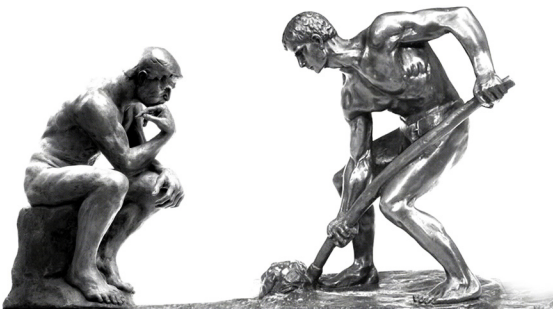Figure 24: *The Carceri* (Piranesi).

Chapter 3

Autonomous architecture and the dissolving city

'**Autonomy**', from the Greek *autonomos*, refers to that which acts according to its own laws and is independent or free (Le Petit Robert 1977).

An architecture of containment: a history

For a project which has so much leverage within the city, the architectural project, the profession's disengagement from a pursuit of the theoretical underpinnings of design, serves as a testament to an ideology of 'doing' rather than thinking. When Heidegger writes of thinking and doing as being mutually exclusive, he presents a division between the realm of the thinker and the daily practice of the worker. Nietzsche is fascinated by the master-slave dynamic for the slave has no need of thought, his destiny is laid out for him, and in fact, thought may be detrimental as then he must face his situation and question the acceptance of what may be unchangeable. So to take up a stance in the question of where to position oneself within the thought worlds and practical dimensions of architecture, is to slot oneself into not merely a divisive scenario but a hierarchical one. On the one hand, one could choose the position of slave but then one is underestimating the accomplishment of centuries of the master's expertise, which will continue to play out uncontested. If one is to take the route of 'master', then one must harness the abilities of 'slaves' in order to roll out one's project but one is relegated to a level which provides a disconnection from the workings 'on the ground', one is disconnected from one's own process. So the challenge for the architect is to assume both roles, that of a thinker, contesting the known, and that of the doer who implements the process. What is perhaps important to recognise, when adopting the role of designer, is that texts are another variation on form and that the political environment in which we operate donates its qualities to the process of inserting forms into it. Design is political, starting with the individual and effecting the entire urban environment and the planet on the other end of the spectrum.

The political nature of the definition of the environment, into various jurisdictions, neighbourhoods and inside-outsides, is an old game. Let us trace the story back to the beginning. In early times our savannah-ape ancestors reconciled themselves to living on the open plane, with an expanse of view, danger was easily perceivable from far off. Peter Sloterdijk discusses the basic condition of 'boredom' in which, according to his vision, we have found ourselves historically; a savannah condition where very little happens most of the time (2005 pp. 242-251). Sloterdijk uses this as a metaphor for understanding the way in which space is 'inhab-

Figure 25: *The thinker and the worker* (Author 2015). Photomontage. Figure 26: *Master and slave* (Author 2015).
Figure 27: *The Savannah* (Author 2015).
Figure 28: *Extension to House Houghton* (Kammeyer 2013).
Figure 29 (next page): *Walking through the door* (Author 2015). Photomontage using Lucio Fontana's spatial concept.

ited', where architecture becomes a means of inhabiting boredom and later in our history, disguising this. "A good building is always a good boredom-container… A bad building is just misplaced boredom. In order to understand what architects do, you have to go back into this original situation of the savannah and ask yourself: how did human beings manage their existence in times when architecture was not yet there?" (Sloterdijk 2005). Sloterdijk questions how an early architecture could have arisen, he describes existing in the savannah as being surrounded by a very large circle, the extents of the horizon but always in relationship to one point, the inhabitant; the first architecture was therefore an invisible one. This, he continues, became the model for the beginnings of spatial definition in the form of the circular fireplace, around which congregations could occur, the fire was the source of community and the sheltering of that fire was the beginnings of protective and defensive design.

So the invention of the wall, the principle of the wall, has an intimate relationship to the phenomenon that the fireplace itself can be or should be protected. And with the discovery of the principle of the wall, you discover the possibility to change the side of the wall and through this discovery of changing sides, in front of the wall or behind the wall, the invention of the door is also close at hand. It will take hundreds of thousands of years before this concept is materialised into wooden walls or walls of stone. But the principle of the wall is already there, and the principle of the door is conceived relatively early. As soon as the wall is there, the question of the other side can be asked. And when it can be asked it can be answered. The answer to the question of the other side is just this: walking through the door (Sloterdijk 2005).
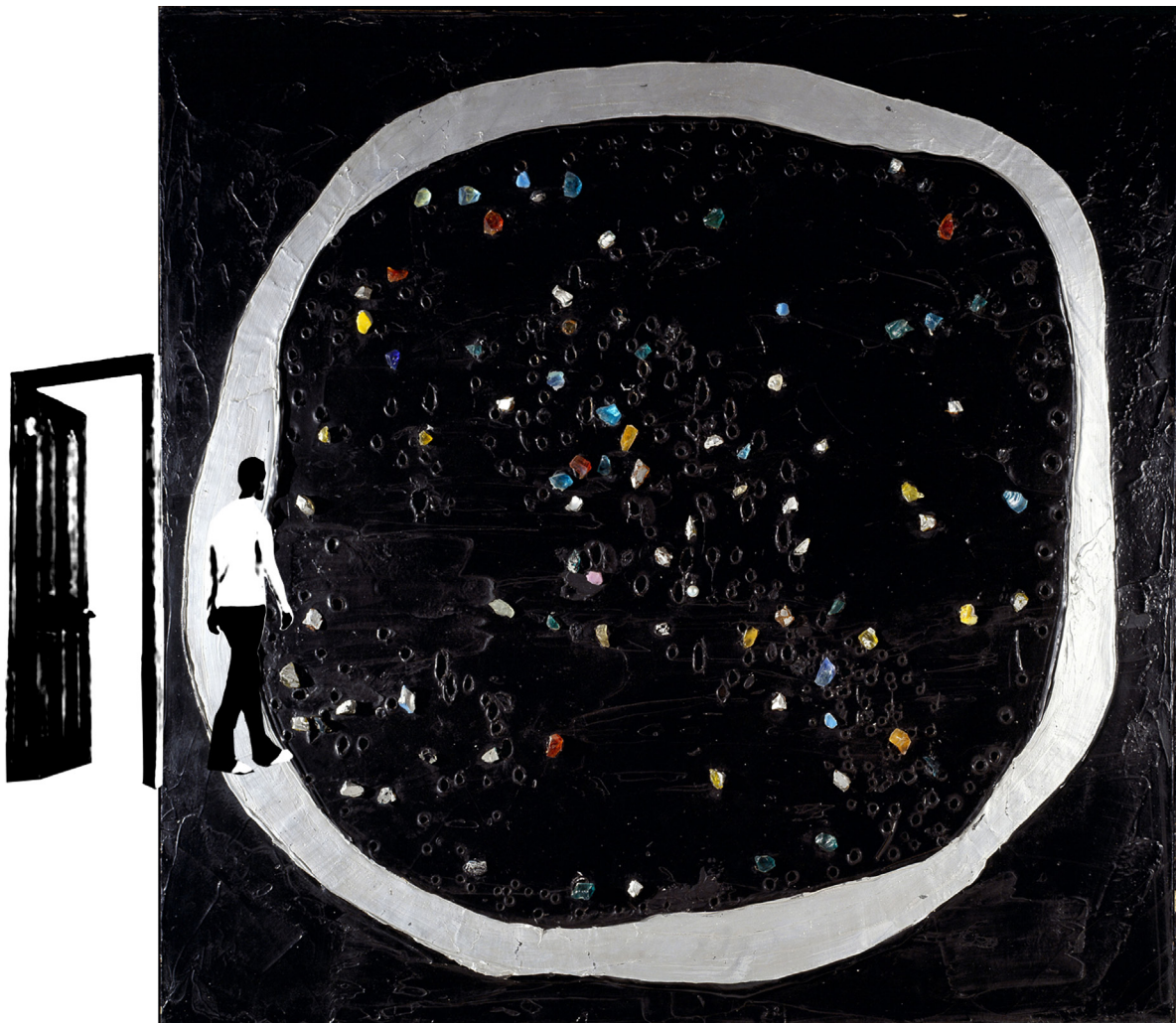
The progression of human evolution allowed new forms of inhabiting space, namely standing, while "… the art of sitting arrived" (Sloterdijk 2005). Sloterdijk sees crouching down as genuine sitting whilst 'sitting as an art', is merely the result of a civilized affectation.

