

LIMINALITIES

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Invited Editorial 

This edition of the journal has been deployed as an explorative tool active in the process of enquiry. We set out with the aim not to share present understanding, but to build understanding through the process; to enact the methodology implicit in the concern, of thinking through doing (process/doing). Within this editorial we will share where this has led us, beginning to attempt to draw together the conclusions, which have been composing themselves through this time. We have been fortunate to share this journey with a cohort of fascinating architect-researchers-theorists who have uncovered byways and detours which will be shared in this edition.

Our starting point was the ambition to begin to discuss how an understanding of a fluid and transitional engagement with the world might reflect into our designerly practice; reframing our understanding of space and the process of designing. We began with Clarke and Chalmers question "Where does the mind stop and the rest of the world begin?" (Clark, Chalmers, 1998, 8). They discuss "a coupling of biological organism and external resource" proposing that, "once the hegemony of skin and skull is usurped, we may be able to see ourselves more truly as creatures of the world" (Clarke and Chalmers, 1998, 7-18). Malafouris extended this discussion of entanglement of mind and matter, speaking of how "we think 'with' and 'through' things, not simply 'about' things." (Malafouris, 2020, 3) which in themselves "gather' space and time" (Malafouris, 2014, 142). He wrote of "thinging" as opposed to "thinking", extending the realm of cognitive processes not just into the body and the senses but equally into our tools (Malafouris, 2014, 143).

This conjured a world of dynamic interwoven processes of understanding and acting where our cognition expands out within a space, which in turn acts upon us. A place where the fluidity of our boundaries extends into the tools

