

**The Production of the Subject through  
Space, Architecture and Image**

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*PhD Fine Art Research, School of Arts & Humanities*

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## *Abstract*

My research addresses our physical and psychical being in space and the space of representation, through the contrasting mediums of sculptural form, image, and text. Central to this is the photograph - understood by Vilém Flusser as a 'technical image', the product of an apparatus, yet one that unavoidably reveals our deepest investment in their content as viewers.

I explore the material condition of the photographic image as a means of engaging the modalities of desire at work in our experience of images, as well as approaching, indirectly, the associated realms of the body and architecture - both of which routinely feature in the photographs I consider, but also influence my project more broadly on the level of praxis. If I choose to prioritise the virtuality of the image over a seemingly more authentic 'direct' experience of the built environment, this is not as a surrogate, but a mode of experience in itself - a means of placing myself at the intersection of the corporal and cognitive, examining the threshold between what is seen and what is felt.

This thesis proceeds accordingly along two parallel creative paths. My artwork on the one hand consists of drawings, sculptures, and installations, which intervene in our immediate architectural environment through a language of constructed spatial abstraction derived, in part, from forms found within the images I collect - images which are then often recycled back into works as another sculptural material. My writing, on the other hand, attempts to penetrate these same images with, as it were, the eye of language, in texts that examine details within (and without) the pictorial frame, through close descriptive and free-associative accounts of both their content and materiality.

These affective encounters are best served by an image that is not my own. Rather than make photographs, I submit to the world of images (as symptoms) through their various

'secondary' forms of reproduction; sifting through books, journals, and magazines, in search of an image that makes - and leaves - an impression, before appropriating it, either by reproduction, typically in the form of a photocopy, or by simply tearing out the page. Such treatment extends to the ways in which I approach the image - in practice, and theory - rejecting any imperative to interpret or critique the specific historical or social context to which a photograph may refer, leaving these instead to recur in phenomena.

If, as Jean Laplanche suggests, the passage to the unconscious is correlative with a lost referentiality, then this is on some level what occurs as I devolve the consequences of the image into the material effects of my own viewing, reading, and writing, as well as by extension, that of the reader/viewer, shifting the politics of the image - and the desires occasioned there - into the ongoing negotiation of space, structure and image. Following this logic, the contribution to knowledge here is one shared, grasping the materiality of the image in terms of its affect, and witnessing how we are all produced in the alterity of representation.

Vicky Kim

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*This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.*

*During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.*

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sung Eun Vicky Kim', written in a cursive style.

**SUNG EUN VICKY KIM**

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*Figure 1. Vicky Kim, 'Corridor, Red (PART, with volume)', 2015, Steel stud frame, plaster board, jointing compound, matt paint (white, red), Dimensions variable*



*'Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.'*

-- Walter Benjamin, 1936 <sup>1</sup>

# 1

## *Some Images from my Archive: The Studio & The Archive*

Sitting down to write I am struck by a nagging doubt. There seems to be a danger in writing about images, a risk that in doing so their meaning, or at least their significance (that mysterious push and pull of attraction and attachment, not easily accounted for) will be destroyed or lost for me: as if committing the visual to language will either unmask and lay bare my curiosity, or mask it more completely, to the point of useless obscurity. Whether through greater understanding and transparency, or greater obscurity and distance, what was held in delicate balance is upset, emptied of significance and imaginative potential. This at least, is the fear. A fear of lost connection, made all the more tangible when the images in question are not strictly 'mine' to begin with.

The hundreds of photocopies piled chaotically in my studio (reproductions of images from books of architecture) are all in a sense equal, though in their relation to the whole, rather than in terms of any individual (magical) correspondence I enter into with them. As I cycle through these images, pausing occasionally to study some detail, or make a comparison, I build tenuous points of connection, some stronger than others, but always in transition, one to another. What holds a certain power one day may fail to inspire the next. Long periods of gestation are followed by a momentary

<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," In W. Benjamin, H. Zohn, H. Arendt, L. Wieseltier, *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp.217-252.

epiphany before fading again: a continual cycle of metamorphosis - the flowering and withering of connection. To stop and write about one of these images, or even a number of them in sequence, is already to distort the ritual of this process. The connection exists in the cycle - it is found through the cycle: the significance of one depending on the insignificance of another.

This is of course, nothing like the bond between photographer and photograph. Taking a photograph, under any circumstances, leaves an indelible trace, not on the roll of film or the camera sensor (for these can be burnt or deleted), but on the photographer: an impression that binds the photographer with the moment of capture, and only latterly becomes associated with the image itself. The act of photocopying on the other hand, generates something like the shadow of the photograph. No doubt there is something photographic in the photocopy - a trace of myself (or my intervention) left in the material record of each copy, but this action, while not totally passive, is not wholly engaged either, and does not lead to the same kind of bond as that between 'author' and image. The photocopy manifests a very different kind of bond - a transitory, weak bond only brought about by the act of mechanical reproduction.

Turning over the pages of my 'archive'<sup>2</sup>, I find that these reproductions set in motion an impulse towards further reproduction, in my case the non-mechanical tracing and drawing that begins as an attempt to copy before diverting inexorably towards the realm of the imitative. The photocopy of an image of architecture from a book, another step removed from the actuality of architectural space, makes the sensory desire for that space all the more present, and even more so, since the moment of the

<sup>2</sup> "No desire, no passion, no drive, no compulsion, indeed no repetition compulsion, no "*mal-de*" can arise for a person who is not already, in one way or another, *en mal d'archive*." - As will become clear, my use of 'archive' here is less an acknowledgement of its complex political connotations (be they institutional, economic, or power dynamics) - than to point towards its pathology; the "compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire[s]" that are embodied in "the disorder of the archive" that Derrida calls 'archive fever'. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Trans. E. Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.91. For further discussion see Appendix B: 'Theoretical Notes & Responses' p.133.

photograph is already 'lost', or 'past'. In this sense, the space longed for, is both present and absent in the photograph, and more expressly so in its photocopied reproduction, giving rise to the desire in which the image demands to be replicated.<sup>3</sup>

The images I copy and collect all speak to me in this way. Works of architecture, architectural spaces, architectural details, architectural landscapes... Landscapes, details, spaces, voids, in no particular order together constitute a world in and of itself, a world of architectural images from which the indifferent has been removed. While my immediate perception of actual space is often wayward,<sup>4</sup> aimless and unreliable, image space, and in particular the architecture of an image of space, is comprehensible, a medium through which I address the real.<sup>5</sup> Despite being able to identify the work of architecture in a particular image, who the architect is, or the purpose it serves, my reading of the 'object' is nevertheless always reduced to the image itself. My knowledge of the 'object' is through the image and limited to the architecture of the image. Context is what falls away.

And so, while there may indeed be risk involved in writing about those images that speak to me as images, I still wonder what they might say as language: what messages lie hidden within the four walls of the frame? But if, as Vilém Flusser suggests, in

3 I use the term 'desire' in both its common understanding (as in sensory desire) and its psychoanalytic elaboration as radically distinct from a need that can be satisfied and a demand that can be met; desire can never be satisfied which led Jacques Lacan to state that 'desire is a metonymy' sustained in an endless process of displacement along chains of associations. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: the first complete edition in English*. (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), p.478.

4 "The memory seems to be to the perception what the image reflected in the mirror is to the object in front of it. The object can be touched as well as seen; acts on us as well as we on it; is pregnant with possible actions; it is actual. The image is virtual, and though it resembles the object, it is incapable of doing what the object does." Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, Trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 2005), p.147. - Though I turn to Bergson here, and locate the duality of 'actual' and 'virtual' in his account of perception and memory, my usage extends to the inherent virtuality of (photographic) images as representation, and the actuality of our tangible, material conditions.

5 Though I often posit 'reality' as something to which the photographic image refers, it should be understood not as objective or external, but a condition of the subject. To appropriate Jacques Lacan's words: "It is impossible at this point not to bear witness to the following fact, [...] that reality isn't just there so that we bump our heads up against the false paths along which the functioning of the pleasure principle leads us. In truth, we make reality out of pleasure." Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*. Miller, Jacques-Alain ed., Trans. D. Porter. (New York: Norton, 1992), p.225.

scanning a photograph 'one's gaze follows a complex path formed, on the one hand, by the structure of the image and, on the other, by the observer's intentions',<sup>6</sup> then the significance that the viewer assigns an image is in a large part a reflection of his or her own investment in the content. An image therefore appears to externalise, and give form to, the wishes of the viewer. When an image speaks to me, it is in fact revealing of my motives and desires - what I wish to say via the medium of mediation, both consciously and unconsciously.<sup>7</sup>

In a world of images, and claims to significance, I thus propose to write about those weakly bonded reproductions that comprise the world of my weak and disordered archive. Where better to read my own thoughts than in the mirror of an image over which I hold no claim, but which nevertheless holds some claim on me? Many of these images, I now realise, lack or have lost all significant information about their origins. I may know that this image was copied from a book of Israeli modern architecture, but without a name, date, or location, what can be said? How can I speak of images without context?

6 Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion, 2000), p.8.

7 "Starting with Freud, the unconscious becomes a chain of signifiers that repeats and insists somewhere (on another stage or in a different scene, as he wrote), interfering in the cuts offered it by actual discourse and the cogitation it informs." Lacan, *Écrits*, p.676. - By extension, the Lacanian unconscious (with which we associate here) is, to paraphrase Dylan Evans, linguistic rather than primordial or instinctual, wherein the signifier is repressed only to return in various formations, determined by the symbolic order which structures and determines the subject from the exteriority of the Other. Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.219-220.

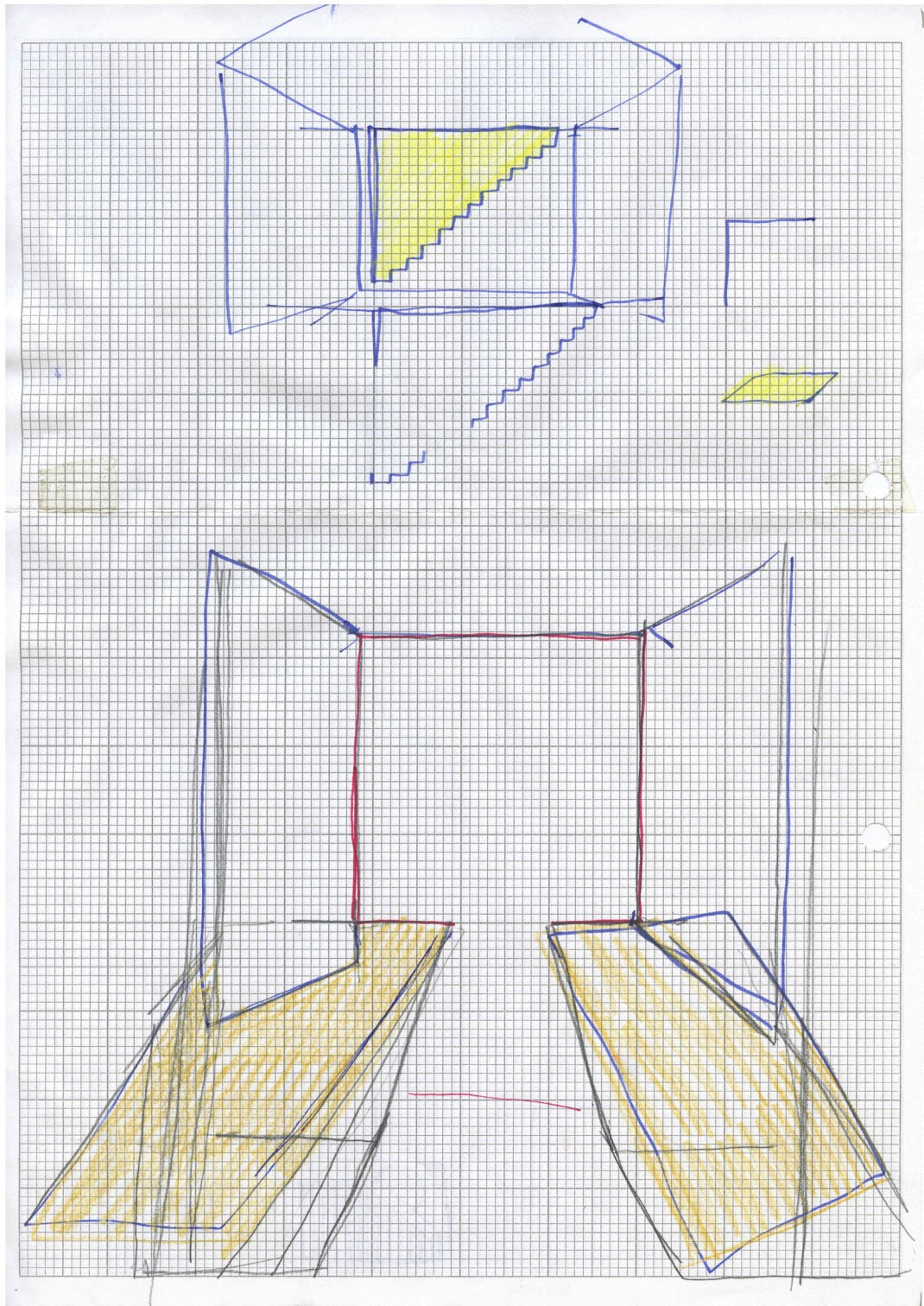


Figure 2. Vicky Kim, 'Untitled' (a moving staircase), 2019, Pencil and ink on paper, framed 29.7 x 21 cm

## 2

### *Four Images of a Japanese House & Garden*

#### *Part 1*

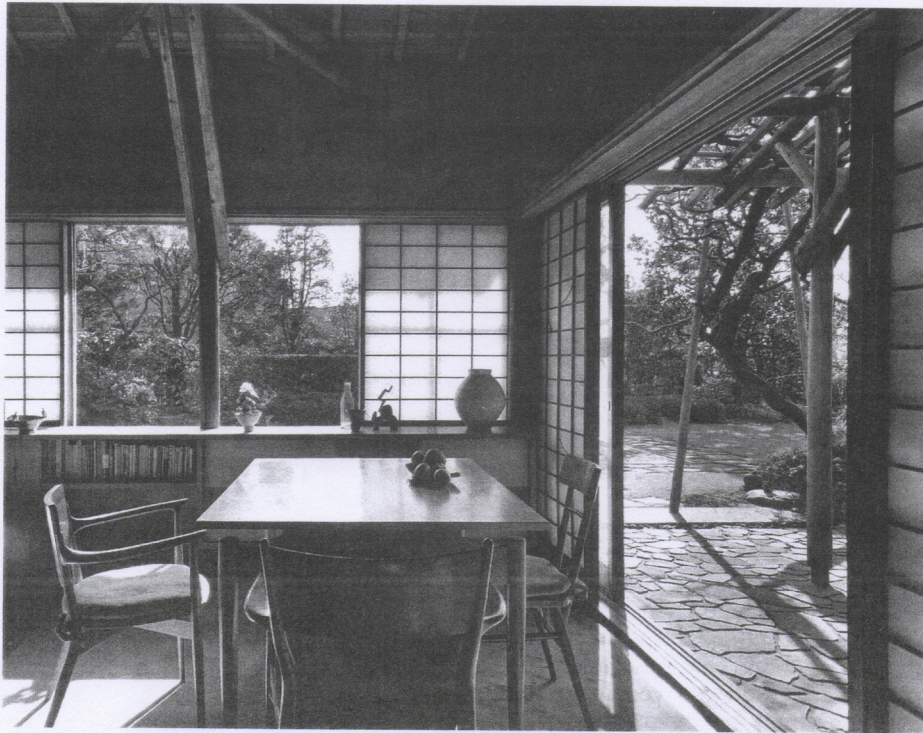
The accompanying images are precisely that; photocopied from a book to which the reference has been lost, and so divorced from their context, these four scenes of a Japanese house and garden settle in the mind as an archetype - the typical dwelling of those familiar with the films of Yasujiro Ozu or novelist Natsume Sōseki. Spread over two pages, and numbered 2-5, the captions likewise are missing, along with (at least) the first image of the sequence [Fig. 3-4, p15-16]. Indeed, having long since forgotten when and where I found the 'original', there is no possibility of knowing whether the original images were even in colour or black and white.

This last detail is more of a handicap than might at first be thought. While it is clear the images are staged, it is much more difficult to say for what purpose. Colour, hue, and saturation might have given a sense of the period in which these were taken, and so their likely destination. As it is, the powder layer of copy toner simulates the grain of black and white film, reinforcing and concealing the surface and hardening the impression that these are historical or archival images: our investment in the greater significance of black and white imagery habitual and superficial - activated by even the common photocopy.

Though already familiar, I study them again now in turn. Image 2. A tightly cropped detail of the border between the edge of a lawn and a paved stone patio, these separated by a narrow gutter of smooth loose stones and charcoal stakes driven irregularly into the earth. The ground fills the frame. There is no horizon or relief, nowhere for the eye to rest or be momentarily absorbed, only a continuous, mazy navigation of the



2



3

⇒0

Figure 3. Photocopy, "Images 2-3", 29.7 x 21 cm



4



5

71

Figure 4. Photocopy, "Images 4-5", 29.7 x 21 cm



dark channels formed in and around the various textures. The gutter divides the image, splitting it vertically, texturally, and tonally, leading the eye upwards along its path away from the camera in the expectation of some exit or escape, but reaching instead only the limits of the frame.

The material transitions are self-evident and sympathetic; grass to charcoal, charcoal to loose stones, loose stones to the cemented yet still irregular paving of the patio - a sequence that appears to follow a natural order, the order of nature, each element touching another closely related to it elementally, softening the transition from nature ordered (the manicured lawn and garden), to naturally ordered artifice (the patio, and by extension the house). This movement then is not only from one kind of material to another, but also one kind of space to another: a rational movement built on visual order, captured in pictorial space covering barely a few square feet.

However, while we might be led symbolically to a house or to a garden, the eye, confined to the image itself, is bound by the limits of this same pictorial space. The landscaping, no doubt rationally constructed in reality, is within the image, subject to other forces. As the eye navigates the tonal contrasts of these contrasting textures, tracing the thousands of jagged blades of grass, or the cracked channels running to the centre of each charcoal log, the visual sensation of texture becomes a movement in itself, and I feel the blades of grass or the cracked charcoal through my eyes (-imagination drawing on memories of tactile sensation to approximate the sense of some thing never directly experienced?)<sup>1</sup>

Image 3 presents us with a first view of the house and garden; one corner of the interior, with sliding windows and wall panels wide open, extending our view out into the garden

<sup>1</sup> "Hence the illusion that consists in regarding sensation as an ethereal and unextended state which acquires extension and consolidates in the body by mere accident[...] We must make up our minds to it: sensation is, in its essence, extended and localized; it is a source of movement!" Bergson, *Key Writings*, pp.128-9. - Thus, following Bergson, is to appreciate that movement is not a matter of motion, but of 'affections' which arise between sensations acting on the body and the physiological movements effected by the body in return. While my use of the word does occasionally revert to the colloquial in explicit reference to physical motion, all other usage is as introduced here. For further discussion see Appendix B: 'Theoretical Notes & Responses' p.127.

beyond. Here, there is every opportunity for the eye to investigate, to rest, to probe details close at hand and further afield. A table and chairs dominate the immediate foreground, parallel to the wall which opens onto the patio with its already familiar paving. Save for a small fruit dish pushed to one side, the polished tabletop is empty, catching and reflecting the light from the window which wash away any visible detail of its surface.

The four chairs are intriguing, in particular the small differences in their relative positions. No other objects in the image constitute a group, and so the chair with arms on the left, pulled back from the table, and closer to the camera than its armless counterpart on the right, neatly tucked in, is a peculiarity - the more so when considering just how precisely composed is every element in this room. One conclusion, for it must be read as suggestive, is that the space has been recently occupied, the chair drawn back, sat in, and then left casually awry in departure. Or, if this is a leap of imagination too far, that this impression has been arranged, by the photographer or owner, to suggest that this is a home in which people live, neatly presented for the camera as such, right down to the glass bottle on the windowsill, standing seemingly forgotten in the corner of the open window.

These details invite us into the image, but not to take possession of the scene. The manner in which the space is framed; straight-on, but not symmetrical, the table slightly off centre, the closest chair cut-off by the base of the image - indeed, all the furniture cut to some extent by either the limits of the frame or other objects - the way in which the exterior patio is presented as an extension of the interior; all these aspects suggest that the true focus of the composition is not on the objects, or even the building itself, but on the spaces articulated (or described) by these organising forms, and the way in which they bleed into one another. The framing also suggests the intermediate positioning of the camera between every linear axis running through the image, not tied to any one object or architectural element, but in suspension between them. It is almost as if we

are aligned to the gaps, to the intervals between things, and as a result, made conscious of the space as a palpable, tangible presence - a continuous void that we only 'see' when temporarily delineated, or made visible, (as a volume or series of volumes that extend on indefinitely) by the material traces of human activity.

In this respect, it appears that the image has a more subtle agenda than simply the design aesthetics of the traditional Japanese home. Though the chair and evident staging of the room may be reminiscent of such a topic, there is also a sense, that only increases as we move on through the images, in which we are being shown and taught something through the aesthetics. This pedagogical quality, or rather what I perceive as such, seems to reside in the evidential character of the image - that what we are presented with *is* presented, and meant to be viewed (as evidence if not artefact) in terms of its anthropological significance: the mechanical eye of the camera, configured by the scientific eye of the photographer, to capture the implications of this space as an archetype, rather than dwell on its particularity or history. Or, to put it another way: what is being represented is actually the underlying philosophy of space running through the different parts of this very refined environment, and made visible - or at least pictured for us - by the construction of the image.

Every individual incidence of spatial articulation is bound to this philosophy and indicative of the system as a whole: the placement of the objects on the tabletop and windowsill, the arrangement of the furniture within the interior, the apparatus of the architecture, the planning of the garden, all in turn imply the larger spatial organisation of the street, the neighbourhood, the city (etc.). We can thus read the order of the whole urban fabric (as well as the social order), in the microcosm of the neat divisions between lawn and patio, while the same is true vice versa; the unit of the individual, the family, and the home, directly inscribed in the larger matrix of infrastructure. To look into this space is to see far beyond, or indeed further within.

However, in this, we venture far beyond the territory of the image, even if the lesson that is its subject leads us there by design. While the camera is focused dispassionately on the visual space between things, our attention falls once again on the material divisions, or transitions, that lead us from one spatial unit to another. There should be a tension (or contradiction) between the level of visual and material order throughout the scene, and the apparent openness of the spaces, both interior and exterior, yet these ordering structures actually effect transitions that enable the fluidity of the spaces they articulate - organising space through transition.

For instance, as one would expect, the walls afford a degree of separation between the interior world of the house and the exterior rooms of the garden, but all those visible in this image are made up of translucent panels - rice paper sheets held taut in sliding wooden frames, allowing light in, and when pulled back, a clear view outside. Of course, the same views are afforded the other way around, from outside looking in. Forms, both within and without, cast shadows on these screens, making their presence felt in the adjacent space, without ever being present in it, while also bringing the other space that much closer - drawing our attention to its proximity, to its contiguity, and the equivalence between spaces that is implied: there is no hierarchy here, either between these spaces, or any others, simply description and transition. But the transition of the screen walls that delimit this room is not only visual. Their mobility, and the openness they permit, allows one space to literally meld with another, joining or separating, expanding or contracting space, both visually and physically according to the needs of the inhabitant.

It is curious then, that what we might expect to be the most stable and definite of borders - the very walls of the building - are instead open, temporary, and transitional, their form as spatially delineating structure weakened in terms of a physical barrier, but all the more manifest in their double role as container and filter - not only delineating space, but easing the transition between them. In fact, there are transitions at work throughout this scene, and not only between what we tend to too strictly define as interior and exterior.

We have already encountered the 'micro'-transitions present in the border between the lawn and patio, which serve to delineate spatial zones in their own right, but there are also liminal transitions here - spread out further across the boundaries between spaces.

Consider for a moment we are transported into this image, as if present within the space for the very first time, standing (where else?) in the very position the camera occupies. It seems natural - in fact instinctive, to take in our surroundings by degrees, from those objects in our immediate vicinity, working forwards, outwards, looking around until quite sure we are alone. Though the feeling of being under observation never quite passes, we soon find our gaze has worked its way through to the very perimeter of the garden where it is arrested by the barrier of a tall, thick hedge, visible through the righthand window in the far wall, between the single flower in its pot, and the glass bottle still standing somewhat incongruously behind the cup - neither sure of its place inside or out.

Rising from behind the hedge is a line of trees, quite upright in posture, reaching for the sun and peering over into the garden, as if watching us. These trees have grown relatively straight, with thin branches, all the more spindly from a distance, yet nonetheless in dialogue with a scattering of elements we have passed en route to the rear of the scene. Drawing back from this point, we begin to see the relationships in their natural order; the tall young trees outside the garden; the old, ornamental tree, contorted across the upper right hand corner of the frame; the two angled poles that support it; the more substantial vertical beam (a single round trunk stripped of its bark) carrying the weight of the pergola; the structural beam that bisects the open window. Even the dark hardwood frames of the screens, and the verticals of the finely crafted legs of the tables and chairs, seem to play their part in this sequence - the point of ultimate refinement within a series of transitions from the artifice of the natural world to the artifice of the human.

In fact, several transitions may be defined here, each manifestly formal, material, and symbolic - a coalescence that reminds us how our interpretation of the actuality represented in an image is always inflected by our perception of the visual space of the image itself, and our ability to read the significance of one, determined, to an extent, by the structuring principle of the other: the inventory above being one example of straying back and forth between the two when attempting to narrate the stages of this transition. Split between representation and actuality, transition therefore takes place on both levels. There is the passage from 'nature' to structure, or rather natural structure in growth, and human structure in form (which is also A passage between living and inanimate matter). There is the shift between the scale of these natural elements, and that of the human body. And there is the sentient being of the trees outside, and the sensory field of the interior; the transition in this case of consciousness - from a feeling and perceiving nature, to the apprehension and perception of nature, where nature is a sensory impression, manifest in material traces.

But these dualities (even those not strictly opposites), are somewhat misleading - drawing our attention to the polarities of transition, rather than the degrees by which the shift from one to the other is enacted here. Looking closely at each element in turn requires that we move through and around the image - the eye drawn here and there, refocusing each time on the relevant plane - not only a consequence of the image space, or (narrative) sequence, but in the first instance the very essence of this kind of dispersed transition as a spatial device. Though, the progression is principally inwards, towards the centre of the image, and forwards, from nature to artifice, the transition is also spread across the whole scene, easing us through from one spatial zone to another. Indeed, these elements may all have functions in their own right (providing shade, structure or ornament), but they also articulate space, making us conscious of it physically (as barrier, screen, border, or perimeter) and peripherally - bringing it to our attention in the corner of the eye.

## *Part 2*

If I have dwelt so long on the interior of image 3, it is not only because this is the most absorbing of the four reproduced on these photocopied pages. With the exception of the extreme close-up of the first shot, this is the most proximate of the group, the interior and its objects tantalisingly within reach. As we shall see, there are barriers in image 4 that immediately put us at a remove from the scene and impede our imaginary entering and occupation of its spaces, but in image 3 there are no such obstacles; the distribution of elements is across the whole breadth and depth of the frame, and the views through the open walls form pictures within pictures that further arrest attention, and invite analysis. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, such formal considerations fail to account for the full significance of this particular image, and even when faced with the two that remain, it sticks in the mind - or in the eye - like a double exposure.

Image 4 shifts our position to the exterior once again, facing the house this time, across an artificial pond, a slice of lawn, and the thinnest strip of stone patio. The old ornamental tree - a cherry? - is now seen in its entirety, contorted in new directions, its trunk leaning from just off-centre, while its bare branches reach into the middle of the frame, trained up onto the beams of the pergola. Just behind, the house fills the width of the frame in one horizontal band, a geometric facade composed of flat opaque surfaces punctuated by shadowy interior depths where it is just possible to make out more wooden tables, chairs, finely gridded screens and frames, while the sky above, clear and cloudless, accounts for another slice of the image, only briefly intruded upon by the capital I of a stone chimney and the nerve endings of the cherry branches as they climb up onto the roof.

That my description has moved so swiftly to split and segment this image into its constituent parts (that of the sky, the house, and the garden: the three principal, horizontal bands that divide it almost into thirds), already strikes me as instructive. We

are encouraged to read this image compositionally, which is to say, from a distance; from a particular position that keeps us at a distance. The pond, that from this angle dominates the garden, is one of the barriers to which I referred above - spanning, like the facade of the house, the entire width of the frame, flooding the foreground, and blocking us, moat-like from proceeding into the spaces beyond. Whereas the chair in image 3, cut by the lower edge of the frame, serves to place us spatially within the interior, here the pond, dramatically cut on three sides, leaves us stranded in an indeterminate space - one that we cannot see, but only presume is solid ground lying outside the frame.

In fact, from this perspective, we could just as well be standing *in* the pond, feet on the bottom, water waist-high, looking up at the house from such an angle that the facade seems to lean ever so slightly back, and the slope of the rooftop is hidden by its own eaves, elevated to the point where the chimney no longer stands on the ridge of the roof, but perches on its edge... Of course, this is not the most convincing interpretation of this peculiar point of view. The camera is surely safe on the bank, and the pond remains a barrier only in terms of the framing of the image, not an insurmountable obstruction in actuality. Nevertheless, the effect is the same, and also what is at issue: this time we are not within the scene in the way we have become accustomed from the earlier images, and we do not read or write ourselves into the inhabitable spaces of the building beyond the pond. Instead, we observe from a distance, estranged and uncertain of our footing, as if looking into this space through glass, and caught in limbo between its surface and the point where the image begins.

What is clear is that, for whatever reason, the camera is low to the ground. The angle of the facade and of the roof both confirm this, as does the exponential tapering of the visible ground as it recedes across the depth of the image - the true width of the lawn between pond and patio for instance, incalculable from such an oblique angle. While we do read the garden as space, the sky and the house (even its depths) somehow appear flat, yet another image within an image: a painted canvas backdrop perhaps, suspended



from some hidden support, to deceive the camera's limited field of view (the artifice of the painting, more real than reality itself). This may be only a facet of the particular lens or depth of field, but in this trance-like state, the longer we stare across the water, the more pronounced the tree, the low bush, and the stones at its base, the more this tableau emerges from the background, and the more distant and miniature the building - a kind of vertigo induced by the sheer drop across the surface of the water (which is itself practically level with the surrounding ground), as if we are looking down into this space, rather than horizontally through it.

