Judging Architecture. On the Role of Beauty in Describing & Representing Architecture

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On the role of Beauty in Architecture

Judging Architecture

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Introduction

Process & Methodology
Although he was a writer, Hogarth wrote one of the most lucid pleas for a functionalistic approach. The book was immediately translated in German and Italian and probably influenced the most rigorous architecture theoreticians.

Preface: Stepping into the Unknown.

In front of you lies a book on beauty in architecture, that is the short answer when people asked me what I was working on. Now the longer explanation. It all started when I was looking for a subject to write

This dissertation has come a long way. Curious was that the very first idea was to find about what is not done or taboo in architecture. Even more curious was that quite soon the theme of beauty in architecture came up as a more specific theme being taboo in architecture. Also, the more that I read about it and went searching for beauty in architecture, the more I became sure it was not as much a marginal phenomenon as was first thought. However, it also became clear that -as following two quotes point out- the concept, word Beauty lost its weight, especially when it is compared to Vitruvius’ Venustas, probably one of the first notions of beauty in Architecture.

... The concept of beauty, however, is not easy to improve. And indeed one seldom finds it used in twentieth-century writings on aesthetics. Its place has been taken by other words less weighed down by equivocation (notably the word aesthetic) -- though they Win turn, by taking the place of beauty, acquire some of the same difficulties. The word and concept beauty have been retained in colloquial speech, however, they are used in practice rather than in theory. ... reduced to the status of a mere colloquialism. The concept of beauty has existed in the history of European aesthetics not much longer than the great Theory. : Tatarkiewicz -The Great Theory of Beauty and Its Decline (1972)

... A building ought to be able to lighten the work and life of complex human beings in many different ways. It can do this only by satisfying many different conceptions of beauty; conceptions which do not compete but complement one another and which, in the most favourable case, are harmonised by a vigorous and mature tradition. : William Charlton - Concepts of beauty in architecture (1993)

Both Charlton & Tatarkiewicz talk about multiple beauties in their texts, sketch a history and conclude quite differently. Tatarkiewicz with saying that beauty is now reduced from a theoretical concept to nothing more than a practical term, due to its elusive, intangible character. This reduction involves a rise of new concepts, words taking its place, concepts on which Tatarkiewicz does not elaborate upon. For Charlton beauty still is seen as a tool lighten our lives. Though it should be achieved by using different kinds of beauty, since buildings & humans are complex and full of variety, in a complementing, harmonious way with the harmony being tradition.

Acknowledging the existence of multiple beauties - regardless if these are different natures existing because of the complexity of humanity (cf. Charlton) or substitutes replacing the ungraspable concept of beauty (cf. Tatarkiewicz) - leads to the main questions this dissertation:
What are these different kinds of beauty in architecture, what do they entail? What role do they play in architecture and thus, what role does beauty play? Is there a hierarchy (cf. Charlton’s harmonising tradition) between these themes?

The structure of the thesis is based on the relation between the act of judging and beauty.

The Taste of Pleasure

Architecture is Beautiful,
In his *Essai sur le goût* Montesquieu explores the pleasures that the soul can experience, to develop the concept of taste, which he defines as the ability one can discover the amount of pleasure an object can give. He discerns three kinds of pleasure, namely a mental pleasure derived from the soul’s own existence, secondly a physical one that relies on the soul’s unity with the body and thirdly a pleasure related to external factors such as prejudices and habits. In this text

From Taboo to Concepts.

Finding Aspects & Facets.

The process of finding concepts, natures was quite intuitive but ended with the choice for the following four themes: classic, vernacular, experience & character. These four concepts cover a whole field, since they all relate in a different way to two pairs of words: shape & space and architecture ( & culture.

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Ugliness was a fifth theme for a long time but is now integrated in the other four as a kind of connected reaction (anti-beauty). This is attributed to the assumption that ugliness is the negatively judging of a certain quality of an object. This also defines what these other four themes are. In contradiction to ugliness, beauty requires the positive judgement of an object. The quality that is judged defines what the theme is about. Classic & Vernacular deal with a tradition of forms and the appreciation of this repetition, where respectively a formal language rooted in the discipline and a cultural expression are mimicked. The two last other themes, Experience & Character have a focus on the interacting with space. In the theme Experience this interaction is physical and about the influence of a space on an experiencing body. In Character an emotional connecting is researched, the moralising function of Beauty and personal expression of the architect.

Until now I used terms like concepts, varieties, natures & the empty general word theme. And although these are terms of great use in certain circumstances, finding a more specific naming for what these four words are, is helpful to define in which way they relate to beauty and the act of judging, what role they play. As written above, the classic & vernacular concentrate on the form of an object, therefore these two terms will be described as facets of beauty. Experience & character on the contrary deal with the interacting with space and are on that account called aspects of beauty. The choice for aspects & facets lies therein, that both words imply that the four terms are not a replacement of (the word) beauty but a kind of beauty. The small difference in meaning between aspects & facets emphasises the different focus of the judgement. The word aspect entails a focus on how the observer looks to, observes an object (<Lat.: a-spicere, towards-looking) while a facet puts the focus on the shape of the object being observed. So, the aspects experience & character concentrate on the observer, while the facets

Designing, Representing & Describing Beauty.
The analysis of this judging forms the main body of the thesis and is done in every facet, aspect through a series of cases, buildings. To reveal what exactly entails these themes, all the cases are analysed in two ways, through text & image. For each of the cases 1 image is produced by using 1 medium for each theme, this part forms a more absolute, more personal approach. While in the text a broader spectrum is grasped, by reading different sources written by the architects themselves or critics & theoreticians. At the end of each chapter, there is a conclusion in which the aspect or facet is further described and defined through mutually comparing the case studies. This comparison is done for every chapter on the basis of three concepts that relate to the act of aesthetic judging in a certain way but every time within the scope of that chapter’s specific architectural beauty. First concept that is discussed is what kind of quality of architecture is evaluated, which I will further refer to as the judged property. Secondly, a concept is introduced which forms the Criterion, the benchmark that forms the base of the decision whether something is beautiful or not. Thirdly, the nature of this specific

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The sum of the four chapters, one for each aspect or facet, gives an overview upon the capacities & use of aesthetic decision making and criticising in architecture.
Chapter 1

Classic Ideals.
Introduction:
Classic, not Classical.

Featuring an Abstract Composition.
Haus ohne Eigenschaften - O.M. Ungers

An Effective Language.
Apartment building in Sargans - Peter Märkli

A Regulating Wife & Manipulated Mistress.
Villa Stein-De Monzie - Le Corbusier

Conclusion:
Ideal Norm & Form
Classic Cases

In this chapter three buildings are analysed to find out what becomes important and what not if there is a classic element involved. The case studies are all chosen because of a - sometimes unexpected, sometimes very subtle- sense of classic-ness they emit. In the House ohne Eigenschaften by O.M. Ungers this was the completely symmetrical, rhythmical & proportional façades, for the Sargans apartment building by Peter Märkli the colonnade with abstracted capitals and in the Villa Stein-de Monzie by Le Corbusier the use of Tracés Régulateurs in the façade & grid in the plan. These elements were only triggers for choosing these buildings, which after analysing showed a much deeper connection with the classical and more generally the classic. The analysis and resulting text consist of three parts: first the building is described, then the classic aspect in this case is studied in depth (why it is a classic building and in what way it is used) and finally the aesthetic behind this facet is explored, in order to find out how and what kind of beauty is generated through the classic. At the same time, this will at the same time clarify what is at the core of this classic aesthetic.

As will be pointed out in the conclusion of this chapter this aesthetic is strongly related to a pursuit for an ideal beauty. Further in the conclusion an overview is given, parallels and differences are described between the case studies and more important, the influence and relevance of a classic beauty on architecture is illustrated by describing what becomes important and what has no relevance when this facet of beauty is applied.

Diagrams & the simple naked line

A diagram is a graphic representation of a process or some parameters and their relation to each other.

As already mentioned, every case is preceded by a graphic exploration of the building, in this chapter all of these visual introductions are diagrams. The choice for this medium originates from a quote by Peter Märkli at the end of an interview in which he explains his view on research, education and practice, in this short fragment he describes in detail his view on the use of a proportion system:

When you have found the basic size you can finish it, you can base the measurements of the building on it, that is the hierarchical element, in my opinion money does not play a role, I can realise a building with very minimal means but I can also realise it with expensive materials, but the essence is always there. When you design an ordinary house without the right proportions and you cover it in gold then I find it to be one of the most tragic things I know in this world. This is what determines the hierarchy. This here (his proportion system) is wonderful not as a design but as a tool as we communicate with numbers.

Question: This is not only two-dimensional?

No this is façade, we make these pencil drawings, always using these lines but you can never create shadows and you can never draw the material when you are dealing with the measures, the simple naked line has to have the effect that you can feel this is going to be a good house.  


In each of these diagrams, a plan and façade is drawn, only consisting of the simple naked lines mentioned by Märkli. The most clear, obvious elements are rendered in black such as the overall form of the building, outer window frames and walls. Details are drawn in grey, while the white lines complete the drawing and depict the governing ideas and principles that make this building classical.
Haus ohne Eigenschaften

Featuring an abstract Composition.

Oswald Mathias Ungers
Previous Spread:
Front façade and ground floor plan of the Häuse ohne Eigenschaften. Redrawn and based on drawings by Ungers. Source: Aphorismen zum Hauserbau.
In his book *Aphorismen zum Häuserbauen* O.M. Ungers describes the design of a couple of houses he built for himself. What he immediately makes clear in his text, is that there is a huge discrepancy between the first house and the last house he built in Cologne. In 1958, Ungers, when he was thirty years old, built his first house and atelier in Cologne, trying out everything what occurred his mind concerning architecture. He articulated every architectural element he could think about: plinth, wall, roof, cornice, lintels, heavy materiality, lightness, breaks. In 1995, almost 40 years later, Ungers built another house again for his wife and himself. Although it is only hundred meters away from the first, the house is miles away in appearance from the first one. Ungers named this last house the *Haus ohne Eigenschaften*, which suggests that the house has no features. Thus, whereas the first house consisted of an abundance of diverse elements, the second seems to suggest rather the opposite.

It is however more interesting to consider what is featured in the *Haus ohne Eigenschaften*. Firstly, the house is inspired on an age-old typology, which he applied imitating historic predecessors such as *Haus Perls* by Mies van der Rohe, the *Villa Badoer* by Palladio and the *Pavilion in Charlottenburg* by Karl Friedrich Schinkel. The plans all display a similar configuration in plan: a central and two side-aisles.

Unger’s plan is a purified version of this spatial organisation, the house mainly consists of five rooms: a central double-height space and four equally big rooms in the side-aisles on the ground and first floor. On the ground floor there is a kitchen and a living room; upstairs the side-aisles each contain a *studiolo*, private rooms, one for his wife and one for himself. The walls of the long façades and the inner walls have a remarkable thickness. This was necessary for the service facilities they contain such as stairs, an elevator, toilets, kitchen-sinks, bathrooms and storage. This way Ungers was able to keep the purity of those five main spaces, in which as little elements as possible are articulated. This reducing of the articulation of things to a minimum is one of the main characteristics of the building. The internal tripartite of spaces is also not articulated in the façades. There is no front, side or back -façade. The openings in the façade all have the same size and shape and seem to be window-like doors on the ground floor and door-like windows on the first floor. There is a complete lack of decorative detail and everything is white.

Taking into consideration the comparison of the two Cologne houses and this reduction of articulation, it is clear that Ungers had an obsession with abstraction which grew stronger over the years. This late work of Ungers served as a culmination point in which he could test the boundaries of his obsession, considering that it was his own house. Ungers himself called this endeavour to abstract architecture a failed experiment. This he ascribes to the arise of differentiation, which he tried to erase.
together with all the narratives and metaphors a building can comprise; e.g. the hierarchy of the entrances disappeared by using twelve identical and rhythmically placed window-doors. When realised and used, one of the twelve entrances, turned into a main entrance. Also, the windows on the first floor did not become doors despite their same appearance.

However, this project should not be considered as a failure. This urge for abstraction is namely related to the aim of bringing back architecture to its essence. An essence that is described by Ungers as followed:

Es war die Absicht, eine Architektur zu verwirklichen, die nicht von etwas anderem als ihrer eigenen Gesetzmäßigkeit, ihrer eigenen, extrem reduzierten Sprache abhängig ist. Eine Architektur, die nur aus sich selbst heraus existiert.

This quest towards the essence of architecture reveals the features of the Haus ohne Eigenschaften. Moreover, Ungers’ endeavour proves the house actually demonstrates subtle features and therefore represents his values. Also, in this quote, Ungers mentions a reduced language, which contains certain classic(al) elements (infra). The house is an experiment of abstraction wherein architecture is successfully reduced to an essence. As will be explained further this essence is composition based on classical principles. By not considering what is omitted, the qualities that characterize this particular house come to attention. Furthermore it becomes clear what a beautiful building is for O.M. Ungers by finding out how it is related to his essence of architecture.

Architecture is Composition.

Besides his fetish for abstraction, Ungers also put thought into defining architecture and its essence. This was the main subject of his inauguration lecture in 1964 at the University of Berlin. In the next few paragraphs this lecture is summarised, which will be helpful to look differently to the Haus ohne Eigenschaften.

An etymological analysis of the word architecture forms the starting point of his lecture. The prefix archi- finds its origin in the Greek prefix ἀρχι-, which can be defined as the first or, principal according to Ungers. It is comparable to the use of the prefix arch- in arch-enemy. The explanation of the second part, -tecture (derived from the Greek word Technos), is considerably more extensive. Semantically speaking it means everything that is opposite to the natural, an appropriate translation for technos could be artificiality. He further states that technos can be defined as three types of art: - technos as the art of handicraft, which comprises the usufruct of natural materials to serve human needs (material justness / Materialgerechtigkeit); - technos as the art of science, which deals with the systematic development of natural forces for certain purposes (fruition, fulfilment of purpose / Zweckerfüllung); - technos as the art of art, which is the manifestation of general, abstract ideas in giving form (giving form / Gestaltung).

These three kinds of technos lead to Ungers saying that to define something as architecture, there are three requirements to fulfil: fulfilment of purpose, justness of material & giving form. If only purpose and material are involved, an object of utility comes into existence. If purpose, function is left out, a work of art is created through form and material. And when solely purpose and form giving is combined, nothing (physical) comes out of it, because a form only crystallises when these two abstract concepts are combined with material and construction. Therefore Architecture is neither pure fulfilment of purpose nor pure art. The essence of architecture lies between building and built art (Baukunst) and is never completely depending on a purpose nor an idea.
A second line of argument in his lecture is about the kind of art architecture is. Unger proposes to rename architecture as a binding art instead of a bound art, with binding and bound as two variations of opposites to the word free as in free, liberal arts. Unger prefers binding over bound art, because this turns architecture into an active art, the art of creating bonds. Due to this change of name it is possible to define architecture not as something between building and art, but giving it a position above art and technique, the mother of all arts.

So if architecture is a binding art, with what means does architecture bind the requirements of fulfilling of purpose, material justness and giving form together? The answer to this question lies for Unger in one word: composition. For Unger this word even defines architecture: Architecture is Composition. Thus, to make architecture is to compose and to compose one needs rules & principles according to Unger, because without them, nothing can be bound together. He concludes his lecture by further developing, defining and applying those rules and principles. He calls them elements of composition, the essential rules. These are the main principles & tools to compose and Unger discerns five of them: rhythm, symmetry, proportion, axis and contrast.

