

The Invisible in Architecture could be conceived as space. Literally, as that which is encompassed by walls and is experienced there. And figuratively, as the region to which meaning is given by those who make use of it. This space can be approached either phenomenologically or ideologically. Every activity takes place in space but it also 'produces' a spatial ordering. People consume and produce space at one and the same time. These users of space now exist, moreover, in a cultural situation in which space has become an existential and moral problem. Implicitly and explicitly, it sets the tone for every cultural debate of recent years.

What kind of space is at issue? Visual, physical, psychological or behaviour space? Interior space, urban space or peripheral space? Space as the mould of things, as negative substance, or as a 'thing' in itself? And, if it is a thing, an independent entity, could it also be a dimension of thought, a notion? And can it, despite being present in itself, also be representative of something else? Is space more than the container in which an act occurs? Can space itself have a meaning as an atmosphere, an ambience? How, finally, can we characterise various spaces? What concepts do we need? Global space? Global village space? Hyperspace? Virtual space? You name it. And why do we attach different values to 'space', 'void' and 'emptiness'?

These are questions that crop up repeatedly. When culture was dominated by the ideology of an elite, there was some consensus about these matters. They were thus not yet a 'problem'. Now that pluralism has itself become an ideology, now that the individual, the fragment and the fragmented individual have been put on a pedestal, the question of space is dogged by a global Babel. Not that this impedes the debate in any way. On the contrary, the problematic nature of space tends to be stressed more and more frequently. 'The anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time', wrote Foucault back in 1967. He thereby set the tone for a cultural period in which all metaphysical and transcendental

Space

conceptions of time were to be dismantled, to make way for a more immanent way of looking at things. Thinking turned towards the Other, instead of the Higher and the Utopia. We became aware of the world *alongside* us at the precise point where the price of believing in the world *ahead* of us started becoming so horribly clear. Time, the chief component of the ideology of Modernism and the basic stuff of the modernisation process, went out of fashion. Space became the vital ingredient of Post-Modern thinking. Not space as three-dimensionality, as a physical entity, but as a category. 'That new spatiality implicit in the Post-Modern' (Fredric Jameson). 'It is space not time that hides consequences for us' (John Berger). What consequences? Perhaps that, as John Urry puts it, 'it is space rather than time which is the distinctively significant dimension of contemporary capitalism.'

Here we conceive space as a microcosm of a certain mentality. Space is not only part of the physical and spiritual universe, but also an expression of it. It shows the relative order of things, the vertical stratification from profane to sacred and the horizontal stratification of social structure, cultural and economic entity, and geographic place.

The physical category of space has been a widespread topic of interest since the early days of scientific speculation. Space is a philosophical determinant of place, a *Satz vom Grunde* that makes the universe thinkable and intelligible. In the course of history, many thinkers have pondered the concept of space and attempted to capture its essence. In both physics and philosophy, space was and is one of the pillars of knowledge and hence a topic of critical reflection.

Still, space was never a point of discussion. As long as man saw himself as having an organic connection with the heavenly order, space was identical to the divine substance. After the eighteenth century, however, following the rise of individual sub-



jectivism, the departure from the classical paradigm and the accompanying secularisation, space became the theatre in which man was obliged to find his own place. Space was what remained when doubts about God went beyond a certain point. For centuries, space had been a modality of existence. Immanuel Kant believed he could provide unquestioned beliefs such as this with a philosophical underpinning, and described space as a logical category a priori. But the consequence of this objectivisation turned out to be the loss of every ontological foothold. Man was confronted with space because he was confronted with himself. Only after the conceptualisation, after the conscious awareness, of the preconditions of existence, did it become clear how arbitrary this existence was. And thus space changed from being a self-evident fact into a problem area in which the human subject had to manifest himself.

