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The New City Reader is a newspaper on architecture, public space and the city, published as part of "The Last Newspaper," an exhibition running at the New Museum of Contemporary Art from October 6, 2010–January 9, 2011. Conceived by executive editors Joseph Grima and Kazys Varnelis, the newspaper's content centers on the spatial implications of epochal shifts in technology, economy and society today. The New City Reader will consist of one edition published over the course of the project, with a new section produced weekly from within the museum's gallery space, each led by a different guest editorial team of architects, theorists and research groups. These sections will be available free at the New Museum and—in emulation of a practice common in the nineteenth-century American city and still popular in China and other parts of the world today—will be posted in public on walls throughout the city for collective reading.

Next week's issue will be FOOD, guest edited by Will Prince, Krista Ninivaggi and Nicola Twilley.

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**The New
City
Reader**
A Newspaper Of
Public Space

The New City Reader

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CLASSIFIEDS
Leagues and Legions

"The Last Newspaper" is curated by Richard Flood and Benjamin Godsill. For more information please visit newmuseum.org

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Why Leisure?

by Beatriz Colomina

Newspapers are less and less about the news. In an age where stories are monitored minute-by-minute on our screens and phones, anything that appears in print is already outdated, even historical. The fluidity of ink no longer announces what's new. It now slows things to a stop.

This liberates newspapers immensely. They no longer have the same obligation to report events, since by the time they do, it is too late anyway. All they can do is make "news," a frozen image of what has happened recently—strongly shaped by what their particular audience wants. With the steady rise of electronic media, more and more of the newspaper is dedicated to the lifestyle of the audience, offering precise advice about what to wear, eat, buy, watch, read, visit, exercise, sit on or live in. Newspapers have adopted the style of the lifestyle magazine, with its mixture of recommendations and light entertainment. Lifestyle magazines in turn adopted this from the "leisure magazines" of the fifties and sixties, with the ultimate model perhaps being *Playboy* and its mixing of "entertainment" and advice on every possible piece of equipment, clothing, cocktail, furniture, music, gadget, come-on line, car, bed and even apartment.

Leisure is now the ultimate section. Its seamless confusion of articles and advertising is the true financial engine of most newspapers, supporting what's left of the infrastructure devoted to reporting. The advertising images of leisure spill out of its pages and are spread over all the surfaces of the city in billboards, posters, video screens and signs. It is as if we read the newspaper at home or in the subway to rehearse what we should do with our leisure, with all the images pinned up around us all over the urban fabric like huge sticky notes reminding us what we should be doing. When we go to restaurants, movie theaters, shops and spas, the actual pages of newspaper leisure sections displayed in the windows and lobbies guide us faithfully to the right product, the right look, the right taste, the right sound, the right idea. Leisure sections guide us from private to public to private. They shape our architecture.

This section explores the concepts of leisure embedded in our urban environment and perhaps more importantly, in our mental environment.

The New City Reader

A Newspaper Of
Public Space

Leisure, Violence, Tourism

by Britt Eversole

As French schools recently began a month-long break, American journalists predicted increases in protest violence. Equating collective violence with immaturity—marginalizing violence’s political significance—rehearses an American myth: students protest because they have free-time. During the Million Man March of 1995, participants were heckled with taunts of “Get a Job!” and black leaders were criticized for encouraging youth to march rather than attend school. Bigotries notwithstanding, these critiques reiterate that political-time is not work-time, education-time or family-time. They de-legitimate collective action, suggesting the unemployed, minorities and youth are not, not yet or no longer fully enfranchised citizens: they haven’t “earned” the right to the city.

We conceive leisure-time as time away from work and obligations. Yet the American sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen cast politics, or government, alongside religion, war-making and sports as the leisure class’ original, ennobling professions. Though emphasis shifted long ago from labor practices to the invidious, conspicuous performance of class distinctions attached to those practices, we still consider political actors’ (non)work as leisure-class activity. Chattering-class blogs criticize demonstrators for wasting their spare time. Jon Stewart dedicated his “Rally to Restore Sanity” to “people who are too busy, that have jobs and lives and are tired of their reflection in the media as being a divided country that’s ideological and conflicted and fighting.” In a nation that rejects the general strike and enjoys politics as mass-leisure, can one truly conceive popular, urban action outside leisure-time’s entertainment logic?

Pageantry and staged authenticity have always characterized urban protests and festivals. But today we sublimate political conflict within tourist, mass-leisure experiences such as visiting sites of violence (Dealy Plaza, Ground Zero) and attending stationary, multimedia rallies. Author Dean MacCannell suggests the tourist-archetype reflects contemporary mankind’s inter-social, spatial practices: modern citizens, locally perceiving modernity’s instability and inauthenticity, nostalgically seek real experiences through travel. However, casting political action as free-time rather than civic duty naturalizes the tourism-politics convergence.

Political rallies promise real, public experiences with like-minded people. But why worry about authenticity with regard to political action? Consider the handwringing over the (un) reality of Stewart’s and Glenn Beck’s recent rallies. Beck’s event was brilliant, not for its originality, but as a repetition of the image of historic protests—and movie scenes of protests. To de-legitimate the left’s historic claim to mass-protests, he

made the repetition explicit—hence its calendrical coincidence with Martin Luther King’s “I Have A Dream” speech. Even Beck’s rhetoric—reclaiming, restoring—solicited historical, urban memories. Stewart deftly responded with the staged inauthenticity of satire, undermining Beck’s image by repeating it.

We knew Stewart’s rally was an important event—and party—and we traveled there with others to be part of it. We spent the day stationary, struggling to put an image with the voices animating the monuments; instead, we took pictures to prove we were there. Stewart’s and Beck’s rallies presupposed a public focused on a screen-image. Both events satisfied expectations, delighted with celebrity surprises and precluded unanticipated urban disruptions.

When the construction of images as scenographies of existing histories become the basis for designing and conceiving the public sphere, alternative versions of the present disappear. Hence the pleasure we still take in do-it-yourself urban interventions (cf: John Cantwell’s “Bonds of Revolution” in the October 16, 2010, [New City Reader](#)). But the within-and-against of the do-it-yourself needs an autonomous, invidious alternative. One model at odds with leisure-time’s logic, but which expropriates its methods, might be the global anarchist tourism of tear gas and property damage. Recalling nineteenth-century radicals crossing borders to foment awareness and discontent, they have birthed the militant-as-tourist. Their travel gear includes comfortable (black) clothes, sensible shoes (boots) and digital cameras. They form the “black bloc,” a tactical image that becomes a moving mass seizing public spaces and facilitating counter-actions such as arrests. The similar clothing self-identifies bloc members and obscures activists’ identities. The black bloc is an image—an image as a means, not an end.

Activists’ mobility, their preference for high-profile public events and desire to document, describe and represent their experiences in public fora—online or otherwise—remotivate touristic experiences but with a key difference: it is difficult to conceive anarchist action within leisure-time. Moving against the city’s spatial logics supporting work and free-time, and against American rallies’ unifying image, they reintroduce the uncertainty of mass-movement. The possibility of urban disruption threatens work-time and leisure-time. These tactics are not foolproof: a new problem arises through black bloc tourists who dress the part but flee before conflict—invidiousness personified. The consistency of the image and the need for anonymous solidarity makes the non-militant tourist invisible—and police infiltration that much easier. No tactic is immune to appropriation, manipulation or abuse, but this isn’t the point. The image of the black bloc compliments the subversive theatrics of punk posters, flash mobs and other, now-familiar acts of autonomous individuals in and against the city. It forms a mobile body, a concrete image, refusing to defer to the American “economy” of after-hours politics that insists people earn and produce before their voice can be heard.

Strike a Pause

by Mireille Roddier

“SARKO, T’ES FOUTU, LA JEUNESSE EST DANS LA RUE!” Kids are skipping school.