Rhythm concerns periodicity and most easily is described by the regular, spatial or temporal succession of equal elements.
Symmetry originally indicates evenness and is the evenly ordering of single parts to each other.
Proportion means generally speaking the mutual relation between the three dimensions, it brings several powers in balance and binds them meanwhile in a stable relation. Unger makes a differentiation between a relative and an absolute proportion. In an absolute proportion the whole changes depending on the parts while in an relative proportion the part changes in relationship to the whole. The axis is a straight line, on which parts can be given an order in any form, while the direction of the line determines the movement of the parts. The last element, contrast, means an opposition, not in the sense of an objection, but as a complementary oppositeness.

These five principles form the basis to create a composition, to achieve a rhythmic formation and to unite elements as a whole.

In the Haus ohne Eigenschaften the five elements of composition can easily be recognised. First of all, everything from the width of the window frames to the complete building volume is aligned and sized along a grid which combines axis & proportion. Symmetry & Rhythm strengthen the composition through the placement & form of the window frames. Finally, all of this would never be so clearly visible, if their would not have been a contrast between the darkness of the glass in the windows and the whiteness of everything else. It is clear that these principles form the main features of the house and the extremely reduced language Unger mentioned when describing this house (supra). Through abstraction Unger achieved to bring back architecture to its essence, composition.
Vierte Betrachtung

Der Leuchter der Schönheit

24. Lehenspruch
Vollkommene Ausführung kennzeichnet sowohl die beste Architektur wie die beste Malerei.

John Ruskin
Vierte Raumvariation

Das Oktogon

Sieben Isometrien

Das Oktogon begrenzt
die Regelmäßigkeit des Raumes
die Zentralität
die Ausgewogenheit
Harmonie und Konzentration auf den
Mittelpunkt.
Der Raum ruht in sich selbst und ist
eine reine Form
des Innenraumes.
An Abstract Composition.

Ungers’ search for an essence through abstraction, leads him to reducing architecture to the application of principles in order to bind elements together. These five principles have an important history. They are similar to some of the ground methods of architecture Vitruvius established in his ten books on architecture such as *Eurythmia & Symmetria, Ordinatio & Dispositio* which show a kinship with composition:

...2. Ordinatio is the measured suitability of the parts of a work considered individually...Dispositio, on the other hand, is the suitable arrangement of elements and the refined effect of the composition of the work in accord with its essential nature. ... 3. Eurythmia is the graceful appearance and agreeable arrangement of elements. 4. Symmetria is the proper agreement among the members of the actual work, and the relation between the different parts and the whole composition. 9

This implicit, indirect aesthetic meaning of composition found in Vitruvius concepts *Dispositio & Eurythmia* is not the only connection between Ungers’ essence of architecture and beauty. In a booklet with the title *Sieben Variationen des Raumes über die Sieben Leuchter der Baukunst von John Ruskin* he makes a more explicit connection. Ungers associates seven room variations -diagrammatic representations which he calls concepts of space- to the seven lamps of architecture of John Ruskin.10

Every lamp, and its corresponding chapter, represents seven demands that Ruskin makes on architecture in order to be good architecture. To the lamp of beauty Ungers links the room variation of the octagon, which refers to the principle of *Zusammenfassung*11, literally framing together. It seems plausible that composition for Ungers also comprises an aesthetic. The diagram of the octagon, the accompanied poem by Ungers and the aphorism of Ruskin, which are depicted on the previous pages will give more details on the beauty that is generated through composition.

In his poem Ungers mentions words like *Harmonie, ruht* and *reine* to describe the nature of beauty caused by the octagon. This suggests that aesthetic qualities like harmony, calmness and purity are generated by composition. In the Haus ohne Eigenschaften these qualities also shimmer through. The service spaces are hidden to keep the main rooms pure, rhythm and proportion are used in the façade to generate a harmonious, calm whole. In fact, the complete house is designed to create this purity, this calmness. The reason for this lies in Ungers’ experience of his first house. In the *Aphorismen zum Häuserbauen* he shares that he hardly could find any rest or inner peace there, because of the abundance of details he wanted to have solved differently.12 Thus, the lack of these classic aesthetic qualities in his first house such as harmony, calmness and purity led Ungers to design his second home entirely based on compositional principles.

The poem is juxtaposed to an aphorism of Ruskin:

> Perfect finish characterises alike the best architecture and the best painting.13

Strangely enough, Ungers used an aphorism from the chapter dealing with the lamp of life instead of the lamp of beauty. Due to this shift from the lamp of life to the lamp of beauty, there is also a shift in meaning. For Ruskin this quote is about the careful, perfect execution (finish) of a building, workmanship14 that characterises the best architecture. In the light of Ungers lamp of beauty, it may be assumed that the best implies the most beautiful and that instead of a perfect finish, a finished perfection is more suitable. The focus is more on the perfect, a completeness (*das Vollkommene*), which can be related to his urge for abstraction and reduction to the essence. In the Haus ohne Eigenschaften it leads to the complete absence of detail and decoration.

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11 Ibid.


14 Ibid. p. 154-155.
and their meaning, which allows Ungers to make a perfect composition without distraction.

The aesthetic qualities of perfection, harmony, purity and calmness are an inherent part of the principles of composition that Ungers applies in the house. Composition even forms the essence of architecture for him. Important is that the aesthetic possibilities of composition are both cause and effect in Ungers Haus ohne Eigenschaften. Composition as a cause, because the lack of a perfect, calm and pure harmony, led him to reduce the design to a composition as much as possible and composition as an effect, because the focus on composition exactly generates this harmony. Therefore, these principles of composition with classical roots are exactly the things Ungers could not leave out in his Haus ohne Eigenschaften and actually made it into a house with features, with quality & beauty. In a way this case study demonstrates that beauty can be used to say that there is an essence, while at the same time bringing a building back to this essence makes the building beautiful.

It seems that perfection is attained not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing more to remove.15
Apartment Building in Sargans

An Effective Language.

Peter Märkli
Previous Spread:
Front facade and first floor (with indication of the position of the pillars on the second and third floor) of the Apartment building in Sargans. Redrawn and based on drawings by Märkli. Combined with sketches about his proportion system. Sources: Approximations. Lecture on Proportions.

This Page:
View from main lobby to the living room and terrace. Source: Approximations, p 87
The Temple of Sargans.

In 1986, Peter Märkli built this apartment building in Sargans (Switzerland), which was the first project of a larger scale. It accommodated nine households instead of one as in the single family houses he did before. Although the building lodges multiple units, one of the main intentions of Märkli was to create a building that appeared as one unity. By doing this he wanted to react on the sprawling landscape of Sargans. The ground floor is completely closed in the front, except for the main entrance, and contains no apartments, but storage space, workshops and garages. The three upper floors all have the same plan configuration and each contains three apartments. The two apartments on both the ends of the building go through the whole depth while the smaller one in the middle, is positioned in the front façade. This way, there is room in the middle of the building’s back side for circulation and entrances to the apartments. This superficial description does not say anything about the quality of this house, therefore the next paragraphs describe how Märkli makes use of classical elements in order to give the building more rich and unified character.

To create a spatial richness, there are no corridors inside the apartments. They are completely composed out of rooms, which have diverse sizes and are connected in different ways. In the living room of the side apartments for example, there is a simple door to the kitchen, a hidden second door to one of the bedrooms and a big open doorway to the main lobby. Like a Palladian villa, rooms are given a hierarchy and differentiation through scale and the way they are connected to the other rooms (fig. on opposite page).

Further, the doors, rooms, the façade and its parts such as the pillars, are given a size and position through the rigorous employment of a proportional system, which Märkli developed himself. This proportion system is based on Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian man with that difference that in Märkli’s diagram, the two upper corners of the square touch the circle and not only the centre of the bottom side of the square. Consequently, he achieves to bring both the golden section and the Triangulum together in one diagram. The centre of the circle is exactly five-eights above the downside of the square, approximating the golden section. A seven-eights proportion, equal to the Triangulum, is found on the intersection of one of the sides of the square with one of the perpendicular lines, needed to construct the circle. The use of proportion is crucial for Märkli and has two reasons. On the one hand it leaves no room for arbitrariness, as he states in the next quote, on the other hand it also it leads to a united expression of the building.
I did not know how to create the measure ... One of the answers was that you simply had to take a brick and not break it, then I said what kind of morale is that? That does not interest me, you can just make them smaller. Anyhow I did not get an answer and I decided to study proportion next to my education. Because it always made me nervous when you had to make arbitrary decisions as if there were endless variations. I looked for the exact values.4

However, proportion & the Palladian plan are only two examples of how Märkli processes the classical in this building. In the façade this happens much more explicitly through the presence of classical ideas. On the ground floor the lines of concrete casting resemble the rustication of a palazzo, strengthening the expression of the base.

By unevenly distributing pillars, with capitals reduced to abaci, Märkli hides the regular placement of the windows, which give access to the loggias. As a consequence, he camouflages the number and position of the apartments and enhances the unified appearance of the building. As if they where the columns of a temple, Märkli’s pillars hide what is happening inside, lifted on a storey-high stylobate with rustication lending the building a representative, public character.

Drawn in Vers une Architecture, this image by Le Corbusier seems to come one case study too early. The image depicts a primitive temple and illustrates the importance Le Corbusier attached to order & geometry, which will be discussed in the next case study. However, it also shows some similarity with the building by Märkli, for example the palisade around the temple resembles the colonnade in front of the loggias in Sargans. Next to this quite literal resemblance, the use of proportion by Märkli is similar to what Le Corbusier explains about this temple: the whole is conditioned by measurements5.

The last paragraphs have shown that Märkli uses classical forms & principles in a similar way as they were formerly used. He uses the classical as a language to give a certain meaning, expression to his buildings. Why exactly he employs a classical language will be explained in the next section.
A Universal Language.

In an interview Märkli says that the expression of things is the reason why humans created artistic professions such as architecture. Architecture has to express, communicate, but in which way? For Märkli, the use of classical elements has not so much to do with composition an sich, but with the meaning their forms can express. In a certain sense, Märkli uses these elements as a tool to produce meaning and generate a richness and radiation. This emphasis on meaning, richness and radiation can be found in multiple conversations with Märkli, e.g.:

> IN-EX: Ultimately what you are looking for is abstraction, an abstraction opposed to the softness of nature?

PM: I am not sure. What matters most to me is that a building should radiate. All the hogwash about minimalism does not interest me. What interest me is richness. A sculpture by Giacometti relies on composition. Cut it in two and there is not much left. But if you find an elbow from a Greek sculpture, this detail will still be rich; it still has something to say, it means something. But the impact of our society and our day is no less important than in the past. And we can still express meaning today even if we do so in a totally different way, because when it comes to craftsmanship and contemplation, we cannot do the same things today.7

In a comparison of architecture with painting8, Märkli inadvertently explains why the classical still plays an important role in (his) architecture. He defines a painting as the universe of a painter in a chosen frame. This frame is absent in architecture, since the architect works in a context. While a painting is the painter’s individual universe in a frame, architecture takes places in a universe and thus has to relate to its surroundings. It might seem a kind of weak and all too simple comparison (which he also admits), nonetheless it is another argument for Märkli to acknowledge the importance of a common, architectural language. Further, saying the same but in other words, he stresses the importance of conventions and rejects privatisation of language.8

To learn the conventions of this language, Märkli went back in time, looking to buildings as a Greek temple, a Roman church, an Islamic mosque and the chapel in Ronchamp of Le Corbusier, which he calls classical buildings.9 In these buildings he searches for the meaning of their forms and the effect they have on people.10 This led to the connection of architectural grammar like proportion, plasticity & rhythm to effects through the formal meaning such as importance, centrality, hierarchy and integration. Examples of this can also be found in the apartment building in Sargans such as the use of proportion to create a unity and the temple-like colonnade which have been described above. The meaning of its forms and in particular the universal character of those meanings form the main reason for Märkli to use a classic language.

An accessible radiation of inner truth.

His plea against an individual language also has an aesthetic ground and therefore adds a reason to use the classical language. This reasoning is based on St. Augustin definition of beauty:

Beauty is the radiance of an inner Truth.11

Märkli explains that this definition- also used by Mies van der Rohe- defines his position as an architect. He tells that beauty provokes him and that this truth, of which beauty is the expression, should be accessible to every individual.12 Again there is a desire for universality implied in this accessibility for everyone, though, this time with an aesthetic connotation. Nonetheless, some of his buildings are not by every-
one seen as if they were radiating an inner Truth. The apartment building for example is called the Garrison of Sargans by the surrounding inhabitants. Märkli believes that people who are calling his building names, do not recognise the language. He means that instead those people see a strange approach because they do not have an educated eye. They do not perceive the rules, which are at the foundation of his vision on beauty, a beauty that Märkli also calls the expression of an attitude.

The use of the word attitude reveals a paradox in Märkli’s line of reasoning. This is due to the contradiction between attitude, with a more personal connotation and the use of the classical language because of its universality. This contradiction disappears when the word accessible is given more attention. Due to his use of classical elements people have an universal access to the value and beauty of his buildings, but only after learning, by training the eye. In other words Märkli makes beauty a function of education, only an educated eye sees this beauty. Here there is a difference with Augustinus definition, who believed that beauty is automatically distributed through by the inner truth.

In the belief that his buildings too become the expression of an inner truth Märkli looks towards the past and learns to speak its language. He wants to narrate a story in an universal language so that the building inscribes itself in its context and can be appreciated by the humans who live in that context. In Sargans he wanted the house to appear as one by hiding the housing units and give the building a representative, public character. Therefore, it is never a plain repeating of classical elements, he makes a translation to the present, since he builds in the present. He is using these classical ideas and the universal beauty they entail as a tool for the sake of an contemporary and accessible radiation of an inner truth.
Villa Stein- de Monzie

A Regulating Wife & Manipulated Mistress.

Le Corbusier
You work with stone, with wood, with concrete; you make them into houses and palaces; this is construction. Ingenuity is at work. But suddenly you touch my heart, you do me good, I am happy, I say: "It is Beautiful." This is architecture. Art is present.

My house is practical. Thank you, as I thank the engineers of the railroad and the telephone company. You have not touched my heart. But the walls rise against the sky in an order such that I am moved. I sense your intentions. You were gentle, brutal, charming, or dignified. Your stones tell me so. You rivet me to this spot and my eyes look. My eyes look at something that states a thought. A thought that clarifies itself without words or sounds, but only through prisms that have relationships with one another. These prisms are such that the light reveals them clearly. These relationships don't necessarily have anything to do with what is practical or descriptive. They are a mathematical creation of your mind. They are the language of architecture. With inert materials, based on a more or less utilitarian program that you go beyond, you have established relationships that moved me. It is architecture.
This third case goes a bit further back in time and focuses on one of Le Corbusier’s so-called Purist villas from the 1920s. The Villa Stein-de Monzie in Garches is one of the last Le Corbusier built, in 1927. He received the commission in 1925 from two wealthy clients, madame Gabrielle de Monzie and her American friends Michael and Sarah Stein.