> *Sitting on a chair in real boredom, adopted boredom, this is a real plague that came up with the development of higher culture, especially with the development of education, because education is linked to the invention of chairs and bringing people into a position that is neither authentic sitting, nor convincing standing (Sloterdijk 2005).*

The transition towards architecture, as we understand it today, emerged between seven and eight thousand years ago as the rise of agrarian societies stabilized 'plane architecture' into occupy-able forms beyond the basic temporary shelter. The house, at this point, becomes a "… place to contain boredom." These houses become places of waiting where one resides until that fruitful moment, occurring once yearly, the harvest. "This is the centre of time, and the farmers' house is not only a waiting room, it is also a kind of clock that tells you once in a year when the crop is ready to be reaped" (Sloterdijk 2005).

With a sedentary lifestyle came the idea of storage; goods and stock were hoarded to be used at a later date, and with this there is no longer a need to 'wait', everything is already there. The 'there-ness' of goods is, according to Sloterdijk, what makes things disposable, the desired object is always more precious than that which is already in our possession. Much of the great architecture that comes into being around this time, castles, temples and cathedrals, is enabled by the storing of materials and other provisions associated with the life of the construction industry. The aristocracy lived in grand edifices to boredom, the eventless life, meant that in high-culture, boredom becomes an art. Sloterdijk brings us the following analogy, the imitation of the plant and how this gives rise to a moral universe of the metaphysic:

> *The idea of existence, the existential of humankind in metaphysical times, is the imitatio plantae. As long*

> *as you take the plant as your model, you develop this cardinal virtue of the metaphysical existence, which is patience. Have you ever seen an impatient plant? Becoming plants is a great program of existence in metaphysical times. That's the reason why architects in these times always are, as it were, gardeners. They construct artificial gardens in which artificial plants, human beings, can be kept. That's the context in which the deepest word of modern poetry, as you find it in Shakespeare's Macbeth, has to be understood: ripeness is all. But ripeness means that you develop not only all the virtues of a real plant. You are ready to await the moment when someone comes to harvest you. This is the way a plants reflects on mortality. That is the reason why, in European history, death has always been represented, or very often represented, as a harvester. This strange instrument that you don't see anymore today, the scythe. There is a voice that is always coming down from heaven to the earth, inaudible, but that can be deciphered nevertheless by every intelligent human being: plants of all countries unite! This is the big harvest of the end. God will organise sooner or later a general harvester where all these useless and lunatic plants, who take themselves for something other than plants, will be gathered and separated. Good plants, bad plants (Sloterdijk 2005).*

In Sloterdijk's version, modern times are those of the animal, where capitalism introduces the human hunter, but not only of animals, of the material and the immaterial, in other words entertainment, where they have "… entirely unlearned the art of boredom." There is this movement in literary heroines, the wall flowers of Jane Austin who must wait to be danced with (plant-like and seated self-consciously) to the hunters of contemporary romantic comedies where women are as equally likely to be predatory as men.

> *The great performance of modern architecture and modern culture as a whole is that we have elaborated this perfect equation between boredom and entertainment, so that this art of containing jobless humans is really pushed to a very high peak. This means, by the way, that also politics long ago have already become a part of this arena-game (Sloterdijk 2005).*
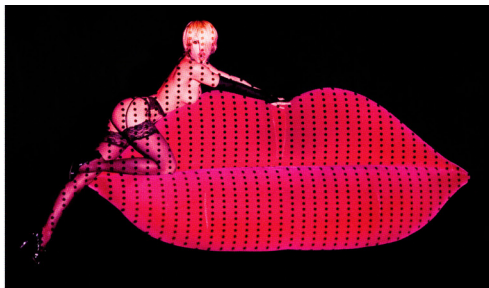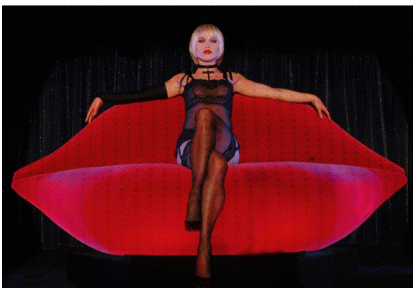
40

Figure 30 (previous page): *Death the reaper* (Marseille Tarot).
Figure 31 (previous page): *The art of crouching verus the affecta-tion of sitting* (Author 2015). Photomontage using photo of le crazy horse, Paris.

The structure of autonomy

In Pier Vittorio Aureli book *the Possibility of an Absolute Architecture,* the notion of autonomy in architecture is explored. These are seen as works of architecture that maintain their power, even in separation, from the context that they are 'bound' within. The archipelago is an urban model that describes the placement of these urban object within a common realm. Aureli goes through a number of examples that we will explore in more detail, two positions are outlined. In the work of Cerda and Archizoom, architecture is seen as a unifying force and Archizoom, in particular, are strongly anti-monument. Palladio, Piranesi, and Ungers, on the hand, propose in their work, an absolute architecture for the city (Lambert 2011 pp. 45).

To Aureli, the city is made up of 'parts' which one confronts, in design, in order to be able to compose within the urban environment. The autonomous object is drawn from archetype and typical aspects present in the memory of architecture, as it is evidenced within the civic realm. These parts stand in isolation, yet they can be understood in terms of the whole, from which they also draw; individual elements express a condition that is 'common'. What retains the power of form, in Aureli's view, is the definition of the city by limits. The 'bounded' city carries authority and gives power to architecture (Lambert 2011 pp. 45).

> *An absolute architecture is one that recognizes whether theses limits are a product (and a camouflage) of economic exploitation (such as the enclaves determined by uneven economic redistribution) or whether they are the pattern of an ideological will to separation within the common space of the city. Instead of dreaming of a perfectly integrated society that can only be achieved as the supreme realization of urbanization and its avatar, capitalism, an absolute architecture must recognize the political separateness that can potentially, with the sea of urbanization, be manifest through the borders that define the possibility of the city"* (Lambert 2011 pp. 45).

