



*A Chapel For Atheists*

*Master Thesis  
By Karagiannidou Eleni*

A STUDY IN TIMELESS BUILDING

AN ARCHITECTURE OF EMPTINESS

*Msc-4 Ark-5, Spring 2013  
Architecture And Design  
Aalborg University  
Denmark*





***“Architecture is not only about domesticating space, it is also a deep defense against the terror of time. The language of beauty of essentially the language of timeless reality”*** [Harries, 1992]

Why is that architecture that moves us makes us feel that time runs slower? How is that places that speak to our inner self are perceived as frozen in time?

This interests me, the ability of architecture to distort our perception, rapping us in an other dimension where time stops.

Show me how to slow down time and I will show you how to create exceptional architecture. How to create still, timeless architecture that speaks to the unconscious. That slows down your brain and activates your senses penetrating your existence and nests in your subconscious. Ables you to turn inside your self to see with real eyes the dream you call a life.

*Karagiannidou Eleni  
Msc4-Ark5, AAU 2013*

# SYNOPSIS

The theme of the master thesis has been the design of an empty space, as a shelter, in the built environment, where silence and calmness would produce a sense of stillness. It addresses an architecture with no clear programmatic aspect; found important for the space to stay physically, challenging, empty, able for hosting unexpected types of use or, simply and perhaps provocatively, nothing. What interests me and what I seek, with this master thesis, is the answer to the question “*How to create emptiness*”; the void.

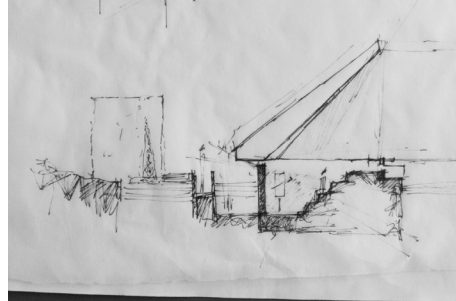
My quest starts in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, where I found myself for a period of one semester working as an intern, multitasking inside and outside the office space, struggling to catch up with time, in total vanity; as man has no effect on how time flows. Nevertheless, as the point of man’s affiliation with time is only his perception, the perception itself and the distortion of it, becomes my study’s

objective. In the quest to discover how can architecture consist the intermediate and the stop, I found myself interested in how to distort time, to create a piece, place or a space where time is experienced as stopped or slowed down.

Consequently, the objective of this master thesis is the relation between space and time and how can the manipulation of one, affect the other.

Exceptional architectural paradigms, like the cemetery in the small city of Igualada North of Barcelona, have this tremendous effect on our bodies. To penetrate our existence and force us to slow down our reactions, our thoughts, our vital processes.

My master thesis is an attempt to decipher and create an architecture speaking to all our senses, creating a space to feel safe just to *be*. A shelter in the city, where time runs slower



giving one, the opportunity to gain his pace.

For feelings of safeness to be experienced, I am seeking on an architecture that speaks an ecumenical but sacred and archaic language, merely for the subconscious. An architecture that evokes feelings and memories linked to those of the safeness.

We feel safe just to *be*.

I am approaching architectural creation through the representation of archetypes; acknowledging archetypes as subjective patterns found in all mans' subconscious, whose stimulation affects the experiential part of living.

Following the Vitruvian theory that the house was the first shelter, trying to revive the phenomenological image of the house as Gaston Bachelard describes it into his book *The poetics of space*, the objective becomes a synthesis of abstractions with

phenomenological significance.

A roof that together with the ground, keeps the inside inside and the outside outside, answering the archetype of the house; a long corridor half sunken in the water answering the need for slowness; facilities around this application, are toilets and running water as I recognize the necessity of those in a city. I am not succumbing to the stereotypical Western image of toilets and I am celebrating the function like Junihiro Tanizaki is doing in his book *In praise of shadows*.

For a sensory architectural experience, for a tactile, timeless architecture, I am trying to summon phenomenology, reflecting on Juhani Pallasmaa's writings, integrating his philosophical topics into my narrations. Aiming to an architecture of the emptiness; a non programmatic application consisting the refuge from the city scape, offering comfort, silence and stillness.

# *ABOUT*

## *PROJECT TITLE*

*A Chapel For Atheists*

*Master Thesis*

*Aalborg University, Department Of  
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## *PROJECT PERIOD*

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*This report is delivered with a volume of  
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*Aalborg, Spring 2013*

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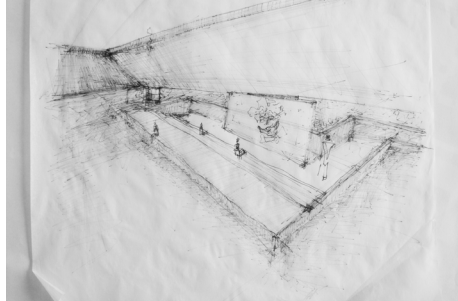
107 *Bibliography*

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## *PART I : Enter*



***“Can you imagine what it is to dissolve into nothingness?”***

[Allan Watts (Meditating upon death)]

I remember myself as a child, often wandering in an empty house, carrying around my deep sorrowfulness result of absolute boredom and emptiness.

When I read Gaston Bachelard’s Poetics of space I found the author describing the very same feeling, as boredom that leads to tears. Why do tears accompany emptiness? What is that, that we have to face, at the same moment that we face nothingness?

I find myself through years, wandering in silent houses of mine, facing my *unbearable*

*lightness of being*, as Milan Kundera in his self titled book, baptizes on one of man’s primitive emotional reactions.

The need for the none doing is essential no matter how intimate, leading to existential awareness, as a child intuitively feels but an adult skips, due to his rationalized image of the world. The more distractions one is surrounded by, the more away he finds himself from existential awareness.

Followed by great understanding, this awareness, assists any creative process. As Juhani Pallasmaa writes “*one’s engagement to silence, solitude and boredom is what leads to creation.*” [Pallasmaa, 2005]



# *1. AS AN INTRO*

## **1.1 THE VOID**

Time and space run in parallel enhancing our life experience with tasks, structuring our reality and placing us in niches of our social realm, leading us to discover our intimate place in the world. Is this self awareness process an effortless journey or we find ourselves distracted and distant from our existential need, by an environment offering all possibilities, as the mirrors brought by Columbus to the Indians?

My belief is that if we can stop ourselves from all doing for a moment and distant ourselves only to start again, amazing things would happen; to the self and society, and the human community.

I recognize a need to find some time for the none doing, but most importantly, a need to find some space for the same purpose -or non purpose, as my field of study implies the manipulation of space. The need for none doing in an environment full of actions, is what triggered me to start exploring how architecture can comprise the pause and consequently, how architecture can create the still.

Naming this stop, an architecture of the emptiness, I find myself in wonder of whether there is a definition for what architecture is and whether it contains the void and the empty; if an empty space with no programmatic purpose is considered architecture. An architecture that simulates an empty vessel to be filled with man's existential conditions.

In a reality where our every day functions -places and acts- are represented as dots in space and time continuum, in a reality where we find ourselves as lines that connect those dots, what I would like to offer, is the pause between the dots. This pause is much more than mere nothing; is a structural part of reality, the



*“Finding place”*

*Stockholm, 2011*



space contained in all things, the *chora* as Plato named it. Connecting all dots, providing the time and space for realization of the very same reality.

In the Japanese language and culture, an idea of the pause is represented by the word *ma*. *Ma* means the space in between, the interval space or, translated literally from the Japanese kanji, “*the space between two structural parts*”. In music, *ma*, relates to the rhythm and it is individually manipulated, to form the pause between the notes; in theater it can be interpreted as the dramatic silence between the lines; in painting, *ma* is enhancing the spatial experience. Hence, it is much more than blank space. It is an entity that gives coherence and adds value to the whole.

It could be then, that an architecture of the emptiness, offers more than a place to stop our activities. It manipulates time together with space to create some space and some time, out of the existing place and moment, enhancing the contextual situation, giving coherence and continuity to the urban fabric.



## 1.2 THE PLACE

I was triggered by my experience of Rotterdam and I entered a circle of questions about how to find the way to create still architecture that empties our mind and soul.

In a vibrant built environment, where an architecture of the image dominates, over an architecture for the senses, expressed through monolithic structures, a city where ordinary architecture is not the traditional one but the innovative, glossy one, could it be that an architecture speaking an archaic language directly for the subconscious, consists an innovative act. An architecture out of the ordinary that gives a new approach to seeing things. An architecture so buried in the past that is almost forgotten and in a sense, rediscovered.

My intuition tells me that the answer is yes; this kind of sensory architecture is forgotten or neglected in cities like Rotterdam. In cities like Rotterdam, where the refuge has the most reasons to exist; as Gaston Bachelard writes, for the shelter to fulfill its purpose, there should be a storm running on the outside.

In cities like Rotterdam where the contemporary, demanding, lifestyle places people in niches of the productive system; where social demands are changing every moment, following their -and our- evolutionary curvature; where people, respond to those demands, becoming more ambitious, productive and creative day by day.

My hypothesis is that in those, full of tasks contexts, we loose track of our existential needs. Our deep and ancient desires and needs are neglected, buried underneath layers of cultural demands. Our Western, stiff, male dominated culture is an unfriendly one towards the feminine, loose, recessive part of our existence.

The moments where we distant ourselves from the torrents of information and be really unavailable, together with the places where we can isolate ourselves and allow ourselves to enter a meditative state, are not integrated in the perception of our reality and consequently not integrated in our spatial structures. This is the reason why even in our private sectors, there is always a leak where the vibrancy of our lifestyle is sneaking in.

My proposal for the master thesis is an attempt to integrate a place to stop and breath into the contemporary city model. A place that embraces the moment and the none doing, an island of stillness within an archipelago of lines in our *to do lists*. An empty shell and a shelter in a city environment. Reflecting on primary existential needs, it provides architectural silence to help release the burden of care; reflecting on biological needs, it provides lavatories to help release physical burdens.

Within the charming verbal pictures found in the book "*In praise of Shadows*" by Junihiro Tanizaki, a poetic narration about the Japanese toilet drew my attention. A narration about loneliness. A portrayal of a meditative place surrounded by the sounds of the garden, witnessing the annual circle of seasons, offering a connection with the natural world, at the same moment, comfort to our physical body. [Tanizaki, 2001] For a westerner, the advocacy to this comfort, causes discomfort, but this narration about every day letting go, taught me how the borders between existential and biological needs are loose, in most cases, imaginary, fed by the tyranny of culture.

Answering primary needs of man, this project, addresses an architecture for the senses, experienced in an almost primitive way as it speaks to the subconscious, found to be the one that affects the perception of time, allowing us to rest our body and mind.

This is the kind of architecture that moves me, in the sense that Peter Zumthor describes the kind of architectural creation that speaks to our soul and body, offering something more than a mere experience of space. Offering a place that emotionally affects us and alter our perception of existence and our perception of the contextual world.

In the modern cities where we dwell, constantly surrounded by challenges, the places that comprises only the intermediate and the stop are not considered to reflect to a basic need of mankind or its products. For we, architects, have bigger and more important problems to solve. Before we turn our attention to the existential needs we *have to* solve the practical ones, necessitated by the cultural evolution and urban development.

What we fail to see is that our existence is unbalanced because we refuse to deal with our innermost need for being. In other words, to enjoy the experience we call *life*. As Dr Giorgos Pashalides is advocating “*we are made for enjoying; anything else is digression from our purpose in life*” [Pashalides, 2012]. We, architects build mega- projects to answer mega- problems often forgetting that the act of building could never solve all the problems that are created only by the same act of building. We give fast and sometimes superficial answers to our problems but most importantly, we identify and deal with the wrong, as far as I am concerned, problems.

In this peripheric approach to the problems of mankind, there comes our, architects’, narcissistic syndrome as the need to provide answers, through our architectural practice. In a sense, our need for building leads us to provide fast and anxious solutions just for the sake of the solutions. As we need to be acknowledged we, architects, build, as if the act of building consists something more than the answer to humanity’s problems. The very act of building consists in fact an act of ego. An act of its own. The built, hence, is seen as a signature, an architectural entity detached from the purpose of building. Alvar Aalto wrote that “*form is nothing else but a concentrated wish for everlasting life on earth*”. We, architects, believing that our artifices keep on existing long after we will not, wound this world trying to satisfy our “*mine is bigger than yours*” complex, through architectural signatures in an attempt to counterattack our mortality.



*“Daydreaming”*  
*The Woodland Cemetery,*  
*Stockholm, 2011*



### 1.3 SEEKING WHERE TO SEEK

I wonder, as I find myself part of this stressed and stressful reality, where should I seek the answer for my question *how to create stillness*. Somewhere on the antipodal of an architecture focused on the imagery representation, should lie an architecture so far away from iconic signatures, able to be interpreted as vernacular.

An architecture quiet and modest but revealing undoubted grace and dignity; an architectural manipulation of space, offering soothe, with no need to prove its purpose of existing, through epic structural legacies. Should I define, then, the purpose of building as the sheltering of our existence. The sheltering not only of the physical body but of the mind and soul; the soothe of the fear for the unknown and the understanding of the experience called *life*.

According to Juhani Pallasmaa the role of architecture is “*to mediate between the world and ourselves and to provide a horizon by which to comprehend our existential condition*”. Our architecture becomes our endeavor to understand the world around us. Our architecture’s purpose of existence becomes the mean to approach *our* purpose of existence. A place to filter the natural world through our mortal eyes. Maybe, in vanity, we attempt to create order, out of what we are experiencing as chaos.

Gaston Bachelard writes in *The poetics of space* that “*a house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs, or the illusion, of stability*”. We try to comfort ourselves by creating memories and a sense of belonging; a sense of possession as if we would possess anything more than mere nothing. We define our identities through our edifices, belongings, creations... I wonder how far and how close to this thesis lie myself, as an architect who tries to identify a deeper reason for practicing, am I, by my turn, satisfying my ego, questioning the very act of building, hoping to gain recognition for those acts of mine. I, too, will try to wound this place with my architectural signature, hopping to affect first and foremost my empty self.

Seeking for the way to create emptiness, entering the void, should I study places that alter one’s perception of time, driving one to move and think



*"Soothed"*

*Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art  
Helsinki, 2012*

slower and slower until his reactions fade into nothingness and finds himself so empty inside, that the shell is almost transparent; it is in that very moment, when, emptiness and beauty are allowed to penetrate one's existence; when the place is perceived as extraordinary. The architectural experience, then, nests in one's memory, long after he leaves those, away from this world, extraordinary, places.

Places where time stops as we find ourselves seduced by beauty and charm; focusing on the emotional part of architectural experience; entering a circle of emotional changes; distancing ourselves from rational thinking. An archaic architectural linguistic expression speaking to an internal part of man. Hypothesizing that architecture's muchness lays more on those soft empirical values and less on glossy pages of digital or physical magazines, I orient my studies to those, out of the norm places, in a believe that those places are mirrors reflecting our empty existence; deeply interested on deciphering my object of studies -architecture- and its strong effect on human psyche.

***“Cemeteries, spiritual places, museums: time passes slowly”***

[Hiroshi Naito]

## *PART II : Contact*

The time and space for the none doing is hard to find in this demanding life style where our daily life span is clustered in tasks. The moments and places where one can just face himself are rare in a commodified lifestyle.

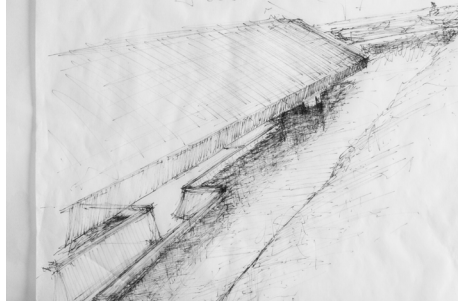
My thesis is that we should give some time for those moments where we are facing our naked selves and we should give some space for those very moments to take place. Those moments where we are unavailable, where we are taking a break, a breath, a stop from the every day flow that we are normally occupied with, in our contemporary cities.

In cities, where architecture is produced, I recognize a superficial and anxious way of building, for the sake of the very act of

building. Cities where ideas and plans are materialized, disregarding any philosophical and existential inquiries, characterizing them as impediments that hold back the architectural creation.

Questioning that creation, on the realm of architectural phenomenology, the first chapter of Part II is addressing an architecture of the mind and the senses, trying to answer one primary defined need of human kind; the need for stillness.

This project is defined as no man's land, built in no man's land. Nevertheless, there is a context that led me on searching for an architecture of the empty; a context hosting an architecture that loudly expresses its



presence. In Rotterdam new needs create new architecture and new urban plans every moment, altering the city's identity, without giving its image any chances of getting old.

Trying to affect a crowd witnessed all the renovation, all the urban and architectural development of the city of Rotterdam, all the disregarding of phenomenological questions by the side of architecture; and has found its niche into a pragmatic designing process; into the wolf's mouth if I may say, I am trying to find my niche, my refuge from the city scape. Cannot imagine a scenery more challenging for a practice distant from the popular way of building. A scenery missing an architecture that gives a sense of stability, an island of stillness into an archipelago of

vibrant and verbose architectural signatures.

The second chapter of Part II, consists an analysis of the city of Rotterdam and the particular site hosting the project, as filtered through a subjective lens, mostly reflecting the reasons that led me into a quest for the stop and the city's role into forming this stop.

Enhanced with photography and entitling, the narration of the place, filtered through personal experiences, consists a memoir; a subjectified analysis of the context and a representation of the world through one's eyes.



