagine is because it comes so much down to the exact situation. How was the architecture causing this feeling, and to what degree can we trace feeling to purely and precise aesthetic categories to learn how it embodies feeling? I will examine the first account, which was the most moving, more closely aesthetically to try to trace what was causing me to become grateful.

Whitehead to explain how the intense emotion of anger unfolds from moment to moment, “How [Whitehead] asks, does an angry person know he’s angry the next moment, even if it’s just a half-second later? He isn’t reflecting, he doesn’t conclude that he’s angry. He just is... The anger is the in-ness of that moment...” (Massumi 2011, 65). Sometimes we can find ourselves unexpectedly with intense emotions that urge our actions that may surprise ourselves. These can happen, and can be traced to be caused by specific things that make us emote.

An Aesthetic Causing Gratitude

The generosity I perceived in the spatial expansiveness that moved me to a deep sense of gratitude was the most potent in bringing an emotion that I otherwise wouldn't have. My response changed in me because it was felt to be relevant to my situation at the time, and the deep sense of gratitude I felt, because it was felt to be extremely relevant. The sensation can be explained being given extra, and abundantly so, of something that I felt to be incredibly valuable and personally relevant at the time. So special was the abundance that it was immediately felt as a fortunate gift rather than a fortunate encounter. The space was being very generous to me, and generosity by this point was intrinsic to the aesthetic causing me to feel grateful for what was being given to me. The difference was noticed in my own being that switched from the role of taking to receiving, an entire shift in feeling, attitude and posture. The event of being surprised and spatial expansiveness as isolated elements are not capable of reconstituting and explaining this deep well of gratitude I was feeling for what was being given to me, so what was I being given so abundantly that was causing me to find myself with this deep sense of gratitude?

The aspect of the “appropriateness of *situation*” in generous giving seems also to be operating to great effect in this case and seems necessary to explain the feeling because what was appropriate in the situation was aesthetic. My feeling of having already reached the end of the museum and the unanticipated new room creating the “false-ending” seems to be operating in setting up the a situation where the desire for more was met abundantly there-after. At the right time, “in my time of need,” the right type of abundance found me. At this moment in my life, what I “needed” more of was more of *this* museum. The space met my situational desire with the right type of abundance with the *rapid expansion* of space, which was aesthetic. Its “rightness” was non-consciously felt both immediately and automatically as value—water quenching thirst. All that had happened to me previously was preparing me for to long for more. However, not only was the abundance in the “more of this gallery”, which would have been fortunate enough for me already, but it was a more intense and condensed version of what I had already experienced that afforded new possibilities of engagement.

The “abundance” was set up in the space here to be immanently *experienced*, where the setup of generosity so that the act of *giving* was in the space being there and the act of my *receiving* was a direct correlation to simply being there and exploring (to me being present in the activity that I was there for). The medium of

abundance here was space and I was being set up as the recipient of the generosity. The being of the architecture was prepared, being given to me in experience, and it was incredibly personally relevant to me in that situation. A fortunate encounter is one that you take, but a fortunate gift given, is something you receive with gladness; and to immanently take it in by exploring it was my only task. This was a condition where to *live* was to gain.

The following paragraphs consider how the aesthetic, and thus feeling, came to be. They are the various aspects embedded in the aesthetic that I consider responsible for provoking the situation I found myself in and its intensity.

Would the generosity appear with as much “force” and cause as much feeling if the same space were to appear on the second floor as well? Not having encountered any similar space on the second floor is why I did not know where the space was coming from. If the unique geometry were to reoccur, my memory would bring a different set of potentials into play, however it would not have felt as much like a discovery on the third floor, nor as much like the grand finale.

It should be clarified that the setup of surprise on its own cannot explain the feeling of abundance; exponentially grows the feeling as a reflex. Not every person would necessarily be surprised, however the 90 degree turn that opens into the expansive space perpendicular to the way you enter the preceding room gives little opportunity for anticipation, especially with the trajectory of entry in the preceding room. The 90 degree turn acts as a quick transitional fade of experience into a realm of difference which tends towards being abrupt with a visceral affect. ¹Even without the particular affect of surprise, the senses are quickly presented with a palette of rich differences.

The most apparent change and the “giving of abundance” can be traced to begin with the new specific and irregular form, which is not merely more of the same space, and not merely expansion, but in actuality is a new mode of expression of what

1 The notion of the experience as a transitional fade is a notion by Massumi. He calls feeling an unperceived background, from which we operate, however it changes from moment like an experiential dissolve (2011, 65). From this background of feeling, action “precipitates.” The background of feeling changes like the weather, and separate from the feeling, “a rain of words and gestures in the micro-climate that is life at this moment” (2011, 65). This was an instance where architecture was employing the fade of experience in an resourceful way.