Aureli's territory, his model of the archipelago, is a political realm that allows for the expression of difference but always in relation to a common ground. Within a globalised world, various warring political factions would desire to mark territories in their own image; when architecture is seen as a unifying force, it serves to achieve this aim. The island-model, expresses the need of individual groups to deterritorialize themselves from shared conditions. The 'islands' become possibilities for expressing unique ideologies, that stand apart from dominant beliefs and hegemonies; in this way the island, or autonomous object, becomes a political enclave within so-called universal consensus. Aureli's vision is a counter-urbanism where "each of those ideological territories necessities an architecture of its own" (Lambert 2011 pp. 45).

Autonomous architecture is defined by various aspects: cubic masses, bare walls, frameless apertures and flat roofs. The forms that result, are then repeated in a rational composition or set off against one another, in contrast and confrontation. This formal motif was particularly evident in the 1970's where it was seen as presenting a challenge to technologically-driven projects which isolated portions of the city underneath glass domes or proposed conglomerations of cellular units, such as in Kenzo Tange's housing projects. Within the technological city of cells, architecture loses its adhesion with the urban context; architecture is both absent and infinite (McEwan 2013).

Contained, finite and autonomous forms imply for architecture, separation, resistance, confrontation and critical distance, in this way they can be seen as agonistic. The essential political position is that conflict is neccesary in order to challenge power regimes, the separation inherent in autonomous architecture, is a productive force in the city (McEwan 2013). Building forms are part of a continuing history of architecture and of urban objects in confrontation with the city, where they form part of the production of a political affect.
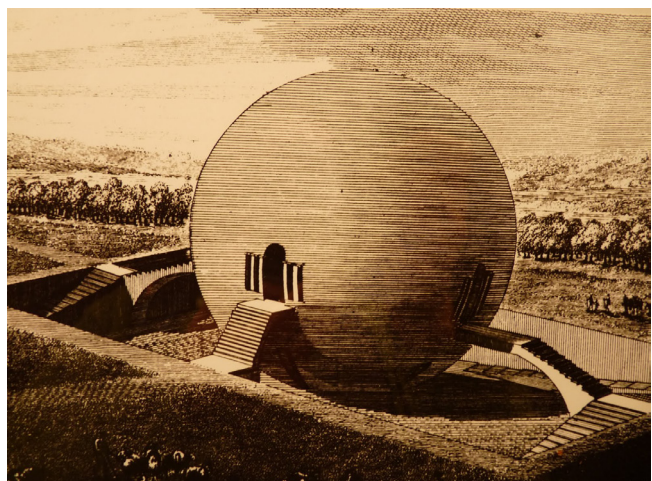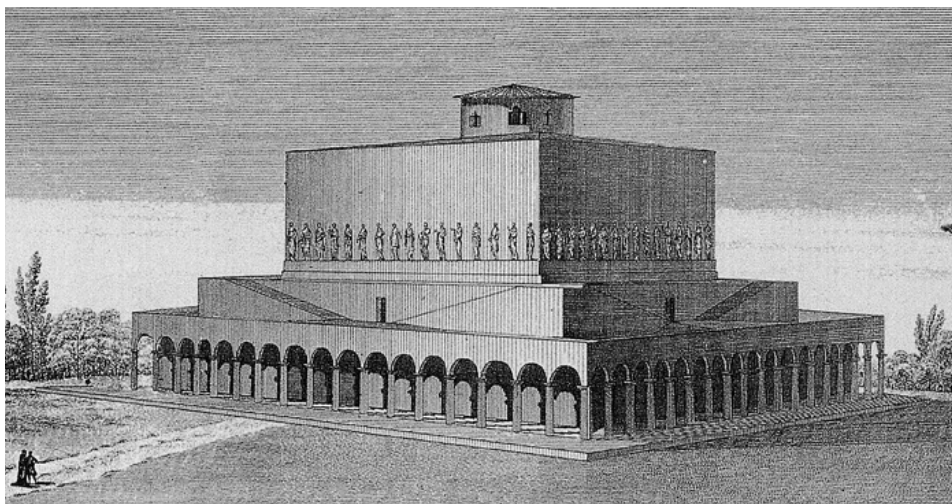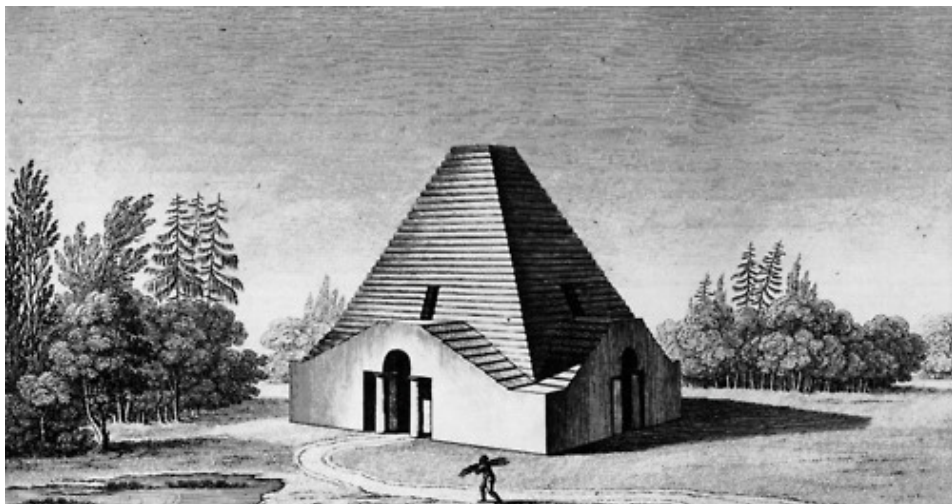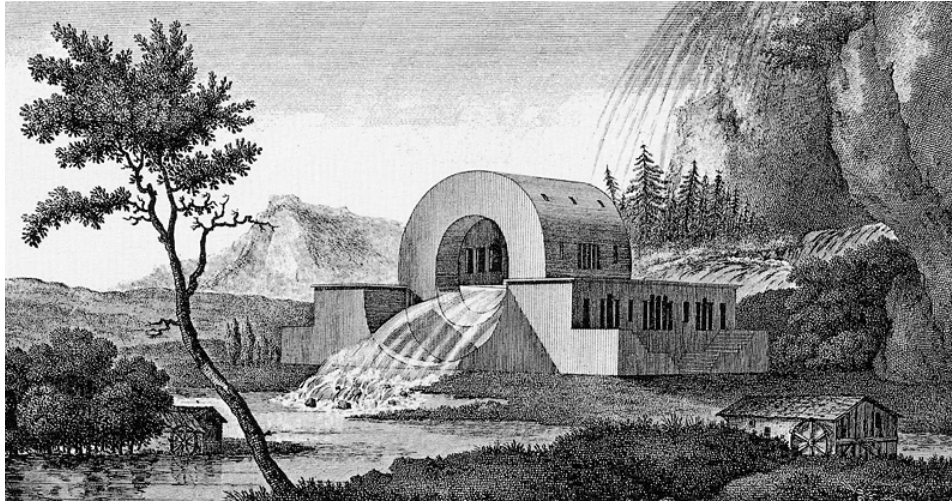
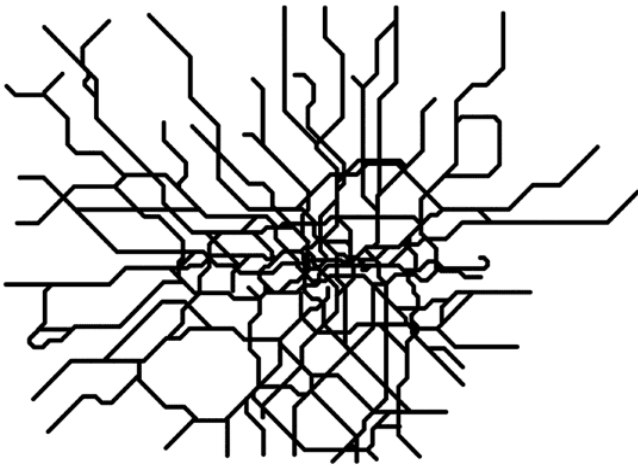Figure 32-35: *Autonomy of form* (Claude Ledoux).