Of course, such a sensation is only intensified by our inability to locate an embodied viewpoint within the stage of this scene. Unlike our earlier experiences of image 3, the spatial and holistic principles that we suppose pervade this rational environment are overwhelmed by these multiple disorienting (special) effects, lost or forfeited by the photographer in the process of moving from a logical perspective to a desiring one; seeking out something within this landscape, reaching or extending outwards to try to grasp it, and forcing a new disorder on the image in the process. But for what reason? Why move the camera closer to the ground? By dropping it down, and it is far lower here than in image 3, the visual space of the pond increases in proportion to the rest of the image, filling more and more of the frame, despite the ever decreasing angle of view. Clearly we are once again being shown or directed towards something - an indication all the more intriguing for upending the photographic rules established in the previous image.

As the camera descends, and the pond rises further into view, an image appears on the perfectly still, viscous surface of the water; the details emerging from its depths in the manner of a photographic print in a chemical bath of developer - cloudy at first, becoming progressively more distinct the further our gaze passes over the pond. This image, a reflection of the scene above, is surely what we are meant to see, and what is being emphasised by the photographer - not for any special insight into what literally is

reflected (i.e. the 'contents' of the reflection as image), or on the nature of reflection, but as a demonstration of the pond as a spatial device in the environment of the house and garden: the very fact of the pond as another spatially delineating structure. That the word pond is derived from 'pound', the etymological origins of which go back to the Middle Ages when used as the name of a pen for the restraint of stray livestock, not only indicates the confinement of something - in this case water (though quite possibly fish in its original usage) - but also the enclosure of space, and simultaneously its creation, in the sense we have already discussed above, by being made visible.

Here then, the enclosure and visual order applied to the 'natural' spaces of the garden are such that being outside in this environment is much the same as being within the literally interior spaces of the building. Thinking back to image 2, there were traces of this, even in the extreme close-up of the transitional elements of the border, and while these are not visible here, we can make out a line of paving stones set into the lawn immediately surrounding the pond that establish another division between elements, helping to define and transition between different areas of ground. In this open air interior every border defines a spatial zone and an equivalence with interior space, and as such, the pond too is a room, only one intended to be occupied by the eye. Still, in its capacity for reflection, we are reminded of this equivalence - for it is the facade that is principally visible in the water, superimposing the image of interior space onto the ground of the exterior.

Of course, knowing what we are supposed to see and the conclusions we are supposed to draw, is not necessarily how the image functions in effect. Though the pond and its role in the landscape is doubtless intended to show us the tranquility and holistic sentiment of this environment, as we have already seen this image is not tranquil - the incident of the reflected image actually serving to further destabilise our instructed point of view. The paradox here, which leads to mixed metaphors, is that there is both surface and depth. We know that the reflection only exists on the surface of the water, yet the optics of what is reflected gives the image visual depth - the inherent flatness of the reflection

reinforcing the flatness (and artifice) of the scene above by mirroring (and doubling) the plane of its visual representation. Indeed, at the same time, the reflection accentuates the painterliness of the double, as it blurs and disintegrates the more deeply it is immersed in the water, bringing to mind the painted backdrop, and since our cognitive reading of the reflective surface always tricks us into the assumption that what appears true in the image is also true in reality, we apply the same interpretation to the original object.

If the question of depth arises again and again, it is in part because the reflection mimics the act of reproduction implicit in the creation of the image itself, including the optical mechanics of the camera (both viewfinder composition via the mirror, and the exposure of the film surface), as well as the reproduction of the image from the negative onto the photographic paper (the various surfaces, liquids, and liquid surfaces involved in this process analogous to the pond and its mediation). The image thus takes on a self-reflexive quality, as if conscious of its own condition; further influencing our reading of the reflection as more than the product of nature alone. But in this respect, we can go further: the reproduction of this image on the page, and on the subsequent photocopy I am now studying, add layers of incidence to those of the subject and the photograph. Indeed, every act of reproduction puts an additional layer between us and whatever we consider the 'original', and every layer is a surface in its own right - the image bonded to the surface.

These supplemental layers though, are outward in movement and necessarily digressive. What is novel in this image, is that the layers of reproduction continue within the scene. To say that the facade appears to be an image within an image is interpretive and does not really qualify, but its reflection in the water adds an additional layer of depth to this sequence, even if this involves shifting between the mechanical reproduction of the photocopy and incidental reproduction of the reflection within the visual space of the image. With this added representational depth, the borders of the pond become a secondary, irregular five-sided frame located within that of the regular representational

bounds of the image - a kind of internal frame - one that shifts between the analogy of a window (that opens onto the scene above), and that of a screen (on which is projected the mirror image), depending on the manner of our approach.

However, neither of these are entirely accurate since both imply the comprehensive and orderly composition of what they frame. At first, the pond appears to capture the facade of the building quite regularly, but now, on closer inspection, it is apparent how fine details upset the balance of the copy; for instance, the very top of the large stone at the foot of the tree and the stone vessel to its right both intrude into the frame of the reflection, not quite edited out as presumably intended. Once detected, it is hard to ignore that these are both partially visible, if only because they lie immediately below the horizontal axis of the reel lawnmower rested just in frame on the right. If we try to visualise the strip of ground missing from the reflection (cut by the upper edge of the internal frame), it seems peculiar that the top of the stones are just present but the mower, which actually lies further outside this zone, is not. Despite the temptation to read and believe this composition perfectly square and aligned, the only explanation can be that the image plane of the camera is not actually parallel to that of the building, but angled very slightly to the left - an observation borne out by the lower part of the reflection, where the windows and panels of the facade, on the verge of disintegrating into the dark water, are slanted along the edge of the frame.

Misaligned, uneven and imbalanced, if the eye is drawn anywhere in this image, it is towards the middle ground not reflected in the water - as if an invisible line has been cut through the image, corresponding to the limits of the pond below, splitting the 'reality' of the scene in two - that reflected, and that not. Even the distortion of the photocopied reproduction - the downward curve of the image on the left hand side, slipping or melting away as the page resists the pressure of being held down against the glass bed of the photocopier - cannot quite distract us from the optical disorder within the image, however slight. (The supplemental layer, however pronounced, not a match for the forces that act

on an image from the inside, even if we do read the image through the supplement). Here then, strangely, the limits of the pond dissect the image twice - once literally, and once in terms of unseen line of separation above - and the reflection seems to act inversely on what we read as actuality: the 'missing' strip of image not authenticated by the reflection, not quite existing for us in the same way as that which is safely reproduced. To be continued...

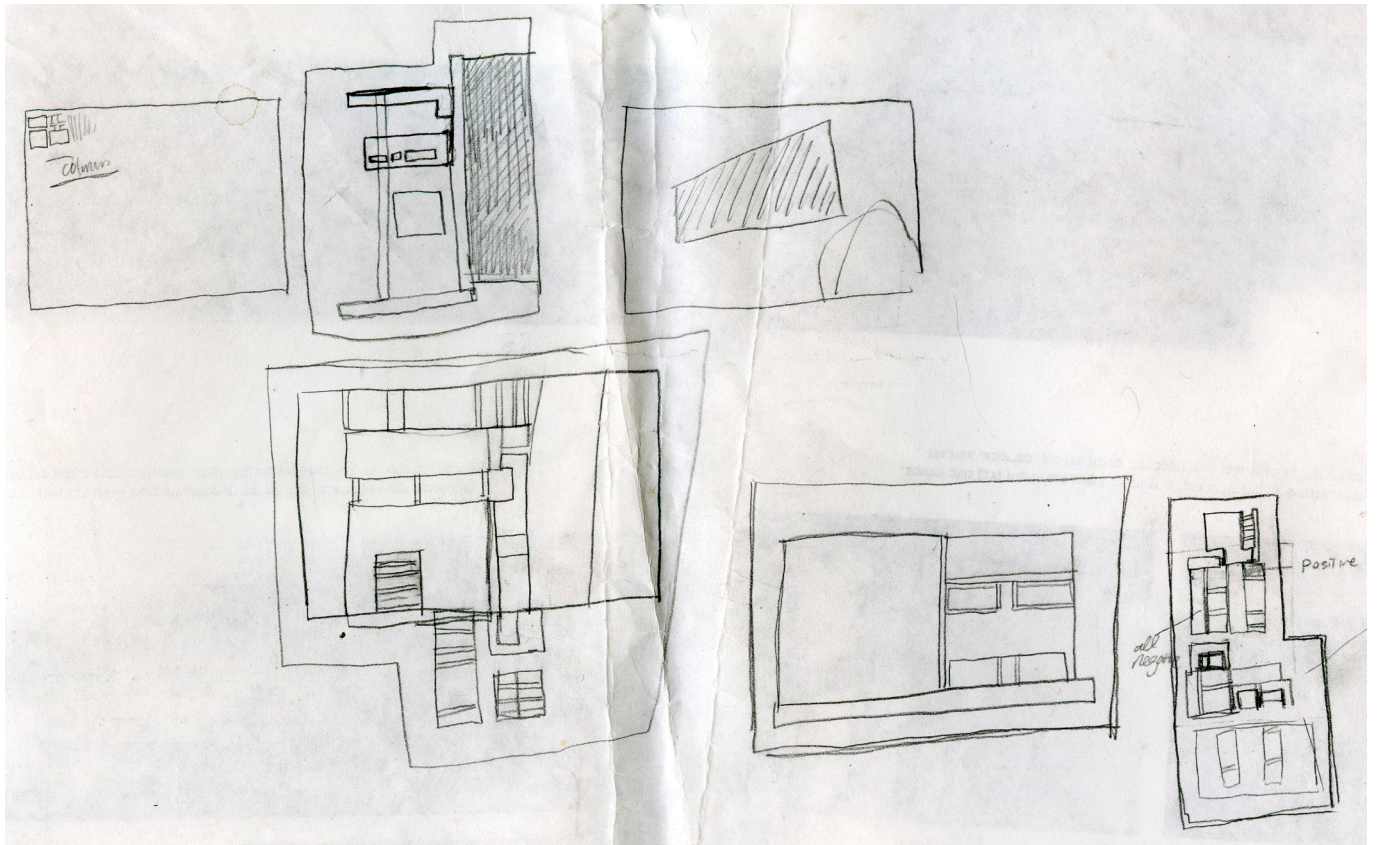


Figure 5. Vicky Kim, 'Untitled' (negative-positive), 2007, Pencil on rear of photocopy, 16.4 x 26.52 cm



*Figure 6. Vicky Kim, 'Untitled' (Rua Campo Alegre 1192), 2017, MDF, pine, glue, spray paint, fixings, 200 x 220 x 60 cm (approx.)*

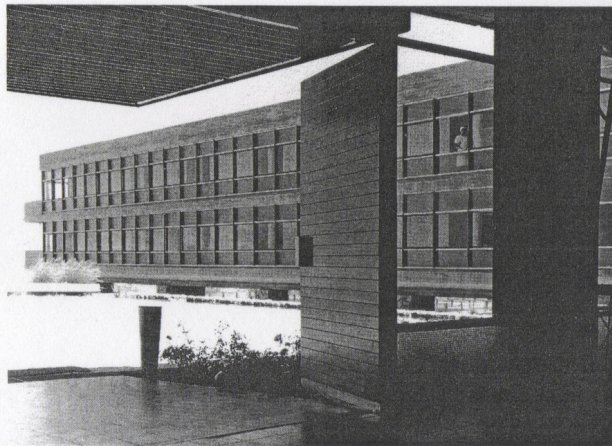
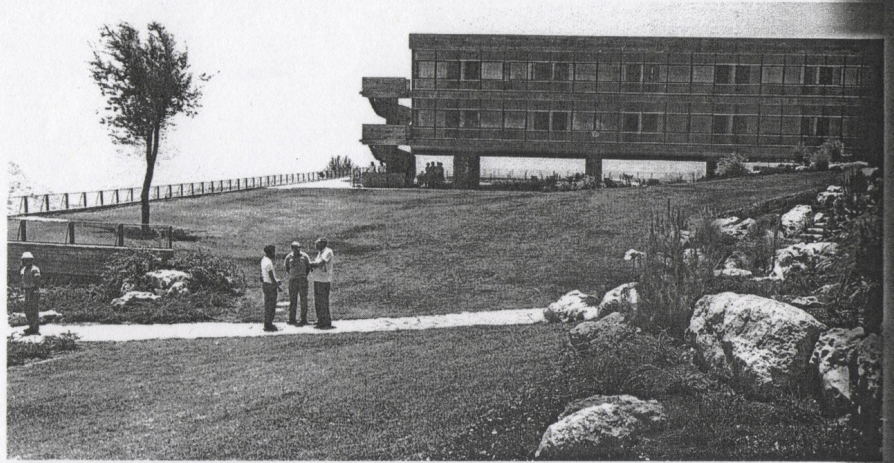
### 3

[39-37] זאב רכטר, משה זרחי, יעקב רכטר, בית הבראה  
"מבטחים" ע"ש י. שפרינצק, בצרה, 1956-60

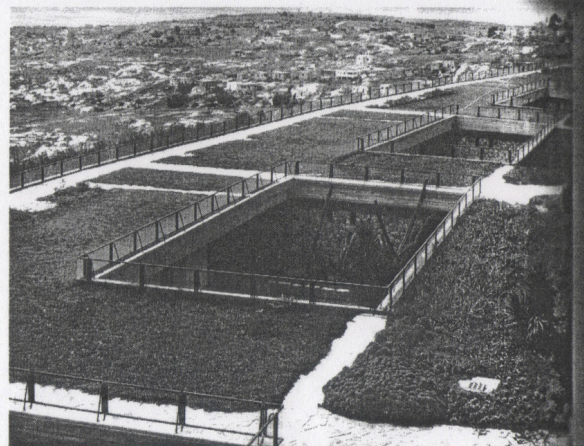
Amongst the oldest, and most treasured of the dog-eared material in my archive (if it is indeed possible to treasure something as disposable as a photocopy), is a collection of around fifty pages from an anthology of Israeli modernist architecture found quite by chance in a university library more than twelve years ago. Richly illustrated, but written only in Hebrew, I remember studying, with illiterate wonder, these images, free from the burden of language, which perhaps explains why I made no note of the title, author, or any other bibliographic information, never imagining I would still be referring to them so many years later. Indeed, these details remain quite unknown to me, despite various efforts to locate the volume, though I do remember that this was a book of both modest proportions (no larger than a sheet of American letter sized paper) and extreme length; from the distinctive numbering along the outer edge of each page, it is clear that it runs to more than a thousand pages.

Of the buildings recorded in these images, almost all are dated from the 1950's and 60's, the decades of intense urban development following the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. These are buildings predominantly of concrete, cast into every conceivable shape and form, sometimes prefabricated, sometimes resolutely site-specific - all individually distinctive, and consistently brutal in design, yet at the same time strangely homogenous: as if the endless flexibility of this liquid material that turns solid - its essential capacity to replicate (when poured into a mould), and the speed at which it sets - lead to some kind of sensory monotony. However unique the architecture, when realised in concrete, its forms are petrified, frozen in the moment of their production, a constant reminder of their inherent reproducibility, not unlike the photocopy, which renders visual difference homogenous by draining images of their details.





39



[39-37] זאב רכטר, משה זרחי, יעקב רכטר, בית הבראה "מבטחים" ע"ש י. שפרינצק, נצרת, 1956-60

Figure 7. Photocopy, "page 427", 22 x 28 cm

One does not need to read Hebrew to recognise many of these buildings, at least in terms of their function. Apartment complexes, schools, libraries, offices, museums, government buildings, private homes, shopping arcades - all are represented, even in the relatively few pages of my collection; a catalogue or index of the urban transformation of a country mirroring that of the political. It is clear from their quantity and diversity, as well as the period of time covered, that these are drawn from numerous sources, and while the majority now appear deliberate attempts at 'documentary' or even 'history' (not just of architectural progress, but of nationhood), there are occasionally those that exceed such terms, as if unconsciously digressing from the subject of architecture into the pictorial realm of landscape, or once again the picturesque: the photographer distracted or drawn away by something supplementary, prompting a slight but fundamental adjustment in framing, focal length, or depth of field. In these instances, the image seems to exist for reasons other than its subject, or simply as an end in and of itself.

Of course, the context in which these images were each initially conceived has nothing to do with that of the book (I recall a relatively new publication when I first encountered it), or the logic of its encyclopaedic catalogue of illustrations, but it seems worth asking if, in every case, architecture really is the intended subject of these other images. Without question there are examples that seem to capture an excess by accident, where a figure or group merely stand in-shot, or appear to pass through a scene while the camera is fixed determinedly on a building behind, but these are not quite the same thing as the handful of images where nothing in particular holds the centre of our attention; where the pictorial moment of the image transcends the intentionality and reflexivity of the photographer, giving rise to the unnerving sense that the image has taken itself.

It should come as no surprise, given that copying is so often a question of repeated viewing, selection and editing, that so many of the photocopied images in my collection come vividly to mind without recourse to the copies themselves. Of those from the Israeli anthology, there is a group of three, 'page 427' of the original book - and one in

particular - that show a relatively unremarkable building in a quite remarkable setting: perched on the edge of a high plateau overlooking a swathe of lower lying coastline towards what must be the Mediterranean Sea in the distance [Fig. 7, p33]. I will call these images 37, 38, and 39, following the caption numbers, and it is 37 that primarily concerns me here, this being precisely what I have identified above as an *other* image.

From even a casual glance it is clear that this is a peculiar image. Whilst numbers 38 and 39 conform to the more conventional qualities of documentary architectural photography, in their apparently definite subject and matter of fact presentation, the landscape-scene in image 37 shows much more than only a building, or only a landscape. There is of course a building in a landscape, but the particular significance of these are lost in the awkwardness of a composition that places as much emphasis on the pictorial qualities of the scene, as it does architecture. Indeed, the dramatic construction that first greets us - a view across an expanse of lawn towards the profile of a building elevated on concrete columns against the sky - does bring to mind the moment of revelation that follows the lights going down and the curtain being raised, as the dazzled eyes of the audience move rapidly back and forth, taking in each element of the set, while the actors wait, stationary for the first line.

Just as we suspend our disbelief when accepting the discrete elements of a theatrical set, as figuring the interior of a drawing room, or a lonely tree on a verdant heath, so too here, the principle components of this image, appear as autonomous and compositionally independent elements, each only temporarily located on the space of the stage (the surface of the image), before being rearranged or taken away at the command of a director for some subsequent act. A lawn, a tree, a rock garden, a building, a group of men standing in conversation on a footpath: from this strangely skewed perspective, the landscape appears as if it had been pulled apart and imprecisely put back together, each of these elements poised for the next transition.

The lawn takes centre-stage, closely-cropped and undulating from the immediate foreground just beneath the camera lens, rolling down and then up again to the foot of the building at its farthest reaches, only interrupted by the stone footpath, brightly lit by the glare of the midday sun. On the right, it climbs, veering away from us, between the rocks, almost to the point of merging (or colliding) with the lower storey of the building, while on the left, the speckled grass runs to the limits of the frame, both in the foreground, and a little further back, where it levels out to meet the glass panelled safety fence patrolling the sharp drop from the edge of the plateau.

Though the lawn fills the space between all the elements in the scene, it does not truly unify them. On the left the tree stands isolated, its shadow cast straight down, encircling the trunk at the point it emerges from the ground, cutting it out from the surrounding grass. Likewise, the building is elevated, framed by the sky, resisting any contact with the ground and the lawn, and even where the supporting columns and external staircase touch the earth they do so safely within a paved area below the building. Elsewhere on the higher ground shrubberies partly obscure the point at which columns and lawn meet. Three men in conversation stand on the white stone path that cuts through and detaches itself from the lawn; and as if to reinforce this separation, another figure stands motionless on the path at the edge of the frame on the left, this time turned towards the camera as if acknowledging its presence (the single incidence of broken naturalism). Even the rocks are visually disconnected from the lawn by the mixed vegetation of the flowerbeds.

Indeed, if there is any unifying factor governing the construction of the scene, it is movement. Though logically speaking the lawn may rise (reading or moving through the scene, from near to far), in the illogical space of the image, it flows, but in the opposite direction, down the slope from the upper right hand side of the frame to the edge of the plateau and the bottom corner of the image on the other side. The building follows this general pattern, also entering from the right on its concrete legs, ushered in just above

the lawn by the same gust of wind that agitates the leaves of the tree, proceeding across the horizon towards the cliff edge. The rock garden too is in motion, tumbling down the slope directly towards us, engulfing the right side of the frame, the boulders trampling the plants and submerging the path, to within a few feet of the camera; the closest rock even dwarfing the figures on the pathway who stand at a distance, yet still appear in danger from the indeterminate scale of the rockfall.

This effect, a consequence of the elevated angle of view, and the trick of foreshortened perspective in relation to the undulating terrain, as well as, perhaps, the curve of the page when pressed flat against the glass bed of the photocopier, begins to suggest a correlation between the topography of the image space and that of the reproduction itself. The tonal gradations of, on the one hand, the image, and the dimensionality of the book on the other, are superimposed: the literal thickness of the open book where the pages meet in the depths of the gutter, casts a shadow over the right hand side of the page; a secondary image, that happens to mimic the movement already present within the elements of the image - both in its trajectory from right to left, and its point of origin. It is probably no coincidence that the movement through the image follows the trajectory of the copy. The scanning eye too follows on, led both by the movement implied within the image, but also the sweep of the photocopy's gradation, and where they come together, at the very edge of the frame, struggling to distinguish the two. In this way, there is a sense that viewing a photocopy, (or indeed a reproduction of any kind?), is always to view a double image - even when this is not literally visible to the eye.

But let us return to the action within the image once more, for while this sense of doubling is undoubtedly at work when reading the reproduction, (and also one that creates the impression that the viewing eye replicates as it reads), we cannot focus our attention on the surfaces of the image/double image, without also exploring the depths of the representation that leads us here in the first place. And so, despite its theatricality, despite the motion and movement, despite the paradoxes of scale, or rather because all

of these originate from the bounds of photographic, optical space, what finally remains to be considered is the time of the image - its semblance of reality.

I have already suggested that in this oddly disjointed yet quite beautiful composition, there seems to be no real subject. Or to be more precise, that the image exceeds our expectations of a single definite focus to the point where it appears to either have several at once, or none at all - the photographer locating, in the coincidence of these elements, something more than he or she was expecting, a moment - of drama? - beyond the simple facts of the matter. Yet drama is wide of the mark. There is not one 'event' occurring here, but several - each happening in its own time and according to its own trajectory, independent of one another - and certainly none of any overt significance.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the images of the Japanese house, this does not appear staged for the camera, but staged by the camera, these events taking place by chance within the frame, rather than in any way predetermined or orchestrated for it.

Staged by the camera, staged by the reproduction, staged by the eye. Without the certainty of a significant subject or event, we might say that what we are left with is merely the incidence of the image itself - the fact of its existence, its having been made. But that some things merely incidental took place, or were captured, by the camera - one particular moment, perhaps five hundredth of a second long, (and one that only ever appeared this way through the lens and the viewfinder, made visible much later within the frame of the processed film) - is also true. The incidence of the image is always beyond dispute, but the incidental quality of the scene here seems to reflect a deeper condition. This is the kind of image in which the sense of time, or moment, overwhelms

<sup>1</sup> "When we are seated on the bank of a river, the flowing of the water, the gliding of a boat or the flight of a bird, the ceaseless murmur in our life's deeps are for us three separate things or only one, as we choose." Bergson, *Key Writings*, p.210. As Bergson shows, it is in our nature to "form the idea of [an] instant, as well as of simultaneous instants, as soon as we acquire the habit of converting time into space." Bergson, *Key Writings*, p.210. What for Bergson is a continuous, indivisible temporal flow, only becomes discrete in terms of the narratives we form around the always already past, in retrospect. Despite the fact that our viewing of a photograph is subject to the same durational laws, their spatial illusion is such that they give us an instant to consider again and again, tempting us to perceive and narrativise these incidents as spatial events.

any other aspect - the landscape, the architecture, the human 'actors' inhabiting the scene: what we might call an incidental image.

The word incidental points in several directions pertaining to both the content of the scene (what is shown), as well as the actuality of the image (as artefact). There is the 'incident' of the event (or lack of event) and the photograph, there is the sense of their inconsequence or insignificance, and there is the unexpectedness or coincidence of their occurrence - including the very accident of something inconsequential being noticed at all (the Latin *incidere*, meaning to 'fall upon', or 'happen to'). Of course, the incidental is paradoxically only such when it is actually seen: the incident of the men's conversation, the incident of the tree caught by a gust of wind, or that of the shadows cast by the midday sun, the seeming accident of the particular configuration of rocks; all of these are seen by the photographer and recorded by the camera - a series of minor, even partial incidental events that extend outwards from the image (their duration exceeding this one moment, leaving us with a sensation of the just before and just after).<sup>2</sup>

One further implication of the incidental is in its sense of being connected or related - of one thing being incidental to something else, and from this perspective, we must admit that in this case (rationally speaking) the building is the something that the various details of the image are incidental to. However, this does not establish the building as the definite subject of the scene: however hard and long we try to read the image in these terms, I find the cumulative 'incidental' of the scene overwhelms such certain hierarchy. As an exercise, we might imagine an image in which there is a tree standing in the background, its branches swaying in the breeze, supplementary and incidental to

<sup>2</sup> "There is, moreover, no stuff more resistant nor more substantial. For our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present - no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances. And as the past grows without ceasing, so also there is no limit to its preservation." Bergson, *Key Writings*, p.173. - The sensation of the just before and just after is therefore, we might say, one of succession: once again a consequence of the photograph, which supplies the illusion of an instant, dividing into two what we encounter as seamless: "Real time cannot therefore supply the instant; the latter is born of the mathematical point, that is to say, of space." Bergson, *Key Writings*, p.210.

some significant action taking place as the definite subject of the composition, or for that matter, consider image 39, in which the relationship between the definite subject of the building and the incidental glimpse at the figure walking down the corridor, establishes a clear hierarchy.

Which leads us back to the possibly irrational, yet palpable absence of the singular or central subject in image 37. As the eye searches we are at once drawn to the incidentals, and to some extent absorbed by them, but also stirred by the movement, distracted from one element to another, somehow unable to settle. The eye is again and again led (or directed) towards the limits out of the frame image, be it by the slope of the pathway and the figure on the verge of stepping out of sight, the trajectory of the rockfall, the fine trails in the cut grass of the lawn, the fence running towards an unseen corner on the left hand side, or the building cut-off on the right. The image spills over the frame, thwarting us in our attempts to locate a centre-point or come to rest on a subject. In this way, the longer we look (in animation), the more distanced we are from the representation, and the trails in the lawn become inscriptions of the eye repeatedly tracing the topography until again merely observing the grain of the reproduction itself, or observing nothing.

There is I believe, a correlation between the incidental content of an image and the sensation of movement (in things both apparently static and captured in motion), though not necessarily a simple equivalence. Certainly the 'incident' within the incidental contributes to a sense of movement, and while the incidental does seem to more often than not imply (or suggest) movement, what we identify as movement-objects are not always incidental to an image as a whole. This said, the point here is the part they can both play in the ultimate loss or lack of the subject - that of the unidentifiable or absent subject of the image, and the way in which the viewer (as subject) is lost (or loses him or herself) within these effects.



Until now it has barely seemed necessary to ask exactly what the image really shows, factually speaking. What and where is the building? Who are the men standing on the path, and the figures grouped sheltering from the sun? For what purpose was it taken in the first place? At least a partial answer to these questions lies elsewhere on the page, if we return to examine image 39 in slightly more detail. The clue offered is in the form of the figure walking along the second floor corridor of the building, seen from an angle across the corner of the building through the wide open entrance door and the glass windows that line the elevated wing we have seen from the grounds outside. The figure in question is that of a woman dressed in a light white dress (of white we can in this instance practically be certain, despite the photocopy), with matching headscarf - the classical uniform of the female nurse. A nurse in a hospital then, or given its scenic location, some kind of private institution?

...

[coda] #1

To what degree does knowing the function of the building actually affect our reading of the scene? In the course of writing the above paragraphs and reflecting on its significance, curiosity getting the better of me, I took the opportunity of contacting a Hebrew-speaking friend to ask for help translating the caption at the bottom of the page. In English it reads: 'Zeev Rechter, Moshe Zarchi, Yaakov Rechter, The "Mivtachim" sanatorium in memory of Y. Shprinzak, Nazareth, 1956-60'. So not a hospital as such, but a (state-owned) sanatorium, and a famous one at that. Having already broken with my principle of leaving the background information of the images in my collection uninvestigated, it was no greater infraction to seek out further details, and no surprise to find that the sanatorium, built on Mount Carmel half an hour south of Haifa, is widely considered one of the masterpieces of Israeli Brutalist architecture.

Like information, images are now all too easily retrievable: even a cursory search online brings up numerous stark black and white shots of the original interiors, saturated brochure-style colour pictures of the outdoor swimming pool in use during the 70's, along with an assortment showing the famous sweeping geometric curve of the sanatorium facade (completed some years later in 1968, and credited to Yaakov (or Jacob) Rechter alone) looking out over Nazareth to the sea. The compilation of these multiple points of view, while not quite a comprehensive account of the building's structure, do reveal large parts of it to me, giving a sense - albeit a crude one - of its layout, its composition, how the viewpoints in the different images fit together; enough to say with certainty that the wing in images 37 and 39 was very much secondary (or preliminary) to the more iconic facade for which the building is still best known.

However intriguing many of these new images are to me in architectural terms, none compare with the miscellaneous qualities of the pictorial in number 37 - curiously the only one I have been unable to locate anywhere other than the photocopy. That this most beautiful (or aesthetic) image shows merely a secondary (we could also say incidental) aspect of the sanatorium complex, is of course appropriate to my thoughts above, and makes me wonder now if, in its partiality, the wing of the building is actually an incidental element of the scene after all. But just how far all these new facts and new images may have effected my connection with this image is yet to be seen. In the moment of this writing I feel the attraction and attachment remain intact, or perhaps even heightened by its singularity; by the impression that this image is uniquely incidental (to those other images), and now seemingly forgotten or even lost in the field of cultural memory.

...

[coda] #2

Some days later, and I am in touch with a Jerusalem-based bookseller who has located a copy of a two volume set entitled:

‘הפרויקט הישראלי : בנייה ואדריכלות, 1948<1973 / צבי אפרת’.

The catalogue entry for the corresponding item at the British Library specifies the total number of pages to be 1,055.



