Atavism of skin markings: Surface patterns in architecture

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The recurrence of the traditional practice of patterns on surfaces of the human body and architecture is explored here. In histories and theories of architecture bodily markings have been used to describe the metaphors of ornamentation in architecture. Architectural patterns are a potent device for architectural articulation and announcement expressing the character of a building. Yet Adolf Loos' essay 'Ornament and Crime' and the nineteenth-century criminal anthropology sought to get rid of decoration for a culture of modernity. This research highlights the influence and fallacy of those unornamented theories on the meanings of behavioural decorum in post-modern and contemporary modes and agendas of surface patterning. Decoration and decorum as social coding, albeit more neutral, less ritualized, less conspicuous, is still seen as apropos.
Key words: atavism, scarification, tattoos, behavioural decorum, apropos

Atavisme van velmerke: oppervlakpatrone in argitektuur
Die terugkeer na die tradisionele praktyk van oppervlakpatrone op die menslike liggaam en argitektuur word hier ondersoek. In argitektoniese geskiedenisse en teorieë is liggaamlike merke gebruik om metafore van versiering in argitektuur te beskryf. Argitektoniese patrone is 'n kragtige apparaat vir argitektoniese artikulasie en aankondiging vir die uitdrukking van karakter van 'n gebou. Maar Adolf Loos se opstel *Ornament and Crime* en die negentiende-eeuse kriminele antropologie, het eerder probeer om ontslae te raak van versiering vir 'n kultuur van moderniteit. Hierdie navorsing dui op die invloed en die dwaling van daardie teorieë relatief tot die betekenis van gedragsfatsoenlikheid in post-moderne en kontemporêre modes en agendas van oppervlakpatrone. Die versiering en die dekorum as sosiale kodering, hoewel meer neutraal, minder geritualiseerd, minder opvallend , word nog steeds gesien as apropos.
Sleutelwoorde: atavisme, insnydings in die vel, tatoeëermerke, gedrags-dekorum, apropos

The New York Times recently estimated that 45 million Americans have body tattoos. Journalist Kwaitkowski (2012) reports: "It's hard to look authentically rebellious or menacing these days, when even well-behaved businessmen wear earrings and ponytails and college students destined for quiet suburban lives have body piercings and tattoos". Despite being illegal in New York right up to the 1960s, in recent years body markings as influenced by sub-cultures, sportsman, bands and celebrities, have become fashionable again. This recurrence of traditional or so-called primitive practices such as tattooing which began over 5000 years ago and derived from a word "tatau" which means "to mark something", is known as *Atavism*.

Professor of Architectural Theory, Neal Leach, dubs our new marked contemporary species (figure 1) as a "*Wallpaper** person". His essay on the behaviour of this species opens with a quote by Walter Benjamin: "Fashion, like architecture, inheres in the darkness of the lived moment, belongs to the dream consciousness of the collective. The latter awakes, for example, in advertising" (Leach 2002: 231). Motivating this sentiment is the necessity of identifications that are mediated, through various types of media, including works of architecture.

Dressing and undressing

In this regard, Susan Kaiser explains that the purpose of adornment has always been to "make ourselves more attractive by rendering beauty to ourselves and thus managing the impressions that are given off to others". Kaiser furthermore points out that the motivation for the adornment

process, as researched by several authors (i.e. Rudofsky, Flügel), are the social aims of an "extension of the bodily self, sexual attraction, and status expression". For instance Rudofsky's position maintains "that we attempt to modify our bodies in ways that are not always healthful, due to a basic boredom with our bodies in their present states". Flügel elaborates on a distinction between permanent *corporal* (molding or manipulation of the body) and temporary *external* (clothing, decorations attached to the body) forms of adornment (Kaiser 1985: 36).

> Every morning, as we prepare ourselves to meet the world, we perform a universal and time-honoured ritual: we change our natural naked state by adding some form of adornment or body covering… The desire to change our bodies in some way is so universal that it would appear to be an inborn expression of our 'humanness'; a trait which sets us apart from the animal world….It is a human trait to wish to change our animal bodies into an acceptable *social body* and it is a human trait to so adorn that social body in a cultural style that clearly distinguishes it from those of its neighbours (Robinson 1988: 10).

It is not the intention here to provide a history of the many types of adornments, which is anyway obscure in its origins and not entirely relevant to our investigation. Rather the interest in this article is limited to scarification and tattoos for our understanding of situated motives for adornment and decoration in a social context. The relationship of man (body) to his material environment (architecture) is of importance here. Human beings adjust and express their identities to fit their interpretations of specific situations and visa versa. "But whether the surface used as the canvas is as soft as a human face or as hard and unyielding as a rock, whether the medium is painting or etching, decoration always conveys messages and information" (Blauer 1999: 101).
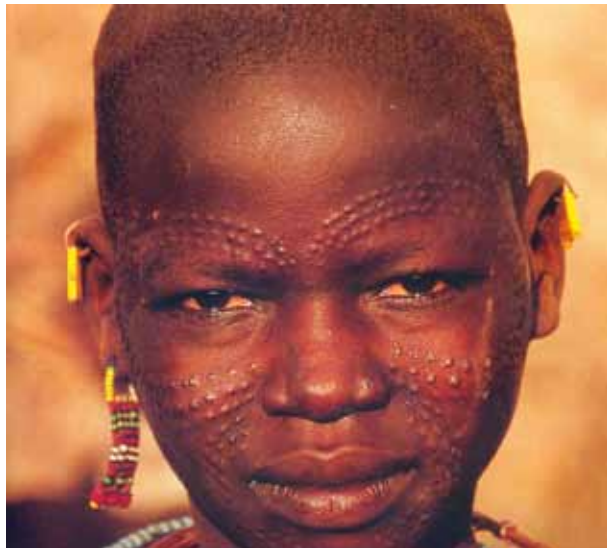
Figures 1 and 2
Left: Western marked contemporary species (source: Robinson 1988).
Right: West African boy with scarification (source: Blauer 1999).

