

ways in which buildings are used, architecture can be said to be the art that orchestrates events somewhere. Our task as architects is to allow for these phenomena of transformation to appear and its immanence to be made visible. The appearance of space can alter depending upon what happens somewhere. For example, an event that occurs somewhere changes the name of the place temporarily, just as during a performance a Piazza can become a theatre, or a market, or a festival; church doors are at once a proscenium arch and a goal mouth. Architecture enables us to name events rather than things. And architecture, like poetry, is symbolic rather than semiotic, constituting images rather than information, invocations rather than instructions, evocative and inconclusive atmospheres; an ambivalent incantation; a promise not a threat.

DISORIENTATION

HALB TROCKEN

Musical Mosel-

seen but not heard
good daughter of laughter and sun,
warm rain and golden wine storms-
flow by beneath the Keller.

Where liquids suspended in oak casks

ferment,

to transport

us

away from our selves,
immer unheimlich,

to ourselves.

Leiwen-London 30/08/02

(at Rut's parents' vineyard)

Recognizing the promise of transformation involves imagination. The spaces within photographs are spaces that the casual glance of the passer-by will often miss. They offer images that open our eyes and minds to possibilities of perception. It is not surprising that architects interested in context and photographers interested in the construction of places should have an affinity. The capacity of photography to reveal hidden aspects of reality mirrors many of the concerns that dominate contemporary design, and there is a particular sensibility at work in German photography that appeals to the architectural imagination. The creative relationship between Herzog & De Meuron and Thomas Ruff blurs the line between client and collaborator, photographic artist and archivist. Ruff makes the record of a building an active component in the revelation of the ideas embodied in it. For example, a digitally enhanced image of the Goetz gallery in Munich (1994) depicts the exterior during the day whilst the interior is illuminated within, as if at night. Illuminating the simultaneous literal and phenomenally transparent and translucent qualities of the building and its architect's ideas. Similarly, the Eberswalde Library (1999) has photographic images of local history printed onto the facades, merging past and present, representation, image and presence⁸.

I have recently worked with photographer Rut Blees Luxemburg upon two exhibitions focused on the theme of site and the perception of spaces within images; a theme that we began in *Cauchemar*, an exhibition of photographs of Paris that was shown at London's Laurent Delaye Gallery, September-November 2002. The display of these works incorporated an architectural intervention that sought to extend the spaces within the images outwards into the gallery in order to encourage an intensified, almost theatrical approach to viewing the artifacts: to turn the act of viewing into an event. Also, we sought to expose the slowness that is part of the making of the images, both in terms of the artist's careful selection of sites and the long duration of her exposures. The influence of the context upon your experience of viewing the artwork was mirrored by your appreciation of its affect upon its surroundings. Reflections of exhibition visitors and of the photographs in the high gloss white paint applied to the gallery walls, extended the space of the photographs phenomenally and imaginatively. Sodium street lighting fell through the open windows upon the photographs, mimicking the night scenes depicted in the images and exposing their content to the context of London beyond the gallery setting. You became conscious of the context of perception. This moment was extended into the public realm, as you saw an image of yourself and the photographs, reflected in the shop windows across Saville Row. The second exhibition *Folly* comprised of seven newly commissioned works about Swansea and a

⁸ Cf. Natural History, ed. Philip Ursprung, Canadian Centre for Architecture & Lars Müller Publishers, 2002, pp157-66.

retrospective of 14 photographs taken over the past six years and also resulted in the production of a book⁹. It extended the play of displacement and exaggerated typicality by recreating parts of Swansea in the Glyn Vivian Gallery last autumn. Inferred ramps, nooks, passageways, rooms and squares allowed the photographs of the city to appear like windows onto the world outside. The spaces within the photographs and the spaces that you viewed them in suggested an uncanny reciprocity between the world of dreams and night visions and daily life. The book comprises of short essays about each photograph that attempt to seek ideal spatial and literary figures within Rut's views of modernist town planning in which the brief glimpses of the natural landscape appear mythically significant. We are also designing a summerhouse for the artist in her home village of Leiwen, on the Mosel river in Germany. The villa will enable you to explore the topography of the site and its relationships with Rut's artistic vision. We seek to amplify the resonance of the typical and particular spatial characteristics that you find in her photographs of cities, such as the dynamic force of rivers and the co-existence of industry and nature in the contemporary world. In microcosm, the villa continues the themes of our other recent projects that examine the painterly and quasi-sacred character of contemporary domestic space. In this case, the idyllic agricultural setting is considered as a man-made environment viewed without the nostalgia that represses the similarities between artificial nature and industry. The ambivalent use of the building, for parties and work, and the preoccupations of the guests with pleasure and serious artistic pursuits mirror many of the concerns of Renaissance and antique Roman villas. It appears as an unsettling version of a farmhouse. An elongated gable creates an extroverted figure-ground relationship. Whilst formally simple, the parallelogram is spatially unstable giving equivalence to the spaces within and around the building fabric. Passing through and spilling out, activities track the sun and merge programme with site - the idea of a home is made porous and stretched to accommodate dreams of leaving and return, of spontaneous and repetitive inhabitation.

