

The Invisible in Architecture could be conceived as border. Without borders nothing can exist, or at least we cannot know of it. At the border, something ends and something else begins. Or *can* begin. A difference thus exists the moment we become aware of a border. Border creates order.

There are numerous shades of meaning in the 'border' concept. In its unmarked sense the term 'border' indicates a more or less humdrum, barely emphasised dividing line – something we can merely step over. We know there are differences between the domains on either side, but take no exception to this fact. Border controls have been abolished. The 'frontier' on the other hand is an evasive, mobile border, one we are forever about to reach but never quite reaching, something we still have to work towards. An unconstrained ambition pushes this frontier ever further even as we strain towards it. Frontiers are there to be advanced. Finally, there is the 'limit', an almost metaphysical boundary beyond which lies the eternally unknown. The limit is absolute, an impenetrable shell. Beyond the limit all is either sacrosanct or taboo.

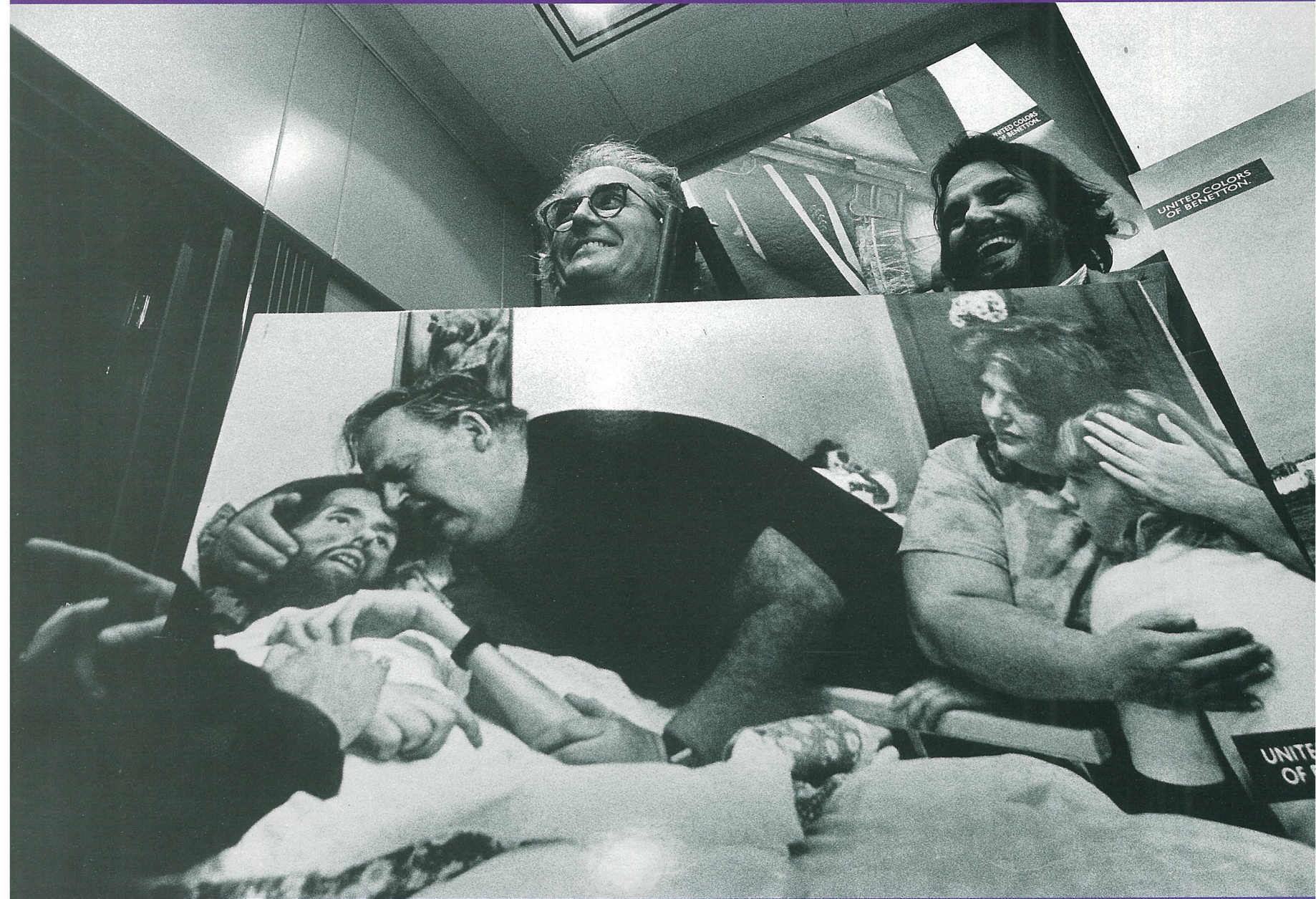
These are the three variants of the concept that figure large in the current discourse on the border. This discourse has now become omnipresent. Wherever we raise our lantern, be it in culture, economy, biology or psychology, we stumble on not just the vocabulary but the symptoms of the borderline syndrome. Sometimes it seems as though an entire new branch of science has been created to tidy up the boundaries of identity and meaning. Its idiom swarms with terms like 'pataphysics', 'simulation', 'hyperreality', 'transgression', 'difference', 'semantic instability', 'deconstruction', 'disjunction', 'virtuality', 'decentring', 'fragmentation' and 'excess'. Were there no intrinsic coherence to be detected in this post-humanistic paradigm, we should think ourselves dissolving in some final entropy in which communication had become an a priori impossibility. Taking into account developments in transport, telematics, genetics and politics, we can hardly believe otherwise than that today's acute aware-