Although the physical forms of their bodies change depending on location, according to their cultures and traditions, humans have the common goal of highlighting their characteristics that distinguish them from the other. People naturally think that their society has the most attractive qualities. Yet as Jonathan Noble (2011: 7) writes: "This skin is mine, given to me by nature, by circumstance. There is little choice in this matter of the colour of one's skin". Therefore if we look to Africa, making tattoos on people with darker skin is difficult, but the urge to mark the body remains, developing into the techniques of scarifications or also known as *cicatrisation*

(figure 2). By lifting the skin slightly and performing cuts and applying sands or ashes, raised Braille-like scars, keloids or welts, dotted or dashed, patterns are made (Robinson 1988: 106-108).

For example the Surma, Karo and Bumi, sworn enemies, practice scarification not only for physical appearance but moreover establishing a cultural identity, setting each group apart from the other, or the civilized self from the natural self. Both tattooing and scarification are painful processes, resulting in permanent body modifications emphasizing complex messages about identity, beauty, sexuality and social status. These markings highlight social, political and religious roles and are also regarded as life stage markers distinguishing the civilized, socialized human body from not only the body in the natural state but also from animals (Blauer 1999: 107-114).

What is hopefully clear is that the motive for body markings has *situated* explanations. The places where we live, work, play and worship are also powerful venues for communication. Body markings, historically predominant in Japan, China, Polynesia, New Zealand, Indonesia, India, Thailand and particularly Africa (the location where we have limited this historical part of the research so far) are intimately connected to inscribed spaces. For example, the Moba women use sharp stone edges for the purposes of inscribing linear incisions into wet mud plaster of walls (figure 3). The metaphor of the house as body extends to the decoration of their earth homes. The Moba compound is a female space and their wall decorations are precisely closely spaced incisions which the Moba call *warri*, a term used to also describe body scarification patterns that are associated with feminine beauty (Kraemer 1981: 1).

Figures 3 and 4
Left: Moba woman inscribing a mud plastered wall (source: Kraemer 1981: 1).
Right: Scratched Sotho wall patterns (source: Matthews & Changuion 1989: 6).

The notion of transferring a form of decoration from one medium or surface to another is historically widespread. For the ancient Nubian culture, house and pottery decoration similar to body adornments as symbols of powers, was an expression of both social status and religious values (Blauer 1999: 107-110). Also the Basotho houses, which incidentally signify womb and creation metaphors, are painted by women asserting their female identity – the house becomes the womb and the Basotho woman becomes the house. The four techniques of Sotho wall decoration are engravings, painting, relief and mosaic and known as *Litema* (figure 4). The finer

motifs are engraved with a comb or a fork, and many of the designs are related to scarification (Matthews & Changuion 1989: 30).

Another example is that of Ndebele mural art in the form of scratching patterns that predates the recent phenomenon of the commercial proliferated wall paintings which nevertheless too assert tribal identity. The earlier practice going back much further than the middle of the nineteenth century of scratching patterns into the wet plaster with one's fingers communicated information of ancestral sacredness. With roots in the 1940s the painted Ndebele patterns (figure 5) communicate family identity, such as ethnic affiliation and sense of place and according to the Nebo women not of any real sacred significance (Powell 1995: 8).

Figures 5 and 6
Left: Adorned Ndebele woman painting communicative wall (source: Powell 1995).
Right: Bodily metaphors, Erechtheum, Acropolis, Athens, 421-406 BC (source: Payne 2003).

Nevertheless what is relevant for this article is not only the relationship of the exemplified African body adornments to wall decorations, but that the 'tradition' was atavistically revived and adjusted to sustain any oppressive regime or nineteenth century strategies to demean black existence as savage. Terence Walz elaborates:

> This tendency for multiple reasons to exist for a form of art, reasons which on one hand seem rooted in traditional, spiritual belief [,..] seem to reflect reasons of display, spectacle, self expression, and changing cultural norms, may be a pervasive reality of all forms of cultural expression in what we think of as a post-globalization world (Walz 1975: 222).

Jonathon Noble (2011: 7) reminds us that "the metaphor of skin […] is widely elaborated upon by established architectural theory". In extension Mark Taylor (2003: 32) writes in his essay *Surface-Talk*: "When reading histories and theories of architecture we find many positions founded on Vitruvius and Alberti use bodily metaphors and gender characteristics to describe transcendent metaphors of architecture (figure 6). We are assured that clothing, cladding, skin and bones portray various states of dressing and undressing surface from structure". In *De architectura* Vitruvius isolates the architecture from the *Gesamtkunstwerk* by supplying paintings, mosaics and sculpture (added by craftsmen) with a context. Therefore Vitruvius was reviled by "irrational painted architecture of the second Pompeian style" whereby "the painter fails to attend to the architectural narrative and the whole is an unmitigated disaster". Perhaps

subtle, but a theory of *ornamenta*, was being formulated by way of *décor* merging with the notion of poetic and rhetoric *decorum* (Payne 2003: 101-102).

Decorum

In essence *decorum* in classical rhetoric and poetic theory is concerned with the appropriateness or fitness of style (i.e. epic, tragedy, comedy) to subject (theatre). However it is the sixteenth century idea of social *decorum* which prescribes limits of social behaviour and subsequent morals of body and building adornment within set situations, that is relevant to this article. Alina Payne (2003: 102) tells us that except for the pediment, it was ornament that communicated visual impact most powerfully and obviously in "declaring the appropriation of antiquity". It was particularly the presence of the human body or *figura* on a façade (figure 7), inherited from Gothic architecture that shifted towards a classical vocabulary of decoration as can be exemplified by Michelangelo's *ignudi* of the Sistine ceiling (Payne 2003: 110).

Figure 7
Andrea Palladio, Palaazzo Chiericati - Decorous *figura*, Vicenza
(source: Payne 2003: 107).