Nowadays, philosophers are concerned with mobility and circulation; architects have thrown out the Modernist dogmas but remain no less preoccupied with 'spatial effects'; sociologists study space as a social construct; artists make space-specific work; and ecologists proclaim the limits of growth. Add to this list the enormous expansion of migratory movements, the universalisation of the diaspora; add, too, the tearing down of the Iron Curtain, and the rapid developments in virtual reality techniques and spatial simulations; and it becomes clear why there has been an explosion in the jargon of space.

Not until now, in this time of unprecedented mobility and virtualisation, has the idea, the concept, of space really got through to us. An actual space or spatial experience becomes less and less necessary, owing to the many techniques for projecting (free) space such as telecommunications, television, fax, data links etc. Home becomes a place of work as well as a place to live and sleep. Yet we displace ourselves physically more and further than ever, through spaces that come to resemble one another more and more closely. We impress our own culture on that of others through the agency of transnational capitalism and tourism. We have already been conditioned before we go somewhere: we experience space not as a process but as a *diktat* of the tour guide. We visit tourist attractions (including nature), but avoid the spots where the social realities are all too obvious.

In the end, space loses its three-dimensionality by reduction to an image. Even though we live in three-dimensional space, we no longer experience it until we see the videos or the photos afterwards. Physical, geographical space is no longer a source of identity. This situation has come about through a whole series of activities that are not linked to space by necessity. The reality of an experience is no longer required to be synchronous with the event.

At first sight, the problem of space looks like the *primus inter pares* of all architectural problems. After all, it is the creation of space that gives architecture its *raison d'être* alongside sculpture. And who, on seeing the architecture of Borromini or Soufflot, would dare deny that a highly developed consciousness of space is at work there. Nonetheless, space has did not become a conscious architectonic *concept* until the end of the nineteenth century. Theorists such as August Schmarsow and Adolf Hildebrandt were among the first to formulate an explicit theory of space in architecture. Space came rapidly to be seen as the 'prime matter' of the architectural design. It was not long before architects such as Loos, Berlage, Schlemmer, Maholy Nagy, Mies van der Rohe, Scharoun and many others, officially proclaimed space as the precept and goal of their work. For one it was the poetic motion through space, for another the ergonomics, for yet another the need for optical transparency; all known architectonic means such as mass, construction, cladding, light etc. were deployed in order to create a desired space.

After the Second World War, this optimistic interpretation of space as a platform for human action declined. Space gradually came to be described as a decor of disillusion, the end of the meta-narrative or even as the end of History itself. Space has become the domain in which we think of the other as Other, a kind of socio-ecological consciousness. Space is no longer the region of the free will that tries to subjugate the world, but the region in which the blind will still has to be held somewhat in

check. Although architecture unavoidably continues seeing itself largely as 'spatial designing', it has abandoned its high-flown emancipatory ambitions. Architecture no longer claims to rescue tomorrow from the straitjacket of the future, but at most to offer a solution for the problem of today.

It is a great pity that the professional discussion shows few signs of recognising these transformations in the cultural dimension of the space concept. Apart from a few avant-garde circles, the majority of architects show no interest in the relation between the conception of space and the Post-Modern condition. And this brings us once again to the invisible in architecture. The 'monopolists of space', as Geoffrey Scott once so aptly characterised them, pay barely any attention to the consequences of the disenchantment of the world for their own profession. Only a few architects have welcomed author Herman Broch's *Wertvakuum*, by definition a spatial idea, as an architectural theme, and this only in the last few years. Space is thus not only literally invisible, but it also appears to be missed all too easily as a cultural dimension.

Three strategies and three architects Although rare, there are now a few architects who have the courage to propagate their conceptions of space as a contribution to the cultural debate. They react against the isotropic, neutral space that Modernism saw as an instrument of emancipation. We distinguish the following:

Archaism Archaism answers isotropy with stereotomy. Its space is a place, a point of rest in a hectic world. It offers shelter and certainty through its strong tactility. The view of the horizon is framed in. The individual finds himself in a reassuring enclosure. **Ton Alberts and Max van Huut** wish to create an antiserum for Post-Modernity by building spaces that offer a stereognostic experience and have implications of spirituality. Moreover, they foster interpersonal meeting. Everything rotates around 'contact'. By falling back on anthroposophic principles, they aim for an architecture that is 'human' once more, in which the person can find 'his place' again. Their spaces are thus more likely to be references to Mother Earth than to engage with the actions that are performed on that Earth.

