In this issue ...

Andrew Ross

Andrew Skulina

Catherine Pease

Charles Holland

Charlotte Vitaioli

Christopher Carthy

Christopher Pendrich

Crystal Bennes

David V. Taylor

Esme Fieldhouse

Fergus Purdie

Jack Wates

Jonny Marks

Maija Viksne

Mentor Noci

Rowan Mackinnon-Pryde

Ryan McLoughlin

Seán McAlister

Stephen Mackie

Tiago Casanova

Cover illustration by Andy Ross. Photograph of rare mineral and chemical element bismuth. Atomic symbol Bi, atomic number 83.

The first edition of Matzine#12 consisted of fifty copies, printed December 2012. The publication is set in Liberation Serif, designed in 2007, whose characterful glyphs make easy reading of small text. We used capitalised Open Sans, designed in 2010, for our titles, for the typeface's soft and clean modern style.

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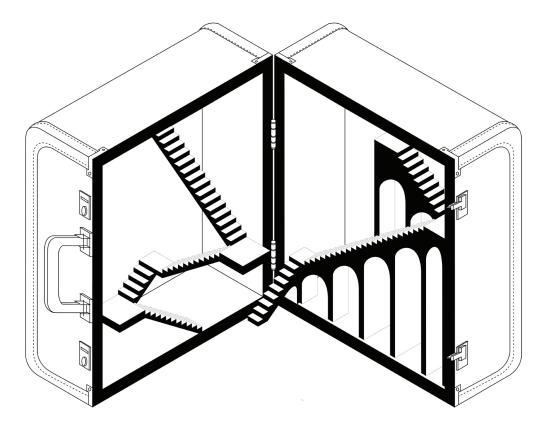




8x8cm screen print of a medium format photograph

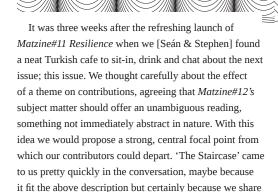
IF ONLY YOU WERE THERE

Maija Viksne





Stephen Mackie



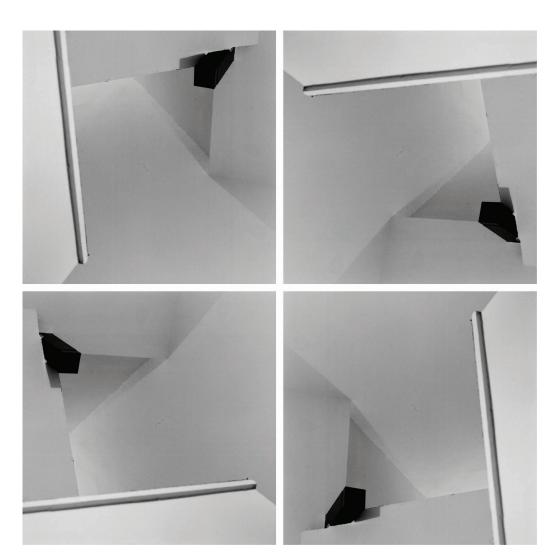
an abnormal attraction to staircases!

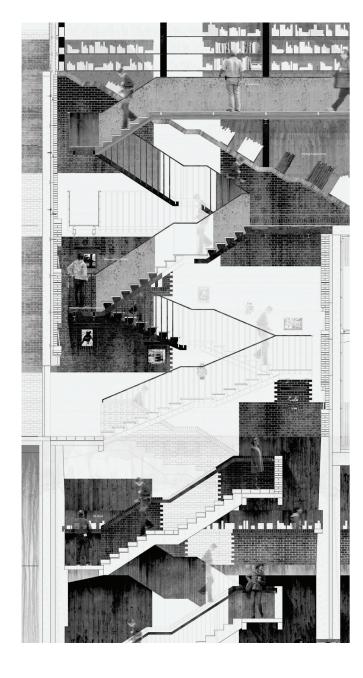
The staircase is one of those fundamental architectural ingredients. And as this issue illustrates, it is a device employed by our contributors to explore a multitude of ideas. It is an element that easily conjures ideas of the practical and the absurd, the symbolic and the real, the static and the moving. In this striking issue we have so many excellent pieces that deserve your undivided, discerning attention; including a fine set of invited submissions: a festive cocktail recipe from Dr. Crystal Bennes; a written article by Charles Holland; an art film from Tiago Casanova and a review of Venice Biennale 2012 by our own Rowan Mackinnon-Pryde. And of course, please enjoy the marvellous, mesmerising cover illustration by Andrew Ross.

The rich and varied set of articles you hold in your hands [or have on your screen] testifies for our contributors' individualism and intellect. That each contributor invests in this collective publication, without material reward, is a proof of pleasure in immaterial things. For us, <code>Matzine#12</code> celebrates these qualities which bring us together and bind us in a much more meaningful manner than the setting of a theme could ever achieve.