Figure 8. Vicky Kim, 'Untitled' (affection-calculation/for standard forms #34.4), 2020, Plywood, timber, paint, glue, lightbulb (or lamp), hardback copy of 'Space & Illusion in the Japanese Garden' by Teiji Itoh, held open by two found stones to show pages 138-139 (fig.46-47). Dimensions variable

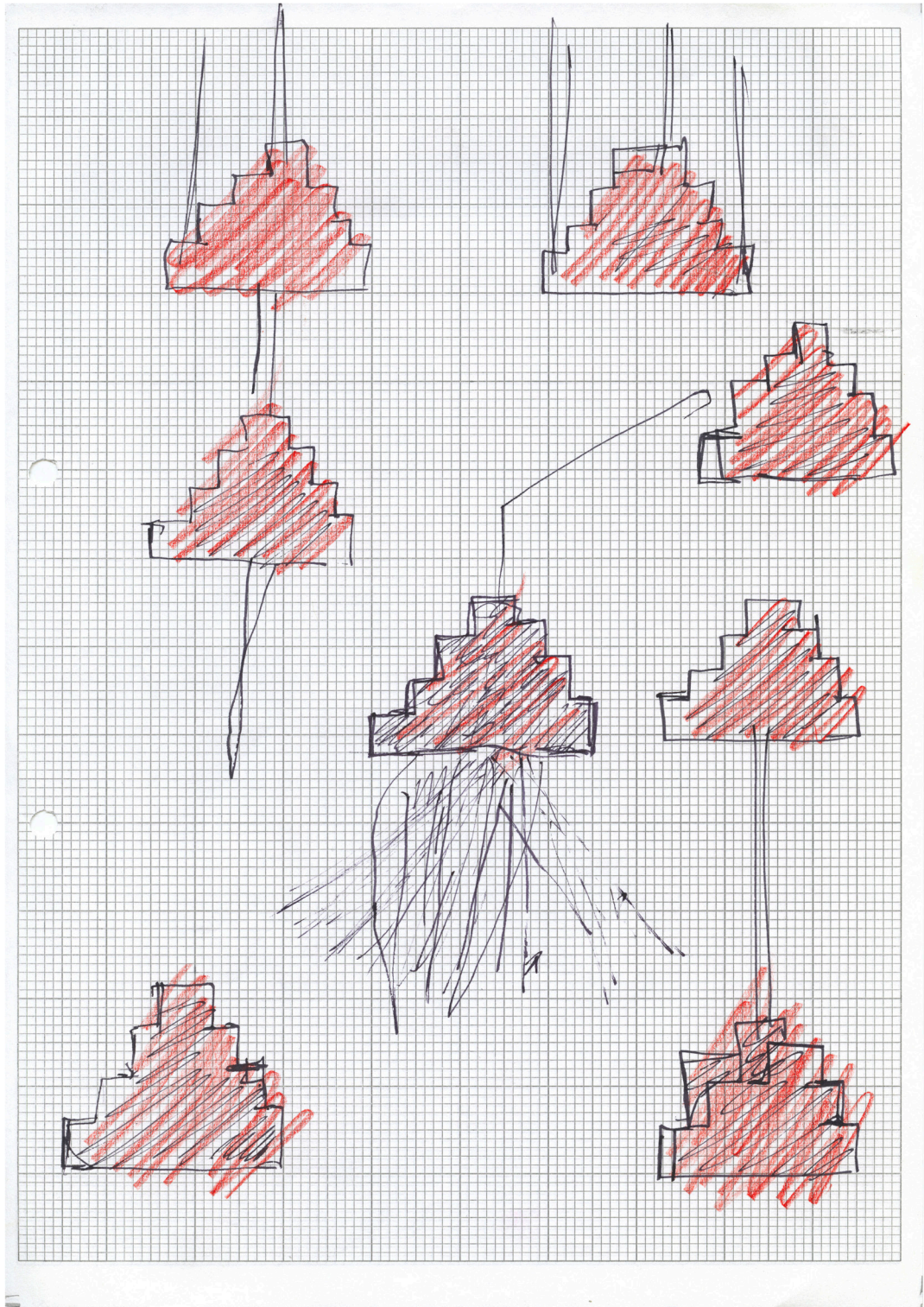


Figure 9. Vicky Kim, 'Untitled' (Podium), 2019, Pen and coloured pencil on graph paper, framed, 29.7 x 21 cm

## 4

### *'Notes on Reading Images', Friday 3rd May, 2019*

Friday the third of May 2019, and almost a year has now passed since I completed the lines above while also entering into negotiation with Ludwig Mayer Jerusalem Ltd. ("Israel's First Quality Book Store"), over the acquisition of the two volume set which now lies just visible on the work bench in my studio, one on top of the other, half submerged by the many other catalogues, piles of paper, notebooks, sketchbooks, tracing paper, pens, pencils, drawings, and half completed models that fill every available surface in the room. It should come as no surprise (though does nevertheless still strike me peculiar), that my preference for cheap reproduction(s) has left these by no means inexpensive editions so seldom consulted, referred to nowhere near as religiously as their photocopied counterparts - their images not as immediately accessible when bound in stiff cover papers and dust jacket, or as agreeably relatable as a loose sheet moving freely amongst hundreds of others. Those continually shifting, shuffled papers, lost and found and lost again as one gives way to another, freed from the unvarying sequence and narrative ties of a book, fill me with a sense of freedom and the by now familiar desire to come into contact with these images more closely, in a more intimate space; to exceed the visual, or remake it in my image.

The photocopied page thus frees me from chronology, history, hierarchy, ideology, cause and effect. All are equal, all transitory - at least in terms of influence, in terms of persuasion (what they have to say for themselves)... But now, returning to my collection following so many months with writing rather than making in mind, seems to call for a reassessment - or at least a retelling of the various theories I have developed to account for my project (both to others, and myself). Theories such as those described here, so embedded in the daily habits and actions of my practice, their sequence, consequence

and internal logic, as to be indistinguishable from the narratives that communicate them, and thus story-like: characteristics that have only emerged as a direct result of choosing to scrutinise the images I work with, and which have in turn become another not inconsequential medium, another problematic in my attempt to provide answers. Things do not stand still, or remain unchanged over the course of such a period of time, and while the principles on which my artwork is based eschew narrative entirely, the manner in which I express these principles textually, and the images involved, has by now assumed a significance that itself requires analysis. The enigma of the image, for so long purely a visual concern, has become inseparable from textuality – not only a question of seeing, but of reading and writing.

Repetition is the reflex at the root of my process. Turning over the same papers, viewing the same images, considering the same forms, reproducing and thereafter inventing structures - all development proceeds from a basic cycle of repetition. So if this (re) introduction already sounds familiar, or provokes a sense of *déjà vu*, it is because repetition must necessarily be at the heart of these written experiments just as it is in those private moments when working spatially - finding “form-in-the-making”,<sup>1</sup> to borrow a phrase from dance theorist Maxine Sheets (why this solitary studio work feels private, while every word here a public statement or broadcast, is part of the contradiction of this enterprise). And if there is uncertainty in one, as there has been of late, there will be uncertainty in the other, when one expressly seeks to interpret the other.

For some time uncertainty in the studio has centred on the appropriateness and consequences of assuming a certain architectural posture, or way of thinking within my practice, rooted in the underlying logic of design and realisation. Over the years my interest in architecture led not only to copying or mimicking designs from within the images I collected, but to adopting something of the process of architecture. The

<sup>1</sup> Maxine Sheets, *The Phenomenology of Dance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p.36.

tendency to work at scale (i.e. in miniature), inventing structures through model-making, before then (but only occasionally) realising or implementing these designs on a bodily, architectural scale, introduced an inconsistency at the heart of my practice. The immediacy of the gesture, the speed at which I could visualise spatial ideas, so natural when working at model-scale, did not easily (or entirely satisfactorily) translate to the larger scale, diminishing these supposedly more significant actualisations to comparatively lifeless fabrications of ideas that really best existed as models. At the same time, while my models became progressively more sculptural - and even painterly - they tended to be seen and appreciated as models and not as sculptures - as delicate miniatures quite unlike the brutal fact of the space or structure they proposed.

Being asked whether my models were in fact theatre set designs, or if I was actually an architect, at first felt productive. The disciplinary confusion held a certain attraction - a sign of boundary-crossing, or the diffusion of categories - yet in time, having given over a part of my work to the internal logic of a different medium - or at least the appearance of this medium, I found myself working in space at one remove from space itself, my ability to work, and engage with work, impaired by the discipline to which I am so attracted. My initial response to this - a determination to put aside model-making entirely, to imagine and develop a way of working directly in space, in actuality, was matched by the certainty that to make such a change would require retracing my steps - that to scrutinise my relationship to architecture would require scrutiny of my relationship to images - to return in greater detail to my use of images, and what that use sets in motion, to my dependence on them.

When does a statement become conjecture, and analysis lead to misrepresentation? At the risk of testing this too far, I now find myself compelled to narrate some of this past year's accounting here. To reach for first, a more detailed analysis of the role of images within my studio practice, and second, what this might reveal about my handling of images in this writing project. To turn the focus of this text, temporarily at least,



back onto myself - to deconstruct my approach, in the manner I have so far employed to deconstruct photocopied images from my collection. And where better to begin, than with my viewing of images, when both sides of this project grow out of a certain essential contact with images - a contact that, at least in the case of my work in the studio, precedes making...

This distinction, I realise, is more significant than first thought: primary contact with images being a procedure in its own right. My use of images follows my quite separate immersion in the familiar irregularity of their flow - separate but proximate. It is when in the midst of these mobile, at least, by my hand, constantly circulating piles of papers, constantly revealing and obscuring images, that I am lost - not within specific moments of connection or revelation, as I have previously suggested, but in an 'impression' formed through the condensation of so many half-registered, briefly apprehended images.<sup>2</sup> Being lost within something I cannot wholly perceive or picture the totality of, and that is reconfigured with every new cycle of viewing, all that is left are impressions - memories traces, abstractions, syntheses of images to some degree internalised, and then subsequently manifest (a re-impression?), transformed in the course of making.

When working, I look, do not look at these images. Hours, or even days might pass in which the piles of images remained untouched, while at other times, I refer to them obsessively, moving back and forth in the studio between image and form. Which is to say that their unseen presence is as important to the process of viewing as their being literally before my eyes (whether glimpsed at or studied). Or more specifically, it is not the presence of piles of images temporarily disregarded while working that is really significant, but the recognition that the periods when not looking at images,

<sup>2</sup> For Henri Bergson, "We instinctively tend to solidify our impressions in order to express them in language. Hence we confuse the feeling itself, which is in a perpetual state of becoming, with its permanent external object, and especially with the word which expresses this object. In the same way as the fleeting duration of our ego is fixed by its projection in homogeneous space, our constantly changing impressions, wrapping themselves round the external object which is their cause, take on its definite outlines and its immobility." Bergson, *Key Writings*, p.73.

(whether merely an interruption or a significant stretch of time) constitute the other side of viewing - the essential turning away from an image,<sup>3</sup> that fixes and confirms the impression; a conclusion of seeing that switches seeing from the eye to the mind's eye - from the appreciation of an image to the forming of an impression, and the transition from image space to actual space - most literally when the eye registers the photocopied page around the image as object.

As I look at images on a page, this break/interruption in reading ('non-reading?') occurs in the 'unseeing' momentary transition from one image to the next; in the temporal, physical, and psychical space that forms between images. As the eye breaches and traverses the edge of the frame, exiting an image, it moves into what Christian Metz refers to in his essay "Photography and Fetish" as the 'off-frame' space - the presumed or imagined continuation of the image content outside the actual boundaries of the frame, extrapolated from the evidence of what is seen as present within it. As Metz says, "The spectator has no empirical knowledge of the contents of the off-frame, but at the same time cannot help imagining some off-frame, hallucinating it, dreaming the shape of this emptiness. It is a projective off-frame (that of the cinema is more introjective), an immaterial, "subtle" one, with no remaining print."<sup>4</sup>

If we go so far as to say that we are always moving from one image to the next (from reading to non-reading to reading again - or vice versa), the off-frame 'effect', which Metz describes as "a singular and definitive cutting off which figures castration" becomes

<sup>3</sup> We might find a corresponding idea in Virginia Woolf's short essay "How Should One Read A Book?" in which the writer recommends a suspension of reading after completing any literary work, in order to better absorb impressions of the work itself and form judgements, but also to take in and appreciate something of the world in "its unconsciousness, its irrelevance, its perpetual movement" Virginia Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book?" In *Essays on the Self*, (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2017), p.71. While this is all very much in the service of creativity or reflection, for Woolf impressions require gestation outside the work itself; "The first process, to receive impressions with the utmost understanding, is only half the process of reading; it must be completed, if we are to get the whole pleasure from a book, by another. [...] But not directly. Wait for the dust of reading to settle; for the conflict and the questioning to die down; walk, talk, pull the dead petals from a rose, or fall asleep. Then suddenly without our willing it, for it is thus that Nature undertakes these transitions, the book will return, but differently. It will float to the top of the mind as a whole. And the book as a whole is different from the book received currently in separate phrases." Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book?", p.75.

<sup>4</sup> Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," In *October*, Vol.34. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), p.87.

the decisive locus in the rupture from reading to non-reading, marking “the place of an irreversible absence, a place from which the look has been averted forever.”<sup>5</sup> Metz’s purpose is of course, to articulate the fetishistic nature of the photograph (which he does principally through an extended comparison between the photographic and cinematic image), and whether or not we subscribe to the Freudian basis of his analysis (and in a sense, the connexion of the ‘off-frame’ with the (potentially endless) duration of the ‘not reading’ / not-seeing, certainly seems to reinforce the fetishistic power of the photographic image - at least in the abstract), this unseen ‘part’ of every photograph - if it can strictly be referred to as a part at all - is plainly evident to even the most skeptical of viewers, from even the most cursory reading, and however featureless the image in question.

The spread of an image implied beyond the bounds of the frame is therefore evidence of the way in which our experience of images is not limited to their optical-empirical actuality, or the duration of viewing. That this ‘place of an irreversible absence’ - a kind of emptiness in itself - is also a space that initiates a hallucinating, dreaming subject, suggests that the afterlife of the image is as potent, if not more so, than the seen presence of an image, and the dreams of the subject proceed from the loss of images - in this case the suspension of viewing forced upon us by a space that is the equivalent of that disregarded and eliminated by the photographer in the moment of first composing the image.

Where then, am I lost? Within the presence of images (when reading images in the cycle), or the absence of images in those transitory, ‘off-frame’ moments between? Is my being lost in the cycle being lost between presence and absence? It seems no coincidence that however deeply we might try to go within an image, the eye - confined by its limits

<sup>5</sup> Metz, “Photography and Fetish,” pp.85-87.

- always seems drawn back to the edges of the frame.<sup>6</sup> The eye desires the illusionary space depicted and the pleasure of exploring its fixed time (that discrepancy between the duration of reading and the time of the image), but is never at leave to remain or trust this completely. We are only ever visitors to image space, and it is in a manner of speaking the 'off-frame' that restores us to 'conscious' time.

And so? This more detailed account of my own practices as a viewer in contrast to those of the notional 'viewer' in general - how my self-initiated contact with images comes through a specific set of relationships and ritual interactions I have established for myself - only serves to demonstrate its divergence from an academic 'reading' of an image, such as that which initiated the writing of this thesis (writing which has hitherto assumed the archetypal, authoritative voice of academic narrative, as well as something like its procedures of analysis, despite disregarding many of its formal conventions). This is not to claim there is anything unique or especially remarkable about the viewing that informs my work in the studio, only that its conditions, namely the forms I have given it (that my collection is made up of photocopies, and these photocopies are loose sheets), as well as the manner in which I tend to 'access' these images (repetitively, transitorily, in a cycle of movement both governed by and precipitating a degree of randomness within the sequence), lead to a different kind of viewing - one in which the impression, as a kind of compound image, is dominant.

Hito Steyerl, in her 2009 text "In Defense of the Poor Image" associates the impression with a particularly contemporary kind of image consumption in the digital age - one based on the speed and consequent superficiality of viewing ever more degraded, low quality images: "On the other hand, this is precisely why [the poor image] also ends up being perfectly integrated into an information capitalism thriving on compressed

<sup>6</sup> As Vilém Flusser says: "Images are surfaces above which the eye circles only to return again and again to the starting point." Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, p.77. - an ahistorical condition which works outside the "context of the linear" in which nothing can be repeated, consigning us instead to a realm of repetition and "functional explanation".

attention spans, on impression rather than immersion, on intensity rather than contemplation, on previews rather than screenings.”<sup>7</sup> Though it is probably unfair to extrapolate much from a short, polemical text, in this passage Steyerl makes a broad distinction between two opposed types of reading - one slow, immersive and active (in terms of contemplation), that we might consider, for the time being at least, the archetype of the critical, self-reflexive academic viewer; the other in haste, superficial and passive - a distracted yet unburdened one that leads to the (presumably short-lived) intensity of the impression.

While my procedure of viewing has developed organically, over time, rather than in response to this or any other particular theory, it is interesting that there are some similarities between my methodologically analogue approach and that described by this brief, but nevertheless wide-ranging cultural critique, which arises in and around the new economy of the digital image.

Although television has long been held responsible for the emergence of the distracted viewer, aimlessly channel-surfing through a stream of random moving images, the digital (and of course the internet - which features prominently in Steyerl’s text) has enabled a new level of dissonance, and a new economy of images - one in which information is freely and fluidly, but not necessarily legally, disseminated. And this new economy seems to go hand in hand with a new (or at least more extreme) kind of distracted, passive viewer.

While I would argue that my own viewing is not necessarily distracted in the sense Steyerl implies, it does attempt something equally disorienting, and perhaps it is inevitable that in this digital age my ‘manual’ viewing of analogue reproductions, unassisted by the screen-technologies of new media, has on some level come to mimic

<sup>7</sup> Hito Steyerl, “In defense of the poor image,” In *The Wretched of the Screen*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), p.42.

or imitate the condition and reception of the digital image (which bears relation to the tendency in my practice to transcend different states - to seek to cross the divide between image space and physical space by manifesting spatial, dimensional form from within the resolutely dimensionless surface of the image).

For instance, we might say there is an equivalence here between the 'poor image' in the digital realm, and the poverty of the photocopy - both in their respective ways introducing a loss of quality through the degradation of reproduction, and thus the actual loss of the image itself. The very materiality of the image (or whatever remains of it) confounds the 'condition' of viewing, changing its terms.

But Steyerl's account, principally concerned with diagnosing the political in the poor image and not its psychology or phenomenology, does not (or perhaps cannot, given the scope and diversity of what she is discussing) consider the consequences of viewing in detail. The nature of Steyerl's impression is limited to the moment of viewing itself, and is the seemingly logical consequence of an image that does not have sufficient information (resolution) to allow an immersive, comprehensive appreciation of what is depicted. For her, a detailed image (and detail in general) permits immersion, and hence a close reading. And if we cannot access what is missing or obscure, an impression is all that is possible - an impression that remains a part of vision in the moment of viewing - the immediate impression (and abstraction) of something before the eyes - one located, fixed in the impenetrability of the image surface itself. Being without, rather than being within.

This impression is, in other words, formulated as a lack, a deficiency (literally) impressed on the consciousness of a passive viewer. While Steyerl argues for a reconsideration of the political agency of the poor image on the basis that new modes of circulation in the digital realm enable 'an alternative economy of images', the psychological agency of the viewer in this economy appears neglected, or at least

marginal. The impression travels no further than the moment of viewing and does not seem to exist beyond the eye.

However, as we have already seen, the loss of the image is what incites the dreams of the subject. When the photocopy distorts, warps, washes out or obscures the image it reproduces, and the poor digital image blurs, pixelates, or corrupts its own high resolution 'original', whatever remains of the image is inevitably completed by the imagination of the viewer. Likewise the empty off-frame space leads us to imagine the scene extending beyond the edges of the frame and to enter the realm of fantasy.

This is true for both the most superficial and the most detailed of viewings and the most superficial and the most detailed of images. When confronted with partial information the imagination of our visual faculty inevitably steps in. Where there is loss, there is compensation - granted, not all equally refined, but the product of a reflex nonetheless, one conditioned to recompose or rebuild the picture, even if this transforms it into something else entirely. The image always invites completion, however complete it may be, or whatever conditions underscore the act of viewing. The same is true of a detailed image. However apparently complete, everything we encounter within the bounds of the frame is fixed and immobile, a mass of layers, edges, hidden or bisected elements. We know the garden, visible through the window and the screen door of the Japanese house must logically continue behind the wall separating them, but not empirically - we cannot see this, only infer it, and our imagination strives to compensate, to keep the illusion intact. The information within an image is thus, by the very nature of the fixed image, inherently incomplete, inherently fragmented, and the reflex (imagination) is driven to make sense of this by momentarily convincing us that image space conforms to the rules of the physical world around us.

Equally, impressions - in their full psychological sense - arise from all types of images and all modes of viewing, and even the most attentive study of a photograph

will distort and redefine when later recalled from memory.<sup>8</sup> For what is truly the impression, if not just this - the apprehension of some thing, image, or state, processed by memory, manifesting a new image - a likeness, an image of an image, in the eye of the mind? It is the transition of visual cognition during the moment of viewing to the fabric of memory; the transition of matter to (a matter of) mind (from vision to psychology) that makes an image (and not only the afterlife of an image) essentially virtual, whether a photograph, photocopy, TIFF, or jpeg.<sup>9</sup> Images only function as images when they are seen. In the moment of viewing we activate what is essentially only a mute physical surface (or screen), bringing it momentarily 'to life' (or such is the effect) through the recognition and decoding of abstract forms and shapes, thereby constituting the illusion of some scene or content where there is in reality none - an inherent virtuality so ingrained in our visual experience we can no longer truly grasp how magical the mechanical image must have first appeared in the early days of photography.

I realise of course, that my definition of 'impression' somewhat shifts the terms in which Steyerl uses the word, as well as its associations with the painterly imitation of direct visual a/ effect (masquerading as the recording of vision) in the history of modern art, but the status of the impression has shifted in line with the shifting status of the image, and is understood today in terms of its virtuality, rather than its visuality.

<sup>8</sup> "In concrete perception, memory intervenes, and the subjectivity of sensible qualities is due precisely to the fact that our consciousness, which begins by being only memory, prolongs a plurality of moments into each other, contracting them into a single intuition." Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p.219. - The work of memory here, to paraphrase Ansell-Pearson, is intrinsic to perception, our apprehension of an object never simply a contact of the mind, but infused with memory-images. Ansell-Pearson, *Bergson: Thinking Beyond the Human Condition*, p.82. For Lacan, in the main part, memory was a phenomenon of the symbolic order, not either biological or psychological. Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p.113. If for Bergson past images form useful syntheses with those of the present, "for psychoanalysis, memory is the symbolic history of the subject, a chain of signifiers linked up together, a 'signifying articulation'. Something is memorable and memorised only when it is 'registered in the signifying chain.'" Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p.113. Though these approaches have distinct trajectories, for me they are not wholly exclusive, both pointing towards memory as something that is purposeful (and only functions as such) within the ongoing emotional present of the subject, constructed anew each time, despite the sensation of a past intruding on the consciousness.

<sup>9</sup> Bergson, *Key Writings*, p.147.



Of course, the question of reading and the nature of the impression are personal (indeed individual), and exist on something of a meta-level in relation to the cultural plane of Steyerl's analysis. But we must imagine there are many more infinitely nuanced, subtly different kinds of reading than the binaries invoked in the course of her text (that nevertheless conform to what most of us would believe true); readings with merits not so categorically defined by tired notions of what constitutes valuable reading (just as the impression is by no means the counterpoint of immersion, and contemplation does not equal intensity). Steyerl does herself proceed to argue along these lines, leaving room for other meaningful lives of images and other meaningful kinds of reading, but does so in reference to these established, yet suspect binaries, on some level refusing to let go of the connoisseurly primacy of the 'close-reading' with its presumption of academic or intellectual rigour. After all, looking very hard at something can constitute its own form of blindness – as we have perhaps already witnessed in the writings here.

While these criticisms might be overstating the matter, every viewing is determined by the image, the viewer, and the conditions under which we see, as well as in effect the use(s) it will ultimately be put to - like implicit memory, the function of our viewing defines the act itself: we remember for why we view; we view as necessary. Which suggests that the reflex of the impression (for like the compensation performed by the mind when faced with the loss of and within an image, the impression is also a psychological reflex) is by no means a state of passive reception, but rather the product of a viewing (and thus desiring) mind.<sup>10</sup> Viewing and impression forming are essentially two sides of the same coin.

<sup>10</sup> By way of explanation, this is similarly a matter of involuntary perception, or in psychoanalytic terms the "subliminal, preconscious" that exists within "the phenomena of everyday life form an amalgamated field of broadly isomorphic endogenous and exogenous impressions. This field is the source of what Freud calls the 'day's residues' – remnants of the day preceding the dream that enter the analysand's account of the dream, and her or his consequent associations. These residues are mental images, not necessarily visual (they may be auditory, tactile, olfactory, enactive or kinaesthetic); nevertheless, visual images predominate." Victor Burgin, *The Remembered Film* (London: Reaktion, 2004), p.15.

Of course, impressions are inherently unstable, unreliable, and transitory. There is the possibility of multiple coexistent impressions of and from the same individual image; there is the possibility of a singular impression of multiple images; as we view, and view again, there is the potential for endless variation in our conclusions; the impressions we form will be imprecise, faulty, error strewn; we will lose our impressions, or 'stand-by' helplessly as they merge into one another. And like a photograph, every impression reveals a different aspect of the 'original' subject, (another reason why the repetition of viewing always feels like starting again; a restart, in which reassessment and re-evaluation are inevitable). Yet impressions are all that is possible. Involuntary and erratic, they are still strictly speaking the only thing we carry with us beyond the image. The moment the eye leaves the frame, and the physical image reverts to mere surface, the impression is born (set in motion).

We might very well be tempted to say that all this is slight and unsubstantial, that the significance of the impression only amounts to the attention we pay it, and having no control, no authorship over the composition of their virtuality, other than what we choose to put before our eyes, renders it subjective and unverifiable. But while this may all be true, the psychological impact of our impressions - the influence of the images we see and retain (reassemble) in the mind, and that become ingrained, enduring, and at worst damaging, suggests the physical image and its psychological double form an inseparable, causal pairing. If we work with images, we work with the impression, whether we choose to acknowledge it or not.

My work with images - the primary contact of my viewing, (the way in which I engage the image as a means to an end), the formation of impressions, followed by the ways in which I 'realise' these impressions (back) in physical space, is therefore nowhere near as magical as it might at first appear. Like all rituals, this is also a performance. Encouraged by the status of the photocopy, I actively engage in a disengaged form of viewing that proceeds, however well I actually already know the images in front of me, as if anew

each time, from my immersion in the flow of many images and their repeated viewings, encouraging synthesis - building synthesis - (the architect of my synthesis), and so an(other) way of seeing (in the eye of the mind).

With this complete, I put images aside and work from memory – drawing on my impressions of these images, their synthesis, and most importantly, the synthesis of the architectural forms found within these images. Just as the image proceeds from the physical to the psychological, from vision to impression, I ‘restore’ its spatiality (spatial substance) by in a sense reversing this process, manifesting not strictly speaking the original image, or even the impression, but an imprecise image of the impression, a trace or fragment of this perception.

The resulting material structures - rough, sometimes crude approximations - are also subject to the play of my own spatial and structural ideas. These works are not simply visualizations of existing form, whether the form of the image or of the architecture found within them, but compounds through which I pursue a spatial invention - a “form-in-the-making”, to once again appropriate Sheets’ phrase: their substance, or lack of it, registering some equivalence between the recollection of the impression, and the realization of form - the apprehension of something image-like during the process of manifestation.<sup>11</sup>

In this way, it is hard to distinguish precisely what is actualised. What is made physically present is not literally or materially either image or architecture, and may be no more than two pieces of spray painted wood glued together, but there remains a particular,

<sup>11</sup> My allusion here is to Sheets’ concept of bodily form in dance, which exists as both a ‘spatial unity’ and ‘temporal continuity’ (i.e. dancer and dance as a whole), with the dancer engaged in their action on the pre-reflective level of the ekstastic, implicitly aware of his or her “form-in-the-making” as if outside the self; “In dance, consciousness exists its body in movement as a form-in-the-making which is a sheer form, and a spatial unity and temporal continuity exist because at this pre-reflective level, consciousness-body is likewise implicitly aware of its ekstastic structure.” Sheets, *The Phenomenology of Dance*, p.47. My use of the phrase with regards to my work is an adaptation; that form proceeds (and appears) through the body, and its gestures, as a type of image, while recollecting some pre-existing program, except in my case, this is not a precisely scripted plan, but another image.

peculiar quality - a sense of virtuality; of the afterlife of an image; of *déjà vu* (the image already seen); of uncanniness; of mimicry - a confusion much like that experienced when viewing an image (the uncertainty, despite oneself, whether what we see is surface or space, image or actuality) - that only comes about as a result of the insistence of the image through the various stages of apprehension and recollection.

What is it that defines this quality? Despite the fact the reality pictured within an image is inseparable from materiality, from the material fact of its being an image, our viewing and recollection (impression forming) endlessly insist to the contrary; that one or more elements - an object or objects within an image, or some part of an image, are more memorable, and so insistent, than the rest, and can in a manner of speaking float-free, separate, and become significant, distinct from the confines of its original (pictorial) context. That such 'spectres' can survive beyond the bounds of the image, and somehow establish themselves as unique, independent entities in the mind of the subject, suggesting a reality of their own, and thereafter appear to exist (and insist) upon themselves as a memory of actuality, something no longer part of an image, but rather something that once existed for the beholder in reality - is one of the most persistent illusions in our engagement with images (the way that images engage us).

The architectural image I extract through layers of mechanical, visual and mental reproduction seems to insist upon its actuality ever more determinedly when given new dimensional form in space. And since this is not architecture (its original form being image) - I have never known it as architecture, but only as image; it has only ever existed for me as image - this suggests the possibility that it is in fact the image which insists upon its actuality, rather than the trace of architectural 'content' that appears to have been manifested. Of course, this is not to suggest my corporal experience of architecture plays no part in the development of these works, only that the experience of the image overwhelms that of three-dimensional space. However physical this trace becomes, the image continues to assert itself, and so remains an image, or rather image-like, at the

intersection of image and actuality, or more specifically, between the actuality of the image and the actuality of the form manifested.

As such, this is form as a form of representation - despite the fact there is no real representation at work. There has rarely been any single specific work of architecture identifiable in the structures I produce, only a degree of reminiscence and a sense of familiarity. What we encounter, however architectural, however sculptural, is not functional in the spatial terms these generally imply; it is made to be seen rather than used or felt physically, but at the same time made to confound seeing, since little of the true origins of these structures ever becomes visible.