Throughout the 1920s, Le Corbusier designed a series of villas with the rigour of a mathematician who, having set out definitions and principles, produces new propositions and theorems, or the system of a musician composer who, having established a theme and rules, moves on composing variations. Indeed, as much as the 1920s-era projects appear to respond to the specifics of each client and site, they do evolve out of a logic of their own and in relation to each other, experimenting with possibilities of spatial composition. Le Corbusier summarised the rules and themes, that he rigorously applied in his villas of the twenties, in two documents. First there is his Five Points of a New architecture, an article that appeared for the first time in L’Ésprit Nouveau. It focuses on five architectural elements that the houses should be composed of: the *pilotis*, the *plan libre*, the *façade libre*, the *fenêtre-en-longueur* and the *toit-jardin*. As can be seen on the diagrammatic façade and plan introducing this case and the axonometric drawing (fig. 2) all five of the points are used in the villa in Garches.

The second document is the Four compositions-scheme published in 1929, in which he shows the plan and axonometric drawing of four ways to compose the volume of such a residence. The villa Stein-de Monzie adheres to the second type:

> ...the compression of organs within a rigid envelope, absolutely pure. A difficult problem, perhaps a spiritual delight; spending spiritual energy within self-imposed limitations.

In his *oeuvre complèt* Le Corbusier writes that this house represents an important step in which problems of luxury, comfort and architectural aesthetics are united. He mentions how the house is completely supported by a grid of pilotis, with alternating distances of 5m & 2.5m (north-south façade) and 1.25m and 3.75m (east-west façade), giving a constant scale and rhythm to the building. About the façades he says that they are bearers of light and nothing more than a glass veil or brick clothing the house since they are not structural.

The plans demonstrate a typical organisation of a bel-étage house, with on the ground floor the entrances, a hall, servant rooms and the garage. The living quarter with kitchen, dining room, library, big living room and a covered terrace is located...
on the first floor. The last two floors contain the sleeping suites with adjacent bathrooms.

As he says in the four compositions the rooms are like organs compressed in the rigid rectangular body and are separated from one another through sculptural non-load bearing walls which are in strong contrast with the structural grid. These kind of dualities for example of reconciling opposites such as old & new, classical & modern, rigid & sculptural form are typical for Le Corbusier’s buildings. This kind of dichotomy reappears also in how the classic(al) appears in his work and how this influenced his aesthetics and view on beauty (in the last part of this case study).

Regulating Wife and Manipulated Mistress.

The classical influence on Le Corbusier does not need much proof. In the first place it is obvious in the publications he made, the theories he developed in those publications and finally in the buildings he built. Also a huge amount of historical and theoretical research is made that connects the work of Le Corbusier to Classical buildings, principles and so forth. This section focuses on two themes that explore the presence of the Classic(al) in the Villa Stein-de Monzie. Firstly, the regulating lines, a design tool that Le Corbusier explicitly links to classical examples in his publications. Secondly, the Palladian influence, which is more implicit and brought to the light through scholarly research which is confined in this case study to the articles of Colin Rowe and Daniel Sherer.

Les Tracés Régulateurs, the regulating lines, are thoroughly described in Le Corbusier’s *Vers une Architecture* (named Toward an architecture from here on) published in 1924. It is his most well-know publication, a manifesto insisting on looking differently to architecture, with modern, a-historic eyes. This a-historic approach is very apparent in the juxtapositions of old classical buildings and machines, vehicles and factories. The book is based on a collection of articles which he mostly wrote with Amédée Ozenfant for their magazine L’Esprit Nouveau. It is also in this magazine he uses the term regulating line for the first time in the article *Sur la plastique* which appeared in the first number in 1920.

In the description of the Villa Stein-de Monzie in the *Œuvre Complète* Le Corbusier writes this about the regulating lines:

> Toute cette maison obéit à des tracés régulateur rigoureux qui on conduit à modifier, à 1 cm. près, les côtes des différentes parties. La mathématique apporte ici des vérités réconfortantes: on ne quitte son ouvrage qu’avec la certitude d’être arrivé à la chose exacte.

This quote about the Villa in Garches in his Oeuvre Complète shows how and why he uses the regulating lines. They guide, they are a means, that he uses in the Villa Stein-de Monzie and every other project he built in that time to dimension the façade and its elements in a proportional way. But this also has its implications on the plan, namely the size of the grid & placement of the structural pilotis.

In Toward an Architecture Le Corbusier declares that the regulating line is a guarantee against arbitrariness, which he implied in the previous quote as a comforting truth bringing forth an exactness, since one can not leave a building site without having the certainty to have achieved something exact (this is also mentioned in the previous quote. Further he describes how the regulating lines were also used before by Michelangelo, the Egyptians and the Greeks for example. Also he mentions how they used it for its correctness and the satisfaction of their artistic sense and their mathematical thought. However, the core thing the regulating lines do, according to Le Corbusier, is the fixation of the base geometry. This fixed geometry consequently
generates the aforementioned exactness, satisfaction & comforting truth. Also this acquired geometry forms the key to produce beauty, as will be discussed in next section.

Palladio’s influence is much more implicit in comparison with the explicit description of the regular lines in theory and the employment of it in the Villa. Therefore, following paragraphs are based on research that focuses on this influence.

There are two causes of beauty- natural and customary. Natural is from geometry consisting in uniformity, that is equality and proportion. Customary beauty is begotten by the use, as familiarity breeds a love for things not in themselves lovely. Here lies the great occasion of errors, but always the true test is natural or geometrical beauty. Geometrical figures are naturally more beautiful than irregular ones: the square, the circle are the most beautiful, next the parallelogram and the oval. There are only two beautiful positions of straight lines, perpendicular and horizontal; this is from Nature and consequently necessity, no other than upright being firm.12

With this quote Colin Rowe commences his article The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa Colin Rowe in which he compares the Villa in Garches and the Villa Foscari, the Malcontenta, by Palladio. In this comparison he describes the differences and similarities in the organisation, proportion & structural system. The most striking resemblance is found in the ABABA rhythm of the front and back façade and in the use of a grid ordering the rooms. Further, Rowe states that both architects share a common standard, which he calls mathematical.13 With mathematical Rowe refers to the regulating lines, grid-structure & geometry of Le Corbusier and the proportion, order & volumes in the Malcontenta. All together, Rowe’s comparison is confined to an interpretation of the forms due to a lack of a proof that Le Corbusier was actually inspired by Palladio.

In his article Le Corbusier’s Discovery of Palladio in 1922 and the Modernist Transformation of the Classical Code Daniel Sherer makes use of a new document that establishes that link between Le Corbusier & Palladio. This article is more of a methodological reflection and gives account to norms instead of forms and therefore complements the argument made in Rowe’s text. The new document is the Album La Roche, it contains a series of drawings that Le Corbusier made Palladio’s churches and villas in Venice and its surroundings. According to Sherer, Le Corbusier emphasises in these drawings the way that Palladio deviates from the classical code. This leads Sherer to say that this inventive dealing with rules is also apparent in Le Corbusier’s work.
A prime example of this, Sherer relies here upon Colquhoun, is how Le Corbusier makes an inversion, manipulation of classical principles. The *pilotis* can be perceived as an inversion of the stylobate, while the *fenêtre en longueur* are the counterparts of the classical aedicule. Sherer’s text illustrates, that next to a similarity in formal logic (mathematics), Le Corbusier also draws upon Palladio’s treatment of norms, both strictly adhering to them and freely manipulating them.

In short, this section shows that the Classic is present in the Villa Stein-de Monzie in two ways. On the one hand the regulating lines govern very overtly the geometry of the façade, plan & structure of the house like a strict wife, while Palladian principles act like an influence, more like a manipulated mistress of Classical principles that are inverted, of rules & norms, which Le Corbusier manipulates to fit the Zeitgeist. The Classic as a wife which subjects Le Corbusier to strict rules, but also as mistress, hidden and manipulated.

Harmonious Relationships and Strange Affairs.

A house has two ambitions/purposes. First of all, it is a dwelling-machine, this means a tool designed as convenient assistance in the speed and accuracy of our work, an industrious and cooperative machine that meets the requirements of the body: comfort. Also the house is a necessary place for meditation and also the place where beauty reigns, which calms the mind, something indispensable. I do not claim that art is for everyone. I simply say that for some people a home should cause experiences of beauty (sentiments de beauté). Everything concerning the practical needs brings the engineer. Thinking & meditation, the experience of beauty, the domineering order (it is the basis of that beauty) is covered by the architecture. Engineering on the one hand, architecture on the other hand.\(^{14}\)

It is clear that the beauty Le Corbusier talks about here is strongly connected to the classic elements in his work. The domineering order, the basis of beauty according to him, is the intended consequence of the use of regulating lines, as discussed in last section. In *Toward an Architecture*\(^{10}\) Le Corbusier states that the regulating lines cause beautiful things, a statement he makes prior to examples of this beauty such as the Capitol by Michelangelo in Rome and his own Villa Schwob. The beauty it causes, is a beauty of exactness & harmony which resides in geometry. Also in this quote Le Corbusier stresses the importance of beauty, it turns the house in a place where we can calm down, where we can meditate.

The beauty of the villa Stein-de Monzie also has a dual character, as the use of the classical described above in terms of the wife and the mistress. On the one hand Le Corbusier achieves harmonious relationships between forms through the use of classic mathematics visualised in the regulating lines and present in the grid structure in the plan. On the other hand there are the strange aberrations from the classical rules, which lend an unique experience and character to the building referring to an age of the machine but nonetheless embedded in a classical tradition.

For deep in every revolution, discreetly hidden, resides a Classicism, which is a form of constant.\(^{15}\)
Nature works according to laws, to which it obliged itself in harmony with the Creator, Art according to rules, about which she has agreed with the Genius.

- Johann Wolfgang Goethe.
In this chapter beauty is found in aesthetic qualities such as harmony, purity, calmness & satisfaction endeavouring an Ideal are mentioned. It is found in the forms of a building and interrelationship of those forms. Crucial for these forms and relationships is that they are based on (classical) norms. These first three sentences form the conclusion of this chapter about the Classic and revolve around three concepts: form, norm & the ideal. These concepts establish both relations and differences between the case studies and expose in which way the Classic added an aesthetic value such as harmony, purity, calmness and so on, to these buildings. Also, these concepts form together the first mode of judging, wherein an Ideal Classic beauty is described in the judgement of architectural forms considering norms as the criterion.

Introduction:
Classic, not Classical.

This first chapter deals with the influence of the classic(al) in architecture and its motives & consequences related to beauty. In scope of this dissertation, this facet of beauty is defined by the word classic as leading title-word instead of classical due to a small but important difference in meaning. The definition of both these words will help to explain this difference and thus, the choice for classic over classical.

classic [klas-ik]
adjective. Also, classical.
1. of the first or highest quality, class, or rank: a classic piece of work
2. serving as a standard, model, or guide: the classic method of teaching arithmetic.
3. of or pertaining to Greek and Roman antiquity, especially with reference to literature and art.
4. modelled upon or imitating the style or thought of ancient Greece and Rome.
5. of or adhering to an established set of artistic or scientific standards or methods.

classical [klas-i-kuhl]
adjective.
...5. Architecture
a. noting or pertaining to the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, especially the religious and public architecture, characterised by the employment of orders.
b. noting or pertaining to any of several styles of architecture closely imitating the architecture of ancient Greece or Rome; neoclassic.
c. noting or pertaining to architectural details or motifs adapted from ancient Greek or Roman models.
d. (of an architectural design) simple, reposeful, well-proportioned, or symmetrical in a manner suggesting the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome.1

The term classical entails a connection to the Greek & Roman antiquity and determines a historical, stylistic category. The word classic on the contrary has no historical nor stylistic connotation (except in definition 3 & 4), but says something about the quality of something (def. 1.), the normative status (def. 2.) or origins (def. 5.) of something. Therefore the word classic is chosen over classical and this way a link with the Classical Era and a qualitative, normative meaning is covered.

Form: Geometry & Effect.

Form is what is appreciated, what is deemed beautiful in this chapter. It is under judgement and in the end sentenced to be beautiful. This accrediting of value to
form occurs in two ways, through the geometrical quality and the unifying effect of those forms.

In the Haus ohne Eigenschaften by Ungers composition is the agent of beauty. He connects qualities such as purity, harmony, calmness to forms. In the Haus ohne Eigenschaften this becomes extremely clear: in an effort to achieve perfection Ungers strips forms from meaning, decoration and so on until just a composition of identical geometries, is left over. Form is reduced to geometry, namely the size, shape and relative position of figures. This is most clear in the façades, white rectangles with evenly, symmetrically distributed rectangular windows. However, the real tour de force happens on the inside, where also the main rooms are kept intact and everything that would disturb this purity is put in to the thick walls. The most remarkable consequence of this striving to keep rooms and thus purity intact, is probably that the windows outside are repeated on the inside of this thick wall.

Le Corbusier his approach towards a classic beauty through form is quite similar. By means of a strict set of rules, from his five points to the regulating lines, he tries to achieve an harmonious whole. Again forms are brought back to a geometry. Märkli’s case is in this context the odd-one-out, although also using a proportion system to achieve qualities such as harmony, there is an other reason for him to use classical forms. Their original use in classical buildings is repeated in his buildings to achieve the same unifying effect they have in their predecessors. Though it needs to be mentioned here, that Märkli does simply copies classical ornamentation here, his columns are not Doric nor Corinthian. What is of importance to Märkli is the primary composition of classical elements, becomes clear in the reduction of the capitals to abaci for example.

Exclusion through Norms.

Throughout this chapter, a search and adherence to standards, a rulebook and guidelines is reflected in Ungers search for an essence, Märkli’s classical syntax and Le Corbusiers mathematical logic. All of this to achieve one thing: creating a building that makes sense. Making sense, an expression that makes sense within this theme, is used to say that something is logical, acceptable, while at the same time using the word sense. This combination of logic and sense forms the core of what the Classic means (and more importantly still means) in architecture. It is about a way of thinking which is based on principles of measure and composition, how to size and order things and create a whole. With the idea behind it that once this whole is achieved, a beautiful building is created. So the beauty of the classic lies in the fulfilling of principles, rules which automatically generate beauty. These rules, principles form at the same time the criterion of the way that buildings are judged and all fall under the notion norm.

E.H. Gombrich elaborates on this link between the notion norm and the classical in his essay norm and form. Based on the analysis of their origins, Gombrich assumes that stylistic categories such as (Neo)-Classical, Romanesque,Gothic, Rococo and


Figure 1
Haus Ohne Eigenschaften.
Interior of the central room
Particularly Vernacular.
Particularly Vernacular: Content.

Introduction:
A Vernacular, with Architects and not an Socio-political -ism.

Conserving Fundaments
Allianz Headquarters - Josef Wiedemann

Exceptional Words of a Living Tradition
Casa Calle Bach - José Antonio Coderch

A Collage of Extra-Ordinary Drawings
LBCDLB/LOD - architecten de vylder vinck taillieu

Conclusion:
Vernacular Mannerism.
Particularly Vernacular.

A Vernacular, with Architects and not a Socio-political -ism.

Throughout the second chapter the notion vernacular takes in a central place to analyse another facet of beauty in architecture. As argued later on, the vernacular has proved to be useful to select & collect a group of buildings/architecture, in a similar way the classic from the previous chapter did: based on a series of properties of architecture. It goes without saying that these properties differ from the ones in the previous chapter and as a consequence lead to a different mode of judgement and accompanying beauty (which will be discussed in the conclusion of this chapter). This introduction contains two different approaches to the concept of vernacular architecture to point out how and when a building can be perceived as vernacular and what the vernacular is. Out of these two approaches a third one is distilled that fits better in the aesthetic realm of this dissertation.

