Reflections 16
Content

Preface by Dag Boutsen 5
Introduction by Johan Verbeke 8

Contributions by Tutors
Gerard de Zeeuw: The carapace 15
Halina Dunin-Woyseth and Fredrik Nilsson: Creating stronger awareness of traditional academic and "by design" scholarship 19
Ranulph Glanville & Michael Hohl: Notes from the reflecting workshop, St Lucas, June 23rd – 25th, 2011 29
Adam Jakimowicz, Johan Verbeke: Knowing by Making 41
Rolf Hughes: Belgium conversations 2011–12 55

Contributions by Participants

Participants: 'batch 2011'
Gisele Gantois: QUESTIONING or how RTSessions are stimulating the act of wondering and doubting 69
Ivo Vrouwwe: Textiles Revised 77
Marijn van De Weijer: Large, detached dwellings in Flanders: A testing ground for practice-based research 89
Nina Taghavi: Storytelling 95
Tüüne-Kristin Vaiška: Spatial Snapshot 105
Veerle Cox: Research by design on West-Flanders, the workshop re-visited 113

Participants of RTS 2010
Cristina R. Maier: Interactive Design 123
Petra Pferdemenges: City Hacktivism 131
Pieterjan Ginckels: SPEED SPACE 139

Participants of previous Research Training Sessions
Karel Deckers: Unheimliche architecture: frictional interior in between encounter and belonging 157

Colophon 176
Preface

Dear everybody, or whoever’s reading,

Let me start by quoting Rolf Hughes’ ‘reflection’ for Reflections: “One can only truly understand walking by walking”.

Research professionals and practice professionals will increasingly come to be the same people, according to Halina Dunin-Woyseth and Fredrik Nilsson, presuming that a more operative definition of “doctorateness” can be developed.

Gerard de Zeeuw talks about research on judgments and other emotional engagements.

Knowing that PhDs keep on targeting significant questions in the field, Johan Verbeke’s introduction expresses a confident looking forward to a positive future.

All the authors in this edition of Reflections discover, revise or criticize ‘research’. And by doing so, they extend the horizons of research.

Sint-Lucas School of Architecture is busy transforming itself into a Faculty of Architecture. The 15th faculty of the KU Leuven.

Step by step we are rediscovering ourselves. The whole process is a matter of increasing our self-awareness. Self-Awareness means having a clear perception of your personality, including your strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivations and emotions. Self-Awareness enables you to understand other people, how they perceive you and your attitude and responses to them.

Step by step, we are constructing and understanding this road by walking down it.

I want to thank all the people who have been involved in and supported RTS and this edition of Reflections for their energy and efforts.

Dag Boutsen
Head of Sint-Lucas School of Architecture
introduction
Introduction

Another year.
Another issue of Reflections.
Another set of contributions from our participants and staff.
Another step in the development of our research program.
Another nice set of projects and ideas.
Another step towards research excellence.

As I write this text, we are just finishing the ‘2012.1 GRC-Toonweekend’. Some 45 PhD Candidates have presented their research, and their work has been discussed by international panels. The quality of the presentations and the research has truly been growing over the last couple of years. It seems the process of continuous peer review is starting to pay off.

We started to develop a research program linked to designing and practice in 2005, publishing the first Reflections in 2006. Since then, we have come a long way. Over this 7-year period, more and more colleagues have ‘taken the plunge’ and started working on a PhD. These colleagues are structurally positioned in a variety of settings, and it is becoming more and more apparent that these settings have an enormous impact on the direction in which their work is developing. Sint-Lucas has always confronted its masters degree students with a variety of visions of architecture. It only seems logical to extend this approach to the PhD level and confront those candidates, as well, with a variety of methods and ways of looking at research. Although this variety seems in the first instance to delay the initial research work, its advantage is that it forces the researchers to explore and develop their own position in the field.

We are happy once again to present a new edition of Reflections: a pocketbook, chock full of texts and images – a pleasure for the eyes and food for thought. The significance of producing such a ‘mini-volume’ on research each year should not be underestimated. There is an impact on at least three levels:

1) For the participants themselves, the publication creates a deadline for formulating their research interests. They need to find an appropriate way of communicating their ideas and actions.
2) For the research climate at Sint-Lucas: all the colleagues are reading one another’s contributions. The transfer of ideas and approaches to research is an important aspect of developing a research culture. It helps to clarify approaches and ideas. In this sense, it’s a pity that not more former RTS participants keep contributing to Reflections.
3) For the international community. It’s happening more and more often that people contact me about Reflections and our research program. Recently, a master’s degree student in Brazil sent me a very interesting
email. It seems that Reflections and our work is becoming more and more widely known. I also believe that it is of utmost importance for the future that we keep a good record of our activities and actions. I'm sure that such a record will prove to be of value for the development of other schools of architecture in the future.

Quality in research is a very difficult issue. Also in other disciplines, it is based on peer review and peer assessment. But for architecture (as well as for arts and design), the interaction with and impact on society and people is of crucial importance. Hence, it is important, when discussing research quality, to incorporate practicing architects (experts) and the general public as well.

In analogy with artistic research in the field of arts, research by design should be research in which designing and practice play a crucial role. On the basis of the work of Henk Borgdorff, the EAAE Research Committee came to the following conclusion:

"Any kind of inquiry in which design is a substantial part of the research process is referred to as research by design. In research by design, the architectural design process forms a pathway through which new insights, knowledge, practices or products come into being. It generates critical inquiry through design work. Therefore research results are obtained by, and are consistent with, experience in practice."


As research by design is developing and becoming a prominent part of the research endeavors of the schools of architecture, the ideas behind research by design are being blurred by research which includes neither design nor practice.

More and more of our researchers are focusing on the very fundamental questions of the discipline. What are the key developments in the field? What is the added value of Architecture, Interior Architecture and Urbanism? Who are architects/designers? Where do designers want to go? What is critical in a design practice? What is important for people? The method includes the specific but also the general, the context and a frame of reference, interaction and discussion. It explores possibilities and develops proposals for the future. I believe that when we keep contributing to these questions and to the central areas of concern in the field, our research will become more and more significant, visible and recognized. Many of the PhDs are targeting these questions and will be concluded in the very near future.

So, we look confidently forward to the future.
To the coming year.
To coming issues of Reflections.
To future contributions by our participants and staff.
To further steps in the development of our research program.
To more innovative projects and ideas.
To a further step towards research excellence.

Johan Verbeke
contributions
tutors
The carapace

The literature abounds with complaints about the lack of success of research in new fields, for example in the arts. This may explain the abundance of proposals to redefine research so that it – minimally – covers the interpretation of anyone who engages with such research. It also suggests that there is no definitive proposal for such research yet, one that resolves all difficulties and guides progress for the next century. Introducing one more such proposal may seem trivial, therefore. There is always the chance, however, that it will be noticed and even lead to a re-arrangement of previous proposals. The proposal outlined in this paper concerns research on judgements and other emotional engagements.

While researchers have a single objective (doing high quality research), practitioner-researchers often wish to realise two objectives, i.e. do research and also contribute to what people prefer in their own situation and in the here and now rather than as a part of a general and long term endeavour. As this split often proves uncomfortable, one is easily tempted to allow the practical objective to dominate and to think that one has done research once one has solved a single problem or answered a direct question. This clearly is not correct. The double objective implies linking the practical objective to all that may impede its realisation, i.e. to a class of research problems.

Solving the latter usually is conceived as identifying the link between two sets of observations such that the one defines the boundaries of the other. Although people claim to see ‘planets’, for example, what they actually see are some moving lights. Research has taught them to link the two sets (‘planets’ and ‘moving lights’) in a unique way – unique in that no other set is linked in this way to the ‘moving lights’ (such as angels or small holes in the night sky). In contrast, researcher-practitioners tend to focus on identifying unique links between sets of experiences other than observations such as smell, touch and – quite importantly in areas like the arts – experiences of beauty, preferences and other emotions.

Many links of the latter type have been found that are highly valued in daily life. Examples include the games that people play as well as how people increase the quality of paintings, buildings and dinners. They also include the development of systems to deal with practical problems, like the legal or democratic system. Contributions from researchers-practitioners to these developments seem to have been fragmented, however, possibly to the tendency to solve single problems rather than their classes. This deficit may be resolved when it is realised that the links constitute carapaces or shields to social activities and to the organisation of feelings of beauty and other preferences. It is proposed that searching for carapaces supports the work of researcher-practitioners. There are important advantages. While observational links make it possible to find collective observations (observations that people can imitate), searching for collective preferences and emotions has met with serious difficulties. Constructing a carapace makes individual preferences cohere without the need for such a collec-
tive preference. They solve the class of research problems by protecting its respective solutions against disturbances and errors. This is achieved via the coordination of individual contributions such that the latter become uniquely linked to the carapace. Its presence allows for a collective competence as the result of the researcher-practitioner’s effort.

*Gerard de Zeeuw*
Creating stronger awareness of traditional academic and "by design" scholarship. Investigating ‘Doctorateness’ in Belgium, Sweden and Norway.

Over the years, research in the ADA fields (Architecture, Design and Arts) has become more and more mature, with this research producing field-specific scholarly knowledge, both in the traditional context of dialogue with disciplinary knowledge and in the context of "research by design". The issue of higher standards of scholarship has been addressed in organised research education, where they have been taught, debated and negotiated. One of the key aspects of mastering this scholarship is the strengthening of the creative abilities of the doctoral students; another is training in research craft. Both these aspects are assessed by adjudication committees for the purpose of evaluating the final product of the doctoral work, most often in the form of a thesis. These committees investigate whether a thesis has achieved a satisfactory level of "doctorateness".

There has been much discussion of the concept of "doctorateness" in recent years, both in the traditional academic disciplines and in the creative fields, and there is still much debate about how to define this concept in the contemporary situation (Denicolo & Park 2010; Stock 2011; Philips, Stock, & Vincs 2009). This short article is a brief report generated out of the midst of an ongoing project, which we hope will contribute to how "doctorateness" could be defined in our own field of architecture, design and arts.

As early as in 1997, the UK Council for Graduate Education brought out a report on the quality of doctoral work in the creative and performing fields, in which it defines its standards of "doctorateness" as follows: “The essence of ‘doctorateness’ is about an informed peer consensus on mastery of the subject; mastery of analytical breadth (where methods, techniques, contexts and data are concerned) and mastery of depth (the contribution itself, judged to be competent and original and of high quality)” (Frayling et al. 1997, 11).

Eight years later, the European Ministers adopted the Framework for Qualifications from the so-called "Dublin descriptors" (EHEA 2005). In the third cycle of higher education, the doctoral studies, these qualities or competences were defined as: a systematic understanding of a field of study; including mastery of the skills and methods of research; the ability to conceive and pursue a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity; a contribution through original research; capacity of critical analysis and evaluation; and an ability to communicate with peers, with the larger scholarly community and with society in general.

While the first set of criteria addresses in a more pronounced way the final product of the doctoral work, the second concerns strengthening the doctoral competences to be
achieved during the process of doctoral studies. Combining these two sets of criteria of doctoral standards is how we tentatively interpret the concept of “doctorateness”. Historically speaking, the doctor’s degree was a licence to teach in a university as a faculty member. This has of course changed, and today it is more about certain abilities and capacities in relation to research, as well as the position in a certain community. The doctoral degree proclaims that the recipient “is worthy of being listened to as an equal by the appropriate university faculty”, and to be a ‘doctor’ means “to be an authority, in full command of the subject right up to the boundaries of current knowledge, and able to extend them’ (Phillips & Pugh 2005, 20–21).

Someone with a doctorate is recognised as an authority by the faculty and by other academics and scholars outside the university, and doctoral education is today about becoming a professional researcher in your field and acquiring what can be called research competence. This mostly concerns the learning of skills, rather than of certain knowledge. “You have to be able to carve out a researchable topic, to master the techniques required and put them to appropriate use, and to cogently communicate your findings. So there are craft skills involved in becoming a full professional, which, like any skills, have to be learned by doing the task in practice situations under supervision.” (Phillips & Pugh 2005, 20–22)

The first time we introduced studying and evaluating doctoral theses as an assignment in research education at the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture in Brussels was in 2008, as a module of the independent research education unit we set up on the theme of “Scholarly craft and criticism” (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson 2010, 75–76). In 2011, together with a group of international doctoral candidates, we embarked on a more thorough investigation of the “doctorateness” of several recent Scandinavian practice-related doctoral theses in architecture and design. This investigation itself was the beginning of a new research project.

This research project is empirically based on the series of doctoral courses which we offered to groups of architects and designers in Belgium, Norway and Sweden in the years 2008–2011 (Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson 2009; Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson 2010; Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson 2011a; Dunin-Woyseth & Nilsson 2011b). These courses were an attempt to train the doctoral students in the art of scholarly assessment as a mode of developing research competences and, thus, to prepare these students to be creative and competent in producing the final product of their doctoral studies – a thesis. The courses were built around the study and evaluation of already accepted doctoral theses in the design fields, which served as empirical material for our research project. The doctoral students were requested to work in groups of two or groups of three. This “peer learning” was intended to train the students in the ability to communicate, argue and give scholarly criticism, as well as to get them more acquainted with the different perspectives from which they as doctoral candidates approach the ADA field. The PhD students were guided in this work by a set of criteria defined by us as teachers. With regard to these guidelines, which include our interpretation of how the competences are embedded in the final product of doctoral work, the students were requested to discuss and evaluate the following: the research problem of the thesis; the knowledge status in the field; the “research design” of the doctoral project (the relations between the object of study, the theoretical frameworks used, the traditional or the “by design” approach to the research); the description and self-evaluation of the “route mapping”, i.e. the research method applied and the arguments for the chosen approach; the scholarly craftsmanship materialised in the thesis; the communicability of the thesis; the importance of the project to the building of knowledge in the field, and whether it has brought about new original knowledge; the potential for further development of the results of the thesis; and the value of the thesis outside the scholarly and designer community.

At the end of each assessment seminar we asked the PhD students to assess the value of this type of research training. We also asked them how they interpret the concept of “doctorateness” after having analysed and discussed the thesis they were assigned to evaluate during the seminar. The conclusions drawn by four different groups, each working on one of three different theses, can serve to elucidate the aims of the project.

A group of doctoral students from the Ardhi University in Dar-es-Salam who studied a traditional thesis (Syversen 2007) wrote: “The assignment on the doctoral thesis review was useful in self-reflection on our own research projects in addition to imparting knowledge on how we can assess other scholarly works”. Their

understanding of the concept of “doctorateness” emphasised its dependence on the academic context of where a thesis was written: “‘Doctorateness’ is a demanding scholarly endeavour that largely relies on the prevailing traditions in a specific university / institution”. (1)

A Swedish architect, working part time in practice and part time doing an industrial PhD, who studied a thesis based on “research by design” (von Busch 2008) reported that his study of the thesis had been problematic for him. He browsed through it many times, though not in a sequential way, and then discussed its contents and form with his co-partner in the assignment. He was not sure whether he had understood the thesis as it was intended to be understood by the author, but in spite of that he found his study of the thesis to be interesting and fruitful. The PhD student highly appreciated the assignment, and he thought that his course colleagues did too. He also found it of value that the course participants had had the opportunity to learn about more than one thesis during the seminar, in which all the theses studied were presented and discussed. He felt a kind of uncertainty with regard to the concept of “doctorateness”. He believes that the “degree of doctorateness” can be measured by the degree of the author’s awareness of what research generally deals with in an academic and cultural context and how the author understands the specificity of his own field of research in relation to other fields. He believes that the course has highly improved this awareness in the participants. (2)

A group of doctoral students at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO) studied an early example of a thesis that is close to being research-by-design (Redström 2001). They comment that, in retrospect, it is possible to argue that the epistemological position of the author might be viewed as in a by-design or performative paradigm, but that there is an uneasy connection between practical experimental design and theory in the thesis. Even though the thesis often claims that its theories, arguments and design philosophy are based upon the outcomes and the processes of the practical experimentation in designing and building the artefacts, there is little evidence in the thesis itself as to how the practical work influenced and formed the theory. “The artefacts then act more as illustrations, as starting points for discussions by the authors and for the presentation of ideas, rather than as experimental design efforts that in themselves seek to explore, investigate and probe creating stronger awareness of traditional academic and ‘by design’ scholarship.”
In their reflections on "doctorateness", they emphasise the importance: (a) of having knowledge of the research landscape; (b) of understanding traditions of research structures, cultures and languages; (c) of having the ability to communicate across disciplinary and professional borders; and (d) of being able to demonstrate criticality, rigour and appropriateness of the structure of the presentation. (3)

During the seminars, we as teachers put emphasis on the research design of the doctoral theses written in a traditional academic manner, and on how these theses differed from doctoral theses based on research by design. We found it important that especially those PhD students who set out to approach design research in new ways have to be aware of what the traditional approaches are. We regard this awareness as being necessary for building generic and field-specific research competences among the doctoral students. This awareness is also essential for being able to communicate their research and new knowledge to others within the field of architecture and design, as well as to those in other fields, and only by doing so will they succeed in gaining recognition for the field-specific knowledge and approaches that they have developed.