Figure 36: *City of flows.*

Figure 37: *Transport network Helsinki.* Figure 38: *Transport network Istanbul.*

Although design may serve to integrate communities, and itself with its context, a building form is inherently an autonomous object, which externally makes edges and internally partitions space. One of the earliest Greek archetypes of form was the temenos, a sanctuary which enabled the removal of the inside from the outside. With the collapse of this typology the city becomes an eternal inside and outside, where the power of form is given over to the power of management. In the Renaissance, the construction and ordering of society is not so much an architectural problem but a managerial one, roads are designed and maintained, people move in and out of cities. In the city of management, Vitruvius' five orders are a nostalgia in an ethos where architecture is not about representation but rather is about performance (Aureli 2012).

The term *urbanism* was invented by Catalan urban planer, Ildefons Cerdà, to describe his development of the extension of Barcelona, during the 1850's and 60's. This was a new type of planning, involving the location of services and public facilities, based on calculation and in response to the size of the population (Pallares-Barbera, M., Badia, A. & Duch, J. 2011). Cerdà was the first person to construct a theory of urbanization based on statistics, where the city becomes about management and was seen as being a product of political processes. With the rise of the city as a managed artifact, the form of architecture begins to lose its power; the city is the embodiment of political structures, communicated through 'flows' and organization rather than through its constitution of individual buildings (Aureli 2012). Architecture gains an anonymity, which is more about the relationship of individual cells to the general infrastructure than the expression of singularity.
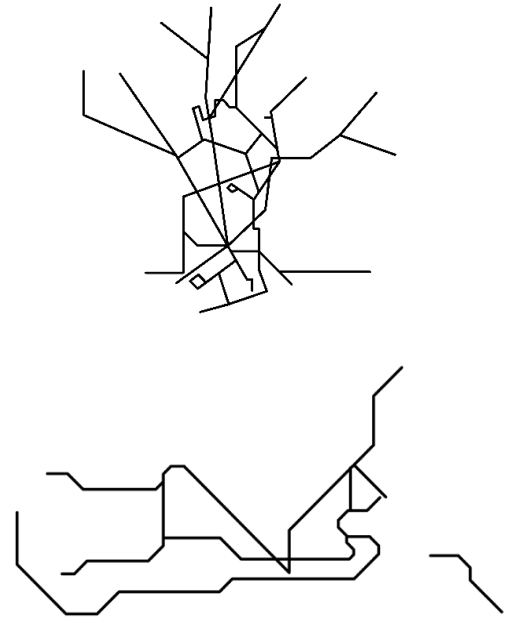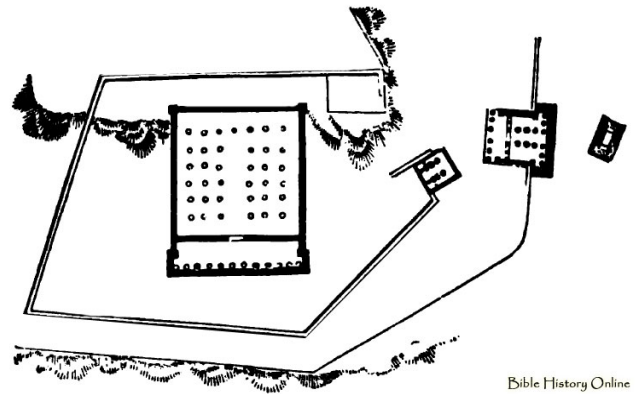

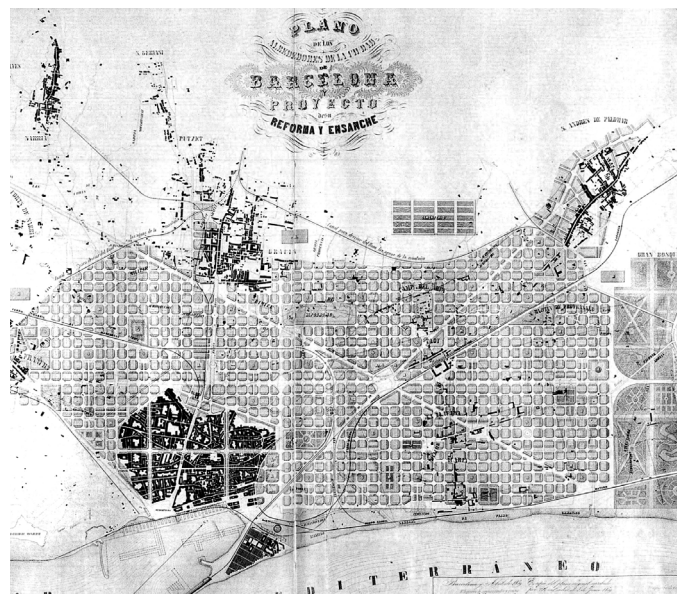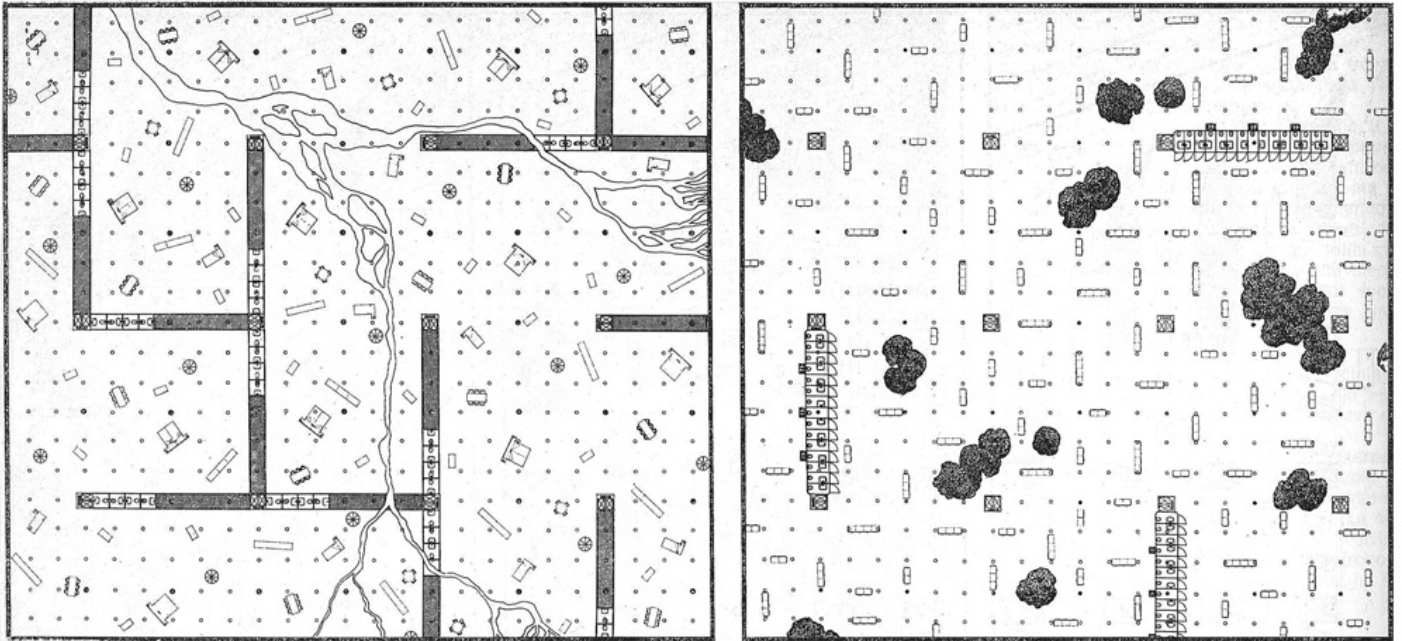Figure 38: *Ancient Greek Temenos.*