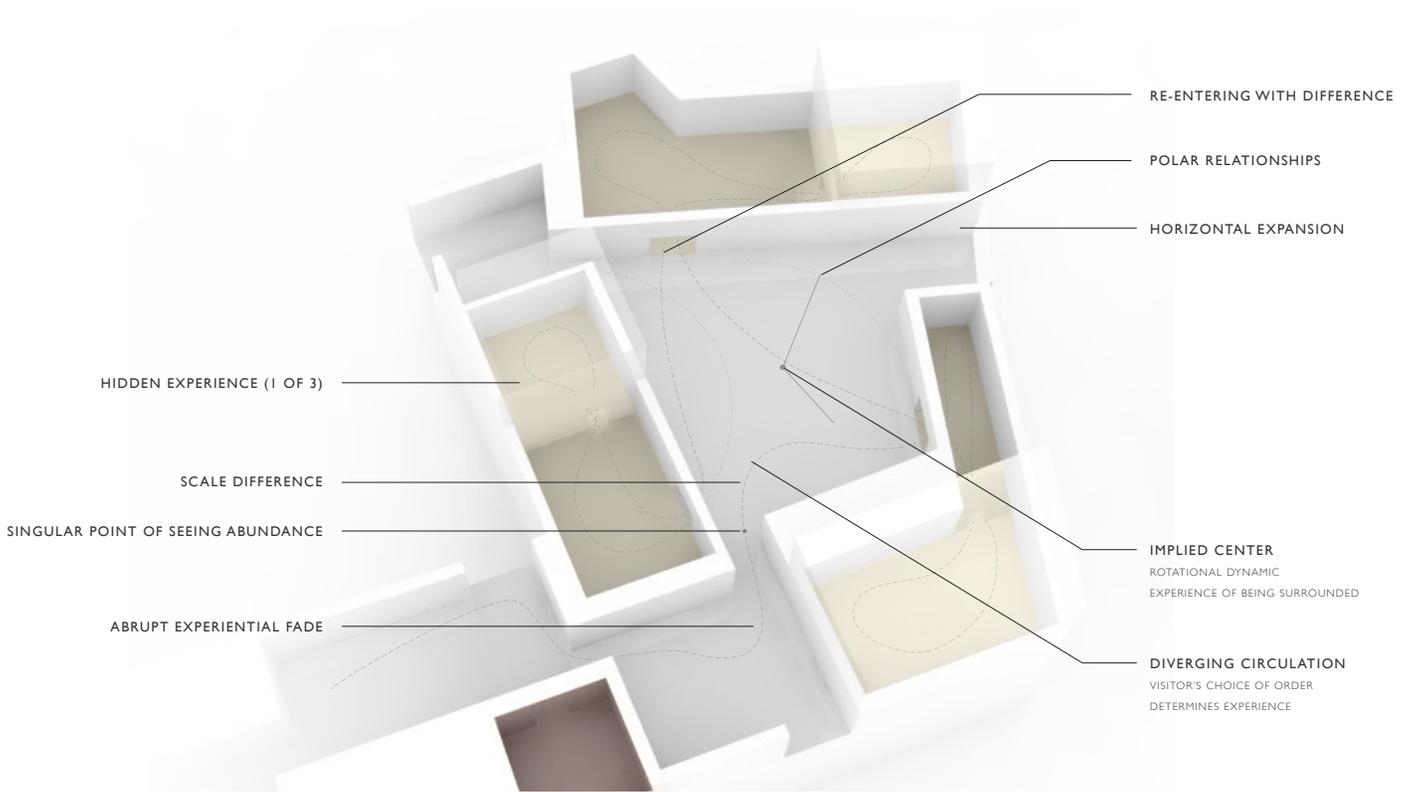


fig. 6.12: Depicted are aesthetic potentials embedded in the design that the curators can utilize within their exhibition to bring more meaning to an art piece.

you've already seen and that affords new potentials of experience. The space remains consistent in same aesthetic motifs (the use of “coming-into-view” and the “threshold of pure appearance” described in *Calibrated Space*), but with the unique geometry, make the space a reconstitution of previous experiences within a singular expanded room. Fundamental differences arise internally because of their expression in this form, which operate to manifest the new potentials of experiences: a change from static form to rotational and expanding form, from rectilinear to angular, a change from a singular path of progression to diverging progressions, and a change from linear spatial orientation to concentric orientation; which manifest the new potentials of experiences. The form is basis of these changes and reinterpretation. In effect it felt like a condensed and intensified essence of the museum's potent experience—the final movement of the symphony. The “reinterpretation” of what came before in the new mode of expression adds a whole new layer of and even more rich thoughts to dwell upon.

Another significant part of the experiential setup is the place that the visitor enter the new form, and how they enter the new form. The quick 90 degree turn enters them into a position where the geometry opens outward from where they stand and where they perceive all the differences at once as a pure appearance of abundance. Because of this position, it gives the impression of beginning in a

“point of privilege”, a vantage point, where they see choice as they are faced by multiple “secondary motif” thresholds opening into more rooms. In the perception of sheer multiplicity that shades off into even more concealed spaces, the visitor is literally seeing a semblance of experiential abundance—even more than if it were one large space.

The new mode of the concentric organization of the form also intensifies the visitor’s perception of being surrounded and of being given simultaneous visions to be perceived at once. It also implies a central point from which everything is expanding outwards dynamically. The irregularity of the form, in contrast to the regularity found before, tends to be expressive towards fluid disintegration into irregular chaos and with its exaggerated proportions and compression give it an intensity to this feeling. While they are walking in this form, you are occupying a polarity. They are always walking in relation to the implied central point, with the artwork surrounding them, and the rooms (and what they virtually contain) concealed behind the thresholds.

The way the floor plan is set up as well also tends to face the visitor with the affect of choice by nature of the relatively equal-sized dimensions of the room and the rotational nature of the gallery. The formal setup does not to suggest an order of experience, which in combination with the necessary choice in the order of experience, opens a matrix of curatorial possibilities. With the multiple rooms opening from the large room concentrically, they not only act to set up a circulation where one “goes out and yet comes back” and re-enters having experienced something new, they re-enter with a new orientation within the space. The unique angles of the room act to present a new experience of the form, that would have not necessarily been obvious, every time a person comes back out.

If I were to go back a second time, the factor of the surprise and the abrupt transition would begin to operate on my experience differently. My mind will already be anticipating the changes and will virtually be living a version of it already. I would be moved differently. It may still be possible that I would be moved to be grateful, but the architecture would need to be dependent on other factors. If the situation of gratitude specifically is to remain, the other potentials giving abundance and extra-ness would have to remain resilient. Other new possibilities of engagement embedded in the space (described in fig. 6.12), that arise from the reinterpretation of the gallery experience and that do not depend on the factor of surprise, seem to have the potential to offer the space a continued resilience and relevance.