*“Building building”*

*Rotterdam, 2013*



## 2. APPROACH

### 2.1 PROBLEM BASED LEARNING

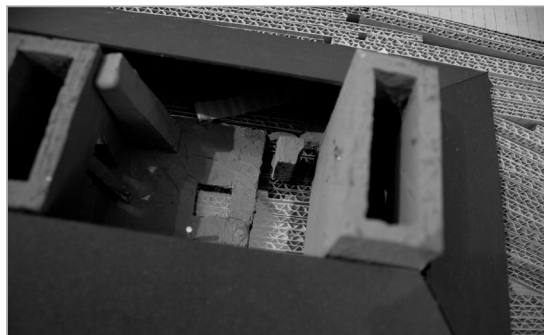
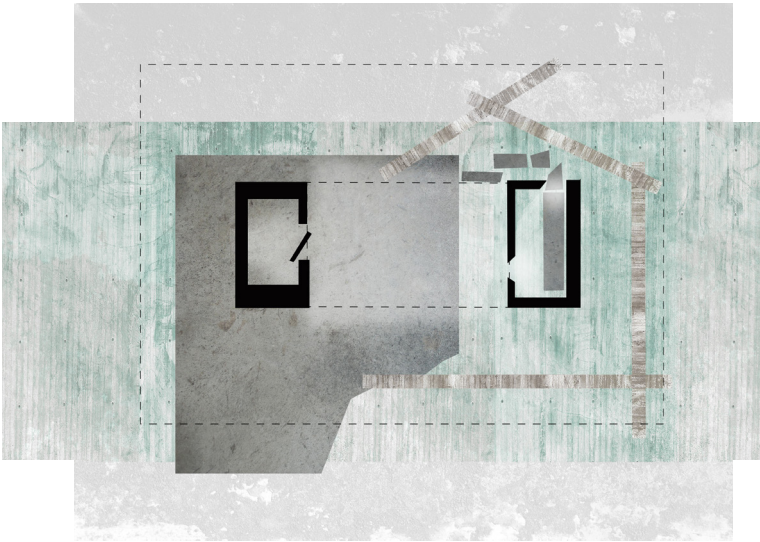
Problem based learning is a studying method where competence skills are acquired acknowledging a problematic aspect in a science's realm and focusing on providing specified solutions. Innovation lies on the definition from the researcher of the sphere of his practice.

Intuitively believing that the architectural practice responds to the various problems that the same architecture has created by the same practice, I recognize us, architects, bound to an endless circle of questions and answers; to an endless circle of architectural solutions, given in response to the spatial problems caused by the very act of building.

*“Why architecture is self-referential and self-motivated?”*, Juhani Pallasmaa asks in his essay *‘Six themes for the next Millennium’*. *“Why are narcissism and self-indulgence in our work, replacing empathy and social conscience?”*. After examining the cultural conditions on the beginning of 21st century in order to understand why architecture's role is uncertain, he argues that architecture as defined by the modern movement, is a representation of the physical world, meaning a representation of the space and time structure as man is experiencing it.

Our culture's most vivid characteristics, such as commodity, lead to a tendency for time and space compression. A compression, visible to social and cultural aspects of our lives, that disorients both receivers and emitters of art and architecture, into a false image of the world; into a fusion where time struggles to find its place to an only temporal space.

Tradition and history become part of this commodified representation only as flatten scenographic illustrations. Adopting David Harvey's quote *“in the*



*Early suggestions for the project  
A dense "overloaded" space under a roof is it  
capable of letting you breath?*

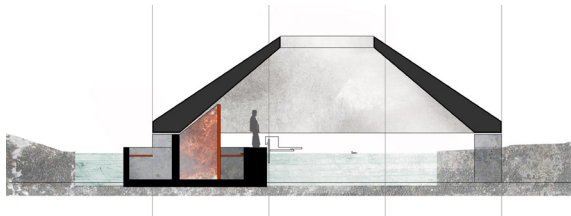
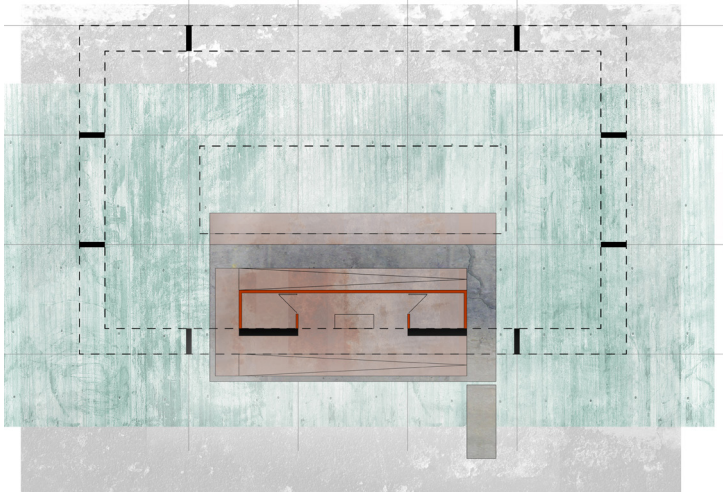
*era of mass television, there has emerged an attachment to surfaces rather than roots”* and reflecting upon the focusing, by art and architecture, on the problem of the representation itself rather than the representation of the experienced world, Pallasmaa is borrowing Italo Calvino’s chapter titles for a lecture that was never substantiated, and develops them into six terms, advocating their reconsideration by the architectural realm.

Identifying an excess of imagery information in contemporary cities, the problematic aspect of building is addressed in this master thesis as: One fails to enjoy what is there to be enjoyed as one’s perception is distracted by the contextual urban fabric.

While this project criticizes the reasons and the obsession for building, it would be utopian and arrogant to criticize the act of building itself; as any theoretical approach gains its strength and reasoning once followed by a haptic practice. Nevertheless, challenging the way and result of building, I would like to focus on an architecture of simplicity and symbolism, where architectural elements are addressed as abstractions and gestures, evoking feelings and memories, rather than concrete, finalized statements.

Criticizing the tendency for building more than an audience -maybe an idealized one, nevertheless still an audience- is capable to accumulate, I would like to define the term “capacity” as not only the numbers of people, their vibrations or the dimensions of a space, but as the capability of the mind to accumulate information. My hypothesis is that the more pluralistic the architectural expression, the smaller the distance from a point of informational satiety, where, occupied by imagery information, the mind is incapable of accumulating the appeased image of the world offered by architecture, hence, architecture fails.

The question I ask, then, and address with my thesis would be *how to produce architecture that raises a feeling of emptiness, leaving the mind open and unoccupied; architecture that speaks in an unaccented language directly to the unconscious. Consequently, how to summon phenomenology, in a journey in architectural synthesis, through understanding and towards awareness.*



*Early suggestions for the project II*  
*Functions found underneath the roof were enclosed in a box-like space, imprisoning the lightness of the roof in a static, forced relationship.*

The soft values, that Juhani Pallasmaa recognizes, I would like to decipher, aiming to an almost sacred architectural result, sensorily and holistically experienced; to decipher the world of architecture, that, although it seems as if characterized by its cover images, my intuitive belief searches for a deeper structural layer, where muchness of quality lies, anticipating to be discovered and enjoyed.

#### A B O U T   S U S T A I N A B I L I T Y

The following cited part is derived from the author's essay for the course *Architectural Concepts in Integrated Design*, Msc in Architecture and Design, Aalborg University, spring semester 2012.

*“sus-tain [from Latin sustinre : sub-, from below; + tenere, to hold;]  
1. To keep in existence; maintain.”*

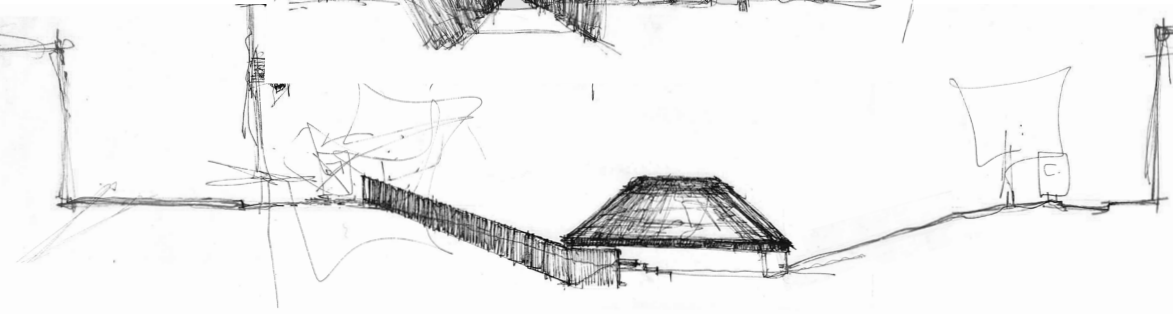
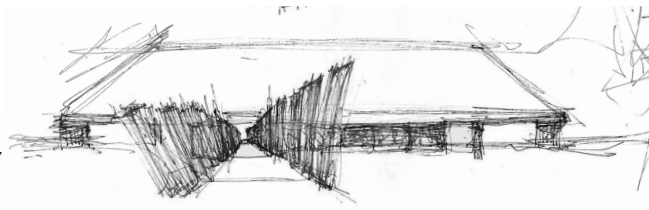
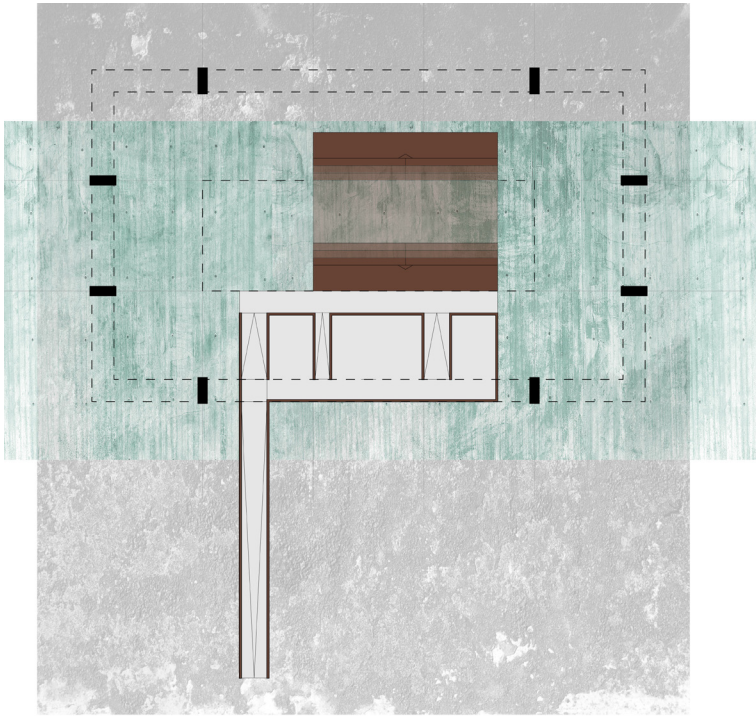
*[dictionary.reference.com]*

*“With concentration in the term of sustainability, architecture is trying to re-establish the connection between man and his surroundings. The new generation of engineers are struggling to answer architecture's call for users' comfort with technical means and innovative technologies, creating buildings whose performance is following the more and more strict applied measures. Comfort and quality are often documented by data exported from technical sources such as computer software and table sheets.*

*An increasing number of buildings are designed aiming to assure user's comfort with affection towards the energy consumption and the renewable sources. However there is still often a gap between sustainable design and architectural quality. Solutions for a green result are often applied like a glossy finishing layer to fancy up the final surface.*

*Taking a look into history, we can observe architecture's addiction to types of designing, and architects' adoption to architectural movements such as functionalism, post-modernism or minimalism. In an almost religious way, they try to fit themselves into those -isms, without understanding the need that lead those frames to appear in the architectural history. [Hardy, 2008]”*

*[Karagiannidou Eleni, Msc2, AC]*



*Early suggestions for the project III  
Elements with distinctive character, competing and shadowing  
each other do they form a soothing experience?*

On the definition of the term sustainability (to keep on existing) lies the deeper and most honest truth, led to the term's implication on architecture's realm. Deeper than any analysis on sustainable strategies and design, lies architecture's response to the fear of non-existence. Addressing the implication of sustainability, as an architecture that deciphers and reflects on the primary existential needs of mankind, for keeping on, not only existing, but evolving.

***“Sustainable design is not the new trend, the new movement that once followed, architects will come up to date. It is a deep and essential need for organic architecture in the true, not stylistic, sense.”*** [Davey, 2009]

As Steven Holl is advocating in his essay *Phenomenology of architecture*, for becoming aware of our existential conditions in space, we should individually connect with our *inner shelf*, disregarding any excess of vibrancies surrounding our routine. He argues though, that in a life full of tasks and distractions, humanity is distant from its existential conditions. [Holl, 2006]

Contemporary commoditive lifestyle dims the question of which are the essential needs. He wonders whether, mankind is able to fully experience the enjoyment derived from its perception about the world; perception that is essential for the evolution of mankind. Whether through its walking towards technological innovation, mankind is evolving or whether it is shrinking. For it is important to transgress the distractions coming from an overload with information environment and center in our psyche and spirit.

For architectural incurable narcissism led to the raise of structural signatures, emerging a devotion to the image of individual selves, carrying mankind away from the quest of its original existential purpose.





*Detail of railing, Querini Stampalia bridge,  
by Carlo Scarpa*



## 2.2 METHODOLOGY

### C a s e S t u d i e s

Borrowing Steven Holl's method of case studying, where one project is dissected into a series of spatial gestures similar to the way architecture is experienced; rarely as a whole and mostly as a collection of moments, applications considered relevant to a sensuous approach or as inspirations, are used as narrations, for stressing emotions and archetypes, found to support an architecture of the emptiness. [Holl, 2006]

Hence, as architectural creations are considered as collections of answers to different questions, the case studies as a design tool, are used not in the traditional study of one project as a whole, but as studies of gestures, feelings or abstractions. Answers to architectural questions found in clusters of the built, not necessarily form a holistic result, able to answer all questions. Particularly, none of the examples of ecclesiastic architecture is able to answer at once, this specific approach of *this* Chapel for Atheist; nevertheless, the pieces to assemble that, which complies, are to be found in clusters of the built.

### I n v o c a t i o n O n A r c h e t y p e s

Recognizing archetypes as images, patterns and symbols derived from past collective experiences of mankind, but represented in the individual conscious as a generic understanding of the world, an architecture of symbolism is emerged to establish a link with the subconscious.

In "*The poetics of space*", Gaston Bachelard separates human memory into the collective and personal memory. The collective memory is the one that we inherit via our DNA, it concerns everything humanity has learned over the centuries.

Noam Chomsky's theory on syntax, often termed *generative grammar*, states that linguistic knowledge becomes a possession, as a body of rules and much of this knowledge is innate. The sum of the innate knowledge is often termed *universal grammar*. According to Chomsky, the limited time needed for a child to learn a language is a proof that *universal grammar* exists.

According to Daniel Schacter, memory can be sub-divided into *episodic memory* and *semantic memory*. The first consists of memories of specific experiential events that can be recalled as facts. *Semantic memory*, on the other hand, is a more abstract record of concepts and general knowledge about the world. It is independent of personal experiences and although semantic memories may once have had a context, they end up standing alone idealized into symbols. [Schacter, 1996]

According to Gaston Bachelard, this general, ecumenical part of memory is the reason why architecture can arouse feelings and simulate an innermost part of human soul. He assumes that architecture speaks to the internal, instinctive part of man.

Juhani Pallasmaa in his essay, *the two languages of architecture*, claims that architecture and art have a superficial and an inner structure. To communicate the two layers, he reflects on Noam Chomsky's theory on the language, its grammar and the grammar's structure. Synthesizing a message, a speaker has to transform his inner feelings and meanings into sounds and pauses, synthesizing a whole and releasing it to the listener. The listener, then, will transform all those sounds into his inner meanings, memories and knowledge. By this narration, Noam Chomsky described how a message is transmitted from one's subconsciousness to the other's; although it seems that the surface structure consists the language, by the sounds and the pauses, in reality, messages are exchanged through an internal, deeper structure.

Parallelizing this thesis first to art and then to architecture, Juhani Pallasmaa narrates how a piece has a superficial structure, saying its style or content and a second, deeper structure that subconsciously emits messages. The architectural experience or critic, often stays on the analysis or the physicality of the surface structure, whereas, messages can be emitted subconsciously, stimulating an emotional reaction. The architectural experience then, can exist in a level, lower than the formalistic one, where the rational interpretation might fail. The architect, according to Juan Pablo Bonta, can be caught to the surface structure, trying to transport his messages, consciously and rationally, where the only architectural communication is interpretation. [Derived from Pallasmaa, 2005]

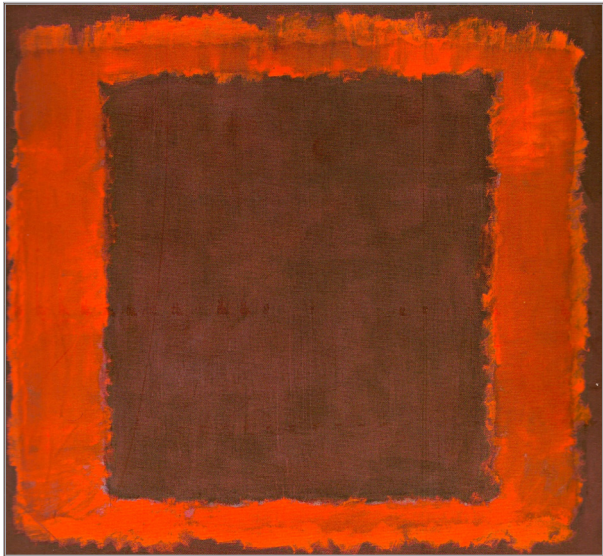
Combining Bachelard and Chomsky may I hypothesize that, for architecture to communicate, it has to speak to an internal part of man. The architectural language, has to have a deep structure, that evokes emotional reactions, connected to our collective memory and based on archetypes. The architect Colin St John Wilson describes one of his architectural experiences as if he was receiving a code, so direct and vivid that the experience was interwoven between imagination and physical world. He assumes that “*this code is the first language we ever learn and it is recalled to us through art*”. [Derived from Pallasmaa, 2005]

#### I n t u i t i o n

As Peter Zumthor quotes, architecture is experienced by feeling and not by thinking. Taking the initiative to rephrase, architecture is created by feeling and not by thinking. Spatial configurations based on experiences and memories are extracted more by one’s intuition, and less by repeating architecture recipes that often lead to panaceas; primitiveness and subconsciousness are the most appropriate places to seek for the synthesis of a sacred architectural experience.