Figure 39: *Plan for Barcelona* (Ildefons Cerdà 1850/60).

44

In the 1960's in Florence, Archizoom's *No-Stop City* was designed to encourage revolutionary architecture. This city plan imbibed principles of mass consumerism, where human beings are merely campers within an endless grid, subdivided by walls and 'interrupted' by natural features. Here the artificial is ubiquitous and organic objects such as rocks and branches are displayed within the all-encompassing interior. "The City frees us with its blankness, its featurelessness, allowing us to be anyone, anywhere" (Architizer 2013). Archizoom's dramatization of this dissolves form and places a toilet every 100 square metres, the city is a place of processes and communication. "Pure political forms come to the fore" (Aureli 2012). Koolhaas recognizes this scenario and attempts to produce an architecture within this in the form of the captive globe. Koolhaas' article, *Junk-space*, describes a world of rife consumerism, where an interior is without character, in an endless frenzy of shopping, waiting and travel (Architizer 2013). Aureli, in response to these situations, returns to a possibility of embedding this condition through the redefinition of the shaping of space, where space is made up of finite parts and no matter that urbanization has dissolved the city, it remains a composition of parts (Aureli 2012).

For Aureli, Mies van der Rohe's strategy is the most successful, in response, as his 'offering' is the "most political and corporate". By inserting finite objects into the fabric, Mies embraces urbanization and attempts to 'stabilize the cloud' by clearing it around a definite object. His investigation of the plinth adopts a temenos strategy and his volumes are silent and profound. The revelation of structure, the steel I-beams anchored to the façade, accepts the construction of forms out of various pieces and hence the city as an assemblage of various objects (2012).

Figure 40-42: *No-Stop City* (Archizoom 1960's).
Figure 43a: *Seagram Building (Mies Van der Rohe).*

Figure 43b: *Villa Rotunda* (Palladio).
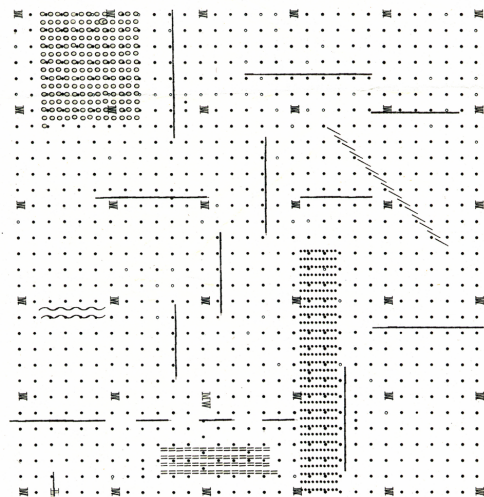
Palladio's response to the expansion of urban territory is not through the continuity of the urban but through the introduction of finite forms (Aureli 2012). A similar concept in painting is where there is an understanding of an image exerting an effect on the surrounding space; an exhibition of artworks is not usually one continuous structure but contains interruptions of blankness between presence, which nevertheless read as fragments bound together within a common which grounds them. On the other hand, one might say that continuous surface is investigated in the work of Mark Rothko, through the large scale of his paintings, situating the viewer within, and hence eliminating the aspect of indifference and removal. Art will always hold the viewer accountable; there is a strange psychological trick that makes us, in some way, feel responsible for the contents. The large scale of the Rothko envelopes and transforms the viewer, the subject matter is relatively neutral casting one, simply into an experience, of existing in space, which is however, charged with energy. Superstudio's *Continuous Monument*, Paxton's *Chrystal Palace*; these are efforts to build what is 'common' as an antithesis to the insertion of individual forms, here the 'interior' encompasses all, the first through the elimination, or 'smoothing', of the exterior and the second in the creation of an isolated dreamland.

