

THE EAMES HOUSE

Beatriz Colomina

So, somehow through Mies, through a rejection of much of Mies, but still through Mies, or so it seems to me, we get the 1949 house –something wholly original, wholly American.

Peter Smithson¹

The oldest published photograph of the house shows a truck on the site, occupying the place of the house, taking its place, anticipating it. The windshield happens to lie exactly where a glass facade will terminate the building. The steel frame of the house is being assembled from a crane on the back of the truck as it steadily moves down the narrow site carved out between a steep hillside and a row of eucalyptus trees. It is said that this process took only a day and a half².

The Eameses immediately celebrated. A sequence of photographs shows the ecstatic couple holding hands under the frame, then stepping off the retaining wall onto a thin beam suspended like a tightrope across the space, and finally posing in the middle of the beam, still holding hands. Ray has a white bird in her raised hand³.

The Eameses liked to celebrate things. Anything. Everything. This was not just whimsy, a distraction from the work: it was part of the work itself. Walking along the beam of the house under construction was the beginning of the occupation of the house. They were literally moving in, even if the crafting of the basic fabric of the building was to take almost a year. The house became an endless process of celebration over the course of their lives. Not by chance, they moved in on Christmas Eve 1949: they wanted the house to be a Christmas gift. When they walked across the steel tightrope before the tent had even been pulled up over the frame, they were launching an intense program of construction through festive play. Every stage of the play was recorded, photographed, and disseminated to an international audience.

Circus, it turns out, was one of their fascinations. When Charles was asked in 1970 to give the prestigious *Charles Eliot Norton Lectures* at Harvard University, he concluded the first of his six lectures by presenting a three-screen slide show of circus photographs he had been shooting since the 1940s. The 180 images were accompanied by a sound track featuring music and other sounds recorded at the circus. The theme of the lectures was that “the rewarding experiences and aesthetic pleasures of our lives should not be dependent solely upon the classic fine arts, but should be, rather, a natural product of the business of life itself⁴”. Eames turned to the circus because what “seems to be a freewheeling exchange in self-expression, is instead a tightly knit and masterfully disciplined organic accumulation of people, energies and details⁵”. In a talk given before the *American Academy of Arts and Sciences* in 1974, he elaborates on the point:

The circus is a nomadic society which is very rich and colorful but which shows apparent license on the surface... Everything in the circus is pushing the possible beyond the limit... Yet, within this apparent freewheeling license, we find a discipline which is almost unbelievable. There is a strict hierarchy of events and an elimination of choice under stress, so that one event can automatically follow another. The layout of the circus under canvas is more like the plan of the Acropolis than anything else⁶.

In many ways, this is what Eames thought architecture was –the ongoing theatrical spectacle of everyday life, understood as an exercise in restrictions rather than self-expression. The endless photographs of the almost ridiculously happy Eameses displaying their latest inventions are part of an extraordinarily precise and professional design practice. We see them on top of the frame of their house, “pinned” by metal chair frames, holding Christmas decorations, waving to us from inside a Christmas ball, wearing Easter hats or masks, photographing their own reflections in the house, and so on. In almost all of the early photographs, they wear matching outfits, as if to emphasize the performative aspect of their work.

The Eameses were very precise about their clothes, commissioning their dress from Dorothy Jenkins, the Oscar-winning designer who created the costumes for films including *South Pacific*, *The Ten Commandments*, *Night of the Iguana*, and *The Sound of Music* (Ray Eames’s distinctive pinafore dresses are even reminiscent of Julie Andrews’s dresses in the latter film). The effect of the Eames costume was that of the professional couple as a matching set, carefully positioned like any other object in the layout. The uniform clothes transformed the couple into a designer object that could

be moved around the frame or from picture to picture. It was always the layout that was the statement, not the objects. And the layout was constantly reworked, rearranged.

If design was not the self-expression of the designer, it was the occupant’s daily life that left its mark on the house. Eames houses used “industrial technology to provide... an ‘unselfconscious’ enclosure that would satisfy the essentials for comfortable living. Such a structure could then be made into a personal statement by the occupant, who could fill it with the accessories of his or her own life⁷”. All the ephemera of daily living were to take over and define the space.

For the Eameses, everything was architecture, from the setting of a table for breakfast to a circus performance. Everybody was a designer. Charles trusted, sometimes to later disappointment, the choices craftsmen would make⁸. If they knew their trade, he believed, they would know what a good solution was. The capacity of an individual, even one without experience, to choose well was respected: “I don’t believe in this ‘gifted few’ concept, just in people doing things they are really interested in doing. They have a way of getting good at whatever it is⁹”.

Employees arriving at the Eames Office were routinely assigned tasks for which they had no previous training¹⁰. It was thought that anyone who applied his or her attention totally, obsessively, to a problem would come up with a good solution, especially if there were many restrictions, such as limited time, materials, or money. Charles spoke nostalgically of his days at the MGM studios, where he would often have only one night to design a whole new set out of a limited range of available props.

This idea of design as the rearrangement of a limited set of parts was constant in the Eameses’ work. Everything they produced could be rearranged; no layout was ever fixed. Even the formal lectures were sometimes rearranged in midstream. Kits of parts, movable partitions, *The Toy*, the plywood cabinets, the *House of Cards*, the *Revell Toy House*, the *Kwikset House* are all infinitely rearrangeable.

The Eames House is a good example. Not only was it produced out of the same structural components as the utterly different Entenza House (designed by Charles Eames with Eero Saarinen), but the Eames House was itself a rearrangement of an earlier version. After the steel had already been delivered to the site, Eames decided to redesign the house, putting the same set of steel parts together in a completely new way¹¹.

The structure exhibited the same logic of rearrangement that would soon dominate its interior. The Eames House blurred the distinction between designer and occupant, accommodating structure and mobile accessories. Where did the work of the designer end and that of the occupant begin in this house? Were the famous colored panels on the facade ephemera (picked up from the history of modern art like the pieces of driftwood the Eameses were always picking up and rearranging) or “unselfconscious structure”? In fact, the color of the panels was meant to change. Ray said that they chose the cheapest kind of paint from Sears, Roebuck so that they could experiment, but the original colors remain¹². Eventually the panels became fixed in the mind of the architectural community and taken to be the architecture. But for the Eameses, the real architecture of the house was to be found in their endless rearrangement of collectables within it. The real space was to be found in the details of their daily life.