Kids are blocking school buildings, preventing teachers and classmates from going to work. The national union of high-school students (UNL) reports over 1,100 shutdown high schools over the past two weeks. For most of these kids, it is their first time practicing direct action—a cultural rite of passage in France. While demonstrating American students typically occupy buildings and lock them from within, French students block access to their schools from the outside, occupying the public space of the street and preventing anyone from getting through. This is not a symbolic picket line, where each individual expresses or rejects solidarity via the choice of crossing a line. This is a barricade, a blocking action essential to understanding the dynamic of these protests.

Strikes never happen on weekends or during holidays. They don’t occur on Mondays or Fridays either, as potential protestors might take long weekends rather than assemble in the streets. Wednesdays are inconvenient for working parents because children don’t have school. Strike and protest days are therefore always scheduled on Tuesdays or Thursdays, carefully balancing the targets of inconvenience with their incidental casualties. The potency of a good protest is measured by the progressive transformation of those potentially victimized by the strike into strikers themselves—a self-organizing pattern at once difficult to set in place and hard to stop once in motion.

Regardless of the end pursued, it’s difficult to resist the solidarity of a good Parisian protest. Even the tourists desert the department stores and descend into the streets, lured by the rhythm of people throwing their fists to the chorus of “l’Internationale.” They photograph it as if they had just stepped onto the set of the evening news. Such is the power of the united masses. The Paris illustrated in sterile guidebook photographs pales to Parisians engaged in their national sport. The heterogeneous beauty of the crowd far eclipses Haussmann. Everyone is here; some of them already reporting, “I was there.”

“CARLA ON COMPATIT, NICOLAS NOUS BAISE AUSSI.” The kids are upset.

The kids are angry because they know they’re being sacrificed. While they look like they’re not paying attention, distracted by adolescence, the mounting public debt will be paid by their future salaries. Already 18% of adults under 30 live in poverty. 25% are unemployed. Because the reforms under protest will widen the intergenerational income gap, they can’t afford to stay uninformed. When one isn’t old enough to vote, the expression of active citizenship takes place in the streets.

Yet this isn’t 1968. That generation pushed all boundaries. They charged themselves up until they sparked reform. But the new generation is more sober: they don’t ask for change,

they are protesting against it. They dream of jobs as state employees—financial security over professional occupation. This is not the utopic youth of ‘68 reading Marx or Vaneigem—the dystopic youth of 2010 finds all the fuel it needs in the pages of [Rolling Stone](#) magazine and in blockbuster documentaries at the cinema. When politics are found in every corner of leisure activities, there is no more playtime. It’s all survival.

“QUE L’AUTORITÉ SE BORNE À ÊTRE JUSTE, NOUS NOUS CHARGERONS D’ÊTRE HEUREUX.” —Benjamin Constant

The right to strike, while hardly limited in its scope—only a minimum five-day advance notice is required—does hold limitations worth noting: la grève du zèle, or work-to-rule, is prohibited in France. Overzealous workers are subject to disciplinary action, though the refusal to work is, since 1946, a constitutional right. Another limitation: those serving in law enforcement relinquish their right to strike. A protest would therefore not be complete without the “on the clock” presence of the national police and CRS (riot control forces) framing the parade. A sense of solidarity with these working class heroes is palpable despite the media’s insistence on rendering them as cold-blooded robots. They graciously pose for photographs and vacillate between apparent engagement in their role and boredom with the whole spectacle. In line with the New York protests during the 2004 Republican National Convention, we want to scream: “Give the cops a raise!” As the parade crosses through the 11th arrondissement, another image surfaces: the women of the Commune de Paris screaming to the army ordered to shoot them down, “Vive l’armée!” To abstract the defenders of a nation into the defenders of its government is to mistake the public with those who represent it. This dismisses the make-up of the police force, a conglomerate of thinking individuals for the most part belonging to the proletariat. Personal identity can be emancipated from professional role, as seen in the 200,000 men of the Garde Républicaine who, in 1871, chose to defend the Parisians—their brothers and their wives, their children and elderly—rather than stand behind the elected officials who had ordered the massacre of the people. One can only hope that, despite how that ended, the lessons of freedom begin with the flattening of societal roles as equal citizens and most essentially, the suspension of our identities as workers.

App for That?!

by Molly Steenson

Night in? Date night? Of course: there's an app for that. Your iPhone and a peripheral or two can satisfy you—and your date.

When an ordinary on/off simply aren't enough for your buzz, there's Body Heat by Perfect Plum (perfectplum.com), an interface that controls the OhMiBod music-powered vibrator (ohmibod.com). Finger painting on the Body Heat with a digit or two amps up the experience. Feeling more passive? The OhMiBod also connects to an iPod, iPhone or other MP3 player and pulses in time to whatever you're playing (though we wouldn't recommend setting it to the Fox News app).

You could throw MoodAgent (moodagent.com) into the mix and set up a whole playlist for the experience. Moving five different sliders auto-magically chooses the right playlist for your mood.

Of course, you could skip the good vibrations, and go straight for the psychedelica with Kaleidovid: it turns your iPhone into a kaleidoscope (kaleidovid.com).

And when you're done for the night, record your sleep patterns with Sleep Cycle (mdlabs.se/sleepcycle). It wakes you during your lightest sleep phase within a half-hour window and draws a graph of how you slept. As far as we know, nobody's tried to connect Sleep Cycle to OhMiBod—maybe that's for version 2.0.

(We'll skip the virtual cigarette apps, but they exist if you're so inclined.)



The Museum of Sex (or Sex as Museum)

by Spyros Papapetros

Is sex a leisure- or a work-related practice? The legal statutes seeking to eliminate sexual activity from the workplace prove that sex has the capacity to contaminate both of these segregated areas. But what happens when sex migrates from the private space of the bedroom to the public areas of a museum—an institution in which sexual activity becomes the object of both scholarly research and leisurely digression? Such is the ontological disparity that the Museum of Sex, established in Manhattan in 2002, does not resolve but fluently displays in its building structure.

In its first years of operation, the museum appeared almost entirely opaque. Housed in a preexisting retail building on 5th Avenue and 27th Street that was converted by the Cleanroom Design Laboratory, all openings in its two façades were fully covered with large posters that announced current exhibitions but provided minimal visual information on their content. However, following the recent expansion of the galleries and the museum shop that practice was reduced to the

upper stories, while the all-glass windows of the ground-floor were uncovered to expose the objects of the interior. At once the sex toys, books, rubbers and other erotic aids displayed in the illuminated cabinets of the storefront became fully visible to the passersby, who often stop to take a peek at the colorful variety of exotic specimens in this alternative museum of natural history. It is as if the building itself had purposely lifted the bar of repression to demonstrate the benefits of sex education offered in its premises. Curatorial practice provided a form of cure not only for the museum's visitors, but also for the museum itself, now freed from former inhibitions and more extroverted.