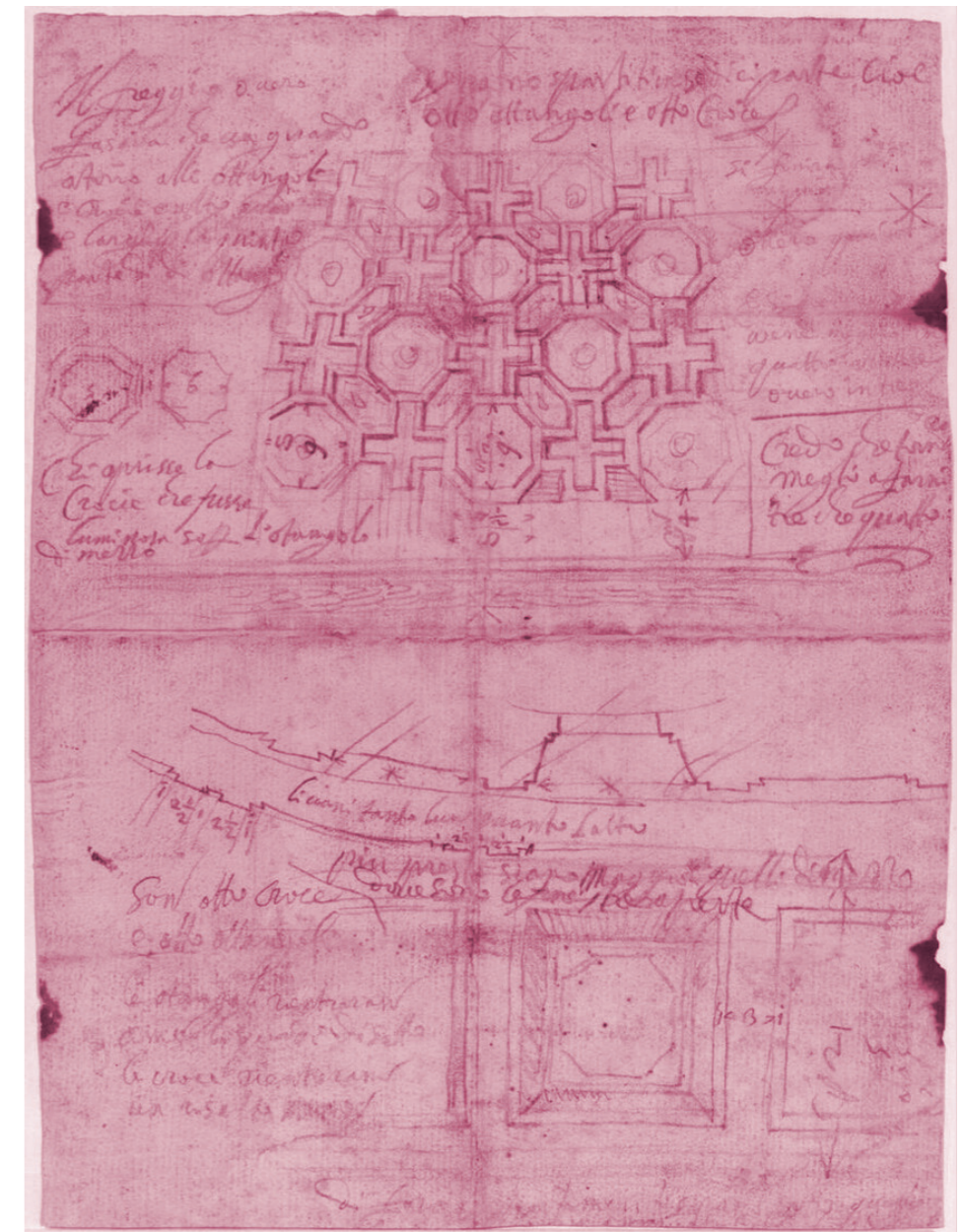


Fig. 1 - Rom, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Studies for cupola cassettes and windows (1639-1640), Francesco Borromini, Collection of the Albertina Museum (AZRom224), Vienna.

we use as we begin to perceive through them. Where we inhabit notebooks, drawings, diaries, phones. When we understand our mind as co-opting our surroundings, the spaces we inhabit emerge as frameworks to support our understanding of ourselves. Our spaces are cognitive and mnemonic support systems, hooks on which to hang the memories that reinforce identity. Space itself emerges as an extension of ourselves; an inhabited desk - an element in a supportive cognitive ecosystem.

Within architecture we are constantly thinking through tools such as drawings and models to support us in our working-through of ideas (Fig. 1). Malafouris uses the

term "cognitive prostheses" which offers a neat understanding of this relationship (Malafouris, 2014, 143). Tim Ingold spoke of a reciprocal process of making, writing. "These materials think in us, as we think through them" (Ingold, 2013, 6-7); suggesting design as a collaboration with the materials with which we work. Jonathan Hill's work furthers this discussion, he wrote of how "A dialogue can exist between what is designed and how it is designed, between design intention and working medium, between thought, action and object" (Hill, 2005, 17). This begins to ask if a shift in understanding of drawing and making as immersive design practices might uncover new routes

towards evolving spatial ecologies that interweave and entwine rather than divide or simulate, and that bring situations into being. Our drawings have always extended us into fictions of spaces yet to be, when so aligned with an embrace of our geographical nature, might we gain traction on enhancing and extending spatial experience through a new route to an immersive architecture?

This understanding begins to realign how we might consider our inhabitation and construction of architectures, indeed challenges the boundaries of what the word architecture might mean or encompass. From this emerging perspective our spatial experience appears comprised of a complex entwining replete with multiple readings and potentials. It suggests a field of ambiguities of becoming redolent of Gilles Deleuze's virtual, which speaks of potential, real yet not concrete. For Marcel Proust the virtual is "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract" (Deleuze, 1994, 208). Although now determinedly inhabited by digital definitions, the virtual has long haunted our spatial experience. Might a reclaiming of this term assist new routes forward?

The virtual sits within the Baroque's *Las Meninas* staring out at us from the 17th century. Michel Foucault writes of Diego Velázquez' Baroque painting *Las Meninas* (Fig.2) as a complex interweaving of spatial, visual and cognitive relationships. Here time and place are folded into each other, like a photograph bringing the past into the present, resulting in ever expanding possibilities of relations. Open threads inhabit the painting; a mirror with uncertain reflections, an open doorway with the ambiguity of past or future action, each element has multiple readings, meaning potentialities abound. The thresholds are dissipated, with boundaries blurred as the observer becomes actively involved within an interweaving of the time of the painting, and of the painting shown within the composition, the front side of which we will never see. We as viewer are implicated in the

making of the experience (Foucault, 2006, 3-9). This virtuality inhabiting *Las Meninas* makes it appear at the same time both historic and eerily familiar.

The baroque is often read as a period but might also be understood as a means of operating. As a spatial technique, the baroque offers us concepts of open narratives, the hidden and layers of multiple possible interpretations folded into a single situation. Might we already be inhabiting a contemporary baroque supercharged by the virtual, an interweaving of physical and digital, of place, time and memory? A space of liminalities of which we are an active participant in a constant becoming.