Charles constantly reflected on what “quality” made a good architect. In an interview with Digby Diehl, Eames recalls a conversation he had with Saarinen on the subject: “One of the things we hit upon was the quality of a host. That is, the role of the architect, or the designer, is that of a very good, thoughtful host, all of whose energy goes into trying to anticipate the needs of his guests –those who enter the building and use the objects in it. We decided that this was an essential ingredient in the design of a building or a useful object¹³”. The house has to efface itself in favor of the creative choices made by its occupants. Its only role is that of the “shock absorber” that protects a unique and ever-changing lifestyle: “The house”, Eames says, “must make no insistent demands for itself, but rather aid as a background for life in work... and as re-orientator and ‘shock absorber’¹⁴”. It is difficult not to think of the war. Domestic life could no longer be taken for granted. It became an art form carefully constructed and marketed by a whole new industry: a form of art therapy for a traumatized nation, a reassuring image of the “good life” to be bought like any other product. Instead of offering a complete environment to the postwar consumer, the Eameses offered a variety of components that individuals could construct and rearrange themselves. The Eameses insisted that life consisted of making choices. They left most of them to the

occupants, rejecting the role of the artist in favor of that of the industrial designer and catalog distributor.

The idea of the house as shock absorber was also literal. The Eameses devoted considerable research to perfecting the rubber shock absorbers in their furniture. In the 1946 exhibition of their plywood furniture at the *Museum of Modern Art*, New York, a rotary device was used to show the strength and flexibility of the rubber shock mount, and a tumbling drum containing the plywood “Eames chair” demonstrated its durability. A house was likewise meant to absorb the eccentric movements of everyday life. In the Eames House, panels shift; furniture moves in and out. It became a kind of testing ground for all the work of the office. Everything moved in the end. Only the basic frame stayed still, and this frame was meant to be almost invisible. A necessary prop –no more than that. As Esther McCoy wrote as a caption for an image of trees reflected on the glass walls of the Eames House, “After thirteen years of living in a house with exposed steel frame, Ray Eames said, ‘The structure long ago ceased to exist. I am not aware of it.’ They lived in nature and its reflections –and reflections of reflections”¹⁹. The house dissolved in a play of reflections, restless images that immediately caught the eye of the world. The Eames House was published everywhere, exposed, scrutinized¹⁶. The images multiplied and became the objects of reflection. Their appeal was part of the general fascination with postwar America that extended from pop-up toasters to buildings.

Perhaps nobody was so captivated by the Eameses, and more lucid about their work, than their buddies the British architects Alison and Peter Smithson. In “Eames Celebration”, a 1966 issue of *Architectural Design* that the Smithsons prepared devoted exclusively to the Eameses, they wrote:

There has been much reflection in England on the Eames House. For the Eames House was a cultural gift parcel received here at a particularly useful time. The bright wrapper has made most people –especially Americans– throw the content away as not sustaining. But we have been brooding on it –working on it– feeding from it”.

The house as an object, a gift all wrapped up in colored paper. This comment reflects so much of the Smithsons’ obsessions, so much of what they saw as new in the Eameses: the attention to seemingly marginal objects (which the Smithsons perceptively understood as “remnants of identity”), the love of ephemera and of colored wrapping paper, and so on.

For the Eameses, gifts were all important. They maintained that the reason they began to design and make toys (such as *The House of Cards*, *The Toy*, the masks) was to give them to their grandchildren and the children of staff members and friends. But the concept of gift extends far beyond the toys. Not only were the Eameses extremely generous with their friends (they once paid for the Smithsons’ airline tickets so the couple could visit them in California), but they understood all their work as a gift. In an interview, Charles said: “The motivation behind most of the things we’ve done was either that we wanted them ourselves, or we wanted to give them to someone else. And the way to make that practical is to have the gifts manufactured... The lounge chair, for example, was really done as a present to a friend, Billy Wilder, and has since been reproduced”. Wilder wanted “something he could take a nap on in his office, but that wouldn’t be mistaken for a casting couch”¹⁸. In addition to the “nap” chaise, the Eameses designed a “TV chair” for Wilder. An article in a 1950 issue of *Life* magazine shows a multiple-exposure photograph of the director moving back and forth on the plywood lounge chair of 1946, claiming that it was designed so that the “restless Wilder can easily jump around while watching television”¹⁹.

From the toys to the furniture to the houses (which were either designed for their closest friends, John Entenza and Billy Wilder, or as toys, like the Revell House and the Birthday House designed for Hallmark Cards in 1959) to the major productions (such as the film *Glimpses of the USA*, which they conceived as a token of friendship to the Russians) to their most complex exhibitions, the Eameses always concentrated on what they were giving and how it should be presented. Everything was thought of as a gift. Design was gift giving.

No one has understood this aspect of the Eameses’ work better than the Smithsons. They took it all personally, seeing the Eames House as a colorfully wrapped gift, the Eames chair as “a message of hope from another planet”²⁰, and the Eames cards as giving them “the courage to collect whatever pleases us”²¹. These gifts transformed their own practice:

The prettiness of our lives now I attribute to Ray even more than Charles; we would not be buying flower-patterned ties but for the Eames card game... I like to think it is to Ray and Charles Eames we owe the debt of the extravagance of the new purchase. The penny whistle, the Woolworth’s plastic Christmas decoration and toy, on to the German pressed metal toy and the walking robots: fresh, pretty, colorful ephemera”.

The Smithsons were eager to return the favor. “Eames Celebration” was a gift given in return for so many others. They write: “The essays on the work of Charles and Ray Eames which make up this issue are very personal, and the impulse behind them was to repay the debt the authors felt they owed to the Eames in a way that would be both pleasurable and useful to the Eames themselves”²³.