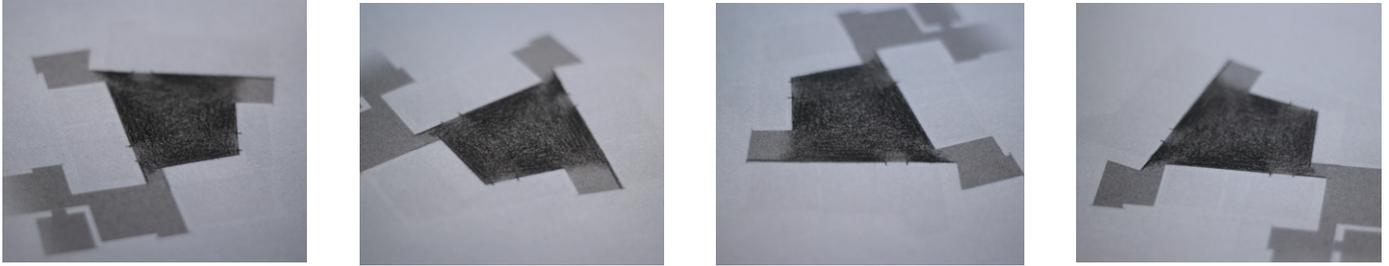


fig. 6.13: The varying orientations of the form as a person exits each room.



fig. 6.14: Approximately view 2



fig. 6.15: Approximately view 4

A Situationally Responsive Aesthetic

A person becomes grateful through the giving of something evoking a sense of thankfulness—it is caused—by an occurrence, a reality encountered. It is good that a person lives knowing they have been given something, that a person lives genuinely believing they are fortunate, that a person lives knowing that there is opportunity in the present. Because the dynamic of affect is so deeply personal, it is a very difficult task to bring up genuine response in the inhabitant that can move them in a way that benefits their lives. There is no shortcut to eliciting genuine response because it arises from genuine situation. It is not emotional deception, but genuine productivity that holds a gravitas for moving the soul from indifference. It is not the emotional layer at the surface of its form, but rather a transformation to the core of its being, that has a possibility of motivating a person to move from indifference. The factors of quantity, the extra-ness, the spirit of giving, cost, value, situation, source, and motive, all constitute perception and culminate in an affected response from the recipient, and they are real things. I realized that each step towards the gratitude I perceived, was built sequentially by the appreciation of the architect making the architecture truly act. The appearance of generosity can at best only elicit temporary a positive emotion. In order for aesthetic to affect response, it must be developed enough in its operation and in the event of its being there, to actually change reality itself. The root of all four moments' affect I experienced can be traced back to an aesthetic that potently creates being. In doing so, there is a situation to respond to, whether that was being given a abundantly rich experience, forming space around and giving space to artwork to be seen in a certain way and be appreciated, or seeing the understated be celebrated. The factors that cause response are factors that belong to any type of action in general (not only generosity), which is why they can affect other responses. A different combination of the same set of factors can cause someone to be angry perhaps when we see a lack of care, disrespect, spending public money over in unnecessary things, and injustice. In its being it is operating constantly in the event of its precise reality that people respond to. In these four cases it is the reality of its giving. The aesthetic's ability to move its inhabitant is dependent on how the varying aesthetic factors remain, diminish in, and augment its relevancy to their present situation with the immediacy and self-evident resonance like that of water quenching thirst.

Special mention should be given to the factor of situation because I am led to think, it can explain how one can design with feeling. Situation is the intersection

between action and response. Response can be potentialized by an aesthetic that is “situationally” responsive down to the nuance of aesthetic detail. This principle stems from firstly recognizing that aesthetic affect is always a matter of what is there, and secondly from the dual recognition that all needs are situational, that is, they are always carried with a person in space and time, and that action and response are situational happening in space a time. It is by an act being situationally appropriate that architecture potentializes response, and architecture is able to contribute to this by making situation stand up in time. The rapid expansion of abundance, the seemingly specifically tailored space for each artwork to allow them to be appreciated individually, or the seeing the understated being celebrated are all examples of situations made to stand up in time. In each of the four cases where the aesthetic was generous—like any act of generosity, it is a choice in time—what Peter Zumthor has done is made the act of generosity stand up in time, to be encountered in space. The architecture contains feeling to the degree that it causes the same response with a person across multiple encounters and across multiple people. People have their own inner situation from their needs and desires that is completely non-spatial and that is carried with them as they occupy each step and position in space.¹ The fact is that enduring needs and temporal needs all need to find situation in space and time to be addressed—ideally somewhere in the city fabric. If architecture is to be moving, its aesthetic must be “situationally responsive” by negotiating a person’s life situation and spatial situation and address it by providing participation in meaningful action in the present moment of their lives down to the specific location they are standing *in*.²

Kolumba illustrates that situation can be made to stand up in time at multiple scales by being situationally responsive aesthetically: at the scale of the

1 Situation simply means the siting of something in place, position, or location in relation to its surroundings from which they gain their point of view of the world. The OED renders: “A place where a person resides, or happens to be for a time.” (OED: situation, *n.*) It can refer literally to one’s spatial siting or it can also refer to their inner situation, which includes their situation in life (season of life), psychological situation (struggles, burdens, and tribulations).

2 The aesthetic responsiveness needs to be responsive to both the circumstances of the program’s activity and relation to life, but simultaneously responsive to the particular spatial circumstance of the site, and even further, the particular situational circumstances within itself. The aesthetic cannot be indifferent to either the site or the person, and must make meaningful participation stand in space.

building to support a portion of dwelling, at the scale of the room to address a person's situational desires, and at the scale of a person's position in space within room; to which its experiential potency can be directly attributed. At the scale of the city, the museum stands as a presence of experience hidden behind its walls. Its purposeful veil of grey stone, hides a situation/place that celebrates, and will celebrate, humble understated beauty. In a very direct way, it preserves in its own being in the world (not only nominally in being called a museum) by situationally creating an aesthetic experience that makes self-apparent its relevance to the visitor in how it benefits their lives. The aesthetic was a medium for my becoming, and even now it makes me very happy that there is such a place in the world. It has changed me in having experienced the possibility that such a beauty exists and can be so relevant. The building's aesthetic has become a presence, a symbol, in the city as such.