EDITORIAL

Stephen Mackie & Seán McAlister





b&w film

PARALLAX ROLLERCOASTER

MArch project, Sheffield, 2012

PRINTMAKERS' JOURNEY
FROM ATTIC TO CELLAR
Christopher Carthy



Marcel Duchamp is the author of one of the most interesting and audacious paintings of the 20th century. *Nu descendant un escalier n°2* [*Nude descending a staircase n.2*], from the year 1912, which created a huge scandal when exhibited in New York City in 1913 at the famous Armory Show. This event, one of the most important in the history of American Art, intended to introduce Modern Art to an audience used to Realistic Art.

Duchamp intended to combine on this painting the elements and characteristics that composed the theoretical basis of the collective *Section d'or* [*Golden section*], combining a mixture of languages such as cubist, futurist and even dadaist, in which the multiplication of points of view suggest an amazing sensation of movement. The act of deconstruction shows his interest on the representation of transformation and the change of state implied by each individual dis-multiplied on the act of movement. This idea of movement on the Futurist Art played an important

role on the development of chrono-photography and cinematography.

One hundred years later, this is my homage to Marcel Duchamp, with my own contemporary version of a staircase descent, in a time where there is the need to make an introduction of Contemporary Art to an audience still used to Realistic and Modern Art.

This video performance intends to dis-multiply the photographs within the video format, in other words I pretend to stop the movement and observe more closely the detail in each frame, making the staircase descent to last in time.

◀ ◀ http://vimeo.com/54480757

Watch my film submission at the above address. This video is an excerpt from series 1 "To destruct / To loose / To extinguish", of "Test to the mnemonic ability of photography," 2012.

A place 'where east meets west, ancient meets modern, land meets sea; [...] a point of convergence': Venice does seem an ideal place to host such a festival of ideas.: The Venice Biennale of Architecture.

Over the period of the Biennale, the end of August to the end of November, the city is flooded with architects and designers. The black clad pilgrims, sporting a selection of designer specs, appear quite at home, making reference to the Venetian penchant for wearing black and to the city's influence in the production of eye glasses.

"...black colours became the national wear. Not only the divines and lawyers wore black, but the statesmen wore black, the ladies wore black; and the gondolas carrying guitar and lovers in their bosoms, were clothes in the same external symbol of solemnity." Hunt, L. (1822) The Indicator, Volume 1. Harvard University

This year, the 13th International Biennale of Architecture, entitled Common Ground, has been directed by British Architect David Chipperfield.

In his introduction to the eponymously titled book of essays, Common Ground: a critical reader, Chipperfield discusses the theme for this year's Venice Biennale. In reaction to the negative image of architecture that he believes is being propagated by today's media, "springing fully formed from the minds of individual talents," Common Ground presents an opportunity to explore the collaborative nature of the subject and to explore the relationship between 'the profession [of architecture] and the society it wishes to represent'. ³

He continues: 'In architecture everything begins with the ground. It is our datum', ⁴ In many ways this seems a rational statement, however, here in Venice, connotations we may associate with ground as a stable or fixed plain do not necessarily apply. Instead, the collective point of reference is one in constant flux: the ever shifting tide with which the city shifts too. 'The sea embodies all that is changing and variable and accidental' ⁵; shifting but forever cyclical. It seems to me that the work on shown at this year's Architectural Biennale, communicates a

similar sense of both change and continuity.

Resonating across the exhibitions is a general attitude of reflection - another inescapable aspect of this city. Accompanying this is a somewhat tentative, but positive projection to the future. There is a sense that in order to reassert a culture of architecture, to establish a more engaged relationship between those who create our architecture and the society it serves, the profession may have to simultaneously adapt to changing climates and challenge the status quo.

'In times of need shouldn't the need for architects be greater?'
Catalan + Balearic Islands pavilion

Communicating architecture within a gallery context, both to an architectural community and the wider public, often presents problems in terms of representation, and an event such as this one demonstrates how challenging the task is.

Taking a broad view, one could group the exhibitions at this year's Biennale into 3 categories. There are those that in a quite traditional manner present completed and proposed building projects through drawings and models. For example, the exhibition in the Greek pavilion, Made in Athens. On the one hand the exhibition identifies the apartment block, *the polykatoikia*, as the major components of the city, while on the other it describes the literal 'common ground' of the city by considering the public spaces between. Projects from recent history and those by prominent contemporary Greek architects are presented through architectural models and drawings.

Where an exhibition of architectural works might be considered most successful are those in which the exhibition structure has been used as a vehicle for research and retrospective study; successfully communicating or representing ideas, while creating a new understanding of the work for the author.

Toshiko Mori exhibits her work in the Central Pavilion. The space is inhabited by half scale sectional models taken through building facades, illustrating construction de-

DESCENDING A STAIRCASE COMMONER ON THE GROUND VENICE BIENNALE 2012

Rowan Mackinnon-Pryde

 tails from completed projects of her own, positioned next to similarly constructed details from famous precedent examples. This juxtaposition, which requires little textual explanation, sets up a dialogue, not necessarily between the designers, but with the architectural ideas themselves.