A first approach is found in the book Architecture without Architects written by Bernard Rudofsky. The notion of vernacular falls under the heading of non-pedigreed architecture next to concepts such as anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous and rural. As the title already signifies this book focuses on buildings and construction methods without architects. The notion of the vernacular is understood here as an amalgam of buildings based on local customs.

Kenneth Frampton's position on the vernacular in his texts about critical regionalism is quite different. Opposed to Rudofsky, Frampton's theory actually takes place in a world with architects, he names Aalvar Alto, Tadao Ando and Louis Kahn amongst others. More importantly, he states that the term critical regionalism is not the same as vernacular. The vernacular in his texts stands for a spontaneous kind of building combining climate, culture, myth & craft, while his notion of regionalism refers to regional schools that depend on a relation between a political consciousness of a society, hence the critical as adjective, and the profession (explaining the presence of architects). Further he emphasizes the distinction between critical regionalism and an vernacular that is evoked in architecture in an sentimental or ironic way, which he finds simplistic.

The approach to the vernacular that is taken upon for the rest of this chapter focuses just like Frampton on architecture with architects and without the socio-political critical approach. However, this does not discriminates a critical position, as will be illustrated in the second case. Instead this third approach of the vernacular stands closer to its original linguistic meaning, namely the vernacular as a native language, eg. a vernacular dialect, spoken by a specific group of people. In architectural terms, the specific group becomes the architect(s) and the language the formal language partially developed by the architect and rooted in local culture. This approach makes it possible to also incorporate different views on & uses of the vernacular. As a consequence more abstract essences concerning the aesthetic possibilities of the vernacular can appear.
Cases in Crescendo

An administration building complex in Munich, a residential building in Barcelona and an ensemble of two theatre studio’s in Ghent are the subjects in this chapter’s case studies. The cases relate in a different way to the vernacular and are ordered in such way that the vernacular gradually becomes more apparent. First there is the subtle & cautious (though omnipresent) vernacular ornamentation incorporated in the classical formal language of Josef Wiedemann’s Headquarters for the Allianz Insurance Company, followed by a critical vernacular compiling modern culture and vernacular elements in an apartment building by José Antonio Coderch to finally end with the subversive assimilation of ordinary building culture in the theatre studio’s designed by advvt. In a way the first and last case illustrate respectively the sentimental and ironic use of a vernacular in architecture. The case studies will focus on distinct elements of the buildings that illustrate the aesthetic possibilities of the vernacular.

Photographs 1: Fragmented Realities

As opposed to the completeness of the diagrams in the previous chapter, the photographs at the beginning of each case study show fragments, moments of the building. They capture certain elements of the buildings to illustrate the way they are beautiful through the incorporation of a vernacular. Next to the ability to capture a fragment, a moment, another perk of the medium photography is that they are abstracts of concrete realities. This abstraction originates both from the flatness of the image inherent to the medium and the final processing and emphasizes the forms of the building rather than the spatial properties of the buildings.
Conserving Fundaments.

Josef Wiedemann
Photograph from the garden towards the main building linked to the office building (left) and the canteen building (right) by two glazed corridors. TKT Source: © The Pk Odessa co. http://www.muenchenarchitektur.com/images/21704/794Allianz1.jpg
Along the border of the Englischer Garten, München’s most extensive park, Josef Wiedemann made a design for the Allianz Headquarters, which was built in 1953-55. At first sight these office buildings for the German insurance company appear to rest on classical principles. This is for instance visible in the proportionate façade with a travertine base and a clearly articulated cornice, which becomes even more expressed on the back of the building because of a loggia on the fourth-floor bordered by a colonnade. The entasis in the walls and columns is another example of how classical rules are carried through, which led to meticulous technical drawings. Nonetheless, this case is the first of three concerning a relation between the vernacular & beauty. By means of three themes (a detail, a reference & an inspiration) running throughout this project a foundation is laid to explain part of the beauty of this building, but first some background information.

Wiedemann was not the sole winner of the competition in 1951 that led to the construction of this building complex. The jury also awarded a first price to the proposal of Branca and von der Lippe, whom suggested an eight-floor high-rise. But in a city that was and still is not eager to construct any high-rise buildings, the client chose for the more conservative design of Wiedemann, a more subtle ensemble of five buildings.
On the plan on the previous page the five distinct volumes can be noticed, which all differ in height, volumetric and function. Central in the composition there is the squarish five-storey high main building, pushed away from the street to create a forecourt. To the left of the forecourt and closer to the street a house-like volume accommodates the residence of the concierge, while to the right an office building, slightly nearer to the street, is attached. To this elongated three-storey building a two storey-building containing a meeting hall, the Hollerith-Haus, is attached. The Hollerith-Haus and the canteen and kitchen attached to the main building on the other end of the composition are both more directed towards the park and embrace the garden. This embracing of the garden seems one of Wiedemann’s main concerns in order to create a gentle transition from city to the park with the building and garden as mediators, or as Reem Almannai and Florian Fischer put it in a text about the building:

At the same time the spatial layout supports the interweaving of the building with the English Garden. The boundaries between the garden of the Allianz Headquarters and the park are no longer recognizable. Wiedemann’s implemented plan is less reminiscent of a traditional urban layout, but more of a modern free plan. He probably understood the compound as a link between the open perimeter block and the park, rather than as a continuation of the clear urban texture.

That this gentle embracing is modern becomes clear in the way he connects the five buildings to each other. As illustrated in the triptych above, three glazed volume generate moments of differentiation both inside and outside, due to jumps in height and dominance of glass opposed to more massive façades of the building volumes. Next to these mutual height differences between buildings and connectors, a considerable slope going down towards the park is specific to the site. As a consequence this height difference, Wiedemann another floor becomes visible in the garden side of the main building and the office building. As a consequence the jumps in height between the buildings become proportionally smaller in the garden compared to the street. In other words, by carefully reflecting on the height, distribution and connection of the buildings over the site Wiedemann uses and takes in consideration the topography of the site, this way he succeeds to embrace the garden in such way that it subtly shades into the park. This sensibility for the incorporation of local specificities and treasuring of the place is also apparent in some smaller details and constitution of the hall, which are discussed in the next section.
Particularly Vernacular.

A Curious Detail, Peacocks & the Hall of References.

The connection of the buildings through the glazed links mentioned above brings us to the first vernacular detail, which is shown on the right page of the spread with photographs at the begin of this case study. The detail is vernacular in this respect that it follows out of the thoroughness and ingenuity with which Wiedemann incorporated qualities of the site as previously described. The photograph is taken on the corner of the garden terrace where the glazed volume links the main building with the canteen.

Around the window right by the corner the delicate frame carved out of the travertine makes an atypical turn to end abruptly. This peculiar detail unites some important properties of Wiedemann’s vernacular. It is an adaptation of a traditional motive, craft as a result of the exception arising from the modern topographical composition of the five buildings.

The natural surroundings as inspiration, a second occurrence of a vernacular, is more frivolous & literally, nonetheless it further demonstrates the enormous amount of craftsmanship that resides in the walls of the Allianz headquarters. As documented on the left page in the top and bottom row of the photograph spread, Wiedemann found inspiration in nature. This inspiration can be found throughout the building in certain commodities such as ashtray’s, lamps, doors and so on designed by Wiedemann himself and incorporates floral motives, as illustrated in the bottom row of photographs. In the decoration of the main hall he went even further and explicitly refers the Englischer Garten where he so carefully planted his ensemble. This ranges from the engraving of a peacock in the wall-mosaics (top-left photograph) to the depiction of the demolished villa on the site and its idyllic garden with pond and the obligatory peacock (top-right) on a windowsill in the main hall.

This main hall, the most important and magnificent space of the headquarters, is besides its rich crafty decoration also vernacular in its totality, namely in the way that the hall inscribes itself in an European building context. The hall namely shows a striking resemblance with the Blue Hall in the Stockholm City Hall designed by Ragnar Östberg. They are both representational entrance halls with a sculptural ceremonial stair, side walls with a balcony on one side and a colonnade going all around. As a whole both halls make the impression of being an open-air courtyard.
It is this resemblance to an exterior courtyard that makes them so remarkable. The walls look like exterior façades while an abundance of light from above shines upon them.

**Fundamental Ornament**

At the end of their text on the Allianz Headquarters Almannai and Fischer mention the following quote by Wiedemann to substantiate a more ontological dimension of his designs:

> All questions on gestalt - the ornament is one of them - lead us back to the fundamentals of life.

The themes discussed above, the peculiar frame, the references to (local) nature and European (Swedish) building culture, lay bare one of those foundations, the vernacular, a fundamental of live rooted in the real. Through subtle, but rich and omnipresent ornamentation Wiedemann enriches the representational character of the building, which was asked in the competition outlines, but more importantly he legitimises it by means of its vernacular properties. By creating an own language inspired by the surroundings, traditional crafts and culture of building, he is able to design a building that is aesthetically surprising in its uniqueness without being alienated from the world it is built in.

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3 Ibid. p.63.
Exceptional Words of a Living Tradition.

J.A. Coderch
Typical floor plan of the complete building.
(For the sake of clarity one apartment is highlighted)
Particularly Vernacular.
Catalan Deflections

A Mediterraneanized, Modern Brick Vernacular.

A display window of a kitchen shop and the change of the more dull grey paving tiles in warm orange-red Catalan bricks indicate that something different, but familiar is going on in the otherwise quiet Calle Compositor Bach right in the middle of a residential neighbourhood in Barcelona. We find ourselves in front of an apartment building, the Casa Calle Compositor Bach, built in 1958 and designed by José Antonio Coderch.

The career of the Barcelona J.A. Coderch has been typically Regionalist inasmuch as it has oscillated, until recent date, between a mediterraneanized, modern brick vernacular - Venetian in evocation - apparent, say, in his eight-stor- rey brick apartment block built in Barcelona in the Paseo Nacional in 1952-54 (a mass articulated by full-height shutters and overhanging cornices), and the avant-gardist, Neoplastic composition of his (Miesian) Casa Catasús completed a Sitges in 1957.

The quote by Kenneth Frampton and images above illustrate the dichotomy in the work of Coderch, the Casa Calle Bach however is a project of Coderch that oscillates to the so-called Mediterraneanized Modern Brick Vernacular. These four words capture in a very concise way the nature of the vernacular in Coderch’s work. He uses Mediterranean elements, converts them to answer to modern needs explicitly supported by a structure that is rooted in the Catalan brick-tradition.

Inventive Plan, Patio, Blinds, Windows & Bricks.

The plan of the building looks on the first sigh a quite labyrinthine collection of rooms, which can be confirmed on visiting the building, there is a dazzling amount of doors leading from one room to another and after a some doors bring you to the room where you stared. After some walks however and upon taking a closer look to the plan, some things become clear. The typical floor plan consists out of four completely identical apartments, which are mirrored around the central patio.

Further, the apartments can be divided into three zones, a night-zone with four bed-rooms and two bathrooms on the side of the building, a day-zone with living and dining room with a terrace on the street or garden and a service zone with a kitchen and bath & bedroom for the maid concentrated around the central patio.

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Figure 1
Street facade of the Casa de La Marina, designed by Coderch in 1951.

Figure 2

1 Kenneth Frampton. Modern Architecture - A Critical History. 1988 (dutch ed.). p. 388. The word Miesian is added here since it explains more or less what this avant-gardist, Neoplasticism entails.
This courtyard-patio in the Casa Calle Bach is a first demonstration of how the vernacular sneaked into this building. The patio appears throughout Barcelona in all kinds of sizes and shapes to bring light & air in to the typical deep floor plans following out of the dense urban structure of this city. In the Casa Calle Bach the patio serves the same purposes, making it possible to blow a fresh breeze through the building and bring a bit of light in to the service area. Only a bit of light, since all the windows are covered with solar blinds, as can be seen on the first photograph on the introductory spread of this case. These solar blinds are omnipresent in this building (and in extension the whole oeuvre of Coderch, see for example figure 1, the Casa de la Marina where Coderch used these blinds for the first time).

... first to avoid inspection of the neighbour and save the intimacy of the house without cutting back on the ventilation of the house; secondly to avoid the noise of roller-blinds and thirdly to limit entry of the sun as wanted, when there is sun.

Once again these blinds are derived from a traditional local precedent and as quoted by Coderch regulating the amount of sun and air flowing through the building. Coderch's blinds however are exceptional in the way he reinterprets this traditional element, through technically improvements and using the blinds as a main element in the façades. Compared to the traditional blinds, the ones in the Casa Calle Bach are scaled-up and underwent a revision in the way they open and close. Instead of being able to open the whole frame, Coderch attached movable wooden ribs to a metal frame that was fixed to the façade as a second skin. By fixing the blinds in the front plane of the façade they become very apparent. It is exactly this kind of transformations that leads Frampton to call Coderch's vernacular a modern vernacular.

Another example of this modern detailing is depicted in the interior photograph on the photograph spread. In an effort to minimize the barrier between the balcony and the living-room as much as possible, Coderch hid the frames of the door and sliding window (which slides over the façade as illustrated on the fourth floor in the big photograph of the garden façade). The vernacular resides in this detail not so much in an adaptation of a local form, element but in the incorporation of an Mediterranean urge to mix up the outside with the inside. In a way, it is a new word in the vernacular vocabulary of Coderch.
A rigid, geometric brick construction holds all these inventive details together. Perpendicular on the street are the bearing walls, constructed in the typical terracotta Catalan brick. In the apartments however, the bricks are hidden behind paint and built-in cupboards only to reappear as base of the hearth in the living-room. The bricks also stay bare in the collective stairwell where they keep in a magnificent way the steps together. And lastly, they are articulated where the façade was not covered with solar blinds and actually dominate in the side façades.

A Living Tradition.

An old and famous American architect, if my memory serves me right, said to a younger one who asked him his advice, "Open your eyes, look around, it's much simpler than you imagine." He also told him, "Behind every building you see there's a man you don't. A man: he didn't even say an architect. No, I don't believe it's geniuses we need right now. I believe geniuses are events, not goals or ends. I think geniuses are events, not goals or ends. Neither do I believe that we need pontificators about architecture, or great proselytisers, or prophets, who are always dubious. Something of living tradition is still within our reach, as well as many old moral doctrines concerning ourselves and our craft or profession as architects (and I use these terms in their best traditional sense). We need to make good use of the little that remains of constructional and above all moral tradition in an era in which the most beautiful words have practically lost their real and true meaning.

Beautiful words by Coderch in the only theoretical text he wrote: *It is not Geniuses we need right now*. A text also about beautiful words stemming from a living tradition. Those beautiful words can be discovered too in the Casa Calle Compositor Bach through Coderch's use of a mediterraneanized modern brick vernacular, as illustrated in the hints to the brick structure, the patio, the balcony window & the façade blinds. The emphasis that he puts on the pointlessness of geniuses in the quote also illustrates how the inventive details described above are not inventive for the sake of invention but to keep a tradition living. A tradition that Coderch values because it captures a spirit of something common residing in all of us. Nonetheless, it is on this thin line of the common & invention that a particular beauty comes into existence.
Figure 7
Les Ballets C de la B - LOD

A Collage of the Extra-Ordinary.

architecten de vylder vinck taillieu
Photographs of two corners made flat as a drawing
Left: LBCDLB
Right: LOD.

Axonometry of the two buildings in their surroundings.
Source: 2G#66 architecten deylder vinck taillieu p.143.
Appropriating the Context.