Piranesi's contribution can be read as a counter project, his work was a critique of the managerial approach to the city, and consisted of autonomous forms. Piranesi's reconstruction of Ancient Rome began with the mapping of ancient ruins, mainly tombs, as these did not have architectural orders and the tomb has 'form within itself'; a very anti-Vitruvian architecture (Aureli 2012). Piranesi's work is about large, heavy walls and big foundations and exaggerated representation in the form of the section. Piranesi exaggerates the perception of the real in order to defamiliarise it, in this way critiquing the fad of archaeological studies on the city at the time. Urbanism and archaeology emerge at the same time and both try to construct an explicated version of the city, built out of facts and measurement. Piranesi understands, rather, that time is not linear and that both antiquity and the contemporary are immersed in one another; one cannot separate out the historical context from the present as a means of sanitizing and preserving it.
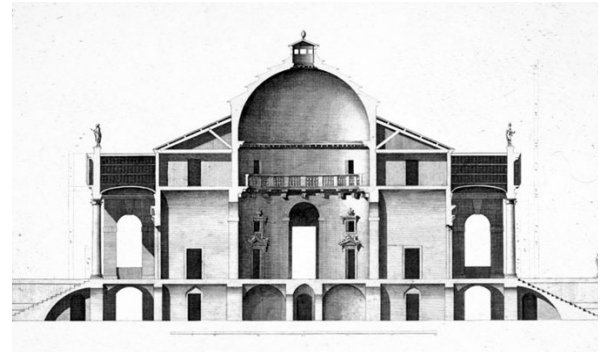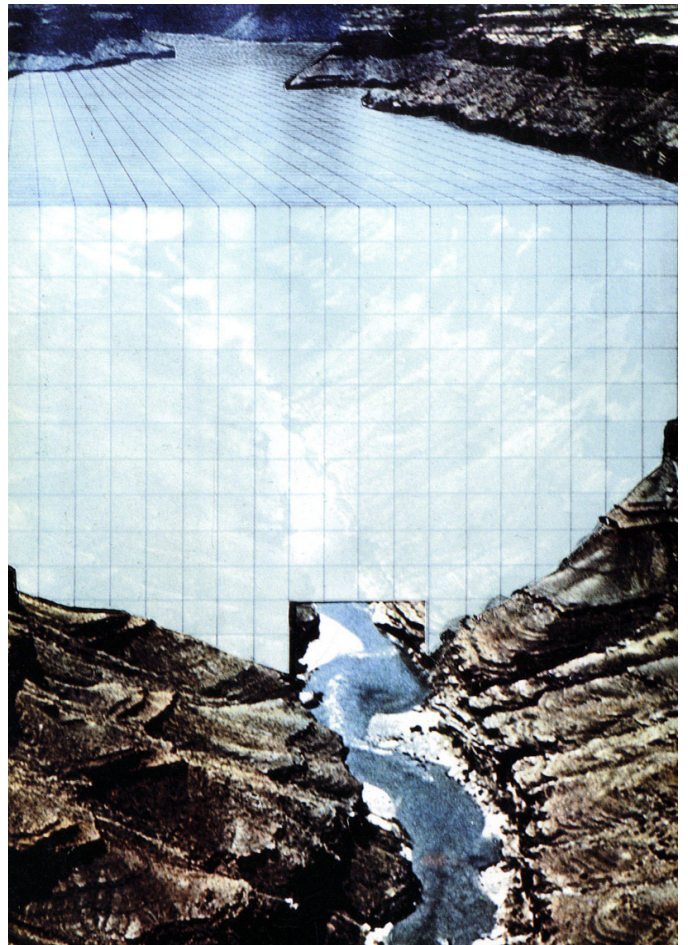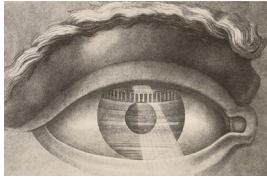

Figure 44: *Continuous Monument* (Superstudio).
Figure 45: *Chrystal Palace* (Joseph Paxton).

Figure 46: *Green over Blue* (Rothko 1956).

Piranesi was the first paper-architect, he "attempted to construe meaning out of ruinous fragments of an antiquated architecture"; by reconstructing and completing, through image, the glory of the monuments of Ancient Rome. In this he was attempting to bring them back from the past, to make them current in order to show their value in the present. Inspired partially by the theatre sets of the time, in 1749 Piranesi began a series of drawings of prison cell interiors, the Carceri, prisons for the imagination (Spiller 2006). As a kind of antithesis to the concept of the Memory Palace, which tries to rationalize imagination and populates it with associations, here perspectives twist and shift. The images detail the unbuildable, they are warped and full of strange objects. When André Gide writes *Les Caves du Vaticans*, he describes the pagan cellars of the Vatican, full of the plundered treasures of the Inca and occult texts; this, in total opposition to the Vatican's public image. In Piranesi's drawings, he presents an underlying structure unbound by constraint, the historic, the crumbling, the dark mysteries of form revealed. Here representation liberates form; the paper has its support within the book or on the desk, it needs no other.

> *What is unusual is that a man who understood perspective implicitly finally let its dictums go and pushed his drawing style to the limit. His vanishing points are unaligned, and his projection planes multiply with unparalleled fecundity as he constructs the representation of an unrealizable group of objects and spaces. So, as with his historic representational endeavours, we see Piranesi as a schizoid artist/architect – one mode of thought dovetailing into, and contrasting with, the other. This testing of architectural limits and the differing modalities of the architectural drawing were the other large preoccupations of twentieth-century avant-garde discourse. The twentieth century's will to abstraction had a profound effect on its architecture* (Spiller 2006).

For Ledoux, a contemporary of Piranesi, it was architecture's power to 'sanitise' that he captures, a controlled and surveilled society to be organized in relation to form. The Salt works at Chaux were, as a model, a precursor to the panopticon prison form with a central point of surveillance from which the surrounds could be brought under management. "Its environs were deeply wooded, and the locals were prone to what Ledoux and his masters would describe as immoral behavior; they were untrustworthy, inclined to drunkenness, pilfering and unreliability. Here again the forest was a place of
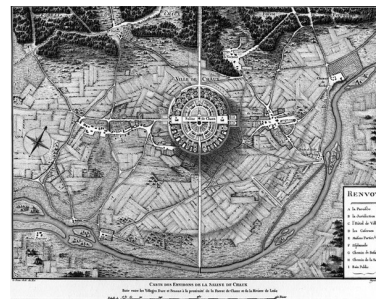
danger, and architecture was its antidote" (Spiller 2006). The plan accommodates management in the centre, radial lines control internal organization and continue into the country, extending jurisdiction outward. Power is exerted here, playing on the fear of being seen and an infectious rationalism inspiring discipline. Inspired, as Ledoux was, by a theatrical metaphor, Chaux acted as a backdrop to a new society. The concentric rings extend the principle of an ideal platonic form, seen as exerting an influence on behaviour, perhaps equally through its role as a model of perfection as much as due to its centre of control; the platonic forms exist before they come into physical being, so too societies' destinies can pivot around these constructions. As the Carceri are shadow machines, Chaux is the machine, these ideologies as forms, shape present action while storing memories as a warning. These early memory banks, precursors to the web, restore power to architecture; architecture need not mimic the machine, it is the machine.

A project for Berlin, under the collaboration of Ungers and Koolhaas, attempted the reconciliation of the 'city as continuous form' versus the 'city of object forms'. In this scheme, the complexity of the city is managed into an understanding of a continuous grid of forest in which urban structure and agricultural fields are situated. This project was a response to the urban crisis at the time, in which there was an exodus of people from the city leaving behind a 'dying' structure. In order to extract

Figure 47: *Eye* (Ledoux). Figure 48: *Carceri* (Piranesi).
Figure 49: Saltworks at Chaux (Ledoux).
Figure 50: Archipelago Berlin (Koolhaas and Ungers).
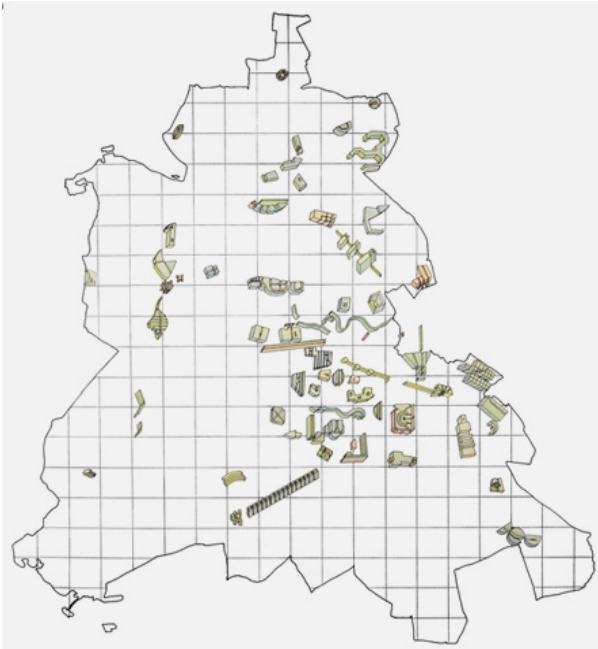
a productive scenario from this occurrence, the city is conceptualized as a series of islands; the crisis was seen as an opportunity to reinterpret the form of the city and to better understand the meaning of architecture and the meaning of architecture in the city. "The most autonomous forms engage with the city in the most radical way – those that merge with the city become autonomous by default, by simply mimicking their cultural or physical context… Autonomy is a critique of urbanism in its current form" (Aureli 2012). The archipelago allows the autonomy of the islands but there is interaction in the flow of the sea, which operates between them. Each island becomes a presencing of the 'common', the sea; each island expresses the common symptomatically and is thereby an authentic expression.