Façadism Façadism has no conscious spatial politics. It leaves the Modernist space more or less intact, but enriches it visually with a wealth of signs. The alienating character of functionalism is compensated by all kinds of iconographic identification points. At the same time, programmatic identities are softened by the creation of transitional zones. The space thus becomes an illustration of accompanying a formal view of the world. In **Kisho Kurokawa's** spaces, he aims to let everything melt into everything else, without hierarchical, moralising connections. The space is the common denominator for all cultures and an arena for the ultimate reconciliation. Nothing is left empty, and the *horror vacui* turns into a glittering feast of signs. It is a synthetic space that absorbs oppositions, a façade for a peaceful atmosphere.

Fascinism Fascinism regards space as the area in which everything has gone wrong, where Utopia and the hope of progress have failed. All that remains is a fascinating autonomous game that is more inclined to create a (moral) void than to fill a space. Architecture can do no more than offer apt illustrations of this historical process and therefore aspires to underline the alienation. **Daniel Libeskind's** approach is to reproduce chunks of historical reference, without creating any new coherent meaning. His spaces are an illustration for the Post-Modern realisation of the pointlessness of every historical project; in that sense, they are truly empty.

Irregularly shaped spaces advance the faculty of intuition.

Ton Alberts & Max van Huut

My approach to the person who will use these spaces amounts to acting as an intermediary in a deep dialogue between him and architecture, because my spaces transcend theory and appeal to the deepest levels. In other words, my spaces relate to the fundamental aspects of humanity.

Tadao Ando

Architecture defines space. Architecture is space. Emptiness does not exist; space does.

Ricardo Bofill

Space and perceptual modes are inseparable. Today we must explore the new space of our changing perspective dimensions. Emptiness is the key. Emptiness is the essential and dominant quality of the city today. The emptiness of traffic spaces while the light is red, the weekend emptiness of business zones, the emptiness of the tourist attraction in bad weather. It is the flux between incompletable patterns of built fabric, between good, bad, large, small and indifferent architecture. Emptiness is a field awaiting the invention of appropriate codes of use. The first step is not to resist the sublime qualities of emptiness, to explore its scales, its frequencies, its grains. Then comes the possibility of interruption (stones thrown in the pond), permanent objects, stoppages that give measure to this geography of absence.

Julia Bolles & Peter Wilson

In the design for a new bridge at Merida, Spain (1991), we proposed an arch spanning 200 metres in the middle. It was a great architectural gesture and, strictly speaking, totally unnecessary. So unnecessary that I didn't bother to rescale the foundations on which it is based. Yet I think this arch is one of the finest aspects of the project.

Santiago Calatrava

What was always more interesting to me was how to essentialise the nature of a spatial experience and then transfer it to the viewer. So it was always more an exercise in architectural communication than in making an observation about the nature of architecture as a thing separate from yourself.

Nigel Coates & Doug Branson

Every architectural space presents itself as an event in waiting.

Pietro Derossi

Our work maps out strategies for 'contractual space', that is, the unspoken social contract between encoded bodies and encoded programmes, in which architecture can bypass its typical role of complicity to perform critically. Situated between 'inscription' and 'prescription', this architecture of 'description' is concerned primarily with the hyper-present. Though description is commonly understood to be recapitulation, passive and uncritical, we employ it actively, as intervention. By articulating the culturally loaded spaces of and between surfaces and for grounding their relations, those relations inevitably become disrupted.

Elisabeth Diller & Ricardo Scofidio

The walls along the narrow passage through the Joan Miró Library are blank screens on which the sunlight gets reflected, giving a transparent brightness to the two porches. As foyers before the entrance to the interior of the building, these porches become a space where one can pause: only the sound of water spouts marks the entrance to a place where silence is compelled.