What Payne (2003: 113) reveals in her conclusion is that "ornament facilitated dialogue and exchange between the arts and tied Renaissance architecture into the fabric of its culture". Therefore the relation of body to architecture in the Renaissance in terms of *decorum* and to a *bella figura* cultural identity was not very different from the relation of the previously mentioned African body adornment to wall patterns in terms of social rank and cultural character. The common denominator is the signifying extension of the bodily self through the medium of (feminine) surface decoration. For instance, the holistic wall patterning of traditional societies is integral with the architecture, whereas the modern notion isolates the decoration from the main trunk of architecture.

Therefore architectural theory generated by Alberti's adage that "the work ought to be constructed naked, and clothed later; let the ornament come last" tended to (by the end of the nineteenth century) exclude discussions of figural ornament in favour of vegetal motifs (Taylor 2003: 32). Under Alberti's conception, the decorated sur-*face* can be peeled off like a mask

to reveal the true architectural layer. Mark Taylor (2003: 32) then interestingly notes that this stance "enables the elevation of structure (as masculine) and the concomitant devaluation of surface decoration and ornament (as feminine)". This reminds us of Jonathon Noble's idea of the mask covering the skin (figure 8) as a "deceptive play of willed versus natural identity" but at the same time reveals the complexity and instabilities of identity causing confusion as to "which is the authentic and which the contrived" (Noble 2011: 7). To exacerbate the confusion Taylor (2003: 32) writes how Gottfried Semper reverses Alberti's theory maintaining that the origins of architecture are ornament then followed by structure (figure 9).


Figures 8 and 9
Left: African tribal masks of willed identity (source: Blauer 1999)
Right: Gottfried Semper, "Carib" hut, *Der Stil in den technischen und* tectonischen Kunsten oder praktische *Asthetik* 1863 (source: Mallgrave 2005: 135).

Nevertheless the naturalized conception of a functional masculine architecture was privileged. What this means is to oppose ornament/decoration to function would be a fallacy says Patrick Schumacher. Instead he proposes, in place of Augustin-Charled d' Aviler's classic triad: *Distribution, construction* and *decoration* in *Cours d' architecture* (1691-93), a distinction between *organization* and *articulation* as the central dimensions of architectural design. Both the organization and articulation are concerned with social order – the former with the spatialization of social order and the latter with the subjective comprehension of that spatialized social order. A potent device for articulation, Schumacher suggests, is architectural patterns (Schumacher 2009: 1-2). We have seen in our historical African examples the concepts of character and expression that are mediating terms that reveal how decoration relates to a buildings purpose. Both in the traditional and classical sense decoration is the essential ingredient of architecture as it was for all artifacts within the concepts of *character* and *expression*. Moreover just as humans were considered unsociable if they were not bodily marked, "building without decoration was unfinished, unable to enter the social world, just as it is impossible to join society naked, or without sufficient behavioural decorum" (Schumacher 2009: 3). At this point, taking our investigation thus far into consideration, the question arises: Why, how and when did architecture lose its character and expression?

Deviant bodies

The clues for our architectural enquiry are perhaps found in changed attitudes towards body markings. Historically, in AD325, one recalls the suppression of the art of body markings, as requested by Christian leaders on the grounds of the disfigurement of "God's image", by the Roman Emperor Constantine (Robinson 1988: 101). The irony is that motives for bodily markings - the inability of humans to accept the naked body in its natural state, coincide with the early Christian's morality and disgust of Plato's (*The Republic*) approval of total nakedness. Both required the concealment of 'the flesh', yet a further irony is that both, by doing so, reinforced the objective spectacle of the human form. Nevertheless it was the Church that "sought to legislate against all forms of gender display, both in clothing and in pictorial representations of the human form". This resulted in the commanding, yet again the irony, of 'castrated mutilation' of sculptures, especially the male nude (Robinson 1988: 28-30). In light of our foregoing architectural theory, the unadorned architectural structure equates to the 'undressed' naked body.
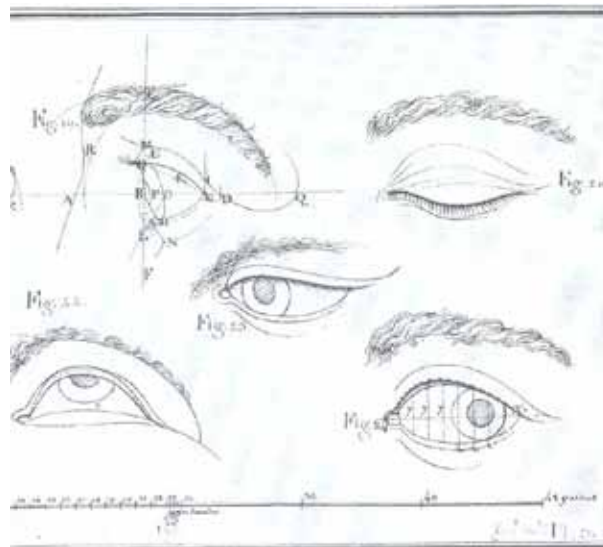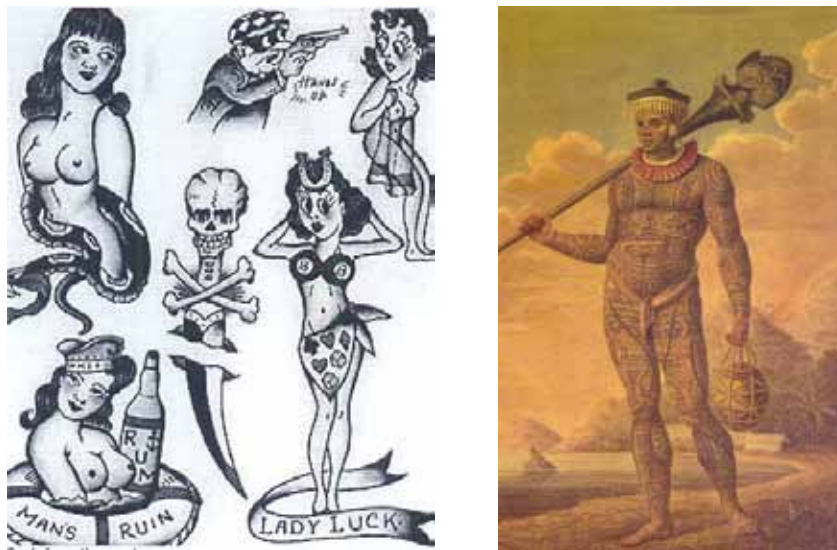

Figure 10
Jean-Jaques Lequeu, Nouvelle Methode 1792, measured character
(source: Bĕdard 1994: 39).