"The purpose of architecture is to transmute the emptiness into space."

El lissitsky, Romanian pavilion

Abandoning the typical methods of architectural representation, some have expressed an idea or statement through an abstract spatial installation. In this case the aim is not to display completed architectural projects but to present ideas and ask questions: architecture as a means rather than an end.

The Polish exhibition: Making the walls quake as if they were dilating with the secret knowledge of great powers, considers the pavilion itself as the exhibition; re-framing the existing architecture to create an intensified experience of sound and space.

The project involved the creation of a carefully calculated acoustic map of the pavilion which was then used to intensify the acoustic qualities of the space. The newly renovated ventilation system [part of the project] is used to transfer and amplify external sounds to the empty interior space, and the vibrations created by the building are also exaggerated so much so that the floor trembles underfoot. Using the building as an acoustic apparatus in this way brings to our attention those overlooked and somewhat intangible aspects of space, while presenting architecture as "a primary system of listening — one that listens to us and for us — creating, transporting, and distorting sound". 6

While the main sites of the the Giardini and Arsenale host the majority of the exhibitions, some work does not exist within the confines of the Biennale complex, but positions itself in the public realm.

For one week in September, the Scottish contingent, Critical Dialogues, produced a series of community based projects, within the shared space of the city including a building workshop for local children and a theatrical banquet in a local piazza. As described in the catalogue, the common ground between the 4 participating groups could be identified as an interest in 'people, the ordinary and the street'.⁷ By interacting with the common ground of the city and its people, 'conversation and engagement'⁸ could be taken beyond the 'architectural community'. These projects not only participated in, but tested what Common Ground might be.

In choosing the theme Chipperfield did not necessarily expect to find a universal definition of what architecture is or should be, or to reach an unanimous agreement on how the profession should operate. It is an open ended question intended to create a context for discourse and debate. There are of course shared concerns within any sphere, but what cannot be avoided in this vast collection of work, is just how broad, varied and rich the subject can be.

More often than not it is conflict and difference, which stimulate negotiation and compromise, that connect us. Difference and consistency are not necessarily mutually exclusive, in fact it could be argued that it is precisely the combination of variation and regularity which create rich architectural environments such as Venice. Like the shifting tides of this place we also operate within a environment of both change and continuity; perhaps this is our shared culture. Our Common Ground.

Footnotes

- 1 Bowness, S., Pillpot, C. (1995) Britain at the Venice Biennale. London: British Council
- 2 from Chipperfield's statement at the outline introduction meeting for the 13th International Biennale of Architecture
- 3 (eds) Chipperfield, D., Long, L, Bose, S. (2012) Common Ground: A Critical Reader. Venice. Marsilio.
- 4 Iboo
- 5 Ackroyd, P. (2009) Venice Pure City. London, Chatto + Windus

5

- 6 Quote taken from the polish pavilion exhibition guide.
- 7 Gillespie, N. (2012) Critical Dialogues.
- 8 Ibid

As he climbed the steps behind the two girls he contemplated a recent mystery. Scratches on the back of his neck had appeared quite suddenly the previous afternoon. First of all his neck had felt hot and itchy, he was aware it must have been red. Then later one of the girls had noticed what looked like scratches, as if a fine wire mesh had been dragged against his skin. There was no accounting for this strange phenomenon. Somehow it felt inexplicably tied in with another weird phenomenon. Sometimes, when he was on the cusp of sleep, he would find himself placing a hand around his neck in a gesture of self strangulation. His hand moved almost automatically, an inexplicable compulsion. And then there was a third phenomenon that he felt was somehow related; the voices. When lying down at night he sometimes heard slow motion voices murmuring rhythmically. He understood nothing of the syntax yet understood the rhythm intuitively, as the dreamer comprehends the absurd logic of a fever dream. How he loathed these voices! And yet there was something familiar about them... comforting, even. A difficult matter to explain.

To distract himself from these vexing matters he attempted to focus solely on the matter at hand; the ascent of the staircase. Approximately two thirds of the way up was a landing on which a window overlooked a melancholy garden. The walls were adorned with bleak oil portraits of aristocrats playing chess. He knew that the staircase led to a hallway and that the hallway led to a door. Whenever he passed the landing window it seemed to be late afternoon and he felt inexplicably sad. It was hard to convey how lethargic and morose he would begin to feel.

Once he had encountered one of the girls on the landing. She had asked him if he was okay. Her manner of asking was ambiguous; he had been unable to determine whether she was concerned or amused. This had angered him and he had repeated the question back to her, taking her shoulder and shaking her. She had grimaced and walked away. And that had been the end of that, he'd never seen her again. Another segment of the mystery. He smirked ruefully. He had arrived at the landing. He

THE QUIET MAN
Jonny Marks

looked out the window at the sun smouldering faintly in an overcast sky. He knew that he was almost at the second floor and that there he would encounter a hallway which led to a door.