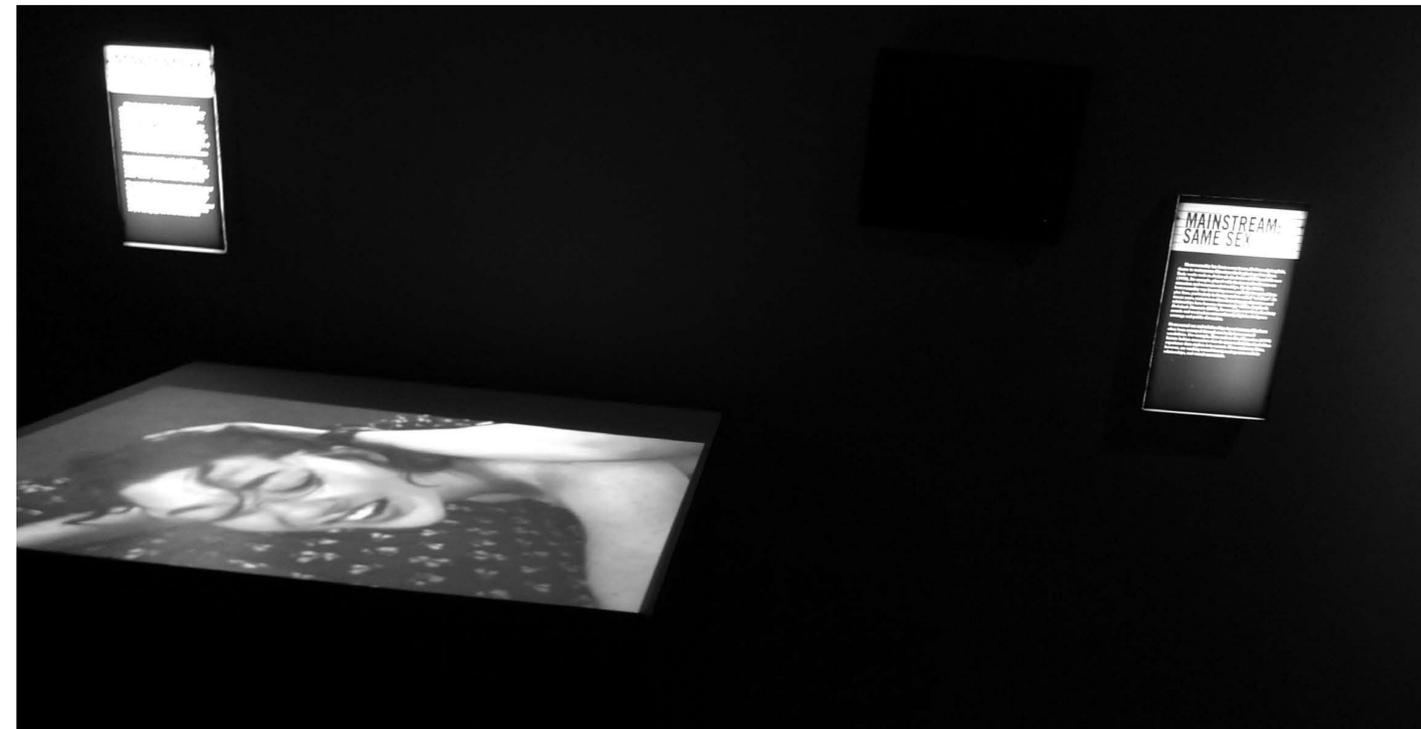
Of course such liberating transparency is limited to the ground floor and is necessitated by the practices of shopping: consumption has to remain conspicuous even when its objects are taboo. The rest of the museum is entirely "blind" and oscillates between a dim prison and an amply illuminated maze. Indeed the primary characteristic of the galleries is their clear organization; it is easy for visitors to navigate this labyrinth and find their exit, and inevitable reentry, to the shopping area. The only dark exhibition space is the "cinema," the relic of the penny-arcade customarily attached to a

sex-shop, here refurbished as an installation of vertical and horizontal screens documenting the parallel development of sex-educational and pornographic films. All other exhibition spaces resemble brightly lit classrooms demonstrating a variety of didactic subjects, such as the use of chastity belts or the implementation of male condoms made of animal intestines. But make no mistake: one cannot immediately turn instruction into practice—no sexual activity can happen in the Museum of Sex. Guards, identical to those we see in all other museums, make sure that any interaction with the displayed artifacts, while occasionally encouraged, is kept within proper limits.

Key to the museum's relative success is its location only a few blocks south from the Empire State Building. Still fresh from their orgasmic ascent to the city's highest and most phallic edifice, indefatigable out-of-towners can then descend into the caverns of the city's most controversial museum, part of the same city tour recommended by their Internet "fun guide." Two decades earlier, tourists would find an outlet from the instinctual suppression suffered during their obligatory pilgrimage to midtown museums in the sex shops of 42nd Street. Now that these have vanished, the only tourist destination that is ostensibly more amenable to sensual pleasures is yet another museum (the former New York City mayor who removed all similar establishments from the city center would probably approve of that development).

The majority of the museum's visitors are young heterosexual couples under thirty. Solitary visitors are an exception and may often be looked at with suspicion: what (reproductive) use could the museum's educational instructions have for them? The popularity of the museum with tourists proves that, even among married couples, sex in America has to originate in a place more exotic than the suburban home, and New York remains one of the prime destinations for the more sophisticated and legitimate sex tourist. Yet often this discerning clientele might leave the museum disappointed: "we were not titillated enough" complains a couple on a blog following their visit. After watching a series of images of publicly masturbating bonobos, group copulating garden-

snakes and fin-rubbing male homosexual dolphins—all part of the recent exhibition on "The Sex Lives of Animals"—one looks at his fellow visitors and the unsold artifacts in the store and leaves the museum even more drained than when exiting a much larger art or natural history museum. Perhaps what Foucault argued in "The History of Sexuality" might after all be true: the practice of sex has been substituted by the "incitation" or even the obligation to talk, write and ultimately confess to it. But in the end, such disappointment may have its benefits. Deferment of satisfaction is also part of the museum's seduction strategy: you can always come back if you want more.



Reflective Thinking: Il tempo libero at the XIII Triennale of Milan

by Federica Vannucchi

The idea of the museum as a place of leisure is not new, yet an exhibition themed on leisure unavoidably warrants a moment of self-reflection. The intersection between the two—museum and an introspective view of leisure—notably materialized in the 1964 XIII Triennale of Milan entitled “Il tempo libero” (Leisure). The curators, architect Vittorio Gregotti and information theorist Umberto Eco, organized the exhibition’s introductory rooms as a spatial narrative describing leisure as a product for mass-consumption. While historically devoted to showcasing design since 1923, the Triennale had for the first time replaced objects with an immersive media experience as the center of the installation.

Exhibition visitors first encountered a space entitled “Exaltation”—a long, dark corridor saturated with sounds and pulsating illuminated depictions of leisure. The seductive images, many culled from newspaper and magazine advertisements, were complemented by audio recordings beckoning the visitor with suggestive phrases such as “luckily, the children are not here today...” or the more explicit “do you want to join our orgy tonight?”

The next room was anything but an exaltation. The space was devoted to silence—a bare, dimly lit room with five computers. Gregotti and Eco conceived the space “to present the real ‘empty time’ that we have to plan for after working long hours, constrained by limited time for making arrangements, the obstacle of a restricted budget, the obsessive presence of mass media and fundamentally indistinguishable choices.” Visitors could introduce data into the computers about their age, profession, gender and entertainment preferences. After tabulating the information, the computers spat out a color-coded card with a “customized” leisure activity. Depending on the card, the visitor was invited to take one of four different itineraries through the following room: “illusions,” “technology,” “integration” and “utopias.” The curators remarked how “the relationship between the data provided and the result obtained is fictive—as fictive as the assumption that one can make free choices about leisure.”

Another jarring transition followed: a luminous reflecting space appeared before the viewer’s eyes, mirrored surfaces from top to bottom creating an illusory space that evaded the architectural conventions of walls, floors, ceilings and stairs. By wandering into the room while searching for the itinerary indicated by the card, the visitor would suddenly discover

his image was repeatedly multiplied, as if he were encountering his ubiquitous alter ego. Gregotti and Eco’s vision of il tempo libero in the neo-consumerist Italy of the 1960s was a carefully manufactured psychological space.

If the installation was essentially a critical view of the mechanism through which mass media could construct leisure, what then were the implications of portraying the museum itself as a space of leisure? Through “curating” leisure, Eco and Gregotti were critiquing the Triennale as a cultural institution. And while their analysis could be seen as tinted with paternalism, it was still difficult to dismiss the basic intuitions underlying their views on leisure and mass consumption. Reviews of the installation by luminaries such as Bruno Zevi were dismissive at best, and yet some of the coarsest criticisms came from the Triennale’s own committee. The turning of a critical eye towards the museum as mass consumption was not only troubling for the Triennale; it also would haunt others to come.