Not only was the practice of skin markings of the body considered congenial by Christians, but their very antithetical opponent in the name of 'science' (i.e. Darwinism) would also seek to relate bodily modifications to physical anomalies (Canales & Herscher 2005: 236-237). This attitude had its foundations in the paradigmatic shift of the Renaissance worldview where *matematica* dominated and everything was measured. So too was character and expression, instrumentally and somewhat absurdly, frozen by the draughting pen (figure 10) and *Nouvelle Methode* (1792) of Jean-Jaques Lequeu (Bĕdard 1994: 36-51). How do you construct character and expression, unless through an appropriate medium/metaphor, amongst others, like surface decoration?

A century after Lequeu's basis, concepts of physiognomy and social Darwinism provided the material for theories of anthropology for criminologists, for example, for the Italian Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909). His essential theory professed that criminal identification was achieved through physical deformation of savages or by virtue of *atavism*. His most important work was *L'uomo delinquente* wherein he equates physical anomalies to criminals as is preserved, according to his theories, in modern 'savages'. What is of most importance for us is his conclusion that

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thieves, rapists and murderers can be identified by specific characteristics including "remorse, more vanity, impulsiveness, vindictiveness and cruelty but most importantly "the excessive use of tattooing" (Canales & Herscher 2005: 238-241).

Despite the Christian suppression and the scientific hinge of the Renaissance, the art of tattooing was revived by Renaissance trader's exploration of the Pacific Ocean, opened up by Captain Cook, in the late 18th century as a trading route. Therefore tattooing (mermaids, ships, anchors, etc.) tended to be the preserve of sailors and criminals (teardrops under eyes, spider webs on elbows). These tattoos (figure 11) generically communicated and revealed beliefs, gang identification and belonging, places traveled, years in jail or symbolized number of people killed (Robinson 1988: 100).

Figures 11 and 12
Left: Generic sailor and criminal tattoos (source: Robinson 1988).
Right: Tattoed Papuan (source: Robinson 1988).

Drawn from nineteenth-century criminal anthropology and with functionalism prolonging its ineffable presence, architect Adolf Loos wrote his famous essay, 'Ornament and Crime' (1908), which taps into the work of criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso and his theories of atavism and degeneration. Loos' theories merge discourses through the concept of tattoos and body markings which distinguish "between normal and deviant bodies. The unornamented architecture and applied art called for by Loos were thus not only the 'liberating' equipment of modern life but also a means by which to distinguish those individuals, communities, nations, and races capable of participating in that life" He read ornament as signifying cultural development in levels of civilization and Darwinian concepts of inherited taste. Darwin's architectural theory of evolution would be theorized in a sense: "Civilized man preferred 'the Jupiter or Apollo of the Greeks' to the 'hideous bas-reliefs on the ruined buildings of Central America" (Canales & Herscher 2005: 235-237).

Within their extensive studies of parallels between Loos and Lombroso regarding 'The Physiogonomy of material culture' Jimena Canales and Andrew Hersher (2005: 240-241) note that the criminal's will to draw excessively (*graphomania*) was said to have resulted from their atavism "which forced them to communicate in the hieroglyphic and symbolic manner of primitives". This stance was also justified in laws by criminal anthropologists such as Ernst

von Haaeckel that privileged unadorned 'modern man' as scientifically superior to atavistic man (Canales & Herscher 2005: 242).

For instance Loos' article, on decorated carriages, in the 'The Luxury Vehicle' written for the Vienna Jubilee Exhibition (1808), revolves his debate on ornament "as a mark of criminality, as well as of primitiveness" around females, Papuans, and criminals that "ornament their skin" (figure 12). He claimed that women's ornamentation atavistically returns to the savage's erotic backward significance. Loos thus synonymously equates the evolution of culture to the removal of ornamentation which he compared to tattoos of criminals. Furthermore it was Kant's aesthetic theory that reinforced the tattoo and ornament as parallel forms of 'free beauty' (Canales & Herscher 2005: 236-237).

Demise of decoration

In writing on Vienna as an indifferent place, the central character of Robert Musil's 'The Man without qualities' is Ulrich who refers to the cities' civilians as masked: "a civilian has at least nine characters: a professional one, a national one, a civic one, a class one, a geographical one, a sex one, a conscious, an unconscious and perhaps even too a private one". Adolf Loos recognizes Vienna as a city with a mask which focuses on *inner* space when he said: "The house does not have to tell anything to the exterior; instead all its richness must be manifest in the interior" (Colomina 1988: 65-68). Thus the house is mute and unable to communicate externally – the silent façade (*autism*) and not ornamentation (tattooing, costume) preferred (figure 13). Therefore the reason Loos detested the applied art of the *Wiener Werkstaette* (1903) and abhorred the intensely decorated work, which he referred to as tattoos (figure 14), of the Secessionist architects Josef Olbrich, Henry vand der Velde and Josef Hoffman (Curtis 1996: 70).
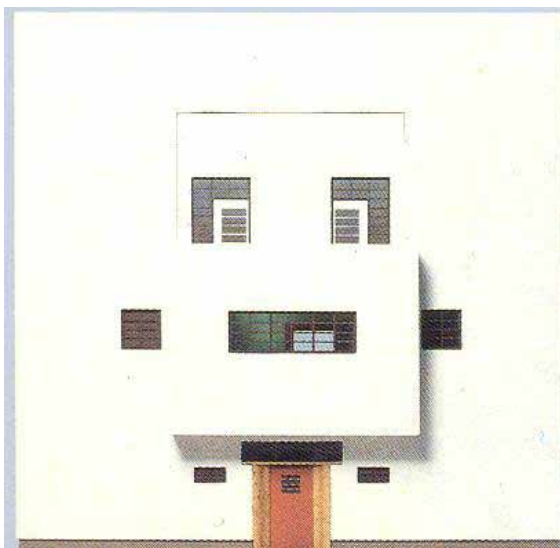
Figures 13 and 14
Left: Loos's Silent façade of Moller house, Vienna 1928 (source: Colomina 1991:23).
**Right: Joseph Maria Olbrich, Tattoed Secession Exhibition Building, Vienna 1897 (Curtis 1996: 66).**