This precise experience plays out in at the *scale of individual spaces and rooms*. Each room is specific in its function and in the situations it provides, which aggregates into an entire experience that is coherent and meaningful. The final room on the third floor is a perfect example of how situational experience contributes to the continuum of the entire experience, where its unique experiential potentials allow for the building to achieve a deeper and more nuanced *degree of dwelling*. Each material-form or material-space contributes to a mindful knowing of the activity of dwelling in whichever domain of life it is serving, such that it fills a specific need within the building and the city fabric. Put differently, each room it allows the activity to achieve a deeper more meaningful degree of dwelling. They give expression to the longing, activity, and feeling in space and time.

Furthermore, Kolumba demonstrates a specificity in the architecture, and is fluidly responsive to the whole-self of the person within the given site and program. It even precisely contextualizes its function to an exact sensitive and nuanced situations *at the scale of the position*. The rapid transitional fade of experience created by the 90 degree turn of the first account, along with its subsequent rapid expansion of abundance is the recognition of the potency of the position in contributing to the entire experience. As mentioned, the situational setup did not allow me to anticipate what was to come in the last space which was unique from everything else before. The setup of the singular position of transition, a point of juncture, in experience allows the curators to either continue what they were doing before, change what they were doing, or reinterpret what came before. These otherwise

would not exist experientially if the singular experience did not exist, even though it is completely reliant on the experiences of what came before and what came after to be meaningful. Another example of precisely contextualized function is illustrated by each artwork placed in Kolumba. They are objects of situational relief at the scale of position contributing to the entire experience. Each experience prompted individual responses, but also formed an overall impression. They revealed to me my need and longing, and subsequently a place that addressed them in the space.

The aesthetics capacity to be responsive at the nuance of the situation, in at least one of these scales, is critical to the overall architecture's relevance in a person's life. Its degree of relevance as it stands in time in a particular location in relation to their daily life is directly related to the immediacy of how they are moved, and the degree to which they are moved.

Finding the Opportunities of the Given Situation

Part of Peter Zumthor's ability to potentialize response stems from his ability to find opportunities within the given site. This ability stems from his awareness of the full reality of what he is designing and can be demonstrated in his many situationally sensitive aesthetics. The key factors of using the unique geometry and the 90 degree turn of the design were brilliant, but they likely would not have been made into such powerful potentials if he didn't search for what he could do with the situation he had before him. The odd geometry which created a new mode of expression, and the abundance of the architecture were not his invention. They originated from within the constraints on the given site, from the pre-existing ruined walls of St. Kolumba cathedral. Its existence that embodied so many potentials was only possible by other factors coalescing the way that they did, and it easily could have been made into something else. However, it is evident that his agency consciously utilized the form to derive so many experiential opportunities with the geometry he was given (fig. 6.12 and 6.17). The same awareness of situation is seen in the design of the experience of surprise, which was a factor that almost certainly arose as a derivative of other decisions: the decision to build a long-span floor on top of the archaeological excavations, and the decision to have the expanded space not appear on the second floor, which was likely driven by a desire for additional height for the excavation space below. Finding these opportunities must begin from an

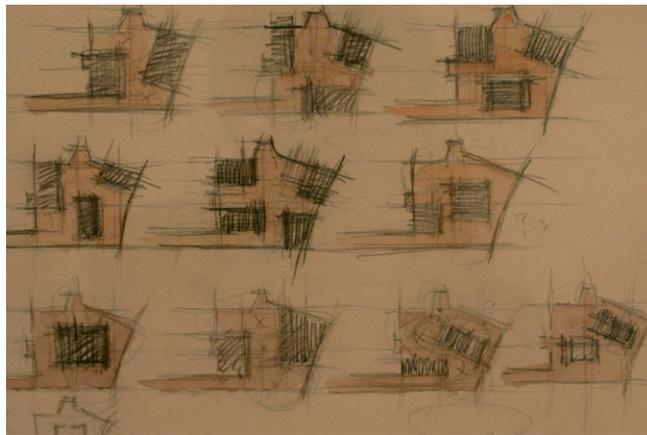


fig. 6.17: These sketches by Peter Zumthor show the various explorations to make use of the unique geometry of the existing form.

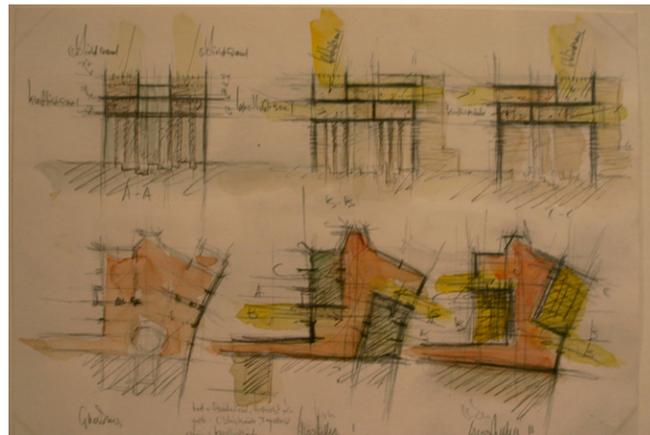


fig. 6.18: This sketches shows the double height rooms that will be filled with a different light, and divide up the floor plate. (Adminstration offices occupy the top floor of the building.)