The sense of the Eames House as a gift also points to the constant shift in scale in their work: from house to cabinets to children’s furniture to toys to miniatures. Even the architectural models were treated like toys, played with by excited architects and clients acting like curious children. Eames once said that in the “world of toys he saw an ideal attitude for approaching the problems of design, because the world of the child lacks self-consciousness and embarrassment”²⁴. In the Eameses’ architecture everything was a toy; everybody is a child. Perhaps this accounts for the constant presence of children in the photographs of their work. Since when have we seen so many children in architecture?

Charles and Ray saw everything through the camera, which explains the astonishing continuity between their work in so many different scales: if the eye is the eye of a camera, size is not fixed but continuously shifting. The Eameses used to shoot everything. This was surely not just an obsession with recording; there is that, no doubt, but they also made decisions on the basis of what they saw through the lens, as is evident in Ray’s description of the process of decision making in the Eames House:

We used to use photographs. We would cut out pieces from photographs and put them onto a photograph of the house to see how different things would look. For instance –there was a space in the studio we wanted filled. It was between the depth of the floor where it opens for the stairs (this is not so in the house where there is a balcony rail). We wondered what to do. We had some pier pylons from Venice pier (we had wanted to keep something of it to remember it by). Well, we had pictures of it, glued them onto a photo and decided it worked so we went ahead and did it”.

To remember the Venice pier, they took a piece of it with them. This was characteristic of the Eameses, who over the years accumulated an astonishing quantity of objects. The pylons could be seen standing outside the house. But to see if they could keep a memory of the object inside the house, they used photographs and collage. Indeed, a photograph of the Venice pier ended up filling the space in the house they had tested using collage.

The photo-collage method had already been important to architects of the early European avant-garde. Mies van der Rohe photo-collaged pictures of the models of his glass skyscrapers onto a photograph of the Friedrichstrasse; glued photographs of landscape, materials, and Paul Klee’s painting *Bunte Mahlzeit* to the Resor House drawings of 1938; and glued together pictures of water, trees, sculptures, and Picasso’s mural *Guernica* in the collage of the *Museum for a Small City* of 1942. The structure of the building gave way to a juxtaposition of photographic images. But it would be important to understand in what sense the Eameses transformed the strategies of the avant-garde. How was the Eames House able to “trigger”, in Peter Smithson’s words, “a wholly different kind of conversation”?

The Smithsons wrote:

In the 1950s the Eames moved design away from the machine aesthetic and bicycle technology, on which it had lived since the 1920s, into the world of the cinema-eye and the technology of the production aircraft; from the world of the painters into the world of the lay-out men... The Eames-aesthetic, made definitive in the House at Santa Monica Canyon, California (as the machine aesthetic was given canonical form in the ‘dwelling unit’ in the Esprit Nouveau Pavilion, Decorative Arts Exhibition, in Paris, 1925), is based on an equally careful selection, but with extra-cultural surprise, rather than harmony of profile, as its criteria. A kind of wide-eyed wonder of seeing the culturally disparate together and so happy with each other. This sounds like whimsy, but the basic vehicle –the steel lattice frame and in the case of the house, the colour film and colour processing in the graphics work, the pressing and mouldings in the case of the furniture– are ordinary to the culture... Charles Eames is a natural Californian Man, using his native resources and know-how –of the film-making, the aircraft and the advertising industries– as others drink water; that is almost without thinking”.

This shift from the machine aesthetic to color film, from the world of painting to that of the layout men, from Europe to California, can be traced in the shift between the first and second versions of the Eames House. The first version, the so-called Bridge House, published in *Arts & Architecture* in 1945, seems to have been based on Mies's 1934 sketch of a glass house on a hillside. The scheme was rejected in 1947, after Charles went to MoMA to photograph the Mies exhibition, in which the sketch was first made public. Charles must have already known of the drawing before 1947. In fact, he said that he didn't see anything new in the projects that were exhibited but that he was inspired by Mies's design of the exhibition itself. Shortly after his visit to the exhibition, the Eameses came up with a new scheme for their house.

The first version, which Charles designed with Eero Saarinen, faithfully followed the Miesian paradigm in every detail. The house is elevated off the ground as a kind of viewing platform. The sheer glass walls are aimed at the landscape, lined up with the horizon. In the original drawings, we see the occupant of the house standing behind the glass, an isolated figure looking out at the world that is now framed by the horizontal structure. The interior is almost empty. In the model of the house published in March 1948, the only things occupying the house are the reflections of the surrounding trees, which the Eameses went to considerable trouble to photograph by placing the model on the actual site and carefully superimposing an image of the trees in the foreground. The effect is classic Mies. As in the Farnsworth House, there is a stark elevated interior with at most a few isolated pieces of furniture floating near the glass in a fixed pattern prescribed by the architect.

In the second version, the house drops to the ground and swings around to hug the hillside. It no longer faces the ocean. The view is now oblique and filtered by the row of eucalyptus trees in front of the long east face. A low wall wraps around the patio on the south facade, partially blocking the ocean from the view of someone sitting in the space and focusing attention on the patio as an extension of the house, as an interior. The dominant focus is now in rather than out. The house abandons the Miesian sandwich, where floating slabs of floor and ceiling define a strictly horizontal view. The floor is treated like a wall with a series of frames defined by rugs, tiles, trays, and low tables on which objects are carefully arranged. In fact, floor, wall, and ceiling are treated in a similar way. Not only are they now given the same dimensions (the sandwich being replaced by a box), but they start to share roles. Paintings by Hans Hofmann used to hang horizontally from the ceiling—Ray had said that it was necessary to protect them from the strong light and that one “would be able to see them well from that position”²⁷. So where are they? Many photographs of the house are taken from a very low angle, and we often see the Eameses sitting on the floor surrounded by their objects.

The west wall is clothed in birch because they needed something they could hang objects on. On the east wall, much of the glass has become translucent or is wired (“to make people realize it is there”²⁸) or replaced with opaque colored panels. The sheer surface is broken up with louvers. The occupants can see only fragments of the outside, fragments that have the same status as the objects that now take over the interior. The view is there but restricted to a few of the many frames. Everything overlaps, moves, and changes. The singular unmediated view is replaced by a kaleidoscopic excess of objects.