Reflective room designed at the central stairs of the Palazzo dell'Arte. Courtesy Archivio Fotografico, © La Triennale di Milano

Stars and Archistars

by Daria Ricchi

PRELUDIO
Dan Graham, born March 31, 1942, ARIES

Aries is the first sign of the Zodiac, symbolized by the ram and ruled by Mars. Aries are often called the pioneers of the Zodiac, the leaders of the pack. They initiate things; whether or not everything gets done is another question altogether. Here’s how Dan Graham sees Aries—and therefore himself: “Aries have original ideas, and these are then taken over by others. I begin a lot of things. I am an Aries. GEMINI are attracted to Aries for their way of thinking. They both believe in clichés and stereotypes.”

INTERMEZZO
Daria Ricchi If we were to ask the stars...what astrological sign makes a good architect and good architecture?

Dan Graham It absolutely influences the perception of space. Frank Lloyd Wright was a Gemini. He was very romantic. Frank Lloyd Wright was constructing romantic fantasies and romantic ideas of the culture. Gemini make up stories. They easily lose interest. They don’t like history, but make fictions.

DR Who likes real history?

DG CAPRICORNS like the nineteenth century. Capricorns are normally attracted to Gemini. They are serious and they have a strong sense of history. I have worked with Capricorn architects. Tony Fretton is one. They have an enormous respect for other people, and they give credit to other people.

DR You are an Aries. Does this influence the way you work?

DG Aries is connected with childishness. It’s all about the ego. They have a big ego and a weak ego to compensate. It’s the child. Aries begin a lot of things, they are really idealistic. [Giuseppe] Terragni was really idealistic. Terragni and Mies van der Rohe were both Aries, but their work takes inspiration from one other Gemini: Sartre.

DR And what about CANCER?

DG [Robert] Venturi is a Cancer and has a great sense of humor, as does the LEO. But the Cancer is also involved with family, family housing and the family as a structure. Denise [Scott

Brown] is a LIBRA though. One other characteristic of Cancer is that they are involved with poetry. Gordon Matta-Clark is also a Cancer. He is poetic and has a strong sense of family. Aldo Rossi was involved with poetry too.

DR But Aldo Rossi was a TAURUS.

DG That’s true. Taurus is more domestic, a bit conservative. They relax psychologically. It is a sexy sign. They take care of people economically. They help Gemini, who are normally tense and nervous. Joseph Beuys was also a Taurus. They feel materiality. But Venturi as a Cancer is more poetic than Rossi.

DR You mention Denise Scott Brown being a Libra. What about this sign? Le Corbusier was also a Libra. Are they balanced or stable? Though the architecture of Le Corbusier is never the same.

DG Yes, but Libra is stubborn and willful more than stable. I’ll tell you the secret of Libra. They always seem calm and happy, but underneath, they know there is terror, terror in the world—behind this smooth surface, there is a dark side to them. Walter De Maria is a Libra too. One other strong sign for architects is SAGITTARIUS: Adolf Loos. They have a lot of rules, but they try to break all these rules. [Stefano] Boeri is a Sagittarius. Brad Pitt is also a Sagittarius, although most people think he is boring because he is All-American. I have a good sense that Johnny Depp is a Gemini. Jean-Luc Godard and Kathryn Bigelow are both Sagittarius.

DR You paired signs. Which is a perfect match?

DG My favorite architects are Atelier Bow-Wow. They are a strong couple. She is a PISCES, and he is an AQUARIUS. Usually Pisces want to have control over things. She is more social, and he is more intellectual. Rem Koolhaas is a SCORPIO, and he is together with Petra Blaisse. He is never relaxed. But Petra Blaisse, his girlfriend, is an Aries. This helps him a lot. Aries women are optimistic, maybe a bit bossy. They can liberate the Scorpio, and they want to guide people.

DR Zaha Hadid and Peter Eisenman are also Scorpios.

DG People normally find them fascinating because Scorpio is an intense sign. Do you get along with Pisces? Gemini has to twin with somebody else. They need to have a partner to work with.

DR So which is an independent sign?

By the late 1970s, George Lucas redefined the movie-going experience, forever changing the relationship between the audience and the space of the theater. “Star Wars” marked the beginning of “ride films”—a trend followed over the years by “Indiana Jones,” “E.T.,” “Jurassic Park,” and countless others. The theme-park terminology used to describe such films soon bled into the lexicon of cinema design. Lobbies became the sites of rope-defined, snaking ticket lines, concessions counters stretched longer and arcade games appeared in overflow areas adjacent to the lobby. Screen dimensions grew wider, and seats became plusher, all but lacking a seat belt. No longer satisfied with having only a few screens, theaters took on more auditoriums, giving birth to the multiplexes we know today. The entire process of movie-going became more immersive than ever. The movies now constitute “destination” entertainment where patrons spend an entire afternoon, rather than just two hours.

In recent years, however, as the movie industry has been forced to contend with the downward pressures of high-end home entertainment systems and the Internet, theater architecture has taken on a new urgency: theaters must now generate more revenue per square foot than ever before. This has led to strange, uncomfortable designs, such as the highrise AMC Empire near Times Square in New York City—a multilevel behemoth featuring 25 screens. Even in 1928, theater architect Walter W. Ahlshlager proclaimed, “I am inclined to believe that there may be skyscraper theatres in the future.” After riding up several escalators simply to hand your ticket to an usher, then several more escalators to arrive in your (possibly bedbug-ridden) seat, patrons now know the unfortunate manifestation of Ahlshlager’s vision.

The space of today’s movie theater is further defined not only by its physical haphazardness, but by the movies being shown. Barring any unforeseen blockbusters, the highest-grossing movie this year will be “Toy Story 3,” a family film shown largely in 3-D. That Toy Story, one of the best-loved franchises in Hollywood, should succeed is no surprise. But “Toy Story 3” was not even in the top ten in terms of overall attendance; its box office revenues were bloated from the added ticket price of a 3-D film. In this way “Toy Story 3” points to an unsettling future for the movie theater: bigger screens and bigger spaces to serve fewer people.



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Storefront for Art and Architecture



Atelier Bow-Wow



Jeanne Gang



Sarah Whiting and Ron Witte

Into Play

by Lisa L. Hsieh

In Japan, by tradition, there exists a hierarchy of emotions. Laughter (*warai*), an emotion associated with enjoyment or amusement, is rated lower than other expressions—even below anger or grief. In fact, “emotionless behavior” is the default code of conduct, especially in a professional setting. During the 1970s, however, a playful spirit began to arise in an unlikely place: architecture. In contrast to Metabolism’s megastructures and the plug-in cells of the 1960s, a new wave of housing designs cropped up characterized by the informality and the humor of their forms. These were typified by Kazumasa Yamashita’s Face House, with its big round eyes, gun-barrel nose and toothy mouth, and Takefumi Aida’s Toy Block House, which mimics building-blocks, defying the ethic of “emotionless behavior.” Architects of this new “toy architecture” conceived architecture as play—or playing—and reoriented it towards entertainment and laughter.

This tendency toward playfulness in Japanese architecture stemmed from the displacement of functionalism in the 1960s, which threatened to render the modernist equation “form follows function” obsolete. In search of a new dictum, Takefumi Aida of ArchiteXt group proposed “form follows fiction”—the fiction of play, based upon Johan Huizinga’s “Homo Ludens,” which characterizes play as fictive: a free activity situated in the “unreality of play.” Reflecting Aida’s aphorism, the new wave houses manifest play, or fiction, in three forms: to mimic, to stimulate and to engage in playing.