Along the river Leie in Ghent architecten de vylder vinck taillieu built two production studios for dance company Les Ballets C de la B and music theatre company LOD. Two quasi identical buildings stand in a rotational symmetry across each other with an open space between them directed to the river (in the axonometry this open space contains a circular foyer building). The fact that there are two buildings is not according to the original question of the client, which were at first expecting one big building containing both the studios. This is just one of the consequences of how advvt relate their designs to the context.

In advvt’s case, the context is appropriated. … this appropriation means that the context itself becomes the project, or at least part of the project. If the context is redrawn, it is transformed and taken over. Each part drawn becomes a part of the whole composition.

In Les Ballets C de la B-LOD this appropriation of the context becomes very clear in the way advvt treats the site. The plot of land where the studios are built is surrounded by a conglomerate of old heritage building containing other similar cultural institutions. The approach of advvt towards these shredded surroundings is to add two other shreds. Two new pieces that in the outdoor spaces around them are only as important as the existing buildings, old and new equally stand next to each other. In some places old on the site is an inspiration for the new (fig. 1 & 2), on others old and new stand incredibly close (fig. 3) and in the glass façades wonderful reflections of the surroundings appear (fig. 2 & photograph spread).

But this appropriating of context goes further than the interaction of the two buildings with the site:

In advvt’s case, the ordinary (Belgian) vernacular building is appropriated. … this appropriation means that vernacular building becomes the project, or at least part of the project. If vernacular building is redrawn, it transformed and taken over. Each part drawn becomes a part of the whole composition.

The quote from Kersten Geers about context can also be of use to the describe their handling of the vernacular way of building (which is once more a kind of context too). In a text about the work of advvt Christoph Van Gerrewey is of the opinion that if advvt’s work has to be categorized, it a fitting category would be mannerism. This he assumes based on the way that ordinary vernacular building is a source of inspiration for advvt. They use elements of an ordinary way of building and assimilate those elements and change them slightly or rather completely since they now find a place in another context.

… made of fragments, rather than models, pushes the mannerist position to orient itself toward an extreme free will in which freedom of expression necessarily coincides with an excess of rules.
This excess of rules is found throughout the building and is expressed in a rich form vocabulary based on ordinary (Belgian) construction elements. Specific colours (sometimes the natural colour of a material, sometimes a colour that complements another, sometimes just because it is beautiful) make the different elements more distinctive from one another, as if advvt want to draw attention on the presence. which are each accentuated by a specific colour, sometimes their natural colours, sometimes just to complement these. There are the green steel beams, the red-orange bricks, the flashy orange old-fashioned balustrade attached to building props, the structure in concrete and all of this covered by the -for this program unusual-green-house glazing or grey slates, typically used for blind side walls.

The following quote from Jo Taillieu points out the interwovenness between aesthetics and logic, similar to how the mannerist position ties the aforementioned freedom of expression and excess of rules together:

*How great a role does aesthetics play for you?*

In my eyes the logic of a particular design choice is very important. I really don’t believe in an aesthetics that exists separately. That’s not to say that architects can’t make decisions that are aesthetic by nature. Obviously I’m very sensitive to aesthetics, and that certainly plays a role in every design choice. But I can only tolerate my aesthetics if I can place it, if it doesn’t stand apart from logic.

A Built Collage of Extra-Ordinary Drawings.

The next paragraphs deal with the act of drawing and the collage as final product to further understand this interwovenness of logic and aesthetic and more precisely how the vernacular is of importance in it.

A text on the inside of the cover of a book by advvt given the title the drawing is everywhere illustrates the importance of the drawing and act of drawing in their work. In it De Vylder describes how building and drawing is in a certain way one and the same. He proves this through a description of some drawings of the green-house façades and the beauty of those drawings. This series of drawings demonstrate how the building is the result of a compilation of drawings, with each drawing an interpretation of the previous one by either the architect or the contractor (fig. 6 &7). Advvt happily accepts this process of change by interpretation, drawing and redrawing.
This process might even be the source of beauty in their work. The ordinary elements become extra-ordinary through drawing, redrawing and finally building.

The importance of drawing also has to do with what was mentioned above concerning the relation between logic and aesthetic. The drawings are the logic, every drawing follows out of a change, a functional or tectonic problem, that needs to be communicated and thus says something more about the building. This logic of the drawing explains the change, the subversion that happens to the vernacular elements, from ordinary to extra-ordinary. Instead of building, advvt draws with vernacular elements, which as a consequence become graphical and decorative instead of tectonic. An example of this is the bond of the brickwork that looks rather graphical than tectonic (fig. 2).

The collage is, next to a common way of making images at advvt, a convenient metaphor for the way they (re)compose the extra-ordinary drawings. Advvt appropriates, cuts out ordinary elements from the culture of building, from the surrounding context. Then they are drawn and redrawn and become extra-ordinary. And finally like pieces of a collage, every drawing is glued together generating a beauty based on a logic of its own, the logic of drawing, the logic of the collage.

After dealing with the way they appropriate context, assimilate through drawing and compose collages, back to the content/subject of this context, drawings and collages:

ABOUT.
ABOUT DETAIL.
ABOUT THE MOMENT.
ABOUT THAT DIFFERENCE.
ABOUT MAKING.
ABOUT CONTEXT.
ABOUT REFERENCE.

Also about uncertainty and decision.
And about the unequivocal and the difference.
And about the strange and the perfectly normal.
And about longing-poetry- and making-things-different.
And about slow and immediate.
And about precision and gesture.

Last six lines of this text, poem by De Vylder describe the thin lines on which their work balances. It is these thin lines, inscribed in the singular drawings of the collage and the collages itself that makes the LBCDLB-LOD studios and in general the work of aDVVT so unusually beautiful. Drawing and redrawing the context leads to extra-ordinary transformations of the ordinary and the context and to buildings/collages that are rooted in it. This creates a kind of bipolar beauty which is unexpected but deals with the expected or in the words of Christophe Van Gerrewey:

Architecture stands its ground while surprise and self-evidence compete for favour, like a demon on one shoulder and a guardian angel on the other. It pays as little heed to instant comprehension as it does to inexplicable extravagance. Architecture may be present where unexpectedly just that other thing is found that gives more to the expected.
Figure 8
Photograph from the terrace of LBCDLB towards the terrace of LOD.
Conclusion

Vernacular Mannerism.
Tradition is to feed the fire, not to preserve the ashes.

- Quintus Miller.
The mannerism discussed in the last case study about advvt’s theatre studios is in a less subversive way also apparent in the other two cases and can be summarized as a vernacular mannerism: a mannerism of advvt’s ordinary made extra-ordinary, of Wiedemann’s ornamentation referring to local fundamentals, of Coderch’s modernisation keeping tradition alive. All three the cases assimilate components of a vernacular building culture and transform them, built upon an own logic without cutting the ties with a vernacular tradition. What unites the three cases in this chapter is in essence what makes them different, makes them stand out while still referencing to commonplace elements, ideas.

Again the aesthetic will be approached as a beauty entangled with a specific kind of judging. A judgement that deems forms beautiful because they are a particular exception on the context which they are based upon.

**Form: Transformed details.**

Similar to the previous chapter form is the main attribute of architecture that is deemed beautiful. But starting point here was not the classical language of architecture but vernacular dialects. All three cases take vernacular elements ranging from culture, nature & history of the surroundings to construction methods & materials and make them part of their formal languages. As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this incorporation of the vernacular is progressively more apparent throughout the cases. In Wiedemann’s Allianz Headquarters the vernacular appears in decoration en detailing on a small scale in very exhaustive way and in the composition of the volumes in a reaction on the surrounding topography and urban fabric. Coderch embraces in his apartment building Mediterranean elements which become much more apparent in the building than they were when used in a traditional way. And finally in the studios by advvt the presence of a vernacular influence is undeniable and omnipresent in the way they appropriate the context and transform them through the act of drawing.

This concept of transformation is crucial to understand what aspect of form is exactly under judgement and even more important than the forms themselves. A quote by Kersten Geers about the work of advvt is key conforms this assumption:

> After the necessary lapse of time, it can be seen as an ingenious anthology of architectural solutions, the development of a formal vocabulary founded on traditional forms. The formal transformations are more important than the forms themselves.

After the necessary lapse of time, it can be seen as an ingenious anthology of architectural solutions, the development of a formal vocabulary founded on traditional forms. The formal transformations are more important than the forms themselves.

Traces of transformation of forms can also be found in the other two cases. Coderch’s use of the blinds for example illustrate how the vernacular undergoes a modernization. The transformation of forms in the Allianz Headquarter is more subtle instead of vernacular elements being transformed, the vernacular is used as a means to add an extra layer on the classical formal language of the building. Also the location of the headquarters led to a choice for an ensemble of five building, that is in essence a compromise between an closed urban block and a series of pavilions in the park.

Another important feature of the forms under discussion here is that there is a shift compared to the previous chapter. Instead of focussing on forms that stand in relation to each other and as a part of a harmonious whole, form is approached more as an autonomous detail. This explains the much used terminology of vernacular elements in this chapter.

Also, the importance of these two aspects, transformation and detail, is related to the jump from vernacular building to vernacular architecture. The fact that the vernacular forms, elements, details are transformations makes the three case studies part of architectural culture rather than - but still rooted in - a local traditional culture. Moreover, through transformation the details become a integral part of the language.

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of the architect or as Kersten Geers describes it, an ingenious anthology of architectural solutions.

**Contextual Idioms.**

To describe the criterion used to decide whether transformed vernacular details are beautiful, the introduction of another linguistic notion is necessary: the idiom. An idiom consists out of a several words, that through common usage got a figurative meaning which is separate from their literal meaning. In a way they are the mannerisms of language. Opposed to the universal normative rules of the previous chapter, idioms in architecture can be seen as rules connected to a specific context (cf. common usage as cause of the change of meaning). As illustrated throughout the cases (and in the upcoming quote) context is very broad concept, which makes that idioms are more open to interpretation, more open to transformation to refer back to the previous section.

The context. That is clear
Making takes place within a context. Context, but not solely defined as a place.
The client, the funding, the place: all these or modes of context.
It is like raking something up from under a heap of dead leaves. How can one find something to make in this context? That is perhaps at least one motif to which we must dare lay claim.

There is more. The reference
But there is something else. There is such a thing as reference. Maybe reference is the opposite of context.

This division of context and reference, with the reference referencing to something outside the context, is given up in the notion of the idiom. The idiom is both context and reference. What is crucial however is that this reference is still recognizable, otherwise the idiom does not make any sense, ties with the context are dissolved. In a certain way the collection of idioms form a contextual base for judgements.

In this respect, the excess of rules mentioned in the case study about advvt are the idioms at play, so are nature and topography of the surroundings of the Allianz Headquarters too and likewise the Mediterranean range of thoughts in the Casa Calle Bach.

**Particular details.**

A bit earlier in this text it was established that this mode of judgement focuses on details. Now, why are these details beautiful. Although they differ extremely in the ways they come to a form, one thing they all have in common is that they celebrate and accentuate the particularity of vernacular forms. Vernacular forms that despite transformations adhere to contextual idioms. In short, it is plausible that the use of transformed vernacular details are deemed beautiful because they are *Particular*. This resolves a kind of paradox that rested on the notion of the idiom. Something can only be particular in accordance with something common, the idiom. That is also why transformation of forms is more important here than the forms themselves. In other words, a particular beauty is found on the thin line between referring and differing from an idiom.

That is why the twisted frame in the Allianz is so exceptionally beautiful. That is why the modern exaggeration of Coderch’s blinds is beautiful. That is why the extraordinariness of LBCDLB-LOD is so beautiful.
Chapter 3

Sensorial Experiences.
Sensorial Experiences: Content.

Introduction:
Experience instead of Interpretation

A Sturdy Void.
City Market in Ghent - Robbrecht en Daem architecten & & Marie-José Vanhee

Smooth Floating.
Barcelona Pavillion - Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe

Cultivating Brick.
Grundtvigs-Kirke - P.V. Jensen-Klint

Conclusion:
The sensual presence of Space.
Experience instead of Interpretation
Form over Content

The closing lines of *Against Interpretation* from 1964 by Susan Sontag:

Interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there. This cannot be taken for granted, now. Think of the sheer multiplication of works of art available to every one of us, superadded to the conflicting tastes and odours and sights of the urban environment that bombard our senses. Ours is a culture based on excess, on overproduction; the result is a steady loss of sharpness in our sensory experience. All the conditions of modern life—its material plenitude, its sheer crowdedness—conjoin to dull our sensory faculties. And it is in the light of the condition of our senses, our capacities (rather than those of another age), that the task of the critic must be assessed. What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more.

Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than already is there. Our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all. The aim of all commentary on art now should be to make works of art—and, by analogy, our own experience—more, rather than less, real to us. The function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means.

In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.

Susan Sontag makes an interesting analysis in her text *Against Interpretation* in which she values an formalist analysis (which she describes as *a really accurate, sharp, loving description of the appearance of a work of art*) over an interpretation based on the content of an art-piece. She traces this dichotomy in ways of criticising art back to the separation of the concepts form and content. This separation coincides with an hierarchy between those two concepts, namely content as the essence of a work of art and form as merely an accessory. Further, this privileging of content entails also a focus on interpretation of art. And it is exactly this act of interpretation that forms for her a key problem in art and art-criticism, which she discusses in the quote above.

So, instead of interpreting and producing more and more content, Sontag proposes a shift in the way we should approach and criticize art. Therefore, she suggests *Transparency* as the highest value in art, which she defines as the experiencing of things for what they are. It is this change in approach that comprises the base of this chapter on an empirical beauty, a beauty arising out of experience.

Contrary to the two previous chapters this chapter about empirical judgement covers an aspect of beauty that can not be described as a judgement based on form, where the beauty lies embedded in the form (in its appearance (chapter 2) and adherence to norms for instance (chapter ). Further, Sontag mentions how one of the difficulties with a formal approach is that our idea of form is mainly spatial, which leads to a much more developed vocabulary of forms for spatial arts than for temporal arts (such as poetry, literature). This observation of Sontag introduces the notion of space, which will be a central notion in this chapter, as the medium of experience of architecture.

Like this spatial idea of form, all the foregoing remarks on Sontag’s text already hint to themes that will return throughout this chapter, such as the importance of the senses, content versus form and vocabulary of forms. However, in what follows these themes are discussed with a more specific focus on the aesthetic judging of architecture instead of the art-criticism.
Experiencing Space

A main guide in making this shift from art to architecture and finding a suitable vocabulary of form was the book *Experiencing Architecture*. In this book Steen Eiler Rasmussen argues just like Sontag for an empirical approach over an interpretative one:

... Architecture is not produced simply by adding plans and sections to elevations. It is something else and something more. It is impossible to explain precisely what it is — its limits are by no means well-defined. On the whole, art should not be explained; it must be experienced. But by means of words it is possible to help others to experience it, and that is what I shall attempt to do here.⁶

In what follows Rasmussen proceeds with describing how architecture can be experienced. These descriptions are divided in different chapters dealing with several empirical aspects. After an introductory chapter, Rasmussen commences with explaining the concepts of solids and cavities, solids being the structural forms (i.e. the built material) of architecture while cavities are the empty spaces between those solids.⁷ However, this contrasting pair of massive solids and empty voids is not the only way to perceive space. In a following chapter he discusses colour planes as spatial elements that can be experienced, focussing more on impressions such as the lightness or weight of a surface.⁸ After these two ways to describe (and in essence also to design) space, Rasmussen zooms in on more specific attributes such as rhythm, proportion & scale, texture, light, colour and auditive aspects in architecture.