The eye that organized the architecture of the historical avant-garde has been displaced by a multiplicity of zooming eyes. Not by chance, the Eameses' 1955 film *House: After Five Years of Living* is made up entirely of thousands of slides. Every aspect of the house is scrutinized by these all-too-intimate eyes. The camera moves up close to every surface, every detail. But these are not the details of the building as such: they are the details of the everyday life that the building makes possible.

Le Corbusier had also considered film the best medium to represent his architecture. In his movie *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, made with Pierre Chenal in 1929, he moves through the space of his houses (the Villa Savoye, the Villa Stein in Garches, the Villa d'Avray) without taking his jacket off. In *House: After Five Years of Living*, the Eameses take the opposite approach. Everything, as the title indicates, is about living in the house. The focus is extremely close: flowers, bugs, eggs, pots and pans, crockery. While Le Corbusier had included figures to provide the scale and, perhaps, to insist that he was just visiting, in the Eames film there are no figures, only traces of ongoing life. And while Le Corbusier's film is all horizontal panning—like the modern house, which frames a horizontal view—the Eames film is just a collection of slides.

This is consistent with the house itself: it is impossible to focus in the Eames House in the same way that we do in a house of the 1920s. Here the eye is that of a television viewer, not the one of the 1950s, but closer to the one of today, looking at multiple screens, some with captions, all simultaneously. It helps to follow more than one story at once.

To some extent the Eameses pioneered this mode of viewing. They were experts in communication. In 1959 they brought *Glimpses of the USA* to Moscow, projecting it on the seven screens suspended within Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome. Twenty-two hundred still and moving images presented the theme of “A Day in the Life of the United States”. Fuller said that nobody had done it before and predicted that advertisers and filmmakers would soon follow²⁹. The Eameses used the technique repeatedly:

Having come upon the use of multiple images, we exhibited a tendency to find new uses for it. If you give a young boy a hammer, he'll find that everything he encounters needs hammering. We found that everything we encountered needed the multiple-image technique... I used the process with triple slides in the Norton lectures at Harvard, in order to give a depth of view. In each lecture I would talk for five minutes and then show three minutes of imagery, and then talk seven minutes more³⁰.

The Eames House is also a multiscreen performance. But Mies is not simply abandoned. Indeed, the house takes an aspect of Mies's work to its extreme. When Charles Eames gave up on the first scheme after seeing the Mies exhibition at MoMA, he did so because he saw something else there. Eames was impressed by the zooming and overlapping of scales: a huge photographic mural of a small pencil sketch alongside a chair towering over a model next to a twice-life-size photograph, and so on. He also noted the interaction between the perspective of the room and that of the life-size photographs. The visitor experienced Mies's architecture rather than a representation of it, by walking through the display and watching others move. It was a sensual encounter: “The exhibition itself provides the smell and feel of what makes it, and Mies van der Rohe great”³¹.

What Eames learned from Mies, then, was less about buildings and more about arrangement of objects in space. Exhibition design, layout, and architecture were indistinguishable, as Mies had demonstrated in his layout for the magazine *G*, his numerous exhibitions with Lilly Reich, the Silk Cafe, the Barcelona Pavilion, and so on. Eames picked up on the idea that architecture was exhibition and developed it.

Once again, the Eames House took something from history and transforms it. The house was an exhibition, a showroom, but a different kind of showroom from those of the modern movement.

The multiple eye belonged to a completely different kind of consumer. It was the eye of the postwar acquisitive society. While Mies is famous for his comment “Less is more”, the Eameses said that their “objective is the simple thing of getting the most of the best to the greatest number of people for the least”³². The glass box gives way to such a density of objects that even the limits of the box blur. The role of the glass changes.

With Mies, reflections consolidate the plane of the wall, and the complex lines of trees become like the veins in marble. With the Eames house, the plane is broken. The reflections of the eucalyptus tree endlessly multiply and relocate. The Eameses even replaced a panel on the south facade with a photograph of a reflection of the trees, confirming that every panel should be understood as a photographic frame. Furthermore, they took photographs of the reflections on the exterior glass, switched some from positive to negative, and reassembled them into a panel. Apparently intended for the house, the panel ended up in the Herman Miller showroom in Los Angeles.

Just as the house was a showroom, the showroom was a house. The Eames House and the showroom for Herman Miller, built at the same time, were in fact the same project, employing the same principles. A light, unselfconscious enclosure, a minimum of architecture, provided a flexible frame for multiple interior arrangements. A wall-size photo-mural was used to construct the sense of an exterior, complete with patio, garden, trees, outdoor furniture and a neighboring house. A complete lifestyle was laid out down to the smallest detail of cutlery and table settings. The space was even filled with personal objects: an African leopard and an early American weather vane loaned by Billy Wilder, a Herbert Matter photograph and a Hofmann painting loaned by John Entenza, and so on—gifts from friends³³.

The showroom quality of the Eames House was exemplified by its repeated use as the site of fashion photographs. Magazines such as *Life* and *Vogue* inserted their models into the building, lining them up with the architecture, even merging them into the interior elements³⁴. In this, the house participated in another long tradition of the historical avant-garde. Ever since the turn of the century, modern architecture had been used as a setting to market fashion. In fact, the history of modern architecture is the history of the showroom, the history of a blending of architecture and exhibition. But the Eames House was not just a uniform backdrop for fashion designs as discrete innovations. The garments blended into the fabric of the house, mingling with the objects. The accompanying text bounced backward and forward between the “California bold look” of the architecture and the fashion. What was on display in the showroom was the equal status of all kinds of objects. The announcement of Case Study Houses #8 and #9 in the December 1945 issue of *Arts & Architecture* shows the silhouettes of both the Eameses and Entenza surrounded by the galaxy of objects that define their respective lifestyles. The role of the architect is simply that of happily accommodating these objects.