With this in mind, the immediacy of the gesture, transience of form, roughness and just sufficient construction, no longer appear especially aesthetically motivated, or for that matter temporary for the sake of a political aesthetics of the ephemeral, but rather more to do with the reduction of form to its bare essentials. With the solidity of the object stripped away and the dumb fragility of materials and media exposed, the three dimensional structure is reduced as far as possible to an image - to the status of something seen, but fundamentally inaccessible, caught between structure and image.

At one point in her text, Hito Steyerl sketches a brief lineage of the poor image, "The poor image - ambivalent as its status may be - thus takes its place in the genealogy of carbon-copied pamphlets, cine-train agitprop films, underground video magazines and other nonconformist materials, which aesthetically often used poor materials."<sup>12</sup> The expediency and immediacy of production and use the materials cited here suggest, is of interest to me in terms of my own relationship with the photocopy. I have sometimes asked myself why I persist with such an outdated technology. Isn't there nostalgia, or even melancholy present in my dependence on the earlier and inferior (i.e. retrograde) condition of the photocopy? This may be so, but any political dimension that might be

<sup>12</sup> Steyerl, "In Defence of the Poor Image," pp.43-44.

construed from my preference for the photocopy (such as a wilful avoidance of more modern, digital technologies), and the economy of the poor image in general, are for me bound up in the contradiction of its materiality and inception.

As noted before, the photocopy manifests a transitory, weak bond only brought about by the act of mechanical reproduction. This is one that relies on proximity, or more specifically contact - the original laid against the glass bed of the copier - like touching, but one that remains solely visual of course, there is nothing affective in this contact; the scanning 'eye' is resolutely optical, and senseless. But anthropomorphism may be useful when attempting to understand our relationships with technology (and there is an inevitability in this given such tools are designed in our image). The point is, what begins with the apparent promise of touching, of contact, is met by the eye, by the disjunction and detachment of vision (in this case optical reproduction). The eye, and the vision it affords, establish distance and ensure separation.

Thus, the photocopy is something of a paradox. It is proof of a contact, but one conditional on the distance of the scanning eye from the original image. Indeed, we might even go so far as to say the scanning mechanism of the photocopier more closely resembles a viewing, or even 'reading' eye - appraising the object or image being copied in its slow movement across the plane of the copier - than the lens and film or sensor of the camera, that merely 'sees' in its momentary exposure. Part of the tension within the analogue technology of the photocopy being that it incorporates both touch and vision, but prioritises the latter; a condition analogous to our own sense cognition.

Likewise, I locate the desire to repeat within the same contradiction. My works construct space, and allow for contact, inviting the presence of the viewer within what appear to be environments, structures, forms that constitute a complete corporal experience. At the same time those environments, structures and forms are open to the viewer's readings, who may imagine or deduct their latent function and meanings. Yet, the

closer we come, the more clearly we see that these are in fact vehicles of/for the eye, forms of representation that only stage their sculptural or architectural presence, and comprehension, on these terms. The choice (and significance) of the photocopy is therefore for me a question of the anticipation of contact (touching), but one that simultaneously prescribes a fundamental distance, and with it an inaccessibility - a withdrawal into visual-optical space.

...

All of which brings me back, full circle, to the task at hand. Putting pen to paper, I find myself once again (self) conscious of the limitations, and the limits, of my approach here - that the writing on images I have undertaken thus far betrays the underlying nature of my (studio) practice, and so too my work, which draws on impressions of the synthesis of forms from images. What, in the studio, are inherently non-narrative viewings of images, have at the keyboard become detailed descriptions and elaborations. When viewing and writing an image I lose sense that the images I collect are equivalent, not only as one comes to assume ever greater significance through the very (f)act of writing, but moreover in the way that this writing reveals to me how, beyond the equivalence of their being, images are fundamentally unequal in their affective charge.

What, in the studio, is approached principally visually, in search of (and so in terms of) architectural form, structure, and spatial design, prioritising certain aspects of the image-experience, at my desk is viewed holistically, the focus being on the image as a whole device or mechanism, rather than on only one or some of its components. I scrutinise the image through language (and narrative), covering every square inch of its surface. The outcome is a consciousness of the differences between images, what distinguishes these images as images beyond their specific content and recognisable features.

This viewing is slow, concentrated, interrogatory, even suspicious, and is not a distinct procedure, separate from the writing that derives from it, but rather a wholly parallel activity, the one hand-in-hand with the other, in collusion, or wrestling with each other,

in conflict... With text and image side by side, I view and I write, painstakingly, back and forth - repeatedly entering and exiting the image, fixing the immediate impression in language, but immediately checking it, verifying it with another look, so there is no opportunity for this impression to digress or synthesise into something other than what it is... No apparent error, or deterioration, exists here. The text forms itself like the viewing it arises from, in fragments, written and rewritten, adjusted, rephrased, checked and checked again. A text not only written, but read - the image viewed, and the text read in turn; just as the image is, in a manner of speaking, written within its viewing.

But this viewing on which my writing has been based is not really a studied 'reading' of an image. It has more in common with literature - with the pleasure of description and narration, crafting sequence, plotting the disclosure of the image and its secrets to the reading viewer. In essence, with storytelling. Looking closely I have become the detective of the image, and so likewise the detective in my texts, 'putting pen to paper', 'sitting down to write' etc., I am both narrator and investigator, rather than explorer of the recollected impression, or the architectural motifs (abstraction) that are key to my use of images in the studio.

However, the narrative form of the detective story is not a foregone conclusion. It has come about instinctively, perhaps unthinkingly, in response to those images first selected for closer, textual scrutiny; the images I was drawn to write about. But these images are not typical of my collection. On the contrary, these are the more exceptional examples, chosen, at first unwittingly, and latterly suspiciously, for their unique features - their anomalies, their incidental chance occurrences - the tree in the breeze, the books that change position on the shelves of the Japanese house. Details that require investigation and elaboration. In order to adhere to the conventions of the detective form, there must be something unexplained (however insignificant) - or at least something potentially mysterious. In order to circumvent the conventions of the detective form, there must be a new way of writing my viewing.





*Figure 10. Vicky Kim, 'Untitled' (Grey relief after VKhUTEMAS), 2019, Paper and spray paint on card, 23 x 29.6 x 4.8 cm*



*Figure 11. Vicky Kim, 'Scaffold Diagram, Traced (Fellini)', 2006, Black iron pipe, fluorescent tube, mounting pins, spray lacquer, 213 x 213 x 76 cm*

*“That this ‘place of an irreversible absence’ - a kind of emptiness in itself - is also a space that initiates a hallucinating, dreaming subject, suggests that the afterlife of the image is as potent, if not more so, than the seen presence of an image...”*

## 5

*Jyväskylä, 1970*

1

On the right hand side, a small parcel of flat blank space bisected by the grubby marks of what might be a tree or just as well the mast of a sailing boat, tells us we are beside a body of water [Fig. 12, p68]. Lacking any detail whatsoever, this bright, benign surface only makes sense as water by virtue of the equally nondescript black profile of a far shoreline, or bank, above and beyond, at once boxing it in, confining and defining it. Treetops, just visible serrated against the horizon, confirm the natural order of things; the trees prove the bank, which in turn confirms the water, and so a landscape emerges from the most meagre forms, comprehension dawning even as the features themselves remain obdurately blurred. Together, these two unpromising, seemingly ungriving abstract shapes bound by the horizon on one side, the right frame of the image on another, and by the hard edges of a grey and a black wall to the left and below, draw us in. What should be little more than an afterthought commands the eye, and indeed the entire image, swallowing us whole - at once the point of absorption and of least information.

2

This void is the point to which my eye is drawn, inescapably, from every other part of this scene [Fig. 13, p69]. A quarter inch to the left, and there would be no evidence of

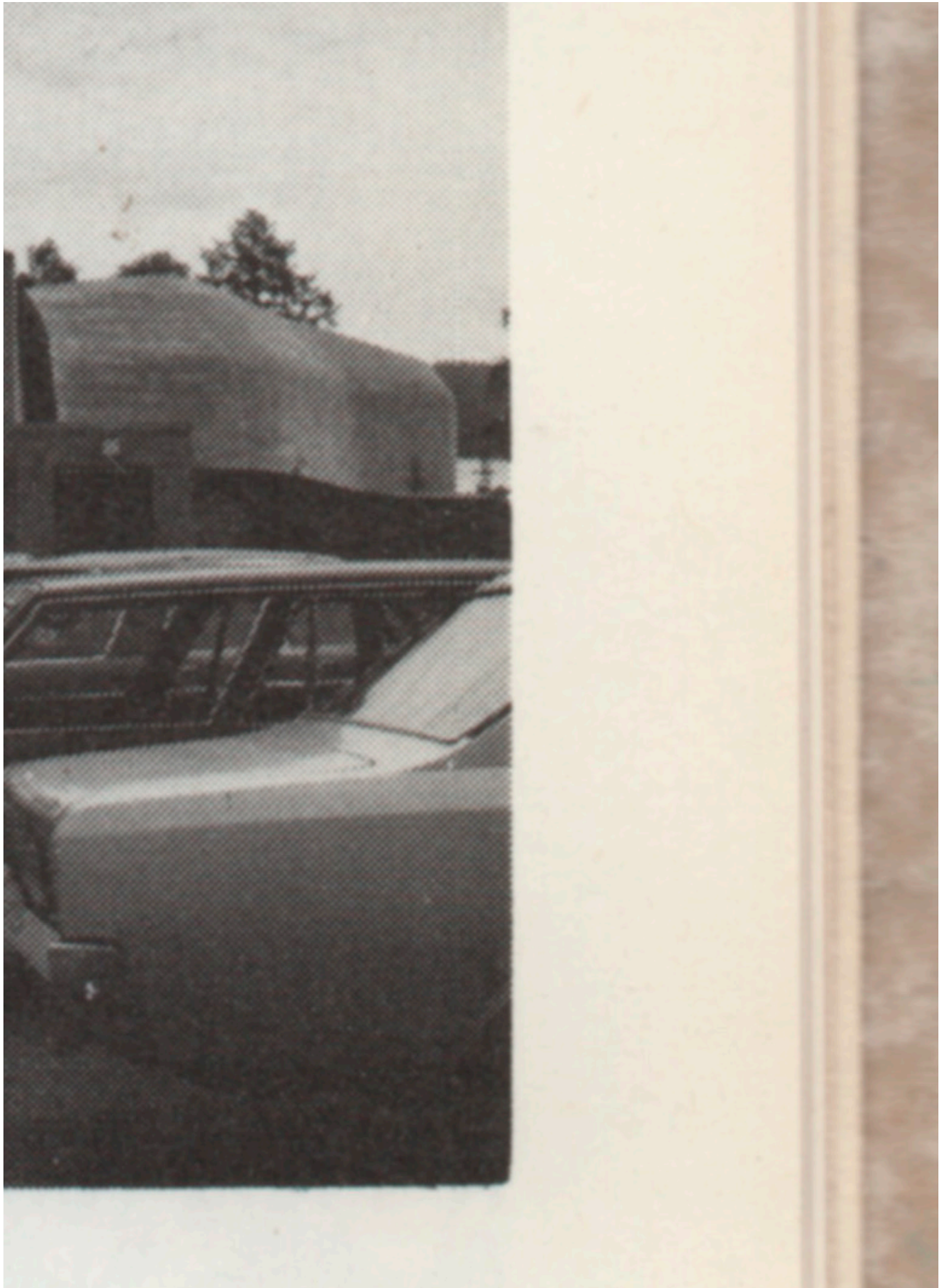


Figure 12. Scan, p117 (detail)



Town Hall, Alajärvi, 1969



Police headquarters, Jyväskylä, 1970

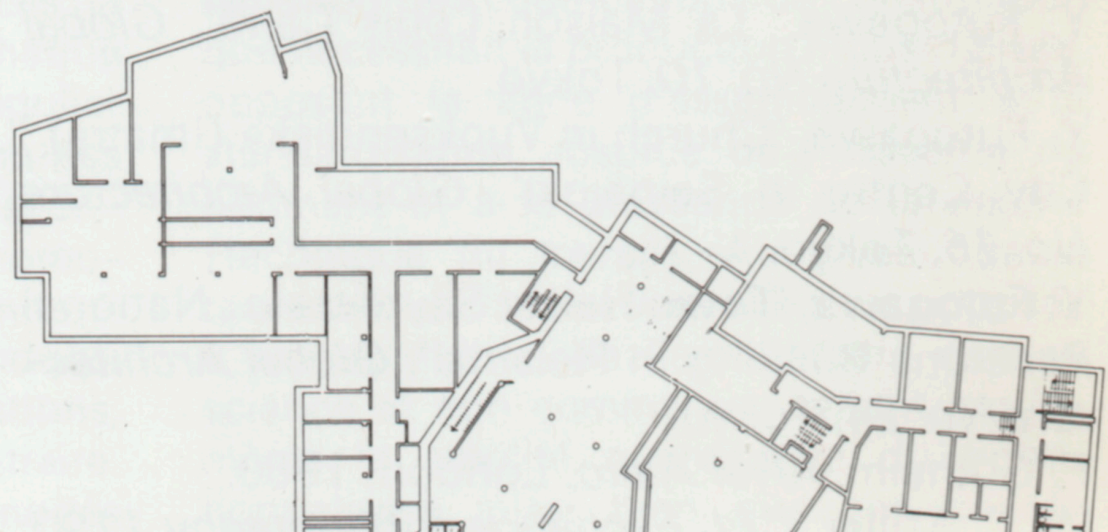


Figure 13. Scan, p117 (detail)

the natural landscape, or our elevation, no sense or appreciation of a larger context, and no exit from the compound that dominates our view, a mass of concrete and brick straddling the full width of the frame. This glimpse of a background - and it is only a glimpse, however long we spend there - is therefore all the more powerful for its restraint as well as the extremes of perspective that further intensify and control my gaze, for the eye is not simply attracted by the light reflected on the surface of the water, but directed to this point by a composition, and the accidents of everyday life that have unwittingly facilitated it, which dramatize and exaggerate the already dramatic perspective present in this landscape.

3

Try as I might, these two abstract shapes are unavoidable - the eye ever more conscious of being an eye in its repeated searching of this space for some greater explanation, as if upon each inspection expecting to see more; to make out ripples on the surface of the water, or some additional detail in the trees on the other side - only to come away empty handed. Thwarted, exhausting this space, wearing it down through repeated surveillance, tracing its contours in ever more concentric paths, the unblinking eye, dry and raw from excess scrutiny, pushes at its limits, straining to see more: to see further around the curved shell of the building, or down the hill behind the black wall to the shoreline; to cross the water and see this landscape from the other bank, or from another perspective entirely; to make sense of this assemblage of architectural elements, each one stacked and stuck onto the other, extending and projecting through the frame, from another point of view; to somehow see the rear of this scene; to turn the image and reverse it; to see the image itself from the other side...

4

Looking back into the image from this notional viewpoint, we see the flat blank light on the water is cast elsewhere throughout the scene; onto the three cars parked at an angle along the gentle gradient of the slope that runs across the centre, turned in unison as

if to expose their windscreens to the light; in strips on the bonnet of the car on the left, facing us (but also facing away from us); spilt over the rear window and boot of the car closest (but also furthest) from us on the right hand side; on an upper floor window of the building just visible standing in the background on the very left, looking down on proceedings from behind a similarly tall tree; on the two windows of the van parked against the side of the building, and on the glazed panel behind, leaning back against the wall, partially obscured by another smaller vehicle - each instance an explosion that appears to have been detonated within these surfaces, constrained by their limits, played out on their screens.

5

These flashes of light punctuate the scene and lead us, evidentially, towards their shared point of origin, or at least in this image, since that location goes unseen, that of greatest absorption; the by now familiar place where the water, and the sky above, separated by the reassuring profile of the bank is the closest we get to the epicentre of the blast. And even when one of these intensities might occupy us discretely, the surfaces on which they form give rise to shapes that themselves direct our gaze; be it the bolt of light sharpening to a point in the right corner of the car bonnet in the centre, or the channel following the contours of the car boot closest to us, expanding out across the rear windscreen while rising upwards as if striving to connect with the water, just out of reach above, and in this one instance, revealing traces of clouds passing overhead.

6

However saturated, or over-exposed, these reflections all also speak of the unseen space beyond the edge of the frame on the right hand side. They refer to it, both visually and indexically; pointing to it, pointing it out, directing us to it, reminding us of it, wherever we move within the bounds of the frame. Without any people visible, these assorted vehicles draw our attention to their absence, but also the absence of what is taking place, what is going unseen by human eyes yet recorded in their anthropomorphic

gaze - a haphazard group of spectators looking up transfixed by some meteorological or astronomical event taking place out of sight. No matter that we cannot make out anything readable in a windscreen or window - these bursts of light drown out any such information - this unknown space is nevertheless as present (with)in this seen space as anything literally there, proving to us its existence, demonstrating to us its contiguity, encouraging us towards it, out across the bounds of the frame and over the edge of the page...

[pause]

7a.

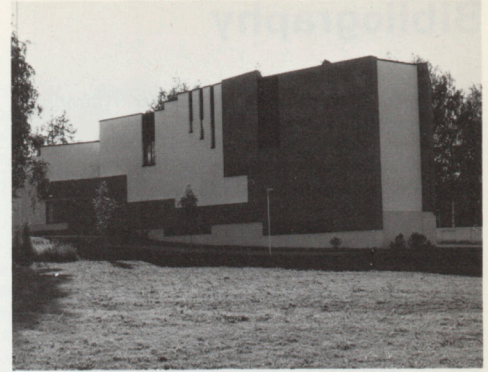
And so where do we find ourselves exactly, once we've picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves down, and recovered from being so caught out? Once we've pulled away from the grip of this powerful light, from its seduction (that both draws us in, and casts us out, into secondary space), and are safely outside this image, we can then begin to situate ourselves - where we find ourselves in relation to both image and page; or rather, the image within the page, and the image of the page, since both here are images and both in their own ways require further reading [Fig. 14, p73].

8

So, what have we here? Where are we here? Working outwards from the uneven edges of the printed image that we call the frame (for as we shall see, looking closely these seemingly secure soft edges are anything but), there is for once, no mystery at all: 'Police headquarters, Jyväskylä, 1970'. Central Finland then, according to my atlas, looking out over the Jyväsjärvi (Jyvä lake) from the city centre across the still blank water to the suburb of Ainolanranta. The police headquarters... So a police van, and most likely therefore the police station car park.



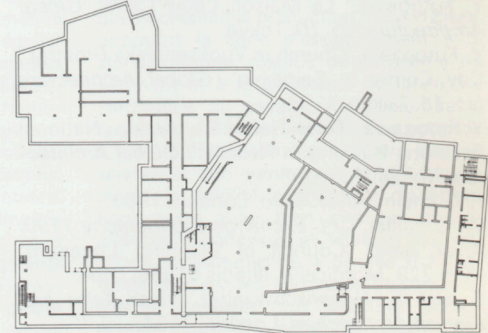
- 1969 Town Hall, Alajärvi
- 1969 Library, Kokkola : project
- 1969 Academic Bookshop, Helsinki
- 1969 Kokkonen House, Järvenpää
- 1969 Water tower, Institute of Technology, Otaniemi
- 1969 Sauna and summer house, Pajanne
- 1969 Municipal Theatre, Seinäjoki : project
- 1970 Sports Institute, University, Jyväskylä
- 1970 Mount Angel Benedictine College Library, Salem, Oregon, USA
- 1970 Parish centre, Alajärvi
- 1970 Villa Schildt, Tammisaari
- 1970 Police Headquarters, Jyväskylä (part of the Administrative and Cultural Centre)
- 1970 (?) Theatre, Alajärvi : project
- 1970 Museum of Modern Art, Shiraz, Iran : project
- 1971 Finlandia Concert Hall, Helsinki
- 1971 Extensions to the Institute of Technology, Otaniemi
- 1972 Project for the city centre, Helsinki
- 1972 Villa Erica, Turin, Italy : project
- 1973 Art Museum, Aalborg, Denmark (with Elissa Aalto and Jean-Jacques Barvel)
- 1973 Alvar Aalto Museum, Jyväskylä
- 1973 Fire-testing laboratory, Otaniemi
- 1974 Administrative building for the City Electric Co., Helsinki
- 1974 Enso-Gutzeit administrative building annexe, Helsinki : project
- 1974 Sculpture for the Finnish Embassy, Brasilia, Brazil
- 1975 Lappia House, Theatre and Congress Hall, Rovaniemi
- 1975 Congress Wing of the Finlandia Hall, Helsinki
- 1975 Mid-West Institute of Scandinavian Culture, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, USA
- 1976 University of Reykjavik, Iceland : project
- 1978 Church, Lahti
- 1978 City office building, Jyväskylä (part of the Administrative and Cultural Centre)
  
- 1976 Died 11th May



Town Hall, Alajärvi, 1969



Police headquarters, Jyväskylä, 1970



Lappia House, Rovaniemi, 1975 : basement plan

Figure 14. Scan, p117, 29.7 x 21.6 cm

9

Taking in the whole expanse of the page, as if for the first time, it is now finally clear how small a reproduction this really is, barely 6 by 7.5 centimetres on a 29.1 by 21.7 centimetre sheet of paper. As the page grows larger, the image contracts ever more sharply into focus, until only one in a column of images, beside a column of text, regulated by the channels of near pristine blank space left, right, above and below, spaces themselves regulated by the unseen typographic grid according to which each image has been scaled and sited, and each block of text set and aligned; the imposition of space within the greater frame of the page that fixes these seemingly floating elements through the expansion and contraction of headers and footers, margins and gutters, the push and pull of finite space, as one width increases and another shrinks accordingly.

14

Making our way from the police headquarters along the gutter between the ragged right margin of the text on the left-hand side and the uncertain edge of the image on the right, we arrive at the Town Hall, Alajärvi a year earlier in 1969. The town hall stands (yet also sits) directly above the police station, separated by merely a thin white space on which its caption is stationed, adjusted left, venturing not much further than the tip of the flag pole below. The building, shrouded in its own shadow, hides in plain sight. The image (and thus page) top-heavy, horizonless, the bulk of the building and the ground beneath it threatening to overwhelm the frame, and encroach on the sky below over Jyväskylä.

15

Getting so close to the edge, we run the risk of falling in again, of finding ourselves back in an image - or an image within an image - the edges inverting as we draw near - no longer the limits of the image, but those of the white spaces that surround it. What hitherto floated on the surface of the page now cuts through it from behind, the edges form a frame, and the image is seen through a window, a hole in the page through which we may step or fall, a precipitous (visual) drop into representational space from

the relative stability of the opaque depthless barrier of the page. So well we might hold ourselves back, from the edge, from too childish or trite observations, yet the floating image on the printed page still insists on itself as a window, however we resist, however firmly we remind ourselves that it is printed and fixed.

16

The eye, at these edges, meets the boundary between two distinct spaces. If the frame of the image on the printed page can look like a window, it is because the surrounding white space appears to obstruct our view of a scene that continues beyond the frame. Here the implication of a secondary space beyond the bounds of the image, that we know full well existed at the time the photograph was made (and persists as a function of representational image space), transfers to the page, momentarily implicating the surrounding non-representational space in the logic of the representational. We are left with the impression that what is not there in reality, appears to be hidden from us, covered up by something that is not image – in this case the blank surround of the page. As if the eye itself actively and independently searches for such a pretense – a satisfactory explanation why it cannot see this (nonexistent) space, thereby willfully engaging in its own deceit before comprehension once again regains control.

17

Though this trick of the eye may only really come about because of the nature of photographic space, it is still contingent on the seamless abstraction of the page and its provision of flat blank white space on all sides of the image; not merely in proximity, but in contiguity - the one adjoining the other (and so conjoined in implication). Here one type of space penetrates another, the representational annexed within the greater bounds of the Cartesian; their limits abutting each other, their mutual edges not only the threshold between two different kinds of space, but between two different states - or conditions.

18

As such, what we refer to as the 'frame' is nothing more than a point of transition, from one discourse to another - something that holds true for the photographic image beyond the space of the page, wherever and in whatever form it may be reproduced. Since we cannot say that the frame belongs definitively to either the image, or (in this instance) the page, it only appears to us in disjunction - as a threshold formed and reformed in relation to whatever space, or spaces, happen to be contiguous with the image at any given time. There is nothing tangible to speak of - nothing we can point at and identify, isolate or separate. The frame has no structure of its own. Outside of language, of terminology, it is invisible - something we encounter as a kind of rupture, but cannot see in and of itself. The paradox of the photographic image is that nothing frames the image aside from the image itself.

30

Wandering down the column, weaving through the spaces between words, not reading (left to right), but charting a passage through the text, the eye returning to the page, moves leisurely, languidly, out of curiosity: circling the 'Water tower' 'Otaniemi', strolling past the 'Sauna and summer house' without quite reaching (misspelt) 'Päjänne', skirting 'Seinäjäki' en route, who knows where. Drifting here and there, round and about, drawn to a view, a fact or a figure, turning a corner, each word a shimmer and dance on the page, of character, type, case, line, break. Floating in formation, these letters and words are their own fascination; the faintest grey halo surrounding each one diffusing as spoken. List, verse, score, song, 'Benedictine College', 'Villa Schildt', 'Finlandia Concert Hall', a city in text, and of sounds. 'Aalto', 'Aalto', 'Erica', 'Barvel', 'Lappia', 'Enso-Guszeit'... This birdsong of dates, places, names and abstractions, cultural and social classification, nouns and punctuation, each one conjuring an image from the page, a shock recollection, (free) association, or work of imagination evoked in the same black and white light that so tempted us.

31

But try as the eye might, to disrupt and derail the significance of this page seen whole - to rid this narrative of clues or context, this is still a chronology with only one end, and only one author; only the very visible end indeed, of a life's work, not the myopic albeit transfixed gaze of an eye into one tiny glimpse of a flat, blank body of water.

32

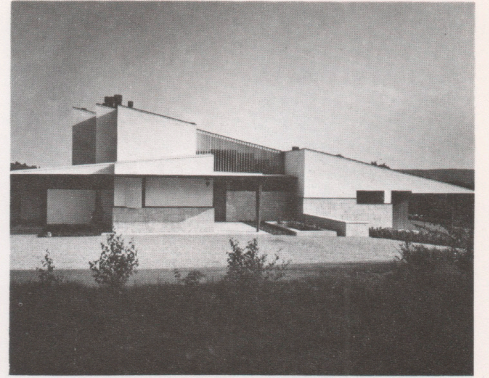
The caption (printed) below the image gives the barest of facts. The page reveals almost everything to know, except where we are, precisely: Porphyrios, Demetri, et al. *Alvar Aalto*. London: Academy Editions, 1978. Page 117. An address, of sorts. Though not one for a book first found lying open at this very page, left behind on a steel kick step stool in the oversize stacks. Not quite lost perhaps, but found. Not an unfamiliar name of course, but an unfamiliar title. And an image... Not so remarkable at first perhaps, but given time... Left open at the end. One small serendipity in an otherwise uneventful day - for this is the end, the very end in fact, the 11th of May 1976, and this is the very last image in the book; the final photograph.

33

Elsewhere in Jyväskylä, the wet white façade of the Aalto Museum dries out after a downpour, the damp stretch of tarmac leading up to the building streaked with water, the grass sodden [Fig. 15-16, p78-79: *Image #48*]. Windows, black this time, facing forwards yet leaning backwards, avoiding our gaze, looking away, giving nothing away about what has just occurred. The upper storey, veiled by a hatching of vertical rods, appears to withdraw from us. The lower, for the most part masked by a thicket of shrubbery, taking refuge in a gesture of modesty. The side of the building, wedge-cut as if to accommodate the arc of the road, lending the whole structure an underlying air of resignation, in the aftermath of this weather, as it retreats into the woods behind, despite its prominence on high ground, and the high horizon line that unbalances the scene and our view, slipping backwards on this water-logged grass, tipping backwards, the tree line



45



46

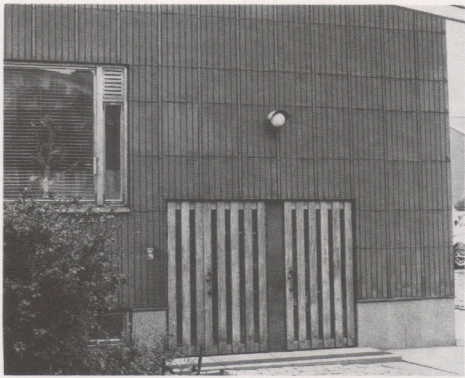
- 45 Municipal Library, Seinäjoki : general view, showing screening of windows looking onto central area
- 46 Villa Carré, Bazoches, France : side elevation, showing painted brickwork and screening of window
- 47 Town Hall, Säynätsalo : general view, showing screening of upper windows (Library) etc.
- 48 Alvar Aalto Museum, Jyväskylä : general view, showing roof lights and tiling to walls passing over windows
- 49 Kulttuuritalo, Helsinki : detail of 'screen' door and corrugated copper cladding
- 50 Church, Seinäjoki : detail of interior screen
- 51 Town Hall, Seinäjoki : detail of window with half-round tiled surface carried across mullions, forming 'screen' and layering surface
- 52 Central Finland Museum, Jyväskylä : view of entrance, showing screen to lecture room window with screen proud of wall
- 53 Municipal Library, Rovaniemi : view of entrance, showing clerestory, tiled walls and screened window



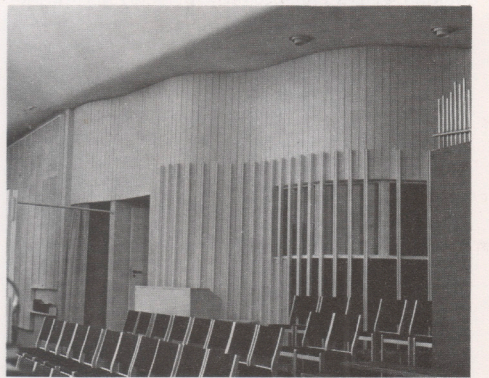
47



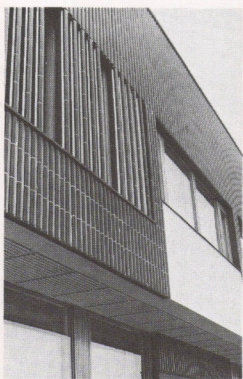
48



49



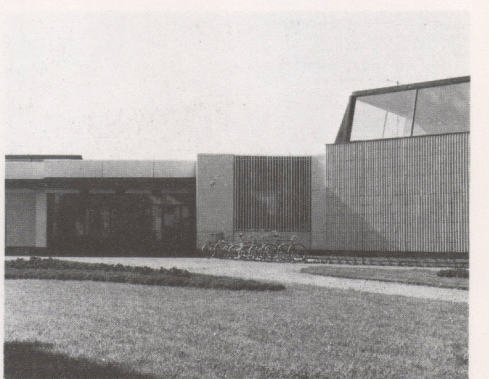
50



51



52



53

Figure 15. Scan, p103, 29.7 x 21.6 cm



46



48

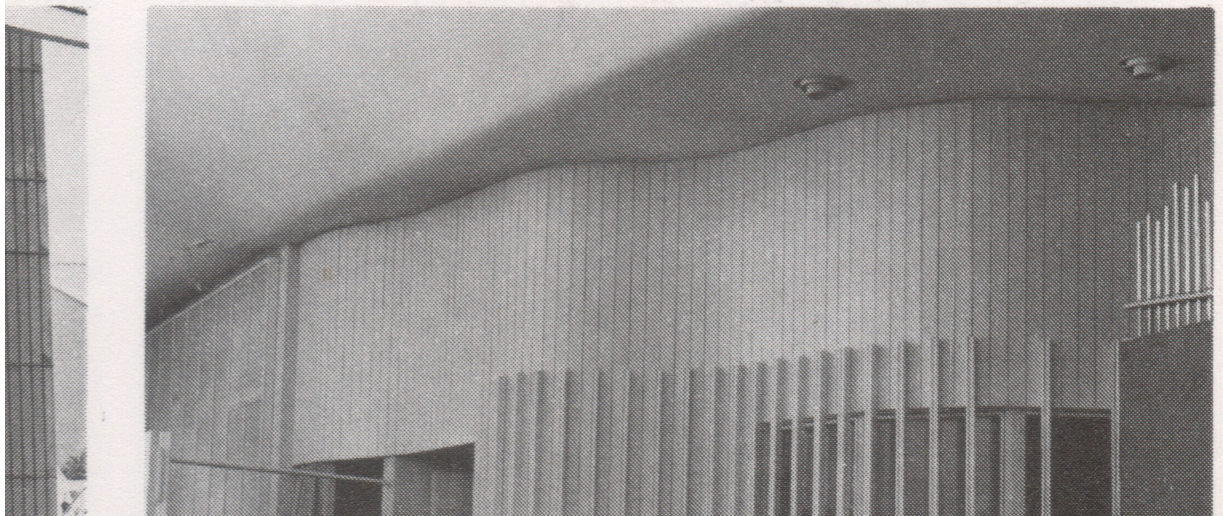


Figure 16. Scan, p103 (detail)

over the building blown to one side, not from a strong wind, but perspective warping as we fall, lurching, the sky revolving to fill the lens as the flagpoles bend round the convex glass until finally whipping away as we land with a thud, and leaves overhead bristle against the sky.