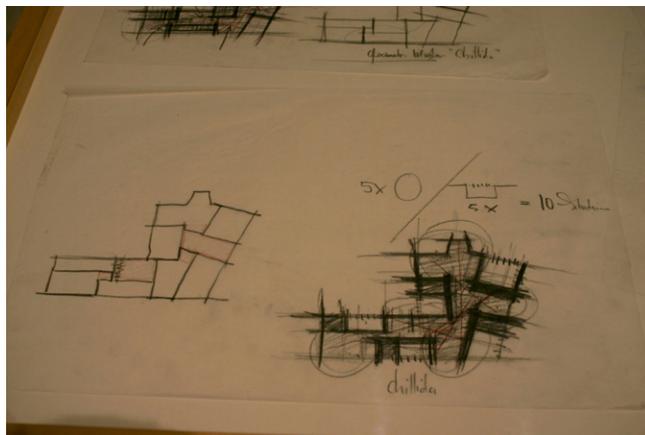


fig. 6.19: This sketch shows the idea of calculated embedded view angles by the placement of rooms.

awareness of the resultant experience of aesthetic decisions. However, the intuition, inspiration, investigation, invention, knowing, and wisdom of the designer are all necessary faculties to take what is given and manifest a situationally appropriate aesthetic, action, or an event in a person's life. The aesthetic must make self-evident its own *raison d'être* that motivated and urged them through the pure act of invention into their specific way of being in the world that participates in the given activity. Its lack of indifference to the situation of the person, the relevance of the program for dwelling, and the negotiation with the site through its aesthetic allowed the architecture to engage spiritually and inform meaning into my activity of living.

In my opinion, a caveat should be made explicit that eliciting a response from the individual is not necessarily the pinnacle of architecture. A response within the moment of experience and enduring effect are not necessarily the same thing—though they possibly can be. It is more important to question the type of response that is being produced and why it should be produced rather than settling for any response. This mindset will ultimately produce a more vitally contributive architecture. Responses should be derivative from architecture being genuinely relevant in a person's life. It is more important to aim for an aesthetic that is genuinely productive rather than one that simply elicits a response. The aesthetic of Kolumba would agree with this. Also one reason perhaps why Peter Zumthor's work is prone to be experienced as generous is because of his close reading of the Other whether it is the person, the artwork or material; and his insistence to always structure his creativity around the goal of contribution into the experience of the person. Of the four accounts, only the first seemed to be designed as a "spectacular" experience of surprise, and even then there are more enduring experiential potentials that contribute valuable experience not rooted on the ephemeral emotion it might bring. In the other moments, the emotional gravitas—that brought feelings from wonder, inspiration, appreciation, and humility—arose naturally from the space of the museum simply doing its task extremely well, helping me to appreciate the art. What happened in the last account has left me, I think permanently, with a more careful eye towards the possible beauty and revelation of the understated.

SEARCHING HEARTS

Perhaps the most valuable way I can encourage you at this moment, my dear colleague, is to search and continue to search: to look, to take time, to evaluate, to make yourself available to reflect on your own life and struggles, and reflect on another's life and struggles, and ask yourself how you might make a difference in the circumstances of the world through your own actions and through your architecture. In order to search effectively, it is necessary to not assume that we know the medium of architecture in totality and thus, the search can always continue. In architecture, the search is all the more important in the fact that each design must seek out the affect specifically required by the percipient. An architect must not adopt methods, forms, and types without thinking and looking at what it might do in the world. Once an architecture exists in the world, our decisions operate apart from ourselves. Instead it stands in its own full reality as affect, which makes it critical that we are aware of the impact of our decisions on the world. The existence speaks directly to the heart of a person through the voice of their perception saying, "Behold." "Indeed, architecture's being and occurrence is true."

For me, this thesis has been a form of searching: to know the medium of architecture, to know its inherent relationship to people and their daily lives, and to know my role in the world through design. In other words, it has been a search to understand how architecture can be valuable and inform the vital living of people, and can aid people in their journey through time and the world. My search has been the finding of surprisingly potent moments woven into the fabric of everyday life, feeling their significance in the present, and documenting the value of architecture and concentrating on its ability to serve the Other. Writing was the process of looking, thinking, evaluating, unravelling, struggling with the complexity and seeming paradoxes and impossibilities, and theorizing how it might be abstracted and deployed in other situations. The readings deepened my understanding on the role of art in the world, the function of aesthetic transformation, and on the spiritual condition and journey of men and women from birth to death. Finally, reading set a theoretical benchmark for what architecture could accomplish. , However their ideas never were able to replace the phenomena of the buildings themselves. The buildings do not represent an existing theory, but they inspired my own theory. They pattern for me what architecture looks like, which then can possibly overlap with existing theories to give illustration to them. Though everything written in the thesis

can be more concentrated and may find greater depth and clarity, and moreover more concrete illustrations need to expand in the breadth of the work, but for now, this must be packaged along with a confession that this is what I can offer at this moment. Though I come short, through each essay I have learned points that are applicable to my own practice that appear to me at the moment worthwhile to be test, visited, and re-evaluated.