Hoffman, a contemporary of Loos, was also aware of the separation of private and public being, but nevertheless preferred the house to be harmonious with the personal *social character* of its inhabitants (Colomina 1988: 67). In contrast to both Loos's position on ornament and Darwinian natural selection were the previously mentioned architectural historians, Gottfried Semper

and Alois Riegl. For example in *Der Stil*, Semper writes: "architectural ornament emerged organically from a specific cultural milieu, as a representation of a building's inner structure". He theorized that a building's 'cladding' (*Bekleidung*), that included 'tattoos', concealing inner structure also was an expression of character (Canales & Herscher 2005: 244-245).

Despite the fact that any attempt to end ornamentation did not signal the end of design's expressive function, neither did it bring about the demise of surface patterning, as will be seen later in this paper. Nevertheless 'Ornament and Crime', was to be the dominant forerunner of modern architecture. As Noble (2011: 7) puts it: "Where European modernism, for instance rests its faith on an aesthetic concept of 'purity in design' and 'honesty to materials', it privileges a naturalised conception of architectural skin". To exemplify and with Loos in mind: Le Corbusier would engage in the 'white abstraction' which favoured masculine modernity freed from feminine cosmetics.

Therefore architects like Le Corbusier would disavow fashion (the frivolity of feminine dress) as the antithesis of the modern which preferred streamlined minimalism (masculine suit). Quentin Bell (1947 age of austerity) predicted for future socialist fashion the disappearance of the fashionable dress since it expressed social status and distinction (Breward & Evans 2005: 12). Interestingly enough, with the help of the Dom-ino skeletal system (figure 15), Le Corbusier's five points of architecture and the advent of the free façade becoming an independent skin from its structure "…it could just as well hang like a curtain or clothing" (Leatherbarrow & Mostafavi 2005:), or not be there at all (figure 16). One can then say that in the modernist sense, any idea of wall patterning in architecture was irrelevant.
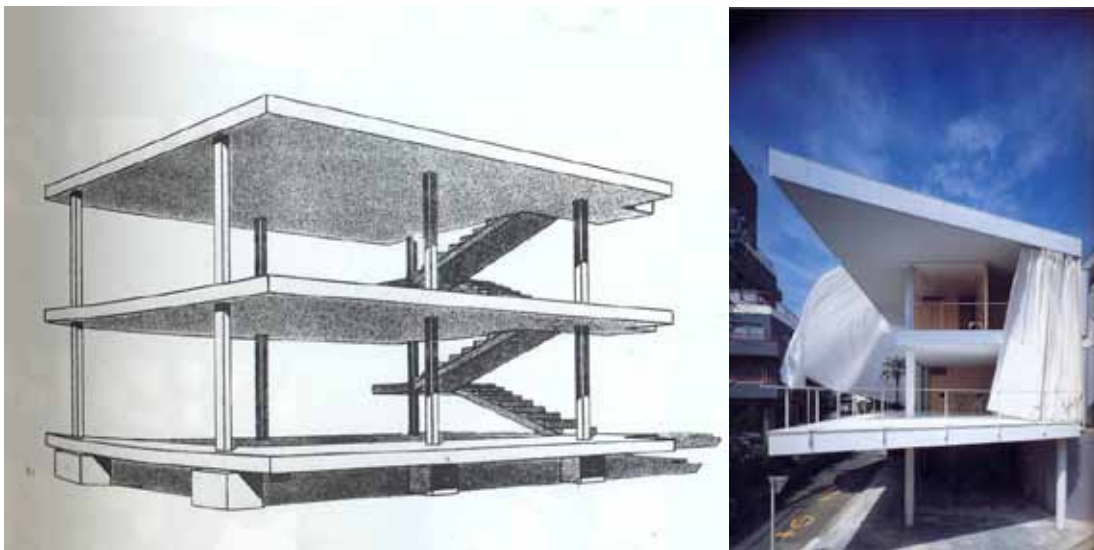
Figures 15 and 16
Left: Le Corbusier/Max Dubois, Dom-ino skeleton, 1914-15 from Oeuvre complete (Curtis 1996: 85).
**Right: Shigeru Ban's curtain wall house, Tokyo, Japan 1993-5 (source: Bell 2001: 50).**

The three most important aesthetic principles of Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnsons consciously constructed International Style exhibition held at MOMA in New York (1932) was: volume (surfacing material); modular regularity and most importantly in our discussion; departure from applied ornament (Gossel & Leuthäuser 1990: 14-30). Interesting how William Curtis (1997: 256) notes that "the authors supported their case with a selection of black-and-white photographs of buildings as far apart as California and Czechoslavakia". The reason for

this was to disguise the regional, size, colour and material differences, hence identities of the chosen projects. Perhaps it is now becoming clear as to *why, how and when architecture lost its character and expression.*

Devising communications

Nevertheless several prominent 'expressive' or 'romantic' architectural figures, including Frank Lloyd Wright, refused to or were omitted to participate in the 'Modern Art: International Exhibition'. For instance, Wright's Imperial Hotel (Gossel & Leuthäuser 1991: 94-95) was described by Hitchcock as "unskillfully exotic ornament" (Mallgrave 2005: 299). Nevertheless, with references to handicraft, local materials, response to climate and way of life the subject of 'Critical Regionalism' could not be avoided (Frampton 1992: 314). For the purposes of this article it is of interest to see how the modifiers of the international modern architecture, such as situated identities, brought about a renewed interest in architectural surface markings not only in the regional modernisms but also in the work of die-hard purists such as Le Corbusier, albeit for the self.