Our research project is designed to proceed in several stages. The first stage was the analysis of the assessment assignments carried out by the doctoral students at various universities and schools of architecture in three different countries – in Belgium, Sweden and Norway. All of them examined the same set of doctoral theses, and it is this first stage that we are briefly reporting on in this paper. The research project will now continue into the next stage, which will be to analyse the assessments written by the adjudication committees for the same doctoral theses at the universities where they were defended. While the first group of informants are novices in research practice, the second group are experts in the practice of assessing research at the doctoral level. The third stage of the project will be dedicated to comparing the different results of the assessments made by these different groups of assessors. In our studies we have adopted the approach that is called ‘integrative research review’ (Cooper 1984). This approach is a form of scientific inquiry similar to the primary research process.

This research project is to a large degree based on sensitive information (especially in the case of the experts’ assessments, which can be studied only with the permission of all parties involved). For this reason, throughout the entire project, the authors are following the ethical rules of conduct as formulated in several European guidelines, (for instance, the Code of Good Practice in Academic Research, European University Institute 2011).

Already at this stage, we can see that the importance of having an awareness of the knowledge landscape through which one as a professional researcher has to navigate cannot be over-emphasised. This awareness is crucial for “doctorateness”. It is essential for being able to position oneself and to extend the knowledge in one’s field. And what is equally essential is the increasingly important ability to communicate and to get into dialogue with peers, professionals and other knowledge producers, both in one’s own discipline and in others. We presume that one result of this project will be a more operative definition of “doctorateness”, which will be used both as a pedagogical tool in research education in the design fields and in dialogues between the research professionals and the practice professionals, who will increasingly come to be the same people.

Notes

References
Dunin-Woyseth, Halina & Fredrik Nilsson (2011a) ‘Research by Design: Progress in establishing...


Notes from the reflecting workshop, Sint-Lucas, June 23rd – 25th, 2011

In this text we set out to describe the reflection workshop from our perspective. Additionally we are adding our own reflections to the process of reflecting and comments about the role of reflecting by educators such as Donald Schon, John Dewey and Maxine Greene.

This was the first time Michael Hohl assisted Prof. Ranulph Glanville in conducting this Research Training Session on Reflection at Sint-Lucas Architectuur. As Ranulph has been conducting workshops on ‘reflection’ for several years now this was a good opportunity for Michael to learn more about this distinct ‘format’ of a ‘recursive’ workshop in which we actually reflect on reflection. Michael’s questions were: How does one ‘do’ reflecting (what is reflection in action)? What goes on when we do reflecting? And especially, how can we reflect on reflecting together as members of a group?

An important aspect of this approach is not to determine a method in advance: as the group discovered what it was interested in and what it was working on, further steps were mapped, but always provisionally, always allowing that a different path would be created as the journey progressed. What is reported here is only a method in retrospect and should not be seen as a recipe to determine behaviour on other occasions.1

We opened the workshop by explaining that in order to understand the importance of reflecting we had to ‘do’ it, not merely speak about it. After this introduction, group members introduced their own individual take on the word’s meaning. What does ‘reflecting’ mean to you? Where does reflection emerge in your own work? Different meanings and associations for reflecting emerged allowing us to become aware of other perspectives and develop an openness and familiarity with these new and different associations.

Having established such a common ground through conversations it was time to proceed to ‘do’ some more reflecting. We distributed stacks of A6 paper in individual colours. The task was to reflect how reflecting appears in or relates to our work and write those terms that we associate with reflecting, on these cards. As we reflect and write, very different terms appear and, written upon cards, the different associations become something tangible.

1 This is inevitable because the process of reflecting changes understandings and hence perceptions. So each reflective act in some way changes the world in which it exists, for the reflective practitioner. Hence, there is a fundamental connection with subjects such as cybernetics that actively include the observer within the system.
So what is considered reflecting? In its nominal form, according to the Oxford American Dictionary of 2005, one meaning of reflection is, 

serious thought or consideration [...] 

Now let us turn this into a question: what is the role of ‘serious thought or consideration’ in our work and how might it help us? What effect does it have? Why is it important? When and where does it happen?

In the research literature on education ‘reflection’ has played a prominent role since at least 1910. Pioneering advocates of reflection were educators Maxine Green and John Dewey both active at New York’s Columbia University’s Teachers College. Dewey’s book “How We Think”, first published in 1910, influenced Donald Schon from early in his studies, and he wrote his doctoral dissertation about Dewey’s theory of enquiry (Lyons, 2010, 14). In 1982 Schon would publish “The Reflective Practitioner” in which reflection would be the central activity of professionals “reflecting in action”.

For Maxine Greene, reflective practice was a quality that would extend into a life project (Lyons, 2010) intrinsically linked to consciousness, wakefulness and freedom, and often expressed through artistic practice (Lyon, 2010, viii). For her, it also was the arts that would play a crucial role in reaching such a state of ‘wide-awakefulness’ leading to reflective encounters that enabled others to see, hear, and feel in unexpected ways. (Greene, p.60)
Her colleague John Dewey considered reflection to be an indispensable way of acquiring knowledge, which he described in his work “How we think”.

Dewey suggested five phases or aspects of reflective thinking:

1. suggestions, in which the mind leaps forward to a possible solution;
2. an intellectualisation of the difficulty or perplexity that has been felt (directly experienced) into a problem to be solved, a question for which the answer must be sought;
3. the use of one suggestion after another as a leading idea, or hypothesis, to initiate and guide observation and other operation in the collection of factual material;
4. the mental elaboration of the idea or supposition as an idea or supposition (reasoning, in the sense in which reasoning is a part, not the whole of inference); and
5. testing the hypothesis by overt or imaginative action (Dewey 1933, p.200)."

Dewey did not consider these functions or phases to follow one another in a set order, rather they only outlined the indispensable traits of reflective thinking. They could also appear nested within each other, forming a recursive system of enquiry.

Once the participants had noted their associations on their cards, these were stacked and placed, one-by-one, on the table. This was a collaborative process and each member of the group explained why a term or concept was important to them, and where it should be located in relation to other association cards. We discussed and reflected. We became aware of the different associations, dimensions and connotations that ‘reflecting’ had for other members of the group and gained a wider understanding. By comparing own, necessarily confined and mono-dimensional ideas to those of other individuals new associations emerged and individual conceptual frames opened up.

Slowly the cards were formed into clusters as they were placed—one after another—in each others' neighbourhoods. Which terms belonged together? What if a term could be located in more than one cluster? In this phase the confined individual associations loosened up as individual concepts become part of something larger: clusters of related concepts. This became a process of negotiation and thinking aloud. How could associations relate? Why did they relate? Did we understand the same when we use what appears to be the same word? Some terms were more clear then others, while ‘orphaned’ cards lie on their own forming a ‘miscellaneous’ cluster later.

From the individual reflective effort of developing concrete terms, the second phase was about collaboration. Here, members became deeply immersed together in the process of ‘sharing knowledge, reflections, ideas and opinions in multi-directional communication’ as, for instance, described in Callao’s text on conversational conferences (Callaos, 2009). This process of sharing also lead to an extension and refining of each individual’s understandings.
Once all cards had been placed on the table and the results discussed we moved on to another phase: What connected the terms in those clusters? What do the concepts have in common? The group was invited to invent overarching terms or labels for each cluster. Another stage of reflective group creativity emerged, nurturing and being nurtured by the individuals in the group in positive loops (Callaos, 2009). Members explored similarities between their own concepts and those of others. In the first exercise mutual agreement had been reached by placing terms together and forming clusters of perceived relatedness. Now the task was to invent or infer connecting concepts that would apply to all terms within a cluster, becoming the shared concepts of a collaborative experience of reflection in action (Schon). When someone reflected in action, he became a researcher in the context of practice (Schon, 68). It is this critical reflection that shifts the process so it becomes a deep learning experience (what Schon calls: becoming research).

By now, all group members had a deeper understanding of what reflection meant for them and also what it meant for others. Individually they had investigated their own associations with the activity and then shared it with the other members of the group. Finally, emerging from this process, they had negotiated shared concepts they could all agree upon. What does this say about the state of mind of collaborating group members?

Dewey identified four ‘attitudes’ which were necessary to cultivate for successful reflective enquiry: “Open-mindedness, defined as freedom from prejudice and [other factors] that close the mind and make it unwilling to consider new problems and entertain new ideas. It includes an active, emphatic desire to listen to more sides than one; to give heed to facts; to give full attention to alternative possibilities. Whole-heartedness – defined as when someone takes up a project with a whole heart, and individual interest; and Responsibility – defined as considering consequences of what one has learned. The final attitude being directedness – faith in human action and the belief that something is worth doing. For Dewey (so Lyons) these were the means to acquire a reflective attitude of mind and constitute the methods of engaging in enquiry. (Lyons, 2010, 47)

The next step of our workshop on reflection moved beyond the merely reflective and collaborative, to physical experience. Now the task was to arrange the individual cards within a grid: not a flat grid placed upon a wall, but a spatial ‘cube’ or mesh, which we could enter and walk inside: a three-dimensional concept structure. Here, reflection, planning and skill were required to decide how to undertake this task. The members of the group chose a section of the large space where strings could be attached to the ceiling. We chose materials from a box of string, scissors, tape and adhesive tape and such-like. Together, members of the group roughly planned the required actions and, using a ladder, quickly started to tie string to hooks and pipes on the ceiling, creating a tense rectangular grid of string. From the connecting nodes of this grid strings were stretched to the floor, where they were fastened with adhesive tape, and stretched up
again to another point on the ceiling, creating a spatial mesh with three Cartesian coordinates along the "x, y, and z" axes. Participants placed cards within this spatial mesh and then marked out paths by tying coloured strings between the cards that were "theirs", shaped by the zig-zag lines of string that stretched from the ceiling to the floor and up again.

Here we experienced reflection, skill and negotiation in action. Beside reflective thinking and understanding the reflections of others, the making of one’s narrative also became a learning experience: as cards are located among other cards (in neighbourhoods individually conceived by each participant), becoming aware of these neighbourhoods and connections resulted in a further personal learning experience. A personal narrative on the reflective process (which may include other participant’s terms (cards) with shared ownership) allows other perspectives to be learned, accepted and internalised. Reflection became an individual, extended, but also shared experience.

These ways of dealing with the new and uncertain connect to Donald Schon’s enquiry into how professionals think in action. Schon regarded academia’s view of knowledge as limited since it did not capture “practical competence and professional artistry”. He was interested in what architects, psychotherapists, engineers, planners or managers were actually doing in their practice. His assumption was that they knew more then they could say. While universities were committed by a particular epistemology to a view of knowledge that ‘fostered selective inattention’ (Schon, 1983, vii)—his concern was to understand how professionals learned through and knew in their practice.

Schon believed this kind of (professional) knowing occurred especially in situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict. Analytic techniques could only reach so far. Problems were interconnected and environments turbulent and active, and therefore synthetic skills were necessary to design a desirable future, and ways of bringing it about. Schon writes: “If it is true that professional practice has at least as much to do with finding the problem as with solving the problem found, it is also true that problem setting is a recognized professional activity.” (Schon, 18) Professionals not only reflect on past actions in order to prepare for the future, but also reflected in action. Reflection in action was central to the art in which practitioners coped with troublesome “divergent” situations of practice, and constructed a new way of setting the problem by imposing a “frame-experiment” upon the situation. (Schon, 62, 63)

For the group attending the workshop this required reflection in action and framing the problem. They were immersed in the shared activity of building the structure made of string that in all its ad-hoc construction required both constant reflection in action and verification that the construction was progressing in the desired direction. Once the structure had been created, the cards were fastened to the strings with clothes pegs, keeping to the order of ‘good neighbourhood’. Here team members experienced their own concept-cards surrounded by those of others.

The final task had each member reflect on the different stages of their own reflective process by selecting the particular cards and thus creating a narrative of the individual
stages of their own experience of reflecting. They examined the cards, took notes, and by stretching an individual coloured string from chosen card to chosen card they connected concepts relevant to their own reflective experience. During this process very individual ‘trails’ of coloured string emerged within the mesh, demonstrating how individual the representation of the reflective process can be. This part of the reflective process consisted of theorising and analysing, and concluded with short presentations of individual tours through the reflective process.

In the workshop we did not teach ‘reflection’—instead we reflected, we did reflecting. One could say we reflected on reflection in the process and experiencing the different stages. When we create or solve a problem we reflect many times without necessarily being conscious of that process, and we always reflect, recursively, in the light of earlier reflections (this is the link to cybernetic understandings and descriptions of our places, acting in the world). The workshop created a deep experience of both conscious and unconscious reflection, of reflective reflection, of reflection in action. Becoming conscious of this is an important experience for creative practitioners involved in problem solving as they become fully aware of the obvious and not so obvious phases of their creative process. It is this awareness or consciousness of the reflective process that allows for more critical processes to emerge, to grow and integrate these into own future practice.

Michael Hohl and Ranulph Glanville

References


Knowing by Making

What I hear I forget
What I see I remember
What I do I know
Chinese proverb

Research by design and artistic research use the continuous flow of designing, making objects and developing creative processes as the central way to generate experience, understanding and knowledge. Hence they encompass the case-based type of research. The activity of making enforces insight, understanding and knowledge generation through the processes it involves as well as the objects it creates. The type of reflection evolving within artistic research and research by design concerns and involves creation itself, therefore it requires making. Inef-fable knowledge, non-definable objects and the status of non-knowing play an implicit, but yet crucial role in developing understanding. The authors discuss a few issues central to acknowledging the importance of making and practicing for the development of knowing in the fields of art, design and architecture. The paper can be treated as a set of notes taken from the ongoing discussion in the field.
The case.

Research by design and creative practice research are much more than a case based research. The related knowledge is more than case based knowledge.

What then is case-based knowledge? According to Edwards¹ “In this type of research, one or more cases of a phenomenon of interest are systematically examined with a view to achieving an understanding and developing or extending a theoretical framework. A case study is a case-based research project which examines a single case, usually in considerable depth. In a multiple case study, a series of cases is examined. However the case-based approach is not limited to research formally bearing the title “case study”. Many qualitative research approaches use case-based strategies.”

At a first glance, the above description ranges the conceptual area in which the researcher-designer could be interested in. However, there are a few aspects, which introduce a fundamental difference between case-based research as defined by Edwards and research by design and artistic research.

Essential is the understanding of the notion of case itself. This usually does not need explanation in traditional, formal research – a case is usually studied in the context of an area of interest, and relates to the focus of a research project. This implies the following:

- the case which is studied is separated from and not dependent on the researcher;
- the choice of cases influences the knowledge generated and hence the cases are to be chosen in a knowledgeable way;
- the analysis of multiple cases is performed in order to understand the domain as it is; the results are not intended to change the domain.

In research by design, artistic research and creative practice research, designing and making art are the core activity in knowledge generation. This knowledge cannot be developed by theoretical endeavors only. This means that in research led by designing and making, designs are not treated as cases as such, because they are not only the objects of observation and analyses. Instead, the designing and making are the vehicles for development of insight and understanding that leads to essential change and innovation. Each new design brings change in both the context (conceptual and physical) within which it is created (similar to action research) and in the practice of the designer. One's own designs from the past are not cases that are separately considered, but together with the new ones, they co-formulate the dynamic and evolving landscape of thinking and creation of the designer. So subsequent evolving designs help not only to understand of what was or what is, but help to experience and understand the nature of change they bring. Therefore the continuous designing and making are essential components of research method and process.

The object.

In this section we will elaborate on the following statement: within the context of undertaking research and knowledge generation in creative disciplines, the object should not be separated from the process. One influences the other in a mutual, stimulating and essential way.

An object or project, which is produced within a creative process, should first of all be seen as something that exists on its own rights within a field. Then it can be related to objects, projects or processes outside the field of designing, but its primary context is always designing itself. This means that the essence of designing cannot be defined outside of designing. And only as such the designing/creating/making process is an essential expression of the development of knowing of the designer. So the process (thinking, searching, exploring, making, designing) as well as the object (resulting from or initiating the process) become themselves interrelated levels of knowledge generation, concerning and emerging from a specific design task. Therefore, in the context of research by designing, design – the process and the object, do not only act as cases because they are inseparable and generate knowing in themselves, and – if creatively developed – are unique. A specific design cannot be a direct representative for the ‘family’ of comparable objects, because of its uniqueness. It “describes” only itself, but the knowledge it introduces can serve for better designing another unique one. This is why in this type of research making or designing are key to the knowledge development.

The design as a whole (the object and the process) represent concepts developed for this specific endeavor of creation and change. And the way in which it introduces values, when understood, enables knowing to appear.

In a specific way, however, the process and the object become instrumental and play as mediators. It could be called a ‘liquid instrumentality’ or mediation, where the process and the object become devices in and contribute to development of deeper understanding. The designer builds on what he did in the past (his mental space) and continuously reflects on the process going on, to develop better understanding and more consciously continue with making new designs.

---

2 This means that for example in designing one housing design cannot be representative for the whole “family” of housing designs, as in biology one trout can be representative for the whole family of trouts.

3 ‘Liquid’ refers here to the way in which Z. Bauman interprets and describes modernity as a social and cultural occurrence, where components and processes can be distinguished and noticed, but the borders between them cannot be steadily defined, are fluid and in constant move; see: Bauman, Z., 2000, Liquid modernity, Blackwell Publishers Inc., Malden.
Understanding.

A work of art or design can be the source of a deep aesthetic experience. For instance, specific spaces of unique buildings can make a big impact on the viewer. The same concerns experiencing paintings, sculptures, music, etc. Experiencing is an essential value and state that makes it possible to appreciate creative activities. As such the experience does not have to be translated into anything else (although it sometimes can). The aesthetic (emotional, spiritual, interpretative) experience answers and expresses the natural human need to perceive beauty and interact with it. This concerns equally the viewer and the creator.