Border

ness of border is due to the fathomless crisis of the border itself (assuming the term crisis is still appropriate in this new paradigm).

The border is not only to be understood as the final station of the visible but also as the framework within which institutions and disciplines operate. Practice, training and even much criticism hamper discussion on that framework or moralise it into something dubious. It is acceptable to dress up the border or even discuss it in depth – but keep your hands off the social and economic actuality! In a world in which everything has become in-between, where there appear to be no borders, there are in fact certain vanishing points beyond which silence reigns. It is in the area past these vanishing points that micro-politics, macro-politics and possibilities of change have their domain. Our concern here is with the dominant mechanisms of repression, the invisible limits. By enthroning the border as the primordial subject of culture, we run the risk of losing sight of the differences that really matter; whereas our aim should be to throw some light on them.

The classical world view respected the border. The modernist world view ignored it. The post-modern world view has *problematized* it. We no longer face a border that surrounds us but carry the problem of the border within us. Our present culture is a borderline one, in which the border is simultaneously a problem everywhere and a philosophical imperative nowhere. The only border that receives collective support seems to be the one that is supposed to shield Western prosperity from interested parties elsewhere. Meanwhile, value judgements are becoming increasingly interchangeable. In the schizophrenic border traffic between the true, the beautiful and the good and their respective counterparts, antinomies between irreconcilable extremes turn into related modalities. Standpoints vary effortlessly from hyperfuturism to the Club of Rome, from virtual reality



to the limits to growth. It is hardly surprising, in this situation, that the grotesque has become the most popular literary and visual device. He who is not grotesque is nothing, he simply no longer counts.

Our consciousness of border is supposed to have given us an eye for differences. But in as far as differences actually exist, they are chiefly prized for their form. United Colors of Benetton, for instance, glorifies purely outward diversity. Differences in mentality, calling or social class are smothered with a dense cosmetic layer. The tension between the actual and the possible is fudged into the superficial cliché of formal conciliation, a *promesse de bonheur* attenuated into a form which can conveniently be assimilated by production. At the same time, a homogenising ideology is propagated: consume and behave like us, or else... The result towards which this works is a pasteurised plurality in which people cease to take an interest in one another – the United Colors of Indifference. It thus becomes clear how form, as a critical intervention, allows itself to be sidelined and is forced to retreat behind the borders of its own domain. Form is emasculated as a means of creating and revealing boundaries. The borders are thereby reinstated with redoubled force. Material borders are growing indistinct, it is true: the Berlin Wall has fallen. But electronic, administrative and economic borders are continually being strengthened – borders that hinder unification, channel movement and help preserve countless forms of dependency. Borders tend to fade within the privileged cultural disciplines; here, distinction ceases to matter. Yet at the same time we disregard the borders that form the hidden preconditions for our privileged position.