34

Or perhaps not. The ever-changing disposition of a photograph is seldom well judged at first sight. And this is an image that barely registered before now. Our first impressions leave us open to extraordinary influence. The rain was surely not as hard as all that. Is that a tap dripping in the kitchen? And that movement might just as well have been the motion of the oscillating fan here beside the desk, that seasick roll bringing on wave after wave of nausea along with its clockwork breeze, the head-spinning rhythm of peaks and troughs rising and falling that finally rolled the eyes up into the head and left the image flat on its back. Or that may have been the heat and the coffee. Jest aside, the eye upon the image helps the mind wander, but the image is as susceptible to an imaginary oscillating fan, as the mind is to the image.

35

By (another) coincidence, the museum happens to be located in precisely the same position as the Jyväskylä police headquarters, only fourteen pages preceding, accompanying an essay by Steven Groák, 'Notes on responding to Aalto's buildings' (which incidentally, at this point in time remains unread; a matter of principle, it strikes me now, to avoid undue influence, and leave the imagination free to formulate a response of its own). Both images are found on the right hand side of the right hand page, second row down in the column, this grid repeating in different combinations and variations throughout the book, sometimes awkwardly, though not here in these latter stages - this is page 103 of 128 - where multiple small images are arranged together, clearly assembled or juxtaposed to illustrate some point in the published text, only to find themselves hijacked here, appropriated in the service of another (decidedly more fanciful) narrative.



And so even when the buildings shown are themselves to my mind disappointing, architecturally speaking, each of these images seems to already tell a tale, evident in their less than classical architectural photography. Landscapes photographed from some faintly incongruous angle, perspective, or vantage, informally framed, and which thereby contain some possibly innocuous intruding or extruding detail. Or which exclude entirely some element beyond the frame that we may not be in a position to identify, but can still sense is missing, that amounts to a discrepancy, however minor, in the representational field and which defies us.

36

The gutter separating wet tarmac from wet grass, running abruptly down into the lower left corner of image 48, slowly draining any remaining first impressions, is met and loosely mirrored across the way, by a protuberance of rough grass scrub, marking the verge of an intersection in the deserted dirt road outside the Säynätsalo Town Hall [Fig. 17, p82: *Image #47*]. Tyre tracks driven into the earth snake away from us, leftwards, parallel pairs curving and closing in on one another as they turn and the angle tightens, bunching together in a single trail before blending away entirely under the weak shadow of an overhanging tree. One or two others tracks bear right, going against the grain, cutting and then cut, threading over and under, a string weave imprinted in mud, earth and sand.

36.2

Despite or perhaps because of their transience, these patterns of movement, first recorded in the soft surface of the ground and then in the sensitive surface of the film (these photographs all predating 1978), suggest a significance of their own here, quite distinct from that of the imposing leaden profile of the Town Hall beyond, and the parked cars and bikes alongside it – vehicles oddly disconnected from the tyre tracks, separated by more than the ground between in which we see almost no detail, washed out by the flattening perspective and lighter tones beyond the shadows of the trees.



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Figure 17. Scan, p103 (detail)

Separated in fact by the more profound sense of ownership established over these tracks by the eye engaged in its own archaeology of this site, tracing dark and light ridges, picking out specks of grit, leaves, or stone, surveying the textures and topography of the dirt road, and becoming all the while their instigator; authoring the movement of these fixed incidents, in the moment of viewing the image, the eye imposing and impressing itself on the dirt road more emphatically than any vehicle. In spite of originating from another space altogether, outside the image, the page, and the image of the page, as well as from another time altogether, the eye, stimulated by arbitrariness, fascinated by detail, assumes a role of its own, and defies the logic of what it sees.

### 36.3

And yet, the more I focus on these tracks, the more I allow the eye to penetrate the surface of the image and study the details of the dirt road, animate them, and indeed enjoy them, and the more I write, and enjoy describing these details, animating them again, by proxy, the more their emptiness becomes apparent and I come to a stop. This image, I seem to recall, had had a far more visceral effect when first thumbing through these pages, already overwhelmed by the light passing through the car park of the Jyväskylä police headquarters, intoxicated, without really realising as much, and ready thereafter to be seduced by every other image in the book; their past time, near-deserted landscapes, and northern light as exotic (and melancholy) to me as a Finlander might find images of Korea from the 1970s.

### 36.4

But now, what had appeared - and felt - a whole is broken up. The soft light rising through the tree line behind the building, diffusing amongst the branches and the layer of haze hanging in the sky, no longer seems in harmony with the scene before it; the pose of the building, impassive, cares little for the expanse of road, or the surrounding trees that themselves seem to observe proceedings, detached and aloof, over-exposed areas merging, not even connected to the ground, but hovering, watching over from on

high. These elements now fail to come together in an atmosphere, as though, without a unifying, obfuscating film of melancholy, the possibility of being immersed emotionally in this image has gone, and all that is left is for the eye to inhabit, observe and survey its parts. And how the eye undoubtedly plays its part in this: extinguishing the lingering original impression (or wishful thinking of it), the more it surveils the scene. Any melancholy that might still arise from the transitory, transient marks in the dirt road, the loss of their past time, is slowly effaced, first by the attentions of the eye, and then by the words that follow. And yet, approaching this image for the second time, in this now sober state, in another sense all that is left is the eye, as we become aware of its mediation, self-conscious and mistrustful of its semi-autonomy and capacity for deception. The eye acts at once under instruction and of its own accord - following its instincts, and working in its own interests. Tracing the marks in the dirt road, it writes its own significance into these tracks - not so much happening upon or discovering some inherent intrigue, as inventing one, investing the image with a mystery it cannot then solve. Another trick of the eye, by the selfsame eye, serving to once again mask this image and obscure it...

37

Others likewise perplex me. Two pages further back, (and now a total of sixteen from the very end), the Villa Mairea, Noormarku, image 33, sits (but also stands) up above us in the top right hand corner [Fig. 18-19, p85-86: *Image #33*]. Obscured in part by both a sapling standing what can only be a matter of inches away from the lens and a fully grown pine tree a little further off behind, the house - which it seems reasonable to assume looks out from the crest of a hill over some scenery that we do not see, this being without question the principal facade of the building (or why else photographed from this vantage), and the principal facade being without question that which affords the principal view - also looks down on us, over the edge of a man-made bank, built-up and reinforced for a road (no footpath would have demanded such construction), driven in from the right side of the frame, sloping gently up to the entrance past a dry stone wall and another young tree.

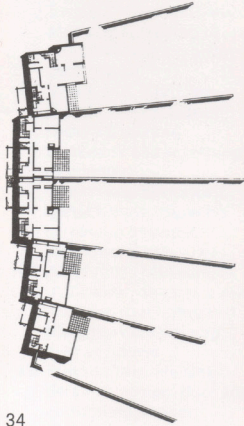
- 32 Enso-Gutzeit building, Helsinki : general view showing three-dimensional grid, with break to allow vehicle entrance
- 33 Villa Mairea, Noormarku : general view showing curved balcony against rectilinear massing
- 34 Terrace housing for supervisory staff, Sunila : typical floor plan showing distension of the planning grid
- 35 Terrace housing for factory staff, Sunila
- 36 Hansaviertel apartments, West Berlin



32



33



34



35



36

- 37 Baker House, MIT Senior Dormitory, Cambridge, USA : general view showing the expression of the staircase route
- 38 City Electricity Company, Helsinki : aerial view showing central 'atrium'
- 39 Apartments for National Pensions staff, Helsinki : view of staircase
- 40 Enso-Gutzeit building, Helsinki : rear elevation, showing cutaway volume and system of 'screens'
- 41 City Electricity Company, Helsinki : toplit internal 'atrium' of banking hall



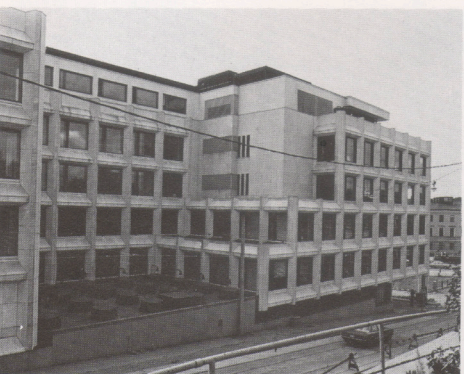
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38



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Figure 18. Scan, p101, 29.7 x 21.6 cm



33



Figure 19. Scan, p101 (detail)

### 37.2

If it were not for the 'expression of the staircase', the bleached clouds in the sky, and the line of cars caught driving (I like to imagine) frantically back and forth along the road running between the fields and the Baker House Senior Dormitory below [Fig. 18, p85: *Image #37*], or the "corduroy" effect of tiling' on the facade of the Rovaniemi Municipal Library on page 105 [Fig. 20, p97: *Image #59*], flanked by a line of forlorn young trees staked out at regular intervals along the kerb quite incapable of supporting their own weight, this equally discordant 'general view showing curved balcony against rectilinear massing' [Fig. 19: p86: *Image #33*], might have appeared an anomaly, either merely overlooking the stray elements that have somehow found their way into this scene, or willfully deflecting from them. As it is, the disparity between these captions and images, between what we see and what we are told to see, between what we are shown, or directed towards, and what actually greets (or confronts) us, is practically comic, and all the more so here when a label of such dry technical understatement is attached to a scene like this.

### 37.3

Almost against my will, I am now drawn towards the balcony, trying to find my way around the screen of foliage; to fight my way there, out of obligation, only realising as much, caught amidst the uneven splayed growth of dark branches rising from the white trunk of the young tree on the road, remembering just who is in charge here, before doubtfully reframing this as a question, the answer being not what first came to mind, but an amalgam: the caption, the image, the eye, the narrative, the author - factions and their dispute, the wax and wane of ongoing struggle for ascendancy, wherein my will, is split in at least three directions, and not even clearly at that.

### 37.4

For a second, eye (opening) comes to rest on the vertical slats, but then pulled straight back, suddenly, optically, an involuntary focal stutter, shifting from one plane to another,

almost unconsciously - under some authority not quite ready to order the approach - or attack? - for if this is not for that, why take cover, why conceal an eye here, within the black, on the branch? The invasive I an eye on the brink, held in waiting, not yet surveilling, a shadow eye on standby, if no longer caption led, then what instead? But withdrawn now eye, sore, beats a retreat, seeking an exit (a route out), a climbdown then a run down black branches to the tip of the white trunk, pausing for breath and to blink. Directives awaiting, issuing in, a regroup and move on, plotting from this junction a new bearing, and altitude gaining, climbing steadily up the north-easterly track, to the cross branches flying between pine tree and massing, forging one x and marking a spot in the sky. Safely here in safety identified, eye witness this intersection, held fused in saltire silhouette by a wedge-shaped deposit, black beading filling one side, bonding this crossing, barbed branches extending, curving, twisting, pointing, a poke in the...

Eye turns to I, only to find this fiction has run amok in picaresque metaphor and rhyme. Overreaching itself, over-exerting itself, over and over and above its station, with little or no regard for what was being said, or for wasting our time, losing itself in an escape (story) - and us in a story within a story, another frame within a frame - in this story of the frame and of images breaking (under the weight of these pronouns). Waking now from the eye, I see its work, what it has written and inscribed into these branches, where it has led us, just not yet quite why, telling with its single eye what double-eyed I would never have said, the liberties taken in description so telling in description a story, as if the eye is a narrative state, and it is sometimes easier to write with this eye than the mind; its sentences verses, its couplets disguised and denied.

37.5

But having given in to its charms, and been transported too far to go back, we begin again from the matted branches of these trees, thin and thick, merging into and out of one another, with twigs, trunks, and leaves conurbating, black against the sky, extending across the upper left side of the image as if all on the same plane, only untangling into a



suggestion of individual forms and relative positions when seen below, against the lie of the land, where intermittent sunlight breaking through the clouds and penetrating the tree cover, picks out glimpses of their topology. Separating, distinguishing and fleshing out shapes into forms, dappled in camouflage patterns of light and dark, just enough to reveal their objecthood but not to chart their network, these splintered fragile forms, untangled from their unity above, patchy and elusive against bank and grassy slope, increase in complexity, posing ever greater challenge and confusion to the eye/s, even as they become discernible, an optical entanglement that leaves us half in and half out of this image. This? These? sapling branches terminated by the bounds of the image on its lower edge, in such proximity to the lens, placing us outside looking in, on the very threshold of the frame, while the eye/s encroach, venturing through the now recurring window in the page, only to be snared by the dimensionality of this barbed barrier, a genuine threat, unlike its mere appearance above in paper-cut silhouette.

37.6

Caught in this thorny trap - not now the ballading eye within the very lines of these forms, but betwixt and between them, snagged by the whites of the eye/s, bloodshot, brows and lids unable to resist. Stuck but not blinded, I see now the foreground beyond but not underfoot, close enough to touch but not within reach, the foreground filling in the spaces between these closer branches and twigs, completing the image with the illusion of depth, filling in the remainder of the surface on which all this truly lies, (dotting and) filling the eye/s. Losing focus here for a second I search for the surface (both with my eye/s and in my mind's eye), having unwittingly recalled it, or been led to, by the proximity of the sapling(s), their plane and position crossing as it were the face of the image, so close and extensive in fact that face to face they appear nearly one and the same, a would-be revelation of a threshold that we cannot see yet cannot fail to perceive - as if this field on which our eye/s are resolutely fixed, on which our contemplation and commentary reside, could be revealed. Alas not. However close the sapling we cannot see the surface of the barrier separating us from the illusion of the image, only that

of the reproduction on the page. In the strictest, purist sense of the image, the illusion (of depth) renders the surface invisible, while simultaneously reinforcing the sense of a surface, a threshold, despite the surface being the very locus of what we see and all the image being equally surface - a membrane through which only vision can pass.

37.7

But where the eye/s go, the I follows, disembodied and immaterial, much like the optical deposit of the image itself, crossing this threshold while dragging with it the broken parts of its fractured body with which to reconstruct a sense of self and corporality on the other side: the memory of a foot for the eye/s to press into the rough grass on the slope and recall what it is for the ground to be underfoot, or a hand for the eye/s to reach into the tangle of branches and twigs and remember the sensation of being snagged and scratched, of splinters in the flesh. The eye/s thus *feeling*, all the while language insisting, persisting, as these visual encounters elicit words and sentences, which a disembodied voice - nay voices, for there are more than one here, reads back. And so, disembodied I am (still) moved by the eye/s to all manner of affect, those that arise from what the eye/s find, and those the eye/s in turn inscribe into the depths of the image, and I read straight back, a circuit of reading, writing and speaking passing forth and back across the threshold.<sup>1</sup>

37.8

Still snagged and eye/s full, I focus again on the soft focus foreground slope, issuing forth through the tangle of brittle branches, details lost to hard light and shadow, its powdery textures indecipherable, diffusing into what appears as an ankle-deep blanket of mist or

<sup>1</sup> “[...] for the diminution that I describe is always carried out to a practical end; it involves our body and must, as a consequence, be translated in an attitude of the body which embraces or repudiates the exterior image. But this attitude of the body is perceived at the points where it is produced, which is to say inside the body-image. And a perception internal to our body is precisely, it seems to me, what is called an affective state.” Bergson, *Key Writings*, p.360. - Despite today there being a field of scholarly discourse known as ‘affect theory’, my use of the term is directed towards Bergson’s early metaphysical consideration, one that sees the image (in the broadest sense of the word) as fundamental to the reciprocity of a body and the forces that act upon it (a genuine ‘movement’, as we have already seen).

heavy gas drifting down the slope, now lingering patches in the sunlight, now building momentum rolling over the surface of the ground, cloaking the ground in a moving layer through which we cannot quite see where to place our eye/s feet for fear of it giving way, to quicksand, sinkhole or chasm, falling away behind us as we desperately dash across this open ground to the safety of the still-intact cliff-face of the man-made bank. This impression, nigh-on flight of fancy, far-fetched as it may be, is hard to shake, the movement we suppose within the textures of this static surface all the more insistent, from this vantage, looking up at the house from behind this briary curtain and through the window of the image.

#### 37.9.1

Secreted and concealed here, camouflaged yet hopelessly exposed, the eye/s move up the slope, finally finding a way through this unidentified vapour and forwards through the parallel struggle with words, syntax, sequence and narration, taking with them the shadow laid out in this foreground space (amorphously, between features and the frame), itself creeping up the slope, moving, or so it seems, both with us and away from us, passing unaffected through the mist, only more malevolently, towards the object of our observation, the surrogate of another presence offering cover for our approach. Down rolls the vapour, up creeps the shadow - two distinct but somehow aligned movements, neither one overwriting the other (that is, aside from written here in the text), where the shadow proceeds from the limits of the image, closest to us, advancing with every passing of the eye/s, creeping repeatedly up the slope every time the eye/s reach out from the branches and up towards the bank; a shadow carried by the eye/s, its movement equally insistent, repetitive, rapturous - mimicking our line of view and description here, executing the image according to the movement of our language, and once again confounding evidence present elsewhere in this scene, if we only care to see it (if only the preoccupied eye/s could reach it!) and follow its logic: the angle of the sharp shadow cast from the right side of the curved balcony, throwing almost the entire entrance below into darkness, and our reasoning thus far out the window, by revealing the true position of the sun overhead.

### 37.9.2

Despite being carried by carried away eye/s, the shadow on the foreground slope cannot creep up towards the house without the underlying logical impetus that it is cast forwards, originating from somewhere above and behind us, and so 'projected' onto the ground, as it were already moving, to be thereafter moved by the eye/s. Yet this is hardly consistent with the fact of the balcony shadow we now find tied to an unseen sun further off to the right. This conclusive evidence forces us into a reappraisal, reorienting the point of origin of the foreground shadow, turning it through a little more than ninety degrees in an arc, anticlockwise over our righthand shoulder, but without of course changing its appearance, as if reversing cause and effect, and the mass of leaves we do not see, but imagine up above us against the sky, move on a string tethered to their likeness fixed on the ground. This shadow therefore establishes a secondary space that proceeds from the interior of the image, rather than its edges, speaking of objects behind the lens, rather than simply an extension of the image bounds left, right, above or below, and in turn implicating and activating an equivalent, but imaginary space around the viewer. A space that is then animated, in the transition from one interpretation of this scene to another, while at the same time remaining wholly notional - a featureless, blank space, into which is cast an imagined image of the actual leaves inferred from the shadow on the ground, moving from behind us to our right as we move from misapprehension to awareness. The irony here being that what we apprehend of this actuality is the product of its own (mere) shadow; an imagined image, even less tangible than the passing traces of it left evidentially here on the ground.

### 37.10

The shadow of the balcony therefore reveals the presumption(s) the myopic eye/s (and I) have been drawn into making here, by the congestion of this foreground space, its layerings and movements dominating and transfixing our gaze, keeping the purported subject of the house at bay beyond. For back there, the balance shifts, as if mounting a counter-attack, instinct commutes to analysis and the background strikes back, forcing

this reassessment - of the movement of the shadow formerly creeping up the foreground slope, now thrown out and instead thrown in from the right, its trajectory horizontal and harmless, neutralised by this unexpected adjustment, passing now who knows which way, left or right, across the plain and against the will of the eye/s, wiping away the earlier certainty, though not quite the fact of the sentiment.

37.11

Looking up in the midst of once more losing track - of just what is at work here, of just who is in charge here, disrupted by the balcony shadow, and not for the first time in the course of this knotted tale (of yets and buts, ifs and nots) not knowing the answer to give or quite which way to turn - I try to concentrate on the upper right side, where the house and extension of the balcony, out in the open, seem to look straight back - to settle the eye/s and still (steel) my gaze, as if looking up there from down here is to move beyond the safety - or reach - of the thorny bush no longer sure of its allegiance, and requires some special commitment, or brazen risk-taking, to meet the stare of this facade straight-on, to look it straight in the? Eye/s raised I feel a resistance, yet not (again), quite what eye to eye anticipated, not the push back of fierce defense from this segment of forbidden image casting out an interloper, but a sense of disquiet from glancing there at all, an internal unease signaled by the lure of the foreground cover, its gravitational pull calling me back into the comfort of its circuit, a longing to be snared, cloaked, and creeping in perpetual avoidance; even this sentence playing its part, moving us with words one after another from one part of this image to another and from discomfort back to ease, though no closer to the end, just lost to the pleasure of words and the linearity of a narrative built from them around a reading of this and other images made up of many words but no straight lines. And so it takes some resolve in our reading, that can proceed in straight lines if we so choose, to recall and go back out to the open end of the background, where we dare not look without looking away, and ask why we can't quite write ourselves into this space, as if this patch is devoid of words or resistant to them, and can only be accounted for by looking away - or looking back on ourselves,

as this balcony seems to do, mirroring our view. Which is itself a clue - the one this sentence and whole chapter still requires to proceed, however meta - finding no words here, only discomfort, it is in this view that our discomfort resides - the misalignment in our perspective that so begs the question of where we stand and why. Which is to say why the photographer has chosen to stand the camera in this very special position - the position we then occupy as viewers of the image - that still insists on itself as that of the photographer's (single) eye looking through the viewfinder - hence the error of the pronounced eye - both imposed upon us, as surely as the frame within the camera imposes its limits onto the reality of the scene it defines. Which is also to say, we are not quite straight-on, and had no chance of meeting any stare squarely; not only looking up at the house from behind these trees, but off-centre and torqued in relation to the building, our perspective within this image, a craning of the neck or dislocation of the spine like the painful bend in the trunk of the pine tree as it twists to avoid the balcony beyond, our viewing similarly double-jointed to the point of collapse (and little wonder as we have seen on occasion, dismemberment): break the image down into parts, and parts will act against each other, in conflict, breaking the eye/s feet and teeth of their viewings apart, kicking and biting, until the field is strewn with contradiction and mangled facts.

37.12

Of course, this 'corporal' discomfort felt through words is in the service of vision here, and our enforced occupation of this vantage is all the more uncomfortable on account of the transgression we seem to enact. Look up from behind this sparse undergrowth, towards the building and the balcony, and do we not have this scene (promontory) under surveillance? Only, the closer we get, the harder to avoid the impression that we too are observed, that the form standing midway along the balcony, that I have gone to such lengths to avoid confronting, is not a vessel collecting rainwater via guttering connected to the roof above, or an outside stove and its chimney, but a figure looking towards us, lookout over the slopes below, mirroring our surveillance, and, unavoidably when the eye/s focus and fix on it, also looking directly at us - via the film, the camera, and the

photographer creeping up the bank under cover of the trees overhead, projected onto our mind's eye; the chain of production that produces the illusion, and reminds us, if it was necessary, that what we are in fact surveilled by is not the unconfirmed report of the figure on the balcony, but rather the image itself: our discomfort not only bound up in witnessing the imagined transgression of the photographer, but within the very medium of the transgression - that by so viewing we are complicit in the act and accomplice to the image - this being the crime it commits against us, the viewer, and (in some way) all images likewise commit - wherein lies their cruelty - making us party to what they show. But what of what they don't? What of what we see in them?

38

For this is only part of the story, and this is only a text, and there is no way to know whether this possibly perfectly tranquil scene is really that of a crime, or only the simple transgression of being a photograph. Either way, it is now spent. Reaching an impasse, the hole I dug for myself in the shadow on the foreground slope has expanded out across the frame to the point where I can no longer read what I saw there, or see what I wrote there, text having replaced image, while defacing it to the extent that no reconciliation is possible - no satisfactory synthesis of viewings and facts, foreground and back, shadows and... Except, glancing now down and around the page, dipping in and out of these neighbouring photographic spaces and sights, there begins to appear something alike in their construction, some shared traits, if we care to compare the foibles in their framing; mannerisms which may suggest a more mundane explanation for the unusual view above; a tendency to religiously fill the frame with the whole building-subject, come what may - come what obstructions and counter-subjects might get in the way, intrude or lead us viewers into temptation.

38.2

Pick any page, pick almost any image. These consistently closely fitting frames, functionally tailored, cropped down to essentials, fit for their purpose and only this,

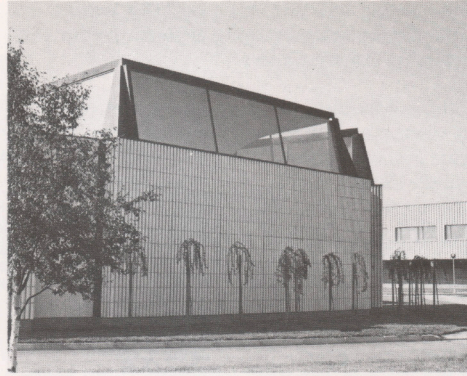
context subordinated to accessory, acknowledged only where strictly necessary, where it would seem unreasonable not to do so, or disingenuous at best, can only be a matter of choice - a strategy, and here suggests the more intriguing possibility of nothing less than the same author (but not auteur) behind the lens. We might already have guessed it, for other signs make it repeatedly within these persistently tight frames; traces of similar seasons (times of the yesteryear), with leaves on the trees, freshly mown lawns and verges, jacketless strolling figures, yet still closed windows; the blossoming tree by the stone wall outside the architect's own home in Helsinki [Fig. 20-21, p97-98: *Image #65*], while its pendant on the right remains resolutely bare, perhaps late, disappearing into the limits of image 65 just as what could have been its double on the right does likewise - brutally yet tantalizingly framed, as though we comprehend these buildings more clearly when closely. And while this may be necessary for corrugated or corduroy claddings - the details the captions oblige us to see - here this tendency throws us into mystery after mystery, formed around the weak clues these glimpses at flat blank spaces, dirt roads, shadows and blossoming trees provide, which in turn become all the more significant by virtue of having found their way inside these restricted framings.