Within research, however, it is important to communicate, discuss and translate experiencing from both the work of art or design project as well as from the designing and making. This implies that the process of reflection needs to include processes that try to make as explicit as possible the issues coming out of the object and the process of creation.

Although the experience of delight exists on its own rights in the artistic realm, when it comes to develop ways of knowing in research, understanding needs to be developed and formulated in order to be communicated and discussed between peers.

Understanding and creation should not be seen as separate within the context of artistic research and research by design. Understanding as a way of knowing that is specific for creative domains, is a more complex issue than we seem to observe within "traditional" research. Understanding for the creative and making disciplines is much more than a post-rationalisation of the outcomes of an analyses. In the creative and making fields understanding is formulated and expressed not only verbally or with formulas; it also appears as the further development of the work of art, as a design, a project, a painting, a sculpture, etc. So understanding is not something external to the making and work itself.

Furthermore, understanding in arts and design contains some important paradox. It is more open than in sciences and at the same time more context dependent. Open, because it induces more than a solution to an existing problem. In fact it does not have to solve anything, but it brings new values. For example a work of art can appear as a result of an initial interpretation of a given issue, but instead of being any solution it may express questioning of the issue by means of the creative and aesthetic processes.

Understanding in the creative world, in order to be expressed, does not have to use any ‘external’ or universal language, but its own. If needed however, some new means of expression may appear, but the meaning then should not be different in nature from what is taking place in the context of making.

That’s why developing understanding in artistic research and research by design essentially involves making – the reflective, continuous creation of works; the reflection-in-action – designs, projects, paintings, music, etc. The creator cannot separate himself from the process of creating in his attempts to understand what he/she is doing and what the meaning of his/her work is. The translation of artistic experience into understanding necessarily involves making. We can use the famous Feynman’s note that “What I cannot create I do not understand” and make it a little more direct: I have to make in order to know.

Bernard Tschumi once said that the concepts precede the drawings (so you draw what you first evolved by thought, hence, in this perspective, drawing is a representation), but quite often, concepts are equally inspired or ‘made’ while drawing (so you draw first and continue drawing until the concept appears, drawing is an exploration). Daniel Libeskind, in a conversation with one of the authors, said that essentially the only thing, which he really had done until that moment (fall 1997), was to create the Micromegas drawings, and all the later projects were the consequence of the attitude which he had developed while creating these strange, linear, black and white images. These drawings were not just cases illustrating a preconceived concept. They were all these – the device, the concept, the understanding and the formulation, but not the case or cases of something else or from which, through analysis, concepts and knowledge were deduced. They were the laboratory, within which the specific sensitivity was discovered and appreciated by the designer, then further evolved into thinking and understanding that architecture is possible to be treated in a new, useful and specific way.

Therefore the process of making can be seen as a fundamental attitude which a designer or an artist represents towards reality.

Under certain conditions even some anarchic or dadaist experiments make a deep sense, as explorative activities, and searching for meaning through making and opening for the future. Tristan Tzara’s experiments with anarchic use of accident in making collages were not based on an automatic acceptance of any accident that happened. They were repeated until he got his ‘aha!’ moment. As an artist, he did not rationally analyse his emotional pre-reflection, or intention, but he must have it, in order to evaluate (subconsciously) experiments in his specific way. For the designer-researcher, however, the formulation of reflection is essential. To get the level of knowing, he or she needs to clarify the experience and to formulate the process and the understanding – of course to the extent, that is possible. It is obvious that in creative and making disciplines there are levels which cannot be translated into the world of explicit and analytical understanding. But, on the other hand, creative work is also not only emotion – it is also reasoning, preferences, contexts, within which the artist-designer operates.

This mental space is essential for the uniqueness of the work; it can be discussed through reflection and be explained one or the other way. However, there are also levels of not-knowing in creative processes, that can inspire further exploration, and develop research.

---

Not Knowing.

We believe not knowing is a specific state, in which thinking begins. We can treat not-knowing as a specific state of mind – it informs of the presence of something that apparently exists and requires naming and/or interpretation and/or explanation – and the knowledge can be approached by exploration. Not-knowing is a consciousness of the gap, which the creative work fills in on an abstract or emotional level. It is a conscious state – which means that one gets to know of his/her not-knowing – and it appears as an indispensable moment and attitude in the process of making, creating and designing. Therefore, in creative and making domains, the object often appears much earlier than any understanding. The ‘pure’ artist does not necessarily pursue knowing. But the artist-researcher does.

However, as we have already mentioned, knowing, especially for an artist or a designer, is a very sensitive field. Complex issues can be trivialized with definitions, especially in arts or design when superficial verbal or written statements are formulated too quickly, without the relevant reflection. In creative disciplines definitions describing works of art sometimes are hardly possible. For example Duchamp’s readymades were created as non-definable objects. According to Naumann: ‘Any attempt to establish a formula or some other type of guiding principle by which to assess or in other ways interpret the artistic production of Marcel Duchamp would be (...) an entirely futile endeavor’11. Duchamp himself said that: “The curious thing about the readymade is that I’ve never been able to arrive to a definition or explanation that fully satisfies me”12. This means two things:

- the nature of some (or most?) works of art is not to know, but they are intended to touch other fields of human experience; artists by making them do not intend to develop or discover a rational of knowing, but to express or create a specific experience, which can not be rationalized, but which is incredibly important for our understanding of the world;
- the attitude of the artist towards reality is to make things, as we already mentioned – regardless the fact if they are pre-conceived (as objects) or they are the pre-conceiving themselves (as processes); so making is the indispensable declaration of creation; and together with emotional experience which the work of art / design brings, they always make people think, feel, react and extend their understanding of our world.

What Duchamps says in the words cited above shows that he did attempt to describe and reflect on his works, after he made them. He said he had failed, but had put thinking in motion. He could have explored the issue of what the readymades were, but it was his decision not to do so. And in a way, being aware of their nature, after making them, he had no choice. He made not-knowable objects. But the knowing he introduced was that it was possible to make such objects. Things, that do not let people stay indifferent, things, which, through the creative process of opening the mind of the author, keep opening the minds of the viewers. And by doing this Duchamps widens the field of human experience and understanding. What is important, he did not describe them. He made them. And the making also enforced his own energy towards the future, not only at the moment itself, but for a long-lasting effect.

Science, with knowledge it develops, concerns the truth about the world. Creative disciplines focus on the truth about human condition and human experience. We all search for reality, or its components which we could treat ‘absolute’, no matter how complex this desire may look. But, as Bauman writes, the “absolute” does not wait for the discoverer as a thing ready to find and use. It can be discovered only thanks to the continuous creation, it has to be re-created day by day, hour after hour. One does not find “absolute”, it is to be created. So in order to know a thing you have to make it.

Adam Jakimowicz
Johan Verbeke

11 Naumann, F., M., 2000, Duchamp’s Erotic Souvenir, Art News 99.2
Dear Gerard,

I am sending you my 'reflections' for Reflections. They are a compilation of various notes deriving from our last 4 meetings, but as my written notes are incomplete and sketchy (as I tend to be too busy following and enjoying the conversation!) I have experimented with a different type of literary form – part fiction, part dialogue, part essay – as a way of trying to convey the twists and turns of thinking that occurs during these sessions. That is (to use your terms, which I think are useful) my focus is less on the content of our discussions, than on the structure of the interaction(s) itself. I hope this comes across. If you feel I have misrepresented anything which you would like revising, just let me know. That I have oversimplified, I have no doubt but this concerns me far less.

best wishes,

Rolf

Things we otherwise would have neglected

Ghent, April 2011

Just as there are many ways to observe, so too are there many ways to walk in an unfamiliar town – strenuously, dawdling, purposefully, with curiosity, open to the twists and turns of serendipity, seeking distraction, exhaustion, advice, directions, a map… Yet one cannot expect to understand these varieties of walking by describing and categorising; one can only truly understand walking by walking.

This I understood during a particularly severe winter in Sweden (November 2010) while crossing the road from a conference on The Future of Play to the end-of-conference bar across the street, a journey – or perhaps it was more an expedition – with an esteemed colleague who has been walking on crutches from an early age and therefore required support to cross the icy street. The kerbstones, as well as the most slippery stretches, meant that my colleague needed to be occasionally lifted; we inched along in the freezing night air, the lights of the steaming bar seemingly a distant destination. It took us over twenty minutes to cross the road. During this time, we spoke of things we otherwise would have neglected.

I thought also of how another reacted to the unfolding news of his sister dying, of how – even though he claims that his is a military family, accustomed to accepting death with a shrug and a shot of something strong – the experience became a swamp that opened up and slowly swallowed him. And yet he had himself already created the conditions in which he might sink and slip under. He was feeding his illness with news of every variety. This too raised things we otherwise would have neglected. The bulletins from his family became the dark light on the footpath that led down to the
quagmire. He was not in the bar that was our current destination.

And then, as is the way of undirected thinking, I remembered Latour’s remark somewhere that things do not exist without being full of people, and I wondered whether one might reverse this to claim that people do not exist without being full of things. A person full of things should become visible, if not weighty. And yet when I lift and shake you, I hear neither rattle, rustle, nor murmur. It is as if the laws of gravity have been suspended.

And then I opened the door and we entered the noisy room.

“O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand;
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By me done and occasioned, or rejoice
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
To God more glory, more good will to men
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.”

Milton, Paradise Lost (Book XII)

Quality
Brussels, June 2011

“The disciplines have established themselves as cultures, and it is therefore difficult to change them. Instead we might change our thinking from disciplinary identity to finding an interesting approach from within a given discipline.”

“If you claim that within the framework I have achieved the highest possible quality, the question that follows is: what, then, is the framework?” “We might look for the individual quality and from that create a culture.”

“There are qualities of a phenomenon (a goat must have four legs) and quality in the sense of making an improvement. It is this latter instance that interests Rolf and I.”

“Quality can involve notions of character, disposition, nature, fidelity, accomplishment, rank, value – implying a degree or grade of excellence. We typically discuss architecture through considerations such as appropriateness, use, politics, discourse, aesthetics, context, authorship etc. Each time we are evaluating not the quality of ‘the thing itself’ but rather our attitude towards it. So rather than define its properties, I would ask how might we exercise judgment to validate discussions of quality?”

“Architecture is like the prototype of a kettle. That is to say, it is not a model of a phenomenon: The prototype in architecture tends to be a model of something that has no phenomena yet. It is possible of course to ‘validate’ a prototype, for example by putting it into situations that are dangerous to the prototype – usually on a gliding scale. One tries to endanger prototypes a little bit to see what ‘works’ and what does not, then change the prototype and introduce more dangers, etc. The aim is to strengthen the prototype, to make it immune to all the dangers one can imagine the prototype has to withstand. The difficulty is of course that this type of strengthening has little to do with ‘models of phenomena.’”

“We agree that quality is the capacity of a given design to engage us by its own distinctive advantages. This capacity may be tested through the strength of our engagement.”

Can we decide (but not necessarily agree) on a joint advantage? How might we engage others in the expression of their preferences?

Not Other is not an other, nor is it other than any other, nor is it an other in an other—for no other reason than that it is Not Other, which can in no way be other, as if it something were lacking to it, as to an other. For an other which is other than something lacks that than which it is other. But Not Other, because it is not other than anything, does not lack anything nor can anything be outside it.

Nicholas of Cusa, De li Non Aliud/On the Not Other (1462)

Exposition
Ghent, November 2011

“Life must be good if it’s worth mentioning,” she said
“Totally agree!” the parrot agreed.

“Alternatively,” I said, “mentioning life brings the act of mentioning alive.”
“Only you can make such a comment – it’s brilliant!” she said.

“You’re too kind – the brilliance is all yours,” I said.
The parrot shook its green, azure-tipped wings: “Nice!”

“Why?” I asked. “Well, you mentioned life. You mentioned the conception of goodness. You mentioned mentioning itself. And in all this there was the idea of comparison, or stating preferences. Others responded – including me. This means you
created a form of life – you increased the available light – and life responded."

She took a deep breath, opened the cage, let the parrot hop onto her fist, then deftly
bound its beak with a rubber band and sighed. "Mais comme tu joues avec les mots..."

She was right. And yet...

"I ask questions," I said. "And I identify and sort the responses. I consider how these
function in people's lives. In this way I try to become educated, as opposed to having an
education."

"You try to understand the variety of what you can include and what exclude."

We thought about this awhile. Other work rhythms took precedence. Then, early one
morning, unexpectedly, she telephoned.

"It seems to me that if you create a set of alternatives, you have a duty to state your
own preferences among these alternatives."

She was right – I had no answer. We agreed to meet.

But to avoid bias we invited a third to the meeting. Now we need names - or
numbers.

"The question is not one of linking," the newcomer said. "It is rather: what do I need to
cut away to get to my work? Put another way, the question is not; there is research,
and there is art – what do I need to do to link the two traditions? No, the question
is rather: What do I have to cut away (God, art, time, the self etc.) to get to my
work? What do I want to link myself to in a wider scheme? How do I make a jump
to a wider field? Many definitions therefore are not definitions, but rather aspects of
'cutting away', of saying it's not this...and it's not this either... At a certain point, there
must be a stopping principle, a limit state, a horizon – or, as Leibniz would say, God."

Let us decide to give the name Gerard to this speaker.

What does it mean, I wondered, to do research on this notion of God?

"One way of thinking about exposition, our topic for the day, is to think about what
needs to be cut away: is it authority that needs to be cut away? Is there anything that
makes authority necessary in your exposition? Is there anything that makes persuasion
necessary in your exposition? An authority does not need to persuade – she points at
her authority and simply says, 'It is this – this is what it is.'"

"Yes, whereas if we decide to work together in a certain way, we may agree to use
certain terms, tools, languages and so forth to produce certain effects which allow us
to improve our practices, our way of being in the world, our way of co-operating with
others, etc. This, then, is a different logic to that of authority – it is the harnessing
of consensus and interaction to bring about improvement. Think about Dimitri's
sculptures, for example, how they bring into relief aspects of encounter such as
experience, expressivity – I would even say they embody a kind of ethics of encounter.
The sculptural forms move us, they bear the marks of Dimitri's quiet, serious
dedication to striving after the highest possible quality in his work. "I decided to have
a long, straight line so I would have this nice shape accentuated... I do this layer after
layer for hours or days until I get a form that is organic." The sculptures remind us
that what is often left out of research is ethics, and feelings. Matter speaks, and does so
movingly, in other words."

"We can cut away God, art, time, and link ourselves to a certain relationship – to
a rope, for example. There is time inside that relationship to the rope but not outside
the relationship. You can bring your local situation into connection with something
wider such that you identify precisely what is lacking from the social situation."

"The rope might have its own notion of time in relationship to, for example, a neck."

"And the neck, likewise, vice versa."

"Particularly in a condemned man waiting on the scaffold."

Gerard drummed his fingers on the table.

"God becomes my horizon," he said, citing Leibniz. "Having excluded God through
measurement (science), God now returns as the horizon condition that makes
measurement (and thus framing) possible – God and the horizon are the points that I
cannot measure or touch."

"And therefore measurement and touch become possible."

"And therefore we can measure and touch, yes. You see, you have to link research
to something else and that something else has to finish somewhere – and where it
finishes becomes the horizon."

"This is where we can learn from Nicholas of Cusa (thank you for mentioning Cusa,
by the way – the reference set me off in an interesting direction). In his 1450 dialogue
The Layman: About Mind, Cusa argued that mind is "that from which comes the
limit and measure of all things", and also that "conception in the human mind is
the assimilation of beings." This means that "assimilating" and "measuring" are, for
Cusa, the key metaphors we use to understand what we do in the act of knowing; we
measure the things we know and in turn are assimilated or likened to the objects of our knowledge. There is thus a “horizontal” notion of our concepts being images of things, and of the mind’s unity, combined with a “vertical” dimension since the act of knowing lets us liken ourselves to a divine Original. We have previously used terms such as strengthening and extending in regards practice, and the metaphors are not dissimilar to those being deployed here. But to return to your point about God as a horizon or stopping principle; for Cusa the things we deal with, in all their variety, are called “others” because each individual “other” is distinct from each other thing. The divine Not-other is simply not one of the things we are familiar with in this sense – it is entirely outside this category, hence a horizon, a horizon that makes the category possible. Put another way: “Our language and thought busy themselves in finding and making further distinctions and divisions between things and parts of things, between one condition and another, between one state of affairs and another. So we come to know that one thing is other than or separate from another thing or that we find it in another that is related to, yet different from, something else.”

What did we conclude? That it is advantageous a) to create variety and b) to stimulate people’s capacity to make judgments. This is why we decided to retire for further discussion to L’Ane Vert. By this time, the three of us had become many and the furniture in the restaurant had to be rearranged before we could settle down to study the menu.

In consequence of this, the case also of Buridan’s ass between two meadows, impelled equally towards both of them, is a fiction that cannot occur in the universe, in the order of Nature (…). It is true that, if the case were possible, one must say that the ass would starve himself to death: but fundamentally the question deals in the impossible, unless it be that God bring the thing about expressly: For the universe cannot be halved by a plane drawn through the middle of the ass, which is cut vertically through its length, so that all is equal and alike on both sides (…). There will therefore always be many things in the ass and outside the ass, although they be not apparent to us, which will determine him to go on one side rather than the other. And although man is free, and the ass is not, nevertheless for the same reason it must be true that in man likewise the case of a perfect equipoise between two courses is impossible. Furthermore it is true that an angel, or God certainly, could always account for the course man has adopted, by assigning a cause or a predisposing reason which has actually induced him to adopt it; yet this reason would often be complex and incomprehensible to ourselves, because the concatenation of causes linked together is very long.