In the first manifestation, architecture bears some resemblance to an actual toy, such as the bright, cheerful colors and simple geometries of Mayumi Miyawaki’s Blue Box (1971) and the irregular composition of distinctly patterned and colored windows of Kazuhiro Ishii’s 54 Windows (1975). In addition, Aida’s House Like a Die (1974) literally takes the form of a die: a skylight above, two, three, four and five windows on each facade and six foundation footings below. In the second, the act of design itself becomes play. For example, Aida’s Toy Block House I to X (1978–1984) originated from a process of playing with Aida Block, a set of wooden building blocks in basic shapes: square, triangle, cylinder, etc., painted in primary colors. In Toy Block House, form consequently follows stacking. Then, in the third manifestation, architecture itself becomes playable: the house is the toy. For instance, Minoru Takeyama’s Atelier Indigo (1976) consists of 2.2 meters long on each side. In ad hoc fashion, the resident improvises space and form by reconfiguring the house with a mast, pulleys and winches.

The playful new wave still percolates through today’s Japanese architecture, from SANAA’s Rabbit chair and Junya Ishigami’s Picnic chair, which wears a wool hat, sweater and socks, to Sou Fujimoto’s Tokyo Apartment (2010), comprising several house-shaped apartments piled on top of each other. One recent work especially bears mentioning: Fujimoto’s Final Wooden House (2008), which stacks lumber in a most playful and game-like fashion. The design engages play via stacking lumber blocks; from columns, beams, walls, ceilings, floors to stairs, one rule fulfills every structural function. In addition, the house has no prescribed program; the inhabitants climb up, bend over and squat down on the lumber, finding their own creative use of space. As if a playground, Final Wooden House stimulates spontaneous play and welcomes gymnastic leisure. Here “form follows fiction” comes to a climax. The architecture says: have fun!

Unpacking My Fridge

by Jaffer Kolb

When asked what he had in his refrigerator, one architect—who will remain anonymous for obvious reasons—responded:

- Sake
- Beer
- Champagne
- Bottle of white wine
- Poppers
- Flat tonic water
- Flat seltzer
- One egg
- One half inch of three-week-old salami.

If we could just stop there...Foucault couldn’t have asked for a better order.

From Gordon Matta-Clark’s conceptual restaurant Food to Zaha Hadid’s much talked about Z-Island (2006) and from the increasing popularity of farm-to-table urbanism to architect-designed tableware, the abundant intersections of architecture, design and food cross many scales. Such synthesis is celebrated in books such as 2004’s “Eating Architecture,” edited

by Jamie Horwitz and Paulette Singley, which characterizes food and architecture from a variety of perspectives and describes the complexity of their interactions.

But at the core of this union rests a fundamental curiosity: what do architects eat? Theories about food and architecture aside, what fantasies can we construct about a

designer’s image through linking pictures of food with the caricature of specific architects?

Unpacking the refrigerator could reveal a secondary practice. The list above paints in reverse perspective a stereotype familiar to some: the ambitious architecture student—an overworked, borderline substance abuser rarely at home to finish that tonic, replenish those eggs, throw away that salami. Let’s just leave the poppers to the imagination.

Just as easily, we could imagine a different scenario: the fussy architect with perfect rows of labeled ingredients, an orchestrated fridge-scape of general tidiness. Then there’s the image of the architect as gourmand, crafting food with the precision of modelmaking and running a kitchen like a studio, his or her fridge crammed with duckfat, fresh herbs and cuts of meat.

Such refrigerator voyeurism echoes other creepy habits, like poking through bathroom cabinets. Implied narratives trace through a system of signifiers that are immediately recognizable given the universality of food: Tupperware or ceramic? Butter or margarine? Organic or processed? Soda? Juice? Such banalities convey a thousand signals that can be endlessly fascinating.

We asked architects to send us photographs of the contents of their refrigerators—home or office. What we got back sometimes matched our expectations (the Helvetic order of Herzog and de Meuron’s office fridge) and sometimes didn’t quite live up to our fantasies (we had hoped Sarah Whiting and Ron Witte’s new Texas fridge would be alliteratively loaded with T-bones, baby-back ribs, barbeque sauce and baked beans). Rather than editorialize further, we’ll let some of their fridges speak for themselves.

Architectural Yoga

by Daria Ricchi

Illustrations by Mandy Lee

The architectural yoga practice helps to enhance mental and physical strength, building a resistant, stable and well-designed body. Space constraints prevent the entire sequence of poses from being published; for the complete series, contact the author: dricchi@princeton.edu.



STANDING POSITION (TADASANA): NORMAN FOSTER

Though apparently effortless, its requirements of stillness should not be underestimated. Repeatable any time.

Stand erect with the feet quite close together, heels and big toes touching each other. Place hands on thighs. This position helps achieve stability of pulse.



PLANK POSE (UTTITHA CHATURANGA DANDASANA): REM KOOLHAAS

The challenge of this position is to maintain, as long as possible, a diagonally straight posture.

Start by lying face down on the ground. Place your elbows and forearms underneath the chest. Prop yourself up to form a bridge using your toes and forearms. Maintain a flat back and do not allow your hips to sag towards the ground.



DOWNWARD FACING DOG (ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA): ALDO ROSSI

This archetypal position serves as a transition between poses.

From a push up position, with your arms and legs fully extended, contract your core and abdominal muscles. Slowly exhale and shift your weight backward by pushing hips up and back. Continue moving until your body forms an inverted V. Keep your arms and legs extended, and be sure to maintain a neutral (flat) spine.



UPWARD FACING DOG (BHUJANGASANA): SANTIAGO CALATRAVA

Indisputably effective in the simultaneous achievement of elongation and compression.

This pose is often confused with the Cobra pose in which legs and pubic pose are grounded. In upward facing dog pose, only the hands and top of the feet are on the floor. This pose opens the chest and shoulders, improves posture, strengthens the wrists and arms and elongates the spine.



HALF MOON POSE (ARDHA CHANDRASANA): GERRIT RIETVELD

This standing yoga posture stretches the muscles, strengthens the spine and improves balance and equilibrium on both sides of the body.

Stand with your feet parallel and close to one another. Raise your arms overhead and face your palms together. Extend your spine by slowly and gently bending from your waist to the left. Angle your upper body slightly to the left while looking down at your left foot. Hold for three to five breaths. Repeat on the right side.



CAT-DOG POSE (MARJARASANA): ANT FARM

This exercise can help extend your spine fully in two different directions.

Inhale deeply, incline your pelvis up and curve your spine downward. Hold, then exhale and move into the cat position by reversing the curve of your spine, slanting your pelvis downwards and stretching your spine upwards. Hold the cat position for a few seconds, then reverse.



EAGLE POSE (GARUDASANA): FRANK GEHRY

This pose requires some extravaganza. Its completion might challenge the ability to maintain equilibrium.

Bend your knees slightly, lift your left foot up and balancing on your right foot, cross your left thigh over the right. Point your left toes toward the floor, press the foot back and then hook the top of the foot behind the lower right calf. Balance on the right foot. Cross the arms in front of your torso so that the right arm is above the left, then bend your elbows. Snug the right elbow into the crook of the left, and raise the forearms perpendicular to the floor. Press the right hand to the right and the left hand to the left, so that the palms are now facing each other. The thumb of the right hand should pass in front of the little finger of the left. Now press the palms together as much as is possible, lift your elbows up and stretch the fingers toward the ceiling.



LOCUST POSE (SALABHASANA): OSCAR NIEMEYER

This is a seemingly unassuming pose that, like other seemingly simple poses, is actually far more interesting and challenging than it first appears.

Lie on your belly with your arms along the sides of your torso. Exhale and lift your head, upper torso, arms and legs away from the floor so that you are resting on your lower ribs, belly and top of the pelvis. Raise your arms parallel to the floor and stretch back. Imagine a weight pressing down on the backs of the upper arms. Push up toward the ceiling against this resistance.



WHEEL POSE (CHAKRA ASANA): ARNE JACOBSEN

This is a beautifully constructed pose held on three points.

Bend the arms at the elbows and place the palms of the hands flat on the floor. While inhaling slowly, begin to raise the head, back and buttocks off the floor while arching the spine. Continue to press downward on the hands and feet while raising the hips and stomach as high as possible. Raise your left leg toward to ceiling.