### 38.3

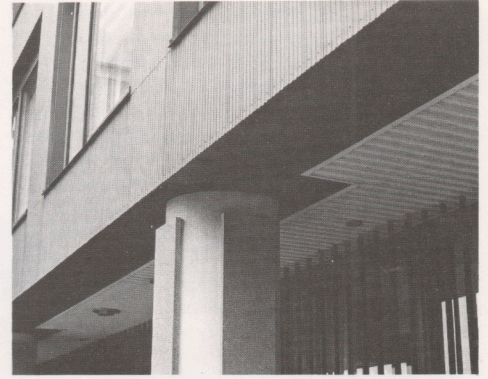
Which is not to say that all these images are equal. If many are clumsily composed, with some stray element cut in two by the frame, or left inexplicably stranded within, now and again one appears, like the stone wall, building, blossoming and bare trees do here, almost fantasizingly framed, as though the more restricted our view, the more tightly bound and proximate the subject, the greater the power of what we see to entrance: the squared eye of the window, formed by the half-drawn blind, the black space below (and behind), lidded by the bowed shadow drooping at the sides - looks out at us invitingly, as we look back directly, lost in the misty layer of glazing where I cannot expect to find some tiny disembodied reflection of my own face, alongside that of the photographer



- 59 Municipal Library, Rovaniemi : exterior of reading room, showing 'corduroy' effect of tiling, and internal reflecting surfaces to clerestory window
- 60 City Electricity Company, Helsinki : detail showing corrugated copper cladding
- 61 Alvar Aalto Museum, Jyväskylä : view of roof light and surface, with flat and half-round tiles giving 'corduroy' effect
- 62 Two-family house, Jyväskylä : general view, showing new timber cladding and altered staircase, and 'corduroy' surface effect
- 63 Finnish pavilion, Paris Expo 1937 : detail of timber cladding
- 64 Hospital, Alajärvi : general view, showing colonnade and timber cladding
- 65 Architect's house, Helsinki : general view, showing timber cladding
- 66 Finnish Pavilion, New York World's Fair 1939 : undulating timber wall of interior
- 67 Finnish Pavilion, Paris Expo : view of entrance, showing timber cladding
- 68 Villa Mairea, Noormarku : detail of timber cladding



59



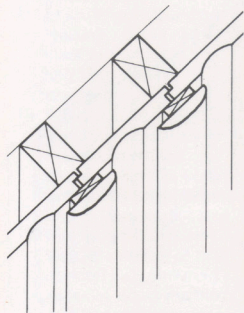
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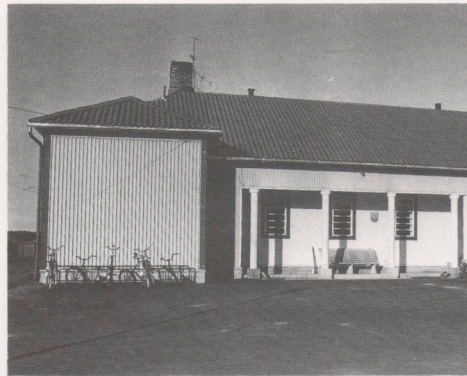
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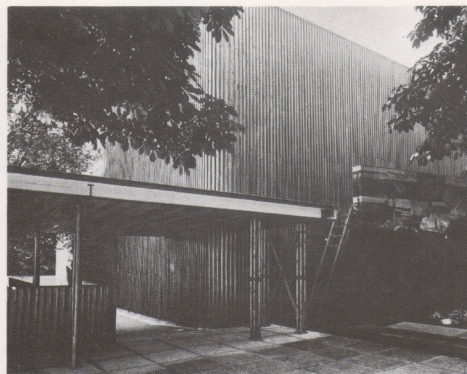
64



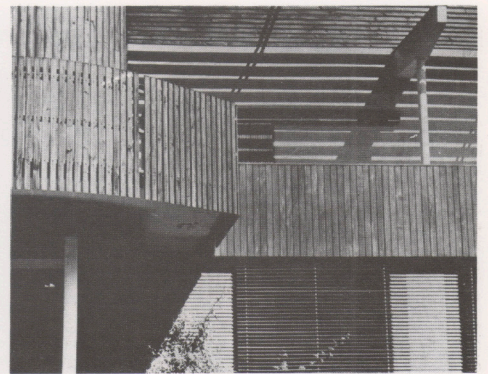
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68

Figure 20. Scan, p105, 29.7 x 21.6 cm



62



65



Figure 21. Scan, p105 (detail)

and camera, though this is the conceit at which this narcissism lets us arrive<sup>2</sup> - just as the half-drawn blind half-draws us in, against reason, as a suggestion, within the definition of words, bringing us only a fruitless search.

38.4

Similar light, times of the day, angles and lenses - or is it just the one lens? Certainly not now more than one author. By which I mean photographer. Only, now I wonder. Though the eye in the window may be I, there is still another presence here to identify, within and between these variously resembling frames. All the more so between the frames, in fact, for when moving forth and back, along with discernible stylistic traits and consistencies of time and place, binding these images together in filial likeness, we also glean some vague sense, or spectre, of the individual as they say rhetorically 'behind the lens', and their agenda, borne of what we might infer or suppose about the making of these photographs: the rituals and expediencies of a photographer on an assignment, working through a list - or around this still envisaged grid?

38.5

While one photograph alone will invariably remain in this regard impenetrable, the greater their number the more we perceive of the unseen enterprise behind affiliated frames like these - or between them, in fact, for though photographic rhetoric keeps pushing us back behind the notional lens in search of a photographer already displaced by a viewer, it is beyond the bounds of the frame, within the indeterminate yet fundamental break between images that our impressions of the absent author are formed. Especially here where assembled together, floating and fixed on the page, the white spaces running through the grid represent the decisive separation of one image

<sup>2</sup> "It is to this object that cannot be grasped in the mirror that the specular image lends its clothes. A substance caught in the net of shadow, and which, robbed of its shadow-swelling volume, holds out once again the tired lure of the shadow as if it were substance." Lacan, *Écrits*, p.693. - According to Dylan Evans, Lacan defines narcissism as the subject's erotic attraction to the specular image, the "wholeness" of which "contrasts with the uncoordinated disunity of the [...] real body, and thus seems to threaten the subject with disintegration." Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p.123.

from the next, drawing our attention to their discrete moments, and the unknown intervals of time between. Even if each image might well originate from one camera, and one frame within the camera, these white spaces mark in their rigid regularity the estrangement of images essential to show us the agency of the author. They also serve to keep them apart, maintaining their isolation in the face of the eye/s that seek out connections thereby closing the gap, bringing one image into the orbit of another, causing one to spill over into another, and, in so doing erase the author.

38.6

Indeed, despite or perhaps because of their unchanging proximity on the page, these images of seemingly disparate places and times belie the continuity of their numbered and captioned sequence, drawing our attention to both the artifice of the structure imposed on them - reordered following the reasoning of the text they illustrate - and the existence of an underlying chronology; that in which these photographs were originally recorded on film. Though we might imagine there were many more images besides, taken but not selected for reproduction here, and as such what we do see are only further isolated incidents in the life of their author, still, in some way, they remain adjoined; inseparable from this real yet concealed sequence. And so, however improbable, it is possible to conceive that with careful inspection these images could be reconfigured to reveal an original succession and indeed, the face of the author encrypted within and between.

38.7

And yet, the concurrence (if not congruence) of the two alternate systems running through this grid, both in their different ways external to the images themselves, both somehow embedded in them, suggests that the truth is not simply a matter of their original photographic execution, but so too their textual one: these captions, divorced here from the context of the text that refers to them, and would doubtless account for their rigorous fixation on the surface effects of each building in the face of what the

camera captured besides, are nevertheless routinely prioritised and visually inscribed, in such a way as to suggest a more profound connection than mutual reference. Which is to say that these captions and these images both exceed their shared purpose, and despite reflecting each other, neither seems to definitely set a precedent for the other: as though their very conception were mutual, and their execution more a single-minded matter of personal interest, than the work of an author *and* a photographer.

38.8

No surprise how hard it is to write this conjecture aloud, let alone put a definitive finger on it. If our pursuit of the photographer has become circuitous, it is in part because we find ourselves investigating within the referential circuit of image and text, in which we are passed back and forth between what we see and what we are told to see, between the supposed existence of an author and a photographer who 'both' seem to turn away as we approach. The reflection missing from the eye of the window appears likewise withdrawn from the caption as it deftly and dryly deflects our attention (from the author) back onto some other detail in the image that however carefully we undertake to see brings us no closer to the identity of our protagonist, since with every roundabout referral, our impression of the gap between image and text becomes steadily more pronounced, and the duality of an author and photographer ever more insistently established as fact.

38.9.1

Little wonder then that my supposition is elusive (and convoluted) amidst so many more manifest trails, with no incontrovertible evidence to prove it. Doubly so in fact when we consider these suspicions do not finally rest on the detection of some hidden presence but on the absence of one. Wherein lies the unexpected yet foreshadowed twist in this text - that there is no masked photographer lurking behind the lens, creeping up the bank, concealed to one side in the drooping lid of the windowed eye, but only the author - though not this time I, rather the writer of the captions and the text to which

these in return refer, as well as the numbering and sequential ordering of the images. And this author I suggest is one and the same as the photographer of these images - a photographing author with only one lens - the limitation that now satisfactorily, if still only speculatively, explains these so frequently compromised framings when in the hands of an amateur so fascinated by his subject.

#### 38.9.2

We might of course, be tempted to see a passing irony in this, given that the author of these images appears so invested in each and every scene, while that of the terse captions does not. But this would be to misconstrue, and imagine another schism where there is none - a reminder of how easily we find due cause to continually invent and reinvent the identity of the photographer (not to mention the viewer), not only on account of what we see, but of every extraneous clue. If one author can speak in voices, so can another, even if only the voice of convention - captions by their very nature terse and to the point, one such convention - the real irony being how language can appear so impersonal and photography so revealingly individual, despite as we have seen our secondary and fundamentally limited control over its physics.

#### 38.9.3

And so, without further need to allude or conspire against this other author's unread text, captions and images, I shall introduce him once again, Steven Groák (1944–1998). But how to confirm it? Without breaking my own rules and searching elsewhere in this book for the credits collated somewhere beyond these pages, unsealing sections I redacted and denied myself when first choosing to write about the light over Jyväskylä, there seems little hope. Though also no little curiosity. So I compromise and rather than abandon my principles, hand over the hardback copy I am working from today (724.6092 Aa) to the librarian at the desk, only yards from where I first found it in the oversize stacks, along with a note on which is written my query, and a request to respond likewise. This wordless exchange with a stranger being I conclude, the closest

to having committed no infraction at all, while also privately resolving to settle for whatever information might be conferred, and not to ask for more:

*Colophon, Page 4:*

*“Other photographs, except where otherwise noted, are by Steven Grodk, who initiated the idea for the issue, and without whose constant and diligent co-operation it would not have been possible.”*

38.9.4

And with these scribbled lines on scrap photocopy in hand, my hunch not quite confirmed but by no means denied, I return to my seat and the book, only to find something awry among these gridded and so I thought safely attributed images. Looking around, a few now stand out discrepantly, even nonsensically, their inconsistencies thrown into greater relief by the near-certain identity of their neighbours' author, who was not even alive to have shot the Paris Expo in '37 [Fig. 20, p97: *Image #67*] or the New York World's Fair in '39 [Fig. 20, p97: *Image #66*], nor for that matter very likely the classic cars racing back and forth before the Baker House Senior Dormitory [Fig. 17, p82: *Image #37*], so obviously from another era compared to those vehicles that date the majority here to the 1970's. Perhaps it was the eye/s that deceived me, or the standardisation of the grid that convinced me, so successfully disguised were these elderly imposters that it took this endgame to see it. Or rather to grasp the full significance of what was right there all along, seen but not seen for this, seen for some other purpose. And if we can in all probability also exclude image 36 [Fig. 17, p82: *Image #36*], of the Hansaviertal apartments in West Berlin - another early building in what I fancy is an older image, growing older by the minute, the longer I consider and grow suspicious of it - we are left with numbers 36 and 37, 66 and 67, pairings that if only by numerical accident seem to substantiate with the mere hint of a pattern...

#### 38.9.5

Still, putting these disqualifications aside, along with the fear there may yet be others undetected to further skew my view, and upset what still holds true of my increasingly fragile apprehension of this photographer, I make my way back to image 65, half-expecting to find some change has taken place on account of these discoveries.

Whether in aspect or facet, whether a new viewing state of mind, or something in the image redefined, there should surely be a sign of this greater cognisance. Even, I admit it, despite how preposterous it may be to keep imagining and searching for it, the appearance of that elusive figure in the glassy eye of the window, obliging us with a profile or movement from which we can thereby acknowledge both his presence and authorship are true. Or failing that, new blossom budding symbolically, but (now I write this thought down) floridly on the bare tree beside. My desire for substantiation within the image so great, that every transient incident touched upon might harbour some changed state or development, however well trodden and exhausted these were formerly by the eye/s, fantasies lurching all the while inexorably into cliché, and thereafter sour disappointment. This being the unfortunate form things are reduced to when all these expectations remain unfulfilled by the image, their only lasting trace mouldering here in prose on my page.

#### 38.9.6

Which is simply to say that none of this is forthcoming in reality. However hard I try, I still cannot put the finger of my eye/s on any reflection in the window, nor blossom on the bare tree beside, florid or otherwise. All in this respect remains unchanged, shadows and half-drawn blind unmoved, despite the promise of insight acquired far beyond the bounds of the image stirring these incidents within towards new expressions of enlightenment. Indeed, it seems that rather than moments of truth or clarity, our pursuit of this photographer has only confirmed the impenetrability therein, not unmasked it, and brought with it another fear - that these are in fact merely moments of emptiness, not mysterious significance, as empty as the knowledge of the author itself. For if



anything has changed it is that the image has become more resistant to the eye/s as I find its planes more constricted: thickened, stiffened and petrified. The dry stone wall flattening against the façade until there is not even imaginary space remaining to separate the two, the window resting on the stones below, the door wedged closed, each plane closing ranks, merging, what little depth there was compressed flat, squeezing us out, pushing us...

38.9.7

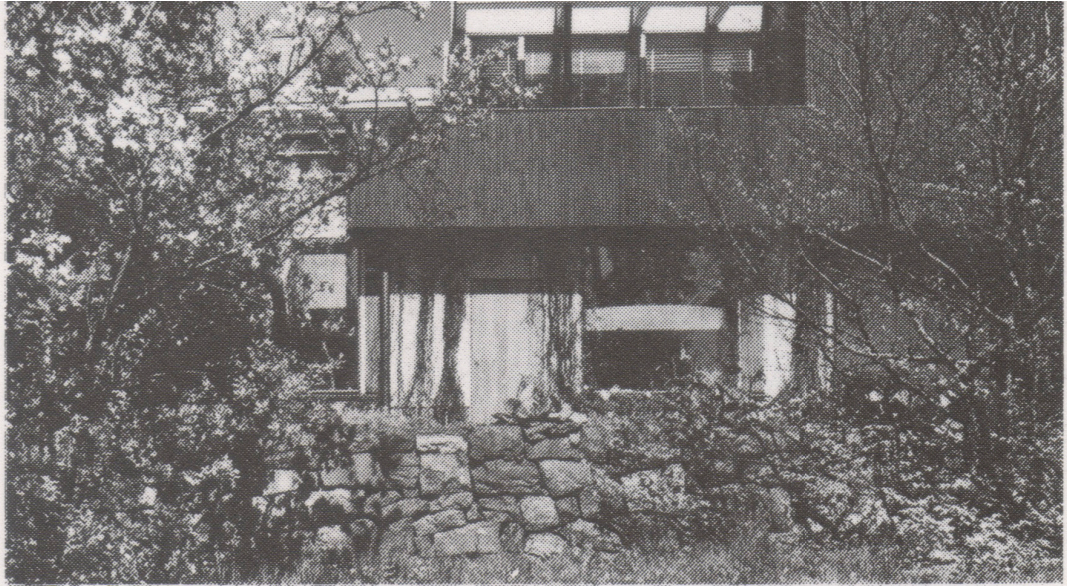
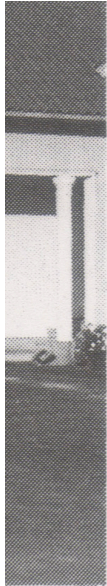
There is no way back. Held at a distance, the scene is cut and sealed hermetically - still nothing secondary, but not entirely still, stolen by the blossom rising on the left hand side, agitated from the branches into what will be a clockwise motion, swirling up and around, until dusting the bare tree and filling the frame with a cloud.

38.9.8

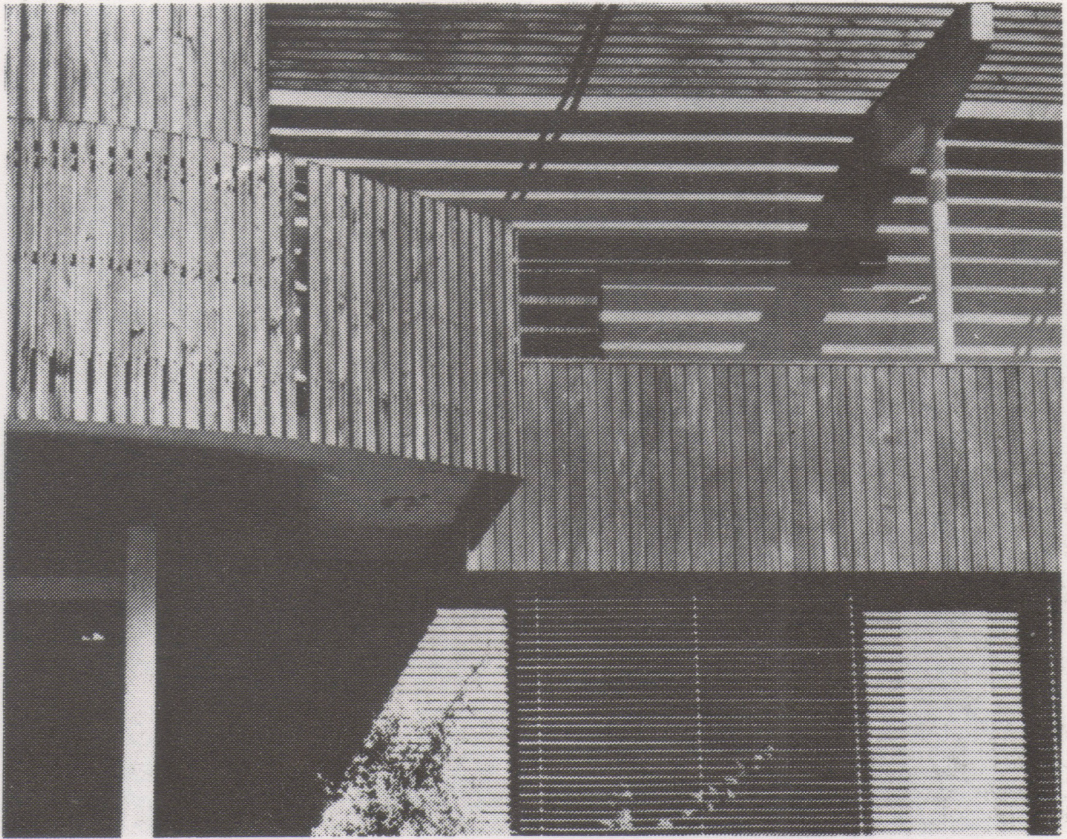
From here, there really is no way back, or right way to turn but down, even though the same deterrents and so reluctance applies to this detail of the Villa Maireia [Fig. 22, p107: *Image #68*], just as it did before, from a distance in image 33. The eye/s once again unwilling (or unable) to encroach and settle in this exposed space for any length of time, hindering my newly resolute gaze, continually pulling me away to any other image on the page. How long I have meanwhile spent staring at the corner of the two-family house [Fig. 20, p97: *Image #62*], or counting shadows cast by the hospital colonnade [Fig. 20, p97: *Image #64*], I cannot say, but I have no more than these lines to show for it, and no more reason for delay now I acknowledge it, yet again beating around the bush, even in its absence, that was in fact only a sapling or two, however the eye/s tried to frame it. But having strayed too close to avoid it, there is really no way to pass along without remarking in passing upon what we are shown of the balcony, four pages on from where we first encountered it. This close-up adjunct to image 33, surely no accident, with respect to both what came before, and what I have since pursued above - this image resembling both, and reawakening the mystery I misplaced by misconceiving of it as a manhunt.

38.9.9

Who would have thought we would find ourselves back 'here' again, on such familiar yet equivocal terrain [Fig. 22, p107: *Image #68*]. Gone are the distractions of the matted trees and foreground slope, gone is the shadow that so preoccupied the eye/s and deceived my disoriented mind, gone the bulk of the building and the man-made bank it stood on. Indeed most everything has been deemed unnecessary (or rendered secondary, for ingrained in memory, we well know this image extends far and wide beyond the frame), aside from incredibly? the one place we dare not look without looking away. This key section now held up, as if blown-up, for our forced inspection, with nowhere this time to hide or retreat, and no way past for this text without confronting it. This image thus presented evidentially, showing us, not only a detail of the timber cladding, and the play of shadows on the wall above, cast by the louvre overhanging the balcony, but also the absence of whatever form we saw before standing at the foot of the white pole that supports this structure. An absence coming no more than the matter of minutes separating image 33 from this - though who knows which came first, with no perceptible difference in the shadow below the balcony - surely confirming this now absent form was a figure, disappearing (or appearing) as swiftly as the photographer climbed up (or down) the slope. This image, showing us, not just a detail of the Villa Mairea, and the absence of the figure on the balcony, but also that of a missing wooden slat in the otherwise uninterrupted line of cladding on the façade. Showing us this missing slat, framed in such a way that we cannot help but also see the white pole supporting the joist above the balcony. Two 'absences' aligned, as though the presence of the missing slat on the left refers to the absence we cannot see anything of on the right, reminding us of the presence we saw there before, and in effect doubling its affect. This pairing also inverting that of the blossoming and bare trees above; blossom for the space of the missing slat, bare tree for the white pole. An unequal parallel, of course, and no more than a visual suggestion at first, yet both are pairs in terms of the absence of the presence they describe, with both as it were synchronized on the page, one above the other, echoing and reinforcing one another, and so also referring to one another. An upshot of course,



65



68

105

Figure 22. Scan, p105 (detail)

of the general likeness their images share, and for which they were certainly so arranged - the balcony and window below, and the balcony and window above - a connection made for us, and which only invites further connection.

38.9.10

Although looking back I realise the missing slat was already missing in image 33, just missed by me, at that distance, and with no good reason then to spot it or alight upon it, in a sense part of its special significance derives from the very fact of it having been missed, so that it remained to be found, belatedly appearing here to fortuitously revive the mystery I mistook for that of the photographer's identity. (And how ironic that this detail must have been fortuitous for him too). No matter that it was missing all along, or that taken alone it amounts to little more than damage or wear and tear, its agency here is of nothing less than a sign towards what else is neither here nor there - a presence in respect of the absent figure, and an absence in respect of the blossoming tree - this gap in the cladding sending us elsewhere, even so far as image 65, resuscitating the collapsed, flattened planes by fixing the flowers back on the blossoming tree, and expanding the space between the window and the dry stone wall. And with depth restored, bringing us back to the half-drawn blind, the black space below (and behind), lidded by the bowed shadow drooping at the sides, into the eye of the window.

[pause]

43.0

Returning to the light passing through the car park of the Jyväskylä police headquarters [Fig. 13, p69], what had struck me before as bright and precise now appears subdued. Every edge has softened and spread, every luminous blank space turned cloudy grey. The vivid, seductive light, that both drew me in and cast us out over the edge of the page, formerly so entrancing, seems to have burnt itself out, reduced to little more than the embers of a once febrile intensity which led me astray. No longer then the luring light that moved me while appearing to itself move, sparking incident after incident across

the frame, dazzling and distracting me from the depths of the monochrome. On the contrary, this scene now seems to glow spectrally, as though the weather has turned, and a storm is brewing, with what remains of the light (or the day) still showing through from behind the clouds before being extinguished and all else swept away. On the verge that is, of this landscape being completely changed, of it disappearing entirely; the camera put hastily away just as the rain begins to fall, cars are started and the ground is churned into puddles of mud. The various elements of this serendipitous composition undoing themselves, disassembling, moving on. Never to combine in quite the same way again. Yet, right at this moment, all this is foreboding, just visible in the landscape forming in the sky: as the clouds grow more threatening, mottled, louring, their new textures and topography emerge to the eye/s, in motion, where else but behind, back over our heads, according to the path of the tyre tracks in the foreground mud, curving towards us, and corroborating the coming downpour.

44.0

Perhaps. Though second time around, under this changed light, and with new eyes, can I really trust what I see? Is that the moon appearing low in the sky, centrally, barely risen above the building, barely visible through the distant grey clouds? Or a figure on the roof, standing by the door at the end of the second storey? The bright light may have dimmed, allowing us to see further into the depths of the gradients, but who is to say that this tonality could not also deceive me? At least this is not a photocopy, further worrying me with a supplemental, distorting layer to muddy the image and muddle the eyes. Here rather, if it were not already obvious from the start, from the creme tint of the paper, glimpses of the edges of the page or binding of the book, or my hands holding it down, all of which I have left intact, we are within colour space, and these reproductions are all flatbed scans. Page 117 from the single hardback copy at the library; the others from a paperback purchased online. And though the latter lies beside me on the desk, here, writing, I have fallen into the habit of working from these scans on screen; zooming in and out of the image, enlarging and reducing to slightly

different degrees each time, cropping the selection of the page in accordance with the passage or allowing it to guide me.

#### 44.1

My final confession, if indeed this amounts to one. For how else could we have moved so freely - so frictionlessly - in, around and between these pages if they were still physically bound (the cycle here at the click of a button). Now for instance, getting ever closer, the edges of the image start to blur and break down - their earlier 'uncertainty' (for the most part felt) becoming magnified, amplified... Lines that might once, from a distance have appeared pristine and definitive, and that we might have assumed unvarying, rigid and impenetrable, here on the scanned and magnified printed page appear to have bled a touch, now and again, as the ink spread unevenly through the fibres of the paper. Minuscule black smudges encroaching on the off-white page below the wheel arch of the car in the bottom right corner, or a slight angle shaved off the edge of the image top right; the image spreading itself out, the page eating it away, tiny notches, bite-marks taken here and there, erode the lines. Inconsequential details, more or less unobservable. Things the eye passes over and forgets, or simply corrects - adjusting for their irregularity by ironing out their creases. And yet, these traces are still present, microscopically significant, like bacteria or growth on a cell, evidence of something however small, but also leading us closer to the very matter of the image, its composition, its substance.

#### 44.2

At 13.2 x 16.5 cm, an increase of 220% percent, the halftone pattern that constitutes the image becomes visible, and what were smooth, if imprecise, edges reveal themselves grains, columns and rows of dots, on the page. A rug fraying at its edges, but with near perfect regularity. Better still, the edges of the image torn along a perforation, its secondary space ripped off and thrown away, leaving the image and page ever so slightly overlapping one another - diffusing into each another along their mutual boundaries. The colour scan smoothes the halftone, but the closer we get, the more grainy, mottled and

distorted the image becomes. A moiré effect appearing, radiating in waves out along the receding brick wall of the building, from the corner towards the van parked alongside, as the halftone and lines of the bricks seen in perspective become confused and interfere with one another, splaying lines in arcs upwards and downwards from the corner of the wall.

#### 44.3

There is a point beyond which we will see nothing more as a result of this enlargement, only the black and white dots alternating, their density building incrementally to simulate the gradients of the image, a topography that is totally flat, and where we reach the (internal) limits of the image as visual texture. But scrutinising the texture of this image, from the uneven edges of the image that we call the frame, scanning across left to right, their regularity occasionally wavers. At 16 x 20.5 cm [Fig. 23, p112], seams become visible, imperfections or misalignment in the fabric of the halftone where columns of dots have been pushed closer together or forced further apart, leaving light and dark channels through the image. One in particular, running down the centre through the clouds from the upper edge, parallel with the flagpole just a touch to its right, appears like a stitch in the halftone, at first black then white, leading to a small bright circle of light, not as I thought the moon but a daylight star, hanging over the building. Closing in still further, this blank white space more mundanely reveals itself to be a tear in the fabric of the image itself, a negative space, a hole in the sky, an opening or portal.

Town Hall, Alajärvi, 1969



Police headquarters, Jyväskylä, 1970

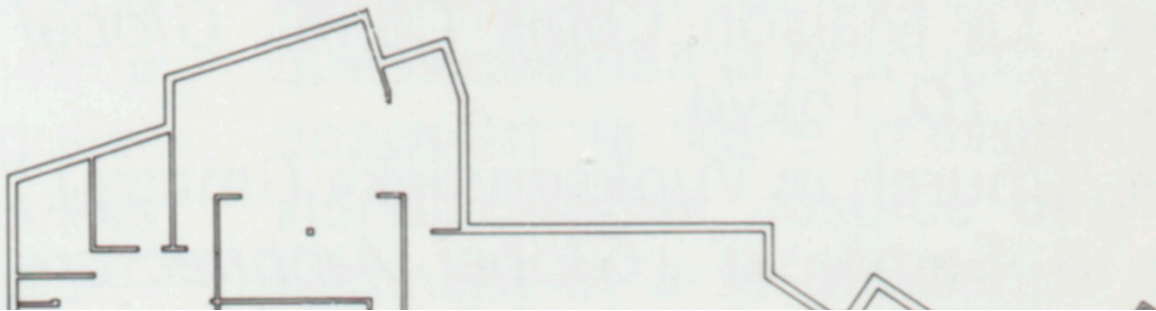


Figure 23. Scan, p117 (detail)



# Appendix A

## *'After affects: Architecture to Image'*

This thesis is comprised of two distinct parts - the preceding texts, written over the course of the past three and a half years, and a selection of artworks from a slightly longer period, inserted here between chapters and reproduced at greater length in the accompanying document. Both are intended to stand as a record of ongoing creative practice, drawing attention to the transitions and evolutions that have taken place during my studies, rather than force a conclusion, or definitive theoretical position on a project which has first and foremost explored its own conditions. When assembling my final submission I have rewritten and amended passages, but have not sought to update their original meanings or speculations, only to clarify, and likewise, while I have prioritised some artworks over others in my selections, I have not attempted to conceal the rationale under which each was first made. Since both texts and artworks are organised chronologically (albeit the artwork document runs in reverse from the most recent back to older works), my reasoning and struggle is left intact - in particular the decisive shift in approach that came about halfway through, as a result of reconsidering the relationship between my sculptural processes and the status of the image in my work, partly addressed in chapter 4 'Notes on Reading Images', but more broadly observable in the contrast between chapters 1-3 and the final longest text in chapter 5.

To unify and bring resolution to a project like this is therefore a tricky, even impossible assignment, and it is worth stating that in many ways this approach has simply been an extension of principles fundamental to my artistic practice, which has long aspired to the condition of temporariness and transience (both as an examination of this condition, and instinctive way of working) - whether materially within artworks themselves, in terms of my processes, or my attitude towards art-making in general.

I use images as a prompt which initiate various spatial actions in relation to our corporeal and architectural environment. Photocopying images, tearing pages from magazines, cutting wood, gluing together offcuts, painting walls, arranging and rearranging elements in space, etcetera - all these actions are for me gestures (the gesture of making to borrow from Vilém Flusser), each of which leave behind some trace of my engagement with an image. My working process is therefore an accumulation of gestures, with no one outcome or resolution, but many points of action and contemplation. As such, my works are temporal as well as spatial - accruing over time, with elements added or taken away, until they finally dissipate, break down, or become absorbed into the next. Produced in transition, my artworks do not attempt to reason or convince, but rather experience, and in turn produce experiences from an ongoing negotiation between image, structure, architecture, and space.

While my earlier works appropriated architectural forms found in the images I collect, and led to sculptures in some way fixated on the object of representation, my recent works do not identify or resemble anything specifically as a referent, but turn their attention instead to our interaction with images. For me the images I involve in works - be they architectural or fashion photography or drawn from other sources - are closely connected to the politics of desire - the way in which they initiate a sense of identification, longing, or phantasy. I am interested in the form(s) these affects take - how they are abstracted, mediated and displayed via the medium of the image, and in turn give rise to new material and spatial representations in the everyday lives of the viewer.