Nowhere are the differences between Mies and the Eameses more clear than in the photographs of their houses under construction. A photograph of the Farnsworth House shows the lonely figure of Mies with his back to the camera somberly appraising the empty frame. His enormous figure cuts a black silhouette into the frigid landscape. With his coat and hat on, he stands like one of Caspar David Friedrich’s figures confronting the sublime. At about the same time but a world away, the Eameses put on their new outfits, climb into their frame, and smile at the camera.

INFRAESTRUCTURAS Y MAPAS

Luis Rojo de Castro

With the idea of contextualizing architectural concerns in a broader and more complex environment, the present text aims to offer a reflection on *infrastructures in the city* as agents which both produce and alter the urban landscape. We are especially interested in underground infrastructures, the spatial conditions and experience of which are distorted by the fact that they must be dug out of the earth, which directly affects the way they function, as well as the way in which they are perceived and understood as architecture.

The commercial and financial area known as A.Z.C.A., located on Paseo de la Castellana between Calle Raimundo Fernández Villaverde and Calle General Perón in Madrid, shall serve as our real-life laboratory in which to contrast the ideas we propose. A.Z.C.A. first appeared in the city planning designed by Bidagor following the Civil War, in 1944-1946. The general design included a commercial and financial center where A.Z.C.A. now stands, with the idea that it would become a new urban center to complement the historical city center, capable of organizing and coordinating the “natural” growth of Madrid northwards along the Paseo de la Castellana.

The visible, open and disperse part of A.Z.C.A. is merely the tip of the iceberg, the simulation of a state. Underground, a vital network of tunnels, connections, streets and passages can be considered both a type of container and a paradoxical “alter ego” of its visible reality.

The area’s true, paradoxical and eventful history began with an architecture competition which aspired to provide order for this gigantic city block (600 meters along the Castellana and nearly 300 along General Perón). The competition was won in 1954 by architect Perpiñá, whose design, eclectic in layout and Lecorbuserian in image, situated its most radical contribution underground, where a labyrinth of streets and tunnels would undertake to offer a solution to the urban traffic problem and return the surface of the city to its pedestrians.

Substantial differences exist, nonetheless, between the ideas of the winning design and the A.Z.C.A. which exists today, transcending formal strategies and ideological options to go deeper into the fundamental issues of the discipline on the representation and production of architecture.

And we can ask ourselves, is A.Z.C.A. a big chunk of architecture or a small piece of the city? Is it one or many? Is it complex, or just big? Is it useful, or does it just seem to be? Is it the product of functional thought, or merely a representation? These are the issues on which we wish to center our attention.

ET IN ARCADIA EGO

Carlos Montes Serrano

During the nineteen fifties and sixties, Erwin Panofsky enjoyed a pre-eminent standing among art historians. The iconography and iconology studies he made popular later became a true intellectual trend. Such it is, that Panofsky even claimed that when a new edition of *Art Bulletin* came out, he was always afraid of coming across a parody of his method.

Inevitably, however, and nearly forty years after his death, his influence has waned and his works, while constantly republished, are read rather infrequently. His immense wealth of knowledge is overwhelming, and at the same time tedious for new generations, who are unable to follow his reasoning rich with classical quotes. This has all contributed to creating a certain suspect feeling or prejudice in the specialized reader, who is more interested nowadays in the artistic value of works than in an interpretation of their meaning within the context of historical and cultural philosophy.

Even so, during the last decade Panofsky’s work was re-launched as the object of certain debate after the celebration in 1995 marking the centenary of his birth. A conference was held in the United States on Panofsky’s influence in various fields of knowledge, while at the same time his disciples published *Three Essays on Style* (1995) in homage to the old master, a collection of three previously unpublished essays followed by personal memoirs. The surprise lay in that an elderly professor Ernst H. Gombrich, from his peaceful retirement in Hampstead, reacted to this work and to the English edition of *Perspective as Symbolic Form* with a caustic review in *The New York Review of Books*, which was quickly included in several specialized publications and later formed part of Gombrich’s last book published during his lifetime.

And that was not all, as Gombrich continued to remark on some of Panofsky’s theses in various interviews on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, which could be described as a last effort to defy the final legends of Hegelian thought in art theory and art history.

Gombrich had already revealed an attempt at concealment in his reviews and a greater reservation throughout his profuse scientific production. In fact, in a long interview granted to Dider Eribon he commented that out of respect for his friendship with Panofsky, his reviews of Panofsky’s work would reveal no more than the tip of the iceberg. And so it is that although Gombrich never failed to transmit his admiration for Panofsky’s incredible wealth of knowledge, it is clear that he did not share his ideas on iconology, rejected the symbolic character of perspective, judged his study on *Idea* as erroneous, and spurned his interpretation of Gothic style and the Renaissance.

The present essay aims to study the work of Panofsky as a whole in order to reveal, together with the intellectual path he followed, some of the submerged bits of the iceberg of critical prejudices referred to by the former head of the *Warburg Institute*.

DUCHAMP’S DOORS AND WINDOWS

Daniel Naegele

“[...] starting with a sentence [...] he made a word game with kinds of parentheses. [...] His word play had a hidden meaning. [...] It was an obscurity of another order”.

Marcel Duchamp of Raymond Roussel¹

When thinking categorically about Marcel Duchamp’s art, one is confronted with an apparent paradox: it simultaneously encourages and resists classification. The characteristic is pervasive. It is a quality found in the individual piece as well as in the collected oeuvre. For, while Duchamp promoted the unique and inventive, while he abhorred routine, eschewed the habitual as taste making and subscribed to a philosophy of indifference, at the same time and more than any other artist he also underscored the cumulative nature of his work. *The Large Glass*, the *Boite-en-valise*, the Arensburg Collection itself: all consciously group Duchamp works together and thereby encourage a context –a fabricated, artificial ground– against which the singular piece must be read. In so doing, Duchamp packaged his production. He provided an artificial backdrop that insists on its own artificiality. This paradox is, in a sense, the essence of Duchamp’s art.