CHILD'S POSE (BALASANA): LE CORBUSIER

One of the most classical resting poses, Balasana is used to start and end your yoga practice. Return to the Child's Pose at any time if you become tired or out of breath. Rejoin the class when you are ready.

Kneel on the floor. Touch your big toes together and sit on your heels, then separate your knees about as wide as your hips. Exhale and lay your torso down between your thighs. Lengthen your tailbone away from the back of the pelvis while you lift the base of your skull away from the back of your neck. Lay your hands on the floor alongside your torso, palms up, and release the fronts of your shoulders toward the floor.

Morgue Than You Know

by Edward Eigen

The mummified corpses of three newborn infants—complete with the steamer trunk in which they were found in the musty basement of a Washington Heights apartment house in 1967—are hardly the most gruesome objects on view at The Milton Helpern Forensic Museum (520 First Avenue at 30th Street, New York). With the “right of sepulcher” lawsuit brought by the parents of teenage brain-snatching victim Jesse Shipley now making its way through the courts, what better time to visit that “place where death rejoices to aid the living” (“Hic locus est ubi mors gaudet succurrere vitae”)? Helpern had that Latin hexameter, often written at the entrance to dissection theaters in Europe, emblazoned in the marble lobby of the Medical Examiner’s Office headquarters, where he long served as the “Chief” (1954–1973). Inspired by Scotland Yard’s Black Museum, where *pièces de conviction* were arranged and labeled, “forming a ghastly, squalid, and suggestive show,” the museum on the sixth floor, established in 1961, is a relatively well-lit collection of more than 2,100 exhibits documenting deaths and crimes in New York history.

Among the most lugubrious relics is the burnt and rusted bathtub used by DeVernon LeGrand, self-styled Bishop of St. John’s Pentecostal Church of Our Lord, to incinerate the bodies of his murder victims in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn in 1974. LeGrand was abetted by Frank Holman, a caretaker of the church’s community house and former Queens Country morgue attendant, who disposed of the charred and dismembered remains—recovered bits of which are on display—in Briscoe Lake in upstate Sullivan County. The most controversial exhibit—with the possible exception of Princeton, New Jersey murder victim Laura Carpi’s head, the careless misplacement of which marred Helpern’s final years in office—are the organs

of the improbably named Patrick O’Malley, apparently a heavy drinker, who was fatally electrocuted when he relieved himself in a subway station and his stream of urine came into contact with the 600-volt third rail. While O’Malley is thought by some to be a not-so-living urban legend, similar cases were documented by Stefan Jellinek, the brilliant investigator and founder of the Museum of Electro-Pathology in Vienna.

The Forensic Museum stands as tribute to Helpern’s inquiring spirit. “This job is not morbid,” he insists. “Things would be very chaotic if people just died and society didn’t find out what the cause of death was.” The morgue is a medium of communication, unsettlingly bringing into view bodies of which society has forgotten, neglected or ignored; like the morgue of a newspaper, filled to the point of inaccessibility with clippings and photographs, it allows all the back stories lost and gained in life and death to be heard again, if only once and finally.

What, then, of the contents of the steamer trunk? X-rays showed the specimens to be well preserved, though Helpern was not able to determine if they were born dead or alive, only that they were “full-term.” The examiner ruled them “three concealed, medically unattended births, apparently one in 1920, one in 1922 and the last in 1923.” The dates were easy enough to surmise. The bodies were neatly wrapped in newspapers bound with cord. Founding editor of the *International Microfilm Journal of Legal Medicine* (1965), the first scientific journal to be published exclusively in that space-saving format, Helpern took a keen interest in the aging papers. Forensic paleography revealed that none of the mummy wrappers, *The Evening Sun* (January 20, 1920), *The Evening World* (March 4, 1922) and *The Evening Journal* (October 17, 1923), were still in circulation. Absorbed into other titles, all folded in 1966 and 1967, an epidemic year for newsprint.

Proust, Leisure, Sex

by Rubén Gallo

Leisure seems like an unattainable ideal for those of us leading frantic twenty-first-century lives. I think of my colleagues at Princeton, rushing from seminar to faculty meeting, stealing a few minutes from a packed schedule to have coffee with a colleague, and then dashing to catch the train to New York. Leisure? What leisure?

Nobody could be more antithetical to our accelerated life-style than the life of Marcel Proust, who devoted his entire life to leisure. He never worked a day in his life beyond the few in his twenties he spent working at the National Library in Paris—he could not stand it and quit. When he was in his thirties, his parents died and left him a fortune that today would be worth about twenty million dollars. He spent the rest of his life on a permanent sabbatical.

So what did Proust do with all this leisure time? He slept. During the day. As his maid, Céleste Albaret, writes in “Monsieur Proust,” her biography of the novelist, he would wake up at five in the afternoon, eat his single meal of the day—a croissant, chicken breast, beer and coffee—and proceed to spend the entire night and early morning in bed, reading and writing. After sunrise, Proust would go to bed and sleep until 5 p.m. when he would wake up and start again.

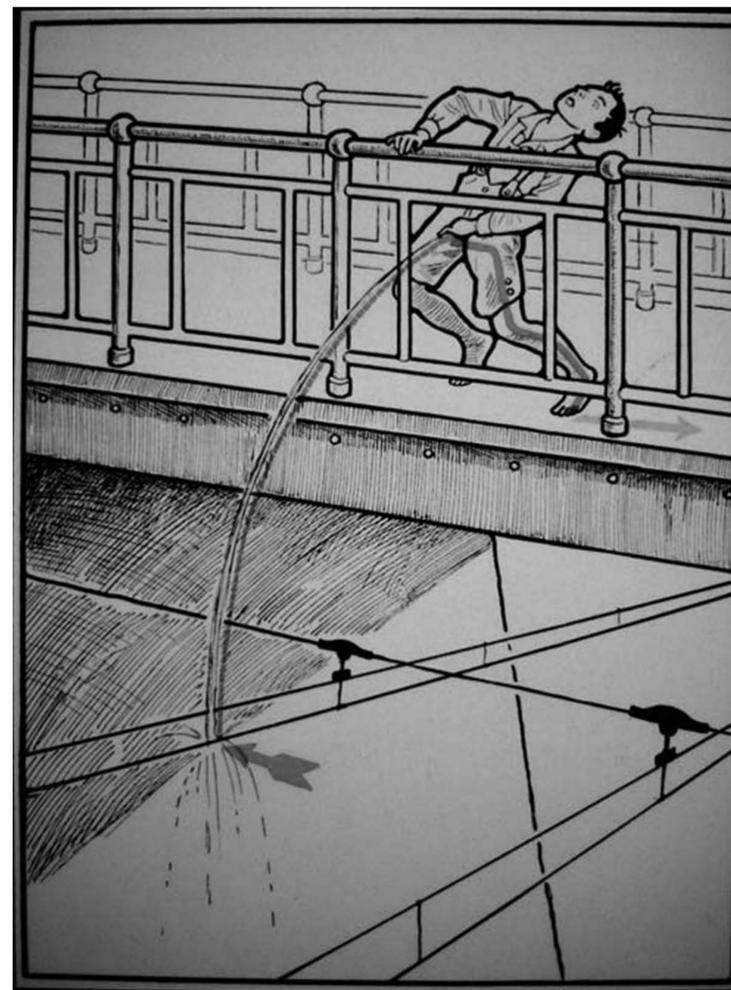
Proust also used his leisure time to collect cute boys. Lots of them. Many of them he found at the Hotel Ritz on Place Vendôme, where he would sometimes host dinners for ten or twelve friends. The waiters were often rosy-cheeked boys; when Proust liked one of them, he would offer him a job as his personal secretary, who would have to come every night to his apartment on Boulevard Haussmann and talk to him for a few hours. It doesn’t seem like Proust ever slept with these boys; he had an intense germ phobia and had trouble touching other people or even shaking hands. He was content with having them in his room, looking at them and asking them many questions.