These first two attributes, rhythm & proportion may seem quite inconvenient here, already being dealt with in the first chapter. In this book however, Rasmussen discusses them empirically. In the case of rhythm he believes that it is the expression of the pace of an era, quite literally, when he describes the bends and turns of the Spanish Steps in Rome as if it was based on the Polonaise.⁹ He connects the rhythm to the way we move, describes how people often have the same sense of rhythm, move in the same way and derive pleasure from the same experience.⁹ This introduction of the notion movement is the key difference with the compositional rhythm of the first chapter. Something similar happens in the way Rasmussen dwells upon proportion, he connects this to scale, more specific human scale. For obvious reasons he also mentions the harmonious qualities of proportion, but mainly he describes the value of proportion by how it generate a scale that feels gigantic, small, large, breath-taking and so on. In other words these two concepts are discussed in terms of the effect they induce on the body instead of their contributions to a harmonious ideal whole.

The other themes of texture, light, colour and the audible also relate in a way to the body since their intrinsic association with one or more sense. But these and the re-defined classic aspects will be further discussed in the case studies and conclusion.

Modelling Cases

As in the preceding chapters, the analysis of case-studies reveals what becomes prominent in architecture when it is judged empirically. Once again, this forms a base to develop the three concepts related to the act of judging in the conclusion. The cases that underpin this chapter are in the first place buildings of which I had the luck experiencing them myself. Further, this choice was influenced by the amount of photographic material and memories I had of that experience. But more importantly, they each are useful examples to discuss different empirical qualities related to the themes in Rasmussen’s book that were shortly discussed above. This led to the selection of three buildings. First case is the Barcelona Pavilion by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in which the concept of movement is discussed along with how this is influenced by the shape and appearance of the walls. Secondly, the City market by Robbrecht & Daem architecten with Marie José Van Hee architecten, reveals empirical take on proportion, related to haptic qualities and colour. The last case study of this chapter is the Grundtvigs-Kirke by Peter Vilhelm Jensen-Klint, which takes the inherent qualities of the material brick as point of departure to discuss its empirical qualities.

Each case study consists of two parts. In the first part an architecture model is introduced that was made for two reasons. On the one hand the creative process of making a model helped to develop thoughts about what are important aspects in the experience of the building. On the other hand the architectural model is probably the most useful medium for spatial analysis & representation of space. The images of every model are further complemented with a description of the model and its empirical and physical characteristics at the end of the case study. In the second part
those characteristics are explained by photographic material and words of theorists and the architects.

...It is not enough to see architecture; you must experience it. You must observe how it was designed for a special purpose and how it was attuned to the entire concept and rhythm of a specific era. You must dwell in the rooms, feel how they close about you, observe how you are naturally led from one to the other. You must be aware of the textural effects, discover why just those colours were used, how the choice depended on the orientation of the rooms in relation to windows and the sun. Two apartments, one above the other, with rooms of exactly the same dimensions and with the same openings, can be entirely different simply because of curtains, wallpaper and furniture. ...11

Photographs of a cast of the interior space of the Market Hall.

Photograph of the roof inside.
A Public Relationship.

Unprotected, as if close to collapse, the plain four-storey façade is silhouetted against the grey-blue sky. Suddenly I understood why, even without function, and in the face of all architectural wisdom, it is so beautiful. It flaunts its lack of function, never claiming to be anything other than the ornament it is. This mere semblance is no longer semblance: freed from sin.

In this quote Adorno describes how a façade at the Piazza San Michele in Lucca is so beautiful by being so obviously functionless. This quote is the end of the text *A Human Relationship with Stone and Mortar*, an ode to the Market Hall by Robbrecht & Daem in collaboration with Marie-José Van Hee, built in the medieval centre of Ghent between the Sint-Niklaas church and belfry. In this text, Christophe Van Gerrewey wonders if a public building, has the ability to engage a relationship with people. First he establishes that a house is able to have such a relationship, that over time by maintaining, decorating, improving and living in a house we bond with it and it gives us back beauty, familiarity and stability. After that he uses the Market Hall as a unique example to illustrate that a public building can have this ability too.

Van Gerrewey describes the Market Hall as an unique invention, it accommodates no function other than give people the possibility of doing nothing, just pass through the hall together, under the same roof. The Market Hall stages city life, just like the church façade in Lucca, the space does not serve a specific function, it is nothing more than a double gable roof over a square on four columns. And in the same way as Adorno writes, the Market Hall claims to be nothing more than an ornament for the city. Just like the façade in Lucca, the City Market does not accommodate a specific function, it is nothing more than a double gable roof over a square on four columns. But from what derives this empty space its beauty? In the course of this case study the concept sturdiness takes up a central place as a spatial quality related to proportion, texture & colour.
Sturdiness through Proportion, Texture & Colour.

It is all about contrast?
We love material. Our buildings must be sturdy because we believe that this makes people happy. You can touch it, use it, stamp on it, rub it. It is something you can hold on to.

Measurement is very important in your architecture. You have even developed your own series of numbers which the firm uses as measurement system. Did you apply this system right from the start?
No, it only developed later. But now the system, known as Loue, is applied very rigorously. We used it throughout the design of the Concertgebouw.

Does this remove the reservations about sometimes oversizing certain elements, because of the Loue number, and giving them a sturdiness they possibly don’t need?
Yes, we certainly do not try to constantly make things as fine as possible. For example, the windows in my house are heavier than they need to be because they comply with the Loue proportions. But I also like the grain patterns you see in wood and they only become visible when you make your window frames wide enough.

This excerpt from an interview with architect Paul Robbrecht introduces the notion of sturdiness. Further, it reveals the importance of proportion in order to achieve this sturdiness. Before describing some elements of the Market Hall, it needs to be noted that the use of proportion is assumed and based on Paul Robbrecht’s confirmation on the question if the proportions are used as a general design tool in the office and on the fact that the plans for the Market Hall were on the drawing boards back when this interview happened.

It is interesting to see that proportion here is mentioned not as a normative means to achieve a harmony (cf. chapter 1), but that Robbrecht stresses the effects of the choice for a specific proportion system, the Loue series. A first effect Robbrecht mentions is that certain parts of a building become heavier than they need to be. In case of the Market Hall this is visible for example in the two chimneys rising from two of the columns on opposite sides of the building. It is also discernible in the way that the two elevators and the fireplaces that are concealed in a concrete hull which make them appear as part of the bearing column. As a consequence, these four ‘feet’ look actually more like blocks than columns. A third example is are the two lying rules spanning the long side of the building while bearing the roof, hiding the gutter and creating a metal-clad cornice. By making things sturdier, secondary such as the gutter and elevator things become disguised while in one move elementary parts as the bearing blocks are more articulated through their sturdiness.
A result of using sturdy proportions and second effect that Robbrecht describes, is that the visual and haptic qualities of the material become more apparent (cf. the windows in Robbrecht’s own house). In the Market Hall these qualities are manifest in the discernable grains of the wooden boards, the smooth metal cornices, the stony concrete columns and the metal chimneys with their clearly visible folds and kinks. In the hall every element gets own sturdy articulated material. Different elements touching each other have a different materiality (most clear example of this is the way the cornice and chimney just don’t touch (fig. 4.). This dividing of materials over the elements also improves the sturdiness of every singular element. In other words the proportions make the qualities materials stand out, which in turn makes the articulation of the primary elements of the building stand out, that are also emphasized through the sturdy proportions.

In this context of sturdy design, the small windows take a special place. They are not sturdy in proportion an rather mute in materiality and colour due to their thin steel sheet used to frame them. Nonetheless, the evenly distribution of the windows in the roof brings a diffuse light into the building, which as a consequence, evenly illuminates the space and the materials. This way there is no distraction from the massivity of the space as a whole and the clear presence of the materials, in other words, it enhances the sturdiness.

A last empirical property of the Market Hall that needs to be dealt with is colour, and again a quote by Paul Robbrecht shines an illuminating light on the matter at hand: not a material but a sensuality that immediately overwhelms you. On the one hand the colour accents create a heightened awareness of the materiality and solidity of the building and on the other they provide a flowing ephemeral presence like a sort of blowing through the space.

Similar to material quality, colour is again divided over the singular elements that the building is constituted of. Again this further accentuates the sturdiness of those elements. What is remarkable however is the bipolarity of the colours, on the one hand there are the grey columns, while the rest have a brownish colour. These colours are natural to the material, except the metal sheets of the chimneys and cornice got a brown lacquer. It seems like a clear distinction is made between the space captured by the roof and the public space continuing through the building. In a way the brown colours enhance the sturdiness of the encapsuled upper space as a whole, while the sturdy grey blocks neatly blends in with the stone surroundings. All together an simple but ingenious play between colour, material & proportion lends the space of the Market Hall a sturdiness.
Moulded Sturdiness.

The model made to magnify the Market Hall’s experiential beauty is a concrete cast of the inside volume of the hall. This cast puts on display both the massivity of the whole building and sturdiness of the interior space. In an abstract way it illustrates how proportion, material and colour effect the sturdiness influence the space of the hall. A scaled version of the building served as mould, therefore the large size of the holes that represent the columns, cornice and chimney represent the sturdiness of their counterparts in reality. Further, the use of two textures reflects the articulation of the singular elements, described above. One the one hand there bottom part of the model is a polished where the space of the interior is open to the surroundings, lending those surfaces a shininess in which that surroundings can be mirrored. The upper part on the other hand is more rough, uniting the elements in the market hall that have a same colour but different texture.

But the most important aspect of this model, is connected to the choice for a cast of the inner space, namely makes explicit how sturdiness lends the empty space of this building an impressive richness that stimulates the senses. To conclude, a last quote by Paul Robbrecht describes the link between sturdiness and that stimulating effect it has on our senses:

We love material. Our buildings must be sturdy because we believe that this makes people happy. You can touch it, use it, stamp on it, rub it. It is something you can hold on to. Colour strengthens this. It stimulates you. And by juxtaposing a series of colours you intensify this stimulus. You also see it in Seurat’s work, where the dots of colours form a single impression in which there is a literal scintillation. I have at certain times been very much involved in this. And then I discovered *une polychromie architecturale*, which is the title of a book on Le Corbusier’s use of colour. This word led me to the farbenklavier or Colour Piano, and I immediately saw it start to flow. Colour used with the tingling directness of music. You could almost describe it as chords.
Barcelona Pavilion

Smooth Floating.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe
Many things have been written about the German Pavilion in Barcelona. It was designed and built as a temporary ceremonial space by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in 1928-29 on the occasion of the International Exhibition and rebuilt in 1983-86. In this case-study however, a mostly images are used as a basis to elucidate empirical aspects that grant this building a great deal of its beauty. The first aspect of this case study deals with the relationship between movement and space. After that the influence of the material on this relationship is shortly discussed. These aspects are concentrated and combined in a model of the experienced space of the pavilion (see previous spread). A description of the model follows at the end of the chase study, but first the two empirical aspects are elaborated.

Smooth Movement.

The reason why movement plays such a big role in the pavilion can be connected to the structure of the pavilion. Structurally, the pavilion consists out a thin horizontal roof plane supported by eight slim columns. By doing this, Mies was able to make the walls appear like screens floating through the space, non-bearing & thin and structurally independent of the roof plane. As a consequence, the barrier between inside and outside fades and the space of the pavilion is qualified as floating space or as W. J. R. Curtis describes it as space with a *mercurial quality.*

However, the attributing of these qualities, floating & mercurial, praising its fluidity of the planes, to a space solely due to its structure is incomplete. The next paragraphs will add some other relationships between the spatial quality of the pavilion and movement, mainly through what is visualised in the following photograph:

When Mies's German Pavilion was built for the 1929 International Exposition, it must have looked like a UFO had landed in Barcelona. Speed in photography is always blurry, and my picture of the German Pavilion looks like a high-speed locomotive–modernity arriving at the train station of the present (albeit the present of 1929).

The quote and photograph above are by Thomas Ruff, a German photographer, who studied with the Beckers in Düsseldorf. This photograph is part of the series *l.m.v.d.r.* in which Ruff documents several buildings by Mies. In the image of the pavilion Ruff visualizes one of the core mechanisms behind the experience of the Barcelona pa-
vilion: speed, movement. By blurring the image it seems like the spectator of the pavilion or even the pavilion itself is moving.

Martin Søberg introduces in a text about this series of photographs by Ruff the concepts of smooth & striated space to illustrate in which way these photographs add new meanings to Mies’ architecture. Søberg borrows these spatial concepts from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, which in turn are based on Alois Riegl’s terms haptic & optic vision. But what do these ideas imply? Smooth space is related to the idea of haptic vision, where the eye becomes like the hand, a kind of seeing similar to physical touching. In other words it is about sensing what we see, therefore, smooth space is not organised by form, but by connections without any direction. For instance, in terms of textile, felt would represent smooth space. If you look at a piece of felt, you only discern its fibres which are randomly connected and are not defined by a form, in a way the space (in this case more of a surface) changes all the time due to its smoothness.

Beside this, there is striated space, that has a direction and is organized by form. Also, striated space is associated with optic vision, where one perceives a space with more distance and orientation, comparable to the representation of a space through a perspective drawing. To speak again in terms of textile, striated space could be symbolised by a woven fabric. The weaving pattern is the organising form in this train of thought, it defines a structure in the fabric and the orientation of the yarns. Although smooth and striated space appear as opposites through the way they are defined, in reality they exist close next to each other and blend all the time.

Søberg uses the concepts of smooth and striated space (and mostly the first one) to explain the way the blur in Ruff’s image visualizes an important force in the experience of the pavilion that remains invisible in a representative photograph, as the one above. More precisely, he argues that movement becomes very prominent in the photograph as a result of the smooth space that is introduced by means of blurring and haptic colouring. In this relation between smooth space, haptic vision and movement, Søberg also discovers a parallel between the spatial experience of the pavilion and movement:


4 Ibid. p. 4.

5 Ibid. p. 6.

6 Ruff also manipulated the texture and colour of the air, surround nature and square in front of the pavilion.
The smooth organisational form blurs the shape of the architecture when the visitor moves around in diagonal movements through the grid of the walls and pillars.\textsuperscript{7}

It is noteworthy that the structure of walls and pillars which was mentioned above as the cause of the floating, mercurial space, in this quote disappears more to the background. Weirdly enough, the opposite happens in the representative photograph where a sense of movement is to a lesser degree present, while the striated space and the form that organizes it- in this case the grid of walls and pillars and the roof plane- becomes all the more clear in this image. In other words, both photographs focus on one of the spatial concepts, striated space in the representative photograph and smooth space in the photograph of Ruff. As mentioned above, in physical reality both blend into each other. Although it seems that smooth space gains the upper hand when Seberg writes that \textit{smooth organisational form blurs the shape of the architecture}.\textsuperscript{8} Unconsciously, this must also have been the intention of Mies, when surveying the materials and the haptic properties they entail.