An exemplary regional variation was the 'tropical modernism' in Brazil, South America. When commissioned to design the Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro, modern architects Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer approached Le Corbusier as consultant, who by then had been involved with a design for an Agricultural Estate in North Africa (1942) with a new approach declaring that in a modern way, building needed to harmonize with landscape, climate and tradition. The resultant project was an expression of Brazilian identity and Baroque with wall surfaces decorated with Portuguese-style faînce tiles (Curtis 1996: 386). Another project by Niemeyer, the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Pampulha (1943) was also decorated, but with brightly coloured mosaics (Underwood 1994: 54) Incidentally this Latin American Art tendency reflective of Brazilian carnival costumes and Kraja Indian facial decoration (figure 17) expressed in mosaics and frescoes (Damaz 1963: 20-22) was also influential in the work of Norman Eaton in Pretoria and particularly his design of the un-built Ministry of Transport Building in Pretoria (1944-8) but evident in later built works such as the Wachthuis, Pretoria (1955-60), with its remarkable variety of surface patterning (figure 18). The development of Eaton's work by the fifties with regards surface treatment especially, brick patterning, had attempted to evoke an 'African quality' (Harrop-Allin 1975: 48, 96).
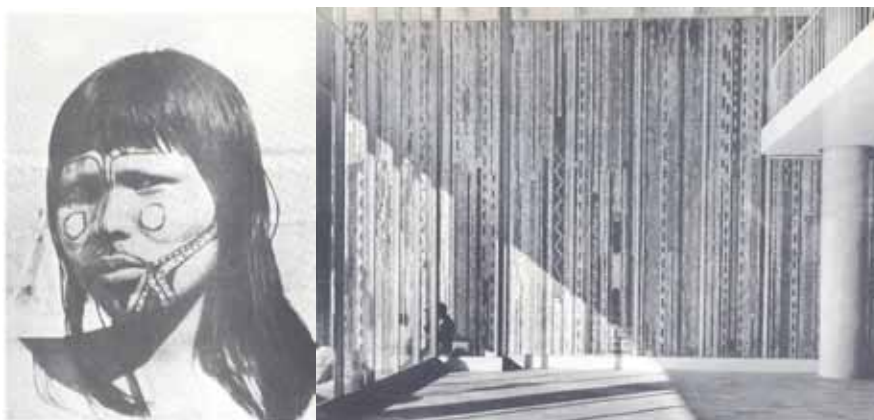

Figures 17 and 18
Left: Karaja Indian, Bananal Island, Golas, Brazil (Damaz 1963: 21).
Right: Norman Eaton, Wachthuis wall patterns, Pretoria 1955-60 (source: Harrop-Allin 1975: 102).

Le Corbusier's later work too had taken on a 'sense of primitivism' in the twentieth century which Gombrich suggests "attempted to achieve by absorbing into its resources the modes and methods of primitive image making" with the goal of new meanings (Gombrich 2002: 297). Graffitti-like murals, window and door surfaces, are evident in his Chapel of Notre-Dame du-Haut, Ronchamp (1950-4) or at Chandigarh in India. Ironically one wonders what Loos would have thought of Le Corbusier painting Jean Badovici (Eillen Grey's grirlfriend) house near Roquebrune, Cap Martin naked and ironically with a scar on his leg (figure 19). Beatrix Colomina writes a scathing article condemning the murals as vandalism – hence if we may we see a certain kind of crime and ornament (Andersen, Jorgenssen & Birket-Smith 1995: 124-126). In light of Darwin's previously mentioned claim of *hideous bas-reliefs*, one wonders what the scientific opinion would be with regards the embossed *Modular* (body) hieroglyphs (figure 20) to *beton brut* (Wall), particularly in the case of the Nantes-Rez Unité wall (Andersen, Jorgenssen & Birket-Smith 1995: 85).
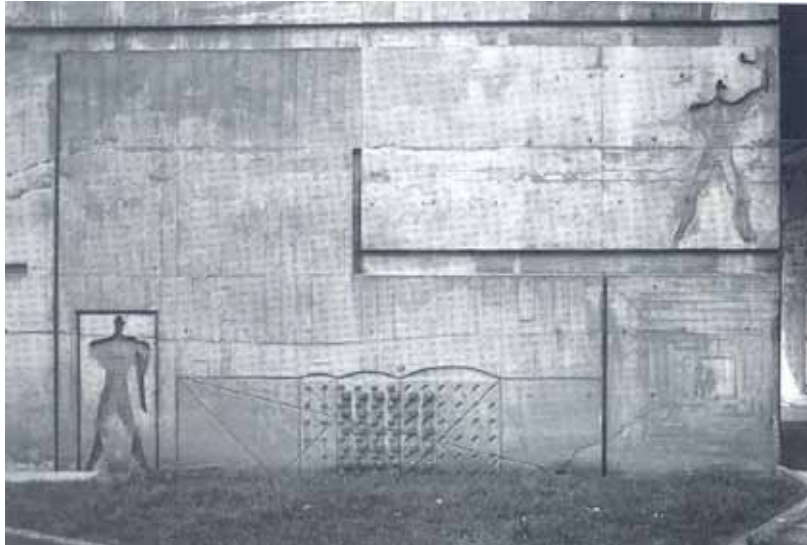
Figures 19 and 20
Left: Le Corbuiser painting wall of Badovici house (source: Anderson et al 1995:124 1).
**Right: Le Corbusier, Nantes-Rez Unite embossed hieroglyph wall (source: Anderson et al 1995: 85).**

More importantly, what we are noticing is an atavistic return to wall surface patterning as a device for communication whether for purposes of reflecting national identities (regionalism) or the individual character (self). The strictures against ornament and decoration were being challenged in a Postmodernism, yet the 'language' that its facades and 'classical' eclectic motifs were meant to 'speak" had no engagement of articulatory patterning but instead an *aesthetic* agenda (Schumacher 2009: 4). Nevertheless post-modernist Robert Venturi opposes Mies "Less is more" with "More is not less" and "Less is a bore" implying humanist aspects of "historic style, contextualism, symbolism, and ornament" as novelty and curiosity. An aesthetic approach furthermore "has to appear as something added on to what necessity dictates, as decoration in a broad sense", thus a "decorated shed" (Harries 2000: 6-8).