Unlike other people with lots of time and money on their hands, Proust was not a collector: he was uninterested in acquiring artworks, antiques or even rare books. Aside from his bourgeois apartment full of the nineteenth-century furniture he inherited from his parents, his life was spartan and almost puritan. Proust also did not travel much. In his youth, he spent his summers in Normandy and traveled to Venice, but after the age of thirty, he rarely left Paris. He never went to America, never visited Russia and never crossed the Pyrenees into Spain. He was not a gourmand, content with his single daily meal.

What Proust did do with his almost infinite hours of leisure was write. Lying in bed, at night, he wrote the many thousands of pages that make up the multi-volume “À la Recherche du Temps Perdu.” Commenting on the monstrous size of the novel, Pablo Neruda asks, “What has more leaves, the oak tree in my garden or ‘À la Recherche du temps perdu?’” A friend once complained that one needs a year sabbatical to be able to read the entire novel.

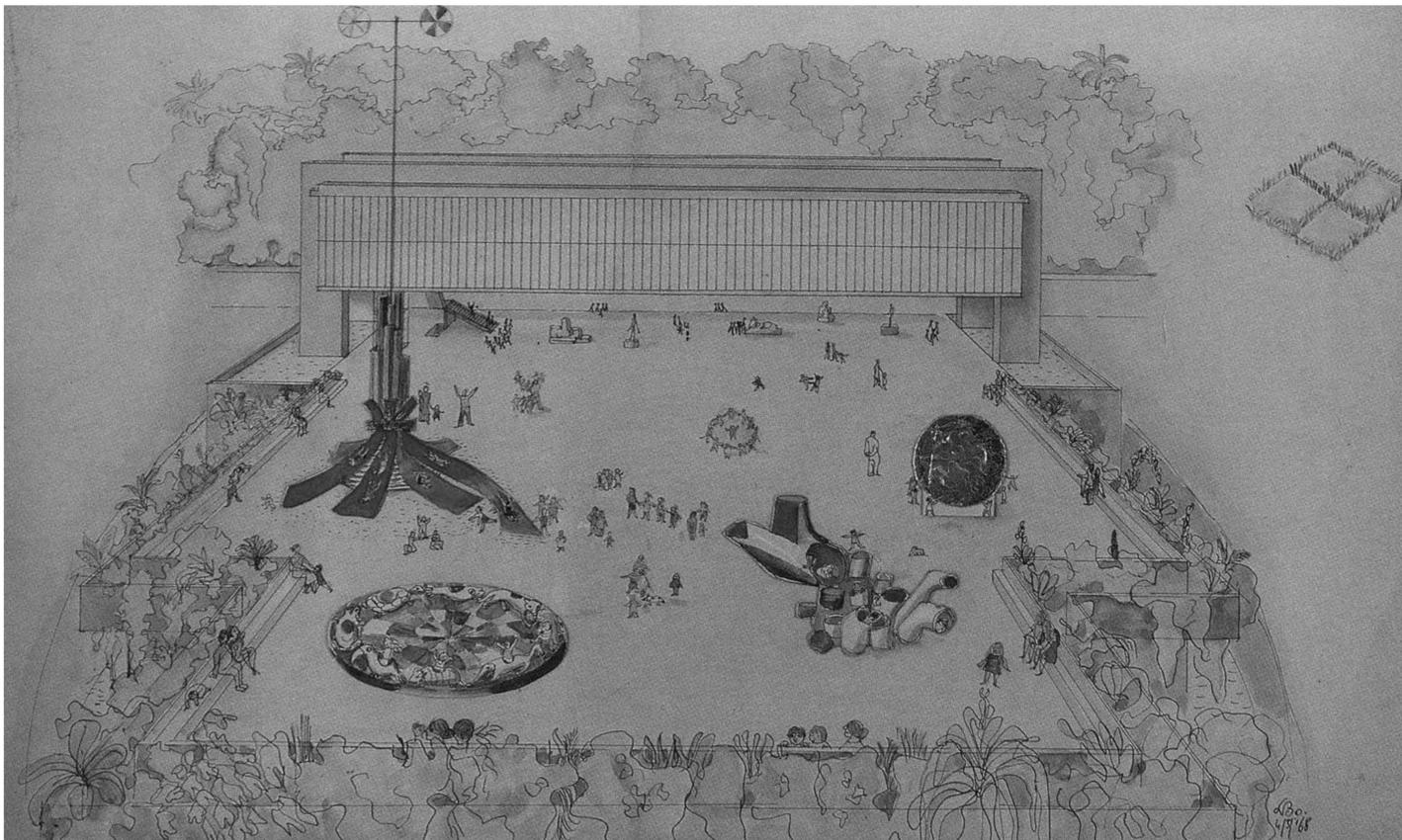
Proust wrote and wrote and wrote. His first readers complained that he took fifty pages to describe how he went to bed as a child. Some of his chronicles of dinner parties hosted by the Duchesse de Guermantes go on for several hundred pages. The whole last volume, “Time Regained,” is a four-hundred page meditation on the experience of getting old.

Proust’s guide to leisure would thus include a few only simple rules. Do nothing—no work, no sex, no therapy, no business lunches, no outings to the theater or the opera—except for flirting with cute boys and writing a novel that, like Freud’s analysis, can be both terminable and interminable. Of course this would be an impossibility in our day; perhaps this explains why Proust’s novel continues to make such an impression on modern readers. It is a relic from the past, every volume representing tens of thousands of hours of leisure time fossilized and decanted into literature. Proust followed only one commandment in life: his superego said “write!”



From the book *Elektroschutz in 132 Bildern* (1931) by Stefan Jellinek

Leisure in Lina Bo Bardi's Architecture



Drawing for MASP, São Paulo Museum of Art. Archives Instituto Lina Bo e P. M. Bardi, São Paulo, Brazil.

by Vanessa Grossman

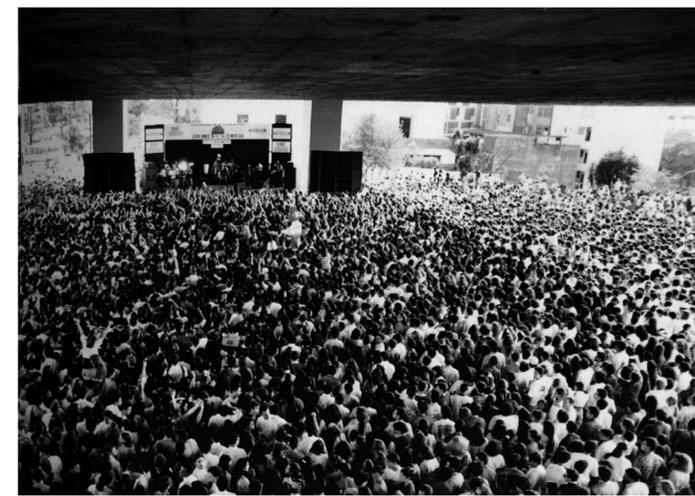
Can leisure reshape architecture, or does it remodel the practice of architecture itself? This question calls to mind the work of Lina Bo Bardi (1914–1992), the Italian-born architect who eventually became one of Brazil's most important architectural figures. When she first arrived in São Paulo in 1946, Brazilian modern architecture was already enjoying a moment of high visibility, yet Bo Bardi became an important presence, helping to distinguish Brazilian modernism from its North American and European counterparts. In 1951 Bo Bardi published "Bela criança" "(Beautiful Child)" in the second issue of *Habitat*, the journal she founded the year before. In that article, Bo Bardi trained her newfound interest on local cultures and wrote of Brazil's new architecture as something that was "suddenly born beautiful." She argued that the rudeness and improvisation of the work evidenced the "spontaneity and fervor" of Brazilian popular culture. For Bo Bardi, Brazilian architecture was a "beautiful child" born with the ability to play freely, yet it was via her unique practice that Brazilian modern architecture grew up. Through its growing pains, this sense of playfulness would transform into something more radical—an architecture of leisure.