I will examine this essence by bringing together five of Duchamp's works: *Fresh Widow* (1920), *The Brawl at Austerlitz* (1921), *Door: rue Larrey* (1927), the doors to Andre Breton's gallery 'Gradiva' (1937), and the door of *Etant donnés* (1946-66). The relationship between the five is obvious. Ostensibly each is either a door or a window. As such they rightfully belong in or of a wall². The wall itself is a boundary. It separates one room from another, the interior from the exterior. In their occupation of the wall, doors and windows simultaneously form and dissolve a boundary. They transgress the boundary-building function of the wall by inhabiting it. This transgression is analogous to Duchamp's paradoxical position on art.

To categorize is by definition to bound or limit. Duchamp's art seeks to throw such a *priori* thinking into question and does so by occupying the boundary itself. Thus these five 'things' –as Duchamp preferred to call his work– are very conventional, physical manifestations of his artistic machination. They have the added advantage of possessing inherent traditional value. Everyday objects, they are charged with symbolic meaning, yet physically embody conventional thinking. Both the symbolic and the conventional imply a *priori* classifications of sorts and so provide Duchamp with the fundamental medium for his exploration.

Duchamp's project, however, is broader in scope than attention to these particulars might imply. His enterprise is an attempt from within to undermine the institutionalization of art. When Duchamp began to exhibit his anti-conventional readymades in the second decade of the 20th Century, art was bounded and defined by external acts of framing, titling, grouping together –in short, by what might be called "museumizing". Nothing so symbolizes the act of representation as the frame. Within a building's fabric, the wall, like the frame, serves to separate. The wall re-presents representation. When Duchamp investigates the occupation, definition and possible dissolution of the wall through windows and doors, analogically he engages in a critique of the ideology that underlies the institutionalization of art, the ideology of representation.

UNDERMINING IDEOLOGY BY REPRESENTING REPRESENTATION

When Duchamp designed the *Fresh Widow* in 1920, he had already been actively engaged in re-presenting representation for some seven years or more. The notion of re-presenting representation was not new to art. Piranesi, for instance, was expert at it, as were many who preceded him; but Duchamp's immediate French context included Gustave Courbet's *The Painter's Studio, real allegory, summing up a phase of seven years in my artistic life from 1854-1855*³ and any of a number of paintings by Georges Seurat from the 1880's to 1891. In *The Circus*, for example, Seurat painted the perimeter of his canvas to resemble a frame. This painted frame suggests that what is being portrayed in paint is a picture of a picture. That is, what we, the viewers, see is a painting of a framed picture, a painting whose proportions neatly coincide with those of the re-presented image, whose boundaries begin where the delineated boundary of the re-presented end.

Seurat practiced a kind of painting called '*pointillisme*.' Pointillisme is a pictorial portrayal comprised of small, more or less equal dabs of various colors. By portioning out units of paint like dough on a cookie sheet, it underscores the physicality of paint as a substance adhered to canvas. This method of painting requires the viewer to form the picture himself in his 'mind's eye.' The viewer must assemble in his eye all the dabs of paints, combining them to construe more or less distinct colors and tones. Together, these toned color shapes suggest the painting's content while vehemently insisting on its construction as almost 'content-less.' In Seurat's *The Circus* the physical presence of paint and the insistence of perception as a subjective and necessary act is emphasized, while 'painting in' the frame itself de-materializes what traditionally is of another world. It appropriates the act of containment.

Frames serve as a disjunctive. They separate the world of illusion from a real world. Often this division is accomplished by a wooden surround, a frame –nature itself carved, contorted, decorated. But in *The Circus*, Seurat presents both frame and canvas as illusions, *illusions actively constructed by the viewer*. Both are no more than paint dabs on canvas. But with dabs that suggest a frame, Seurat appropriates the conventional boundary between art and reality. In doing so, he calls into question the very nature of institutionalized art itself.

Almost a quarter of a century after Seurat's *The Circus*, Picasso's first collage, *Still Life with Chair Caning* (1911-1912), posed a similar question. In creating his illusion, Picasso employed both paint and swatches of 'reality': a mariner's rope as frame and

stock oilcloth pre-painted to resemble chair caning. The composition is centrifugal. Its component parts push to the still life's elliptical perimeter. But a frame of real rope corrals them. Its tensile strength efficiently resists the outward thrust, preventing the 'parts' from flying off the canvas.

Like Seurat's painted frame, the mariner's rope is both frame and a part of that which traditionally is framed. The rope-frame works on multiple levels. Iconographically, it suggests endlessness and a sea-faring condition. In addition, William Rubin has written that the "relief patterning" of this custom-made endless mariner's rope "re-enacts the upholstery border [...] of one of Picasso's table coverings [...] as well as familiar border-molding of real tabletops"⁴. In this sense, it offers a specific historical time and place to the still life, giving it temporal as well as spatial dimension. More obviously though, it is unlike Seurat's *fictive* boundary; it is reality itself, reality that is simultaneously art. As such, it is subtly similar to Duchamp's more assertive Ready-mades, the first of which appeared two years after *Still Life with Chair Caning*.

Duchamp's own 'questioning' was first made manifest in February, 1912 when he sent his recently completed *Nude Descending the Staircase* to the Paris Independents. According to him, his "fellow cubists did not like it and asked me to, at least, change the title"⁵. He refused and withdrew the painting; but it is significant that the controversy surrounding *Nude Descending the Staircase* had little to do with the inherent qualities of the work. Rather it revolved around two seemingly extraneous issues: the painting's title and its apparent allegiance to *both* Cubism and Futurism, movements regarded at the time as mutually exclusive. Henceforth, Duchamp awarded great importance to titling and classification. Together with framing and the notion of museumizing itself, they serve as society's means of appropriating art, of controlling its display and therefore its momentum. Collectively, titling, framing, classification, and museumizing form a sort of systematic thinking, an ideology whose authority and coerciveness Duchamp questioned and ultimately set out to undermine.