I have searched so that I can do more in the architecture. I am responsible for its simply being—that it might not only shelter the body but also affect the entire being of the individual that encounters my architecture. I want to be cognizant in the midst of a design, how directly my decisions and final products are tied-up with the lives of those who inhabit or encounter it and how it will make an impact on their lives. I am looking to sense the opportunity in the given site, and in the gift of the present moment, to improve what came before, so that what is good unfolds in the present as a gift to people's lives. I want to have the dexterity to negotiate aesthetically the complexity of the situation and its simultaneous challenges on many fronts to truly elevate the condition of circumstance in a precise situation. I want to be sensitive to what is most appropriate in each situation in the design to potentialize each space. I want to make an enduring aesthetic that grows in its beauty over time and grows in its relevance in a person's life. However short I may come in my search, I am compelled to continue and re-evaluate myself to the measure of Truth, Good, and Beauty and believe that they might not be just found in the world, but made in the world. This sort of design does not focus on creating an object, but an experience, participated in as a meaningful dwelling and affected to be lived out in the lives of people in the present (Pérez-Gómez 2006, 679). The object is ephemeral, but the event that occurs is significant as a moment in a person's life, never to be repeated (Pérez-Gómez 2006, 679). Meaning in architecture is found not in the architecture itself, but in what it does for the life of the individual who encounters its aesthetic, whose life story is intertwined into that architecture. Its meaning is contingent on the totality of its effect in the world through time. It is love that is necessary to acknowledge that the Other is more important than the architecture in the end. However, designing architecture can make a difference in their life and lives of many. This realization urges the search to know the medium, and it is the concretizing force that moves the aesthetic from indifference, and supplies and materializes an experience for the inhabitant.

For me, this architecture brings itself as close as possible to be a spring that the thirsty and weary wander into and encounter along their journey. I am but another thirsty wanderer along the same path searching, digging, and in the case of my architecture, making real the walls of the well in a situation to help the others find water in the world. Its event affects similar to the emanation of “a scent of a flower that we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never visited” (Lewis [1949] 2001, 31). Architecture may fix a place in our minds where we know we have something concrete to return to and immanently experience. It causes our heart to say to itself in an ever more intricate song, “I have seen, I have tasted, I have found a splendid existence.” It is in this architecture that Florensky’s notion that existence is seen to not be the most general characteristic of architecture, but its most essential (Bychkov 1993, 25). This is the search that is never ending, but ever rewarding. Towards whatever architecture is, and can do for the world and people, let us search with one another.

I feel my ego wanting to rear its ugly head at every turn, and potentially souring everything. I feel the temptation to use knowledge for my own personal advancement rather than remaining wholly centered on the lives of others. My choices, when embedded exactly in the aesthetic, not only affect my community and myself, but all those who experience my architecture on so many simultaneous levels. I threaten to squander the precious resources and the precious opportunity that is present. Blessed purity. Abiding above reproach. I feel my inability. Father of Lights, help us! Grace us with Your right hand, visit us in our poverty, free us from oppression, reveal to us our injustice, break us from the bonds of wickedness that we might do what is right in Your sight. Break my heart for your purposes, use me. Hope for the future. Hope of the nations.

*To the believer, be mindful that
there are no architecture awards in heaven.*

There is only one commendation to earn:

“Good work good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:33)

No rhetoric will stand on that day.

All things will come to the light on that day

in pure knowing-being.

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully,

even as I have been fully known.” (1 Corinthians 13)

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The thesis uses some terms slightly differently than their common usage, which are adopted from the texts of other authors and theorists. The definitions here are not comprehensive of the ideas but are only meant to locate the understanding generally in the way they have been understood within the context of this thesis. Unless otherwise noted, the original understandings can be found in the following texts being referred to: when in reference to Pavel Florensky, primarily referring to Victor Bychkov's *The Aesthetic Face of Being: Art in the Theology of Pavel Florensky* (1993); when in reference to Susanne Langer, Chapter 4: "Semblance," in *Feeling and Form* (1953); and when in reference to Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (2011).

Being

'Being', in its simplest sense, is understood as "that which is existent" and that operates in time, and in its large sense, the fullness of that which is real in time and the simultaneous implications that come with its reality. The small sense of the word assumes an indifference to something existing, which in many ways, is the reality in some instances of being (in relation to ourselves), however this sense of the word misses the other instances of the significant felt relation of being—the weighty significance of being—where something being real, the way that it is, makes all the difference in its reality in our living. Whether significant or not, being implies something existing having a degree of reciprocal affect unfolding in time in its encounter, and simultaneous relation of what is real. Put differently, being is understood here to be something that exists, which has an affect on others in the terms of its own reality and its own particularity and that is subject to be affected by others on itself in time to varying degrees and with varying significances. It can be referring to a person in time, an architecture in time, or an event that happened in time. The concept is primarily referenced from translations of Pavel Florensky's work where it originally appears as *Istina*, the Russian word for Truth. Florensky's work connects aesthetic and Truth through a concept of being.

Aesthetic

Aesthetic is used to refer to the material reality of a building that a person encounters, and that which the architect shapes. It is understood based on Florensky's

understanding, where aesthetic is the “face of being.” Aesthetic is both the “face” that we interact with but is also the gateway to the fullness of its being. It is evoked with the sense of its occupation of the nascent moment of architecture where it is something that was formed, yet now is form. It is referred to as the material object of being in apparent reality. Aesthetic in this thesis is understood to operate from various dimensions of its being such as from its being image, real, material, shaped, and that has direct influence on what we perceive, see, feel, have relation to.

Reality

“What do I mean by reality? I mean that which has existence apart from any idea any mind may have of it, and which would exist if there were no mind anywhere to entertain a thought of it. That which is real has being in itself. It does not depend upon the observer for its validity.” (A.W. Tozer ... 52)

Spirituality

is understood in the thesis in reference to a person as their way of being on the earth. A moment of spirituality is employed quite generally to mean a moment where one’s spirit is moved from a state of indifference (moved by feeling, moved by seeing) to hope, to rejoice, to gratitude; causing a visceral change in their inclination toward the divine, toward themselves, or toward others.

Knowing

is being used in the Judeo-Christian sense where knowing is relational and seen in degrees of intimacy. This knowing is more specific than the understanding of knowledge that denotes awareness, acquaintance, or having acquired understanding common to intellectual or scientific knowledge without necessarily understanding the knowledge’s application. While this understanding is also relational in knowing, in essence simple awareness allows for one to say they know without a change in themselves (i.e. saying they know while still being far off and not intimately knowing its intricacy and truth within the world). Pavel Florensky develops a concept of this knowing as being inseparable from aesthetic being, because relational knowledge demands a transformation of being in that we live (be) what we know. In relation

to being, knowing is the process of becoming in a person's or architecture's being through their intentional movement for communion with the Truth, that necessitates a transformation in being. (Bychkov 1993, 27) The matter of knowledge is a state of being with, being intimate with, and appreciation of Truth and reality.