**Kaleidoscopic Reflections.**

“Right from the beginning I had a clear idea of what to do with that pavilion. But nothing was fixed yet, it was still a bit hazy. But then when I visited the showrooms of a marble firm at Hamburg, I said: ‘Tell me, haven’t you got something else, something really beautiful?’ I thought of that free-standing wall I had, and so they said: ‘Well, we have a big block of onyx. But that block is sold—to the North German Lloyd.’ They want to make big vases from it for the dining room in a new steamer. So I said: ‘Listen, let me see it,’ and they at once shouted: ‘No, no, no, that can’t be done, for Heaven’s sake you mustn’t touch that marvellous piece.’ But I said: ‘Just give me a hammer, will you, and I’ll show you how we used to do that at home.’ So reluctantly they brought a hammer, and they were curious whether I would want to chip away a corner. But no, I hit the block hard just once right in the middle, and off came a thin slab the size of my hand. ‘Now go and polish it at once so that I can see it.’ And so we decided to use onyx. We fixed the quantities and brought the stone.\textsuperscript{9}"

\textsuperscript{7} Martin Seberg. Theorizing the image of architecture. Thomas Ruff’s photographs of the buildings of Mies van der Rohe. 2008. p. 6.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid. p 3.

Glass, chrome, water and four different kinds of stone: Roman travertine, green Alpine marble, ancient green marble from Greece and golden onyx from the Atlas Mountains. These are the main visible materials of the pavilion, not mentioning the steel profiles hidden underneath the chrome and reinforced concrete underneath the thin layers of marble.

Concerning their haptic properties, these materials can be divided in roughly two categories. On the one hand Mies used natural stones with their impressive textures, ranging from the subtle roughness of the travertine to the bold veins of the golden onyx. Most of the stone blocks have been cut in thin plates (except for the pieces on the ends of the wall) and then mounted in pairs sharing the same section plane and thus identical, but mirrored texture. This paired suspension hanging of the plates results in Rorschach- or butterfly-like patterns. These patterns are also impressive examples of smoothness, which Søberg also described as inhomogeneous and amorphous like a kaleidoscope.

On the other hand there are the reflecting and transparent materials: the chrome covers of the columns and window profiles, the window glass itself and the two water ponds surrounding the pavilion.

The sketch on the previous page shows that Mies was clearly aware of the transparent & reflective properties of the chrome, glass & water. Similarly he was very conscious about the intrinsic haptic beauty of the marbles. Mies smoothed the rigid striated organisational space, by charging the screen-like walls with kaleidoscopic haptic quality. On top of this smoothness becomes omnipresent when moving through the pavilion, because of the transparency and infinite reflections in the other materials and even the polished finish of the marbles themselves. In this way, the material can be seen as the biggest generator of the smoothness of the pavilion. Almost literally covering the grid with marble and chrome and minimizing the striated-spatial experience of the pavilion. This is why it seems like the pavilion itself is moving, in the sense that the reflections are constantly changing, illustrating that Ruff’s movement not only can be tricked in photographs.
Floating Space

The model shown on the first spread of this case study is a Mobile à vent taking in consideration these main empirical qualities of the Barcelona pavilion, movement and materiality. The mobile is a kind of moving sculpture that had a prominent place in the oeuvre of Alexander Calder (fig. 1), whose mobiles formed a main inspiration in the process of making the model.

The mobile has been chosen as an abstraction of the spatial experience of the Barcelona Pavilion. The mobile as way of sculpting offers the possibility to incorporate some crucial characteristics of the Barcelona pavilion. The picture above of Calder's mobile *Snow Flurry I* illustrates some of this possibilities. This mobile consists out of a certain amount of metal sheet surfaces with white coating, that represent snow flakes. These are hooked on thin rods connecting and balancing them in an intricate composition. This ensemble of surfaces, planes and rods is attached to the ceiling with a thin, almost invisible wire which makes the whole floating, moving through the air.

The model adopts some of the qualities of the mobile to achieve a spatial organisation at least as smooth as the real pavilion. The stone walls become thin plates rotating around their axis as if they were really floating under the roof plane to which they are connected with a thin string. This axis also serves as mirror-axis on which the patterns of the marble prints are mirrored generating natural impossible but even more kaleidoscopic patterns. Also the striated grid of columns underwent some changes, first they became in scale slightly bigger in comparison to the walls, what makes them even more thin. Secondly, they do not stand in two rows anymore but are placed in such a way that the surfaces rotate very closely next to the columns at certain points just like the walls float narrowly along the columns in the pavilion.
Figure 13
Diagrams of the original placement of the columns, walls regarding the roof plane (top) and the position of the columns and walls in the model; the circles define the borders of the area wherein the walls turn around (bottom).
Grundtvigs Kirke

Cultivating Brick.

P.V. Jensen- Klint
Previous Spread:
  Left: Photographs of the exterior of the church. Right: Photograph of the interior.
This Page:
  To the right: detail of the front facade. Source: Archives of Ghent University.
A Brick Crystal

This last case study throws a light on the influence of a material on the aesthetic experience of a building, namely on the bricks of the Grundtvigs Kirke. This church was built in a suburb of Copenhagen between 1921 and 1940 and designed by P.V. Jensen-Klint. Following quote illustrates that Jensen-Klint had a quite clear view on the use of materials in architecture:

Cultivate brick, the red or the yellowish-white. Utilize all of its many possibilities. Use few or no shaped bricks. Do not copy details, whether Greek or Gothic. Make them yourself from the material. Do not believe stucco is a building material, and smile when your professor says ‘that paint is also a material’. If you ever get a chance to build a house of granite, remember that it is a precious stone, and if ferro-concrete becomes a building material do not rest until a new style is found for it.

For the style is created by the material, the subject, the time, and the man.

Jensen-Klint puts an emphasis here on an approach of style as a concept deeply related to material, much more than it is related to history. In the Grundtvigs Church he was able to take this style originating from the material the furthest. The church consists of five million bricks, carefully put together by five masons and detailed with tremendous precision by Jensen-Klint and his son Kaare Jensen-Klint.

An essential notion in the constitution of this church is that of the crystal. Carl Petersen wrote about how the church is an expression of Jensen-Klint’s interest in natural laws and more specifically the fragmentation of a crystal. Petersen mainly recognizes the crystalline in how Jensen-Klint composed certain elements and forms and repeated them next to each other. An example of this crystalline composing is the way the tripartite tower springs from the tripartite sanctuary. Further, Peterson also recognizes crystal-like elements in the resemblance between the splits in basalt stones and the holes in the gables. Or in the way the buttresses and stairwells step-in while rising up. Or as Per Kirkeby describes it:

From front, the church is an enormous form, not actually a tower. It is a mighty crystal. An almost organic, living crystal, hacking its way up as it grows.

The idea of the crystal not only relates to the way forms rise out one another but also foreshadows the crystalline potential of brick. Through a conglomerate of small stones Jensen-Klint achieves to built a church that seems that to be carefully sculptured out of one enormous crystal rock.
Rough Diamond.

Concerning textures, the Grundtvig church can be compared to a rough diamond, with a gleaming brilliance in the polished interior and a coarse exterior, weathered through time.

On the outside the building is characterized by its big surfaces of rough brick, that show passage of time for example in the engraved names on the side of the church, but also in the darkening of the yellowish-white stone, creating more hue in colour. As brute/coarse the outside of the church is, all the more refined is the inside of the church. First and foremost this is due to the fact that every stone in the interior has been polished, every imperfection such as moulding stains was rubbed away before the stone was laid. As a consequence, the stones appear to be very smooth and capture the light in very softly while also reflecting it in dim way. Also the interior brick surfaces are less sensitive for weathering.

This contrast of rough and smooth is also reflected in the details of certain elements on the in- and outside. The side gables are an example of the coarseness on the outside aimed for by Jensen-Klint. They are merely brick shields on the outside and aren’t even articulated in the side naves on the inside, though they make the outside of the church appear much heavier. In a similar way also the buttresses around the chancel are really sturdy.

The inside on the other hand is characterized by enormous columns, that separate the transept from the side aisles. Despite their large measurements these appear to rise like a bundle of thin pillars due to jumps the size of one or two bricks in the contour of the column (fig. 2.). These columns dissolve into the smooth vaults of the ceiling through a fluid deflection into arches.
Another example of this fluid detailing of brickwork can be found in the way Jensen-Klint designed the stairs and stairwells.

This contrast in detailing and texture between inside and outside influences the experience of this church. The crude, hard exterior makes a fragmented monumental impression when approaching the church, while also making the softness of the interior all the more impressive. A softness characterized by its smooth, fluid detailing that turns the complete inner space of the church in an homogeneous entity.

The finely smoothed bricks enabled a precision that has probably never before been achieved in brickwork, yet there is no hardness about the material; 'firm but soft' was an expression my father favoured.

The Scale of Brick, One vs. Many.

Next to the variety in texture and detail, scale is an important aspect in the empirical qualities of the church. This relation of scale and experience can be explained in two ways. On the one hand there is the enormous dimensions of the church, which makes of course an impression on our more humble human body. On the other hand the experience of the scale of the building is influenced by an interesting mechanism inherent to the use of brickwork. Due to the modularity of brickwork we are able to relate to the scale of the church despite the elusive dimensions of it. The cause of this lies in the size of the brick, which is in essence made to be laid out with the human hand. This tectonic pragmatic origin of the scale of a brick is the reason why it has a susceptible scale. It is this susceptibility combined with the colossal size of the grundtvigs church that makes it such an impressive building. It is unbelievable magnificent in how large it is while at the same time on is able to get grip on the scale due to the single bricks, which makes it all the more magnificent.
This shift in scale is supported by the refined details of both the interior and exterior that were described above. The jumps of the size of one or two bricks in the towers on the outside for example make the modularity of the bricks apparent. The same is valid for the columns appearing like a bundle of bricks, with some of them sprouting in to the thin ribs of the vaults (fig. 7). This relates back to the idea of the crystal, also containing the shift in scale that makes this church so overwhelming, an object that combines both the appearance of being one entity without overshadowing the beauty of its fragments.

Figure 7
A cross-section of the chancel
Conclusion

The Sensorial Presence of Space
The quality that we call beauty

must always grow
from the realities of life.1

-Jun’ichiro Tanizaki.

1 Jun’ichiro Tanizaki. In the
Praise of Shadows. 1977. p. 29.
As mentioned in the introduction, space is the medium and judged property of this chapter. The next paragraphs take a closer look on how space is perceived which will be a base to explain the importance of (physical) presence as a benchmark in this judgement, leading to a beauty experienced by the senses.

**Space: Experienced Medium**

In the introduction to this chapter there is a short mention of how Rasmussen two ways to perceive space. On the one hand as a contrast between cavities and solids and on the other hand a space experienced as colour planes. These perceptions of space appear both throughout the case studies.

First there are notions of smooth and striated space, which defined two ways space is organised and are connected to floating as a quality of the Barcelona Pavilion. These notions are mainly dealing with space enclosed by a series of surfaces, thus space experienced as colour planes. Besides that, at the foundation of the analysis of the pavilion lies shift from a qualification of the space based solely on its structure to the qualification of the experience of the movement through the space between that structure. This is in essence a shift on focus from the solid structure to the cavity between that structure. In the case study about the Market Hall the perception of space as a dialogue between solids and cavities becomes very apparent in the concrete model of the building, where the cavity is solid and the other way around. Further, the haptic qualities that the sturdiness generates lead to a colour plane perception of the space. Due to the emphasis on the material in the third case, the focus is more on the appearance of the surfaces and their effect on the experience. Nonetheless, in the metaphor of the crystal the approach of space constituted out of solids and cavities shimmers through.

All these kinds of perceiving/experiencing space have something in common, namely they use space as a central notion in the experience of architecture. From the more abstract notions smooth and striated, focussing on spatial organisation, to the qualifying notions such as mercurial and sturdy, they all add to what space can convey as a medium in the experience of architecture. Because of that space is in this chapter the judged property in the experience of architecture.

**Physical Presence: Building & Body.**

Whether the space is deemed beautiful or not is based on physical presence. This notion covers the relation between body and building. In the text *Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space* Gernot Böhme discusses this notion in order to define atmosphere. But more important here is that Böhme establishes in this text the link between experience, space and physical sensation (this last concept is of importance for the understanding of the nature of beauty in this chapter, see further). In summary he writes that the experience of space is a physical sensation due to the interaction of the human body and what is physically built.

To understand better in what way this physical presence is the benchmark in the aesthetic judging of building, a closer look on the changes that the concept of proportion undergoes in this chapter is helpful. Proportion has been mainly discussed in the case about the Market Hall. What is remarkable is that proportion is not discussed in normative terms as in the first chapter, but in relation to the notion of sturdiness. Sturdiness is a good example of the importance of physical presence in the experience of a space. In essence sturdiness means that the building becomes more physical present, the mass and materiality of what is built become much more apparent. In other words, proportion is of importance in the Market Hall case because of the empirical quality of sturdiness it induces.

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2 The notion of atmosphere is not further discussed within this dissertation, because it interweaves the approach taken in this chapter and the next chapter.

3 Ibid. p. 27.
Further, the other two cases in this chapter each lay more focus on the physical presence of either the body or the building. In the Barcelona pavilion the importance of the physical human body becomes clear through the impact that moving through the pavilion has on the experience of the space. The Grundtvigs Church on the other hand illustrates the empirical capacity of the built physical presence, more specifically the bricks it consists of.

The Sensorial: Effect on the senses.

The physical sensation of experienced space mentioned by Böhme earlier, brings us to the nature of beauty of this chapter. Throughout the cases it becomes clear that beauty is not found or seen in forms but through the experience of space and the stimulation of our senses. This can be deduced from the fact that terms such as stimulation, pleasure, happiness are introduced as a consequence of the effect of the space on the senses. This appears for instance when Paul Robbrecht describes that their buildings need to be sturdy since it makes people happy because you can touch them, rub them. The use of colour Robbrecht relates to a stimulation of the senses.

An important place is given to the haptic, encompassing the experience through touch. Reason for this is probably that touch is the most physical of our senses. The case about the Barcelona Pavillion illustrates this. In the case the shift is made from the movement through space and perception of that space to the sensorial qualities of that space through the relation between the concepts smooth space and haptic vision. In the Grundtvigs Church there is again a focus on this interconnection between the haptic and perception (vision). Moreover, it is crucial in the impression that the bricks have due to the two scales they deal with, making immense church both overwhelming and comprehensible.
Chapter 4

Emotional Character.
Emotional Character: Content.

Introduction:
A meaningful Experience

Aquatic Strangeness.
Olivetti Showroom - Carlo Scarpa

Aesthetics as Found.
Solar Pavilion - Peter & Alison Smithson

A Serene Remembrance.
Woodland Cemetery - Gunnar Asplund & Sigurd Lewerentz

Conclusion:
The sensual presence of Space.
In this last chapter, three cases are chosen that are beautiful because of

Intuition

This chapter is probably the most ambiguous, vague, non-specific

Photographs as form of expression.
Olivetti Showroom

Aquatic
Strangeness

Carlo Scarpa
An Aquatic Sensibility

On one of the sides of the Piazza San Marco in Venice behind two bays of the colonnade of Procuratie Vecchie lies a hidden gem, the Olivetti Showroom designed by Carlo Scarpa in 1957-58. This narrow gallery space, only 21 meters by 5 meters, exhibits not only the industrial designs, mostly typewriters, of the Olivetti Company but also Scarpa’s mastery of materials & detailing. That mastery is connected with the rich presence of craftsmanship in Venice, where industrialisation never really took over. Because of this, Scarpa is able to subtly blend his work in its context. Scarpa’s work also displays a remarkable experiential quality, which Robert McCarter describes as follows:

We soon realize that his works are so densely layered and infinitely articulated as to make it impossible to remember, notice or experience every detail and joint, every material characteristic, every nuanced spatial moment, every shadow and reflection. There is a kind of excess of sensory stimulation, ...