It is incorrect to see the use of archetypal and autonomous forms as historicist as these are pure forms, which to some extent are always in circulation. Over time these forms are merely modified into varying typologies but fundamentally, they are the same in the principle of their conception. The island forms refer to qualities beyond themselves, they "…do not share anything except floating in these value-free compositions", and they hold a "secret relation to an absent centre" (Aureli 2012).

To Guattari, the archipelago islands "… are never reducible to one and yet they also share the absent fatherland that no singularity can reduce in one object, but every

object is an expression of the common, which is embedded in the singularities but no singularity can exhaust the common." For Guattari, the sea can never be known, only by the limited understanding gleaned from moving through the islands. Like in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, where the sea gives forms to inhabiting fantasies, these pre-exist the desiring mind, which turns to them as if finding what has been lost. Aldo Rossi's typologies are an attempt for him to develop this 'common' in architecture and in architectural form. For Lyotard, language is an archipelago; islands consist of different races and philosophies, which can never merge into one thing. We must accept the sea although we can never see the sea (Aureli 2012). The ruin becomes very important in this philosophy as it provides the clues from which to reconstruct, from which to exercise the power of repetition. The ideas presented here act in antithesis to the informal city, the city of flows and the absence of form. An individual building differs from the project of architecture, which much engage politically through the production of drawings, determine and presume values, contend with affects and produce objects, which will come to exert forces on other objects.

The border is not the façade but is rather where the form ends, "…when architecture exists it implies boundary." The façade is not a border; it is a cutting-edge division, more a managerial device. Buildings before the Middle Ages didn't have façades, only walls; the façade was invented as a way to create interface between public and private, it was created in a way to control this interface and therefore has an economic and social function as a managerial apparatus.

For Serlio, the façade is a device of control and privatization to mask form; the façade is actually an anti-border. Etruscan architecture is made of huge cyclopic walls serving as an anti-façade (Aureli 2012). The wall is formative whereas the façade is representative and so we have seen the shift from the use of the wall, in defining edge, to the use of the façade, where again one might draw a parallel to the evolution of plant-like waiting to animal-like consumption and quest for entertainment; one waits in a place, one is entertained in a wonderland. Furthermore, the move from the boundary or temenos condition to urbanization, where borders are no longer material apparatus but become organizational devices, is a move towards the dematerialization of architecture. This immaterial experience of wall presents a boundary,

which is stronger than ever but from which the form has disappeared; glass and transparency present a fiction. This poses the question of how to design a wall that is really an enclosing environment, where one must control the shift from recognizable edges to a more diffuse system, the lie of transparency makes a weak architectural statement which is indicative of architecture's response to politics by means of this convenient tropism. Externally, the city walls have disappeared but the city itself, and the street, has become a defensive mechanism.
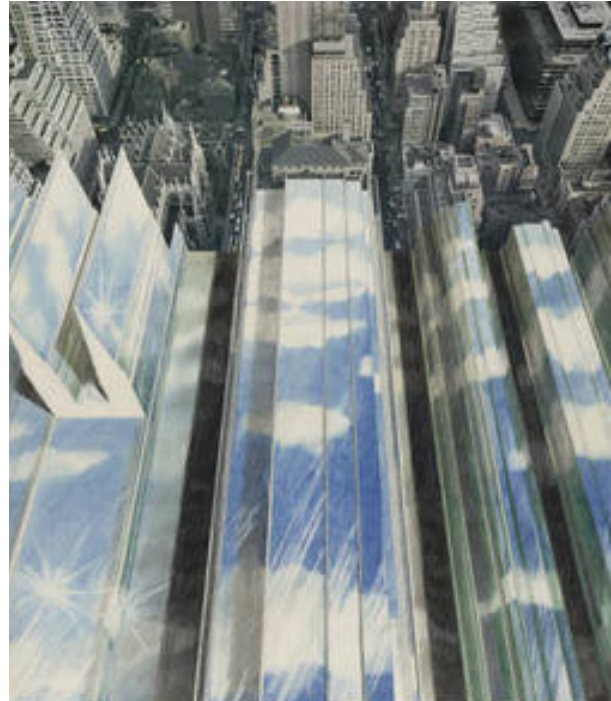
Social hygiene

Das Ungeziefer ist nicht fein,
Ins Glashaus kommt es niemals rein.

Vermin is not refined,
It will never get into a glass house.
- Paul Scheerbart

Today's fortresses are made of glass; the same monuments are presented to us in new guises, empty gestures signify change, high living and modernity. The city of modernity is not pristine and purified, if ever there were a 'heart of darkness' surely it would be here, amongst the masked meanings lurking behind transparency, where reflections on the glass render facades more like "screens than inlets" (Fiedler 2006 pp. 587).

What is this advance that we strive so desperately to achieve? "As with plants and animals, in architecture too a new species only appears after the disappearance of the old" (Sloterdijk 2005). Architecture is seen as undergoing a process of evolution, a natural metaphor used to justify 'progress' at all costs. At the same time, architectural and urban development is a movement away from nature, and towards 'civilization', according to the new dualistic universe of the moderns. New cities and their buildings are advertised as neat, fit and hygienic, as though buildings should go to the gym and then take a shower afterwards. As we saw in the analysis of identity and schema, where the process of deriving one's own self-image is interrupted, so too with the much-famed 'standardization' of the urban, a similar principle applies: we do not conform to standards in our cities, we invent them. The 'vermin' cannot enter the glass box, it is too clean; here again the idea of state enemies, pests, immi-

grants and the undesirable rears its head; they are kept out of a society, which is filtered and purified so that we may drink of it. Society sustains society, in this view, not nature and certainly not the 'body' which has become as sort of pseudo hyper-body. With the aestheticisation of politics and an aestheticized economy, image is all.

Figure 51: *New York Extrusion* (Superstudio).
Figure 52: *Agnes Denes, Crystal Fort* (Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlini 2000)
Figure 53: *Paris' Triangle Tower* (Herzog and de Meuron)
Figure 54: *Geodesic Dome Patent (Buckminster Fuller 1951).*
Figure 55: *Germaine Greer's photograph of Monument* (Rachel Whiteread).