The same is true of my written work, that has only properly emerged as a part of my practice during this PhD, and might now be considered a gesture alongside those I employ in the studio. This began I now realise as an attempt to write the photograph photographically, through precise description and analysis of the visible, prioritised over context, but has slowly shifted to writing the affect of the photograph, while confronting the limitations and primacy of language as the medium of both viewing and narration. So

it is somehow natural and inevitable then, that the textual side of this thesis has become a creative endeavour in its own right, one characterised by sustained internal debate, and an accrual of thought and speculation - all centred on a certain kind of struggle around the place of images in my practice and beyond; of looking at images, viewing them, and reviewing them; of spectatorship and affect - engagement and disengagement. The etymological relationship between vision and theory - theorem emerging via late Latin from the Greek *theōrēma* ('speculation, proposition'), *theōrein* ('look at'), and *theōros* ('spectator') - suggesting, even colloquially, the critical potential of narrating an invested, affected viewing, all the more so one which allows for theoretical and subjective dispute.

Needless to say, all of this is important to state clearly, because I am keenly aware of how this thesis places different demands on the reader than would a traditional academic text. It had been my intention here to leave the two sides of my project separate, free to refer to one another, to either enlighten or obscure the other, their relationship, and the logic of this approach uncommented on. But I see now, reaching this end point, that these qualifications are necessary, so my methods may be understood in the spirit intended, as well as to belatedly articulate the contribution I believe this makes - to artistic research, if not to knowledge - of which the structure here is a key part.

Sculptural installation and writing. Two distinct approaches then, not necessarily binary, but not obviously complementary either. Two different routes by which to penetrate the same material via analysis of the experience as well as the consequent gesture itself. Which, incidentally, accounts for the absence of any explanatory text in the accompanying artwork presentation, as well as for those images included here between chapters - an acknowledgement of the fundamental division/split between these strategies; one that necessarily moves via language, the other that moves primarily via the body. While what they hold in common, is their mission, always just out of reach: a means of grasping the materiality of the image in terms of its affect - and to witness how this transforms the subject.

And though this is hardly unique, what may be considered novel is how the dual forms of this enterprise have engaged in their own deconstruction while in the midst of a deconstruction of the affects encountered, and in turn, the manner in which these have been routed back towards the reader's and viewer's own agency - involving both audiences in what has become an increasingly intimate matter for me as both writer and artist, while inviting their own intimate encounters with the material in question. The images that have latterly found their way into the work - or rather found their way back into my work, being one example of this, since images of girls (in various subcultural settings) were a prominent feature at the very beginnings of my practice, only to be eclipsed at a certain point by architectural imagery, in which I located similar concerns, but most observers crucially could not. The return of this older material alongside architectural photography and sculptural structures, has thus helped rewrite the rules of my work.

Indeed, the overriding accomplishment of this project might well be how both artwork and writing have progressed from formerly opaque, near-hermetic concerns, defined by an obsession with abstract architectural forms, but now opening up, by degrees, to a decidedly more personal outcome. To the extent that my most recent installations - presented in the video document at my viva and in the online RCA2021 exhibition, can almost be considered portraits of emotional identification and longing, captured in the fragmentary, spatial form of a sketch, while my most recent writing is in many ways an elegy to passing affect, encapsulated in my attachment to an image that signifies the death of the author - both architect and photographer, but also the 'death' of my own attachment to this mode of thought, having taken another step towards a way of working in which authorship - like resolution, and the singular artistic product - is one constituent, but only one, in a field of found, shared and diversified forces. Which is to say that what ultimately might be my conclusion here, is the modest realisation that the production of the subject, and subjecthood, through space, architecture and image, is also a discursive terrain, and my subject (and subjecthood) is not only space, architecture or image, but also the fictions we all construct and contribute to.

I would like to end this statement with an extended quotation from the opening pages of Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* that - like others which have exerted some influence on my practice (some of which are introduced in the following pages), I like to read - or misread - as both diagnosis and a call to arms.

“We will assume for the moment that we know nothing of theories of matter and theories of spirit, nothing of the discussions as to the reality or ideality of the external world. Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word, images perceived when my senses are opened to them, unperceived when they are closed. All these images act and react upon one another in all their elementary parts according to constant laws which I call laws of nature, and, as a perfect knowledge of these laws would probably allow us to calculate and to foresee what will happen in each of these images, the future of the images must be contained in their present and will add to them nothing new.

Yet there is *one* of them which is distinct from all the others, in that I do not know it only from without by perceptions, but from within by affections: it is my body. I examine the conditions in which these affections are produced: I find that they always interpose themselves between the excitations that I receive from without and the movements which I am about to execute, as though they had some undefined influence on the final issue. I pass in review my different affections: it seems to me that each of them contains, after its kind, an invitation to act, with at the same time leave to wait and even to do nothing. I look closer: I find movements begun, but not executed, the indication of a more or less useful decision, but not that constraint which precludes choice. I call up, I compare my recollections: I remember that everywhere, in the organic world, I have thought I saw this same sensibility appear at the very moment when nature, having conferred upon the living

being the power of mobility in space, gives warning to the species, by means of sensation, of the general dangers which threaten it, leaving to the individual the precautions necessary for escaping from them. Lastly, I interrogate my consciousness as to the part which it plays in affection: consciousness replies that it is present indeed, in the form of feeling or of sensation, at all the steps in which I believe that I take the initiative, and that it fades and disappears as soon as my activity, by becoming automatic, shows that consciousness is no longer needed. Therefore, either all these appearances are deceptive, or the act in which the affective state issues is not one of those which might be rigorously deduced from antecedent phenomena, as a movement from a movement; and, hence, it really adds something new to the universe and to its history. Let us hold to the appearances; I will formulate purely and simply what I feel and what I see: *All seems to take place as if, in this aggregate of images which I call the universe, nothing really new could happen except through the medium of certain particular images, the type of which is furnished me by my body.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p.17-18.

# Appendix B

## *'Theoretical Notes & Responses'*

The following passages are intended to provide a brief sample of the theorists who have influenced, and provided inspiration for my project. Given that this PhD began as a study of the subject in architecture, and ended as an investigation of the subject in relation to the photographic image of architecture - both deliberately, becoming aware of the importance of the image in the process of my research, but also by accident, in the course of fixating on these images in the studio - these are not a homologous group of references, but a selection that point in different directions. Just as I approach images as a space for imagination and intellectual elaboration, the same applies to my reading of these, and other texts in support of my project: not only focused on explicit meanings, but reading as it were between the lines, and finding utility in their unintended associations.

### Architecture & Eroticism

“In other words, architecture is not of interest because of its fragments and what they represent or do not represent. Nor does it consist in exteriorizing, through whatever forms, the unconscious desires of society or its architects. Nor is it a mere representation of those desires through some fantastic architectural image. Rather it can only act as a recipient in which your desires, my desires, can be reflected. Thus a piece of architecture is not architectural because it seduces, or because it fulfils some utilitarian function, but because it sets in motion the operations of seduction and the unconsciousness.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), p.96.

In his essay *'The Pleasure of Architecture'* (1977) Bernard Tschumi observes that there is an unreconcilable division between architecture as concept on the one hand, and as experience (of the subject and body) on the other, a paradox that renders it impossible to question the nature of spatial theory and spatial experience as one. Rather than attempt to probe this schism, Tschumi declares that "today the pleasure of architecture may lie both inside and outside such oppositions - both in the dialectic and in the disintegration of the dialectic",<sup>2</sup> a pleasure that he calls 'eroticism', "The pleasure of architecture simultaneously contains (and dissolves) both mental constructs and sensuality. Neither space nor concepts alone are erotic, but the junction between the two is."<sup>3</sup>

Tschumi's essay, made up of a series of short passages, each - appropriately - described as a 'Fragment' alongside a descriptive sub-heading, concludes with Fragment 10, 'Desire/Fragments', in which the Freudian notion of language "as a condition of the unconscious"<sup>4</sup> is applied to architecture in terms of the fragment: "the Freudian notion of fragments does not presuppose the breaking of an image, or of a totality, but the dialectical multiplicity of a process".<sup>5</sup> Equating architecture with language, Tschumi suggests we can only ever read a building in fragments - "of walls, of rooms, of streets, of ideas" - the erotic junction of space and concept occurring in the repetition of these "beginnings without ends".<sup>6</sup> Of course, this extends further still, for "there is always a split between fragments that are real and fragments that are virtual, between memory and fantasy" - their separation being less important than the 'passage' or 'movement' between, which is "neither a part of language nor of structure [...]; it is nothing but a constant and mobile relationship inside language itself."<sup>7</sup>

Or, in other words, desire. Although, intriguingly, Tschumi turns to the cinema to give this movement a name - to what he calls its perfect simulation, characterised as a

2 Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.83.

3 Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.89.

4 Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.94.

5 Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.95.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.



“movement toward something constantly missing, toward absence”.<sup>8</sup> Like architecture, we are told, ‘*A Streetcar Named Desire*’ (1951), his ideal here, is also made up of fragments, each successive “setting” of the film, and our movement between, a continual process of seduction and dissolution; a desire “never seen. Yet it remained constant. The same goes for architecture.”<sup>9</sup> Perhaps it should come as no surprise that the moving images of cinematic space so readily serve as an allegory for the unseen emotional unfolding of architectural experience (this is not the only such cinematic reference in Tschumi’s work), but it is nevertheless instructive of the extent to which the matter of this desire is hard to separate from visual representation, even in a discipline as supposedly corporal as architecture, in which visuality has been embedded from the start. Tschumi is at pains to distinguish his definition from “mere representation”, yet seems to overlook the function of the image in precisely the circuit of desire he describes, and its place in both the operations of seduction and the unconscious.

### Eros & The Subject

“Erotic space is not an a priori concept, nor an objectified geometric or topological reality. It is both the physical space of architecture at the inception of the Western tradition and the linguistic space of a metaphor, the electrified void between two terms that are brought together but kept apart.”<sup>10</sup>

Like Bernard Tschumi, Alberto Pérez-Gómez seeks to rationalise architectural space as the space of desire - albeit one rooted in a more thoroughly phenomenological, ethical program that avoids any reference to Freud or psychoanalysis, and takes a hostile position with regard to contemporary architecture. In ‘*Built Upon Love*’, Pérez-Gómez contends that “A partial or total ignorance of the deep relationship between love and architectural meanings has dire consequences, perpetuating the modern epidemic of

<sup>8</sup> Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.96.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006) p.36.

empty formalism and banal functionalism, condemning architecture to passing fashion or consumable commodity, and destining the cultures it frames to their present dangerous pathologies.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite being more closely aligned with Tschumi’s attitude to the architecture of our times, I have consistently returned to Pérez-Gómez’s text for its elaboration of the classical origins of eroticism - the lack, longing, and boundaries involved in subject-formation. Through discussions of Eros and Chōra, their significance in the cosmology of the Greek theatre, and thus the origins of Western architecture, Pérez-Gómez closely aligns the very creation (or discovery) of the mind, and hence the subject itself, to the architectural realm.

In Greek philosophy the space between subject and object is articulated as an erotic space, a physical interval. Pérez-Gómez outlines how classical Greek civilization was the first to conceive of architecture as an artifice distinct from the natural landscape, or topos. Plato named this architectural language chōra, to separate it from topos, a designation that for the first time acknowledged the spaces between things, and as a consequence, the edges and boundaries that separate all entities. Once the space between things was articulated, subject and object were in effect invented, and the space of desire, of Eros, set into motion: ‘Erotic space also becomes the physical interval between the work and the new observer/participant, and between the architect and his work’.<sup>12</sup>

To establish a definition of Eros, Pérez-Gómez turns to Anne Carson, whose study *‘Eros the Bittersweet’* acknowledges the paradoxical nature of the ‘Sweet-bitter Eros’ as a ‘convergence of love and hate, apprehended as a conflicted blend of action, sensation, and valorization’. Since the lover’s search is for what one doesn’t possess (‘no one ever desires what is not gone’), ‘Eros in Greek connotes want or lack’ - a desire that is extinguished the moment the object of desire is realised. The Greeks, we are told, ‘invented Eros

<sup>11</sup> Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love*, p.5.

<sup>12</sup> Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love*, p.34.

to account for the fundamental human condition in the Western tradition'. Eros then, represents this subjective condition, and negates its wholeness by desire.<sup>13</sup>

Pérez-Gómez's argues that if architectural space is acknowledged as a space of desire, and 'built upon love', the subject's inherent sense of lack can become integral to its formation. This lack can be elaborated in three components analogous to the constitution of Eros: the lover, the beloved, and the space-time that comes between them - an intermediary space that obtains its existential ground for both subject and object to remain securely bound. Desire is therefore a perpetual inception and dissolution, within which Eros functions to 'block fulfilment', thwarting any potential state of unity, and 'turn[ing] the subject into itself' through recognition of its selfhood.<sup>14</sup>

Pérez-Gómez relates Plato's conception of reality (being, becoming, and *chōra*) as analogous to the spatial composition of Greek theatre (spectator, actor, and a space between), which is often considered the true precedent of western art and architecture. The form of the amphitheatre introduces a distance between the mind and world that is revealed through desire. "The introduction of the amphitheatre acutely illustrates the gap that begins to open with the arrival of Eros/Cupid and the advent of philosophy. The theatre is a place to understand the world by seeing and hearing."<sup>15</sup> This gap however, did not separate the spectator from the performance in the Cartesian sense of a disembodied gaze: spectators were in fact caught in something like rapt contemplation, a state that Pérez-Gómez likens to the catharsis of direct participation in primitive ritual. Just as the function of Eros causes the subject to realise itself, so too the gap or distance between spectator and performance in Greek theatre was more akin to the space of consciousness, or recognition, of the self: "Unlike its previous articulations in a mythical horizon, desire began to be perceived in relation to an understanding of death as something that happens to the self".<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love*, p.32.

<sup>14</sup> Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love*, p.48.

<sup>15</sup> Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love*, p.49.

<sup>16</sup> Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love*, p.47.

One of primary functions of architecture is as a space of dwelling in which our desires and their traces are constituted. But beyond its forms and functionality, architecture not only becomes an integral part of our experience, but also a limitation of the human subject as a corporal and existential being. My interest in the erotic space of desire in relation to architecture draws on our existential ground: the apprehension of the subject/self, and object/space, their relationship, and where this falters, the potential transgression(s) that lead to different ways of defining boundaries between them.

### Spatial Temptation & Dissolution

“Here the limits of Foucault’s interpretation of Enlightenment space become evident. Still tied to the Enlightenment’s own phenomenology of light and dark, clear and obscure, his insistence on the operation of power through transparency, the panoptic principle, resists exploration of the extent to which the pairing of transparency and obscurity is essential for power to operate. For it is in the intimate associations of the two, their uncanny ability to slip from one to the other, that the sublime as instrument of fear retains its hold — in that ambiguity that stages the presence of death in life, dark space in bright space. In this sense, all the radiant spaces of modernism, from the first Panopticon to the Ville Radieuse, should be seen as calculated not on the final triumph of light over dark but precisely on the insistent presence of the one in the other.”<sup>17</sup>

Among the many texts in Anthony Vidler’s 1992 collection *‘The Architectural Uncanny’* that have informed my work, I have consistently returned to the essay ‘Dark Space’, which charts connections between overlooked aspects of Enlightenment spatial thinking, the subject tempted (and consumed) by architectural space, and the pathologies that haunt the built environment of today.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) p.172.

Vidler cites various examples of the subject's desire (including that of the architect as subject) to transgress its physical boundaries, all of which share an image of space not as something light and visible, but as something dark and impenetrable. He describes the work of certain Enlightenment architects, such as Étienne-Louis Boullée, a French neo-classicist who was fascinated by the idea of an architecture that would 'speak of death', by creating "an image of an architecture not only without real depth, but one that deliberately played on the ambiguities between absolute flatness and infinite depth, between his own shadow and the void."<sup>18</sup> Boullée, we are further told, displays a "relentless desire to mimic the 'engulfing' of the subject into the void of death", and via the work of contemporary Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, we arrive at the image of space as "an instrument of monumental dissolution."<sup>19</sup>

Having thus retraced the origins of Enlightenment dark space, Vidler proceeds to associate these architectural fantasies to Roger Caillois' concept of 'legendary psychasthenia' - the capacity of certain animals to visually merge with their environment - and the resemblance of this biological 'temptation by space' to the pathological experience of subjects suffering from phobias such as schizophrenics, who Caillois observed, believed themselves to be 'literally eaten up by space': "To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them ... It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put."<sup>20</sup>

Despite the violence present in these symptoms, Vidler points out that Caillois did not ultimately consider the dark space as something negative, and quotes him in turn quoting Eugene Minkowski, to state: "darkness is not the mere absence of light; there is

<sup>18</sup> Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, pp.171-172.

<sup>19</sup> Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, p.173.

<sup>20</sup> Roger Callois, 1938, cited in Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, p.174.

something positive about it. While light space is eliminated by the materiality of objects, darkness is 'filled,' it touches the individual directly, envelops him, penetrates him, and even passes through him: hence 'the ego is permeable for darkness while it is not so for light'".<sup>21</sup>

Though he concludes the chapter by returning to Boullée, leaving us with a lasting image of a subject tempted by space, driven by an impulse to be absorbed and ultimately lost in the dark (or void), Vidler's ultimate purpose in all this is to propose a counter narrative to that of most post-Foucauldian historians who have tended to focus their efforts on the deconstruction of transparent space as the "paradigm of total control", ignoring the fact that this paradigm was identified by Foucault as itself "constructed out of an initial fear [...] of Enlightenment in the face of 'darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men and truths'".<sup>22</sup> By thus recuperating the earlier pathology, Vidler demonstrates why the subject-space relations of today are such that the "organic space of the body and the social space in which that body lives and works [can] no longer can be identified as separate."<sup>23</sup>

While this essay initially fascinated me for the implication that our lives in architectural space might be unwittingly inflected by such neuroses, lingering not only in the fabric of our built environment, but in the inheritance of art-historical repression, I have - perhaps inevitably - found these ideas resonate more profoundly for me in image - rather than actual - space. Being tempted by, and then absorbed in an image - whether a function of dark or light, or simply the very illusion of absolute flatness and infinite depth - there is the potential for the dissolution of the subject - the temporary loss of the I in the architecture of the visual image, followed by its subsequent reconstitution as corporal whole.

21 Roger Callois, 1938, cited in Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, p.175.

22 Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, pp.167-8.

23 Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, p.168.

## Movement & Relation

In his study of the continued relevance of the picturesque to contemporary cultural theory, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (2007), John F. MacArthur proposes a non-sensual mimetic relation between the subject and architecture, drawing on aspects of the picturesque movement-effect that have informed modern theories of affect.

MacArthur examines how the “paradox of applying pictorial form to lived experience undoes a too easy opposition of movement and stasis”,<sup>24</sup> and what this means for different approaches to architectural experience. In particular he considers affect as a type of movement, distinct from that of bodily motion through space, and relates this to both imitation and mimesis. MacArthur cites Henri Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* in which affect is closely linked to the bodily-ness of emotion, “the sensation of being affected occurs when one moves, outwardly as it were, the parts of the body which are normally experienced as a perceptive surface, a surface which receives the [external] world and takes it into the body.”<sup>25</sup>

Movement is commonly associated with being either literally in motion or motionless, and by extension implies the interaction of the physical body with a specific space and time, and the measurement of these parameters through the realm of our senses. Yet Bergson makes it clear that when in the grip of emotions, such as when one cries, the perceptive surface of our vision moves not to perceive visual information, but to release tears. Architecture, MacArthur suggests, building on Heinrich Wölfflin’s theory of empathy in relation to the Baroque, might be thought to operate on the same terms: “The motion or motionlessness of the subject in the experience of architecture has nothing (necessarily) to do with movement. Movement is when the building becomes

<sup>24</sup> John F. MacArthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.2.

<sup>25</sup> MacArthur, *The Picturesque*, p.256.

present to a body that has an image of itself as affectable, causing in the body a kind of movement between sensation and action”.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, both self and environment are always evolving between one and the other - between the receptivity and productivity of affect, and the mimesis on which this movement relies. This is, to be clear, a wholly different train of thought to the idea, prevalent for much of the last century, that “buildings, cities and gardens [are] things that move us; devices to construct certain kinds of visual and spatial experience”.<sup>27</sup> Rather, MacArthur’s text recovers the idea of a non-sensual mimetic relation between the subject and architecture, drawing on aspects of the picturesque movement-effect that have informed modern theories of affect. My own recourse to this here, is to suggest possible connections between such thinking and the relationships I propose between subject, architecture, image, and emptiness.

The visual movements and temporal experiences of the subject in space are not the opposite of a purported stillness of architecture, but implied within its very existence. Architecture constantly resembles and mimics the affected state of the subject. Thus architecture simultaneously consists of movements/representations of affects within the concrete and actual, and this process of formation is inherently fragile, indeterminate and transient. However, the affected and affecting subject incorporates multiple levels of perception - the psychical, corporal and psychological, in which its formation is not always conscious. The affect that occurs in the subject is not always evident through bodily sensations, and the relationship between subject and the external environment is not always in equilibrium or (logically) reciprocal. MacArthur mentions Benjamin’s analogy of a child at play to understand the nature of mimicry in human behaviour: “The goal of this imitation is not to re-present the visual form of the object, but to approach the object. When the child takes a pose in imitation of a windmill, all the meaning is in the appearance that the child makes, but none of it in the adequacy of the

<sup>26</sup> MacArthur, *The Picturesque*, p.257.

<sup>27</sup> MacArthur, *The Picturesque*, p.261.



image to the thing. Semblance is a movement towards the object, or of the object onto the subject, not the deceit by which the appearance might be taken for the thing.”<sup>28</sup> In a way, perception and sensibility move outwards from the body, rather than in, from which the pictorial movements of architecture mimic or resemble the state of subject.

### The Photographic Condition

“The significance of the image as revealed in the process of scanning therefore represents a synthesis of two intentions: one manifested in the image and the other belonging to the observer. It follows that images are not ‘denotative’ (unambiguous) complexes of symbols (like numbers, for example) but ‘connotative’ (ambiguous) complexes of symbols: They provide space for interpretation.”<sup>29</sup>

In his short treatise, *‘Towards a Philosophy of Photography’*, first published in German in 1983, Vilém Flusser presents a phenomenological (and frequently etymological) analysis of the photographic image as symptomatic of our post-industrial and post-historical condition. According to Flusser, the photograph is one example of a ‘technical image’, the superficial product of an ‘apparatus’ (in this case the camera) that pre-determines the outcome within a finite range of possibilities, “The camera is programmed to produce photographs, and every photograph is a realization of one of the possibilities contained within the program of the camera.”<sup>30</sup>

Flusser’s thinking both reduces the photographic image to its fundamental material and mechanistic elements, revealing them for what they are, while also elaborating our relationship with this system as one that threatens our very orientation in the world - the technical image “restructuring our ‘reality’” and turning imagination into hallucination.<sup>31</sup> My interest in Flusser’s work is concerned with the former, and his understanding that, in

28 MacArthur, *The Picturesque*, pp.255-6.

29 Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion, 2000), p.8.

30 Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, p.26.

31 Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, p.10.

viewing technical images, we must negotiate their inherent 'magical power', bound up in their surfaces - "a magical model for the actions of an observer".<sup>32</sup>

Flusser begins by asserting that photographic images are only ever surfaces, in which the four dimensions of space and time are reduced to two. He states, "This specific ability to abstract surfaces out of space and time and to project them back into space and time is what is known as 'imagination'. It is the precondition for the production and decoding of images. In other words: the ability to encode phenomena into two dimensional symbols and to read these symbols."<sup>33</sup> The importance of images therefore lies on the surface, and reading this surface (the movement of our gaze 'scanning' elements within the frame) involves the reconstruction of abstract dimensions.

There are two intentions in the process of viewing, or reading images. One is manifest within the image itself (what it manifestly is), and the other is what the viewer brings to the image - what we invest in it (our own motives). This dual, or shared structure of meaning, which belongs to both image and viewer, means that images are not conclusive in and of themselves, but ambiguous complexes of symbols open to interpretation. In scanning the surface of an image, we build temporal relationships between elements, moving back and forth between them. We are told, "The time reconstructed by scanning is an eternal recurrence of the same process."<sup>34</sup> Yet this repetition also leads us to invest particular elements with significance - the movement of the gaze around the image drawn repeatedly to one thing that comes to assume greater, or even primary significance, which in turn confers this onto other elements, leading to 'complexes' of significance that for the viewer come to appear the very meaning of the image itself. In this way, "the space reconstructed by scanning is the space of mutual significance"<sup>35</sup> - or rather, it is the viewer who, in response to the manifestation of the photograph, produces the significance of any given image based on his or her own intentions.

32 Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, p.70.

33 Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, p.8.

34 Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, p.9.

35 Ibid.

While, or perhaps because, Flusser chooses not to illustrate his text, his theories do - in my opinion - invite some implementation, or application as a tool in the consideration of particular images. There is a challenge inherent in his polemic, to approach the photographic image, its apparatus (and by extension those of the technologies involved in their reproduction), both as a technical, material production, and a space of mutual significance.

### The Eye of Realism

“Everything in my novels is pure invention. It may be seen with the precision of something that is there, in front of my eyes, but it never is! If it were, I would not wish to describe it. It is in my brain and not in front of my eyes. During the first years of my work people always wrote, “Robbe-Grillet means objectivity, the scientific eye.” Perhaps, but the scientific eye is looking at what is in the imagination.”<sup>36</sup>

So answers Alain Robbe-Grillet in a 1988 interview by Shusha Guppy for *The Paris Review*; a statement which speaks directly to my interest in his writing, both from a technical perspective, in terms of the invention of an ‘objective’ mode of apprehension in prose form, as well as the larger philosophical implications around authorship that inevitably follow. What Robbe-Grillet has pursued in fictional space, I have found myself confronting, and experimenting with in actuality - the ‘scientific’ eye in my case turned towards the visible, as a means of approaching the unseen, and so imaginary effects/affects that proceed from viewing images.

Published in 1957, *Jealousy*, or rather *La Jalousie* in the original French, is the work to which I have the greatest affinity. While the intersection of the erotic scenario and overtly architectural setting accounts for what first drew me to the text, these themes

<sup>36</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet, “Alain Robbe-Grillet, The Art of Fiction No. 91.” Interview by Shusha Guppy. In *The Paris Review*, Issue 99. (New York: Paris Review, Inc., 1986). Available at: <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2819/the-art-of-fiction-no-91-alain-robbe-grillet>. [Accessed 21 June 2021]

are ultimately inseparable from the formulation of the 'eye' - that is, the narration - through which everything is perceived and communicated.

According to Zahi Zalloua in a 2008 essay on reading *La Jalousie*, "Robbe-Grillet vacillates between (and conflates) two versions of realism: an objective realism (which accords primacy to objects) and a subjective one (stressing the primacy of perception)"<sup>37</sup> - both of which issue from the same first-person narrator. While the former asserts the "neutrality of the external world",<sup>38</sup> in which objects simply exist, outwith attachment or interpretation, as a material, non-signifying reality, the latter "[privileges] the individual's fragmented, precarious, and contingent perception"<sup>39</sup> where everything seen through the eye is subject to the distorting effects of human consciousness.

Though on the face of it, a text that combines these dual realisms might seem to lead to irresolvable conflict, how they coincide and affect one another is precisely the point of interest. Robbe-Grillet makes this the structural enigma at the heart of the novel - reimagining the narrator as an absence, in Maurice Blanchot's words a 'lack that allows everything to be said and everything to be seen',<sup>40</sup> evacuated of any emotional investment in the objects, events, memories and fantasies it equanimously observes and relates, in minute, excessive detail. Lacking any physical or referential presence in the story, what is left appears little more than an 'eye' - or even an apparatus - restricted, in its inherent opticality, to scanning the surface of imaginary appearances.

37 Zahi Zalloua, "Alain Robbe-Grillet's "La Jalousie": Realism and the Ethics of Reading." In *Journal of Narrative Theory*, Vol.38, No.1. (Ypsilanti, MI: Eastern Michigan University, 2008), p.19.

38 Ibid.

39 Zalloua, "Alain Robbe-Grillet's "La Jalousie," p.20.

40 Maurice Blanchot, 1959, cited in Zalloua, "Alain Robbe-Grillet's "La Jalousie," p.16.

## Archive Fever

In an essay on the intersection of photographic culture and economic life, Allan Sekula considers the photographic archive as a “territory of images”,<sup>41</sup> one whose unity is imposed by ownership. Whether the property of individuals or institutions, the photographer or some other entity, public or private, “the model of the archive, of the quantitative ensemble of images, is a powerful one in photographic discourse”, exerting “a basic influence on the character of the truths and pleasures experienced in looking at photographs”.<sup>42</sup> Sekula’s text not only demonstrates how archives “embody the power inherent in accumulation, collection, and hoarding as well as that power inherent in the command of the lexicon and rules of a language”,<sup>43</sup> but also the dangers inherent to the medium of photography that arise when images are decontextualised within the larger archival structure: “In an archive, the possibility of meaning is ‘liberated’ from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, an abstraction from the complexity and richness of use, a loss of context. Thus the specificity of ‘original’ uses and meanings can be avoided and even made invisible”.<sup>44</sup>

Writing with these points in mind, my own use of the term in this thesis is intended to conjure such associations and theoretical issues, while also marking in contrast (both through references in my texts and the accompanying illustrations) how my collection and methods are hardly archival at all. Though there is undeniably a biographical aspect to my collection (an evidential quality that is imbedded in the very notion of the archive), its pursuit, I would argue, works in opposition to many established norms. For instance, not only are the materials I collect appropriated (rather than purchased or acquired ‘legitimately’), they are poorly appropriated through (weak) reproduction, becoming part of a deliberately disorderly collection that defies any systematic organisational logic. Of

<sup>41</sup> Allan Sekula, “Reading An Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capitalism.” In Wells, L. ed. *The Photography Reader*. 2nd Edition. (London: Routledge, 2019), p.444.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Sekula, “Reading An Archive,” p.446.

<sup>44</sup> Sekula, “Reading An Archive,” pp.444-445.

course, aspects of Sekula's criticism do apply, and are investigated in my texts; the loss of context, and abstraction of meaning in particular, but rather than "a compulsive desire for completeness, a faith in an ultimate coherence imposed by the sheer quantity of acquisitions",<sup>45</sup> my archival compulsion tends more towards the (literal and metaphorical) fever of disorder, closer in spirit to what Jacques Derrida calls a 'mal d'archive':

"In any case, there would be no future without repetition. And thus, as Freud might say (this would be his thesis), there is no future without the specter of the oedipal violence that inscribes the superrepression into the archontic institution of the archive, in the position, the auto-position or the hetero-position of the One and of the Unique, in the nomological arkhē. And the death drive. Without this evil, which is also archive fever, the desire and the disorder of the archive, there would be neither assignation nor consignation."<sup>46</sup>

45 Sekula, "Reading An Archive," p.446.

46 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Trans. E. Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.80-81.