In 1913 then, Duchamp "put a bicycle wheel on a stool, the fork down, there was no idea of a 'readymade,' or anything else. It was just a distraction"⁶. In 1914 he added two green and red marks to a commercial print of a landscape, titled it *Pharmacie*, and produced an edition of three. The same year, Duchamp 'chose' his first Ready-Made, *Bottlerack*. In his words it was an attempt to "reduce the idea of aesthetic consideration to the choice of the mind, not to the ability or cleverness of the hand which I objected to in many paintings of my generation"⁷. He noted that the "functionalism" of this object "was already obliterated by the fact that I took it out of the earth and onto the planet of aesthetics"⁸. In 1915, Duchamp purchased a snow shovel in a New York hardware store. On its lower edge, he inscribed in white paint: "IN ADVANCE OF THE BROKEN ARM MARCEL DUCHAMP".

In 1917, Duchamp purchased a urinal from "Mott Works" company in New York, signed it "R. Mutt", titled it *Fountain* and submitted it to the Independents exhibition to be hung on the wall rotated and upside down. As expected, the piece was rejected despite the liberal ideals purported by the exhibition organizers. It was removed from the gallery and mysteriously disappeared. A photograph of it later illustrated an anonymous article in the second issue of *The Blind Man* (May, 1917). The article defended the work, noting that the urinal's "useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view" and that therefore the artist had "created a new thought for that object"⁹. The photograph is by Alfred Stieglitz. High contrast, highly ambiguous and saturated with gender iconography, the image is simultaneously phallic and gynomorphic. Through re-presentation, *Fountain* acquired new lives. Its title connotes different meanings in accordance with our 'seeing' the piece as a urinal, phallus or female pudenda. With *Fountain*, the disappearance of the really real –of the original, 'authentic' object– encouraged representation to interrogate art. Even before the urinal disappeared, Duchamp had undermined authenticity by promoting a pre-manufactured object as art. With its disappearance, the mass-produced plumbing fixture acquired cult value. The short life span of the authentic object imbued it with a temporal dimension. Ambiguous representation gave it an always-fluctuating, spatial quality. Photography documented *Fountain* as elusive and unobtainable –permanent and essential characteristics of this work of art.

In 1919, Duchamp penciled a moustache and goatee onto a small reproduction of the Mona Lisa and inscribed below it: 'L. H. O. O. Q.' According to Duchamp, this inscription, when "pronounced like initials in French, made a very risqué joke on the gio-

conda”¹⁰. Duchamp’s modifications to the reproduction are diagrammatic, cartoonish, and literally superficial. They combine writing and artistic enactment, the latter employing a visual cliché, a banal schoolboy gesture that itself re-presents. Together the moustache and goatee form a ready-made response, more a reaction than a thoughtful alteration. The gesture is one of masking. The well-known face is not substantially modified but adorned cosmetically. Duchamp costumed the famous face with an ‘infrathin’ layer –graffiti that belongs to ‘other worlds’ only when considered thoughtfully, that is, only when considered in a manner inappropriate to the consideration of graffiti.

With the ‘L. H. O. O. Q.’ inscription, Duchamp again explored the temporal dimension, demonstrating a preference for process over product. By modifying a print, a mere representation of the classic painting, he called into question the static condition of the work of art. He undermined the traditional belief that once the work has left the artist, it necessarily remains constant and unchanged. Later, he used a similar strategy with his own work when he issued “notes” for the *Large Glass*. His imposition might also be thought of as the physical manifestation of the viewer’s point of view¹¹.

In 1967 Duchamp clearly and concisely stated his position: “I don’t believe in positions”¹². It is a stance which in a sense conforms to the philosophy of ‘perspectivism’ founded on the belief that “there are, or can be, different languages which are not translatable into each other and which supply their speakers with quite different pictures of the world”. A Nietzschean philosophy, it sees ‘belief systems’ as “instruments serving the impulse to survive and succeed”. There is no authoritative, external way of choosing between such systems¹³.

Duchamp’s goal, his ‘positive good,’ might be defined as emancipation from what he perceived to be an oppressive, overarching, cultural condition that by 1912 had reached crisis level. We can politicize Duchamp’s quest. It is a patient search for a condition of co-existence –recognition of the limitations of our own point of view, a point of view always altered if not wholly determined by the immediate physical and cultural conditions under which we live.

Ready-mades were the beginning of this pursuit. When Duchamp spoke of them he described them in terms of what they were not. They “weren’t works of art... weren’t sketches” but rather objects, ‘things’ “to which no art terms applied”¹⁴. His definitions suggest his role as inventor who seeks to critique an establishment by situating himself outside of it. His use of the past tense, ‘applied’, indicates the inevitable adjustment of art world boundaries to include, indeed eventually to appropriate, his ‘things.’

FRESH WIDOW

In his *Complete Works* Arturo Schwarz refers to Duchamp’s *Fresh Widow* of 1920 as “Semi-Ready-made: a miniature French window, 30 1/2” X 17 11/16”, painted light green. The eight panes of glass are covered with black leather. The window is fixed onto a base [...], bearing, on the front, the following inscription applied in black paper-tape letters: FRESH WIDOW COPYRIGHT ROSE SELAVY 1920”. According to Schwarz this “Semi-Ready-made may be considered a three-dimensional pun (*Fresh Widow* = French Window). But the pun does not stop at the title of the item. It is extended from the verbal sphere to the plastic one. The polished black leather on the panels of the window induces the spectator to believe that the room on which the window opens is in the dark [...]¹⁵. He has little more to say about *Fresh Widow*. Indeed, when critics make mention of this work at all, it is almost always in a cursory way.

Robert Lebel said of *Fresh Widow* that with it Duchamp “had reached the limit of the unaesthetic, the useless, and the unjustifiable”¹⁶. In reference to Lebel’s comment, Duchamp responded: “[...] it’s very pleasing as a formula [...] it’s very nice –I congratulate him!”¹⁷.