According to Glenn Murcutt, the creative process is not about creativity in the design sense, but the process to a discovery [interview by Aleš Vodopivec in the University of Ljubljana]. Evolution, according to him, happened through the hand and eye communication. The eye-hand arrives to solution long before the rational part of the individual realizes it. Murcutt reflects on the essay called *The thinking hand*, by Juhani Pallasmaa, where, using Einstein’s words, Pallasmaa is acknowledging sensory thinking and embodied intuition as means of deciphering the world and as tools for artistic creation. Einstein suggests that a sensory factor is present in the artistic creation as much as in the scientific. Pallasmaa advocates, that our senses “are thinking” and answering our life experiences in an unconscious yet correct way. Our body knows the answers that our mind skips, by trying to rationalize the world. [Pallasmaa, 2005]

In a lecture called “*the dialogue between art and science in modern art*”, organized by Aalborg University, professor Else Bukdahl, states that through



*Jackson Pollock No6*

*Studying Martin Rothko in an attempt to  
integrate colour to architecture*

art and science, we, mere mortals, try to decipher the world around us, to recognize order in chaos, patterns and principles in the natural world. Bukdahl acknowledges that artists' dedication and diorasis (the ability to read between the lines) led to discoveries of scientific principles long before science really got there. According to a study on Jackson's Pollock painting No6, by the Australian physicist and artist Richard P. Taylor, 25 years before the discovery of fractals from science, Pollock was representing fractal patterns in an attempt to portray what he was experiencing as reality.

I cannot help myself asking, though, whether the fractals found in Pollock's painting were created at a moment where he was trying to visualize his intuitive perception about the world or it is a representation of a kinetic intuition that dictated a repetition in movements. At any case, either kinetic or intellect intuition, Pollock drew similar patterns in different scales with the largest to be more than 1000 times bigger than the smallest one, patterns that exists in the experienced natural world, at a point that there was any proof about their existence.

This chapter about intuition ends with Rene Huyghe's words derived from Juhani Pallasmaa's *Encounters*:

***“Art looks into life’s very heart and lays bare its unconscious secrets, that it contains the most honest confessions, confessions that have within them the least element of calculation and must therefore be accounted exceptionally sincere.”*** [Pallasmaa, 2005]



*“Consult the genius of the place in all;  
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;  
Or helps th’ ambitious hill the heav’ns to  
scale,  
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;  
Calls in the country, catches opening  
glades,  
Joins willing woods, and varies shades  
from shades,  
Now breaks, or now directs, th’ intending  
lines;  
Paints as you plant, and, as you work,  
designs”.*

[Alexander Pope, Epistle IV, to Richard  
Boyle, Earl of Burlington]



*“Finding place II”*

*Rotterdam, 2012*



## 3. ROTTERDAM (or someplace else)

### 3.1 FLATNESS AND THE LACK OF IDENTITY

The Netherlands is undoubtedly flat but Rotterdam's flatness relies also to a significant non-topographical reason. The whole city's bombardment during WWII and total destruction led to the almost total reconstruction.

The city's flatness is particularly stressed in its lack of identity due to the lack of a historical fabric. The lack of history, set the terrain for a no barriers and no hindrances place making, leading to architectural freedom; there was nothing, so it could be anything. Memories of the old urban conditions were left to rot in the past as, no longer valid, parameters; the lack of identity, became the city's new identity. Rotterdam was built once again, starting from scratch, with no barriers in architectural form or urban structure.

The city became the playground and the place to be for architects and urban planners, setting the terrain for bold applications and experimentations, mostly in the urban domain, that could not be applied anywhere else; turning the image of the city to a spread landmark. Undoubtedly beautiful masterpieces of architecture and engineering, have arisen from this boldness like the mysteriously elegant despite its size, Erasmus bridge.

Consequently, undoubtedly ugly architecture, resulted from this, non-barriers, approach; represented mostly through shiny, office buildings, as would it be expected, but also, in more romantic, intimate uses of public spaces. Proud example, the new MVRDV's plan for the open, public, market in Blaak square, concretizing a charming, atmospheric and ancient function, to an, unable to transpire any elegance or sensitivity towards the patterns of society and the human scale, architectural *product*.



*“Stretching”*  
Rotterdam, 2012

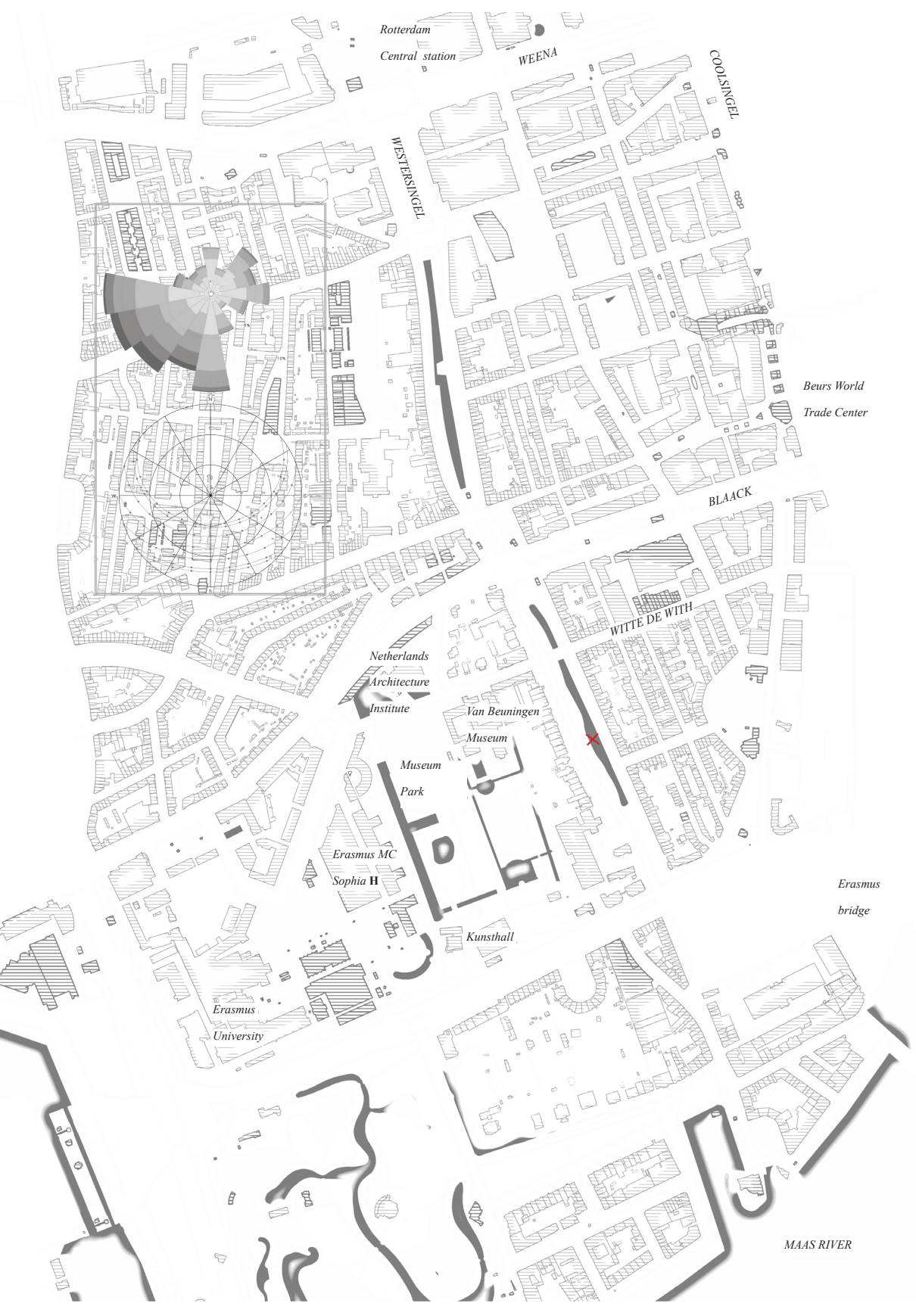
#### Architecture and the lack of rootedness

When OMA moved to Rotterdam from London, a change has established and a new era has started. Rem Koolhaas's provoking architecture and planning attitude, formed Rotterdam's architecture image and projected it world-widely giving the city, the reputation of the place to be for ambitious young architects. Popular architecture offices attracted other offices and international interns, creating a dense network of people; a new branch of the architectural community.

Rotterdam could be a living, supporting example of Richard Florida's questioned theory, about the concentration of *creative class* to contemporary cities. Florida advocates that cities highly populated with the representatives of science, education, art and various creative professions, attract more creative people and it is this *creative class*, responsible for not only the evolution but the economical growth of cities [Florida, 2002]. Seems that just like supermarkets are built next to other supermarkets, culture attracts culture. The Netherlands Architecture Institute, the Berlage institute, the Technical University of Delft architecture school and a lot of galleries and cultural spaces hosting exhibitions and festivals, made Rotterdam a vibrant, interesting and constantly progressing city.

Job opportunities and low rent for office spaces, make people move to Rotterdam *not to find love, but to find their professional path and make everything possible*. Rotterdam is seen as a *real* city with *real* opportunities rather than a scenographic, picturesque one, posing on postal cards. [Upmeyer, 2006] Maybe that is the reason why people determinately walking with purpose and destination, looking all straight ahead, like they can already see the moment when they reach their working place, the supermarket, their gym. No room for promenading in the streets of Rotterdam; since destination is all that matters, consisting the buffered space and time, as lost in transportation. No room for praying in the Rotterdam too.

In a multi cultural city, where all levels of society speak English, a lack of rootedness, spirituality and tradition has raised. Most of churches are left ruined or renovated, hosting a different function, whilst the Netherlands is one of the most secular European countries. For someone who wants to take a breathe, yes, Rotterdam is a hostile environment.



Rotterdam

Central station

WEENA

COOLSINGEL

WESTERSINGEL

Beurs World  
Trade Center

BLAAK

WITTE DE WIT

Netherlands  
Architecture  
Institute

Van Beuningen  
Museum

Museum  
Park

Erasmus MC  
Sophia H

Erasmus  
bridge

Kunsthall

Erasmus  
University

MAAS RIVER

### 3.2. TAKING A CLOSER LOOK...

The city is developed on the two sides of Maas river, with the Southern part having always been neglected; although hosting industrial and residential use, it holds the records for the criminal activity giving it a bad reputation. In a sense, Erasmus bridge connects the developing, financially evolving North, with the evil South. This narration focuses on the city's financial and cultural center, on the North of Maas river starting from the central station, acknowledging that, the heart of any city, the first visiting part and the strongest landmark is its central station.

From Weena to Erasmus bridge, lies the commercial and business heart of Rotterdam, with the highest and shiniest buildings consisting the busiest, loudest and most vibrant area during working and night hours.

The ambitious urban plans of the city, are predicting an axis with skyscrapers, along Coolingsingel, a plan that will be realized during the coming years, having partly concretized with examples like the Nationale Nederlanden office tower next to the central station and the Mondevideo hotel next to the bridge. This ambitious plan, part of an attempt for connection between the two parts of the city, names officially Coolingsingel as the major business center of Rotterdam. Along Coolingsingel, streets of different character are crossing. The world trade center, standing proudly at the end of a pedestrian streets network of boutiques, represents Rotterdam's face of consumerism. Witte de With street, also perpendicularly connected with coolingsingel, consists the most scenographic place as it hosts various galleries and exhibition spaces along with recreational spaces. It is an area particularly active during night, integrating art into entertainment. Rotterdammers love multipurpose spaces; theatrical acts and art installations are hosted in bars, cafe and all kind of "inappropriate" spaces; it seems that, both artists and audience, are adapted to an informal way of presenting and experiencing art. For Rotterdammers, nothing is too progressive or too provocative and too many exhibitions or too much exposed art is never enough to for their satiety.

Attracting my attention as it consists the stop by its own, looking like it cuts the city into half, Westersingel axis, runs in parallel with Coolingsingel but in the opposite side of the mirror. Westersingel is a green axis with qualitative open air spaces, water, vegetation, a slash in the city's surface, where horizontality





***Vibrance around the site.***

*The gradient in colour is simulating the rate of this circulation of both cars and pedestrians, with the most reddish representing the pick points like crossroads where movement is gathered and the softer colored the less vibrant areas.*


*This representation is chosen because is a way to simulate also the level of noise pollution around the site, with the intensity of the colour portraying the sound level.*

*The dark grey color represents the water ponds. Imagery, the area of interest is connected with the museum park as the city is developed in two poles. A North one, characterised by high, shiny, commercial buildings and a South one characterized by horizontality, natural recreation and spaces hosting culture.*



*Picture taken under the undoubtedly beautiful  
Erasmus bridge  
Rotterdam, 2012*

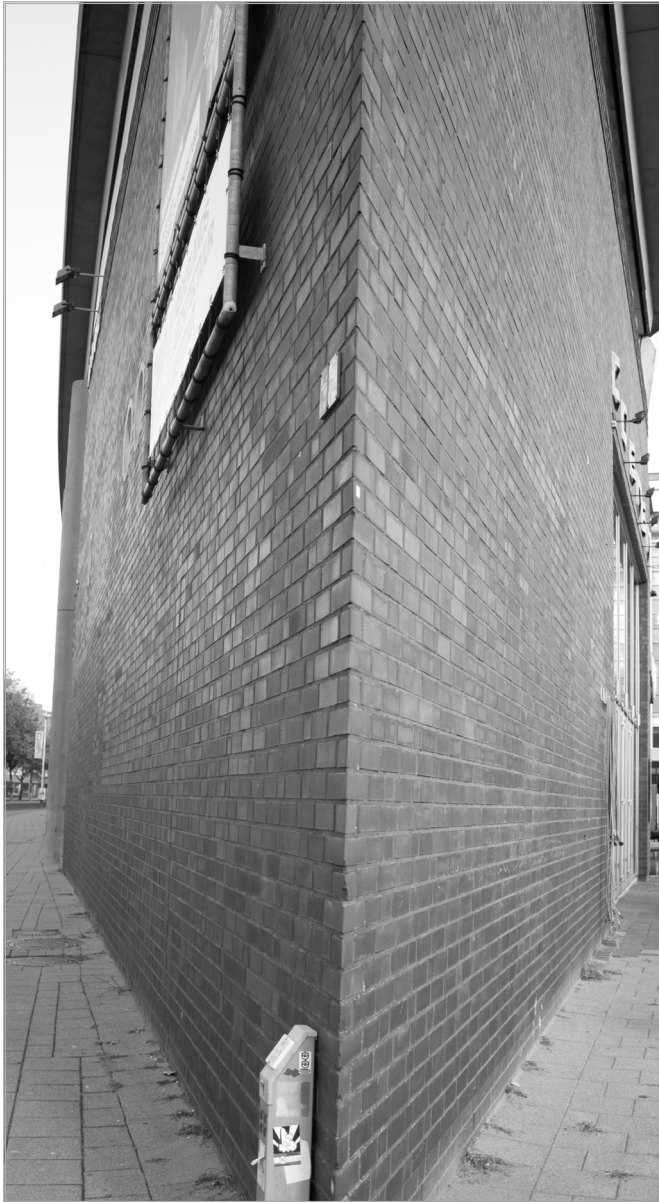




*On the map, a representation of the higher than 6 floors buildings. Mostly found on the North and East part of the city center. The height raise is fading away towards the West and South, where residential, low height buildings are developed.*

*Towards south, the scenery is calming down with the green and water elements almost connected in a network providing the possibility for promenading. Element of antithesis the monstrous Erasmus Hospital standing next to the museum park.*





***“This is NOT distortion of the perception”***

*The Netherlands Architecture Institute*

*Rotterdam, 2012*



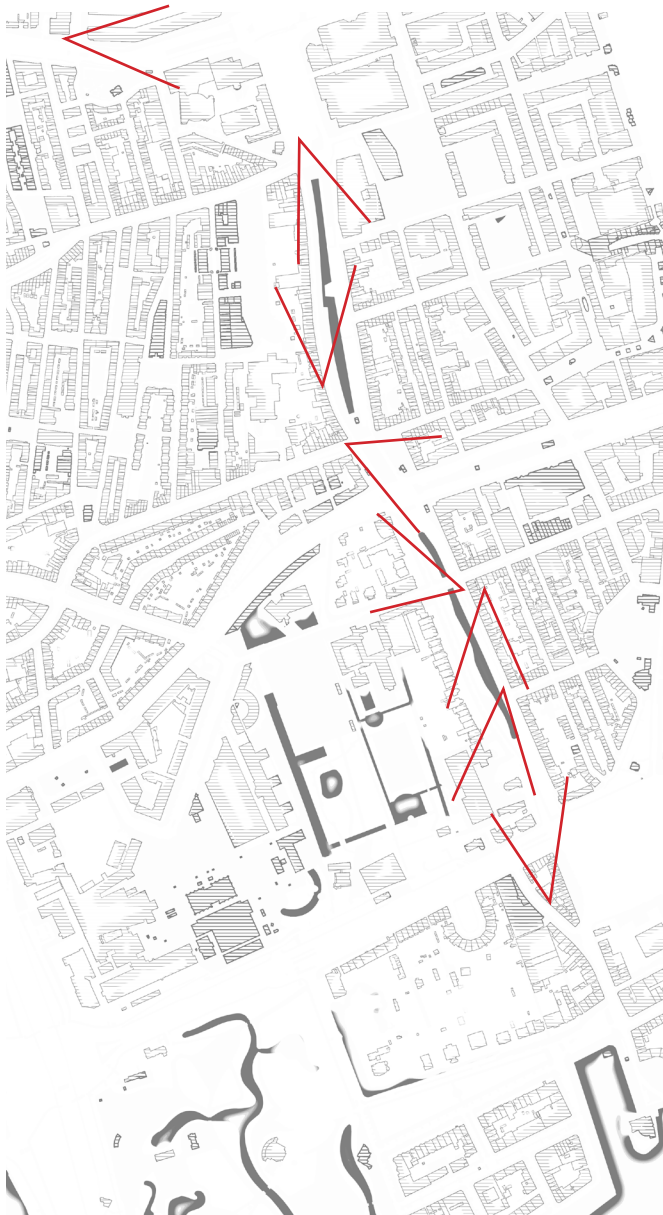
*Erasmus MC Hospital / OMA installation on the  
Museum park  
Rotterdam, 2012*

dominates over the verticality of the city center. However it has very little to do with the *Olympian calmness*. This area of stillness, stands as island surrounded by a storming sea, rather than non-moving water. A no man's land, an intermediate, a stop. An opportunity to get in touch with the natural elements, to take some, distance from the noisy surrounding city. Connected with all major areas of the city center, it hosts all kind of private and public traffic with the tram being the most dominant.