Beth Gali

If the spaces that we create do not move the heart and mind then they are surely only addressing one part of their function?

Norman Foster

I approach each building as a sculptural object, a spatial container, a space with light and air. The manipulation of the inside of the container is for me an independent sculptural problem and no less interesting than the design of the container itself.

Frank Gehry

While certain monuments of the Modern Movement have introduced new spatial configurations, the cumulative effect of non-figurative architecture is the dismemberment of our former cultural language of architecture.

Michael Graves

In creating spaces we must recognise that human beings are a part of nature. Architecture must be responsive to the ecosystem as all of human existence is ultimately encompassed by nature.

Itsuko Hasegawa

The perception of our architectures does not happen through the perspectival image, through photography or video, but through the reality of the exhibition space itself. We annexate and transform this space, make it part of our architecture, and then expose the observer to this transformed space. In this way the observer can experience our architecture in a spatial manner, can live through it in an almost physical sense.

Jacques Herzog & Pierre de Meuron

Psychological space is at the core of spatial experience. It is intertwined with the subjective impression of actual spatial geometry and born in the imagination. The absolute side of rational planning is in a contrapuntal relationship with the pathological nature of the human soul. It is in this mix, at its architectonic conception, that the spatial spirit of a work of architecture is determined.

Steven Holl

Architecture dominates spaces, it soars upwards, it penetrates the earth, it stands out against landscapes, it spreads in all directions, it dominates space with its mass and void, it dominates space through space itself.

Hans Hollein

The harder we search the more we find that the fundamental types of spaces and construction have been known for a long while. They remain relevant exactly because they are timeless.

Leon Krier

Everything in its proper place – that is a fundamental tenet of the bourgeoisie, and it generates a very particular form of city. Later that form was termed ‘hygienic’ and was used to design working-class districts and then entire social complexes. Some people have ascribed the ‘hygienic’ regimentation to the use of prefab architecture. But prefab is in fact merely a convenient extension of the same formal principles. We, on the other hand, seek to foster the development of self-organising social autonomies out of disorder. Is that an ideology too? The times have changed, at least.

Lucien Kroll

Modern Architecture was constructed on the paradigm of clear divisions of space – interior from exterior, environment from building, private from public, historic from contemporary – a strict order based on dichotomy. Yet what was lost to such dualistic articulation were the ‘in-between’ multivalent ambiguities, that is to say, the human qualities harboured in fringe and median environments. I seek a new symbiotic architectural space, to reintroduce symbiotic spaces between exterior and interior, symbiotic ambivalences between nature and architecture, symbiotic multivalences between contradictory elements.

Kisho Kurokawa

We want to give the people a space that is poetic and as interesting as possible. You can organise it all and provide a space in a very ordinary way, but we are also looking to some extent for an interesting space, for the most beautiful cross-section possible, for the most spatial space possible. That is the beauty we have in mind.

Lucien Lafour & Rikkert Wijk

Emptiness is not a pure minus – not a deficiency as the idealists thought – but a play of new curvatures, curvatures eternally misadjusted to each other’s hollowness.

Daniel Libeskind

Distance – or if you prefer, the sensation of closeness – depends on material.

Rafael Moneo

Spaces are qualified by actions just as actions are qualified by spaces. One does not trigger the other; they exist independently. Only when they intersect do they affect one another.

Bernard Tschumi

You have called space *primus inter pares*, we have more irreverently said that for Modern architecture space was God. We suggested that this was a deviation from tradition and that, in the emphasis on space, other aspects of architecture, primarily symbolism, were suppressed (although not eliminated) by the Modern Movement.

Different cultures have different conceptions of space and architects have for years analysed them. Films, from Jacques Tati to Woody Allen, are a good source of wry comment on the symbolic meaning of architectural and urban space. ‘Death of God’? You tell me. Empty space? I like the definition of space as opportunity for something to happen.

The American city has the democracy of the grid, where the mayor’s house and the gasoline station can be (almost) next to each other.

Robert Venturi & Denise Scott Brown