

LOBBY



No 1 | Autumn 2014 | The Bartlett School of Architecture

Un/Spectacle

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LOBBY

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Regner Ramos

DESIGN AND ART DIRECTION studio 4

EDITORIAL

The Exhibition Space _____ **Regner Ramos**
The Seminar Room _____ **Sophie Read**
The Lift _____ **Nito Ramírez**
The Crit Room _____ **Nahed Jawad-Chakouf**
The Staircase _____ **Laura Narvaez**
The Library _____ **Stylianos Giamarelos**
The Toilets _____ **Mrinal S. Rammohan**

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Contributors

Can we experience something spectacular through senses other than sight? To answer the riddle we handpicked four of this issue's contributors and asked them the following question: **What's the most spectacular thing you've ever felt, tasted, smelled or heard?**

Fame Ornuja Boonyasit, Contributing Writer
@FameOBoonyasit



Fame is pursuing her Masters of Architecture at The Bartlett's Graduate Architectural Design programme. Apart from writing for LOBBY, she's also involved in art direction and writing for *Numéro Thailand* (though we want to keep her for ourselves). You can easily recognise her by her geometric bob which she admits is the product of her own cutting. Feel free

to turn to page 48 in the Exhibition Space to read Fame's article.

“Without any sense of sight, the taste of an ice-cream is always a spectacular feast. As a sense conductor, its taste flourishes as soon as it loses structure, while at the same time calling for the emergence of other sub-senses. A spoonful or a scrumptious bite brings about a sense formation comparable to that of a tree, with taste as a core, touch, smell and temperature fluctuation branch out in an immediate venation of causality.”

Laurie Goodman, Editorial Assistant
@_LGOODMAN



Laurie is a masters student in Spatial Design here at The Bartlett, and she's got a background in architectural history. She is a very, very serious and very clever academic, often using words such as 'phenomena', 'paradigm' and 'ubiquitous'. In between that, she enjoys naps and cat videos on YouTube. Laurie was a recurrent face in the

very official meetings between the magazine's editors, who felt compelled to invite her due to how fired up she was about being involved in the editorial process. We were dubious at first, but now we don't regret it. You can read the article Laurie's written for us on page 68 in the Lift.

“A potent combination of gin and Beyonce.”

Nick Elias, Contributing Illustrator
nickelias.co.uk



Nick is your boy-next-door-type, apart from being a little more scared of bees. He's a truly gifted architectural illustrator, and we're lucky to have him on our team, especially since we nearly missed him. Nick is now an official Bartlett alumn, having just finished his Masters in Architecture; it's a relief that we caught him in time before he made an escape.

If you're curious about Nick's contribution to the issue, be patient, you'll see his illustration in the Toilets. No pun intended.

“I think it's probably a smell. Smelling something is known in science to have a stronger connection to memories than any other sense. I guess I find it more 'spectacular' when a sense like this exposes otherworldly sensations of nostalgia and situation. It sort of tells a story, meaning that a poo could be more spectacular than a piece of Mozart.”

DaeWha Kang, Crit Room Contributor
@daewhakang



DaeWha is one of the non-Bartlett, external contributors we were keen to have on this issue. He studied architecture at Princeton and Yale University and is an Associate at Zaha Hadid Architects, where he's worked since 2004. You can read through his insightful, contributing student-critiques throughout pages 84-95 in the Crit Room.

“Smell is considered to be the sense most deeply linked to our emotions and our memories. I think of the smell of moist wood and dust in the air after a short spring rain in the stone garden of Ryoan-ji temple in Kyoto. In a culture that increasingly privileges the visual over our other senses, our connection with the scent of architecture might reacquaint us with the deep essence of materiality and the pathos of history that is so fundamental to our discipline.”

Stairway to HEAVEN

Words by Sophia Psarra

Space as a means to communicate knowledge

Buildings are more complex environments than metaphors about them express, but metaphors make ideas visible, bring concepts and language to the service of architecture and make its messages widely intelligible. LOBBY stems from ‘the desire to create a common (lobbying) space, opportunities for exchange, internal communication, and exposure to the outside world’. The magazine is organised in sections, each section being about a space in an architecture school; there is the ‘exhibition space’, where design work is showcased, the ‘crit room’, where design work in progress is intensively debated’, the ‘seminar room’, where external correspondence may come in’, the ‘lift’, where brief interviews take place, the ‘library’, ‘toilets’, and so on. Distributing visual and discursive work along this organisation, LOBBY maps thematic categories of knowledge on the elements of a building programme, and areas of architectural programme on the sections of the publication. The magazine becomes in this way a metaphor for an architecture school and vice versa, in a close association of building to language and architecture to knowledge. This mapping of spatial order into intellectual order instantly conveys the

organisation of content. It expresses the idea that the magazine is the students’ own, in the same way a school building belongs to its students, a vital component of their social and intellectual life.