In its role as shelter, habitation, construction and enclosure, architecture is concerned by definition with the problem of border: its major duties necessarily imply the demarcation of boundaries. Architecture must also invariably work within the limits created by the demands of usage. Moreover, it is a form of cultural speculation and as such participates in the crisis of border. And, precisely because it is itself border-creating by nature, it forms the ideal medium in which to tackle the problems of border. Usually this takes place in a mundane way, the issue being literally the border of the architecture, the boundary of the built mass. We then find ourselves at the level of the art form, which can delimit space in numerous conformations according to the standpoint one wishes to take: membrane, facade, interface, skin, mask, billboard etc. Merely the research into such interpretations of the physical border of a built object offers several footholds for the analysis of attitudes.

We can, furthermore, distinguish countless other manifestations of the border in architecture: production specialisms, functional differences in the programme, aesthetics, routing, physics, constructional joints, materials – every decision about these is also a statement about border. This all forms part of the architect's practical awareness of his *métier*.

There are, however, dimensions of the border experience that tend to be much less considered. This brings us to the institutional borders of architecture, to the economic bounds of yield and profit, to the restrictions of specified programmes. Surpassing even these constraints are those of a social configuration in which architecture has only a very limited sway, as a specialism of form within a mechanism that is further dominated by economic interests. It is illustrative of the reduction of the discipline to a specialism, that the debate about border is conducted purely in terms of craftsmanship. Rarely is an architect a participant in a cultural debate. All architecture can do is supply interesting 'events', i.e. one-off *tours de force* in form, which admittedly are formally capable of addressing the cultural problem of the border but nonetheless perpetuate the institutional constraints of architecture unaltered. This results in projects in which the architect has the freest possible rein in the surface and the circulation spaces but refrains from any direct involvement in the programme of requirements. The architectural object becomes principally a collage of *différends* which mark it out as a distinct work. Only after that claim has been satisfied can it return to being the declaration of a standpoint, and then only at an illustrative level e.g. of the dissolving borders that have developed into a leitmotif of culture. The question is whether, and how, this dilemma can play a role in the architect's practical

work. While every border is being challenged, the architect is still expected to create borders. The more strongly he or she articulates this dilemma in design, the clearer it becomes that his or her position has been marginalised to that of a designer. It is in no small part due to this paradoxical situation that architecture is becoming increasingly a subject for cultural philosophy.

Three strategies and three architects Architects draw borders, whether they like (to believe) it or not. There are countless ways in which architecture can relate to the problem of border. We classify them as follows:

Archaism The first strategy strives for the domestication of whatever lies beyond the frontier. Galí does not do this as part of an offensive process but by seeking the core of everything, an ultimate authenticity, and thereby constructing a defensive bulwark founded on the nature of things. An abstract interpretation of durability is concretised in a specific location with the spatial aid of tectonics, material, grid and path. This bulwark then stands in contrast to that modernity which rips up everything in its path. **Beth Galí** sees the border as an advancing front, with Design winning ground at the expense of Chaos, the *terra incognita* of the periphery. The border, whether between city and countryside, between private and public, between park and square or between footpath and road, is invariably designed with the greatest attention to detail. Nature is domesticated to the phenomenological level of the living room. The park becomes the outlet valve for the city.