G.W. Leibniz, *Theodicy.*
Brussels is coated in wet, treacherous snow – venturing out risks life and limb on pavements that hold no traction. We have bad colds, a touch of fever. We are shadows of our usual selves. Eyelids are heavy.

“How can I take in the aspect of reflection into the work itself?”

“Research is about making it possible to name precisely what had previously been general,” Gerard says. “The researcher seeks to eliminate from the research all the magical elements that one cannot control – e.g. ‘me’. There are certain situations where you have to step outside what is presented to you – for example, the statement ‘I am not fulfilled’. This presupposes that being fulfilled is possible. You are in the world, and by being in the world, you have two worlds – one is the world and the other is you. You are forced to be one thing as well as another – the one who finds something as well as the one who loses something.”

“Looking closely,” I venture, “is one of the core challenges – looking, that is, in a way that combines simultaneously the general and the specific – the type and its variety. Francis Ponge achieves this in prose poems such as “The Oyster” or “Water”. It is an attempt to distil the essential – to observe so closely that the details become expansive and resonant. It is possible to couple complexity to a sequence of apparent clarifications. As Thierry Berlemont commented yesterday, traces of intentions are revealed in the exposed foundations of ruins, which thereby become ‘materialised drawings’.”

“Self-reflection occurs in the context of operations on specific phenomena. But self-reflection in research is not sufficient – you have to be interested in what you exclude when you operate on something. Reflection is the creation of a shadow that makes us aware of the existence of the shadow.”

“I like that notion very much – ‘the creation of a shadow that makes us aware of the existence of the shadow’. So, to the question how might I bring reflection into the work itself? – our view clearly is that you are already doing this. And so the best advice is surely to ‘keep on keeping on’…”

Stockholm, February 2012.

Rolf Hughes

Endnotes
contributions
participants
Participants RTS 2011
QUESTIONING or how RTSessions are stimulating the act of wondering and doubting.

The following is about how I personally experience the Research Training Sessions. I prefer to call them the Reflection Time Sessions as:

- They give you a wonderful Time. TiME OU — TiME.
- They invite you to try to free Your mind.
- To have a meditative MOMENT
- To focus alertness
- To see the whole
- To step out for a moment out of the visual routine
- To respite — to retreat

The sessions are MOMENTS OF CONTEMPLATION
- Of uttermost concentration
- They are moments of refreshment
- They help you to clear up your mind
- To freeze frame and get an overview
- To obtain a state of mindlessness.
They invite you to **TAKE A BREAK**

After one or more sessions you might be **LOST**
It’s possible you get the feeling to be undirected
But be **open**
Don’t be **afraid** to be out of control
Take the benefit out of this state of desoration

**RTS**essions make you **Search**ing  
**W**andering
**D**oubting / **D**oubting
**H**- **He** - **Hesitating**
Comparing - relating - [isolating]
**Walking** ~~~dreaming acting
**Structuring**

**Framing** **Rastering**

**Composing** **Decomposing**
[ Isolating]

They want you to be **critical**
To be **sceptical**

When you experience the **wonderful blue hour**, as it is so beautifully called in French.
When you are awake when everybody is asleep zzz
When you find yourself in an in between zone

You might all of a sudden
see things clearer.
More **specific** and then again out of focus

You may recognise things
See things – by **reading** – going back and forward

While ~~~dreaming away.... **mapping things**
While **sketching**... entering the own **storyboard**

Having an eidetic recall.
**Reading** **Seeing** **Imagining**
All
- **P**
- **B**
- **I**
- **O**
- **I**
- **E**
- **S**
- **L**
- **S**
- **I**
- **I**
- **T**

Modelling - \((-c ; -v)\) entering - peeling off -

And then you start to build up a filter, determining the rules -

Restricting, limiting - Simplifying - Selecting - Clarifying -

You highlight the headlines of the story -
You chose/choose the essential element -
You take decisions -

In excluding and eliminating -

QUESTIONING - COMMUNICATING

Wondering -

Discovering -

Dealing with the uncertain -

FINALLY YOU MIGHT SIT DOWN AND MAKE THE MODEL FOR...

FINDING a KEY

Finding a key can give you a way out of uncertainty. Sharing, being together, e.e.x.x.c.h.a.a.n.g.e.g.i.n.n.g.g and finally making explicit.

Clarifying -
Refining - extending -

Going in -

Dialogue -

To get more -

Enrichment -

S-h-a-r-e something -

Dialoguing -

In conversation -

Needing someone to - as the listener makes the communication -

Learning the Act of listening -

The Action of trying to formulate -

You think while you speak -

Talking - formulating ideas -
REPRESENTING

How to make this personal knowledge public, comprehensible?

- Making the reflection tactile - tangible
- Simplified - understandable
- Explaining
- Explicitificating

Searching for a balance between personally knowledge and true knowledge, between passively gained knowledge and actively gained knowledge.

ACTING REACTING

- Evaluating / ....
- Rechecking

- Transforming
- Cycling
- Being Flexible
- Inter acting
- Learning from your own mental space
- Learning from Literature

We, as architects act to understand – so we don’t need to understand to act.
We learn to be able to act without being certain, with uncomplete information.

With trial and error.

Thanks to all tutors and participants of the RTSessions 2010-2011 and 2011-2012.
And to MeShell for the lay-out.

Gisèle Gantois
Architect MSc in Architecture
**Textiles Revised**

In the following text I discuss my research on the qualities of reframing textiles into a framework of architectural structural systems. The reframing of textiles into an architectural context evokes the potential for a new architectural coherence (Shön, 1984). A frame analysis of both the textile and the structural framework has been performed to create an awareness of the possibilities and values that should be given priority. First, the framework of textile production and processing is presented in a taxonomy to juxtapose the range and variety of textiles in general. Next, the taxonomy of structural shapes as described by Heino Engel in his book Structure Systems (Engel, 2007) is used as the architectural framework. By reframing or re-contextualizing the textile matrix into the architectural context, we create architectural-textile combinations.

**AIMS AND MOTIVATIONS**

For several years I worked as a designer for a firm that engineers lightweight and tensile structures. I specialized in designing and engineering foil and membrane structures in architectural applications.

In the engineering phase, the use of textiles in lightweight structures necessitates the efficient use of materials and the optimization of form to achieve the desired structural behavior. Double curved surfaces are designed with the aid of form optimization and form-finding software. By defining boundary points or lines in a digital environment, the designer creates a geometry in which the form can be calculated. The surface is then generated in between these points and lines by the form-finding program and further processed by patterning programs into building components.

During the design phase, form and force optimization of structural textile geometries are dominant elements. The designs are mainly constructed with the use of minimal surfaces and form-active shapes. This given limits these textile geometries to being materialized in tensioned and pneumatically pressurized structures. To extend the possibilities of textile design, I started developing a broader view of textile production and processing in architecture.

Since textile is material independent, textile design is open for innovation and materialization in a wider range of materials and coherent techniques. By scaling up micro techniques as used in clothing and textile design to a scale suitable for architectural use, specific textile qualities are innovated into architectural variants. By stretching the textile architectural vocabulary, surface patterning as used in membrane engineering is complemented with processes like weaving and pleating. The materialization, on the other hand, can range from wood to metals and synthetic polymers.
RESEARCH APPROACH

This study concerns semi-artistic research by design, driven by an engineering interest to support artistic structural design. “Semi-artistic” is used because construction engineering is subject to structural border conditions that necessitate a different artistic coherence compared to the classical conception of art. The study focuses on tools and products, rather than on design theories, to educate artists, architects and students. The description of design routines is supposed to make tacit knowledge become more explicit (Östman, 2006). Through the introduction of tools in the form of iterative procedures, formalized methods are evolved.

The ‘intelligent’ character of architectural textile engineering makes some of its techniques relatively hard to access by designers. In the first place, the designers must have high levels of knowledge and extensive experience to design such systems. This unconventional approach to designing is only taught in a few places. This is why only a small group of (mostly self-educated) specialists are able to design, engineer and process these structures. In the second place, the complex geometries of these systems require large quantities of information to be described. The description of a cube, for example, only requires eight points. The description of a double curved surface, by contrast, requires multiple quantities of guiding elements.

Developments in custom made computer scripts and a limited amount of commercial software have made the description and visualization of textile systems more accessible. Geometrically, great progress has been made in the design and manipulation of textiles in the architectural context. In materialization, more research is recommended. Most of the digital computation relating to textile geometry is independent of material and structure. Material feedback usually takes place later on in the designing process. Most geometrical digital models consist of homogenous, endlessly bendable parts (Cabrinha, 2008). Bridging the gap between arts and engineering requires the utilization of materials, which in turn requires the implementation of their geometrical parameters within the software. Material restrictions such as bending and torsion can have a great influence on the structure’s geometry. Material strength, on the other hand, can have a great influence on the structure’s dimensions.

Since the intelligent character of textile systems relates both to geometrical and to structural and material aspects, a bottom-up approach is favored in designing these projects. The introduction of structural concepts and material aspects in an early stage of the design process results in a more coherent outcome. A reframing strategy is used to describe this coherence. In this strategy, textile qualities of geometries are combined with structural systems and the main properties of the materials used. Through the reframing of the architectural geometry within a textile framework, another meaning or sense is assigned, the matter is viewed within a different context. With the viewer freed from former prejudices, a different point of view and different rules apply. With this reframing approach, original possibilities occur (Schön, 1984).

FRAME ANALYSIS

In this research project, frame analysis is used to create awareness of the tacit frameworks used in the reframing strategy. With the frame awareness, possible dilemmas in the reframing process are avoided to the utmost extent (Schön, 1984). As a result of the focusing on frame qualities in relation to the scope of the research topic, certain benefits surface within the framework above others. These conclusions favor decisions in relation to alternatives within the solution space of the applied frames. With a stable reframing strategy, subjective observations are embedded in a solid theoretical background, which can result in a more objective procedure (Dorst, Dijkhuis, 1995). To situate the applied frames, classical materials science is taken as a starting point, on the basis of which three supertypes can be distinguished:

- Material Production
- Material Processing
- Material Application
With textile being material independent, the framework for material production and processing is multi-interpretable. In the case of clothing, the thread is produced, for example, from cotton, the textile is made by weaving the threads and the clothing is made from the textile. One can say that thread or wire is the product, and the use of crafts like weaving or knitting is the material processing. In this grouping scheme, techniques like folding, patterning and ruffling are either ignored or else are assigned to a different group.

In this research project, textile production is understood as the group of tectonics by means of with which textiles are produced. Subtypes like weaving and knitting belong to this group.

Material processing is understood as the framework of techniques used to process the textile product into a Textile Application. Subtypes like pattermaking, pleating and folding belong to this group.

All the techniques used within the Textile Production and the Textile Processing groups are obtained with a description of their geometrical constraints. These constraints define the solution space within which the different techniques can be used.

Since the textile framework contains a number of different qualities, many different items within the framework can form a basis for the reframing strategy. The geometry of techniques, ways of fabrication and structural behavior can for instance be used as a technique to be implemented into the architectural framework. For the purpose of constructing and materializing architectural textile geometries, the framework is narrowed down by limiting its input. Structural systems, such as those used in the book Structure Systems by Heino Engel, are used as the third group, i.e. Material Application.

The book Structure Systems describes six systems. Only four of these systems are used in this research project. The four systems contain Form-Active, Surface-Active, Section-Active and Vector-Active structures. In the context of this paper, no further characteristics or qualities of these systems will be mentioned.

EMPIRICAL METHOD
To unlock the qualities of a transdisciplinary research project, physical reflection must be generated within the project. Physical reflection is generated by case scenarios in three phases. The first phase involves a project approached “from within”, which is intended to support a project in the second phase “from outside” (Dunin-Woyseth, Nilsson, 2007).

The first phase consists of case scenarios designed and manufactured by the researcher. These projects are used to understand the crafts, techniques and materials applied to the design. The projects have a relatively small scale and take a bottom-up approach. Starting with a given material, technique or tectonic, together with a structural system, the design is made to support reflection-in-action (Schön, 1984)

The second phase is implemented in an educational context. By means of workshops, a broader view of a specific reframing combination is generated.

Techniques derived from the first two phases are applied on a larger scale within the context of a project in the third phase. With the first two phases completed, a better understanding of the language of the disciplines involved is generated in this third phase.

Techniques derived from the first two phases are applied on a larger scale within the context of a project in the third phase, in which a better understanding of the language of the disciplines involved is generated (Dunin-Woyseth, Nielsen, eds., 2004).

References
É. Östnart, L. (2006) Design theory is a philosophical discipline – Reframing the epistemological issues in design theory. Bremen, EAD 06
Cabrinha M. (2008) Gridshell Tectonics, ACADIA 08
Erasmus IP 2011, Arnay, Reframing Combination: Bi-Axial Weaving and Surface Active Structures
Elective Textiles, Ghent, Reframing Combination: Tri-Axial Patterning and Form Active Structures
Invisible City, Schiedam, Ivo Vrouwe en Michiel Jansen, Reframing Combination: Tri-Axial Weaving and Surface Active Structures
Stageability 4D, Rotterdam, Ivo Vrouwe en Michiel Jansen, Reframing Combination: Radial Pleating and Surface Active Structures
Pergola, Amsterdam, Arjan Karsen, Mark Feijen en Ivo Vrouwe, Reframing Combination, Amorphous Volumetric Patterning and Surface Active Structures
Het Baken, Emmeloord, Maarten de Reus, Mark Feijen en Ivo Vrouwe, Reframing Combination, Bi-Axial Volumetric Patterning and Surface Active Structures
Large, detached dwellings in Flanders: A testing ground for practice-based research

This contribution discusses the role of design based research in the interdisciplinary project ‘Large Underused Dwellings in Flanders – Development of architectural and users strategies in view of demographic trends and ecological constraints’ which is organised at the Departments ASRO (OSA Research Group) and ISEG, KU Leuven, in cooperation with the Department of Architecture, Research Group ArcK, PHL, and is funded by FWO Flanders. The project is executed under the supervision of Prof. Hilde Heynen (KUL-ASRO), Prof. Koenraad Van Cleempoel (PHL-Architecture), Prof. Dominique Vanneste (KUL-ISEG) and Dr. Michael Ryckewaert (KUL-ASRO). 1

Housing is a subject that interests nearly everybody, and every dweller is a ‘hands-on’ expert in the field – a field in which great numbers of many different kinds of skilled workers and professionals are engaged.

In his theoretical book ‘The Architecture of the City’, 2 the Italian architect Aldo Rossi pointed out that the character of housing evolves slowly over time under the influence of dwellers and professionals. Thus, housing issues are studied from a number of different academic points of view. For example, for every local culture a complex history can be written on how the local housing has developed into what it is today, to what extent modernity has influenced traditional ways to build and vice versa, and which political influences have determined the typological preferences. This article aims to explain the development of a research methodology for investigating a specific segment of a regional housing stock, which adds and synthesises new insights next to existing disciplinary perspectives, by incorporating methods derived from architectural practice.

This approach is directed towards a concrete, spatial housing typology. If we have to portray an exemplary housing type which is tied to Flemish spatial planning and lifestyle, the single-family dwelling on a spacious lot, preferably detached, would fit the description (figure 1). Since the end of the Second World War, the political and cultural establishment have stimulated the individual household to acquire land and to build a home, and as a result this housing type has proliferated across the entire Flemish region. 3 Currently, Flanders faces the challenges of an ageing population, like most European regions do: in 2050, one-third of its inhabitants is expected to be older than 65. At present, many still see the detached house as the best – or only – long term dwelling solution, but contemporary demographical, socio-economic and spatial developments are forcing many to choose for smaller and centrally located housing types. Theoretically, the demand for housing for the ‘nuclear family’ should be decreasing.

Figure 1: The commonly aspired housing condition, which can be found all across the Flemish region: a large detached dwelling, hidden from sight in a green garden, in a quiet semi-rural or semi- natural environment.
In order to focus on the potential of the existing housing stock in relation to these new demands and challenges, a research project has been established in the KU Leuven Departments of Architecture and Geography in collaboration with the PHL department of Architecture to address the issue of ‘overhoused’ households in large dwellings in Flanders. The project combines a number of different disciplinary approaches to study the topic from different perspectives. On the basis of the geographical interpretation of statistical data, the ‘underused regions’ are first identified. This informs the researchers as to where to look for potential respondents for profound sociological research and architectural analysis of the dwellings. Furthermore, the resulting analysis is followed by the definition and evaluation of potential architectural strategies to be used in search for an answer to the question as to what can be done with this large amount of detached houses (in remote areas) after the demand for this type of housing drops.

We argue that, due to the complex nature of the project, the set of methods should be expanded with practice-based architectural research. Geographical, sociological and demographical data provide valuable information and help in narrowing down the complex research question of this project into manageable parts. But they all lack an architectural dimension, which is, nonetheless, a vital aspect in this project. Over the course of the research, we propose architectural transformations directly related to the dwelling environment of interviewed respondents, with the goal to obtain deeper understanding of their appreciation for the house, the plot, and the neighbourhood. We also aim to inquire into which aspects of the built environment could be altered, and which elements are resilient and unchangeable.