The Eastern part of the city center are, the inside of the facade consisted by those major axis, is characterized by residential use; with narrow faced, three floors high, brick buildings, high ceiling and big windows apartments and doorsteps painted in bright colours, the area responds to the modern Dutch residential model. With reflection to the human proportions, the building blocks on the inside of the major commercialized streets such as Coolsingel, Blaak and Weena, reproduce some of the characteristics of the neighborhood, contradicting the verbose expression of the *city's facade*.

The two maps, visually point out the character of the surrounding areas of the plot. The first one, the vibrancy, noise and the movement of people; with the vibrancy leveled down moving from North to South. The second, on the next page, is portraying the high raise, newly built part of Rotterdam. One pole represents the vertical, the glossy and the verbose; the other, the horizontal, the natural, the rough and the humble presence of nature. Westersingel lays somewhere in the middle of those two poles having characteristics of both. It does not have a vibrant, loud terrain like Coolsingel, and it does not have a recreational, developed green area like Witte de With or museum park. It is just the intermediate.

Taking an even closer look or the site analysis Acknowledging qualities named as ecumenical, lying in this green area, I intuitively try to portray and document through photography, with given effort to the caption as equal part of the story. Starting from Central station heading South, all the way down on Westersingel, the following photographic documentary is an attempt to capture the *genius loci* of the place and justify that there is no better place for an architecture of the emptiness than the urban void itself.





***“On your own risk”***

*Rotterdam central station and Nationale*

*Nederlanden tower*

*Rotterdam, 2012*





*“Views”*  
*Rotterdam, 2012*



*“Views II”*

*Weena and the Rotterdam central station*

*Rotterdam, 2012*



*“Flatness”*

*The major crossroad. On the background, Witte de*

*With street.*

*Rotterdam, 2012*





*“Elements of synthesis”*

*Rotterdam, 2012*



*“Elements of synthesis II”*

*Rotterdam, 2012*



*“Elements of synthesis III”*

*Rotterdam, 2012*





*"In retrospect"*  
Rotterdam, 2012

The first part is a ditch between two, vertically developed shores. The attention is drawn by the dominant built, whereas water and greenery, function on the background, below eye level. Maybe that is the result of the body's attempt to adapt on the context, as a kinetic mimesis of architecture, or it could be that, to catch the whole image, the focus point is set higher.

Few trees, in regular pace, enhance the experience of the built as they were predicted in the area's master plan, rather than creating a qualitative green space. The few benches, also in regular pace, lie empty, probably in lack of qualitative views and silence. Purchase and sale of goods and services nest on the ground floors of office towers and controlled motorized traffic create an ideal shopping street; the first part of Westersingel is not estimated for its recreational qualities but for its offered merchandise. Here, the shopping district begins, ending in the World Trade Center; the consumership of Rotterdam.

This first part ends, at a major crossroad running on top of a bridge; water and greenery are no longer present as a tile desert is unfolded towards all directions. Trams, cars, pedestrians, bicycles and the metro exits force the eyes and the mind into constant movement in an attempt to catch all information. Nevertheless the distractions, the openness is soothing after the verticality and density of the first part.

Across the crossroad, the greenery starts once again, this time a little more rough, a little more rude, reflecting more to a part of nature, than any master plan. The city looks as if surrounds this green area with its vehicular traffic, making it hard for me to find a way to cross all routes and step on the grass. The green is not meant to be walked; it represents literally the colour to look at, rather than the space to be at. Once crossing the streets, bicycle lanes, pavements and tram lanes, once found myself walking on the grass, the surrounding buildings seem far away. As if the city distanced its self from me for I have rejected it.

I wonder whether the people still walking on the pavements, have any clue of what lies on the other side of the street, where there is no tilling, no hard flooring and no rush.



*“Emptiness”*  
Rotterdam, 2012

Sequentially the scenery is witnessing a change. The built becomes lower and rougher and the natural element vivid and anarchic. From the point I stand, horizontality dominates. The lower, from the street, water level and the slopping banks make the space experienced as contained, as if this water pond and greenery is another “room” where I entered; more silent, more bright and more seductive. By now the city is blurred and the reflections on the water more and more vivid. It is getting quiet and it feels easier to stay and continue walking by the shore rather than cross the tram lines and street, to reach the pavement again.

Surprisingly, charming elements start to appear like a tree in the middle of the water and the small valley lying on its shadow. Imagining someone lying underneath this shadow, incepted on my thinking, the idea of an architecture of stillness, on top of, this still, water.

The seduction continues as I meet beautiful trees, beautifully reflected, and the effortless movement of the ducks, giving purpose for the area to exist.

The elements of synthesis are already there. What needs to be done is for the architecture to frame them, use them as if they were materials, and offer them back to the citizens. As in this life full of distractions, we often get distracted...

Derived from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*:

*Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?*

*The Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.*

*Alice: I don’t much care where.*

*The Cat: Then it doesn’t much matter which way you go.*

*Alice: ...so long as I get somewhere.*

*The Cat: Oh, you’re sure to do that, if only you walk long enough.”*

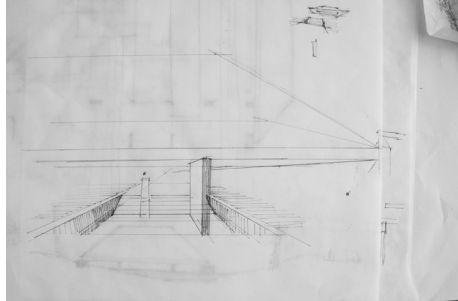
[Carroll, 2009]

## *PART III : Awake*

Seeking the reasons why architecture's role is undefined in today's scenery, Juhani Pallasmaa starts by defining art and architecture as the representation of contextual reality. In an era where fashion has replaced comfort, art and architecture are focusing on the representation itself, as crafts of the image. Even architecture has lost its plasticity as a sculptural creation developed in three, or more, dimensions; yet it is considered as a visual expression of surfaces, offering spacial experiences way distant from sensory ones.

Juhani Pallasmaa borrows Italo Calvino's titles for a lecture that was never substantiated, alters their meaning to architectural



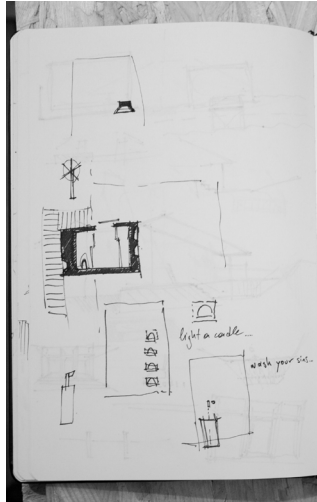
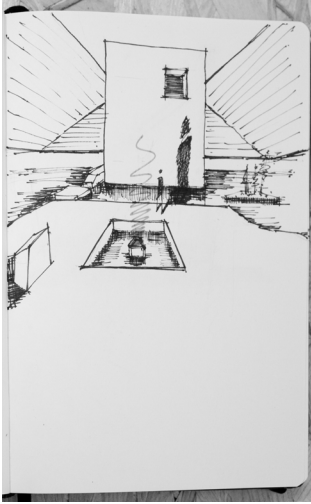


qualitative parameters and develops them into six terms whose incorporation or reconsideration in the architectural realm, could endow back to architectural scenery some of its charm.

Although Juhani Pallasmaa, in his “*six themes for the next Millennium*”, develops six terms based and parallelized with Italo Calvino’s unfinished lecture’s topics, I am taking the initiative to develop those scemes ordered in my own interpretation for my narration to flow easier.

Starting by the term *IDEALIZATION*, as I acknowledge that the first and foremost characteristic of my work is not very distant

to Alfred North Whitehead’s definitions of *religion* “[...] *a vision of something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest*”, [Whitehead, 1925]; trying to decipher and summon the following four schemes -*AUTHENTICITY, SLOWNESS, PLASTICITY and SENSUOUSNESS*- as a discussion about integration would be more than unrespectfully naive; concluding and reflecting on the last chapter *SILENCE*; I am trying to alliance phenomenology on my quest for the architecture of the emptiness.



*Early ideas derived from my sketchbook.*

*Up left a fireplace is enhancing the experience leaving shadows on the wall of a concrete core; the core's intimate interior (right), frames the sky and the non-moving water. Down left, a study of reflections and down right a second core with facilities and lockers; "Light a candle" is a symbolism referring to "lock your phone and other items, and become unavailable".*

## 4. SIX THEMES FOR EMPTINESS

### 4.1 IDEALIZATION

Juhani Pallasmaa starts the chapter *IDEALIZATION* stating that the contemporary world is unbalanced due to the absence of focus towards humanity's existential concerns, from the side of architectural, but also any other, creation. Cultural demands set humanity apart from its understanding of its essential needs, misleading it to false ideals.

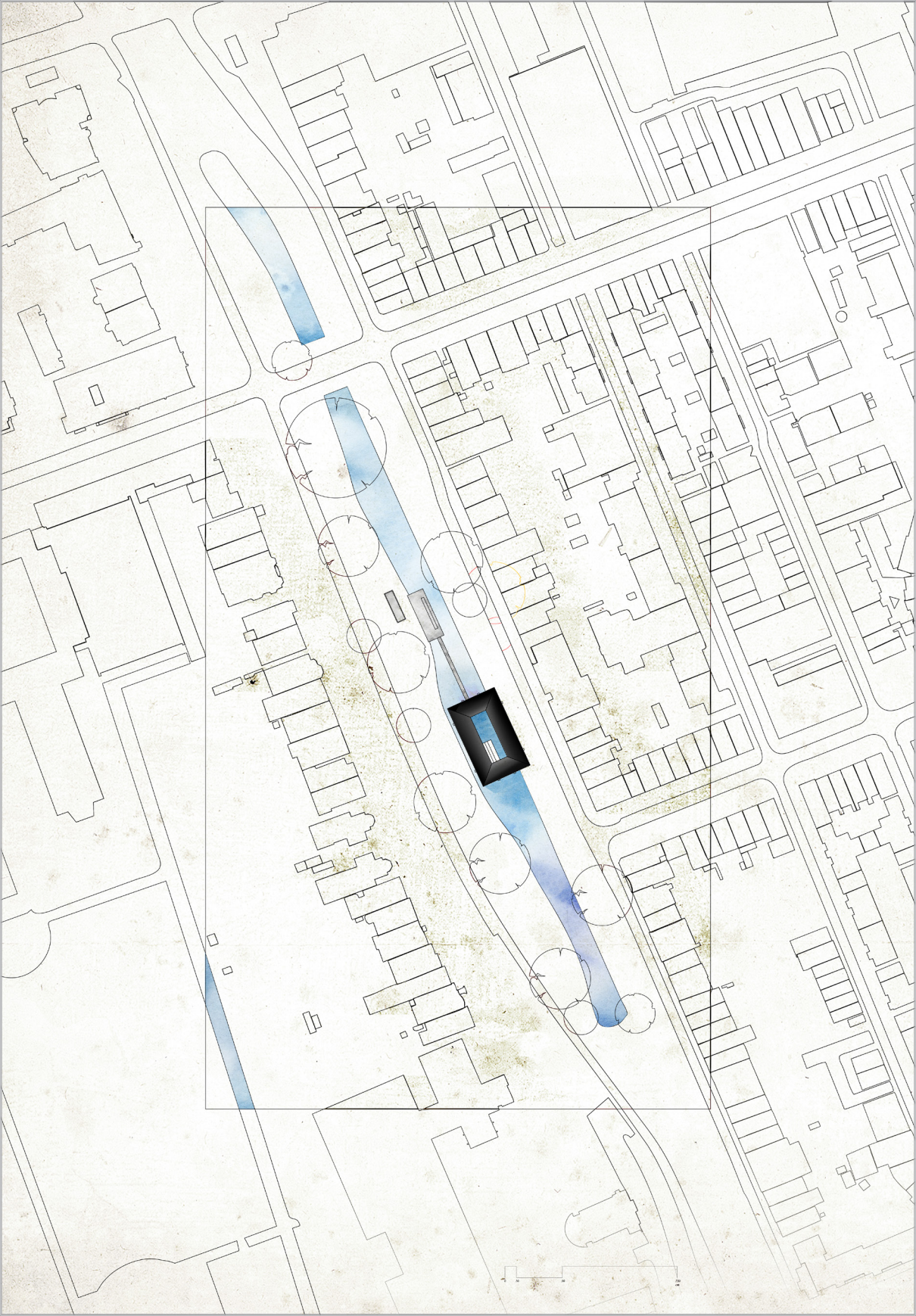
In this false direction, away from crucial transcendent questions and responses, the need for individual reconsideration of humanity's values is essential for the establishment of islands of romanticization into a rationalised context.

Into the archipelago of architectural applications, that had resulted to a fragmented architectural image, idealistic initiatives, projecting the image of a perfect world, re-establish a sense of coherence, meaning and hope. For positivism to dominate over despair and reconnect architectural realm to a phenomenological approach distancing the first from commodified rational demands.

Juhani Pallasmaa argues that once followed, those rational demands, distract architecture from its purpose, which is the understanding of man's existential conditions; hence, the genuine artist and architect should and ought to integrate in his sphere of visions and wishes *the hypostatization of an ideal view of life*; for a dignified practice, not surrendered to any social demands; for an architecture freed from commodification that offers places of soothe where we fearlessly daydream.

The architectural realm, hence, if it could be parallelized with a living organism, is called to decide whether those individual empathic approaches would be declined or accepted. In the first scenario, where architecture's incapability, as a science, to embrace individual empathic elements, leads





to an architectural acampsia; stereotypes and panaceas, often disconnected from human nature and memory, try to answer the innermost need for comfort and enjoyment. An, image focused, architecture of fashion, built on a superficial approach, where styles are repeated, following stylistically the formalistic obsessions of the era, rejecting to appease any, out of the norm, individualization.

On the opposite side, lays an architecture of accommodation and reconciliation, that, according to Juhani Pallasmaa is based on images rooted in our common memory. An architecture that embraces humanity's existential identity, and soothes it, offering a comforting shelter.

It is this kind of empathic and humble individualization -and I would like to add feminine and maternal- as Juhani Pallasmaa characterizes it, that architecture needs the most, to eternalize and preserve its connection with phenomenology.

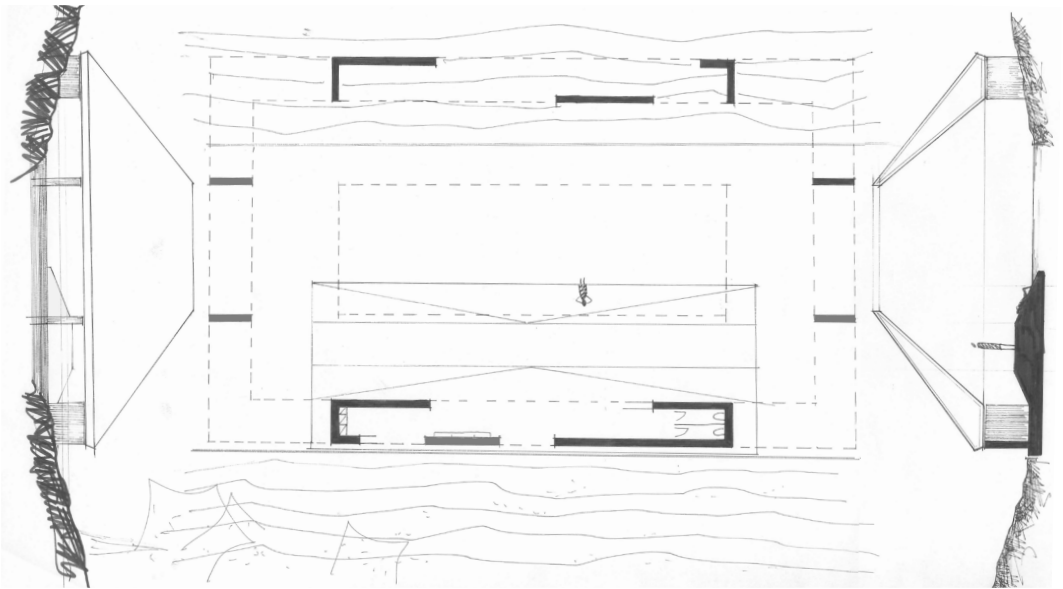
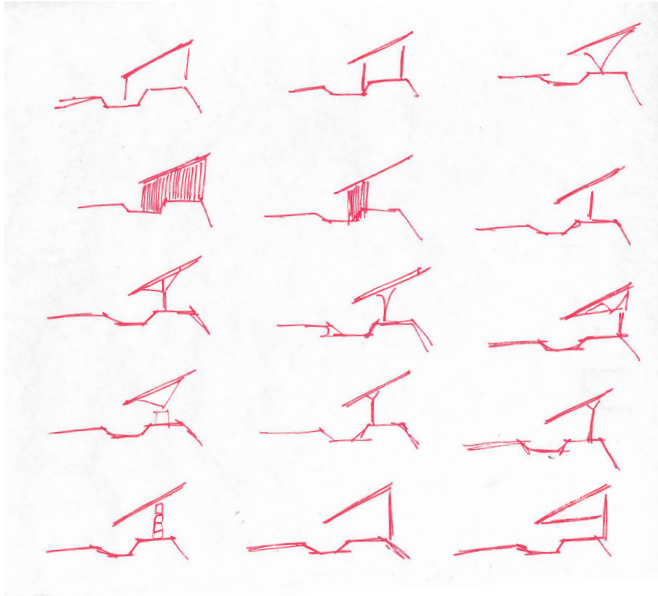
My practice is an almost naive quest for romanticization in the pragmatic, Western world. Would things be different finding myself in ancient Greece, trying to find place for an architecture of the emptiness in duality existential condition consisting of being and becoming, or whether the empty lays in the *chora*, as Plato defined the space between all things or better the condition between *being and becoming*; but as my context is somewhat unoccupied by the question "why we build" and very much focused on "how we build", my need for a non building architecture, an architecture of the empty is merely nothing more than barking at the moon, like the ingenious and hopelessly romantic, Tom Robbins, defines *love* in his "*Still life with Woodpecker*".