He was terribly quiet. His quietness was a terrible thing. In what sense? In the sense that it rendered others unnerved. Which others? Other persons, one is liable to encounter persons. A silent consensus seemed to have occurred, he had somehow been elected by the others wordlessly. One feels an obligation sometimes. To do what? Blethering again, silly stories, blethering away to himself. It was a quiet, overcast afternoon. His glass of whisky. His spectacles. The chess board. Everything seemed perfectly inert. Somehow objects drained him, hurt his arms and made him feel tired, different objects, what objects? Who objects? The others. But the silent consensus had occurred nonetheless and there were these damn obligations. Fuck he couldn't find his slippers. Where had he put the damn things. One loses the slippers, the wife the mind. One blethers away, incomprehensible nonsense.

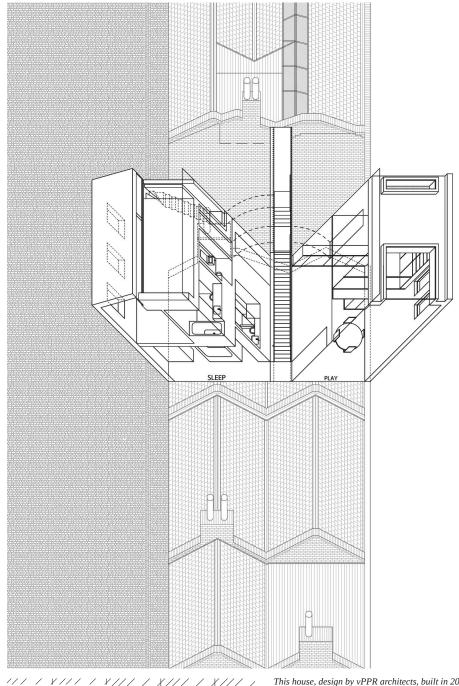
A sheepish grin occurs, automatically. Caught in the act, one assumes a pose to lend the whole debacle a theatrical aspect, an absurd aspect. Shuffling, dancing, an angry dance to mourn the lost slippers. Later on that same afternoon he designated further contemplation to this issue of his obligations. Did they exist? What were they? He felt stupid. He felt like he had to kid on he knew until he figured them out. Sometimes he liked to pretend that his plight was pitiful and pitiable to make light of it somehow.

He had stopped to appreciate one of the paintings. Except that before he had even began to examine it he felt very cold, tired and bored. His bones felt cold, and ancient, old before his time! He tried to look but his eyes couldn't really anything he was so bored and his mind already wandering. Murky meandering thoughts about nothing in particular. The girl was standing nearby he realised with a start. She was near the window. He had to climb farther to reach a hallway which led to a door.



The staircase informs movement of the body through space and thereby produces a sense of disorientation.

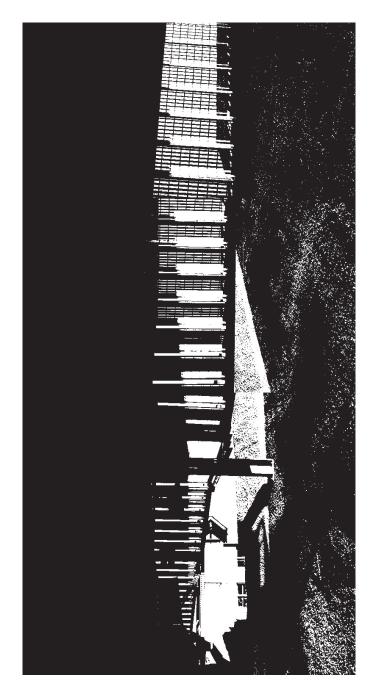




SPLIT HOUSE

Catherine Pease

This house, design by vPPR architects, built in 2011, uses a central staircase to divide the private spaces (bedrooms, bathrooms) at the front of the house from the communal ones (dining room, kitchen, living room) at the rear. The incisive staircase is constructed with a dark stained oak.





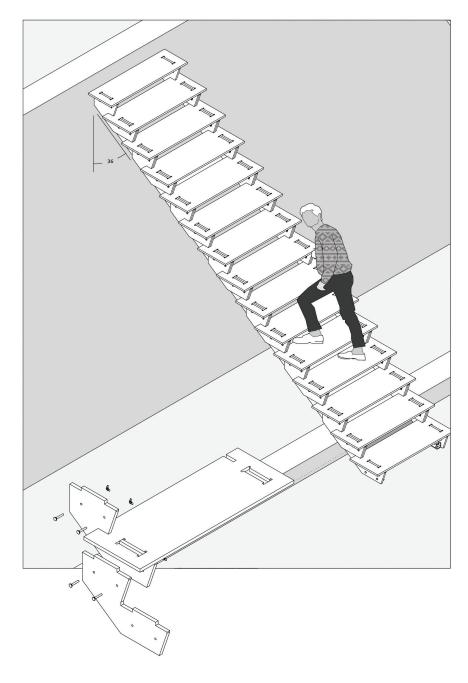


◀ ◀ A narrated stroll on the last Sunday of January 2013,
meeting point: St Augustine's Tower.