This dynamic embodied interaction challenges cartesian mind-body dualism strongly echoing phenomenology's concerns for embodiment. As a long argued philosophical position it now has resonance within evolving research in the cognitive science of neurophenomenology. This field understands "the mind (...) [as] an embodied dynamic system in the world" (Pérez-Gómez, 2016, 142). We are not other to the world. Our conversation with Alberto Pérez-Gómez, which is shared within this edition, furthered this understanding from a theoretical perspective. The discussion opened up the architectural implications for both our architectural spaces and the design process. The importance of the relationships between language, gesture and habit he discusses inform our understanding of lived space, and how it includes us within a non-linear experience of time, movement and communication.

Our conversation with Jane Rendell, also shared in the coming pages, begins to draw connections from embodied cognition to a situated practice. This recognition of the relational positioning of the individual and the ethical implications that come with this, added a vital component to the conversation. She discusses the importance of positionality, the

multiple perspectives of reading and writing, and the crucial condition of the in-between that has evolved through her writing practice

Multiple perspectives emerged through the journey of editing this journal expanding our understanding of interrelations between thinking, writing, drawing and making. Our authors open up new pathways to chase the implications of extended cognition and our entanglement within our world to evolve the practice of architecture. We are happy to share their work in the following pages.

We invited Frederik Petersen to share his tactile and material practices that engage with the design process as a conversation, encouraging unpredictable outcomes, while the dialogue between maker and material draws the work into being. For us this brings an understanding of relations where notions of gesture are an embodied and situated engagement within the design process. *Dreaming with the Pantheon in Rome* by Sebastian Andersson explores potential readings of the Pantheon when it's construction and longevity are considered through the lens of material engagement theory. Bahar and Ipek Avanoğlu further this exploration of material practices by inviting us to join a feast where speaking, eating and drawing entwine physical and digital space to engender a critical drawing practice. Their artistic work *A Dinner Story* presents work that blurs the boundaries of media, allowing for in-between readings and multiple layers informing and interfering with each other.

Another area of concern focuses on spatial experience uncovering multiple layers within a site and its spatial inhabitations. Samantha Jane Lynch shares an experimental architectural design studio practice. She discusses in her article *Interloper* the possible and the probable within dynamic contexts. The work engages site in a multi-layered manner to tease out openness and complexity. Duygu Doğan Taupitz and Aslihan Şenel take us into the world of exhibition

design, merging the viewer and viewed within situated spatial engagement. Their work *In-between Frame and Gallery* explores the concepts of framing and installing as methods for uncovering a new form of architectural practice. This engages the spatial relations between artwork, the space of the artwork and the space of the spectator. The potential of the entanglement of physical and digital realms is explored by Martina D'Alessandro and Georgio Dall'Osso in their article *Community, Public Space and Digital Data*. They share speculative design research that draws on the digital traces we leave within our urban realm to enhance engagement and build communities.

The memories and narratives we weave within space add layers for multiple possible interpretations. Yue Xin looks to the novel as a repository for historic lived experience within an entwining of character, place and temporality in her article *Phenomenological Narratives*. Here the potential of active engagement to build forms of knowing and making is unpicked. Ayse Hilal Menlioğlu and Aslihan Şenel explore filmic space in their article *Relocating Subjectivities* as a means of enquiring into nomadic subjectivity, questioning the evolving character's identity in the narrative through her own subjective reading. Mert Zafer Kara, Bihter Almaç and Metem Aksoy contribute an exploration of architectural essay films in their article *Performative Autotopography as Creative Recording*, and exemplify mnemonic structures within "performative autotopographical practices" through their own engagements with remembering.

The edition concludes with the Atlas, a celebration of student exploration of liminalities. It shares a reflection on the rich collaborations with our UOU student cohort within the short UOU workshops which posed these questions, alongside individual responses to these questions from MA students at the Bergen School of Architecture, and the University of Brighton.



Fig.2 - Las Meninas (1656), Diego Velázquez, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

This editorship has acted as a tool for thinking, provoking a deeper understanding, a "knowing from the inside" to use Tim Ingold's term; a form of knowledge that only can be gained through an embracing of the liminalities of entwinement. We would like to thank everyone who has joined us on this journey.

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