Dealing with an architecture with no programmatic body, an architecture for the sake of the place making, the haptic detail as an articulated object and the framing of that existing place where the, already on site, elements articulate the synthesis.

A synthesis of almost undefined floating objects, half interlocking with each other, half distant from each other. An unaccentic verbal use of middle range vocabulary. Raising images of the shelter if that would be our first house. Entrance, corridor, roof, up in the attic, down in the cellar and the Japanese toilet outside of the house.

#### **"No man's land"**

*Site plan of a place to hark the ducks.*



*Early sketching for the proposal.*

*Study of the roof as the dominant element in the memories of the  
image of the house; evoking images of sheltering*



## 4.2 AUTHENTICITY

Juhani Pallasmaa recognizes an architecture rooted in the layering of culture as an authentic one; as the kind of architecture that evokes an emotional response, due to its connection with archetypal structures of our existential experience. The contemporary world, he argues, subtles any autonomous emotional responses leading us to a game of simulations and uncertainty for our nature. For him, it is essential to embrace any emotional responses evolving to artistic and architectural creation for acknowledge our individual identity, and find our intimate place in the world as autonomous beings with existential purpose and meaning.

I used to wonder what is left on the hill of Petrin from Tomas and Teresa, in Milan Kundera's narration about "*the unbearable lightness of being*", leading myself in a flirtation with depression. Existence's temporality is underlined as we surround ourselves by, not connected to our memory, artificies. We feed our fears and uncertainties by our superficial approach to artistic and architectural creation, making the lightness of our being deeply unbearable.

Juhani Pallasmaa argues for an architecture of memory and emotional accent for providing coherence and hope. I argue for an architecture that invokes to archetype of the shelter for a quelling and comforting architectural experience, providing a stable ground, absorbing any vibrations, weight our being.

Vitruvius acknowledged the primitive hut as the first shelter, linking the form of the house to the archetypal realm. The house is the mirror and the container of one's existence as the solid and stable, compared to ever changing social norms; reflected over the centuries and in various geographical areas, one purpose; the shelter. According to Gaston Bachelard, we trust our physicality in the safeness of our houses for mental traveling; and it is this absense of consious brain activity, the fundamental purpose of safeness [Bachelard, 1958].

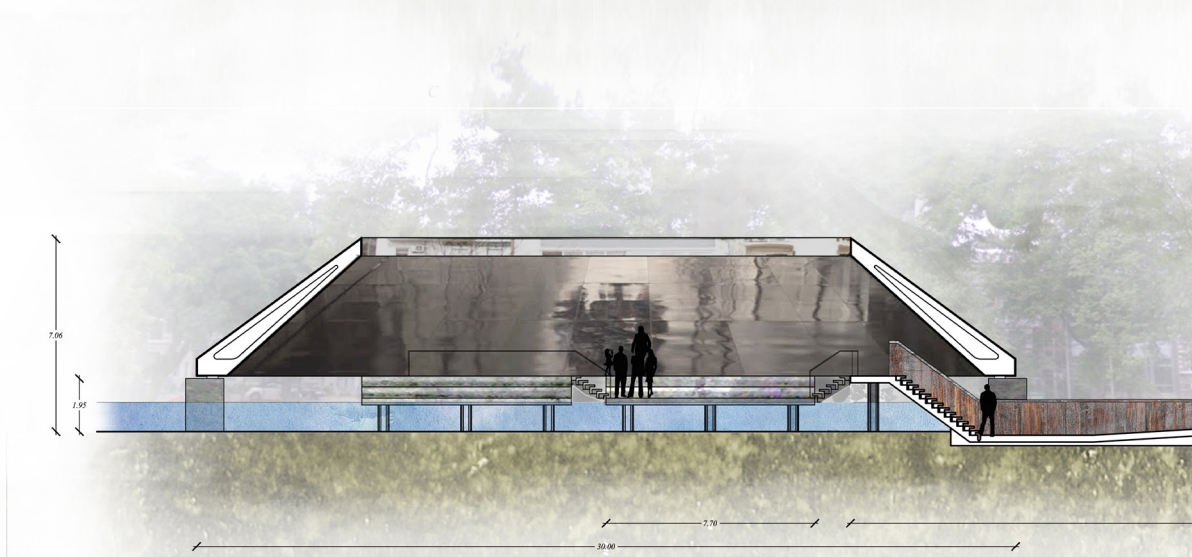
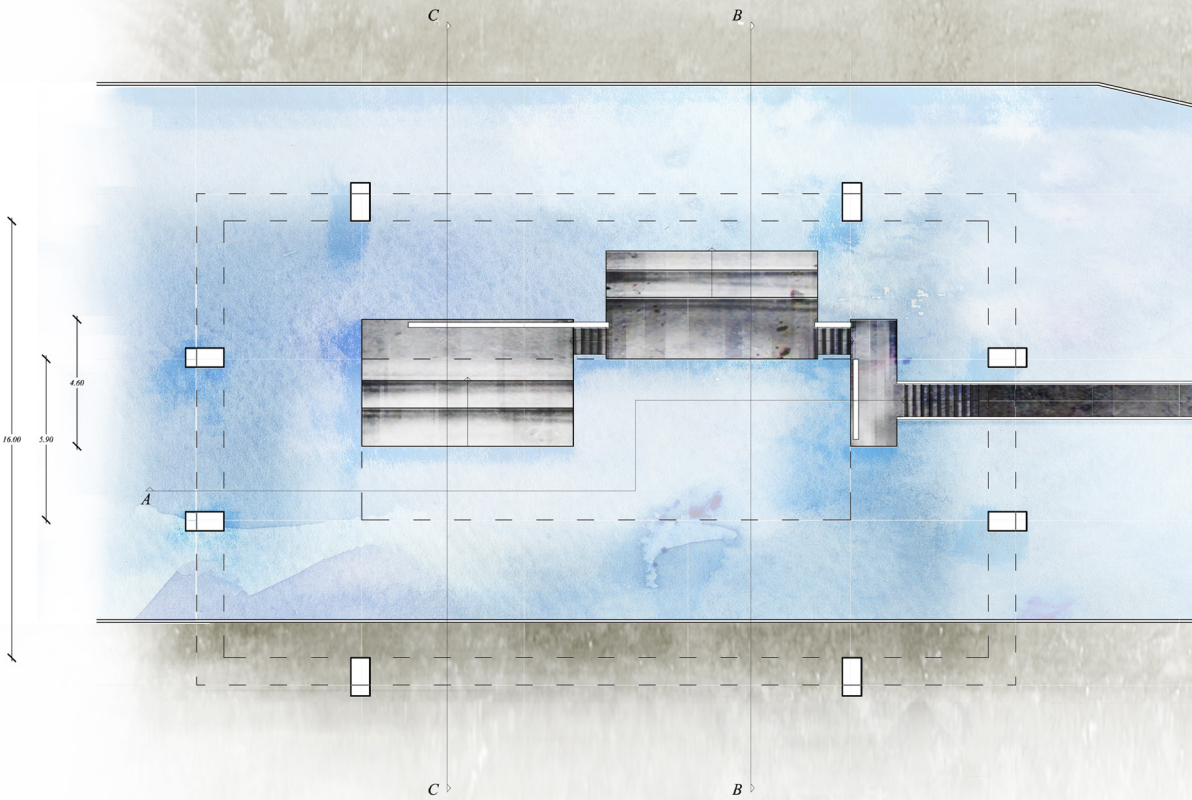
### T h r o u g h s a f e n e s s t o e m p t i n e s s

Imagination affects the memories of the house adding scenographical and dramatic elements in the houses we have lived especially our first years. But as adults we distant ourselves from the romantic, primitive feelings, we rationalize our thinking, and we stop considering the house as our cosmos, universe, cradle.

20.00

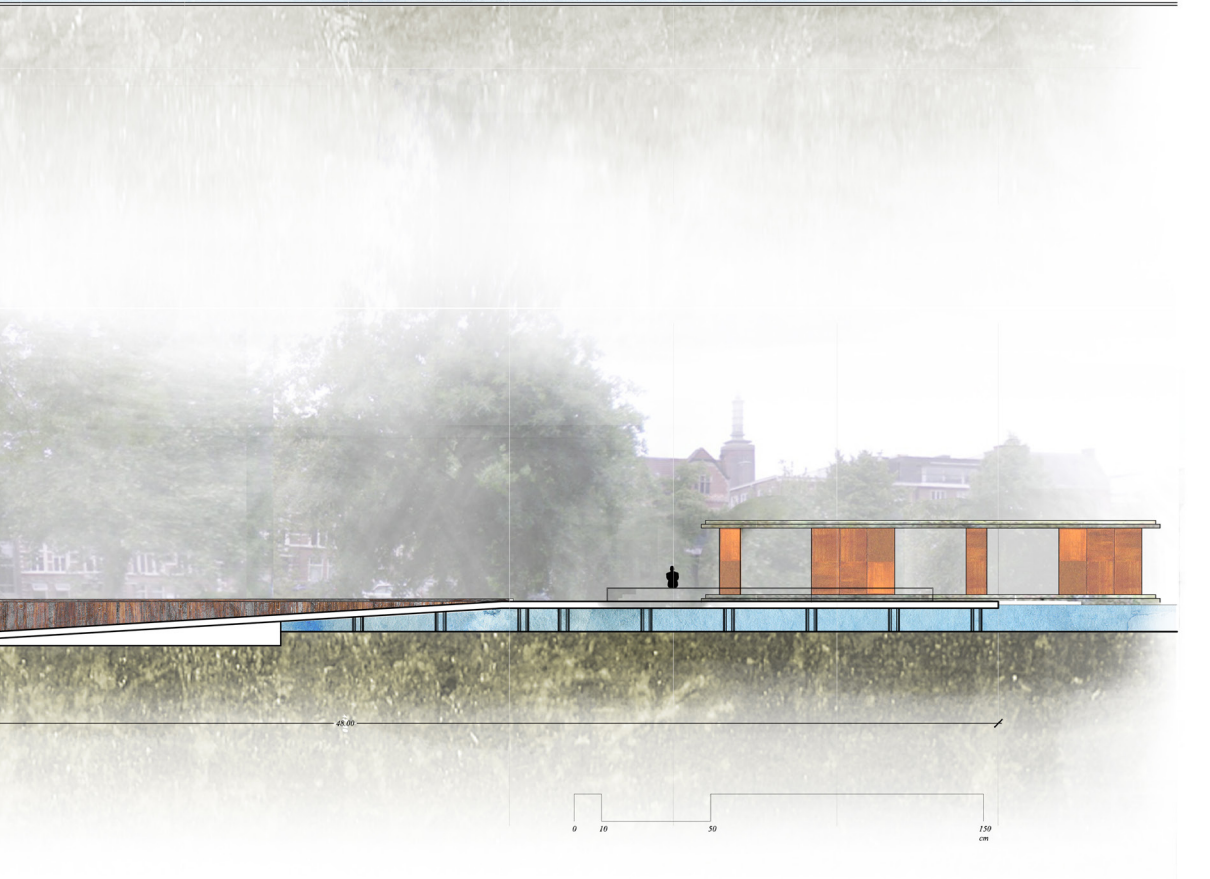
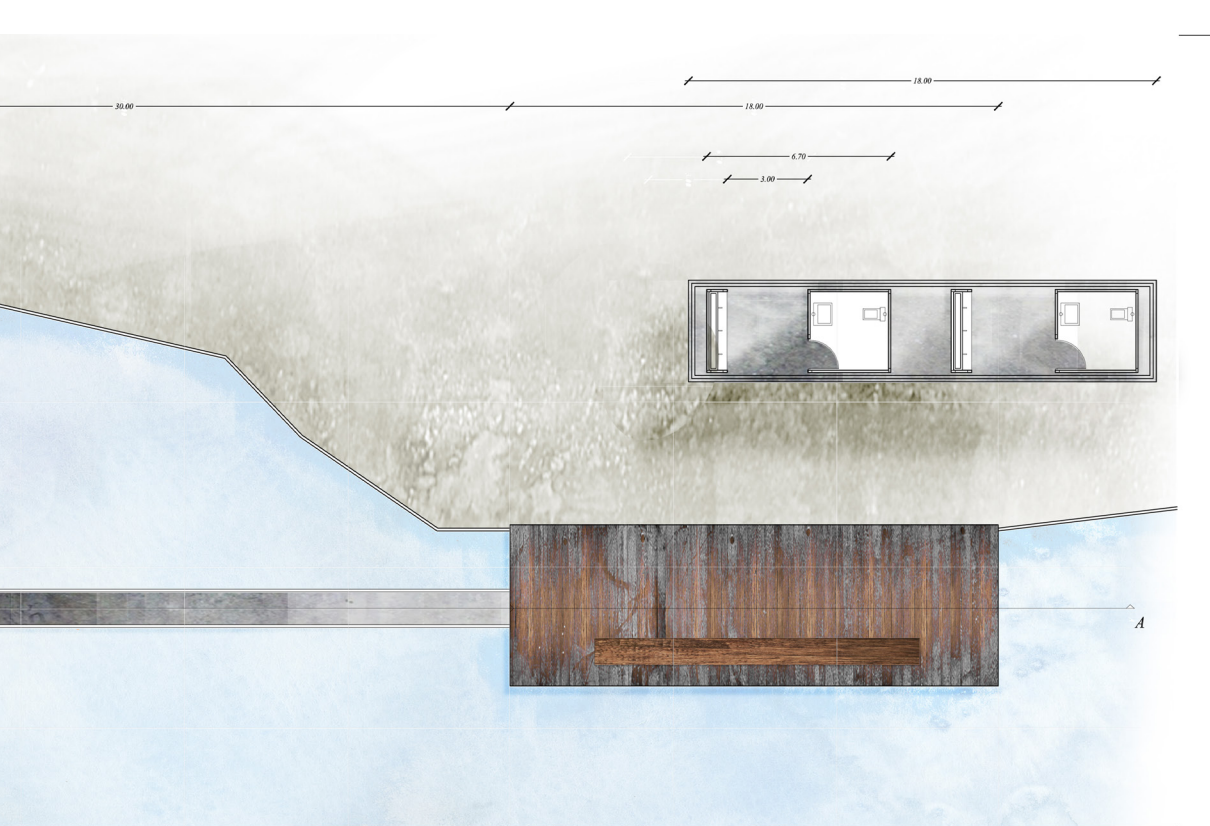
7.70 7.70 1.60

6.00



A-A





Abstract mysterious elements, sitting on top and within the water pond that tears the city's infrastructure in two pieces, visible from long distances despite their low height, due to the area's openness. A no man's land built in no man's land. As portrayed in the site plan, a black island in grey context; space defined by its own shadow, with no walls, doors and doorhandles; yet, an imagery house. Relax, you are at home...

Concrete slabs and corten steel plates construct the facility unit, as it stays closer to the city, making the connection between physical and metaphysical. Treating with respect an intentionally disregarded, function. Pieces of matter and void between two horizontal slabs play a game of hiding and revealing of what lays behind.

For the first platform, corridor and "interior", thought is given to the symbolic value of materials affected by Gaston Bachelard's narrations about a phenomenological image of a house with strong foundations deep in the ground, a cellar and an attic.

A wooden deck when first "entering" reminds of the external sunny space of the garden versus the massive dark interior space of the house. Wood here is used unpolished, becoming darker as time goes by, also darker when wet, looking more fragile during dry seasons. The unstable, almost schizophrenic, Dutch weather changes the image of the built, colouring the wooden surface with a depressing darkness on wet days and lightening it up on sunny ones.

The movement towards the roof, passes through a sunken corridor, an inverted bridge with, extremely tolerant to water, wooden banks. A concrete floor with a long trench for leading rainwater to disposal and people to emptiness is my interpretation of Mark Rothko's *black on maroon*. We slowly descend on a sloping route, touching the water surface, to be raised again finding ourselves under or "inside" the roof. By the time we pass under the roof, we face the piece of sky framed by the roof's blackness. Ascending the staircase, moving towards our very own piece of sky, witnessing the city's fading out to directly lean on a second handrail right after the staircase and take a few breathes deciphering the situation unfolded in front.

Heavy, stable concrete forms an immovable space, be the first to built, mediates between habitant and the earth. Reflecting the time, getting old with the most beautiful way of all materials, giving memory and a hint of history even in very short terms through the way it “holds” the moisture. Water stamps on concrete surfaces, take their time until they disappear; longterm contact with water creates a line of algy where the surface are touching one another and all kinds of rust, mud and ravages alter the material’s colour. Concrete steps form a first platform, interpreted as the attic, where we touch the surface of the roof; a second platform leads us next to the water surface simulating the moisture environment of the cellar.