It shouldn't really be here, sneaking in as Hackney's oldest building by the skin of its teeth. Something to do with the unavailability of an affordable wrist watch and the Victorians' penchant for antiquity. To climb the stealth relic, you must wrap yourself around sloping stone steps, squeeze through a hatch at the top before emerging out to a view of London stretched out.

More details to follow on matzine website.

THE STAIR THAT LOST ITS BUILDING
Esme Fieldhouse



Opensource Modular stair: A CNC cut object that can be used to access and re imagine parts of the city previously uninhabited.

Ryan McLoughlin

Opensource Modular stair: A CNC cut object that can be used to access and re imagine parts of the city previously uninhabited.

OM stair is the first iteration of this project and is free to download, modify, print and use off the matzine website.

◀ ◀ Find the OM stair CAD design file on Matzine.org

'When they were up, they were up. And when they were down, they were down. But when they were only halfway up, they were neither up nor down'.

In her book Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media², Beatriz Colomina contrasts Adolf Loos' use of the stair with Le Corbusier's employment of the ramp in their respective house designs. Colomina notes that Loos' stairs often perform a theatrical role, acting as an architectural promenade that gives views onto the 'stage' of domestic life. Loos' domestic compositions hinge around a spiralling upward motion with the stair at the centre linking a series of spaces that Colomina codes as either stage or theatre box.

By contrast, she notes that the ramp in Le Corbusier's work suggests a more cinematic experience, one where we move through the a series of 'cuts' in the domestic realm, analogous to the montage effects of film. While Loos' stair opens onto a series of discrete stage-like



NEITHER UP NOR DOWN

Charles Holland

rooms, Le Corbusier's ramp passes through several different spaces simultaneously.

Colomina likens this movement to the action of the film camera. The ramp exploits a desire for fluidity and movement amid the flows and eddies of contemporary urban experience. It's a compelling observation and one that also seems to capture the shift from Loos' work, with its fragments of plush 19th century life, to Le Corbusier's thoroughly 20th century sensibility.

The ramp thus forms a key component within modern architecture, suggesting almost a mechanisation of the act of walking or traversing space. It also allows a greater fluidity between the different levels and floorplates of buildings and the spaces between them. Being neither up nor down becomes a valid destination in its own right.

This desire for a more complex relationship to the ground plane and the use of ramps and elevated walkways was a feature of much post-war modernist planning. Here, the circulation systems of Le Corbusier's domestic planning were extended to an urban level. It is interesting at this point – when such designs have become discredited and the primacy of the street re-asserted once again – to re-engage with the possibilities thrown up by these spatial experiments.

The Golden Lane estate in London's east city area, was one of the first major rebuilding projects of post-war London. The competition for a new housing estate on the edge of the city's financial district was won by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon in 1952.

CPB's winning scheme was eclipsed in architectural notoriety by the un-placed submission of Alison and Peter Smithson. The Smithson's design introduced their concept of 'streets in the sky' – an expanded and enlarged access deck that aspired to the level of life and activity of the traditional city street. This idea developed directly from the Smithson's intensive documentation of London's east end.

The Smithson's drawings for their Golden Lane submission featured montaged images of 1950's movie stars glamorously posing on the elevated walkways and pedestrian decks. In the background, the rubble of wartime devastation is still clearly visible as the new blocks rise out of them.

The Smithsons' scheme seemed to make another link between cinematic space and urban experience. The elevated deck and its linking ramps and bridges, is the physical manifestation of a conceptual realm of experience found in the montaged images of the screen. Pedestrians glide through the simultaneous wreckage of war and the brave new post-war world of reconstruction like a camera on a track, or actors in a movie.

CPB's built design for Golden Lane also involved an ambiguous ground plane. Once inside the Golden Lane estate, there is a sense that you have left the single, stable level of the street and are traversing up, down and over a three-dimensional landscape. Gardens appear to be sunk at least a level below grade with individual blocks of flats growing out of a series of 'holes' in the urban fabric.

These 'holes' are actually the remains of the basements of workshops and industrial lofts that previously occupied the site. Destroyed by bombing during the Second World War, the remains of these buildings provided a rich 'asfound' topography that was exploited by CPB to create gardens and public spaces. It also undoubtedly formed an important influence on their evolving concept of the 'three-dimensional city'³, an idea most comprehensively realised in their later design for the nearby Barbican estate.