Decorating sheds and shacks

In their work, *The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural* Form, Venturi and his associates, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, disapproved the muteness and the way "modern architects abandoned a tradition of iconology in which painting, sculpture, and graphics combined with

architecture". In hope of *architecture parlante* the authors refer to "the delicate hieroglyphics on a bold pylon (figure 21), the archetypal inscriptions of a Roman architrave, the mosaic processions in Saint'Apollinare, the ubiquitous tattoos over a Giotto Chapel…" as containing "messages beyond their ornamental contribution to architectural space" (Harries 2000: 70). Venturi's intention was to reclaim the disappeared textual qualities of architecture as could be learnt from Levittown and Las Vegas. In their book *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi and his associates compare the definitions of a *duck* to a *decorated shed* : "The duck is the special building that *is* a symbol; the decorated shed is the conventional shelter that *applies* symbols: What the authors were arguing for was "the symbolism of the ugly and ordinary in architecture and for the particular significance of the decorated shed with a rhetorical [decorous] front and conventional behind; for architecture as shelter with symbols on it" (Venturi, Scott Brown & Izenour 2001: 87-90).
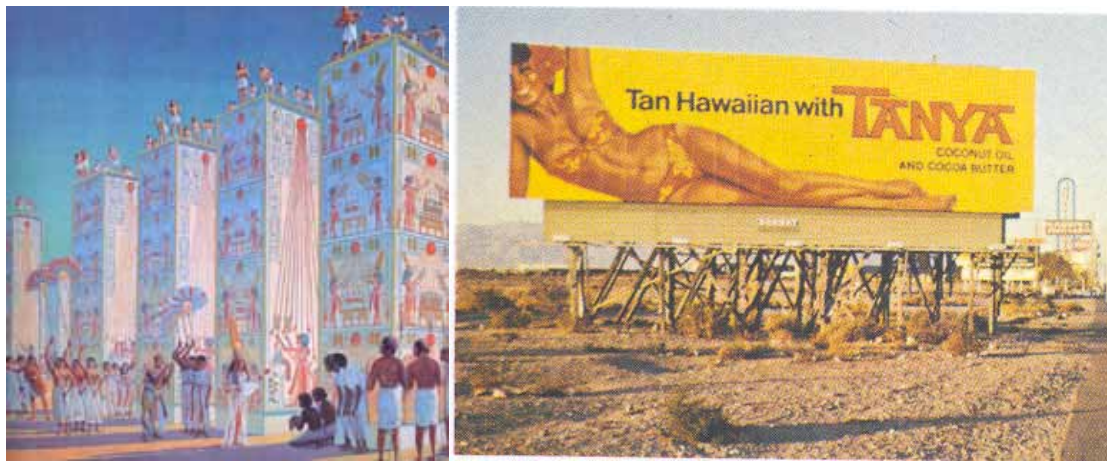
Figures 21 and 22
Left: Egyptian Pylon with hieroglyphs
Right: Las Vegas billboard iconography   (source: Venturi 2001).

In writing *Masked Matter and Other Diagrams*, Hans Frei (2003: 44) states that if one takes technological innovation into consideration as merely dressing and undressing in the historical decoration/structure debate, then iconographic or digital, billboards (figure 22) "are not fundamentally different from a classical façade" in the sense that "it is nearly impossible to liberate architectural surfaces from the culture of representation". We noted previously in this article that *the naturalized conception of a functional masculine architecture was privileged* and dominant in Western architectural theory. Yet what Frei considers is the possibility of integrating mask with matter "in order to achieve a surface beyond representation" (Frei 2003: 44). Interestingly for Semper the clothing or the mask as first principle of architecture was derived at from the observation of Greek temples built of white marble, but only because the matter was a good base for paint. Semper associated the cosmetic mask (incidentally derived from the Greek word *kosmos*) to the matter in his textile theories, which Frei (2003: 46) mentions is "a first step towards nonrepresentational architectural surface".

It is the 'minimalist' Ricola Storage Building in Mulhouse-Brunstatt, France (1993) and library of the Fachhochschule in Eberswalde, near Berlin (1994-99) both designed by Herzog & de Meuron, that Frei highlights as an example in the Semperian sense where no battle exists between mask (cosmetic) and matter (technical manipulation). How ironic that within minimalism

there would be a return to surface patterns in architecture. Frei defines Herzog & De Meurons', non-representational buildings as "tattooed over and over with images" like wallpaper (Frei 2003: 47). The repetitive patterns remind of Warhol's anonymous artistic production "being nothing but surface" (Bastion 2001: 9). However, despite Frei's intentions both the images for a Warholion or Herzog and De Meuron surface mask were technologically produced revealing a crisis of textual image of new media and as already mentioned Leach's *Wallpaper** person. For instance in the work of NL DESIGN and their *Catalogue of Strategies*: Through the technique of repetitive Warhol-like icons and Las Vegas-like text as cut-and-paste wallpaper, the strategy is "that designers should be made aware of their ethical and social responsibilities" – hence through appropriate representation (Gerritzen 2001: 4).

Figures 23 and 24
Left: Tattoed images by artist Thomas Ruff on Herzog & De Meuron, Technical School library, Eberswalde, Germany 1994-99.   (source: Frei 2003: 45). Right: NL DESIGN, cut and paste strategized representation (source: Gerritzen 2001).