The roof is made from a dark and somehow reflective surface, friendly for the eye, as Tanizaki is portraying Japanese darkness through his narration on laquerware. Black and shinny, but still and non violent. An object that mirrors reality just like art and architecture suppose to, offer a reintepratation of what we experience as world. A looking glass where we see our distorted selves. Exploiting the sound of the raindrops reverberating on the “interior” underneath. Sound would travel through the material transforming architecture to a giant hang drum. Unfolding the mystery of time and physics.

*On the previous pages:*

***“Movement and seduction”***

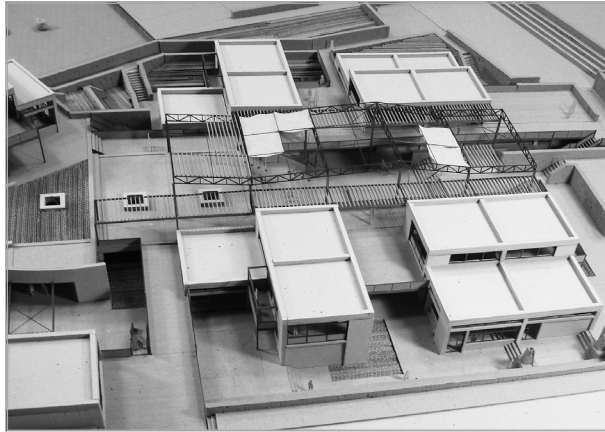
*Plan and long section of the project.*

*Concrete platforms in different heights alter our spatial experience as we move up the staircase, under the roof, over the*

*steps,*

*down the platform*

...



***“Open plan childcare center”***

*Sunk into the ground, outlined by the earth itself, in an attempt to avoid the use of fences, to whose site, Roma people react with violence. A steel truss evoking memories of nomadic lifestyle, rough unfinished materials to avoid any cultural shock, synthesize a low tech but with various indoor and outdoor spatial qualities architecture where functions interlock in flowing, sequential spaces.*

*Arch Eng Diploma thesis by Karagiannidou Eleni,*

*Democritus University of Thrace, 2009*

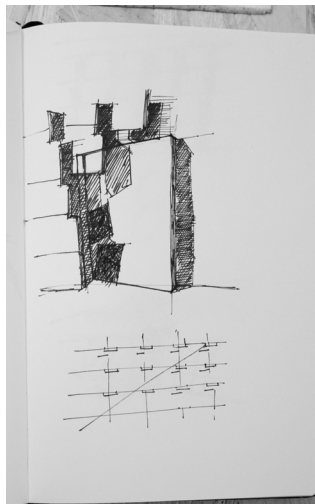
### 3.3 SLOWNESS

Juhani Pallasmaa argues that architecture should slow down our perception of time and leads us to an understanding of the world, witnessing and participating in its constant changes. In an environment full of distractions, evolution of reality stays on our experiential background, as we fail to follow the world's progression and sequentially evolve in parallel to this progression.

Our contemporary Western society, perceives time as fragments of an entity instead of a continuum. Our whole life span is separated into childhood, adulthood and oldage. Our daily life is fragmented into morning, afternoon, evening and night, neatly organized into clusters of time when we carry out our activities. This is a structural model that emerged the moment our living got divided to activity units, hosted in different spatial entities. The transient time model follows the permanent spatial model, where activities define the functions of spaces we spread our disunited life to.

Pallasmaa advocates for slower life rhythms where we can gain some coherence in our life experience. Architecture should enhance this slowness, through time manipulation; as the flow of space is immensely linked with the flow of time. Architecture represents and manipulates both, at the same place and moment. In a fragmented time and space model, hence, in a corrupted perception of the space and time continuum, the coherence of the architectural experience is questioned; for corrupted perception leads to false image of creation, or, creation of the false image.

For my master thesis for Democritus Polytechnic School, I designed an elementary school for a Roma settlement. I studied and got exposed to a society with deeply different from the westernized Greek, cultural structure, which to understand, I first had to decipher its time and space perception. For the Roma society, time is not perceived as a linear entity consisted of clusters, but as a circular scheme with limited perimeter but no beginning and no ending. Its attitude towards time, also reflects to its spatial model; for a society based on family bonds, where all family shares the same house, personal and professional life is merged.



**"A place to grow"**  
Derived from my sketchbook  
Igalada, 2013

There is no question of working hours, but working load, which they have to deliver once ready. In addition, there is no working environment either, as the whole family is working from their house. Studying an attached to archaic ways of living, society, endowed me with great understanding about the social realm and the space and time connection; the distance from our roots and the consequences of contemporary living. We, westerners, find the totality of our experiences fragmented and applied in spacial entities.

Time is perceived as pieces where we find ourselves in different places and it is this fragmented model that leads us to anxiety and the incapability of defining our existential conditions [Holl, 2006]. Our perception of ourselves is a collection of different definitions spread in time and space lacking of coherence and continuum. We define ourselves temporally through our acting in giving time and giving space and we lack a holistic identity of our existence. The places we dwell have clear programmatic function and we identify ourselves once found in those places. Having defined frames, our temporary identities, reflect on given time span. I wonder what is happening to our temporally identity once visiting places with no clear programmatic aspect, without standardized duration of our staying.

Quoting Hiroshi Naito sharp and straightforward statement "*Cemeteries, spiritual places, museums: Time passes slowly*", I hypothesize that in places with no clear programmatic function or where the function touches the sphere of the metaphysical, where rational rules do not apply or where we, consciously break those rules out of our need for stillness, like in a church or a cemetery, our perception of time stays still, as we do not relate to a piece of our functional life, hosted in those spaces. If there is no standardized function, there is no standardized time span, hence, no preformatted identity on our acting. Consciously or subconsciously stop thinking about time once found ourselves to those extraordinary places, we get absorbed into a timeless space where our rationalized no reason for existing, meets our not rationalized need for non-existing.

Acknowledging cemeteries as metaphysical spaces, enrapturing us in a distorted perception of time, I visited Igalada cemetery, a city of the dead, to



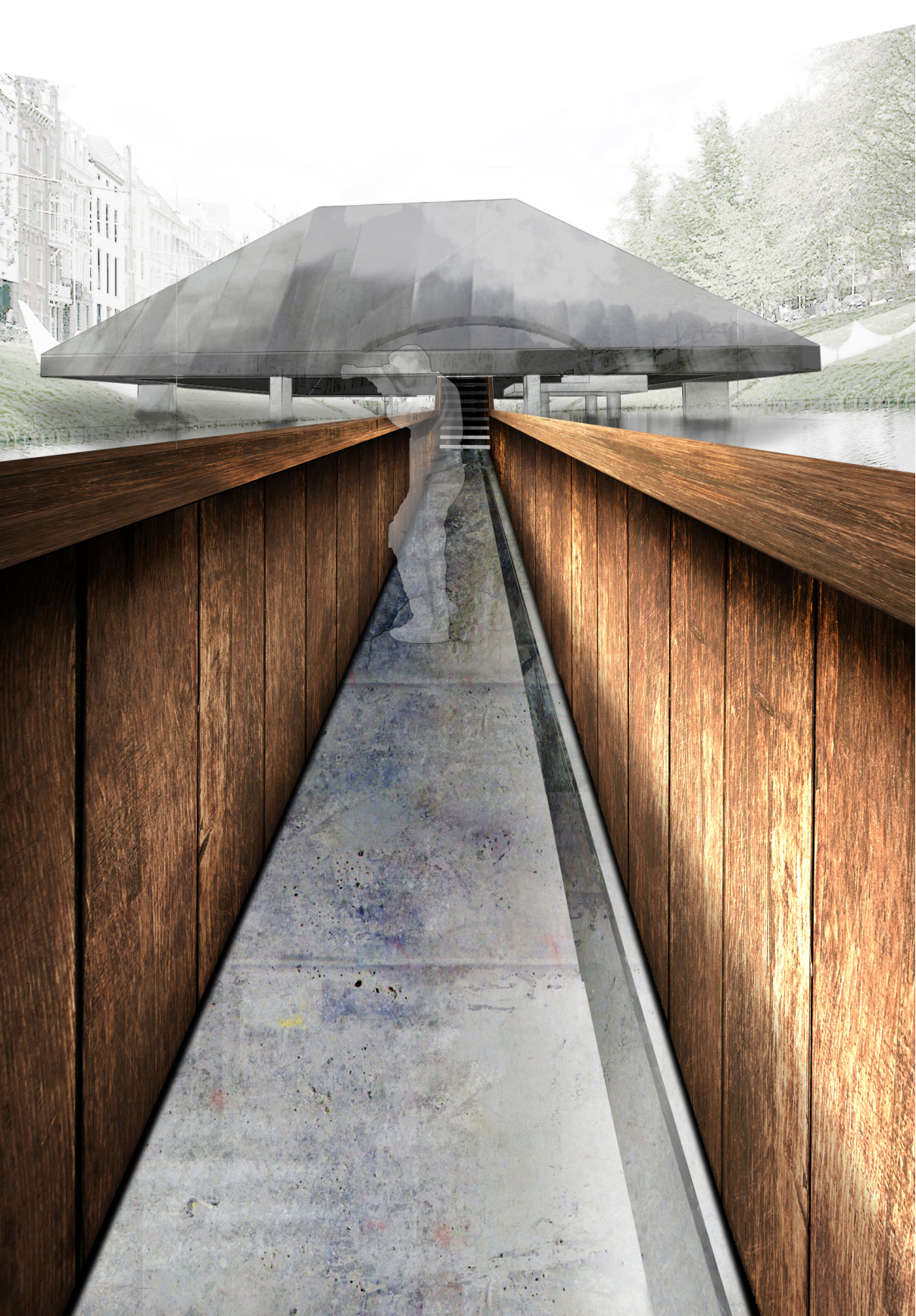
witness that, the space is flowing slowly and steady like a stream; a stop-less force was applied on me, leading me to slow down and effortlessly *be* in this extraordinary space. The sun set very early that afternoon, as my perception was corrupted. I wonder how much of the distortion of this perception of time is caused by Enric Miralles' influential space manipulation, and how much on my crave for more time, to connect with my dead and myself.

There is no given time one needs to spend in Igualada cemetery; visiting time is affiliated with the desired mental state. Stay until be ready to leave; it is those moments of freedom from the tyranny of time that slow down the experience of reality.

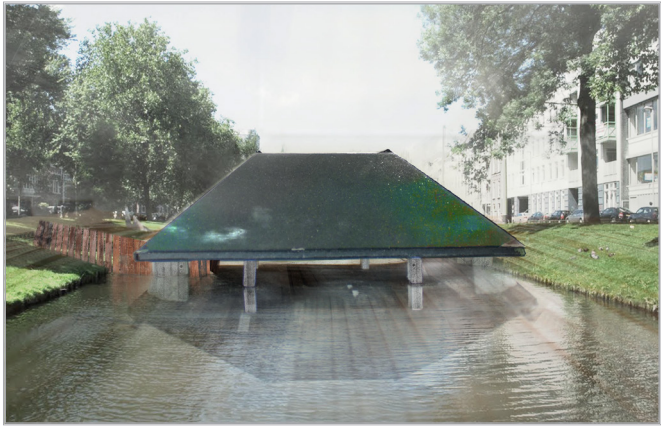
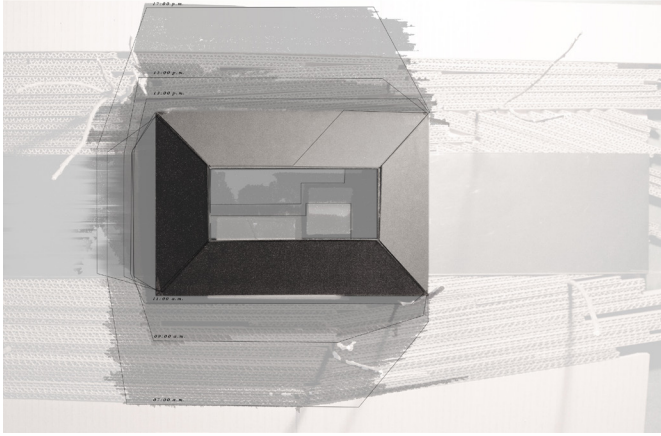
#### F r a m e   a n d   M o v e m e n t

Architectural experience involves movement and transgression from space to space. The deciphering of architectural creation is never a static state but a sequential process involving the time factor. For an architecture whose aim is to introduce us to slower breathe rhythms, there is no space for rush, forced and compulsory movements. Every space is a potential stop and every walking forward is moved by curiosity for the framed scenery, rather than direction. In a humble space, an example of natural flow and effortlessness, movement and stop should come naturally and be experienced individually. Space and architecture should include the option and not the command for moving. As Peter Zumthor suggests, when nothing is trying to coax you away, you can simply be.

In the illustrated detail of the next two pages, the *inverted* bridge leads the visitor to the shadow of the roof. Dark wood forms the walls of an open air corridor, steady and slowly moving lower, until we touch the water. The friendly for the touch handrail, in the proper hight for leaning, turns the contained space into more than a transportation route. Offers the opportunity to stand and stare at the water and the city from a new perspective; a transformation of walking into promenading. A nick in the concrete floor creates a strong axis leading the rainwater to discharge and the eye to the darkness. Once found under the roof, we rise again climbing up the staircase towards our very own piece of the sky.







***Shadow study***

*“Good working models sometimes have an aura that is much more effective in communicating the architectural idea than a perfectly detailed replica...” (Jacques Herzog interviewed by Theodora Vischer)*

***“Through the looking glass”***

*Every reality has its inverted illusion.*

## Reflection and Refraction

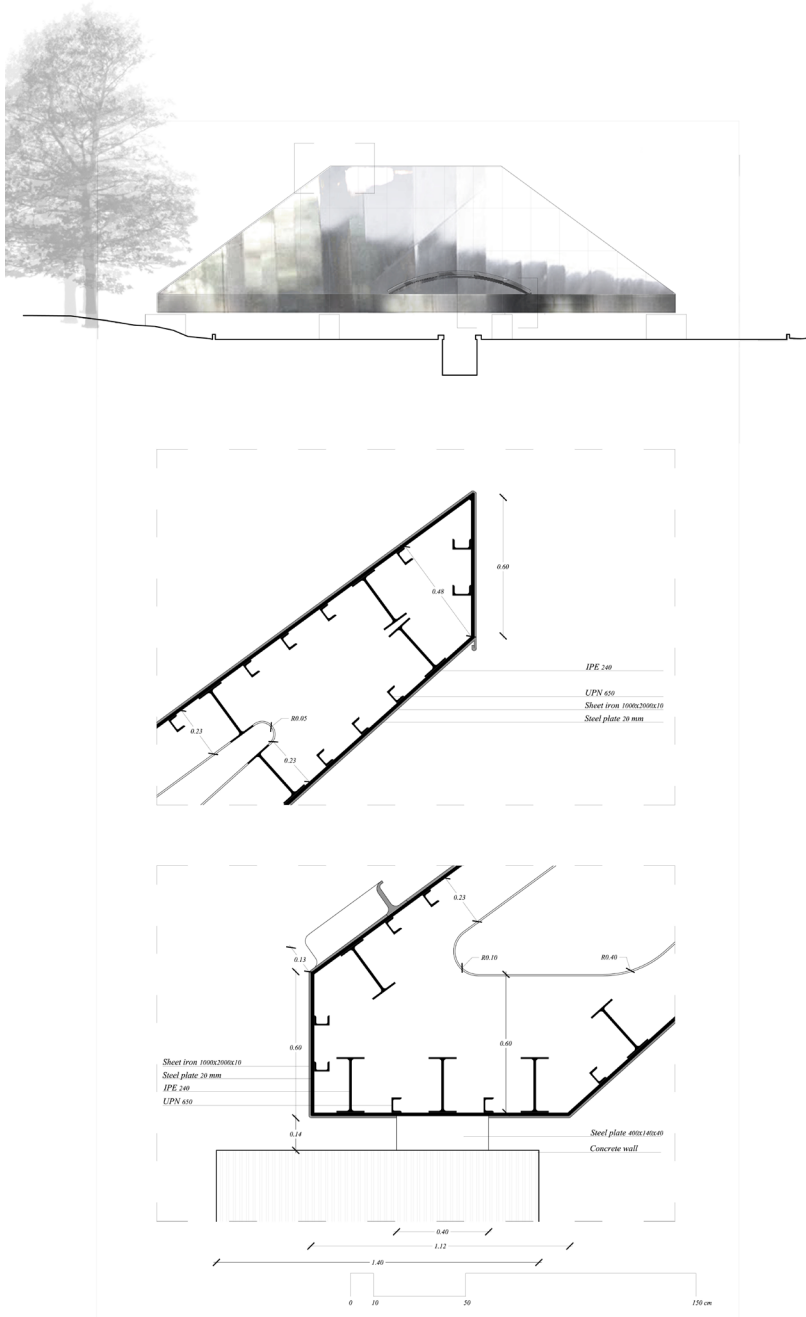
Glenn Murcutt in an interview by Aleš Vodopivec in the University of Ljubljana says, referring to the climate conditions in a huge country like Australia that all those physical conditions are parameters and not problems, that architecture has to deal with. They are opportunities to understand how the world is structured, by which elements and in which proportions, to unravel and confront the mystery of that what surrounds us.

Answering this mystery, architecture dresses the site and the man, bonding them into one harmonic symbiosis. The architect becomes the conductor of the things that are already there, and architecture as a sensuous response, comes to frame the site.