Still, implementing design practice in the research arena is not self-evident as a certain rigor is expected. Inevitably, this also raises the question of the relationship between scientific activity and design activity. There is a tradition of design being informed by science, but examples of science being informed by design are less easy to find; possibly, this has to do with the way scientific findings are disseminated and evaluated. Although researchers perform creative processes during their investigation which play a crucial role in generating and evaluating findings - for example to devise a research method or a laboratory setup - scientific publications do not specify these creative processes as argued by Ranulph Glanville.5

In this project, we acknowledge the difference between scientific and designerly approaches, but if we accept the gap in between, both strands of thinking can inform one another, and both a scientific and a design contribution can contribute in their own right. The Research Training Sessions offered a number of productive concepts for the purpose of bridging the gap between the design- and the research components. These concepts helped to refine the research methodology and to claim a critical position next to those of colleagues on the same project, who are working on the basis of a different disciplinary outlook. The RTS concepts refer in the first place to the delimitation of disciplinary boundaries and the crossing of these limits, secondly to the interaction of design creativity with scientific methodology, and thirdly to the involvement of objects and artefacts in research practice.

Primarily, Halina Dunin-Woyseth and Fredrik Nilsson address the interaction between professionals and academics in their explanation of transdisciplinary research.6 It is in this mode of inquiry that a researcher can look for interaction with professionals in order to deal with a complex problem that cannot be framed within a single disciplinary perspective. By proposing design alternatives to adapt the dwelling environment of interviewed respondents, the research project incorporates architectural contributions that would normally deal with the problem within the context of a professional rather than an academic environment. Over time, the whole of professional architectural developments slowly influences the character of the housing stock together with the evolution of the local way of life. In contrast, in this project we employ design strategies and link them with interview techniques with a finality to discover which are the factors that stimulate or hamper the evolution of the housing stock in line with demographic developments.

Secondly, Chris Rust argues that design activity and design products can contribute to science. This does not imply that design becomes a field of science in itself, but rather that design methods can be used to investigate other fields, where they can contribute to the formulation of innovative angles and methods for the purpose of overcoming existing barriers.7 This is an important argument for the involvement of design, as the research field is already divided up along the boundaries of the different disciplines. Looking at our problem from the integrative perspective that design can offer, this research effort aims to unveil practical knowledge about dealing with the residential environment that should be of interest to both professionals and academics.

Thirdly, objects can take on many different roles in a research setting. Chris Rust and Nicola Wood address the question of how the knowledge that lies implicit within an object can be made explicit.8 Drawings and models are objects that propel our research. Usually, architects base themselves on inspiration and experience, which can be grouped under the idea of ‘tacit knowledge’, as the philosopher Michael Polanyi explains;9 practice-based research is regularly defined as a process which makes this tacit design knowledge explicit.10 In this project, we rather chose to use these imaginative objects as a means to gather data about the tangible, built environment (figure 2).

In this ongoing project, architectural design has found a place next to geographical and sociological disciplinary perspectives, and takes on the task of generating and synthesising various forms of knowledge. While architectural design is rather particular than generic, this characteristic is fully acknowledged, and design is used to closely relate diverse, interdisciplinary perspectives to concrete, everyday spatial situations and how stakeholders relate to these situations. Besides aiming for the development of knowledge regarding the problem at hand, the project aspires to testing a methodology that is well founded on and related to what architects do in practice.

Marijn van De Weijer
With warm thanks to the organisation, tutors and participants of the RTS sessions 2010-2011, in gratitude of having had the opportunity to participate.
All illustrations by the author. Contact: Marijn.vandeWeijer@asro.kuleuven.be.

Endnotes
1 The author would like to thank Koenraad Van Cleempoel for his comments on earlier versions of this text.
10 For example in the approach of the doctoral programme at the RMIT, Melbourne: Peter Downton (2003), Design Research, Melbourne: RMIT University Press.

Figure 2: Design sketches inquiring into possible transformations of a detached dwelling. Such architectural ‘explorations’ are the basis for collecting data about the potential to transform existing dwellings, and how current inhabitants evaluate this potential.
Storytelling

I find myself in a vacuum – a space entirely devoid of matter. Not really devoid of matter, rather many matters flying slowly around me.

Key words - storytelling, writing architecture, fiction, intuition.

My intention is to examine whether storytelling can help bring me into a certain space, whether the process of writing can help me arrive at an alternative architecture. With the focus on the process, I note and examine everything that happens along the road, with storytelling as my point of departure. Stories evoke strong emotions, they spark inspiration and imagination, and they give us room to listen to our intuition.

I have experienced that fictional writing, in relation to my practice, has led me to another understanding, to the desired result – that is, to put my intuition into print, which was a part of the driving force. I have experienced that the story, as one of the ‘legs’ supporting my project, has led the way to a more personal, a more intimate space, an architecture ‘which is not that of settlements, cities and buildings made of stones, but of movements, displacements and flows // It is an architecture which speaks about space not as being contained by walls but as made of routes, paths and relationships’.1
In time to come - Project # 1
In an architect's notebook we read how a vague character\(^1\) starts calling her architect to come to her. After I wrote this part, it occurred to me that the notebook form helped me to achieve a greater distance from the characters and that these characters were starting to live their own lives.

[sketches from my notebook – 18-05-2010]

In Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking-Glass", he writes:

'I'll tell you all my ideas about Looking-glass House. First, there's the room you can see through the glass [...] that's just the same as our drawing room, only the things go the other way. I can see all of it when I get upon a chair [...] all but the bit behind the fireplace. Oh! I do so wish I could see that bit! I want so much to know whether they've a fire in the winter; you never can tell, you know, unless our fire smokes, and then smoke comes up in that room too [...] but that may be only pretence, just to make it look as if they had a fire. Well, then, the books are something like our books, only the words go the wrong way; I know that, because I've held up one of our books to the glass, and then they hold up one in the other room.'

Lewis Carroll, (1865) 'Through the Looking-Glass'

[The returning dream-scenario 1]

This is a returning dream that I had for nearly half a year recently. I didn't share it with others, just kept it to myself. Because each time I returned to this dream I felt increasingly familiar with it, because each time I could hear or sense something new. The dream is situated in my bedroom and the scenario is as follows: I 'wake up' from the knock-knock sound. It seems to be coming from inside a wall. As I watch the walls with contemplation, slowly the environment transforms. I see figures taking shape, as through the mist in the bathroom mirror, and then an aviary appears. It is dusty, but my allergy keeps calm. The depth is not more than two or three meters, but the perspective of the paintings makes it infinite and naive: the water, the rocks, sun-reflection, water rings, the still waves, and in the water we find: pike-perch, roach,
Could this be beginning of something new?

[question to be answered]

Who is she? What does she want? What does this dream mean? When will it stop?

[architecture to be drawn]

Client The pounding heart The situation The aviary Sweden California.

[at (this) last]

Could this be beginning of something new?

I hear her breathing through the thin wall
the pounding of her heart shivers it
and her face pushes towards it
so is her hand

quiet
still
except for the steam of her breath
on the now transparent wall
am I dreaming

i am here
it echoed
her voice is in my thoughts

i find myself pushing my face onto hers
my hand on hers
silenced
still

listening responsive
i also hear
a painted sea where dead birds fly above
a painted forest where dead birds build their home

now i remember
my thoughts got interrupted by my consciousness
i read it somewhere
there's something feminine about being dead

and then she mentioned:
Kathryn McGuire
May McCoy
Jean Harlow

she said she saw their faces in parrots and other exotic kinds
and she said the aviary made her cry because they were all begging
look at me! listen to my song!

here i am
what can i do for you
the owner of the pounding heart is no longer here.
Vision - In time to come
I imagine a place perhaps an exhibition based on this story—in time to come. An observer might experience through different media the meeting between the architect and her clients their common story together. It's not just that I also see the observer as another character but I don't know how I see them together in an intimate space recount past occurrences. I see part of the story arranged in sections dream frequencies elements each layer exposed to the observer I don't see how I arrive from here to there.

There are those before me who have examined the interrelationship between writing and architecture. One in particular I feel grateful to is Katja Grillner, who has been introducing this tool on a more conscious level, and I have participated in several of her workshops at KTH. I have also been introduced to other architects and lay people concerning this subject. These contacts stirred up an interest to investigate further whether the structure of the story—the printed body of the text—can say anything else about the architecture. Jane Rendell explained in Site-Writing The Architecture of Art Criticism: “Fewer have actively exploited its textual and material possibilities, the patterning of words on a page, the design of a page itself—its edges, boundaries, thresholds, surfaces, the relation of one page to another.” The architects of a young London-based architecture office, Studio Weave, are exploring in their practice how storytelling can create a sense of a place and how to involve the people surrounding the project. In their book The Sorting Castle, the words on the printed paper take different shapes in order to suit the narrative.

A previous story - Project #2
I mentioned that I found myself in a vacuum. I think this is due to the fact that I can't see the continuation, the gap between now and the Vision—in time to come—that I don't have control. And then Nina Holzer said it like this: “As my own writing process continued, I began to trust that hidden field of knowledge. I knew I did not have to be in charge of it. In fact, the less I was in charge of it, the more miraculous it came.” OK, Nina, this was what made me come up with project #2, it's where it all started. In project #2 I allowed myself, solely, to drive the process through my gut feelings. I remember, at that time, trying to get hold of this fugitive project, but I never could. As time passed by, it became clear to me that this was the magic of it.

Trust the flow, trust the formlessness. The creative starting point is formlessness.

Is the vision an attempt to get a hold of the form?

What separates us from the characters about whom we write is not knowledge, either objective or subjective, but our experience of time in the story we are telling. This separation allows us, the storytellers, the power of knowing the whole. Yet, equally, this separation renders us powerless: we cannot control our characters after the narration has begun. We are obliged to follow them, and this following is through and across the time, which they are living and which we oversee.

The time, and therefore the story, belongs to them. Yet the meaning of the story, what makes it worthy of being told, is what we can see and what inspires us because we are beyond its time.

Written by John Berger (1984) “And our faces, my heart, brief as photos”

In project #2, I let myself, as a starting point get inspired by Lewis Carroll's books "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the looking glass". At the core stands one sentence out of which the project grew: “In my dream, my body longed to flow the other way.” The key words for the project are just that: longing, body, reversed, inside out and the positive and negative.

I spun inventions about an imaginary client who had grown as a fiction in my head the way a character develops in the writing of a fiction novel. Instead of using my own voice, I used a letter “written by my client” to tell how they live in the house. As the process continued, I began to trust that hidden field of knowledge. I knew I did not have to be in charge of it. In fact, the less I was in charge of it, the more miraculous it came. OK, Nina, this was what made me come up with project #2, it’s where it all started. In project #2 I allowed myself, solely, to drive the process through my gut feelings. I remember, at that time, trying to get hold of this fugitive project, but I never could. As time passed by, it became clear to me that this was the magic of it.

Trust the flow, trust the formlessness. The creative starting point is formlessness.

Is the vision an attempt to get a hold of the form?
The kitchen is a wonderful place in the morning. The sun shines through the walls and paints shadows on the rose-garden. Many of the walls in the house can get quite dark at night, but they are lit up during the day. I like to take my morning tea in the outer room on the East side of the house. This is a room with soft carpets and I can lean comfortably against the insulation.

My daughter loves to move around and explore the house. Sometimes she is gone for hours exploring new places in the house. Her favourite places are those small spaces inside and under the window-sill or in between the wooden truss. She also loves her bedroom, which consists of one big bed that she can only reach by climbing up a ladder. In the west wall, she often sits on a big sill. On the walls, Nina hung up wallpaper portraying a young girl who jumps into an ocean of down. The entire room is just so soft! She also likes to feel the walls. Some walls consist of fabric others have holes or entrances in them that are not obvious at first sight.

My daughter and I often spend time in the library. This room reaches from the ground floor all the way up to the roof and consists of a combination of stairs and bookshelves. We often sit on the stairs and read together. It’s a place where time stands still.

The nature of my practice is the writing, the documentation of the dialogs, the thoughts and the memories, however fictional. Bending the reality to the point where it approaches to the space I see. 'She worked with the text the way an architect would, by building the text, or writing it into architecture'

My point of departure is the novel, out of which the images grow. Images that may be independent of the story… environments living their own lives – and so I start connecting the images to one another, images so alive, vivid, it feels real. From the images, the characters grow. New stories are written. New architecture is created?

---

**Endnotes**

2 This vague character grew in my mind as I read the novel ‘Blonde’ by Joyce Carol Oates (2000). “Blonde is a bestselling historical novel by Joyce Carol Oates that chronicles the inner life of Marilyn Monroe, though Oates insists that the novel is a work of fiction and that it should not be regarded as a biography.” : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blonde_(novel)
3 Professor Katja Grilner, the Vice-Dean of the School of Architecture and the Built Environment and head of Critical Studies in Architecture at KTH (Stockholm). A great inspiration is her dissertation ‘Ramble, linger and gaze - Dialogues from the landscape garden’ (KTH, 2000).
4 I was participating in several courses at KTH together with the research group FATALE (www.fatale.nu), a collaborative platform for research by architecture and design. The significant course for me was the ‘Essay course’. We worked with writing projects: creative writing with a focus on architectural experiences and interpretation and, in an extended sense, to create new architectures.
5 In Particular, I think about Malin Zimm (Co-teacher of the ‘Essay course’ at KTH) with her dissertations ‘Losing the Plot - Architecture and Narrativity in Fin de Siècle Media Cultures (KTH/AxlBooks, Stockholm 2005). Some of the other texts we got introduced to were by Jennifer Bloomer, Sandra Harding, Penelope Haralambidou, Elizabeth Kamard Miminch, Mona Livholtz and Rolf Hughes
6 Professor Jane Rendell, teaching at The Bartlett School of Architecture. Several of her texts have inspired me to look more into the subject of writing.
8 See under http://www.studioweave.com/ Education / The sorting castle / Right column. (accessed Dec., 2011)
** A Walk between Heaven and Earth; A Personal Journal on Writing – search.barnesandnoble.com/...Walk-between-Hea... – Vertaal deze pagina
Results 1 - 25 of 31 – A Walk between Heaven and Earth; A Personal Journal on Writing and the Creative Process by Burghild Nina Holzer, B. Nina Holzer.
10 Here I refer to my diploma project: “A house for a client”, KTH (2008). I received honors for this project and was asked to present it several times to the following years of graduating students while they were doing their diploma projects. In fact, the idea of doing a research project grew out of my curiosity to find out more about the process I had passed through, and why it had led to that specific result.
See more at http://www.ninataghavi.com
“Best student in 2008 in the category Architecture and Built Environment at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm, 05/2008 ‘Bosch’ Scholarship for best diploma project - Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm, 06/2008”
Spatial Snapshot

My research project deals with the questions deriving from the transformation of buildings and the metamorphosis of the space through the new housing functions. I use the human senses to analyze the spatial qualities and meanings of these spaces, mapping my design research using different tools such as illumination and interviewing different people who act as narrators, zooming in the context and location of the building, etc.

In order to understand and find my personal connections with the architecture of the building, my strategy as an interior architect is to prepare site-specific art projects within the abandoned buildings, using the spaces they contain as a lab. The exhibitions I create are my spatial snapshots of the present moment, focused on awakening spatial emotions and seeking different values. In art and science creativity is the intersection and I am creating a different new atmosphere.

• exhibition

methods

In my research by practice, I made a case study of the Pärnu Water Mud Baths that were built in 1927 in Neo-Classicist style and are known as an architectural landmark of the Pärnu summer resort in western Estonia. Throughout the history of the resort, the building has had different users, but they have always been privileged ones – from local vacationers to German battlefront soldiers and Soviet workers. Nowadays, the building is important for people who have never been behind the façade.

The message from Kazuyo Sejima, the curator of the 12th Venice Architecture Biennale, was simple: the idea is to help people relate to architecture, to help architecture relate to people and to help people relate to themselves.

In order to understand the architecture and atmosphere of the original building and to find the interconnection between the new users and the old house, I prepared an exhibition called Spatial Snapshot [team: Urmo Vaikla – video, Ingel Vaikla – photography] in the abandoned building as a creative part of the research. The time and space of the exhibition were relevant, as an architectural conference was taking place at the same time in Pärnu and the total renovation works were scheduled to begin very soon in 2012.

1 Site-specific art is intended to become part of its locale, restructuring the viewer’s conceptual and perceptual experience of that locale through the artist’s intervention. Richard Serra’s famous dictum “to remove the work is to destroy the work” is being challenged by new models of site specificity, and changes in institutional and market forces.

2 The town architect Olev Siinmaa’s 130th Jubilee Conference / November 11-12, 2011 in Pärnu, Estonia.
In the exhibition I opened up the background of the historical building with the help of people who talked about their memories, experiences and expectations in relation to the Water Mud Baths. I collected the interviews from different people: local citizens, heritage protection authorities, architects, future developers, previous users, etc. Despite the building's context or urban setting, which has continued to change throughout the existence of the Neo-Classicist structure, the façade of the building has remained basically the same and has continued to draw people, obliging them to conduct themselves nobly and to pose for their family photos in front of it – many local family photo albums witness to this fact. *Noblesse oblige!* But is this behavioral pattern still in operation today?

In the exhibition I focused on the confrontation: the good old times versus the current state of abandonment, while presenting via projector a sweet selection of photos / postcards / texts from people taken at the façade of the Water Mud Baths from the first part of the last century and miserable snapshots of the present situation of the building and offseason resort. Zooming in on the people from the context [parallel with M. Antonioni, *Blow-Up*, 1966] – to make the space and time come alive.