Facadism The second strategy sees the border as a mask that unambiguously represents an absolutised order. The form, both interior and exterior, refers to a redundant interpretation of the substance. The function is concealed behind a cogent image that defines its own laws. This façadism has elevated the border to a region, and restricts what the architecture has to say to that region. Memory is represented statically as a literal commonplace. **Rafael Moneo** treats his borders as a separate, discrete image with the aim of bringing the architectural object more than ever into the public arena. The border of the building is the facade, which is monumentally present and is to be experienced above all visually. Despite the powerful materiality, it is an image that 'sets the boundary' here. It is not just the border of the building but also a cultural boundary: a limit to the decline of the discipline or even of civilisation itself. A limit: so far and no further. Architecture, and *basta!*

Fascinism The third strategy sees the border as something utterly flimsy if not materially dissolute. We can better speak of an interface, which indicates the aspiration to find the briefest possible transition between one thing and another. Identities fuse into a congestive maelstrom. Movement is the watchword. In architectural terms, this fascist standpoint emerges chiefly as transparency. The building ceases to exist as mass. The impediment, whether in movement or in the view, is an outmoded idea. **Elisabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio** do all they can to exemplify and legitimise the porosity of categorical borders. They show that borders themselves depend on a consensus and that their transgression is thereby guaranteed in advance. The border of Diller and Scofidio is the border in its simplest sense; border traffic is now unimpeded. They show us the intermediary between man and machine. Architecture is a prosthesis – no, man is an appendage of the machine.

In our philosophy, a house can grow along with the needs of its occupants. The architecture of the future will be such that the building will envelop its occupants like a third skin – the first being our natural skin, our clothing the second.

Ton Albers & Max van Huut

In the series of urban houses I have designed up to now, the walls were intended to question the nature of contemporary society. The exterior environment is invariably cut off, and a new, separate world is created inside.

Tadao Ando

To configure space means to play with limits. Sometimes a building's frieze is the beginning of the limitless vault of heaven – limitless like the architect's profession.

Ricardo Bofill

One operates within the limits of architecture, one attempts at times to push the limit but always from inside.

We are no longer interested in symbolisation. The great game of signs is no longer of any consequence. Architecture if it is to be at all must firstly be itself. It must know its own form.

We prefer to articulate ourselves by placing objects in the world.

Julia Bolles & Peter Wilson

The laws of statics say that in the world of criticism certain things you can do and can't do. But the new moralists say there are things you shouldn't do. Why is it not permissible when it is possible?

Santiago Calatrava

Think of an intermediary architecture on that edge between people's lives and the given city, a kind of city furniture poised to refurbish rather than rebuild... Build in fictional gestures and narrative side-steps, because peripheral ingredients can upgrade reality when thrown in with it.

Nigel Coates & Doug Branson

Precisely because it has limits, architecture speaks to us of what is excluded by the limits, of the mystery of life and death, of the mystery which gives us a significance as particular entities, as human beings.

Pietro Derossi

*The body as site cannot be detached from the body as situation.
The body enters our work as content rather than source, pre-formed, and de-territorialised with matter and event.
Ubiquitous and inert.*

Elisabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio

The excellent runway of over 3000m already at Stansted, is able to accommodate all the planned increase in traffic. The runway is well aligned. The terminal zone is situated at the south east end of the runway with enough land to expand from 8 million passengers per annum to 15 million passengers per annum.

Norman Foster

The main access to the Parc de l'Escorxador, on axis with one of the streets of the Cerdá grid, divides the Joan Miró Library into two symmetrical wings – one for adults and one for children. Crossing through a narrow passage of parallel walls, one finally gains the open space of the park.

Beth Galí

I had a funny notion that you could make architecture that you could bump into it before you realise it was architecture.

Frank Gehry

...I'm sure it's true world-wide, the sculpture you're asking for – the depth of the façade, the chiaroscuro, requires a construction technique that allows for recession and advancement of the wall plane and, my dear, that is very expensive.

Michael Graves

Ultimately, my goal is to create a place that houses the world, to enclose within an apparently delimited space the universe.