*“Hearing the rain under a metal roof is a tremendous gift; collecting this water to tanks, using this rain water to shower, makes architecture an extraordinary activity about place making”* [Glenn Murcutt]

Wind, light, water and all elements already on site, seen as the materials architecture has to collaborate with, to create a sensuous result. A water pond lying still in the middle of the city, provides a precious element that once framed, is offering its mystical attributes to enhance the spatial experience. Water is a *“phenomenal lens”*, to use a term borrowed from Steven Holl and extruded from his self-titled essay, where he narrates about how in the contemporary cities where we host ourselves, there is a lack of touch with the natural phenomena and their poetic unpredictability.

The water surface is waving, accepting even the slightest raindrop or wind flow, causing dramatic changes in the patterns of the reflections; the sky, the clouds, the context, the very same architecture, are mirrored on the water’s reflective surface forming another, inverted reality; all colours of the sunlight are spread in the interior through this *“phenomenal lens”*. We reconnect with the weather and its effects through our creations and it is this creation that looks so integrated to the context, that we lose track of what is artificial and what natural. At the same time the movement of the sun, sharpens the perception of real time as time is perceived through the physical phenomena. [Holl, 2006]

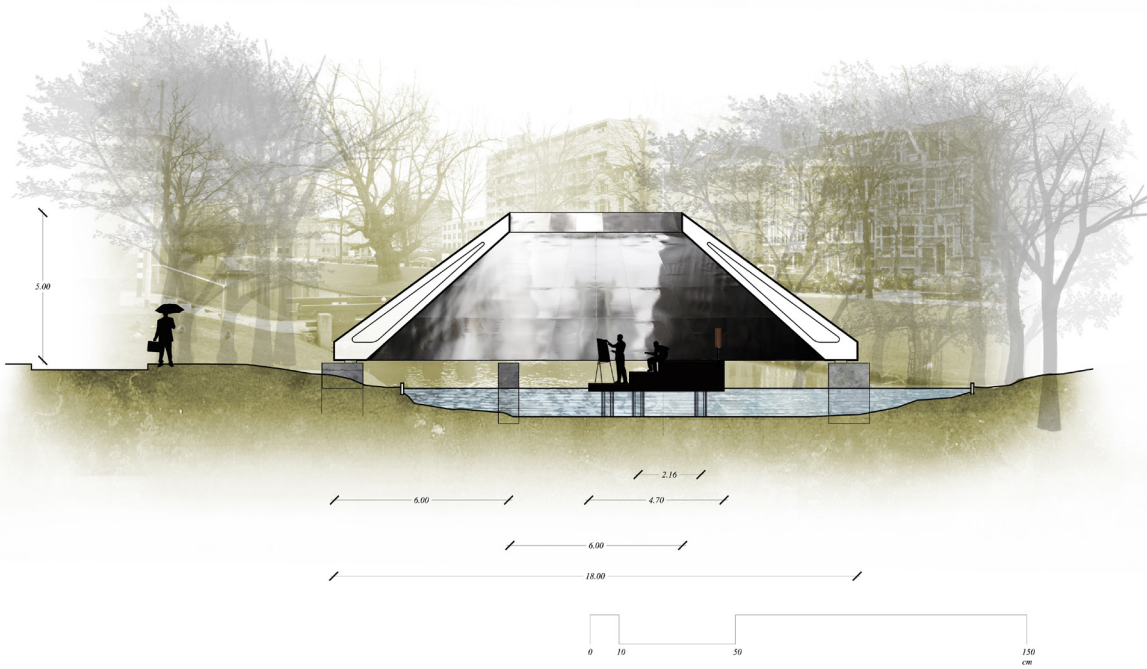
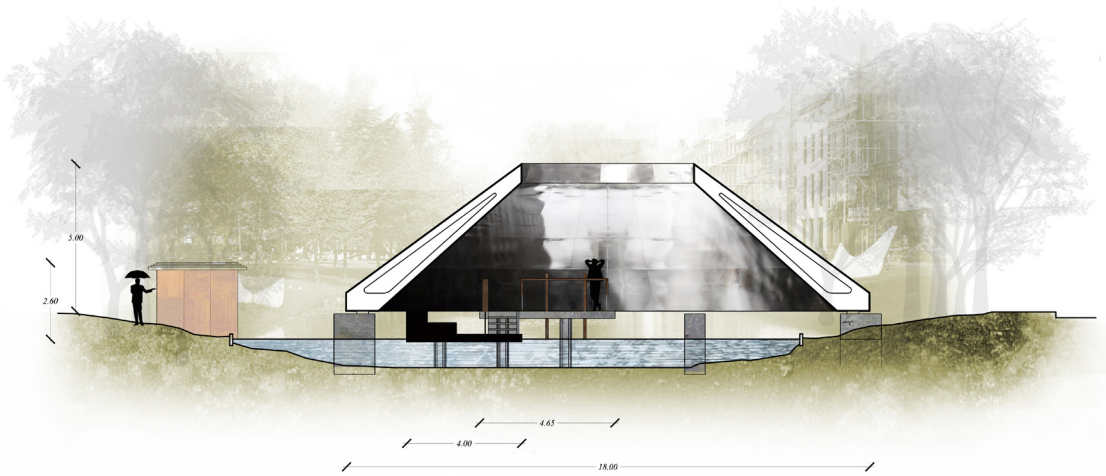


*On the next page, construction details of the roof. For tectonic architecture, is the poetics of construction. For architecture is techne and poiesis.*

Similarly, architecture is sensed through sound and reverberation of phenomena, clarifying our perception of space and material. We redefine the spatial limits of architecture, as in the lack of outlining walls, the “room” under the roof is expanding through sound reverberation. According to Steven Holl, sound is experienced not only by hearing but by the whole body as vibrations that can shock our stomach, cause us headaches or lead us to a place of ease.

Juhani Pallasmaa often reflects on an architectural silence. A silence that lies in the strong spatial experience and it is unrelated to the contextual amount of noise. A silence that is produced by self awareness, the moments when we confront and understand our existential conditions, through art and architecture. This silence is a mental, state, rather than an actual physical condition. In Pallasmaa’s narration of an architectural experience where he finds himself hearing only his own heartbeat, any produced from the very architecture sounds turn into, imprinted to the subconscious, patterns. Any, caused from the falling on the roof, rainwater, reverberation or any floorboard groaning, becomes a scheme to human memory. It is those moments when the self is transparent that we connect with the place, environment and ourselves.

Sound reverberation and light reflection of physical phenomena in space, are poetic tools for the architectural experience. The steel roof here, becomes the amplifier of the natural phenomena. In the hollow roof’s surfaces lie an experience for all senses. The sound of raindrops falling on the steel surface was imagined as the tones coming from a giant hang drum -a steel instrument of similar shape, that produces a metallic but poetic sound. The ever changing reflected patterns of light rapping us in a seductive space simulating the patterns of light in the bottom of the pool. Mediating between man and its surroundings, architecture enhances the world experience, leading us to great understanding and appreciation. With our soul open, we observe and hark.



**Sections A-A, B-B**

*The roof's final surface random bumpiness adds to the experiential complexity reflecting sound and light*



#### 5.4 PLASTICITY

Even though architecture is almost a sculptural art consuming and developed in space, there are moments, according to Juhani Pallasmaa, that architecture stays on paper, on two dimensional representations through plans and sections; I would like to add on this theory that even more often, architectural flatness is noticed even in three dimensional representations. Perspective representations or renderings, portray the facade, as if it was a thin film wrapped all around buildings with no material weight but most importantly with no tactility. Images of buildings distant from the senses, that are experienced only by vision.

Flatness according to Pallasmaa is a quality in a commodified approach, where techno economical parameters dictate for an architecture without tectonic weight. An architecture, that, no matter three dimensional, is experienced as a collection of surfaces enclosing some volume. For this enclosed volume is rarely experienced as a spacial continuum and more rarely as a place with character; as a place with *atmosphere*, to quote Peter Zumthor. The architecture of today, has lost one of its most valuable characteristics: plasticity.

Buildings with no tactility and with no reference to the human body and senses are posturing on architectural digital and physical magazines and on glossy boardings at the perimeter of their construction sites. Having just visited Aalborg House of Music, I find myself unsatisfied and in wonder of how it is possible to enter a tactile experience, in a building, whose environment is more similar to a virtual model than a physical, *real* one.

*“If you have an understanding about materials, you can do architecture; you have a vocabulary as if you have had a language vocabulary. Knowing how to use a language ables you to write prose or poems, but if you don’t know your vocabulary, your materials, how can you do architecture?”* This question, according to me, it is not a rhetorical one, as Glenn Murcutt suggests in his interview for Lubliana University, but a real problem. How can architects exposed only to digital design and not to real construction site do any kind of built architecture? For the digital design and all the virtual and technical



*Olivetti Gallery staircase by Carlo Scarpa*

*Installation by Donald Judd*

*Stainless steel reflects the context adding a milky, non visible effect to the material surface almost disappearing*

means to enhance the architectural communication, they should perform as instruments, that, in the hands of a conductor, give amazing results; but first and foremost, Murcutt advocates for the conquest of the hapticity of materials.

*“Materials interlocking with the perceiver’s senses, provide the detail that moves us beyond acute sight to tactility. An architecture of matter and tactility aims for a ‘poetics of revealing’ as Martin Heidegger states it, which requires an inspiration of joinery. Detail, this poetics of revealing, interplays intimate scaled dissonance with large scale consonance”.* [Steven Holl]

The Italian architect Carlo Scarpa through his deep understanding of craftsmanship, was able to create spatial narratives, leading the observer in a never ending discovering and rediscovering of the space; in an ever increasing emotion of change. We enter a circle of emotions as we find ourselves seduced by the sequential revealing of transcendence, with our perception of time altered, leading to a place of ease, slowness and effortlessness. The strong experiential part does not leave space for rational thinking allowing the mind to lay empty, maybe in an unconscious attempt to absorb the benefits of beauty.

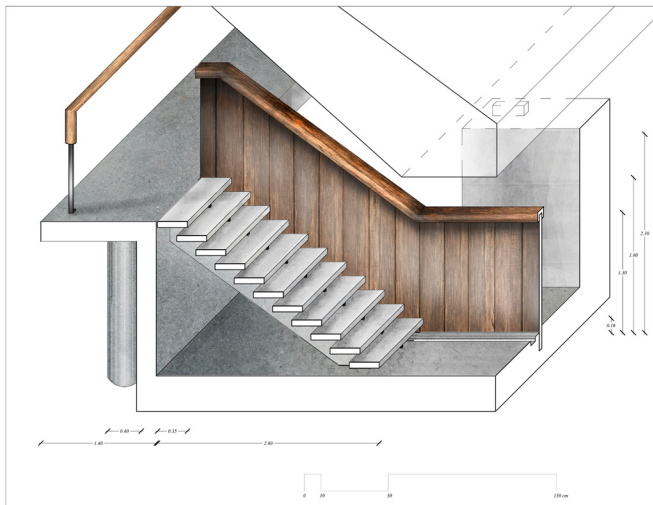
In Olivetti gallery, the vertical transportation becomes a sculptural element, adding elegance and charm to the room. The staircase inspires a slightly movement and displacement as the steps are harmonically synthesized to raise a feeling of looseness and effortlessness.

Underneath each marble step, the support is celebrated by a bronze cylinder, half visible from a distance as one is approaching the staircase, placed away from the center axis of each step. Structural elements in all scales become decorative ones offer a sequential narrative. An architectural approach reflected in all scales, giving coherence to the spatial experience. The same architectural vocabulary offers a holistic understanding of space and its flow. The seduction never ends.

In the illustrated Donald Judd’s installation, the mysterious reflective, milky surface of steel reacts with the surrounding making the material almost

invisible. Judd summons geometry and materiality to raise a discussion on the boundaries of space and its fluidity.

Regarded as enjoyable for the eye, stainless steel is integrated to an interpretation of the Ollivetti staircase, to support the handrail. Particularly, the handrail is constructed from a wooden cylindrical beam, that responds to the temperature and softness of palm skin. The prefabricated steps have a finishing layer of marble dust, contributing elegance through their light color and slight reflections. They are supported by a concrete construction that stays mostly invisible, giving to each step a sense of sliding and movement. In the night, integrated fluorescent light underneath each step, turns the staircase into a decorative element, casting shadows on the concrete slabs.

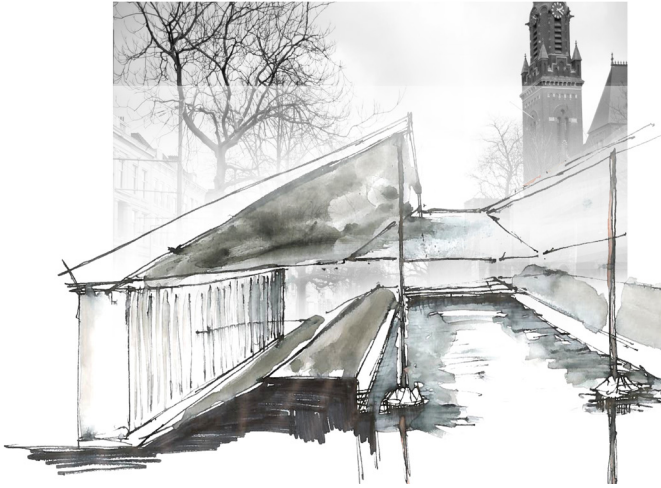


**“Enter”**

*Accuracy and abstraction allied as needed in representational techniques in the attempt to reproduce certain atmospheres*







*Framing, offers experiential complexity in simple forms.  
Early sketching for the proposal (at a design moment when the  
roof was supported by a series of columns, the entrance was  
achieved from the long side and the space was surrounding the  
water and sky)*

*Roden Crater by James Turrell*



## 5.5 SENSUOUSNESS

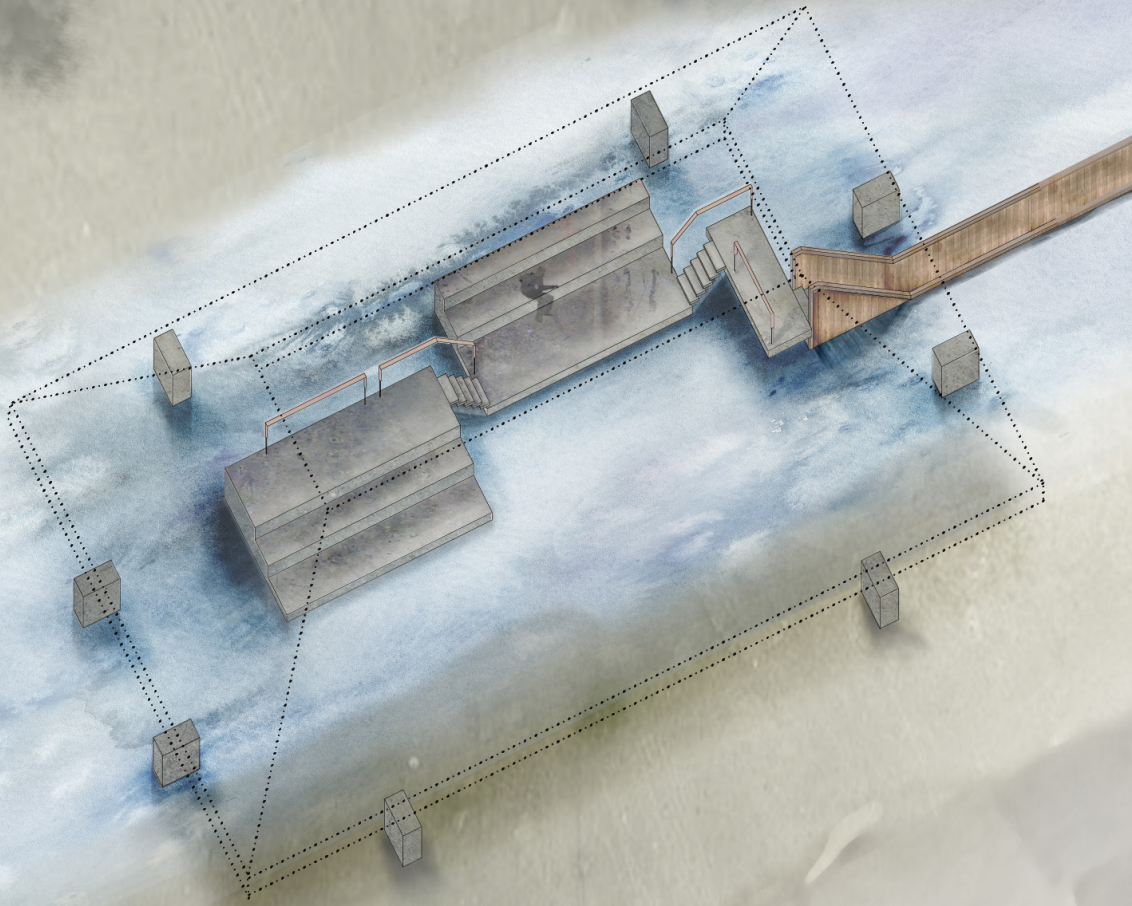
***“Architecture’s task is to provide the stable and reliable ground for the perception of the world, for the ground of homecoming into the world”***

Juhani Pallasmaa using those words is advocating an architecture that evokes and stimulates all our senses, separating its self from the merely visual, focused on adopting an aesthetic style, rather than an emotionally experienced, architecture. An architecture that evokes all spectrum of feelings and mental conditions giving coherence in our understanding of the world.

Robert Hughes writes: *“One of the projects of art is to reconcile us with the world, not by protest, irony, or political metaphors, but by the ecstatic contemplation of the pleasure in nature”* [Hughes, 1991].