Wisdom

is closely linked to the condition or fact of knowing and vision,¹ that allows for the capacity to judge rightly, to have sound judgement, and be discerning in the practical affairs of being or action. (OED: wisdom, *n.*) Opposite to that of folly, wisdom not only implies rightness of action but also efficacy and achievement in affect, living, or being.

Truth (Istina)

Istina is being understood based on Florensky's understanding, which for this thesis can be summarized as that which is truly real, which at its apex culminates in the being of the Trinitarian God. He considers that all things exist on a continuum of being real to not real, where what is most real is most significant. One can get a sense of this from Robert Slesinski's excellent summary of Florensky's dense cross-examination of the etymology of the words truth in Russian (*Istina*), Greek (*Aletheia*), Latin (*Veritas*), and Hebrew (*emet*) and the individual senses and moments of the concept that they contain. The following statement is from his summary of *Istina*, which is primarily where the sense of being evoked in this thesis, and the one which describes an affective dimension of what is real in time:

Since not all that exists is true, *istina* must more specifically correspond with real being... Florensky adds, if we dig deeper into the roots of the Russian verbal form, "is". *Est'*, according to Florensky and other linguists, contains the Sanskrit root, as, which equally connotes the concepts of "breathing" and "being alive". (Slesinski 1988, 89)

¹ This can be found when traced back to its medieval roots of wit-dom, wisdom is the "dominion, or condition or fact" (OED: -dom, *suffix*) of "wit", where the earliest sense of wit meant: "to have cognizance or knowledge of; to be aware of; to know (as a fact or an existing thing)." (OED: wit, *v.*)

This conception describes a lively and operative dimension of truth, and explicitly tied to having a characteristic “phenomena” in its being existent, from which it elicits affect and response in a person as they encounter its being situationally.

Vision

is being employed not particularly for the sense of sight, but for the human capacity to comprehend aesthetic articulation of symbols as a “mental concept of a distinct or vivid kind; an object of mental contemplation” (OED: Vision, *n*). More specific to this thesis, it is understood as the visual sense of grasping knowledge (whether in the eye or mind) as a concrete understanding of a way of practicing architecture from the perspective of the architect, or a way of being from the perspective of the inhabitant through aesthetic reality. Psychologist and priest Henri Nouwen captures the hinge of the vision and knowing that connects the two perspectives this way:

Evagrius Ponticus, one of the Desert Fathers who had great influence on monastic spirituality in the East and the West, calls contemplation a *theoria physike*, which means a vision (*theoria*) of the real nature of things (*physike*). The contemplative is someone who sees things for what they really are, who sees the real connections of how things hang together...To attain such a vision, spiritual discipline is necessary. (Nouwen 2010, 5)

Coherence

Coherence is a term that is employed by Peter Zumthor, which seems to indicate a feeling he gets from a design when it works and becomes something on its own. () Coherence, quite simply means “sticking together” (OED: Cohere, *v*). However the fascination and complexity of the term comes from its material reality of substance reacting when individual parts placed together begin to forcefully cleave to one another, or unite and remain united with one another as a different substance. It also holds a sense of intelligibility within our perception, which the word “Coherent,” that comes from the same Latin root, describes. One definition of coherence describes this dimension of intelligibility of a substance as: “Logical connection or relation; congruity, consistency”, (OED: Coherence, *n*.) which begins to speak of an agreement between its parts “so that one part of the discourse does not destroy or

contradict the rest” (OED: Coherence, *n.*), and a harmonious connection of different parts as an apparent overall system.

Presence

Presence is another term that is used often by Peter Zumthor to describe what he is trying to create. But the term is employed as the connection mediating the ‘thereness’ of material cohering as something larger, and our being in time. He describes it in various instances but has not articulated a definition of it. However in a lecture entitled *Presence in Architecture, Seven Personal Observations*, at the end of it, he offers a phrasing that an art historian listening to him speak once suggested to him: “You’re in the world, and you’re part of the world in the moment, and there is something bigger in the world than you” (Zumthor 2013b, YouTube video posted by 4757755, 55:00-57:00). It indicates a living feeling connected to reality at large, caused by virtue of material cohering to inform a situation. Lived relation through material of reality at large.

Virtual

The virtual in this thesis has been understood from its intersection with aesthetic from the point of view that Brian Massumi’s text *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (2011) provides. The original philosophical development of the concept was by Gilles Deleuze’s elaboration of the ‘virtual’ that had existed previously but particularly was employed by Henri Bergson in his ontological study of how time and memory operate upon our being in the present. Deleuze picks up Bergson’s notion of the concept, and traces the virtual from the original sense of the medieval latin *virtus*, which means strength or power, and the later eighteenth century sense of the virtual that was applied to describe optical images that came to be associated with a pure image in opposition to a physical thing. Deleuze draws on both the potentializing aspect and optical roots of the word to refer to “the unconscious potential or power of thought, a potential attributed to the very fact that they are not yet actualized or made present” (Blackwell 2012, 3-4). It is a concept developed to allow challenge the established domination of inherited hegemonic concepts that exert powers of conformation upon the individual.

Abstract

is a term employed both by Susanne Langer and Brian Massumi in reference to the concept of Semblance. For Langer, abstraction isn't being referred to as an aesthetic quality of art itself, but is being understood as a technique. She says "art forms are abstracted only to be made *clearly apparent*, and are *freed* from their common uses only to be put to new uses, to act as symbols, to become expressive fo human feeling." (1953, 51, emphasis added)

The power of the image "lies in the fact of that it is an abstraction, a symbol, the bearer of an idea" as it presents itself purely to our vision as a virtual potential. which being the direct aesthetic quality thrown into relief is very substance "is abstract from material existence."