But next to this particularly Venetian ‘detailedness’ and sensory abundance, there is something more going on in this building, turning it into something more (beautiful). Michael Cadwell describes this something more strikingly in his book Strange Details:

I was transported: how and to where I did not know, but I knew that I was... elsewhere. It was later still that I came to understand how Scarpa cast this spell: how he liquefied materials and how, in doing so, he sometimes gave rise to an all-embracing spatial affect that unmoors us from the earth, leaving us to swim in a liquid ambience. Scarpa’s sensibility, especially for an architect was fundamentally strange. It was aquatic.

Cadwell describes here what he felt when he was in the Fondazione Querini Stampalia, a pallazo that Scarpa renovated to house an art collection and gallery within a stone’s throw of the Olivetti Showroom. This something more shimmers through in the words sensibility, fundamentally strange, aquatic. By means of Heidegger and the concept of earth TKT Cadwell links Scarpa’s strangeness to the uniqueness of Venice and its water (in short: according to Cadwell Scarpa’s Aquatic sensibility is strange due too its Venetian aquaticness). This only a part of a bigger truth, as

There is no totalizing scheme, no one direction; there are only figures with their own resonance suggesting many narratives, movements, and discoveries. And let us be clear about this: I am telling only one story, and I am telling it on a good day.

& Other Stories: Scarpian Details.

This section focuses on some other narratives to broaden the view on Scarpa’s sensibility, to understand better what exactly (as far as this is possible to say this exactly) makes his work so strange.

Late in his career, Scarpa himself would sometimes dismiss his details as ‘scarpini’, as if they were the first expression of his liquid architecture and he recognized that he must suppress them to realize the full affect of his unique aquatic sensibility. Tragically, just as his career was gaining momentum, Scarpa died. He rests in what he considered his masterpiece, the Brion Cemetery. At his request, Scarpa is interred in the manner of a medieval knight: wrapped in a white cloak, upright, perpendicular to the earth.
The Typewriter Armatures. Cadwell shortly mentions Scarpa’s affinity for historical artefacts which is very apparent in the remarkable armatures for the typewriters. By means of three thin steel beams a wooden board is lifted from the ground to serve as a platform to exhibit typewriters.

Scarpa also had a remarkable empathy for historical artifacts, which led to extensive museum renovations. ... Scarpa’s affinity was extraordinary and cannot be attributed only to having matured in a city that is itself an extensive museum. Scarpa often displaced the artwork-paintings onto elaborate easels hinged with brass, books into delicate-legged vitrines, sculpture boarded onto bargelike bases or drifting from extended steel armatures- so that they leave the hygienic remove of the museum without completely entering our own. We puzzle over possible connections, and not only as an intellectual excercise.

The stairs.

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5 Michael Cadwell. Strange Details. 2007. p. 11.

We must also acknowledge Scarpa’s admiration of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, an influence overcome, after many false starts, in Scarpa’s exquisite Olivetti Showroom on the Piazza San Marco. Yet again a proviso asserts itself. The Istrian limestone threads that cascade from the showroom’s second to first floor recall Wright’s concrete cantilevers at Falling Water, but Wright abstracts the landscape’s cascade in crisp geometries while Scarpa shapes the stone into the bends and folds of successive waves. Wright and Scarpa pass each other, certainly, but they are going in different directions: Wright from liquid to solid, Scarpa from solid to liquid.

The floors. Fluidity. Dazzling.

The logo in the wall. When one knows that this complicated inlay of matt and reflective brass represents the Olivetti logo, it does not become more beautiful. But the chance is taken away to read something else in it, to imagine a story of its own, to be surprised.

Beautiful Stranger, Strangely Beautiful.

He described himself as “a man of Byzantium who came to Venice by the way of Greece.” Such an amniotic trip might include all the major monuments of Western (and, by implication, Eastern) civilisation... and could only be made by water. Scarpa was born on water, matured on water, and built on water. Not land unlike his terrestrial contemporaries, Scarpa’s was an aquatic sensibility, saturated by Venice.

For me, Scarpa’s Work truly opens when he discards architectural associations for a more comprehensive spatial engagement.
Upper Lawn Pavillion

As Found Aesthetics

Peter (BRUTus) & ALison Smithson
select and arrange technique which we have used in the designing and equipping of our own houses and which we still regard as a valid technique for the organisation of relatively simple objects, mechanisms and services in buildings when they can be known about in detail and entrained into the design process. This of course, as a design method, is close to flower arrangement, and to good-taste in the furnishing of rooms with collector's pieces: it uses things for what they are, each object being enhanced and speaking more clearly of itself by virtue of the arrangement. But into an arrangement of traditional domestic objects, introduce a new need, say for a family-size washing-up machine. In washing-up machines there is no past production to choose from, the machine is large, the product availability will be small and in any one year the styling of one is pretty like the others. The arrangement cannot normally absorb it: the design method faces collapse.

So too with the control of mechanisms and services in a large building: the range of needs to be served, the unpredictability of the methods of connecting together, the styling of the casings and so on of quite simple things like switch gear, thermostats, etc., etc., tend to produce a confused jumble.
When le Corbusier assembled Vers Une Architecture, he gave to young architects everywhere a way of looking at the emergent machine-served society, and from that, a way of looking at antiquity and a rationale to support his personal aesthetic. Viollet-le-Duc had performed the same service to architects before le Corbusier: the role they played is traditional to the development of architecture. In this essay, based on material written between 1955 and 1972, we try to do the same as these architects before us.

We write to make ourselves see what we have got in the inescapable present... to give another interpretation of the same ruins... to show a glimpse of another aesthetic.

Just like in their book Without Rhetorics this case shows a glimpse of the aesthetics behind the work of Peter & Alison Smithson, more specifically the personal aesthetic in their weekend-house at Upper Lawn, Wiltshire, the Solar Pavilion. The renowned architects-couple is best known for projects such as the Hunstanton Secondary Modern School, the Economist Building and the Robin Hood Gardens Housing Estate, which where built in the post-war Britain of the sixties and seventies and are often categorized under brutalism. Nonetheless, this case-study zooms in on one of the houses they built for themselves instead of one of their brutalist masterpieces of a bigger scale, described by Keith Krumwiede as heroic and monumental brutalism. While this specific focus on the Solar Pavilion brings forth a more sensible private kind of brutalism based on that can be best described as:

Alongside their architecture and without hierarchy, The Shift presents what the Smithsons called the “ephemera” of their lives, “underground streams which will feed our architecture maybe years later... genuine ephemera, something in the air and drifting by, to be caught, looked at and released into other work.”

A New Brutalist Grandchild.

Aanwezig Clear exhibition of Structure & Valuation of Materials ‘as found’ Beschrijven van de structuur en de materialen IMAGE INL ART OF INHABITATION HOUSE OF THE FUTER HOUSE OF TODAY

Twenty years after the Solar Pavilion was built, In The New Brutalism Reyner Banham defines three key aspects of brutalism: the Memorability as an Image, a Clear exhibition of Structure and a Valuation of Materials as found. The last two are clearly readable in the image above but

Memorability as an Image

Here the shoe pinches,

Instead the as found is next to

As Found: Attitude and Aesthetic

Picking up, turning over and putting with

The Art of Ordinary Inhabitation.
The Smithsons called the Eames-Aesthetic “an art form of ordinary life and ordinary objects seen with an eye that sees the ordinary as also magical.”
Our understanding-and so it might have been for Mies-was that for the Japanese their Form was only part of a general conception of life, a sort of reverence for the natural world and from that, for the materials of the built world. It is this respect for materials—a realisation of the affinity which can be established between building and man—which was at the root of our way of seeing and thinking about things that we called New Brutalism. Therefore for us, our Hunstanton School—which probably owes as much to Japanese architecture as to Mies—was the first realisation of our New Brutalism. This particular handling of materials, not in the craft sense but in intellectual appraisal, has been ever-present in the Modern Movement, as indeed familiars of the early German architects have been prompt to remind us. What is new about the New Brutalism among Movements is that it finds its closest affinities not in a past architectural style, but in peasant dwelling forms, which have style and are stylish but were never modish: a poetry without rhetoric. We see architecture as a direct statement of a way of life and in the past ordinary, prosaic life has been most succinctly, economically, tersely expressed in the peasant farms and the impedimenta of Mediterranean rural life that Le Corbusier had made respectable.
Woodland Cemetery

a Serene Remembrance

Gunnar Asplund & Sigurd Lewerentz
When we come across a mound in the wood, six feet long and three feet wide, raised in a pyramidal form by means of a spade, we become serious and something in us says: somebody lies buried here. This is architecture.

It might be slightly symbolic, but in the last case study the Woodland cemetery is at the center of attention.

About asplund in the cover of The architecture of Erik Gunnar Asplund:

his ability to distill and to combine formal and psychological essences from different architectures makes Asplund’s work especially fascinating today.

In 1916 Asplund and Lewerentz won a competition for a cemetary

Two Chapels

Originally located on a 75 hectare pine forest on the site of a former quarry and developed over

Narrative Paths & Landscape

WANGS TEKST

Vroeg werk: autonomy of the narrative towards Laat werk: integration of human actions and A Serene Landscape Loos & Landscape over de resurrectie kapel

ARTICLE ONLOOS


....

And, sure enough, just as we’ve had the time to get up our protective righteousness, Loos asks the question again. This time he answers it:

...why does the architect, the good one as well as the bad one, desecrate the lake? The architect, like almost every urban dweller, has no culture. He lacks the certainty of the farmer, who possesses culture.

Wait a minute — the FARMER? Isn’t culture supposed to be on the side of the architect? I mean, aren’t WE the culture industry? But Loos has no patience for archi-
tects. They are here his target. Or were. He has in fact already fired the lethal shot, protecting the overall unity of a landscape against the interloping presence of an individual building. Loos is now preparing to field-dress the corpse. He begins this work by noting that the farmer, the engineer and the boat captain create in ways that are different from the architect. Though Loos clearly oversimplifies, he does so to drive home a particular argument. So, Loos claims, the farmer, in building a house for himself and his family, simply knows how to build correctly, as has always been done: "just as any animal succeeds that allows itself to be guided by its instincts." So do the mason, the joiner, the other craftsmen who come to work with him. There is no importation: "if clay is in the vicinity, it provides a brickyard which delivers bricks; if not, then those stones that form the lake’s shore will suffice."

Nor is there any real invention in Loos’s idealized rural world. The carpenter "... builds the roof. What kind of a roof? A beautiful one or an ugly one? He does not know. It is a roof!" Though Loos does not say it directly, he thus implies that the boat captain also does not take beauty into account in deciding the route across the lake; nor does the engineer in asking: what is the best path for the train? All, Loos suggests, are simply working directly from a storehouse of embedded landscape-specific knowledge — without the burden of a concern for beauty — and it is the character of this directness that binds the landscape. It is not beautiful by cultured intention, but by enlightened default. Again Loos asks about beauty: "is the house beautiful? Yes, just as beautiful as the rose or the thistle or the horse or the cow." As beautiful as the rose or the thistle or the horse or the cow. [2]

To this point there are several crucial components to Loos’s argument. Human constructions are not inherently foreign to landscape, even, as in Loos’s alpine village, a landscape with components of incomparable natural beauty. [3] Second, the relationship of any construction to its landscape is not only visual, but also constitutional. When you look at a building, you are seeing more in it than its appearance: you also impute its occurrence as a construction, a material act. The third component of Loos’s argument is subtly linked to the second: as part of this constitutional understanding, you also know that various agents — farmer, engineer, mason, carpenter, and also architect — make parts of landscape (Loos is about to complicate matters by adding artist to this list). Finally, fourth, just as the farmer does not think of beauty any more than you or I would question the beauty of the rose, thistle, cow or horse, so should beauty not have to be thought about — though Loos is about to make a critical exception — in order be experienced in constructions in their landscapes.

This argument may initially appear dishearteningly conservative and limiting. But Loos was actually making a radical and powerful claim. Buildings, in order to correctly make the landscape to which they are normal, fall into a class of perception. This class has one crucial qualification: in landscape, buildings are constructions that we do not interpret. This is the essential birthright — the secret power, if you will — that landscape grants buildings. Later in his essay — after that long middle section in which he theorizes on why architects do not recognize this fact, summarized here in a long end note [4] — Loos restates this thought directly — and he summarizes its meaning in his own italics — with an unusually severe and poetic example:
When we come across a mound in the wood, six feet long and three feet wide, raised in a pyramidal form by means of a spade, we become serious and something in us says: somebody lies buried here. This is architecture.

Here, coincidentally, are three essential components of landscape: a site (a wood), a construction (a mute mound, raised in a pyramidal form by means of a spade), and a desire (to engender the emotion of seriousness with regard to the buried). The task of architecture, Loos states, is to so make landscape: “to make those sentiments more precise.”
Conclusion

Characteristic Positions achieved in Space
The past three case studies bend our minds to human emotions and the evocation of beauty through those emotions, being it the surprise of enigmatic strangeness, the joy and naivity of ordinary as found ephemera or the serenity of a landscape.

From the architecture, the people in and around unavoidably feel something. We often came to the word atmosphere. When you walk into a place designed by Jan De Vylder, Inge Vinck and Jo Taillieu you have the opportunity to feel as they feel, which is to say a little bit off-balance, rather complicated, exuberant and humble.

Emotional
Sensual Presence of Space
Final Remarks

Constellations.
One of the main difficulties with writing about beauty was to find the right words, language within every chapter. This however illustrates one of the essential themes within this dissertation, namely that beauty is intensely related to the act of judging. In each of the chapters this act is defined differently though mutually connected. On these final pages the relationship between judging and beauty is further

**Beauty as a consequence**

Another remarkable observation that shimmers through the cases is that whilst designing, critiquing and/or using beauty is always a consequence. Regardless if one adopts the position of an architect, critic or user, follows out of a judgement, respectively a design decision, a critical argument or a perception.

**Beauty’s the law, not mess!**

After establishing that beauty is a consequence, this remark wants to point out that the relation between judgement and beauty also works in the other direction. Beauty forms a base to establish design principles on.

This is closely related to the main difference between the first two and the last two chapters. In the first two chapters beauty is projected on objects. Beauty is a kind of argument here

In the last two chapters beauty is experienced through emotional or

**Lack of History**

This section focuses on of the advantages of making aesthetic judgements, decisions. Throughout this dissertation there is a lack of dates, of historical context. This becomes for example apparent in the shift from critical regionalism to the linguistic vernacular. It illustrates the superfluity of historical information to judge whether a building is beautiful or not. This is reflected in the subjectivity of an aesthetic judgment but also in the speed an aesthetic judgment can be made.

The step of interpretation can be skipped?! Sontag?

**Constellations of beauty**

**EXAMPLES**

Le Corbusiers extramarital wanderings with the classical lead to an extraordinary beauty which are in a way contextual idioms referring to industrialisation

It is for example undeniable that the cases of the Smitsons and de vylder vinck taillelieu architecten are exchangeable. This is due...

Coderch empirical character (sola moralis in thesi mathieu desmet p 40)

Asplund’s chapel in the woodland cemetary

(Un)Conscious Aesthetic Choices