Writing for *Staircase*, “where interdisciplinary perspectives momentarily meet” therefore, is relevant to the discussion of the key role that buildings have historically played in the making and communication of knowledge. Frances Yates offered a history of the relationship between space and knowledge founded on the ancient technique of impressing ‘places’ and ‘images’ on memory. “Mnemonotechnics,” Yates explains, “is today a rather unimportant branch of memory activity, but in the ages before printing a trained memory was vitally important.”¹ Yet, she concludes that the art of memory, or the relationship of space to knowledge, is everyone’s matter. It is one of the greatest manifestations of our culture, touching at vital points on the history of religion, ethics, philosophy, psychology, art, literature and the scientific method.

In the nineteenth century this matter was associated with the development of disciplines and building types in specific sites where knowledge construction evolved. Through the shape and

organisation of their architectural spaces—so often top lit—museums, libraries and university buildings, which were then housed in one site, opened to new groups of people and shifted pedagogical regimes. In addition to making knowledge widely available, these buildings spatialised knowledge operating like ‘library books’. The layout of the Natural History Museum in London for example, was organised around the notion of taxonomy,² “which assumed that the all possible variations in type of species could be incorporated and simultaneously observed in one complete classificatory table.”³ Another striking example was the Jermyn Street Geological Museum, which was “laid out stratigraphically, so that the natural order of rocks might be apparent in a general glance around the main hall.”⁴ As collections grew over time, university campuses expanded, and laboratories displaced the central role formerly held by collection-based sciences, museums and libraries ceased to act as total encyclopaedias, adopting a selective approach to display. More recently, they have begun innovating and pioneering new sources of knowledge by connecting with various artists, scientists, communities and people.⁵

In *Buildings and Power*, Thomas Marcus places museums and libraries in the category of ‘visible knowledge’. University buildings on the other hand, belong to the section of knowledge, which he calls ‘invisible’.⁶ Historically, the essence of teaching space is one in which the performer presents a fragment of knowledge to the audience as a dramatic spectacle. In this sense, the teaching space is close to the theatre where performances are staged. In fact “the ancient actor-audience relationship gave its name to the first teaching space—the anatomy theatre.”⁷ Whether founded on one typology or another, architecture school buildings mix many space types, exhibition spaces, teaching spaces, social spaces, office spaces, studios, or laboratory spaces. Today, like other building typologies, university buildings are changing from within. Digital communications, pervasive computing and social mobility makes a wide range of building types more flexible in terms of programme and function, while they

“Sociality is about itineraries and trajectories of bodies meeting in space, from the studio to the office, from the exhibition up the staircase.”

have also ceased to define themselves as encyclopaedic, pedagogical, moral or ethical regimes.

Historically, knowledge was developed and represented on the building by a group of experts as though the building was a book. Today universities, libraries, museums and learning environments increasingly define themselves as ‘laboratories’ or places of intellectual intensity, continuously favouring controversy and encouraging taking risks. Buildings are social spaces; particularly in buildings in which knowledge is constructed and exchanged, socialisation becomes a form of learning, sharing and producing new information. Knowledge is no longer seen as static entity to be mapped on the building’s physical body, but as a dynamic enterprise, commonly shaped by those who are socially involved. Rather than regarding buildings as bodies onto which knowledge relationships are symbolically mapped, today we shift our attention to bodies in space, the choreography of the ways in which they come together, depart from each other and interact.

Marcus explains that buildings house bodies in space entering in social relationships, those of power and those of bond. Robin Evans put forward a similar proposition. Taking human figures in paintings and house plans from given times and places, he looked at them together as evidence of a way of life, connecting everyday conduct and



Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri Plate VII—The Drawbridge*, 1761 edition. From *The Imaginary Prisons (Le Carceri d'Invenzione)*, Rome.

architectural organisation.⁸ Everyday conduct can either take the rigid form of social power, of mapping social categories, schedules and itineraries in space and keeping them apart, or the fluid and negotiable form of a society “that recognises the body as the person and in which gregariousness is habitual.”⁹ Architecture is different from art, painting or writing, “not simply because it requires the addition of some extra ingredient such as utility or function, but because it encompasses everyday reality and in so doing inevitably provides a format for social life.”¹⁰ Looking at Rafael’s *Villa Madama* in Rome and Roger Pratt’s *Coleshill* at Berkshire, Evans explains that the former was permeable to the numerous members of a household whose paths would intersect during the course of the

day. In contrast, the latter inscribed a deep division between social categories of people in the building, separating commodity from delight, utility from beauty and function from form. The justification of Klein’s *House for Frictionless Living* in which paths never cross was to eliminate accidental encounters, which caused friction. For Evans, this kind of logic is buried in the desire for tidiness, consistency and order. For Hillier and Hanson this model assumes socially identified groups through spatial domains, together with asymmetrical relationships between different categories of users.¹¹ The larger ramification of this arrangement for a creative environment such as an architecture school would be a conservative building, territorialised and utterly dull.