The interviewees are different people – the narrators – who transform the space and try to express something via and by means of space. The process of space transformation is somehow similar to the process of filmmaking. It is a joint, collective activity where the narrator’s function is distributed among the participants. The exhibition provides an opportunity to observe the old building from a whole collection of different points of view, to explore different experiences of space within the old building, and to interpret these observations and experiences while participating in the exhibition.

Now the reconstruction and extension plans are ready – which should contain and express the people's needs and the local possibilities.

What knowledge have I gained through the exhibition process?

The exhibition was a spatial snapshot at the present moment, which is focused on awakening spatial emotions and seeking values. But at the same time it is also a diachronic cross-section not only in space but in time.

The exhibition took place in a special SPACE where I intended to open up conceptual constructions of the process. Background knowledge is as important as sound or smell in the exhibition. Generating emotions and giving knowledge to the public was important for me as a researcher. And I observed how people cared about the building and acted as participants in the exhibition: some were prepared to make a financial donation to prevent the abandonment of the building, others have attended to the fox families living under the house, etc.

As a result, I got the opportunity to test and also to draw some pragmatic conclusions:
The exhibition provided me with experience in lighting. I illuminated only the historically valuable details of the interior, which created a spectacular atmosphere inside the building. The sensitive touch of light can be enough to vitalize the environment and induce a certain kind of communication between the old building and the contemporary users. I followed the daylight with all its shadows and developed a deep feeling for the old details of the building [embodied in friable plaster, which cannot be replaced].

I understood that the acoustics of the space inside the building could be problematic in the future use of the contemporary spa – some interior materials will have to be replaced for the purpose of dampening the echo.

The vitalization of the building as an event or process for exhibition was essential for the guests and locals when people had the opportunity to ask and express their opinions – to communicate with the building / space and with each other. Being on the spot for 3½ days myself, I found the exhibition to be like a dress rehearsal where I had the opportunity to act and to get the reactions of and reflections from the future users – design cognition – I realized the difficulty of posing questions and giving the answers at the exhibition itself, but I was able to perceive and understand the narrative:


* patterns

Rapid developments in technology lead to social changes. Contemporary life is affected by communications – electronic media, highways – everything that leads to mobility changes the way of life. The border between periphery and center becomes fuzzy. People become the consumers of time and space. Unfortunately, everything that cannot be sold will vanish, including social relations. In the existing community, people with different cultural, social and economic capital replace the old users of buildings. Social relations disappear, services are carried out by machines rather than by people, and people searching for identity will find it only in trademarks. The function of buildings is changing – often as a result of gentrification¹ – old factories, churches and manor houses are converted into attractive theatres, restaurants, gym halls, offices and apartments and vice versa. The reasons for the death of old uses are pragmatic: Industry has disappeared from city centers, congregations are on the wane, country squires belong to history, and their manor houses are not functional as homes for contemporary families. There is a replacement of the neighborhood’s residents. Who are the new users? The new inhabitants are searching for a new self-image: the fast life, and habits that create new consumption patterns. The values of this new environment are created by the media and by urban development. This will

1 Gentrification occurs when there is a substantial replacement of a neighborhood’s residents with newcomers who are of higher income and who, having acquired the homes cheaply, renovate them and upgrade the neighborhood (Holcomb and Beauregard 1981).
be the chiasma of relational aesthetics and environmental design in the context of space and time. Time contains memory, memory [which is personal] conserves values.

The building is alive when it is used; abandoned places are dead. Most of the buildings have been reconstructed in their lifetime because of functional need or new aesthetic principles, or else partly demolished for pragmatic reasons. Values change and develop in space and time. The transformation of space reflects values, whether preserved or lost in the course of time.

communication

The demographic situation, the reorganization of the economy, the privatization of real estate and the rapid developments in technology have changed the people’s lifestyle during the past 20 years of independence in Estonia – a small national state in the European border area. Today in the post-industrial world and in post-soviet Estonia, historical buildings are being repurposed to achieve the wellbeing of contemporary users. This process is also part of my practice as an interior architect: repurposing a factory into attractive apartments, barn houses into summer houses, a beach house into studio apartments, an electric power station into a culture center, a weigh house into an office, water mud baths into a spa hotel, etc.

Consequently, my research generates several key research questions:

• why is the new function found for the building?
• who are the new users of the old building?
• how do the new users come to sense and understand the old building?
• which values are lost and which found in the repurposing process?
• what are the alternatives if a new function is not found?

My aim, in this research project, is to analyze the problem: does the transformation of space (the repurposing of a building), which is an inevitable process, increase or decrease cultural values, even though the notion of value changes over time.

Tüüne-Kristin Vaikla

5 Soosaare Farm, Köpu Peninsula, Hiiumaa (island) Estonia [built at the end of 19th c].
6 Pirita Beech House, Merivälja tee 5, Tallinn, Estonia [built 1980].
7 Põhja pst 27a, Tallinn, Estonia [built 1934, architectural heritage] / Center of Architecture and design / competition of interior architecture.
8 Weigh station and brigade leader’s house in Ranna Collective Farm, Tammi tee 42, Harku, Estonia.
9 Pärnu Water Mudbaths, Ranna pst 1, Pärnu, Estonia [built 1927, architectural heritage].
Research by design

Nowadays a lot of attention is being given to design research. ‘Research about design’ focuses on the methodological aspects and implications in terms of teaching and learning the professionalism of a designer. ‘Research for design’ is understood to be research that is carried out during the overall design process. However, the present research project focuses on ‘Research through (or by) design’, which evaluates the argument ‘that designing is a way of researching, that it is a way of producing knowledge’.1 But how can knowledge be produced by designing? Several authors perceive great potentials for design as ‘Mode 2 knowledge production’, which is characterized by transdisciplinarity and by the starting up of a project with a dialogue among a large number of stakeholders, with all their different perspectives.2

Urban design is investigative and includes amongst other things the acquisition and use of local social knowledge by communication and participation. Urban design is also a tool for negotiation towards a workable synthesis of conflicting realities.3 Research by design can contribute to urban design in various ways. It enables the urban designer to explore opportunities, to envision ideas and concepts, to start up mediation and negotiation among the stakeholders involved, and to verify scenarios for a given area. Various tools and approaches to research by design or design as a knowledge producer can be found in different theories of urbanism. The exploration of the site through mapping, for example, does not simply help to present knowledge of a certain area, but also represents a way to create and discuss knowledge.4 Drawing is thinking, and representation is a way of understanding, reading, and decoding a site for envisioning a future.5 The creation of knowledge could also be done through constructing a collection of hypotheses – or ‘scenarios’ – for the future.6 In ‘Public Places, Urban Spaces’, Matthew Carmona gives an overview of participatory approaches to involving communities more extensively in the design process and to starting a process of negotiation. Design workshops, urban design studios, interviews, audits, mock-ups, visual simulations, and design competitions are only a few of them.7

1 Peter DOWNTON, Design Research (Melbourne: University press, 2003)
Aim of the research project

This research project is an attempt to find out more about the potentialities and limitations of research by design when it is applied in urban design workshops. For this purpose, two modes of research are involved: action research, in combination with desktop research.

Action research
Action research focuses on organizing design workshops that make use of research by design. These workshops are characterized by their complex and challenging user dynamics. The workshops are organized in a different manner each time, thus providing for a way to test and amend different methodologies of research by design. Within the present research project, two groups of cases can be distinguished. The first group represents cases in which I am actively involved and for which workshops are organized. These include the following cases: the Landscape Urbanism Workshops ‘Mark(e) the urban fringe forest’, ‘Thought for food’ and ‘Hoog Kortrijk’. The second group includes cases in which practices of research by design in Flanders are observed. These cases include the ‘Lelijke plekjes, mooie trekjes’ project, and two projects which received a ‘Concept Grant’ from the Flemish government: the ‘Uco site’ in Ghent and the ‘Tragel site’ in Aalst. These cases are mainly design projects within the ‘problem formulation’ and ‘project definition’ phase of research by design. These projects contribute, for example, to envisioning ideas, to offering the opportunity for the stakeholders to become involved, and to broadening the support for future interventions through co-production or otherwise.

Research by design is used in these workshops as a participative tool, and also as a tool for vision formulation, strategy development and concept development for the purpose of achieving spatial quality. The analysis of the research is focused on the methodologies that were used throughout the design process: Who needs to be involved at what time? What needs to happen when? When and how should the design be presented to whom? What type of analysis and data are brought into the design process and at what time? To what extent are stakeholders made part of the design process? How is the design organized in time?

Desktop research
To be able to frame these different cases within a wider context, a literature study needs to be done to further define ‘research by design’, and to have a look at ‘participatory design practices’ that have occurred in the past (such as ‘UDAT’ urban design in action, co-design and co-creation) and at urban design practices in Flanders.

Lelijke plekjes, Mooie trekjes
This project was launched at the end of April 2010 by the Intermunicipal organization Leiedal, together with eleven municipalities of the Kortrijk region. This project provided the opportunity to municipalities and their inhabitants to select the most ugly spots in their community. Concrete squares and parking spaces, deserted playgrounds and streets, neglected open spaces and many other place were suddenly put in the spotlight. From among this wide range of places, each of the municipalities,
together with an external selection committee, had to select one ‘ugly spot’, which was then passed on to the designers, students, architects and artists, whose task then was to come up with a creative design. The goal was to stress the importance of the quality of open spaces and to obtain a notion of different people’s opinions on ‘ugliness’ in their living environment.

Mark(e): The urban Fringe forest

The IXth International OSA Urban Design Workshop in South-West Flanders dealt with Marke. Marke is the name of a brook and also the name of a village, which nowadays is a major suburb of the city of Kortrijk, into which it has officially been incorporated. Marke has also been selected as the location for the ‘urban fringe forest’. This means that the remaining open agricultural land around Marke will be subject to drastic change and will inevitably have to fulfill a number of different roles: a brook valley, an urban fringe forest, a village space, an ecological space and a peri-urban space that mediates the transition between the urbanized area and the surrounding rural landscape. All these projections and envisioned roles operate across various scales. The urban fringe forest of Kortrijk plays an important role in larger-scale green corridors (along the Leie River and the perpendicular corridor adjacent to the border with France, etc.). Paradoxically (but typical in peri-urban contexts), large-scale infrastructures (two international highways, a railway line, and the canalized Leie River) quite brutally cut the site off from its wider context.

The aim of the workshops was to envision unknown ideas and scenarios for a given location through a thorough analysis of the capacities of the site itself and by involving key stakeholders. A proposal for the design of the urban fringe forest of Marke already existed before the start of the workshop. That proposal, however, was not supported by most of the stakeholders involved. Therefore the workshop was aimed not only at reducing the opposition of those stakeholders to the urban fringe forest, but also at adding extra dimensions to the design of the forest. The already existing proposal offered a design with only one dimension, namely the urban fringe forest itself. The workshop was aimed at creating a design with multiple dimensions: an urban fringe forest that is a forest in its own right, but that also will be perceived and will function as a frame for future spatial development for Marke – a design that will be perceived as making a contribution to the regional green structures around Kortrijk, that will be part of a recreational circuit, and that will function as a central recreational space around municipalities like Marke and Lauwe.
Thought for Food

A series of participatory and ‘research by design’ workshops were organized during October – December 2011. These workshops were part of the ‘Thought for Food’ project of the VLM (Vlaamse Land Maatschappij) for the agro-industry of Roeselare. The aim of the project was to develop a spatial vision for this ‘vegetable region’ that would deal with the neglected ecology, the deprived spatial quality, the water shortage, the shortage of employees, the expanding urbanization, etc. Two different scenarios were designed for these regions in cooperation with the farmers and residents living and working in this area. This resulted in an interesting experiment involving three design workshops and two ‘stakeholder’ workshops. Research by design was the main tool used in this participatory design process.

Veerle Cox
advisor: prof. dr. ir. Bruno De Meulder
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
reflective | ri'flektiv |

adjective
1. providing a reflection; capable of reflecting light or other radiation: reflective glass | reflective clothing
2. produced by reflection: a colorful reflective glass.
3. relating to or characterized by deep thought: thoughtful: a quiet, reflective, astute man.

DERIVATIVES
reflectively adverb
reflectiveness noun

reflexive | ri'fleksiv |

adjective
1. Grammar denoting a pronoun that refers back to the subject of the clause in which it is used, e.g., myself, themselves.
2. (of a verb or clause) having a reflexive pronoun as its object, e.g., wash oneself.
3. (of an action) performed as a reflex, without conscious thought: at concerts like this one, standing ovations have become reflexive.
4. (of a relation) always holding between a term and itself.
5. (of a method or theory in the social sciences) taking account of itself or of the effect of the personality or presence of the researcher on what is being investigated.

Participants RTS 2010
An important aspect of this approach is not to determine a method in advance: as the journey progressed what is reported here is only a method in retrospect created as the group discovered what it was interested in and what it was working on, further steps were mapped, but always provisionally, always allowing that a different path would be.

And especially, how can we reflect on reflecting together as members of a group? One 'do' reflecting (what is reflection in action)? What goes on when we do reflecting? We opened the workshop by explaining that in order to understand the importance of reflecting we had to 'do' it, not merely speak about it. After this introduction, group members introduced their own individual take on the word's meaning. What does 'reflecting' mean to you? Where does reflection emerge in your own work? Different perspectives and develop an openness and familiarity with these new and different meanings and associations for reflecting emerged allowing us to become aware of other associations.

We proceeded to 'do' some more reflecting. We distributed stacks of A6 in individual colours. Having established such a common ground through conversations it was time to

1 This is inevitable because the process of reflecting changes understandings and hence perceptions about the role of reflecting by educators such as Donald Schon, John Dewey and Maxine Greene.

Additionally we are adding our own reflections to the process of reflecting and actively include the observer within the system. Hence, there is a fundamental connection with subjects such as cybernetics that active participations. So each reflective act in some way changes the world in which it exists, for the reflective actions. So each reflective act in some way changes the world in which it exists, for the reflective

This was the first time Michael Hohl assisted Prof. Ranulph Glanville in conducting workshops on 'reflection' for several years now this was a good


In this text we set out to describe the reflection workshop from our perspective. Comments about the role of reflecting by educators such as Donald Schon, John Dewey and Maxine Greene.

This Research Training Session on Reflection at St Lucas Architectuur. As Ranulph
Interactive systems seem to become an integral part of our lives. Recent technological advancements made it feasible to integrate these systems in our built environment. The motivation for designing interactive architectural systems lies in their capability of adapting in real-time, thus fulfilling evolving individual, social and environmental demands.

Among a wide range of existing interactive architectural systems, I will focus on the ones with a human behavior and visual component. People have more or less been expected to adapt to a built environment rather than it adapting to their desires. Understanding human behavior by relying on a visual component seems to generate new insight regarding the interactive aspect and also allows for a rapid validation of a given hypothesis.

Different levels of interaction and behavioral awareness can be achieved by the use of sometimes rather simple techniques, people becoming participants either willingly or unwillingly.

“Lightrails”, indoor interactive audio-visual installation designed by Strukt in collaboration with unheilbar architektur for the sound:frame Festival 2010 Austria, invites towards a more participatory behavior. The intensity and motion of the visual content projected onto the surfaces, as well as the accompanying sound-effects are directly influenced by the way visitors apply pressure on specific parts of the “Lightrails”. Thus, a repetitive type of interaction can create an immersive experience.

The behavioral awareness is more advanced in the "Interactive Video Installation" than in the previous one, while the user interaction seems rather limited. This outdoor interactive installation, by Devin Kerr, Cory Levinson and Wil Pertz, University of Michigan 2010 USA, enhances the surface of a facade via a video projection that uses an interesting technique of filling pedestrians’ silhouettes, perceived as voids, with abstract representations.

“Duality”, interactive installation in public space designed by Joachim Sauer, Jussi An Geleva, Amanda Parks 2006 Japan, blurs the boundary between itself and the surroundings by generating water ripples as an extension of artificial light waves triggered by the passers. An enhanced interaction is achieved by use of load cells that determine the position and amplitude of each footstep and thus influencing the appearance of the waves.

Most of the realized projects up to this point dealing with human interaction have been artistic endeavors with intriguing outcomes. Working mostly with artificial lighting, the focus seems to be more on surfaces, reinventing what they are and what they can do, rather than spaces.

Within my research, exploring new levels of human - built form interaction is envisioned. Consequently, this will create a unique sense of space that has the ability to adapt to our needs, while at the same time shape our experiences. Such spaces should rely on a bidirectional, cognitive and constructive information exchange that would allow active participation rather than simple usage.

**Methods**

In addition to analyzing some existing projects in this context, I would like to acquire a better insight on visual cognizance, human behavior awareness, interface design and embedded computation.

This research project, Interactive Design: Lightscapes, aims at testing new concepts and ideas through model[s] and installation[s], using light as a media. These built experiments, physical tangible forms and at human scale, will give us the most insight into the strengths and weaknesses.

Alternatively, by studying and using interactive/innovative materials, more advanced designs could be created as well as further enhancements regarding a successful dialogue of the users with a space could be achieved.

**Contributions**

Interactive designs can have a major impact on our lives by interacting with us and as a consequence reshape the ways in which we connect with each other.