Itsuko Hasegawa

A conception of architecture which treats structure and dressing, material and space, as mutually independent categories appears to be the most adaptable to circumstances. But the playful, accidental moment which results from architectural unity dissolving into computerised data cannot be one-sidedly brought into play by architectural decorators. All interested civilians, civilian associations and associations of tenants should take part in this. Each building will then express a collective compromise, the specific taste of a restricted moment as experienced by both users and authorities.

Jacques Herzog & Pierre de Meuron

On the fringe of the modern city, displaced fragments sprout without intrinsic relationships to existing organisation, other than that of the camber and loops of the curvilinear freeway. Here the 'thrown away' spreads itself outward like the nodal lines of a stone tossed into a pond. The edge of a city is a philosophical region, where city and natural landscape overlap, existing without choice or expectation. This zone calls for visions and projections to delineate the boundary between the urban and the rural. Visions of a city's future can be plotted on this partially spoiled land, liberating the remaining natural landscape, protecting the habitat of hundreds of species of animals and plants that are threatened with extinction. What remains of the wilderness can be preserved; defoliated territory can be restored. In the middle zone between landscape and city, there is hope for a new synthesis of urban life and urban form.

Steven Holl

Architects have to stop thinking in terms of building only.

Hans Hollein

Unless zoning ordinances, planning and building briefs are radically rewritten, architects can do nothing but contribute to the ecological holocaust that is now underway.

Leon Krier

Despite the invention of bureaucracy and of its mechanical organisation at the beginning of the twentieth century, architecture knows no bounds: its apparent limitations are rapidly dissolving. Only modern architects imprison themselves in their own pigeon holes.

Lucien Kroll

The term intermediary zone is useful when considering the symbiosis of interior and exterior space. In Western culture, particularly in the currents of modern thought that are based on rationalism, it is considered important to clearly differentiate between any two distinct phenomena. But by dividing all of existence into either yes or no, interior or exterior, mind or body, the warmth that lies at the border between the two extremes is lost, sacrificed to rationality.

Kisho Kurokawa

The Werf/G.D.H.-terrain is an uncompromising project which is becoming fantastic. It scores so high because the client was prepared to invest in the materials, to choose somewhat more expensive bricks and construct a new quay using the old stones from the wharf. Everything has been designed, the layout does not stop at the front door.

Lucien Lafour & Rikkert Wijk

When one thinks back about the 1960s or 1950s and the more ideological prejudices of architecture, one sees how limited these people were, because they didn't have access to certain materials, to certain architectures. They only knew about rebuilding in certain patterns and certain clichés about world order. I don't know any architect who believes these things any more. The picture is now more scattered and confusing and much more open, which I think is good. There are more interesting things coming than might appear from what is being built.

Daniel Libeskind

Architecture arrives when our thoughts about it acquire the real condition that only materials can provide. By accepting and bargaining with limitations and restrictions, with the act of construction, architecture becomes what it really is.

Rafael Moneo

If you want to follow architecture's first rule, break it.

Bernard Tschumi

A channel is a limit on two sides with the others left open for growth. Early Modern architects perhaps channelled rather than limited their ideas on architecture, achieving force through the narrowness of their definition. In the end, the limitations proved too narrow for the breadth of problems faced and the tastes of the society. This does not mean that limits and channels don't apply today. They must merely be sought in other ways. Each architect brings to the task a multi-layered set of ideas, preoccupations, and proclivities, as well as years of training; these condition a response. There is not a clear slate at the beginning of the design; the question is whether the limits in application are those that can help architects creatively channel their ideas. The sonnet form with its limitations on length, rhythm, and rhyme, has been a vehicle for the highest expression in poetry. For us, the limits have to do with questions of scale and appropriateness. Owing to our studies of Las Vegas we have at times been accused of taking liberties or producing libertine architecture, when we have merely been looking for new parameters, new guidelines. We search for limits but for those arising from within the problem.

Robert Venturi & Denise Scott Brown