The Barbican is a complex urban quarter in its own right, one that includes a cinema, theatre, concert hall and a school as well as housing. Its design involves multiple changes in level connected by a series of walkways, ramps and bridges. Ground level ceases to be a meaningful term here and we enter a new spatial vocabulary of 'high-walks', 'podiums' and 'sub-podiums'. We are never either purely above or below buildings in this scenario but both, often simultaneously.

The spaces of the Barbican seem to capture precisely the sensibility that Beatriz Colomina identifies as 'cinematic', a sense of the city as a montage of experiences through which we pass. In this scenario, we are neither audience member nor actor but a combination of both. Space is no longer coded as either stage or theatre box. Nor is it stable or contained in the way that a classical square or piazza might be, but is fragmentary and made

up of simultaneous incident.

The roof of one building serves as the base for another as well being a walkway, playground or park in its own right. Ground planes tilt up and down or step dramatically over voids that suddenly open up before us. Surreal disjunctions and sectional juxtapositions often occur: a soft green surface of grass hovers over a road below, a tree is glimpsed through a void above us.

The ramp and the high-level walkway offer the obvious spatial manifestation of the idea of the three-dimensional city. In post-war planning terms, they were used to separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic, elevating people over the circulation of cars and trucks below. Essentially pragmatic in justification then, they also served an undeniably more romantic impulse, freeing the city dweller from the concerns of negotiating traffic and congestion in order to be able to better 'experience' modern life.

The modernist city, we are often told, is one of both mechanistic determination and spiritual anonymity. Lost in the machine, we are no longer autonomous subjects but atoms floating in space. However, the physical aspects of modernist space – the ramps, walkways and bridges detailed here – also serve to make us more, rather than less, aware of our own bodies. The social democratic space of modernism is certainly about collective, civic identity but the physical thrill of its spatial invention also unmistakably celebrates the experience of the subjective self.

A lack of stability in terms of traditional demarcations of street, building and space, may force a reliance on individual perception as a navigational tool, but it also requires a level of unfamiliarity. The current conventions of urban planning — at least in Europe and the US - emphasise stable definitions of ground, street, square and building. The subversion of these terms found in a place like the Barbican has also become associated with a lack of legibility and with wider social problems. We have returned to the primacy of the street on the ground and the one-dimensional, pre-cinematic city.

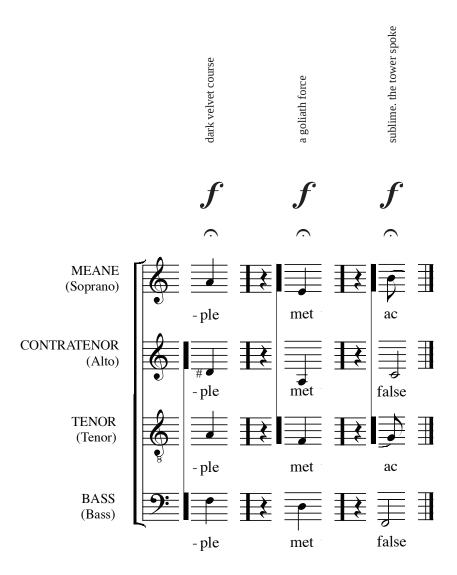
- 1 From the nursery rhyme: The Grand Old Duke of York, anon.
- 2 Privacy and Publicity: Architecture as Mass Media, by Beatriz Colomina, published by MIT Press.
- 3 See Elain Harwood, Chamberlin, Powell and Bon (20th Century Architects, by Elain Harwood, published by RIBA Enterprises.)

Waltham Tower is a short fiction, set in the 16th Century; the concept is rooted in a fascination with the idea and sound of the semitone. The story is told in three parts, or *fragments*. Below is a description of these fragments, in the author's suggested reading order, while you can read and listen to actual pieces here:

The Sound - This fragment provides a sense of spatiality and atmosphere; both supporting and being-supported-by the written fragment. Advised listening instructions: close the door, wear headphones, lie on your bed, press play and close your eyes for 7 minutes.

The Writing - This is the textual account of Waltham Tower; an acoustic instrument of biblical scale, a stone monolith built upon the last monastery to survive the Reformation, in 1540. Thomas Tallis was the monastery's organist at the time. Believing himself divinely inspired, Tallis began construction of an unfathomably tall building with an unearthly purpose. The isolated community tasked with the build would sing relentlessly, and as generations passed by, their singing would represent their unity, subsequent division and ultimate fate as Waltham Tower neared completion.

The Score - This is the music score as if sung by the people living in the Tower, perhaps scribed by Pietro Aron V after the events of the written fragment. This arrangement looks at Thomas Tallis's Third Tune for Archbishop Parker, because of its simplicity, Tallis's own interests in writing music with semitones and because it was composed, conveniently, at a very interesting time for choirs, instruments, temperaments and tuning - a rich backdrop for the story.