Subsequently, lifting materials from their usual dependence on surfaces and utility will lead to redefining our physical boundaries and acquiring energy-time frame-cost-efficiency. This implies as well a transdisciplinary approach, including architecture, design, art, computer and material science.
photos: Study model of the Long Studio at Saunders Architecture, creative use of natural and artificial lighting within the design phase, 2007

photos: Study model of the Vincent Lunges Square at Landskap Design, creative use of artificial lighting within the design phase, 2007
photos: Conceptual models illustrating the focus on human - built form interaction, 2009

photos: "LEDwall", experimenting with LED lighting, 2008/2009

photos: Interactive installation within ByDesignForDesign0 in Brussels, Belgium, 2011
The research-based practice Alive Architecture reveals the hidden potentials of ‘urban islands’ in Europe through city-hacking: Eclectic ma-

Crossing the fairground frequently on my daily route to the city, I got fascinated by the temporary occupation of space by the caravans and the attractions. So I took a closer look at the two different

‘We are born into the culture of the fair. Our fellow workers’ families are our neighbours, the kids all go to the same school, and usually we spend our summer holiday
ppings of immigration camps, red-light districts, trailer parks or fairgrounds serve to open up the system in order to comprehend its struc-

For some of the people living and working on the fairground, making a living can become a challenge, as the rental price per running meter for the stands and attractions is

creates the bond between us. Most of us live all year long in a trailer. We consider this way of living to be a kind of freedom. You can go anywhere, any time.

The trend toward the commercialisation of urban space is leading more and more to the search

faces of the fairground: On the front side, you have 3.2 kilometres of attractions and food stands lined up on a promenade, which serves as the interface between the temporary urban island and the surrounding

with many of us all together. Last year we went with 80 people to the Dominican Republic. Our culture is about living together."
have any contact with the people from the neighbourhood wherever the fair happens to be set up. But people from the city do sometimes come to us, for example to play games. Then we talk.

Micro-interventions plug into this existing system in order to redirect the flows. The interaction between observation and action is rather high. On the other hand, the fair personnel are charged nothing for their occupation of the backstage space.

The tendency of commercialisation of urban space is leading more and more to the search for an authentic urban experience: red light districts, Indian neighbourhoods and informal settlements are popping up in a wide range of tourist guidebooks. Alive Architecture proposes to expand the public

‘To set up our stand here, we have to pay a certain amount per running meter. A food stand is about 11 meters long, and the owner pays about 11 x 450,-

society. On the back side, you have the trailers, mobile homes, sanitary spaces and technical installations, which are isolated from the surrounding urban setting by fences and closed curtains.
a bit together and have a good time.

a non-linear approach to temporary transformations, which gives some idea of the possible role of the architect in these socio-spatial margins.

experience of the fairground's front stage to include a view of the backstage as well. Such a development would serve both to increase the fairground workers' income and to enhance the visitors' experience. For the period of the fair, or in total 4950,-. This is a lot of money for us, as we can't be sure of our income. When it's bad weather, sometimes we earn only 80,- per day.
2012. Facebook, Fablab, Google, Gaga, Second Life, the end of Second life, Wikipedia, Wikileaks, iTunes, iStore, iPod, iPad, the Social Network (the movie), Idol tweets, riot tweets, and everybody else next door, and everything looks silver, gold and platinum, and blogged, vlogged, sued, hot, not. Our culture glides on the surface of things; light, fast, unnatural, superficial, conflictual. Our lives are hyper-real; they are themed, spectacular, illusionary. Concepts turn into alibis, idée-fixes mirror trends. Life without objections.

Few of us as architects seem to react upon this; and if we do, we still act along old, unadapted methods; slow methods. I live in the world I design, so I should design it the way I live in it. I work the way I live, I think the way I act. Whilst finding out about these processes, I surrender to them. I try to explore the lightness, the fastness, the superficiality.

I define speed as a fundamental design tool. Speed prevents from sinking deep into the truthful blubber, keeps you from going in-depth. With speed, we can glide the surface, and in a professional way, make this into a greatly satisfactory gesture. Speed - when going too fast - also creates rupture. When we work too fast, we create ‘mistakes’ that will serve as stepping stones towards future actions. Speed is an instigator, not an evaluator.
The image is our medium. We think through images. We communicate in highly detailed Photoshop worlds, 3D film and live Photoshop-based lecture-performances. More than just an illustrative image that supports text, they are our mental universe, our theoretical landscape. They are the professionalised surface.


2009, view over Pudong’s workers housing area photographed from the 88th floor of the Jin Mao tower, Shanghai, China.
Speedism, 2009, ‘Doomdough.’
A counter-urbanism scenario for the Chinese city promoting Doom as a necessary opposition to Dream, in a mental instead of a factual sphere. Created during a residency program at TIM/LAB Beijing, China, developed for Urban China magazine and transformed into ‘Doomdough Royâle’ for ‘Reversed Images’, MoCP Chicago.
Creating an image can help to question the context of architecture, the city, architecture’s position and our place within. Our images report of the many kinds of input we come across, touch upon, and arrange in a visual way. We compile and collect our image, just like a teenager compiles his or her own identity out of the surrounding availabilities. Our approach is intuitive, fast, incomplete.

While working on a project, we visually mix very diverse fields of influence ranging from Wikipedia, mythology, theory, geopolitics, technical restrictions, the news of the day, software, location, personal experience, music, economics, ecology, marketing, globalism, nationalism, potentialism. We touch upon things just as long - we dive just as deep, we look at things, read things - until we can transfer them to an image, a layer in Photoshop, so as to keep our machine running, to keep the image growing. We don’t go to the core of things but peel away some parts, maybe not the essential parts. Use theory as an alibi, easy shortcuts as emulation, we roam referential networks as legitimation to undercut the slow maturation of architectural thought. Cut short to go fast. In the Speedism manifest, I state “we might be wrong.” So we surrender, in favour of a free, fast, hyper-contemporary visual reflection. And as these visual worlds grow, the influences and layers start to manifest their sense, combinations generate narratives, objects unfold meaning. The images are experiential, architectural sandbox and mental fitness centre.

The general conditions of today become the driving cultural, architectural, theoretical and aesthetic conditions of all the images. The images themselves attempt to articulate these conditions. Thus the projects cluster together as a theoretical endeavor, a differently structured kind of research, in which method, topic and context go hand in hand and are developed, refined, reshuffled along the way.
We are the lost children of the hyper-generation. Welcome to the twenty-first century Luna Park! Come celebrate the one-dimensional, futureless, asexual orgy of mistrust. Come down to our overground party. Let us glide the surface. Never stop! We need you to not believe. Don’t believe in yourself, because otherwise you are the only truth left. It is We need you to believe. Believe in yourself, because otherwise you are the only truth left. It is not a fault in reality, it is you. It is not a matter of false interpretation, it isn’t. It is not about the past, neither about the future. Come fight against the right. Come fight against the unwritten laws of logic and serious principle. Come fight against the slow truth of conceptual thinking. Come fight against building codes, fight against design codes, Rage! Never stop! We will have to show them our passion or they will not listen. But how do we show a passion that can impossibly be shared? A hyper-individual state of gliding, a drug-free rush into the non-existing self, is that enough? Output, Location. Volume. Green to purple, red to black; yellow to sky, stone to palm tree, vinyl to Indian, northern light to green, blue, and white. Never stop! & We are beyond quartz & We write like "fig."

PHOTOSHOP

The choice of Photoshop is not arbitrary but rather technical and tactical. Photoshop as an environment to theorise visually and experiment with speed in action works extremely well. While sketching and assembling ideas and bits of information, we stitch them together using tools. And these tools function at this time like retorical actions, like tropes. Liquify, blur, sharpen, invert, mirror, rotate, crop, duplicate, saturate, merge. There’s even a perspective transformation tool to put things in perspective! As you distort an object, you distort its meaning, you distort your mind. An isometric drawing style - which is easy in Photoshop using shortcuts and simple tools - enables us to connect and merge objects to create a world of hybrids. The resulting game-like aesthetic hints at the performative process behind it, and at the dynamic nature of the image, being frozen in one specific constellation, but waiting to be activated again. Moreover, the ongoing search for a fitting visual style aims at the mediation between insiders and outsiders, or to construct a conflict between both the professional and individual within you.
The images that we make are our surface, our level of work and process, our means of communication, the gate to ideas and scenarios, and simultaneously the grounds where they grow. The images are not dead, they’re dynamic. First of all, images are constructed through a ping-pong process between several players, editing, deleting, pimping, and reinterpreting layers in the Photoshop file. Second: every time we present an image, we dive into it, break it open, and using Photoshop live, we zoom, pan, deform, duplicate, and direct. Narrative is generated on the spot. These interfaces must be obtrusive, noisy, endless, lo-tech. We should not just glide the surface - like smartphones - but crash-land onto them, break them up. Anti-interface. Face to face. Both creation and presentation of an image are performative acts. So when we travel through the images, we get thrown back on the work and the ideas that were so hastily incorporated in this new world. The drawn objects become objections. We bury ourselves into a cycle of production, reproduction. Do in order to think. We think in doing, and rethink in redoing.

Top: Speedism production screenshot.
Bottom: Speedism skype production session extract.
Right: Speedism portrait taken just before a lecture-performance at MAD architects, Beijing, China.
SPEED SPACE

Speed Space might be the unlikely generalisation of a time- and culture-determined boys-together venture named SPEEDISM*. Speed, noise, performance, speculation get mixed up in a specific cocktail - the dead angle of architecture.

Speed Space is an experiential architectural theory giving priority to image over word, a spatial mental construction offering a multitude of perspectives and some tools that can be tried and tested by anyone. Theory not as a truth, not written and published, but as a multidimensional stage - performed in production and declamation, looped, giving rise to a non-stop remix. Speed Space forces us to be in our time in order to work in our time.

*SPEEDISM is the practice founded in 2008 by Julian Friedauer (DE) and Pieterjan Ginckels (BE). Rooted in architecture and art, SPEEDISM operates in what they call the dead angle of architecture. Their operations consist of a continuous production of a visual universe, concerning architecture, visual arts, theoretic landscapes, urban tactic, imagineering and speculative noise.

Cover image: In 2008, 50 Chinese took a trip with SPEEDISM into Beijing’s hidden science fictions. They sped from cities in the city to cities under the city and cities outside of the city, and found ways to parts of power and powerless parts in the city. The Speedism bus and its tourleaders stopped at a castle, a book city, a migrant dormitory, an art factory.
Participants of previous Research Training Sessions
Unheimliche architecture: frictional interior in between encounter and belonging

Abstract. In the current age of unsettlement, my research is aimed at understanding and possibly incorporating existential anguish into architectural design. Inquiry into the architectural ‘Unheimlichkeit’ (a reference to Vidler’s ‘the architectural Uncanny’ (Vidler, 1992) addresses a paradoxical and disquieting force in architecture that does not intimidate but rather stimulates the growth of human creativity through architecture.

The inquiry into Unheimlichkeit proposes a specific approach towards architectural design and education. Unheimlichkeit complements prevailing values and norms in architecture as preset by society (commodities, light, sight, and so on). The architectural Unheimlichkeit envisages and embodies a ‘frictional’ design approach that promotes the growth of ‘other’ values in architecture such as mortality, empathy, trans-disciplinarity and alteration. Simultaneously, I conduct specific pedagogic experiments through a number of Research Design Studios entitled ‘Onheimelijk’ that are collectively organized with and by students–researchers in the Sint–Lucas School of Architecture.

This article is intended to address a central question: How can Unheimlichkeit consolidate the architectural discipline (as we know it) and yet provoke thinking beyond the discipline? By provoking unfamiliar thoughts on the relationship between art and architecture, I inquire into the possibility of the architectural interior as a ‘frictional’ vehicle for overcoming existing dualities.

In this article, I address the following issues. First, I will introduce Unheimlichkeit as an existential condition and effect (i.e. anguish) in architecture and the arts. Furthermore I will see that Unheimlichkeit serves as a specific approach and theme in educational practice. Finally, I will describe the unheimliche interior as a frictional vehicle that both consolidates and expands the architectural discipline, in between materializing and thinking. In other words, my research into Unheimlichkeit may lead to a particular state of mind, i.e. material thinking.

Fig. 1 – ‘Man in the chair’, 1876 by Henri de Brackeleer
Introduction: the paradox of ‘Material Thinking’

The term material thinking contains a fascinating and tantalizing paradox. Ambiguously enough, it could mean either ‘materializing thoughts’ or the ‘significance of thinking’. This paradoxical twist invites the reader to critically reflect upon the relationship between matter and thinking. I will see that this paradox is just one of the common grounds between architectural Unheimlichkeit, or the Architectural Uncanny (Vidler, 1992) and material thinking. In the present article, material thinking deals rather with the possibility of materializing thoughts into a concrete experience through unheimliche values.

Unheimlichkeit as an existential condition and effect through two aspirations

My inquiry into Unheimlichkeit in architecture is an attempt to approach the profoundly paradoxical nature of one’s Being-In-the-World. According to Heidegger, one can turn the world into a ‘Heim’ or home, yet one also is estranged from it as one is fundamentally and unavoidably a Being-towards-Death. In other words, one has (to) become unheimlich. Unheimlichkeit originates in a profound and fundamental uncertainty in dealing with reality.

This paradoxical phenomenon – to be familiar yet estranged – a Freudian credo from his 1919’s das Unheimliche (Freud, 1919) may be central to understanding the essence of the object of my research. One can imagine that this uncertain process of making something heimlich or worldly, and then deliberately abandoning this world (or becoming un-heimlich) may cause anguish. In this article, I invite the reader to inquire into existential anguish as a creative force in architecture.

While Unheimlichkeit is a central issue in contemporary arts and has been so down through the centuries (think for instance of Rachel Whiteread, Anish Kappoor, Goya, Kafka, …), it has been strangely absent in architectural discourse. Nevertheless, I can reveal Unheimlichkeit as a frictional and ambiguous phenomenon in architecture: a building can be perceived as familiar and yet also strange and this perception evokes a feeling of Unheimlichkeit. For instance, the hotel, as portrayed in Stanley Kubrick’s The Shining – a film rendition of the book by Stephen King – transforms in the wintertime into a pandemonium of murder and hate, parallel to the evil transformation of the main character. Unheimlichkeit as a creative force in architecture relates to two basic human aspirations: the first is the yearning for a sense of belonging to a larger entity (a nation, a family, a person, a house,…). One can belong to a particular place or person and so on. This urge is the expression of a universal desire. As a Being-in-the-World, one can thus long for this carefree environment. In other words, upon finding such a place, one can finally belong to a safe and reassuring ‘home’ to which one always returns: one has become Heimlich or homely.

Yet this desire may be called into question by another aspiration: one can yearn for a particular ‘sense of encounter’. This urge is rooted in an existential fascination with encountering the unknown i.e. the other. The encounter with the other profoundly calls into question the self-evident character of Heimlichkeit. By encountering the other, one may – whether deliberately or not – jeopardize the familiar and comfortable house that one has come to know. In this sense, one is inevitably a Being-towards-Death.

Perhaps architectural education focuses too one-sidedly on a harmonious ‘sense of belonging’ by insisting on heimliche forces. One can assume that the primary task of architecture is to create a sense of protection or, in one word, a home. Why then leave the security and safety of this home? Unheimlichkeit identifies this security as illusory: the inquiry deliberately engages with an intriguing world of not knowing, whereby unpredicted possibilities may emerge. Thus, through the encounter with the unheimliche other, one is thrown into a World-of-Possibilities.

In my research, I ask myself how this going back and forth between constructing a home and leaving home affects one. How does it change one’s way of thinking as it calls into question preset values? My research identifies a process that has a frictional yet constructive influence on how one thinks, makes and acts. In essence, the research into Unheimlichkeit is thus a constructive endeavour.

Unheimlichkeit as a specific approach and theme in architectural education

I started my research in the academic year 2008-2009. What has been the specific approach and initial framework utilized throughout the inquiry? Through a series of Research Design Studios – the so called Onheimefijk Studios organized from 2008 onwards (Deckers, 2009) in the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture – I gradually developed a framework built upon educational practice.

The inquiry focuses on educational practice and does not start with an a priori understanding of Unheimlichkeit. The essence of the inquiry lies in the body of work conducted through, with and by students. I investigated how existential anguish can become both a design factor and a leading theme in a Design Studio. I generally focused on the emergence and formation of collective forces generated by the encounter with the other. Parallel to producing an individual design, a student is also asked to perform a collective task ‘set in the world’, which ultimately becomes more relevant than the individual design. For instance, one of these collective tasks was to organize a temporary interior, such as organizing an exhibition of all student work in a totally unequipped environment such as an abandoned warehouse.

The Studio also aims at combining practice and theory. I anticipated a Research Design Studio in which the student would simultaneously learn to think strategically and act accordingly through the making of a design. This process is conducted...
The whole concept of the Studios is geared to monitoring the design process as it occurs. My focus is upon monitoring and stimulating a creative process in order to obtain unexpected qualities, not a preset final design or a fixed end result.

I also wanted to take distance from familiar settings. The *Onheimelijkheid* Research Design Studio explicitly starts from the idea that student-researchers do not belong exclusively to a school environment, but rather belong to the world. The Studio thus deliberately de-familiarizes the participants from the school environment for instance by altering neglected interiors located extra muros. Each year, my students and I have built a temporary installation/exhibition outside the school walls.

The Research Design Studio therefore takes architectural education to the streets and thus potentially generates encounters. In this sense, architecture, may be - or may not be - this mythical and solitary act of designing. Architecture rather takes place and is characterized by one's *Being-in-the-World*. Yet, simultaneously this *Being-in-the-World* is being questioned in the encounter with the other. Thus, there is a tension emerging between one's *Being-in-the-World* and *Being-towards-Death*, i.e. the tragic yet necessary distance taken from the world. This paradoxical tension between the present and mortality, between longing and encounter, can be fruitful in architectural education.