Reading Aldus Huxley on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison and Piranesi's metaphysical prisons (*Carceri d'Invenzione*),¹² one can gain insights on the impulse for tidiness, clockwork rituals, and itineraries in buildings and human affairs. Bentham, for Huxley, had "the logician's passion" for social efficiency and order. The former is often made an excuse for the concentration of power in the hands of few experts and the regimentation of social structures and institutions. Bentham spent large amounts of his own money and more than twenty five years of his life devoted to the design of the Panopticon,¹³ the perfectly efficient prison in which prisoners would pass their life in solitude under the surveillance of a warder at the centre. On the opposite side to Jeremy's prison, are Piranesi's enigmatic prisons made of incomprehensible complexity and labyrinthine emptiness: the staircases lead nowhere, the arches and vaults support nothing but their own weight, enclosing not rooms but vast spaces that can almost continue indefinitely, defying any sense of scale, orientation and purpose. Conceived by the imagination of one of the greatest eighteenth century minds, the *Carceri* spoke to the condition of Coleridge and De Quincey at the height of the Romantic reaction¹⁴; and they speak no less eloquently to Bentham's utilitarianism in the nineteenth century, in his attempt to design mechanisms to change social behaviour, reform institutions for those that had been deformed by various pathologies, and turning the subject of the reforming regimes into agents of their own reformation.¹⁵

Arguably, Bentham thought of individuals as real people and held unpretentious intentions that led to real benefits—"the repeal of antiquated laws, the introduction of sewage systems, the reform of municipal government, almost everything sensible and humane in the civilisation of the nineteenth century". However, his extreme impulse for mechanical efficiency has little to do with real life and real people in buildings. In addition, it is the enemy to freedom. Significantly, 'efficient' workspace shares in origin something with the orderliness and tidiness embedded in this idea.

Jeremy had borrowed the notion for the Panopticon from his brother, Sir Samuel Bentham, who, while employed by Catherine the Great to build ships for Russia, designed a factory along the Panopticon model for getting more efficient labour out of workers.

For Marcus, the *Carceri* represent two extreme worlds that never meet but are secretly mirroring and excluding one another: romantic chaos and classical order.

"One is subterranean, dark, massive full of ambiguous machines which could be instruments of torture or machines for construction, and paradoxical spaces ... Through an opening there is often visible an upper world where normal Classical buildings sit in the light of day. He seems to suggest that it is their order and reason, which sits on, {that} truly imprisons, a hidden world of dangerous freedom. He may be saying more than this—that the creation of order (...) has a paradox at its core. The rules, classifications and systems needed are alienating and imprisoning."¹⁶

Piranesi's metaphysical prisons remind us that stairways to nowhere are equal to those that rise to a purpose that is obsessively desired and mechanically conceived. On the other side of these cyclopean labyrinths—or efficient workspaces—that diminish the human figure and annihilate bodies in space are buildings that are human, drawing people towards each other, an architecture that 'recognizes sociality'.¹⁷ Sociality is about itineraries and trajectories of bodies meeting in space, from the studio to the office, from the exhibition up the staircase and through the balcony overlooking the studio to the library, and from the library via the crit space to the seminar room. The plan of a building should include—drawn in different colour ink—all these routes by students, staff, visitors, academics and other users. The role of the architect together with the many and diverse users is not to distribute functions, programmes and territories, but—like in a neural-network model of interconnectivity¹⁸

—maximise the opportunities and the spaces where the network of these lines intersect with each other.

If education is about supporting the growth of thoughtful professionals—so as to develop the capacity to redefine the state-of-the art and change their discipline—its buildings and journals should enable the development of the unknown and the unexpected, endlessly generating serendipitous socialisation, un-programmed encounters and ways of engagement over and above those that are programmed and foreseen. LOBBY seems to be one of these 'spaces' and it is with pleasure that we welcome it in our Faculty and our fields. ▲

- 1 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 11.
- 2 John Peponis and Jenny Hedin, "The Layout of Theories in the Natural History Museum", 9H, 3(1982): 21–5.
- 3 Sophie Forgan, "The Architecture of Display: Museums, Universities and Objects in Nineteenth Century Britain, History of Science, 32(96) (1994): 139–62, p. 148.
- 4 Ibid. p. 148.
- 5 "Arts Council of England", last accessed 30 March 2014, <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk>.
- 6 Thomas Marcus, *Buildings and Power* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- 7 Ibid. p. 229.
- 8 Robin Evans, *Translations from Drawings to Building and Other Essays*, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1997).
- 9 Ibid. p. 88.
- 10 Ibid. p. 89.
- 11 Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- 12 Aldus Huxley, *Prisons with the Carceri Etchings* by G. B. Piranesi (London: Trianon, 1949).
- 13 Phil Steadman, *Building Types and Built Forms*, (London: Toubador, 2014), http://www.toubador.co.uk/book_info.asp?bookid=2509.
- 14 Aldus Huxley, *ibid.*
- 15 Thomas Marcus, *ibid.*
- 16 *ibid.* p. 318.
- 17 Robin Evans, *ibid.*
- 18 Barbara Stanford, "Reconceiving the Warburg Library as a Working Museum of the Mind", *Common Knowledge* 18:1 (2012):180–187, p. 185.