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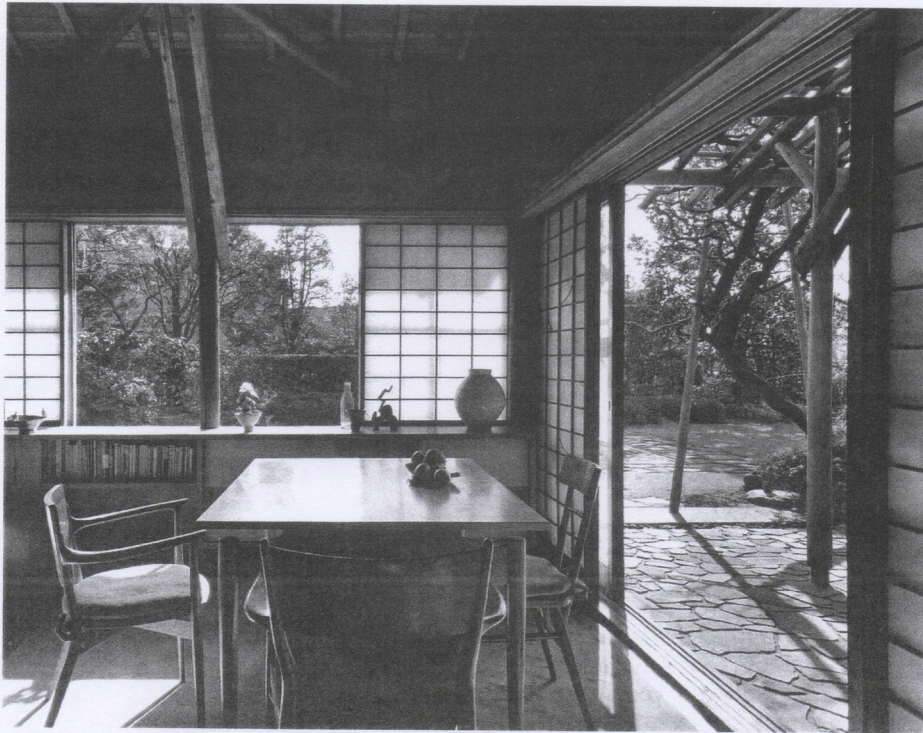
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**DUPLICATE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR REMOVAL**



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Figure 3. Photocopy, "Images 2-3", 29.7 x 21 cm



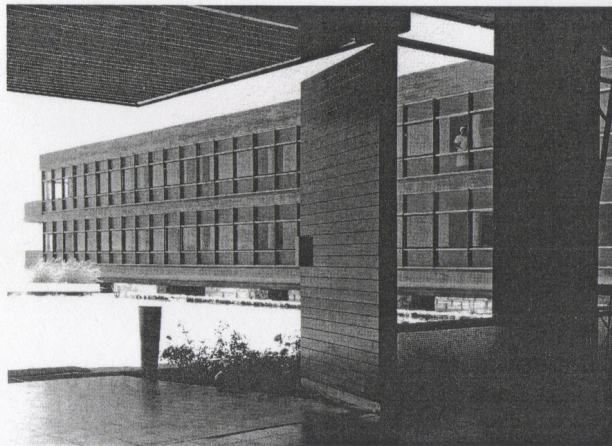
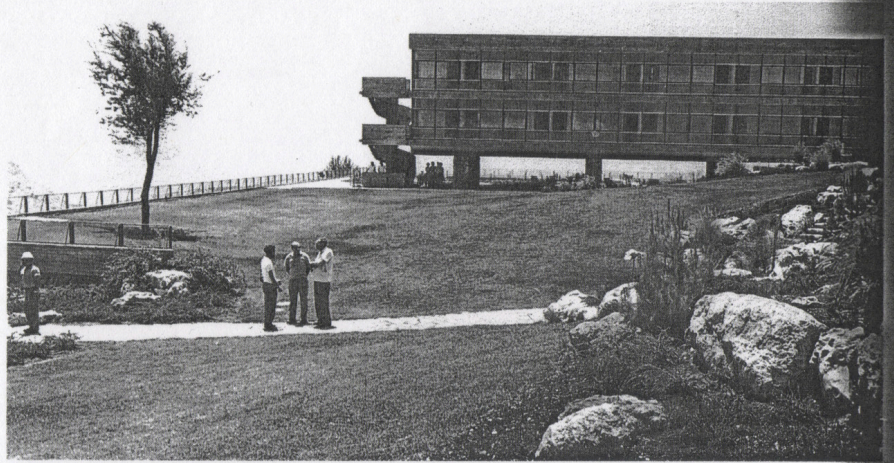
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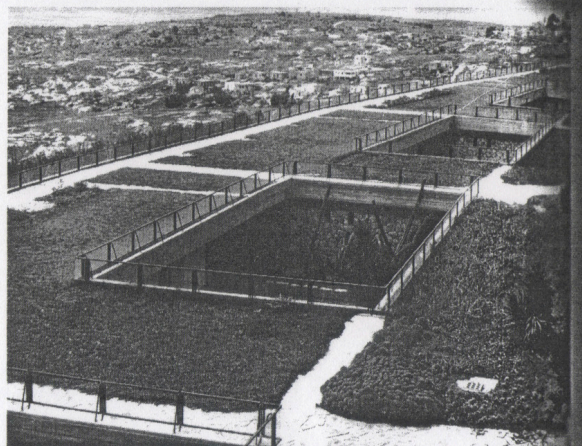
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Figure 4. Photocopy, "Images 4-5", 29.7 x 21 cm



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[39-37] זאב רכטר, משה זרחי, יעקב רכטר, בית הבראה "מבטחים" ע"ש י. שפרינצק, נצרת, 1956-60

Figure 7. Photocopy, "page 427", 22 x 28 cm

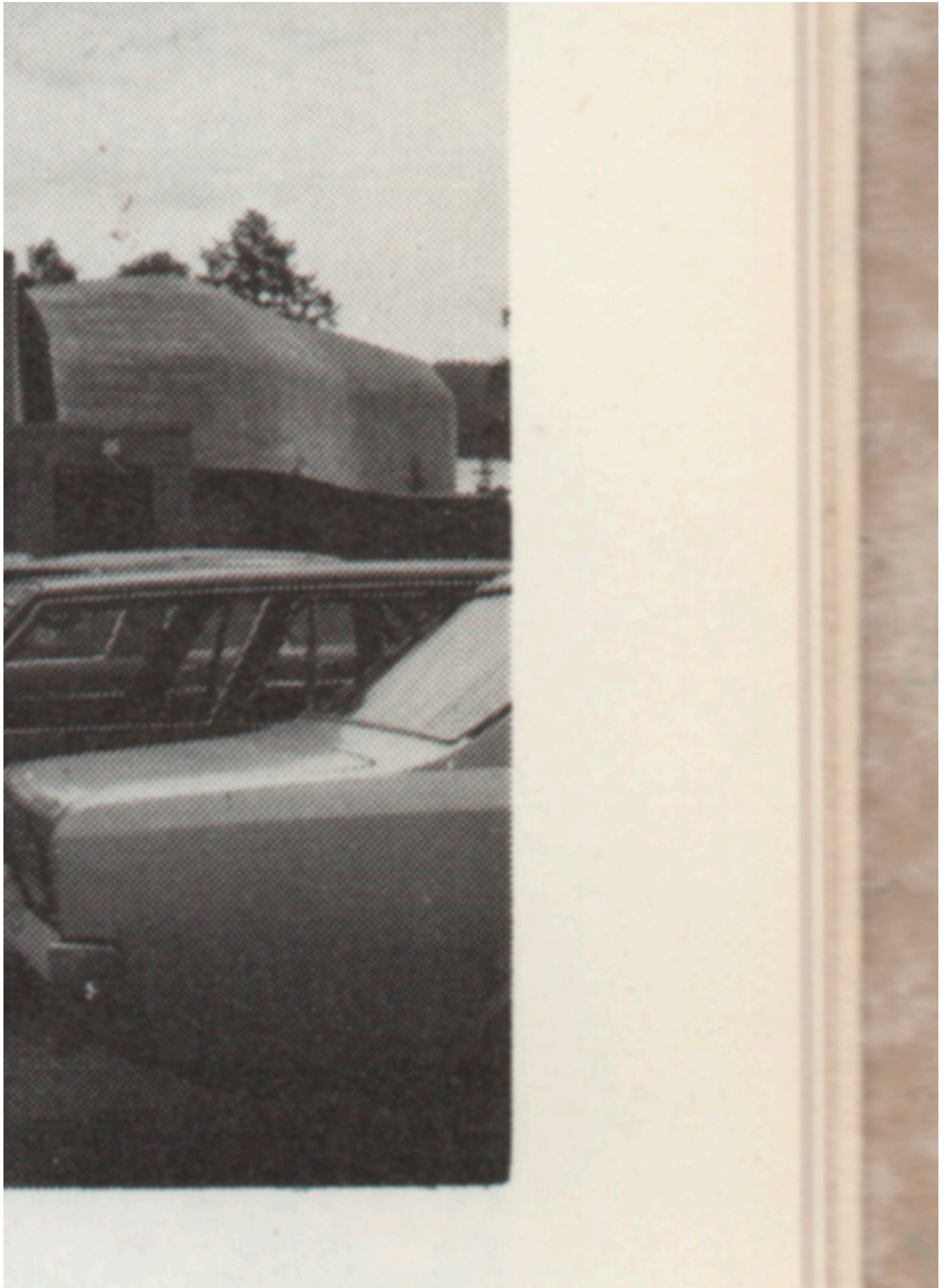


Figure 12. Scan, p117 (detail)





Town Hall, Alajärvi, 1969



Police headquarters, Jyväskylä, 1970

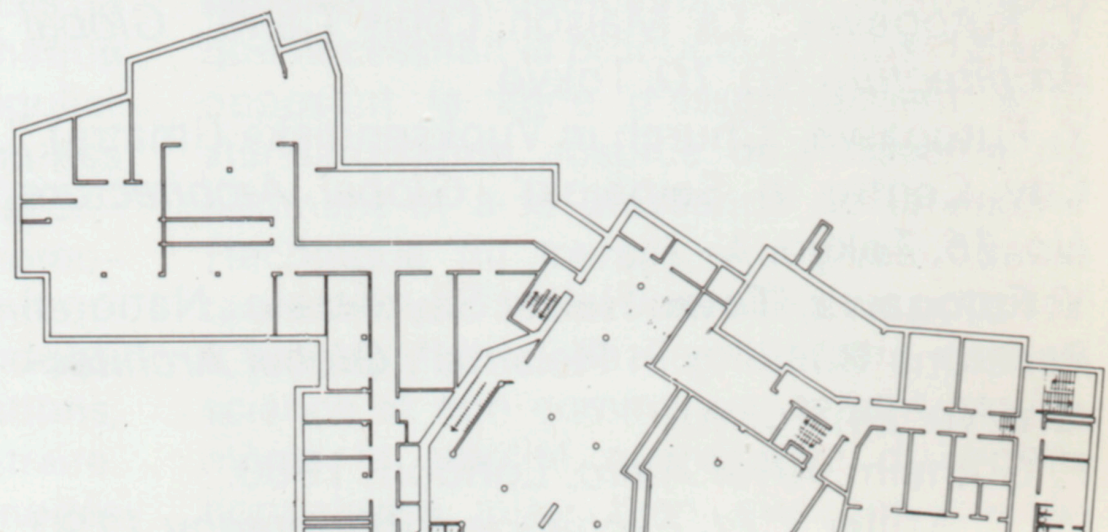


Figure 13. Scan, p117 (detail)

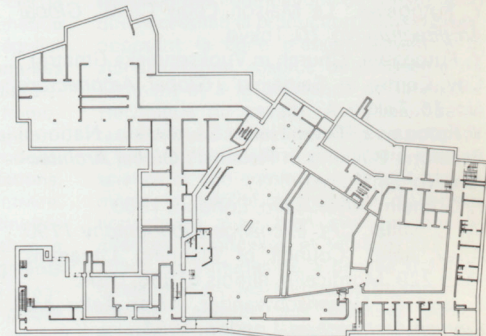
- 1969 Town Hall, Alajärvi
- 1969 Library, Kokkola : project
- 1969 Academic Bookshop, Helsinki
- 1969 Kokkonen House, Järvenpää
- 1969 Water tower, Institute of Technology, Otaniemi
- 1969 Sauna and summer house, Pajanne
- 1969 Municipal Theatre, Seinäjoki : project
- 1970 Sports Institute, University, Jyväskylä
- 1970 Mount Angel Benedictine College Library, Salem, Oregon, USA
- 1970 Parish centre, Alajärvi
- 1970 Villa Schildt, Tammisaari
- 1970 Police Headquarters, Jyväskylä (part of the Administrative and Cultural Centre)
- 1970 (?) Theatre, Alajärvi : project
- 1970 Museum of Modern Art, Shiraz, Iran : project
- 1971 Finlandia Concert Hall, Helsinki
- 1971 Extensions to the Institute of Technology, Otaniemi
- 1972 Project for the city centre, Helsinki
- 1972 Villa Erica, Turin, Italy : project
- 1973 Art Museum, Aalborg, Denmark (with Elissa Aalto and Jean-Jacques Barvel)
- 1973 Alvar Aalto Museum, Jyväskylä
- 1973 Fire-testing laboratory, Otaniemi
- 1974 Administrative building for the City Electric Co., Helsinki
- 1974 Enso-Gutzeit administrative building annexe, Helsinki : project
- 1974 Sculpture for the Finnish Embassy, Brasilia, Brazil
- 1975 Lappia House, Theatre and Congress Hall, Rovaniemi
- 1975 Congress Wing of the Finlandia Hall, Helsinki
- 1975 Mid-West Institute of Scandinavian Culture, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, USA
- 1976 University of Reykjavik, Iceland : project
- 1978 Church, Lahti
- 1978 City office building, Jyväskylä (part of the Administrative and Cultural Centre)
  
- 1976 Died 11th May



Town Hall, Alajärvi, 1969

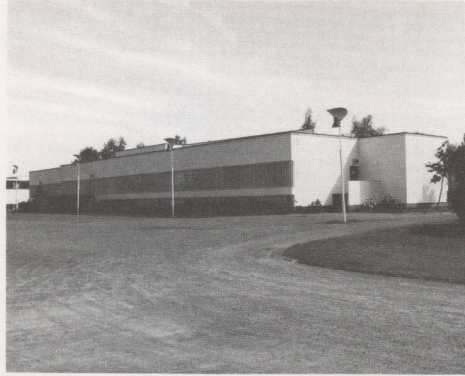


Police headquarters, Jyväskylä, 1970

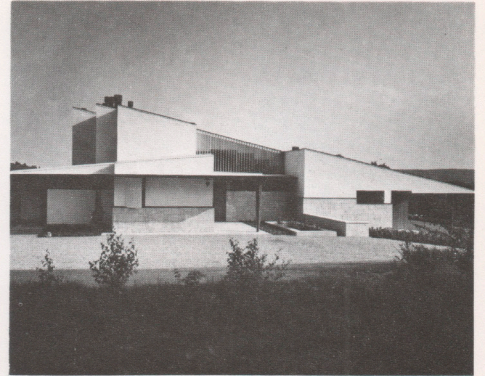


Lappia House, Rovaniemi, 1975 : basement plan

Figure 14. Scan, p117, 29.7 x 21.6 cm



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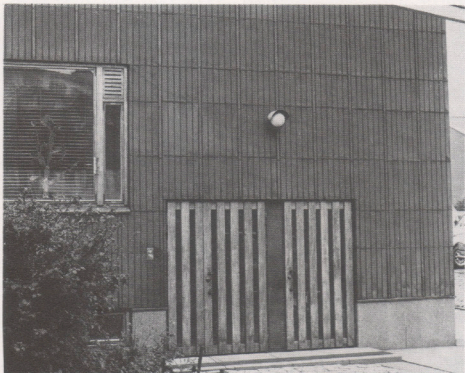
- 45 Municipal Library, Seinäjoki : general view, showing screening of windows looking onto central area
- 46 Villa Carré, Bazoche, France : side elevation, showing painted brickwork and screening of window
- 47 Town Hall, Säynätsalo : general view, showing screening of upper windows (Library) etc.
- 48 Alvar Aalto Museum, Jyväskylä : general view, showing roof lights and tiling to walls passing over windows
- 49 Kulttuuritalo, Helsinki : detail of 'screen' door and corrugated copper cladding
- 50 Church, Seinäjoki : detail of interior screen
- 51 Town Hall, Seinäjoki : detail of window with half-round tiled surface carried across mullions, forming 'screen' and layering surface
- 52 Central Finland Museum, Jyväskylä : view of entrance, showing screen to lecture room window with screen proud of wall
- 53 Municipal Library, Rovaniemi : view of entrance, showing clerestory, tiled walls and screened window



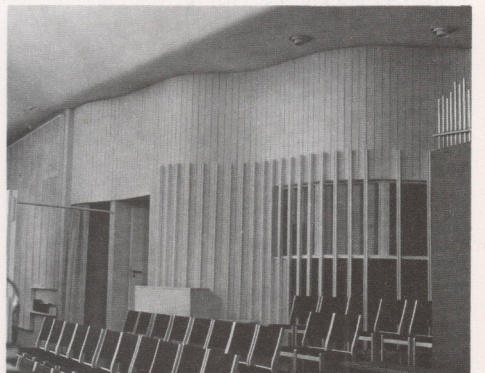
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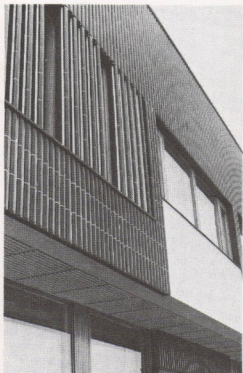
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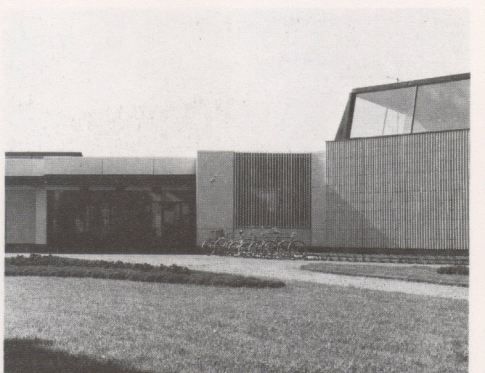
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Figure 15. Scan, p103, 29.7 x 21.6 cm



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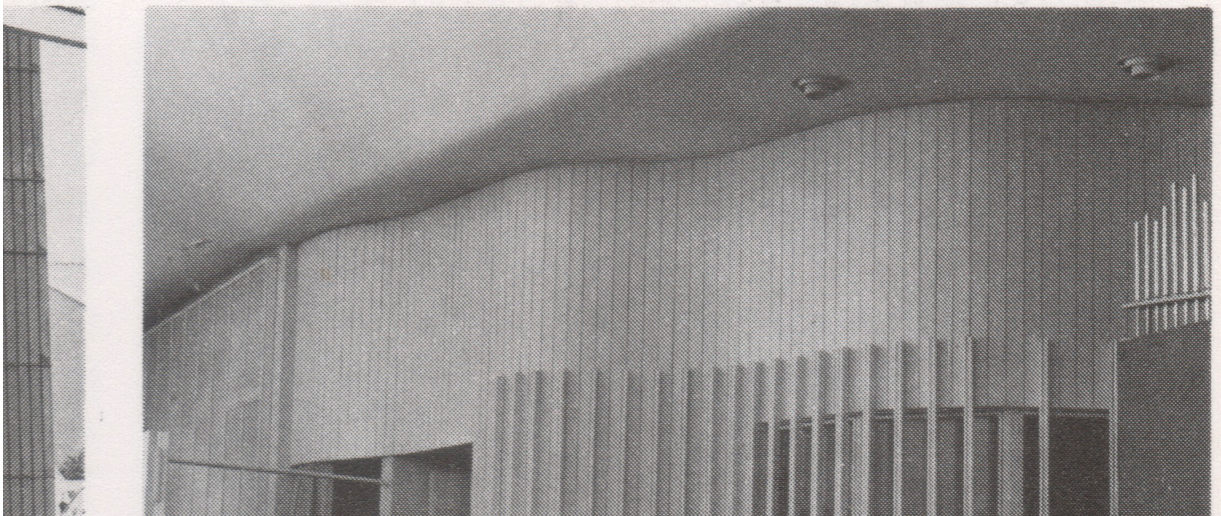


Figure 16. Scan, p103 (detail)



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Figure 17. Scan, p103 (detail)

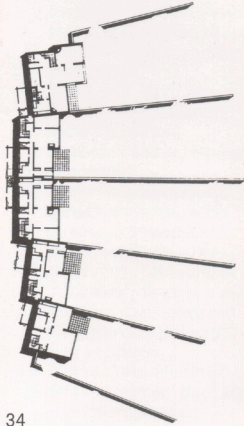
- 32 Enso-Gutzeit building, Helsinki : general view showing three-dimensional grid, with break to allow vehicle entrance
- 33 Villa Mairea, Noormarku : general view showing curved balcony against rectilinear massing
- 34 Terrace housing for supervisory staff, Sunila : typical floor plan showing distension of the planning grid
- 35 Terrace housing for factory staff, Sunila
- 36 Hansaviertel apartments, West Berlin



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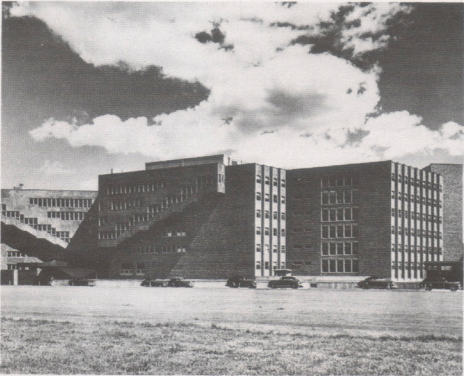


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- 37 Baker House, MIT Senior Dormitory, Cambridge, USA : general view showing the expression of the staircase route
- 38 City Electricity Company, Helsinki : aerial view showing central 'atrium'
- 39 Apartments for National Pensions staff, Helsinki : view of staircase
- 40 Enso-Gutzeit building, Helsinki : rear elevation, showing cutaway volume and system of 'screens'
- 41 City Electricity Company, Helsinki : toplit internal 'atrium' of banking hall



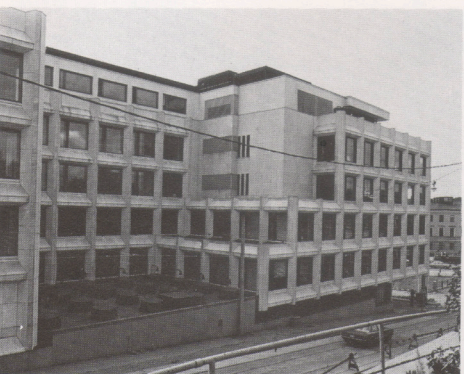
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Figure 18. Scan, p101, 29.7 x 21.6 cm

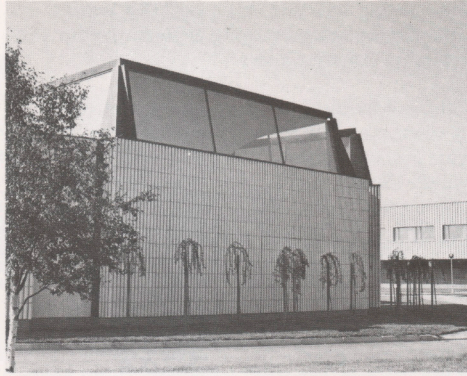


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Figure 19. Scan, p101 (detail)

- 59 Municipal Library, Rovaniemi : exterior of reading room, showing 'corduroy' effect of tiling, and internal reflecting surfaces to clerestory window
- 60 City Electricity Company, Helsinki : detail showing corrugated copper cladding
- 61 Alvar Aalto Museum, Jyväskylä : view of roof light and surface, with flat and half-round tiles giving 'corduroy' effect
- 62 Two-family house, Jyväskylä : general view, showing new timber cladding and altered staircase, and 'corduroy' surface effect
- 63 Finnish pavilion, Paris Expo 1937 : detail of timber cladding
- 64 Hospital, Alajärvi : general view, showing colonnade and timber cladding
- 65 Architect's house, Helsinki : general view, showing timber cladding
- 66 Finnish Pavilion, New York World's Fair 1939 : undulating timber wall of interior
- 67 Finnish Pavilion, Paris Expo : view of entrance, showing timber cladding
- 68 Villa Mairea, Noormarku : detail of timber cladding



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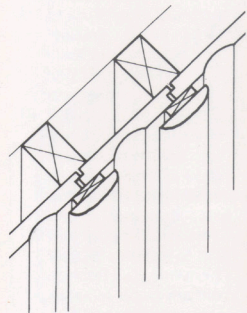
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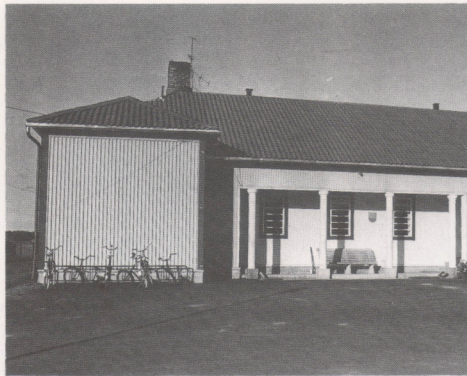
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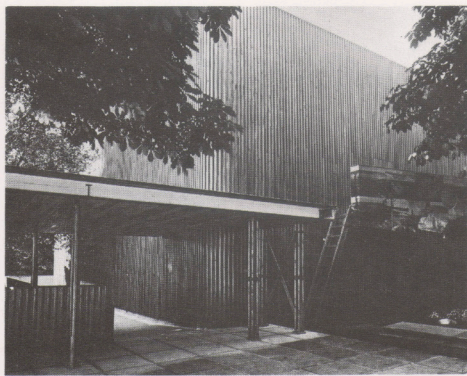
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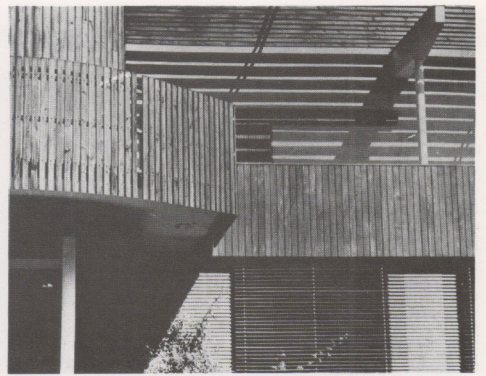
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Figure 20. Scan, p105, 29.7 x 21.6 cm





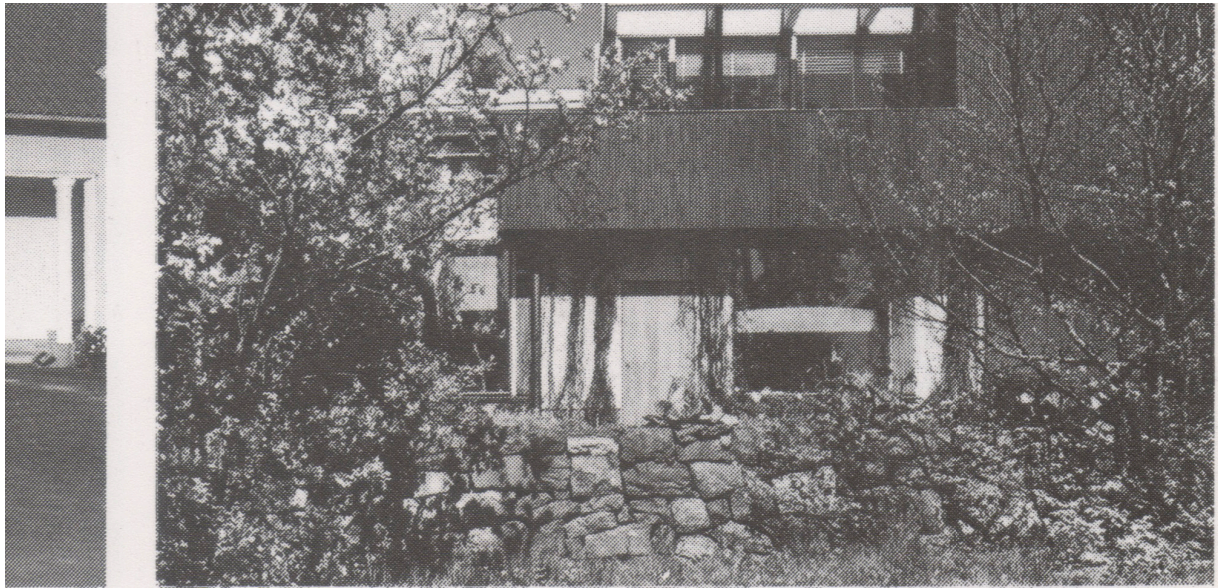
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Figure 21. Scan, p105 (detail)



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Figure 22. Scan, p105 (detail)

Town Hall, Alajärvi, 1969



Police headquarters, Jyväskylä, 1970

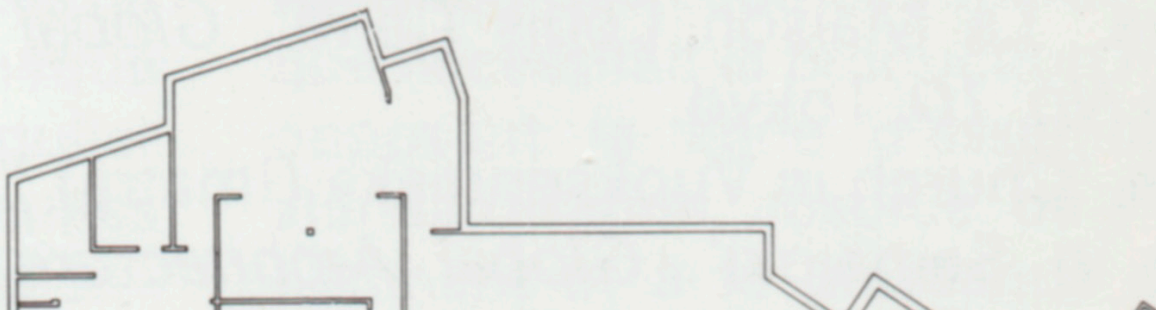


Figure 23. Scan, p117 (detail)