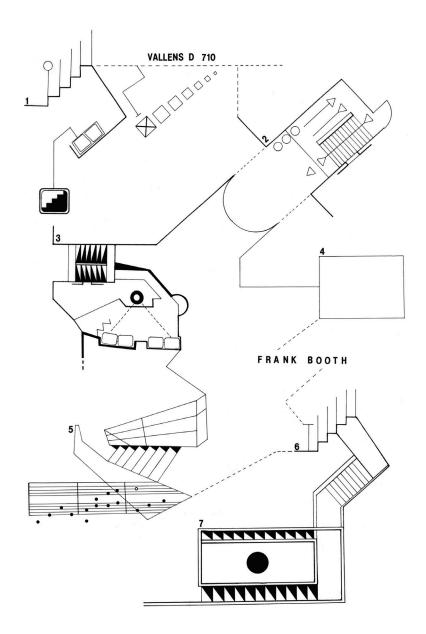


The above music notation describes moments of greatest tension in Thomas Tallis's The Third Tune. Semitones occur simultaneously, harmonically; in the song they are transitional phrases that are resolved melodically. Here I have extracted and arranged these chords from the original music, into their own concentrated, dissonant piece, made to be sung by a choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor & Bass).



 $A\,photograph\ of\ the\ Barbican$

"Ground planes tilt up and down or step dramatically over voids that suddenly open up before us. Surreal disjunctions and sectional juxtapositions often occur: a soft green surface of grass hovers over a road below..."





- 1. descent 00:00:10 ascent 00:00:15
- 2. ascent 00:21:36 descent 00:24:35
- 3. ascent 00:31:51 descent 00:52:05
- 4. assumed ascent 00:57:57 assumed descent 00:59:16
- 5. ascent 01:06:40 tease 01:10:03
- 6. collision 01:42:29
- 7. ascent 01:46:49 reveal 01:50:25



- 1. Core the apples (1 apple for every 500ml of ale) and place on roasting tray with brown sugar packed into cored area. Roast in oven at 190C for 20-35 minutes, until apples have softened.
- 2. In a large stock pot add the water, ale, sherry, apple juice and approx. 1/2 cup of brown sugar. Heat over a low heat.
- 3. Then crush 1 tsp cloves, 2 cinnamon sticks, 1 tsp juniper berries and a half dozen swipes of grated nutmeg in a mortar and pestle. Add the spices, stir well and continue to heat until flavours are well mixed. Simmer, uncovered, until apples have finished roasting.
- 4. Add roasted apples to the pot, along with thin, de-seeded slices from half a lemon. Squeeze the cut end of the lemon into the pot. To finish, cut a good knob of butter into two or three smaller pieces and stir in. Adjust sugar or spicing to taste, but final brew should be sweet, rich and bitter. Serve while hot.

Serves 6 mugs

1 mug water

1/2 mug of paolo cortado sherry (waitrose own brand is cheap +

good)

500ml light ale

1/2 mug of cloudy apple juice

2 cinnamon sticks

1 tsp juniper berries

1 tsp cloves

1 lemon

2 apples

light brown sugar

nutmeg

butter



I got to wassail from staircases via memory. That probably seems strange, but a standard memory trick starts with something called the memory palace. The idea is that you have some kind of spatial anchor for a sequence of individual memories. So if I'm trying to remember the shopping list, for example, I might start by putting various items in the kitchen cupboards of my memory palace and then on each of the stairs, until I finally get to the bathtub full of yoghurt (so I don't forget to buy creme fraiche). When I was thinking about creating a cocktail inspired by staircase, my first thought was toward the staircase in the memory palace, but that then led to the distraction of thinking about memories, which got me going on Christmas memories, i.e. tradition which finally led me to wassailing.

Wassailing dates back at least to the Middle Ages, if in Middle English. An ancient drinking ritual which involves singing and drinking to the health of the trees, wassailing helps to ensure a good cider apple harvest for the following year. Though the ceremony revolves around cider trees, historically wassail was made with and heated through, topped off with bits of toast to soak up the juices - hence, our modern-day expression of "a their men to the orchards, bearing a large pail of wassail and roasting apples. They'd encircle the finest specimen, the trees.

not further before, with waes hael meaning "good health" mulled ale or mead. Sugar and spices are added to a bowl toast". On Twelfth Night, the farmers would proceed with place the slices of toast in the tree branches, pour a splash of cider over the roots and chant a wassail rhyme to bless

It has been five years since Jean Simone, the fourteen year-old to whom the first dream was attributed, jumped out of a second floor window onto some railings. The tabloid newspapers correlated the dream with the trauma wrought by the recent European Philosophy Wars in which he witnessed his father, a chemo-gun operator, being sexually assaulted by Pornographer soldiers. Since the Armistice two years ago, this dream has been experienced by around a tenth of the population of Europe, though this number continues to grow every day. The intensity of this shared dream-scape is also deepening and being rendered indistinguishable from real life in many cases.