Nevertheless we highlighted earlier in this text that it is a human strategy or trait, with or without designers, to want to distinguish one's character and identity from those of one's neighbours, albeit through the use of the same techniques as others (i.e. tattoos, scarification, clothing, wall or body painting, signs or wallpaper). In support of his photographs, Craig Fraser writes in the book *Shack chic*:

> No statistics could reveal the full truth of life as much as people themselves through the way they mediate their physical environments … 1,5 million shack-dwellers in South Africa line the interior walls with branded 'wallpaper' – surplus packaging for popular South African products such as Lucky Star (pilchards), Bull Brand (corned beef), Lion matches, Sunlight soap, Colgate, Palmolive soap and Koo baked beans – is a popular décor scheme, initially employed of necessity (functional for filling holes in the walls and covering the unsightly lack of uniformity in the building materials) they are more and more becoming a design feature in themselves. The effect of the step and repeat patterns of the paper is almost Warholian – terminally modern (Fraser 2002).

Deleuze, de Meuron and dialogues

It is through Fraser (2002) quoting a shack resident Sandile Dikeni: "These walls. Thin as membranes, keep nothing outside. They are here to keep our beauty inside, away from that

solitude out there", that brings us to the notion of surface patterning, previously seen as an outer representational space/face at expense of the inner space/face (figure 25). Not necessarily with shack dwellers in mind, but coincidentally and important for where this article is leading, Frei refers to the possibility (although not always desirable in the sense of Loos or shack dwellers) of "continuous inside and outside flow of space" as an experiment in the later works of Herzog and de Meuron and their contemporaries such as Rem Koolhaas and his utilization of 'monad' surfaces (Frei 2003: 49). Picking up from Gilles Deleuze's *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Deleuze 1993: 16-20) and the unfolding of patterned surface structures in the footsteps of Buckminster Fuller and texture mapping or NURB[1] surface articulations brought *parametricist patterning* to the fore that enables deployment of facade relief (figure 26) and apertures reminding of scarification (Schumacher 2009: 4).

Figures 25 and 26
Left: Interior decorated space/face of shack dweller (Fraser 2002).
Right: Folded pattern surface, Ashton Raggat McDougal, National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2001 (source: Taylor 2003: 73).

What has been evident so far is the relationship of surface/skin to structure/matter and visa versa but most importantly the idea of patterning in relation to the body therefore any folded matter or surface consciousness for this article needs to consider surface patterns atavistically. Thus reference is made to Zaha Hadid's design of the Azerbaijan Cultural Centre (figure 27) which utilizes "seaming as accentuating device…comparable to the feature accentuating Maori facial tattoos" (figure 28). Her parametricism is an artistic agenda that embodies the will to form with differentiation introduced by willfully 'painting' the surface with any pattern or image beyond the polarisation of ornament and structure as perpetuated by Vitruvius and the modernists (Schumacher 2009: 5-8). In his book *Surface Architecture*, David Leatherbarrow (2005) tells us that reflection of earlier motifs, is an extension of that between modernity (production) and tradition (representation) reflected by many contemporary buildings.

Figures 27 and 28
Left: Zaha Hadid Architects, Azerbaijan Cultural Centre, Baku (source: Schumacher 2009:8).
Right: Maori mask showing facial tattoos (source: Schumacher 2009:8)

In light of the aforementioned, it is interesting to note that Jonathan Noble reinforces the notion of "contemporary public [South African] architecture that attempts to 'concretise' imaginative dialogues with African landscapes, craft and indigenous traditions". He bases his premise by referring to Frantz Fanon's metaphors of black mask and white skin to post-Apartheid public design that emphasizes "African expression". Within the metaphors of 'skin' and 'mask', Noble suggests that the former (natural identity) is a condition belonging to the body and the latter (willed identity) is a "less-than-natural projection of the self" and that "when taken together, suggest a tension, a duality of being" (Noble 2011: 1). Besides contemporary parametric notions beyond representation Leatherbarrow's question therefore remains relevant: How can cladding thus transform itself, how can it be both, general and particular, suitable for the economics of construction, repetition, and the claims of representation, identity?" (Leatherbarrow 2005). In *The Anatomy of Architecture* Susan Blier gives us a hint at an answer by suggesting that architecture is "integrally identified with human activity, for, in ordering space, architecture orders human action. To elaborate: when architecture borrows its imagery from human experience, it encourages those who move within it to reaffirm essential features of human identity and activity" (Blier 1987: 2).

Drawing conclusions

We note that, despite historical attempts at 'getting rid of' there is a recurrence of surface patterns in contemporary architecture whether as digital parametric experimentations or desires to express the *identities* and *character* of the users and their cultures. Perhaps no longer any clear correlation with architectural patterning but for the same reasons of the human necessity to mark an identity, we note that there is an increase in the acceptability of, previously taboo, body markings (tattoos, scarification, piercings, plastic surgery, etc.) in order to *belong* to sub-cultures across the globe. On inspection and relative to societies which continue the traditional practice of integrating, body skin markings and wall surface patterning, both as contemporary *atavistic* attempts are less ritualized, less authentic and conspicuous in the relationship of the body surface marker to the architectural surface pattern maker.

Nevertheless, correlation or not we can again say that cultures, sub-cultures, individuals or humans *adjust and express their identities to fit their interpretations of specific situations*. These situations could be a human activity (i.e wedding) or event space (i.e. wedding venue). Both choice of dress (body adornment) and décor (decoration/ornament) would, by taking the *decorum* of the sub-culture to which they belong into account, have an *appropriate* representative relationship.

Notes

1   The surface geometry of 'folded architecture' was initially faceted but by the end of the 1990s. Thereafter surfaces were smoothed out and known as NURB surfaces. This made the technique *ITALS* of textural mapping onto warped NURB surfaces possible (Shumacher 2009: 4).

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