Whereas conventional architectural discourse teaches you to repress curiosity about the surface of things, to focus on the inner logic of an idea, photography influences the way in which I think about context. Photographs can reveal the material richness of artifacts that we often dismiss as cliché, and to enable kitsch and local idiosyncrasy to appear mythical and strange. Rut is acutely aware of gauging the response of the viewer to the appearance of something. Working together allows us to fabricate monstrous versions of normal situations and to elaborate patterns of thinking which make sense of an invented scenario. This makes it easier to accept that we construct not only things you look at, but how you look as well.

ORIENTATION

THE GRID REVEALS THE HILLS

The grid reveals the hills;
I look left and right as I
walk down south and I see the
city disappearing into,
what I know, must be
the sea.

Avenues ahead similarly,
fade from view into
the sky.

Suspended,
reason swells in my chest and
I sigh, exhale the
shadow I passed through
into the gold dust air and
solid light,
embodied here.

Manhattan 15/11/01 9.46pm

Without words, we cannot think, if we do not draw we cannot see. Perhaps both '*thinking and seeing as an architect*'¹⁰ cannot exist without insight and intuition? Skills that we can tune and amplify?

⁹ Ffolly, Rut Blees Luxemburg, Patrick Lynch, Cerith Wyn Evans, Douglas Parks, Ffotogallery Press, Cardiff, 2003.

¹⁰ A phrase used by John O'Tuomey in a thesis project crit at UCD in 2002.

If words become disassociated from experience, and subjectivity is not encouraged towards communication, the architectural imagination remains disembodied and open to picturesque interpretations. It is no surprise that philosophers used images of houses and bodily orientation to illustrate the location of thinking as a situated event. If architecture is to understand itself in philosophical terms, then the same questions Martin Heidegger applied to thinking about language and ontology relate directly to spatiality as descriptive and prepositional. 'The house has its sunny side and its shady side', Heidegger reminds us and he notes that, 'the way it is divided up into "rooms" (*Räume*) is oriented towards these, and so is the "arrangement" (*Einrichtung*) within them, according to their character as equipment'¹¹. If, as Heidegger suggests, we are already aware of spaces in relation to time and location relative to orientation, we may begin to think about architecture without actually knowing much about a place *in situ*. Perhaps the typical characteristics of a situation can be contrasted with the local and topographical conditions of a place; both of which, typicality and *Topos*, oscillate between specific and general conditions of universality and contingency. Quite quickly, the importance of the horizon becomes clear in offering possibilities not only for orientation in space, but also as a check and balance to the potential of architectural form to make literary references as well as enabling sculptural judgements regarding scale, rhythm, etc. This horizon is the background against which hermeneutic and phenomenological propositions, historical allusions and the pleasures of plastic and material surfaces, haptic, structural and visual thinking, etc., can be projected and proportions measured. For example, to avoid getting lost in a forest, I know that moss grows on one side of a tree not another and that water flows downhill. Might it be possible to navigate the simple trajectory of thinking about the ground conditions somewhere, at the same time as considering the sun and the wind as influences upon the formal questions of architectural Decorum that enable us to discuss front and back? Is architectural thinking a mode of orientation that enables us to recognize and to know where we are in time as well as location? I mean, does architecture, like poetry, restate the obvious and the ordinary extraordinariness of life for us?

I do not know if you can teach anyone to appreciate this background or to how you can sense if it is rich and true to life's complexities and poetic disjunction. How do you learn to appreciate the bittersweet paradox that buildings and places recede and come into focus, yet are always there, solid and autonomous? Like people, architecture offers ruthless surprises; buildings can exhibit constancy and contrariness; spaces can be tragic and forms can be imbued with comedy; places can appear to express silliness and pomposity, monumental impulses and fantastic needs; buildings manifest basic desires and hard-won ideals; longings for homecoming and abandonment can be reconciled; we crave directions and choice, nuances and clarity; seek conviviality and secrecy and find gregarious defense and extravagant incompleteness; we encounter complex personae and enjoy mutable characters. Architecture teaches us something about ourselves that is there always all around anyway despite buildings and maybe sometimes because of them.

¹¹ Being and Time, Martin Heidegger, Oxford, 1993, p.137