Those afflicted dream of an immense labyrinth of spiral staircases connected by a series of doorways at random points throughout. Light is provided by large high voltage torches tied to the wrists of the dreamers. Constructed of what is reported to be bricks roughly hewn from glassy volcanic rock, the desolate empty stairwells are joined together like a series of vertical tubes that sprawl on in an endless fashion. No matter how high or low one climbs, the dreamers also never reach the top or bottom of the staircases. Some have dreamt of spiral staircases as narrow as a coffin, whereas other people have reported them to be as wide as a city street. The labyrinth seems designed to inspire terror given the claustrophobia-inducing darkness and its un-graspable dimensions. Incidences of night time heart attacks have increased since the birth of what has been dubbed the Continuum. Other weird similarities reported in the dreams include the white smocks that the dreamers wear with a single threaded seam down the centre and the numbered bricks next to where they first emerge into the labyrinth.

Since the first noted case, it is estimated that people are now sleeping an average of 10 hours a night. This figure is increasing, as is the number experiencing psychosis that ends in coma. Those on the verge of a comatose state often suffer from the pernicious feeling that the labyrinth stairwell continues on behind all surfaces and that the maze is imposing itself on reality. Those deemed highly sensitive actually see the labyrinth even when they are

awake. There are rare reports of latent schizophrenics smashing their heads against walls until they die.

Theories for the causes of the Continuum hallucination are numerous, though none of these have been definitively proven. The most obvious one is mass hysteria. Guilt and trauma experienced by the population of Europe during the wars was repressed during the cessation of hostilities; blame was apportioned equally and the preceding ten years were talked about as if they never happened. The suicide of Jean Simone (the theory goes) triggered an outburst of emotion with the architecture of the labyrinth offering an obvious schematic for their grief.

Some believe that humanity is evolving into another higher plain of existence with the repeated appearance of the endless staircases as a transitory realm. There is now a glut of new apocalyptic religious movements with many of its members going into voluntary comas or even committing suicide. The Syllabus cult has recently built a ten story minaret in Paris in which members climb the spiral staircase around its outside and leap off the when stairs cut short at the top. Many of their adherents base jump off the structure to get some adrenal high, whilst there are fanatics who throw themselves off without parachutes. Another theory related to this one is that mankind is being slowly being removed from the earth for its sins and placed in this vision of Hell – a conclusion grounded in the Continuum's emergence from the war. Some religious groups like the Trueman Foundation believe that we are all already dead citing the meteor that struck Newfoundland in 2034 as the cause of a worldwide extinction. We are all living now in some kind of purgatory reluctant to ascend the stairs into heaven.

Slightly more pragmatic, though no less fanciful, theories say that the shared dream is a sign of latent telepathy in the human race. There are stories that during the war a contingent of Poets utilised supposed telepaths and witch-doctors to infect the dreams of enemy battalions. In some ways telepathy has become a possibility with the implantation of sub-cranial wi-fi nodes creating a hive mind of sorts. Although most people do not yet have

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WAKE David V. Taylor these implanted nodes, advocates of this theory hold that humans have evolved a wi-fi receiver. One fault in this idea is that nobody has ever met another human being in the labyrinth.

A theory that has gained strong footing in the scientific community postulates that the staircase labyrinth is a test created by an advanced alien civilization to gauge our suitability for contact. Although belief in aliens has always been the preserve of those who cannot rationalise dogmatic religion, this theory seems to be the most popular at the moment with a growth in the mathematics branch of Continuum studies. The governments of Europe have also declared this to be the most likely scenario and have invested millions in the investigation of this theory.

Every dreamer arrives in the labyrinth standing next to a particular number carved into a nearby brick. The numbers range from single digits to anywhere up to thirty digits with decimal places at any point within that number string. They say that our capacity for teamwork and problem solving is being tested. Researchers have attempted to cross-reference the numbers by location and time of dream, but have so far been unable to find any correlation at all.

Two weeks ago, a Doctor Richard Kubilius of the University of Athens discovered a psychoactive enzyme that had been created by radioactive fallout. Those infected with the enzyme which had contaminated a soya factory in Dardenne were found to be extremely suggestible, lethargic and occasionally suffered from hallucinations. He has not found a definitive link between the occurrence of the Continuum and infection – the latter being extremely hard to detect. Combined with the mass hysteria thesis, the infection theory's plausibility is not in doubt. However its appearance in the newspapers made little impact on the populace. More and more people are voluntarily going into medically induced comas, hailed by the press as intrepid psychonauts. Religious factions have coalesced to form powerful groups with sectarian divisions now forming that are on the verge of exploding into violence and the scientific community is embedded in a Kabbalist search for meaning in the numbers. The population of Europe is now sliding into a state of incessant dreaming without end. ■



STAIRS TO THE LAST CHAMBER

Mentor No