Take for instance, the student project by Jonas Van Vliet Eb and *Tide House* (Deckers, 2009). (See Fig. 3) This exemplary research project illustrates in my view a tragic dimension in architectural design. He designed a house that is subject to the changing of ebb and tide. This design embodies a crossing of two contradictory ideas: a safe and predictable interior that encounters currents of salty water. The interior arrangements follow the natural rhythm of ebb and tide. By allowing water to enter, the interior continually contracts and expands. These changes transform the experience of the interior into something intense and rich, into architecture. The underlying idea is that by accepting a continuously changing interior, one is able to turn something erratic into a quality.

The tragic dimension could be described as follows: only when the forces of nature are allowed to overtake us, can architecture be possible. Paradoxically, as the interior is infiltrated with water, Unheimlichkeit, or something discomfiting kicks in. Unheimlichkeit usually occurs when the natural order of things is reversed: natural yet unpredictable elements invade a common sense of security and commodity. Yet this commodity in itself can be questioned: 'Modern commodities threaten the stability of the world.' (Taylor, 1998)

This student research project thus constructs otherness through the notion of *Unheimlichkeit*. One can ask the following: In what way could the outcome of the research with and by students be meaningful for the architectural discipline? In
other words, how can Unheimlichkeit consolidate the architectural discipline and still provoke thinking beyond the discipline? Perhaps one ought to simultaneously familiarize with the discipline as one knows it, and de-familiarize (or estrange) from the discipline by deliberately taking distance.

**Consolidation of the architectural discipline through Unheimliche values**

First I look at which architectural values potentially belong to Unheimlichkeit. Can these unheimliche values consolidate the specificity of the discipline?

**Empathy** can be described as an unheimliche value, i.e. a desire to ‘read’ and comprehend somebody else’s mind. Through the act of designing, we start to learn to think and to imagine being somebody else. This is an intellectual encounter with the other: it is a way to construct a sense of otherness. It is as if the architect is able to escape from him or herself in order to embody someone else. Throughout the design process, the architect empathically switches roles: he or she can be a drawing artist, a speaker, a viewer or a listener all at once. ‘Designers learn to take on two roles themselves. They learn to switch between viewer and drawer’ (Glanville, 2006). Empathy thus consolidates and strengthens the architectural discipline though it means altering the self. However, Unheimlichkeit deals with a more typical desire to alter spaces. Transforming or altering existing spaces allows us to make a link with architectural interiors. The profound alteration of the interior arguably allows us to encounter the other and thus construct otherness.

For instance, a drastic refurbishment of an interior such as by MVRDV in Delft profoundly alters the previous state into something unexpected thus leaving us bewildered and in awe. ‘This is truly uncanny!’ Although profound changes may have altered the space drastically, it is still possible to belong to the altered space again afterwards. The interior may thus be a powerful instrument for creating a stark before and after effect. It holds the key to understanding what alteration in time and space can mean. It becomes really unheimlich when these alterations become erratic and fall out of the control of the architect. For instance, the alteration caused by climatic changes. Lawson already claimed that weathering leads to fascinating changes in the interior. (Lawson, 2005). One’s Heim or world has been profoundly altered – consciously or unconsciously – and then becomes something ‘else’, i.e. unheimlich.

Another unheimliche value potentially addresses the indeterminateness of the design act. In this respect Fredrik Nilsson writes about the fundamental ‘optional’ faculty of design. ‘Designers deal with possible worlds and with opinions about what the environment should be, and any design decision is open to questioning and debate’ (Nilsson, 2007). Thus, one might say that in the process of designing, one focuses upon deliberate encounters with in-built uncertainties. The complexity of the current age leaves few certain options. In other words, architecture can ‘appear’ through the uncertainty of questions rather than through the reassurance of solving a particular design problem.
This particular open-endedness of design leaves an intriguing absence and may just generate – not hinder – a *World-of-Possibilities* through the making of a design.

The consolidation of the discipline through *unheimliche* values tends to confirm architecture as a discipline concerned with the development of autonomy – the development of an own identity – in other words, the self. However, this may lead to a typical pre-conception that the architectural discipline is exclusively dedicated to materializing spatial desires. From an *unheimliche* point of view, these desires should be open to questioning – and not per se materialized – as they potentially lead to another expansive kind of thinking.

**Expansion of the architectural discipline through *unheimliche* values**

One could argue that disciplinary expansion – or the gradual taking distance from the discipline – takes place through a set of *unheimliche* values that push us beyond disciplinary purity. How can architectural *Unheimlichkeit* with its typical values (spatial and temporal alteration, empathy in design) encounter other disciplines?

First of all, *Unheimlichkeit* may deal with a profoundly sinister aspect of our life: **mortality** as a fatal condition that positively guides one toward taking action. The final horizon of *Being-towards-Death* (Heidegger, 1927) stimulates creativity and generates a *World-of-Possibilities*. *Unheimlichkeit* gravitates around this mortal notion: the finality of things creates a sense of urgency. It is a horizon and a realm in which both contemplation and action is made possible.

Heidegger's work resonates through in Hans Jonas' reflections on the importance of making artefacts. Jonas considers artefacts as cultural products that essentially distinguish us from animals. According to Hans Jonas' article, *‘Werkzeug, Bild und Grab’* (Jonas, 1992, 1925), mankind has developed three kind of artefacts. First, a grave is an artefact: burying the dead and ritualising the grave cult is a supremely self-reflective act. Secondly, the *Homo Pictor* started to make artefacts based on images that provide meaning through the representation of other realities. Finally, as a *Homo Faber*, man has successfully mastered the skill of making instruments. In the light of the first artefact – the grave – Jonas speaks of the horizon of death as a *Möglichkeit*, as a possibility towards action, not as a fatal datum.

Thus an intriguing paradox emerges between mortality and the making of a design. Mortality may thus become a vital value that allows one to understand why one designs. The architectural artefact may outlive several generations; however a creative life span is limited to an ending. *Unheimlichkeit* can thus be considered sinister.

Alvar Aalto states: *‘Form is nothing else but a concentrated wish for everlasting life on earth.’* (Pallasmaa, 2005). Artists often stage **existential issues** in their works of art, but this is less common in architecture. Libeskind, Hedjuk, Llebeus Woods and Aalto are the most noteworthy exceptions to the supposed rule: their architectural achievements and inquiries arguably question the tragic condition of man through...
deliberately evoking unsettling experiences.

During these Onheilmelierik Research Design Studios, I have witnessed this deliberate search for existentialism. The student collective worked and exhibited in places of decay. The uncanny atmosphere of those places stimulated the imagination, and probably much more than did the sterility of the clean gallery spaces. Apparently, there was no need to design a novel space: it was interesting enough to reveal the potential of existing derelict warehouses and then to transform them into – temporary – exhibition spaces.

Architecture can be thought provoking and mind-moving as it questions the commodities of the world such as light, sight, and harmony. Unheimlichkeit thus may evoke an element of subversion. Engaging in Unheimlichkeit as an architectural value, protects man against overprotection and excess of comfort: it urges him to take action in a contemporary world of abundance.

This attitude can be traced back to architectural interiors as well. An architectural interior may be difficult to reuse in time, while the building in general is not. For instance, it might be a complicated matter to reuse the interior of the Rietveld’s Schröder house successfully. Interior architecture thus may be the discipline by means of which one senses the vulnerability and fragility in the architectural field most urgently. Confronted with the question of reuse, the architectural interior is often condemned to be replaced or demolished after less than a decade. As a particular architectural fashion declines, the interior is usually the first to go. The building stays and becomes something else. The interior – too often the unfortunate half of a Siamese twin – is left behind and loses its raison d’être. This tragic sense of fragility and loss makes the interior such an exciting research topic.

A sad example illustrates this better. After demolishing La Maison de Peuple in 1965 in Brussels, a part of the interior was saved and transposed to be ‘reused’ as part of an interior of a luxurious restaurant in another city, Antwerp 40 years later. However, in this particular example one witnesses that the artistic qualities of the original beams of the interior cannot be transposed without damaging the values of Art Nouveau (such as overall consistency of interior and exterior, structural innovations, etc). One sees that the beams of the Maison du Peuple have only been used to create a sensational background of drama and decoration: the interior arrangement is meant to honour Art Nouveau and to set an example of proper reuse, but it fails to do so. The building and its interior do not pay tribute to the artistic ideas of Horta. In fact, they distort his legacy by shamelessly aiming at commercial exploitation.

Furthermore, Unheimlichkeit may enable the expansion of the architectural discipline by pushing the boundaries outward in the search for the unfamiliar. Unheimlichkeit thus embraces the discipline with transdisciplinary values that transgress the traditional and disciplinary settings. I understand the notion of transdisciplinarity here in the sense given by Helga Nowotny: ‘Transdisciplinarity contributes to joint problem solving. [ ] What is needed in addition to reliable knowledge is socially robust knowledge’. (Nowotny, 2010).

During the Onheilmelierik Research Design Studio, it became crucial to nurture this transdisciplinary attitude. The decision to involve other disciplines did not arise out of a holistic aspiration to belong to a greater whole, but rather out of the necessity of openness and susceptibility in the effort to encounter the ‘other’. Transgressing the disciplinary boundaries also means taking risks.

Unheimlichkeit in architecture finally provokes by indulging in crisis situations and calamities. This provocative feature of Unheimlichkeit returns on many levels. In an architectural practice, a deadline is an artificial and self-induced moment of crisis that finally nourishes an eagerness to come up with a sharp design. To put it polemically, to avoid a design problem is to avoid the possibility of generating architecture. Unheimlichkeit then may be about deliberately searching for risks and crisis, danger and anguish. The architectural design of the Unheimlichkeit flourishes in the context of catastrophe and imminent danger.

Studying the life of Alvar Aalto potentially gives us a good idea of what we mean by inserting unpredictability into architecture. Even in the construction phase, he allowed certain kinds of uncertainty to slip into the design. ‘A mistake’ made by a builder (an element that differs from the original building plans), potentially became for him an opportunity to produce another, adapted and improved design. There is something unheimlich in allowing something unexpected to slip into the building process without damaging the original intentions: in other words, Unheimlichkeit enables us to move in possible – thinkable – worlds.

As an architectural approach, is Unheimlichkeit then exclusively related to immateriality? In this respect, I would like to cite the renowned architect and critic, Marc Dubois. In a response to an article on Unheimlichkeit published by the author, Dubois claimed: ‘Art can be immaterial, buildings cannot’. In an article entitled ‘Kunst en Architectuur’ (‘Art and Architecture’) – to be published in June 2012 – Dubois expands on the specific role of art and architecture. He is convinced that Unheimlichkeit does not belong to architecture, though it can only be associated with the fragile and immaterial world of artistic expression. For him, Unheimlichkeit has nothing to do with the ‘real’ world of buildings. Anguish can only be a theme in architecture, and not a praxis in architecture. However, one can argue that limiting the architectural discipline to the actual standing buildings themselves would be the same as equating Fritz Lang films to a collection of celluloid!

Of course, the spectacular interior and exterior of the San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane church in Rome, for example, is made up of matter like any building. However, beyond the material world lies the imagined world or the world of the metaphysical. Meta-physics transcends the physical: it points toward what a collection of matter means for people through time. Arguably, this sense of metaphysical immateriality is equally precious and transcends the material. One can thus encounter Unheimlichkeit in between the material and the immaterial, in between belonging and encour-
Fig. 5 – photo of ‘Onheimlijk’, an exhibition held in a derelict building in Ghent, Belgium

Unheimliche architecture: frictional interior in between encounter and belonging

For instance, one can think of the ‘Stendhal Syndrome’ which refers to feelings of dizziness that one can experience when struck by the beauty of a work of art. As one wanders through the interiors of Borromini or Guarini, it is difficult not to feel overwhelmed. The spectator – safely enclosed by baroque matter – finally can but surrender to the sublime and immaterial encounter with the ‘other’.

In ‘Poetics of Space’, Gaston Bachelard points out the relevance of the fictional and immaterial aspects of wandering in space. I myself consider literary documents as realities of the imagination, pure products of the imagination. And why should the actions of the imagination not be as real as those of perception? (Bachelard, 1958). For him, the daydreaming activities have an effect on one’s perception and conception of architecture. In point of fact, daydreaming, from the very first second, is an entirely constituted state. We do not see it start, and yet it always starts the same way, that is, it flees the object nearby and right away it is far off, elsewhere, in the space of elsewhere. All these immaterial experiences of elsewhere bear evidence of the fact that buildings can embody parallel immaterial worlds, existing simultaneously next to and within the material.

Unfortunately, much of contemporary architectural discourse reduces buildings to their ‘primal’ and material aspects. In so doing, it may consolidate the discipline, but it also potentially impoverishes it by confirming the existing dualities between art – often considered as something exclusively immaterial – and architecture – often considered as something exclusively material. This division may weaken architecture in its confrontation with the contemporary trends of image building and ‘branding’.

An alternative can be to develop another way of thinking in architecture through the notion of material thinking. The underlying paradox of material thinking could provide a tool for better comprehending the delicate ambiguities of architecture. Unheimlichkeit in architecture may then be ultimately related to the synthetic activity of interconnecting informal stories with formal realities. In other words, the activity of interconnecting built environments with imaginary ones. Thus the paradoxical formation of material thinking emerges in between fiction and friction, belonging and encounter, matter and thoughts, consolidation and expansion.

Conclusion

I have seen that architectural Unheimlichkeit both specifies and expands the architectural discipline through a set of values: this paradoxical consolidation and expansion makes the effort to categorize this phenomenon an uncomfortable task. Through the lens of a polemic debate, I have described the interior as a frictional vehicle that both consolidates and expands the architectural discipline, in between materializing and thinking.

One belongs to a material world with people and their artefacts. In a way, this belonging ensures a heimliche sense of home. Yet in the encounter with other – immaterial
Fig 6, 7 – The images above indicate the Maison du Peuple in Brussels designed by Horta in 1899, its original exterior (top left) and interior (top right).
Fig 8, 9 – The images at the bottom indicate the present building replacing the Maison du Peuple demolished in 1965 (bottom left) and the contemporary reuse of the interior in a restaurant in Antwerp. (bottom right)

Unheimlichkeits starts from an acceptance of change and uncertainty, not of protection. The architectural Unheimlichkeit may be capable of bridging the growing gap between the existential and deep artistic images arising out of the world of the arts and the ‘here and now’ qualities of architecture.

The present article started from the central concerned: What is the specificity of the architectural discipline? I acknowledge the importance of disciplinary autonomy. However, a radical concern to keep out foreign and transdisciplinary voices may potentially eclipse other more substantial issues. How can one affect and enrich the specificity of the architectural discipline in the light of the challenges that threaten the contemporary society?

History teaches that architecture has a unique ability to expand by learning from other disciplines in a quiet and humble way. Since Vitruvius, the supposed role of architecture and architects has been continuously changing and shifted in a response to critique. In the age of global expansion, and in fact throughout all of history, it has been virtually impossible to keep the discipline unspoilt, free and pristine from external forces. In trying to keep things ‘pure’, architecture runs the risk of finally ending up in an unhealthy, sterile kind of self-indulgence. Unheimlichkeit starts from an acceptance of change and uncertainty, not of protection.

What are the limits of one’s certainties and how can one overcome them even if they
cause existential anguish? In reducing the meaning of architecture to technical and material commodities, one damages the fragile faculties of architectural experience namely, memory and anticipation. The architectural interior may – or may not be – a medium to question one’s way of living – here and now – in the light of one's mortality. The whole underlying intention of my research into Unheimlichkeit in architecture is not to lose the specificity of architecture, but rather to treasure architectural experiences by interpreting them as charged with specific values, even if those values might be subversive.

A paradoxical formation of both matter and thinking emerges in the architectural interior. It balances between fiction and friction, belonging and encounter, materiality and thinking, consolidation and expansion, in other words material thinking. Speaking in the words of Pallasmia, as published in Encounters: ‘We live in worlds in which the material and the mental, the experienced, remembered and imagined completely fuse into each other.’ (Pallasmia, 2005).

Acknowledgements: A warm thanks to my family, Fredrik Nilsson, Jo Liekens, Marc Dubois, Richard Sundahl for their generosity, inspiration and support in writing this article.

Karel Deckers, architect and teaching assistant, has been organising and leading Design Studios, first at the Politecnico di Torino in 2003, and at the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture in Brussels/Ghent since 2005. Since 2009, he has been working on a PhD research project at the Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg, entitled ‘The Architectural Uncanny: the creative use of existential anguish in architectural representation and education’ supervised by Fredrik Nilsson. He has published several papers in national and international research contexts. He regularly writes articles for the architectural journal ‘Giornale dell’architettura’. He has his own architectural practice and lives in Brussels with Astrid and their three children, Oscar, Arthur and Thomas.

Karel Deckers

Fig. 10 – Drawing of the sublime interior San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, a church building designed by Borromini.

Bibliography


Reflections 16 is published by Sint-Lucas School of Architecture
Editing: Gudrun De Maeyer
Revision, final editing selected English texts: Richard Sundahl
Image editing: Ben Robberechts
Print: Drukkerij Sintjoris Ghent - June 2012
Production: ARC, Architectuur Reflectie Centrum
ISSN: 1784-7052