In one of the documentary films of the Art21 series “Art:21—Art in the Twenty-First Century”, the work of James Turrell at the Roden Crater is addressed with the words *“Turrell’s crater brings the heavens down to earth, linking the actions of people with the movements of planets and distant galaxies. His fascination with the phenomena of light is ultimately connected to a very personal, inward search for mankind’s place in the universe”*. In general we experience light in a large scale in abstract and ephemeral way whereas in Turrell’s work light has a materiality that gives it its scale and allows it to be exposed. We experience it as if it has a physicality and we feel it almost as we taste things. Light then, becomes the exposed object and we look AT the light, rather than something exposed and illuminated. Turrell’s art assists self-awareness, demanding the discipline from the audience to slow down, be patient, in order to get in a meditative state where the almost physical body of light will communicate feelings of transcendence and the divine. Additionally, the sky is no more an abstraction, once framed in Turrell’s instalations, but a sky, right here, next to us; it can almost be touched. Our very own sky is experienced as an ever changing colour and texture, material, surrounded and framed by the installation’s whiteness.

In his work “atmospheres”, Peter Zumthor, narrates how architecture is creating an experience for the context it is developed into. How architecture reacts with the surroundings developing a language in a big scale. Physical



elements becoming elements of synthesis, create a strong reaction and develop a dialogue with the architecture.

Inside and outside, the tyranny of the facade  
Those two terms are considered reciprocal in the following description, hence, inside and outside is only experienced once compared one with the other and not as absolute spatial situations.

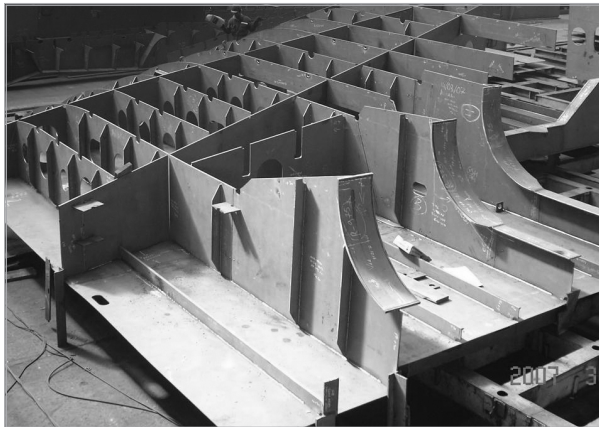
The architecture that is formed only by horizontal elements and does not outline the space with traditional wall elements once combined with the section of the ground and surrounded by sloping surfaces, creates the feeling of inside space.

Open air space is physically *outside* space, but as inside and outside are relevant terms one with the other, placed under a roof, open air space is experienced as *inside*. There is a way of entering and a defined spatial enclosure. A slit in this roof provides another experience of the *outside* space. The lack of material, the hole, creates a new exterior space experienced only from the *inside* of the roof.

When architecture is unfolded sequentially, entering a circle of spatial definitions questioning and re questioning the feeling of the very same space, it gives an experience of enclosure with no need for vertical barriers. We have some visual contact with the *outside*, we feel cold and smell the trees but we find ourselves sheltered.

The tyranny of the facade is the antithesis of a narrative architectural experience. The moment when we are forced to counter balance our body weight in the acting of opening a door and enter a new reality without having the time to prepare ourselves for our entering. The moment when we loose contact with our context and we enter a disconnected part of the world.

Part of the charm of the place that this project is situated, lies on the experience of space as if it was “contained”. The natural slopping banks create a “room” with invisible barriers, yet a different than the pavement, the street or the square “room”. It is this vivid perception of space and its coherence that enables the horizontal elements to “contain” space and it is this



*Sankt Markus Church in Bjorkhagen, Sweden*

*by Sigurd Lewerentz*

*Case study of the water drainage formed by the roof's very material*

*Ship construction. The first surface to be mantled is a slope, following the IPE and UPN beams connection. The piece gains its strength as a self carrying construction once all elements are mantled together.*

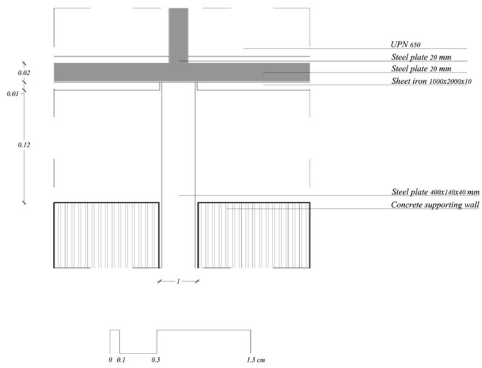
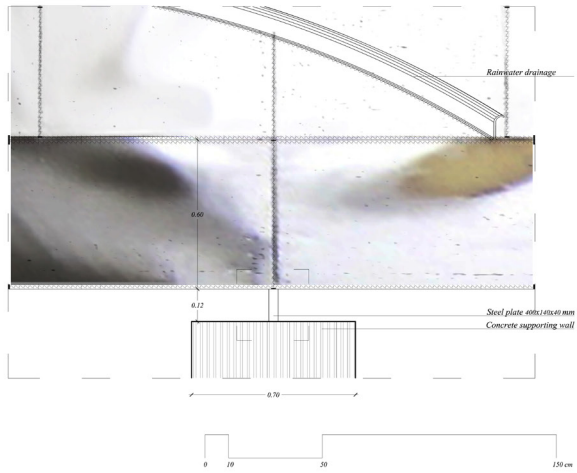
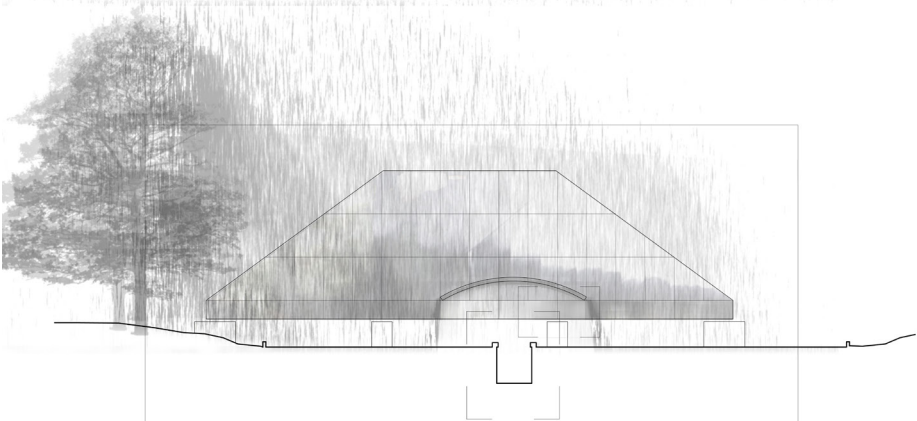
quality of “inside” yet outdoor space that defines this project, giving it part of its mysticality as the space flows between the structural elements with no clear barriers; it moves as the shadow moves and it expands during dusk and dawn. Maybe on a rainy day, the space is shrunk to the minimum as rainwater becomes a curtain, the missing vertical element, surrounding the roof and entering from the hole.

O n a r a i n y d a y . . .

On an extreme context such as the ever wet Dutch weather, it would be inconceivable not to integrate the rain as a mysterious yet very much present, physical phenomenon in the experience of the place. As the detail is the poetic of construction, for architecture that is, first and foremost, *tecne*, term derived from ancient Greek and meaning *that that is made*, the detail of the rainwater drainage on the roof, becomes a celebrated element. As it is illustrated on the next page, a practical need for protection from the volume of the rainwater oozing from the roof, becomes a scenographic pattern. The arched gutter, leads the water on the two sides of the “entering”, forming a water gate.

This often hidden detail of the construction, the drainage, becomes *the haptic realm*, to quote Steven Holl, the part where we connect with the architecture; our sensory alliance. [Holl, 2006] It is the felt part of the built, even though the experience of the element is only a visual one, as, according to Glenn Murcutt, touching is implied to seeing and the first haptic experience comes through the eyes.

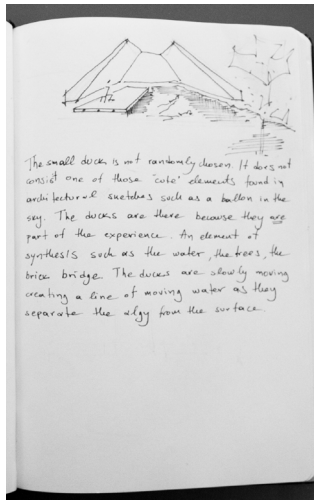
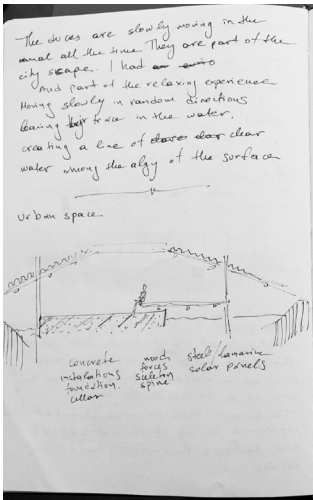
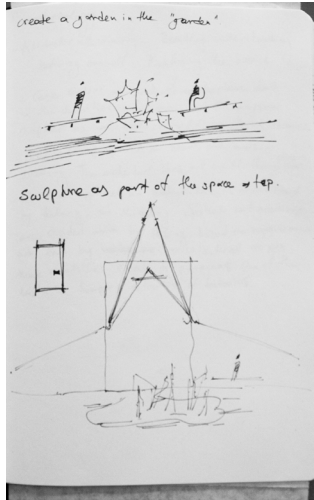
As it is important for architectural intentions to be expressed structurally without getting hindered in construction inconsiderations, calculations of the support area of the eight concrete walls are delivered together with this report. Following the ship construction principal, maybe constructed in Rotterdam port, the roof is adapting an innovative, for architectural creation technique, where the slopping surfaces are the first to be mantled, out of steel plates. Once connected with the inner steel skeleton of IPE and UPN beams, the element, gains its acampsia. It performs as a self carrying object with no need for any other support except for mantling with the concrete walls, holding it in the desired height and place.





An intentional “gap” between the roof and the supporting columns, a small distance between the structural materials, gives lightness and a sense of movement to the construction. For this, floating on top of the water pond, element to be experienced as it effortlessly contains the space, the supporting steel plate is carefully “hidden” underneath the mass of the shadow, giving a feeling of instability to this distinctive component. It is not a concrete manifestation of the built; it is not a determined structural signature; it is an, uncertain about its own existence, abstraction, looking as if it is hanging from the sky, or hovering on top of the water. In a context of definitions and statements, this mysterious element dwells as a, ready and unafraid to be objectively interpreted, symbolism.

*Own interpretation of the rainwater drainage on Sankt Markus  
church. The final surface is folded to form an arched gutter,  
creating a dry gate on rainy days.  
The roof's final reflective surface,  
offers a filtered image of the context.*



**"Movements in water"**

Derived from my sketchbook, a narration about a small duck

## 5.6 SILENCE

***“Great architecture is silence turn into matter”*** [Pallasmaa, 2005]

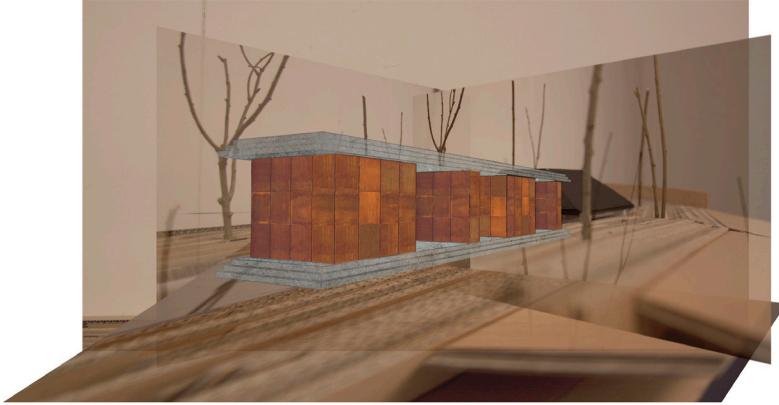
Juhani Pallasmaa repeatedly writes about an architecture that turns us towards the self, raising a feeling of loneliness and silence, unrelated to the amount of surrounded noise or people. This kind of silence, accompanying the art and architectural experience, does not rely on the absence of sound but on the state of mind offering an existential rather than spatial experience. It is a silence of deciphering and understanding, implying self awareness. And it is in that very moment when architecture adopts a holistic sensory quality.

Once answering the phenomenological questions with haptic applications, once considering the soft values analyzed earlier in this master thesis, architecture becomes *a timeless monument of silence*. In this not contextual but inner silence we dwell, trying to unravel the mystery of existence; in mere emptiness we recognize and embrace our mortality.

There is a project in *Filoppapou hill* in Athens where Dimitris Pikionis, created a promenading route, furnishing the place with natural materials forming archaic patterns. An architecture that creates an almost sacred place that raises images from one’s memories and affects his innermost feelings.

Though not a building, it consists architecture in a higher sense, a contemporary application of primitive, ancient methods of inhabiting the earth. Architecture, at times, stops as if it is being consumed by the earth, raising feelings of tranquility and fairness. Humbling, the project itself -as my belief is that once built, architecture gains its own identity and follows its own path in life- is guiding the visitor into discovering places to *just* sit and enjoy one of the few natural spaces in Athens and steal glimpses of the Parthenon. A place of ease without harsh gestures. As if it always belonged to the place; as if architecture was raised from the ground.

And the ground extracted to host the architecture is the one inserted again as aggregates, as the soil of the greenery or as stone masonry. Earth is making its circle simulating the circle of life and architecture is part of this natural process; part of the site’s evolution.



***“Filtering”***

*The facility unit’s material and geometry develops a dialogue with the area’s character. The sequence of volume and void, reveals views of the “house”, city and water.*

*Philopapou Hill by Dimitris Pikionis*

A project that declares its dignity, respecting the *genius loci* -to borrow the Latin name for the spirit and soul of the place- and the human psyche, answering essential existential needs, although built at a time, when Greek architecture was bowing to profit and insensitive development. Pikionis was interested in creating a place with environmental sensitivity, considering humanity as part of this environment.

The result is astonishing and hard to be expressed verbally; in the chaotic scenery of Athens, a chimera created both from the Western and the Eastern civilizations, this island of stillness at Philopappou hill, provides a metaphysical space enrapturing the visitor in a sensorily experienced silence; a silence we could almost taste -and what a bitter taste it would have; in still silence where we sense ourselves, we absorb the emptiness; we enter the void.

#### A perfect circle

“*Why architecture is self-referential and self-motivated?*” Juhani Pallasmaa asked in his *six themes for the next millennium* essay. After reading and reproducing his writings and trying to reflect gain from the master thesis, I would like to answer that, in a commodified lifestyle, where we distant ourselves from our very selves, the crave for personal development has replaced the need for the evolution of mankind.

I believe that the progress in technology gave architecture the ability to, once combined with engineering, overpass any hindrances. We, architects found ourselves in possession of great tools without having them, yet, integrated holistically and tectonically into our architecture.

In the era of mass television as David Harvey named our times, architects segue in superficial fast solutions, having the means both for fast building and fast fame, as informations travel by the speed of light, breaking last century's time barrier of after death architectural recognition.

For our actions have immediate reactions.

Without questioning our motivation, which would be 15 minutes of world fame -proof that the Andy Warholian universe is raising- we, architects offer images for the eyes, neglecting all other senses. Maybe it is so, because vision has the promptest reaction where all other senses are slowly aroused. Or it

could be that the imagery obsession invalidated all other senses. Whichever the fact, the truth is this: we want fame and we want it now. Self development means self projection, qualitative architecture becomes the popular one and architects become st-architects.

Through this master thesis report, I repeatedly express my objections towards the very act of building, contradicting with my objective of studies. As a conclusion I would like to try to explain my beliefs and connect all saying, addressing this master thesis as the closure of a long studying period.

T H I N K   b e f o r e   y o u   b u i l d

A small logo found on the bottom of electronic mails' pages, writing "*think before you print, save a tree*", dictates for the reconsideration of our actings and their results on the planet's flora.

For our individual actions have reactions.

I would like to change this logo to "*think before you build*".

As architects we build hospitals and hospices, where people heal, dwell or die, where people are getting born and where people loose their beloved ones. This example is an exaggerated one used to underline that, the vessels we create, are to be filled with emotions and the mystery of life.

We, architects, have responsibilities towards our species as we affect humanity and its evolution through our artifices. The houses we dwell during our childhood, provide the space that hosts and forms our growth and affects our psyche. Never heard of a description of one's childhood house, as it had 2,1 daylight factor and 24 degrees Celsius indoor controlled conditions. On the contrary I have heard a description of one's childhood house that had marble floor that during summer, in the dark shadow of one's bedroom, was so attractively cold that one used to lie naked, releasing the body's high temperature. During winter, standing barefoot on the piece of floor covering the heat pipes, was absorbing the heat through the toes.

This is an example of the way architecture gives us understanding of the world. We understand how materials react, how the climate works, we participate on the micro-climate by closing the shader ourselves, experiencing



the immediate change in the indoor temperature.

We participate in creating our micro environment, our existential conditions, our universe. I wonder whether we lose part of our creativity and ingeniousness once dwell in, controlled by an artificial intelligence, context; whether we put ourselves in a different place than the goldfish bowl.

I am criticizing the act of building for the sake of building itself, the superficial approach to architecture and phenomenology that had disconnecting man from the world, and the fast produced, verbose architecture, resulting from our stopples evolutionary process.

For our actions have reactions.

I narrated about the house of my childhood to show how architecture gives us understanding of the world, forms our thinking and affects our psyche. I am advocating a moment of silence before we speak. A moment in mental, existential silence before we draw the line on the paper. For this line will affect someone; for we are a unity, an organism that evolves, and every small particle -human being- of this organism -humanity- is responsible for the evolution of the whole.

A moment of silence for as long as we need, to consider our existential conditions. I am offering a space still in time, a pause, an intermediate space, where time is felt as if stopped or slowed down; an urban void and an architecture of the emptiness.

***Your very own piece of sky***

*The gloomy light stripe underneath the roof dramatizes the framing experience*



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