Bo Bardi's most important works were devoted to explorations of leisure at all

scales. From the Museum of Popular Art in Salvador (1959) to the SESC-Pompeia cultural and leisure center in São Paulo (1977), and even to the remarkable exhibits she placed in the latter, her architecture maintained the same spirit she outlined in "Bela criança." Leisure and playfulness were aspects of function as much as they were intrinsic components of Bo Bardi's own creative process and expressivity. Acting as a sort of bricoleur, in an almost childlike attitude, she aimed to combine popular culture and everyday life, integrating into her projects things and situations she would find in the streets or in the construction site. Freedom and playfulness were also reflected in Bo Bardi's informal drawings, in their incorporation of pencil, pen, watercolor and collage to narrate spaces transformed and humanized by her "findings:" people, animals, plants and sculptures. Yet these projects can be seen as an attempt to give leisure and playfulness a cultural dimension. This is because for Bo Bardi, leisure was more than the occupation of free time outside the world of labor: leisure was essential to labor.

But Bo Bardi did not believe leisure should be definitively shaped by architecture. For one of her most important commissions, the Museum of Art of São Paulo (1957–1968), Bo Bardi stressed the existence of an interstitial void she envisaged as a belvedere. The magnificent design comprised two parts: a glazed body hung from two enormous concrete

porticos, with its lower half buried underneath a plinth. The museum is depicted as a structural frame for an indefinite space of the belvedere with open programmable space. One unanticipated reaction was from the American musician John Cage. Upon encountering the museum's vast span he exited his car and with arms raised shouted, "It is the architecture of freedom." According to Bo Bardi in an article published in 1990, Cage was able to communicate what she wanted to say when she designed that space for leisure: the museum was a "nothing" but a search for freedom, the capacity of being free before things. Leisure, for Bo Bardi, should reshape architecture and life.



Voyeurism, Powerlessness, Viciousness and Occasional Humor

by Sam Jacob

Architecture and design have always had an intimate relationship with media. Often these other forms of communication frame and shape architectural culture more than the solid stuff of the buildings themselves. We can call out a series of architects and designers—Vitruvius, Palladio, Morris, Loos, Corbusier, Venturi/Scott Brown, Koolhaas—whose influence is located as much in forms of media and communication as it is in their built record—an intricate lacing of media and physicality that proposes the question of where "architecture" is actually located. It unbinds architecture from its singularity and geographic specificity, disseminating it to a more universal experience. It's the mechanism by which all that stone, steel and glass—the physical agglomerations of material—becomes a culture.

Media in architecture has mostly meant books and magazines—drawings, photography, text—and strangely for a spatial and temporal activity, not often video. This comfortable relationship between architecture and its media has evolved into a series of formal structures: roles of editor and critic, mechanisms of monograph and the ways in which magazines have corralled architectural activity into movements and styles. There is a distinct link between publishing and practice, editorial and architecture, critic and architect.

But the challenges these traditional media are currently facing and the simultaneous rise of online media has disrupted this familiar relationship. It is much more than a transition of content from paper to screen; if traditional media are a frame or lens, these have been stretched, refocused or entirely reconfigured by online media. And for a culture that is so intimately linked with its media, this reformulation will inevitably reshape the practice of architecture and design.

For architects, the website was first seen as installation. This existed in the days of hand-coded html, before the online experience had solidified into all-too-familiar models. It was an extension of the culture of drawing that had been so fundamental to 1980s practice; certainly these websites took as long to make as drawings. In my own experience making the first iteration of the fat.co.uk website, placing animated gifs in html tables felt similar to the careful stroke of Rotring on trace. Perhaps these low-tech digital experiments were the last gasp of a particular strand of architectural representation, before the ubiquitous tools of the digital render obliterated difference.

At the tail end of this period came the blog. By removing the need for arcane coding, the blog became a platform to pursue

architectural agendas and interests. Blog authors were propelled into the hot seats of academic panels or to deals with respected publishers—which suggests that even the bloggers still think of their outlet as a not-quite legitimate form. It was the margin, though now a wider, denser, more populated margin, a challenge to "proper"—published—architectural media. There was a generational gap, a sense that this stuff had to be written because it wasn't. A combination of youthful arrogance and ignorance, perhaps, combined with sincerity. Their style—not quite journalism, not quite academic—offered an alternative, allowing a range of unfamiliar subjects to find their way into architectural discourse.

Their refusal to write about "legitimate" subjects such as superstar designers or new buildings meant blogs operated outside of the field occupied by mainstream media. Its mode was speculative, often finding subjects on the horizons of obscure topics that the growth of the internet had opened up. It formulated an obsessive worldview that shared more in common with the paranoid construction of conspiracy theories than traditional notions of architectural criticism, building themselves around specific marginalias—sci-fi, landscape infrastructures or 1950s British Brutalism, as just a few examples.

Yet the things which make architecture blogs liberating are the same things that prescribe their limitations. Unedited, they often descend into self-parody. Unfunded, their scope of discovery and research remains narrow and shallow, often repeating themselves. Unanswerable to any larger institutional framework, they become bloated and lazy.

And as a form, it has solidified. We know what they are and what they are there for. They are now part of a landscape of architectural media, operating as catch-alls for the varied activities of their authors, places where the proto-ideas and unexpurgated versions of later projects are assembled, and exerting a specific influence on the ways in which architecture and design is now practiced. In essence, these are concentrated, sometimes quirky, versions of the kind of opinion whose place in traditional magazines has become more precarious.

The third phase of web-media-architecture exaggerates a different attribute of traditional media: news. These sites use the same off-the-shelf back-end systems as blogs, but are unimpeded by the idea of opinion, personality or any remnant of editorial viewpoint. Perhaps the most successful is also the most extreme: Dezeen. Set up by the launch editor of *Icon*, its modus operandi is simple. It takes the best or most striking of the many press releases emanating from the offices of architects and designers and simply posts them to the web: text and

image. It is radical by dispensing with the trappings of traditional journalism—it acts as a conduit between the designer and its public, but also disguises the terms of the media and turns an articulated, explicit argument into an invisible and unanswerable entity. By remaining mute beyond the choice of which projects to post, it acts as a surface across which images and project descriptions glide, the role of critic passed on to viewers.

Sites like Dezeen also accelerate the rate at which we visually consume architecture and design—such a consumption of projects per second has simply not been possible before. This mainlining of design generates its own eco-system. Maybe it's here, in the speak-your-brainz immediacy of the comment trails, that the effect is visible, a strange combination of voyeurism and powerlessness, multiplied by viciousness and occasional humor. A kind of consumer reaction, gut-instinct, often totally naive, ill-informed and badly written—a world away from the old ideas of critic, criticism and how architectural media should perform. There is nothing riding on the commenter's opinion, nothing close to the stakes of the traditional relationship between critic and architect, where a nod or shake of the head could make or break a project's reputation or an architect's career.

Sites like Dezeen are places where traditional models of media and journalism collapse. Their abandonment of a critical or editorial position, their relentless stream of new-ness and flattening of hierarchies may liberate us from the power structures of traditional media. But its exaggeration of the speed of news, the prioritizing of novelty and the spectacle of image over other formulations of architecture and design has its own impact upon the field's practice.

In some senses, this increase in communication has reinvigorated aspects of the discipline—allowing new arguments to be formulated, opening up areas of speculation and providing platforms for work that would otherwise remain unseen. But at the same time, the flattening of hierarchies, the fragmentation of opinions, the lack of institutional framework or the challenge of criticism dissolve any notion of an overarching narrative of the discipline, while multiple and pluralistic platforms make the possibility of an argument for the discipline ever more difficult. Architectural media—at least in the trend suggested by these models—is in the process of removing itself from the frameworks of traditional criticism. But will we only be left with a stream of obnoxious comments trailing from a press release?