Brian Massumi used the term in association with semblance which happens in the virtual () configuration of the actual.

Operating with semblance in aesthetic manipulation is a process of aesthetic abstraction which has the function of "giv[ing] forms a new embodiment in *purely qualitative*, [abstract aesthetic] instances, setting them free from their normal embodiment in real things so that they may be *recognized* in their own right, ... freely conceived and composed in the interest of the artist's ultimate aim--significance, or logical expression." (1953, 50, emphasis added)

Quality

Susanne Langer theorizes that the qualities are dynamically operative in their expression through the virtual. She says that design is expressive through qualities and relationships, and in themselves, they do something by causing a difference in our perception, which we respond to.

Qualitative Dynamic

is a term by Massumi used to empasize that qualities are dynamic and cause a difference to happen in our encounter with their specificity in our perception.

Potential

Different from the possible, potential is a term employed by Massumi to mainly denote the virtual... the capacity to poise the body and set up a response that the person then responds to in their own way.

Semblance

The term was developed by Susanne Langer as a concept to resolve the philosophical issue of art between objects and its image, which in the case of art, clearly the created thing often so “transparent” in its actual material means as an object that we mistake its image for its object. Semblance describes what is created and emergent virtually when aesthetic components are placed in relation to one another in a certain way, whether it is strokes and colours applied on canvas, or notes in music, or materials in architecture; and whether they are abstract or not, they are not representative (even if they are representing something) but things in themselves (with contents that speak of something that which they depict if they are depicting something) beyond the means of their individual constituents, especially in the hands of a master. Prior to Susanne Langer, the term has existed since the 13th century, and has always referred to a connection between actual person or thing and its virtual outward appearance and demeanor. Langer offers resolution to the issue between object and image by using semblance to consolidate the two separate entities by noting that the “semblance of thing, thus thrown into relief, is its direct aesthetic quality.” (1953, 50) The semblance, or the virtual form, is noted to not be something entirely separate but its being is purely integral to the actual while being something other, (importing something other into the actual, and having a presence) and with a different role in life and significance than the actual itself. They are seen as immediately and presently through the present object, but characteristically, she notes that the semblance setting of operation occurs apart from their practical existence and significance as a mere arrangement of matter. She presents this principle, this way:

The setting forth of pure quality, or semblance, creates a new dimension, apart from the familiar world. That is its office. In this dimension, all artistic forms are conceived and presented. Since their substance is illusion or ‘Schein’ they are, from the standpoint of practical reality, mere forms; they exist only for the sense or the imagination that perceives them--like the *fata morgana*, or the elaborate, improbable structure of events in our dreams. (1953, 50)

But their significance is not in their possibility and how they operate (because artist create them intuitively and they are appreciated intuitively independent of whether they can be theorized or not) but in their specificity and function in life. Langer describes the function of semblance this way:

The function of 'semblance' is to give forms a new embodiment in purely qualitative, unreal instances, setting them free from their normal embodiment in real things so that they may be recognized in their own right, and freely conceived and composed in the interest of the artist's ultimate aim--significance, or logical expression. (1953, 50)

It is adopted by Brian Massumi in his latest text *Semblance and Event* (2011) as a concept that provoke action aesthetically. Semblance, in Massumi's view, appears when qualities are foregrounded in perception so that its presence can be lived immanently.

Pure Appearance

Pure appearance is a term used by Susanne Langer to describe an object appearing to perception, arresting one's perception and was an alternate way of explaining the perception of a semblance. The term carries the connotation of the thing seen for what it is more fully than just seeing it with habitual meanings and conventional assumptions brought upon it. Where something is seen as a pure appearance, it is understood in her text that an event has occurred upon the percipient where they have experienced the magnetic pull and the tendency that belongs to a work of art to have the power of disassociation. She explains, "it is not the percipient who discounts the surroundings, but the work of art which, if it is successful, detaches itself from the rest of the world; [and where they] now only see it as how it is presented to them, and thus disassociated from the mundane." (1953, 45) It is introduced in the first section of Chapter 4 as an introduction to the characteristic dynamic of semblance in the percipient.

Lived-Relation

Massumi notes, the importance of aesthetic and its qualities or with the semblance that arises is that they provide us with lived-relation--a lived relation of concepts through semblance. The same operation of aesthetic is seen the other theorists,

except they describe aesthetic providing relation to different things: to concepts in Massumi's case, pure feelings in Susanne Langer's case, a larger sense of reality in Peter Zumthor's case, and Truth (*Istina*) in Pavel Florensky's case. And where their felt relation within their experience in life, aesthetic potentializes our response by their presence in being. Without thinking, our response happens naturally when any of the above are present in aesthetic.

Thinking-Feeling

In certain circumstances, the living of relation becomes so apparent that it engages us so directly that we have immediate sensations of the virtual as it happens and continues to unfold, which this thesis considers to be in the circumstances when the qualitative relation is relevant to our situation. In these cases, our own self becomes aware, being awakened to our immanence in our present situation, alive in the event of perceiving, sensing, being activated by the qualities in aesthetic. This is the instances of aesthetic that this thesis is interested in. Massumi describes this as thinking-feeling, which he notes is a different way of describing semblance and pure appearance. Where the emphasis of pure appearance is describing the receptivity of virtual qualities purely integral to itself, and semblance is describing what we are seeing virtually through the actual, thinking-feeling seems to be his present participle emphasizing the immanent living-within of Susanne Langer's semblance and pure appearance, where we think and feel in the present as a continual unfolding of experience toward a certain set of also unfolding relations. (See)