Political precedents – Visionary Work

A project that tried to overthrow "…capitalist paradigms and legislation of space" through the total rejection of the "… geometries, social organization and political implications of the capitalist spectacle" was the City of New Babylon, a Situationist overlay onto the City of Paris. This, a city so large that it would cover the entire surface of the world and eradicate the divide between city and countryside, is an ultimate retreat from the agonistic principle.

Constant's New Babylon was based on a theory of 'unitary urbanism' which he came across at a conference in Italy in 1956. The attempt was expressed in the form of collages, models and sketches, introducing disorientation as a new way to experience the city. It represents the virtualization of the urban, where it becomes unmoored. Racked internally by disagreement amongst its members, the Situationist construction emphasized not only an escape to Utopia but also the instability of untempered 'meanings'; with no string to guide through the labyrinth, the temporality of the dream became the space and duration of the exercise. Even in its denial of the logic of the city, the 'situations' inscribed along the routes of Paris, appear much like the contemporary *Corridors of Freedom* scheme, applied in a post-apartheid Johannesburg. The corridor, a predominant theme during the Baroque period, is locally evolved as freedom through development; infrastructure for possibility. Here it should be said that while the 'incision' may be generative, the long lines of infrastructure are themselves barriers, while they may extend economic possibility this will never be to everybody and in their physical form, they must be crossed by those who arrive at the perpendicular. Again, to New Babylon, development as a metaphor of infinite growth, the biologism of relentless development indifferent to landscape, is only evidence of the extreme fragility of the cause; eradication as a means of control but where design becomes the unstoppable force and the land itself the cultural evil to be enveloped.

The denial of the grid creates an awkward and self-conscious architecture for the escapist. While to be 'square' may be undesirable, to accept a viral or fungal expansion as the antithesis, is perhaps more so. When it is the rejection of a representational guideline that is the primary driver of form away from it, the result is bound by the realm of representation, to be critiqued, to be dreamed

of, but perhaps merely, after all, only remembered.

> *Around 1967 New Babylon began to feel what might be called the 'Francis Bacon influence'. The inhabitants of the city became blurred and strangely distorted. Stark planes of colour – blue here, terracotta there and yellow there – burst into the interiors, and the exterior became much more mesh-like. The year 1967's versions of New Babylon were 'straighter', more recognizable as architecture. Over the next few years New Babylon declined further into a chaos of scribble, hemorrhaging figures, smoke and general splatter. Enigmatic rooms appeared with bumps of organic, fleshy blobs heaped against walls, some even engaging in a bloated coitus. It is here that we leave New Babylon as it decays and disappears. The last model was an accumulation of small loudspeakers, lights and circuitry: '[t]he plexiglass control panel allowed the model to be played like a musical instrument'* (Spiller 2006).

It is necessary to enter the labyrinth, but only in order to re-emerge. The 'ecologicising' of human endeavor could be linked to the rejection of what it means to be a living being – everything porous with no boundaries and no blood and guts, merely their representation as fictional devices, the being is plasticized as is the fabrication of Utopia. "New Babylon was a conceit conceived as a city, created by an artist masquerading as an architect for polemical reasons. It therefore often lacks full architectural understanding and detail" (Spiller 2006).

Moving closer to the present, the Internet is the situational possibility, however, just like the Situationist movement, it is not autonomous; unlike architecture it cannot be indifferent as it is subject to constant inputs, without which it would cease to exist. Soft Babylon, a further translation of New Babylon, is the cyberspace of Neo-Situationism conceptualized by Marcus Novak.

The theories contained in Guy Debord's *Society of Spectacle* did not revolutionise urban planning, rather they sparked a formalistic revolution, a rejection of 'state', which needed to reimagine a world so different to be inhabited by a new form of being. The architecture was not so much the concern, rather the design for New Babylon reconfigured the human. Invasive, the concept when digitized produces not infinite possibility but infinite observation, the 'panopticon' of the Internet,

the city and the rationalization of human psychology as the ultimate form of control. Now it is not enough to be human, one must be a particular kind of human in order to inhabit and reshape the eternal and encircling representations of escapism.

Frederick Kiesler investigated the endless, in 1924 exhibiting his Endless Theatre in Vienna. Beginning with pure forms, an ellipse in section and a circle in plan, he began the investigation of inhabitation by introducing places to walk and spaces to sit. True to the age of quantum physics, he was concerned with continuous geometries, which had minimal contact with the ground plane. He looked at ways to suspend forms via tensioning systems such as in his Tensionist Skyscraper of 1925, a structural core from which floors were cantilevered. In Kiesler's manifesto of 'tensionism' he details his dislike for the orthogonal functionality of the Modern Movement, he says this: "What are our homes but coffins towering up from the Earth into the air. One storey, two storeys – a thousand storeys. Walled upon two sides, on ten sides. Stone entombed – or wood, clay, concrete, coffins with air holes…" Technology was, for Kiesler, a means of liberation from the enslavement of the everyday; by situating power, freedom and possibility within the dissolution of formal means, he rejected walls. "Kiesler's architecture was always characterized by attempts to avoid walls, ceiling and floor, so he conceived it as structurally holistic, double-curved geometries – the geometry of eggs, of butterfly pupae" (Spiller 2006).

Where there is no separation, occupation is endless – boundaries carve up space but they also contain activity; the endless dissipates, the attempt fizzles out. Architects are not inventors of people, they can imagine new societies, but forms, in the sense that they are autonomous and indifferent, have their own agendas. Perhaps they have little time for us. The attempt to make people see beyond consumerism was a noble idea, but too late for the space of fun has a 'price' on its head; being is not free!

While Constant viewed nature as something to be overcome and transformed, Kiesler wants to eradicate the city-country divide. The inapplicability of these schemes means they remain trapped in representation, plexiglass on board; the ambition of a fairground city remained the stuff of dreams. These examples are useful as there is a limited repertoire of architectural and urban projects

that attempt to confront their political circumstances directly. These projects are also visionary and utopian, challenging the conformist notions of conservatives. The lesson to extract, however, is in the very tension between their unbuildability and their potential power; had they been tested in such a way that their believability increased, then an exciting series of projects may have emerged.

In contrast, the Fun Palace, the collaboration between Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood, operated between the biological and the mechanical. The project was an investigation of surface (envelope and boundary) and service (structure, sanitation and accessibility of service areas). In this, boundaries were lightweight and moveable to offer choices to people, not to create them anew. Fun and frivolity - The Fun Palace was really about having fun but in a situation where fun becomes productive. The Fun Palace is the project that really anticipated the contemporary understanding of space in relationship to production (entertainment culture). It is tragic that Price sold this project in such naïve terms (Aureli 2012).

The Fun Palace was anticipatory whilst New Babylon was intended to be destabilizing. The Fun Palace was a design for an entertainment centre rather than a proposition for a whole frenzied, delegislated, anarchist city that knew no boundaries… the Fun Palace reveals deeper and more detailed thought and exhibits a pragmatism capable of delivering space that challenged the political and institutional status quo. The Fun Palace was a far more ambitious proposition than the rather staid version of some of its ideas built in Paris during the 1970's – designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers and called the Centre Beaubourg (Spiller 2006).