Duchamp himself said of the work: “Yes, ‘fresh’ widow, meaning ‘smart.’ [...] The combination amused me, with French window. I had the window made by a carpenter in New York. The little panes are covered with black leather, and would have to be shined every morning like a pair of shoes in order to shine like real panes. All these things had the same spirit”¹⁸. *Fresh Widow* questions the notion of stasis in art, contrasting it with the temporal: ‘fresh,’ ‘widow,’ and ‘fresh widow’ are temporal conditions, and the window’s leather panes are to be polished daily.

Conventionally, a window is in the wall or part of the wall. But Duchamp’s *Fresh Widow* steps down from, or sits in front of the wall, just far enough to assert its inde-

pendence, not far enough for us to view behind it. As a ‘museum piece,’ *Fresh Widow* seems to consciously avoid classification, situating itself somewhere between painting and sculpture. It is clearly a three-dimensional object and sits on a base articulated as such and carrying the black lettering of its title, date and author. Its inert simplicity and confident independence assert undeniable presence. But it is also very much like a painting, and is currently hung amongst paintings. Its proximity to the wall, its flatness, one-sidedness and opaqueness encourage its reading as a painting¹⁹. This reading is enhanced by a frame that entirely surrounds the would-be movable leaves of the ‘window.’ Conventionally, such a frame is found only on both sides and the top of a window; a sill completes the framing at the bottom, extending past the side frames.

Were *Fresh Widow* a painting, it would represent a ‘real’ window. Here, one might think of Seurat’s painting of a painting. The illusion of such an image is made utterly apparent. As such, the subject of the ‘painting’ is illusionism. The work collapses to its material components –paint, frame, leather, display stand, title– underscoring the collusion behind illusion and implicating the viewer himself as prime conspirator.

Viewing *Fresh Widow* as a three-dimensional object/sculpture does not relieve the situation for as such it takes on the characteristics of a miniature –a simulacrum of a window, a ‘sample’ produced at half scale presumably to facilitate mobility. Despite its obvious sense of presence and its assertion of independence, it is ‘a representation of.’ Indeed, its essence is representation; and as such it is a display of the idea of display.

Fresh Widow re-presents representation itself and does so in several ways. Windows are a boundary between outer and inner. They constitute a kind of projection screen onto which the outside world is cast for our understanding and visual consumption. That they might frame or serve to limit our visual comprehension allows them to metaphorically denote our necessarily always-incomplete knowledge of the world. In a sense, they symbolize a certain freedom –a view out, a new window on the world. But in another sense, they impose limitation²⁰.

This condition is inherent in the Renaissance idea of ‘reality as viewed through a window,’ an idea which *Fresh Widow* critically re-presents. When we look through a window, do we see the space beyond or do we see only the glass on which a bi-dimensional image, a representation of all that lies behind it, appears? Apparently, we see the space beyond, but paradoxically our recordings of this space are bi-dimensional. The issue of what exactly it is we see when we “see through” a transparent surface was considered at great length by Renaissance artists. In his *Notebooks*, under the title “Optics”, Leonardo wrote: “[...] the convergence of the images of any object which is cut by the interposition of transparent bodies will impress itself on the surface of these bodies and will there create a new convergence which will lead the images of these objects to the eye”²¹.

Machines were devised to assist the recording of space based on this principle. The square panes of *Fresh Widow* might be thought of as a grid paralleling such drawing aids as the “Machine à Dessiner” illustrated in an engraving from Jean Dubreuil’s *La Perspective pratique*, Paris, 1663. This machine for drawing mechanizes the act of representation, assisting in the translation from three dimensions to two by interjecting a grid between the view and the viewer. The grid serves as a framework. It establishes a system of co-ordinates and is repeated for reference on the two-dimensional surface. Duchamp himself occasionally worked this way or at least found it desirable to leave evidence of such a grid in his *Network of Stoppages* from 1914.

In “Machine à Dessiner”, both paving and window patterns reinforce the concept of space quantified on a projected grid. The gridded horizontal plane provides us with convenient co-ordinates that help locate the drawing table, chair and their shadows in the space of the picture. The chessboard floor pattern employed as a concealed base in Duchamp’s *Etant donnés* –itself a kind of camera obscura construct– comes to mind.

If *Fresh Widow* critically re-presents the Renaissance tradition of representation, its black panes also suggest another form of representation: the illustration or cartoon. Often delineators render windows black; and this is a common convention in both architectural and mechanical drawing. Such a parallel presents *Fresh Widow* as diagrammatic and reductive representation. These qualities are ostensibly at odds with the (more real?) three-dimensional. The contradiction makes manifest the paradox of representation.

A facsimile of a 'building component', *Fresh Widow* presents mass production, invoking the ideology of industry. Building is directly connected with technique and mode of production. Duchamp did not make *Fresh Widow* himself, he ordered it made to his written and drawn specifications. Though one of a kind, the portability implied by its size, coupled with its stock appearance (more the idea of a window than a window itself) suggests a standardized part such as one might find in a catalogue. Such parts are only useful when found in another context as part of a system: a system of enclosure, a wall system, a system of building. In the twentieth century the dwellings we inhabit are largely composed of factory made component parts, which are themselves, patterned on traditional, handcrafted components. McShine and d'Harnoncourt tell us that *Fresh Widow* "was the first work to be signed by Rose Sélavy"²². But the "black, paper-tape letters" –certainly a 'signing' of sorts–can hardly be considered a signature in the conventional sense. Duchamp has removed the hand of the artist from *Fresh Widow*. With it, he re-presents standardization and mass-production, conveying these notions as themselves symbolic of representation.

If a traditional perspective presents us with an understanding of a three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface, Duchamp reverses this procedure. The window, typically a device for framing a subject in traditional two-dimensional art, here becomes not the frame but the subject itself. Duchamp inverts figure and ground. He presents a three-dimensional frame: flat, simple, reduced to base terms. It might have been presented in two-dimensions for it seems to avail itself of none of the opportunities for plastic expression inherent in a dimension of depth. Instead, it denies depth. The black leather panes insist on the object's presence. The 'window' is not something we look *through*, but something we look at. Denying the window transmissivity, Duchamp alters its essence.

Finally, there is the copyright, the right to reproduce held by Rose Sélavy, a fictitious character known to us only through representation, a re-presentation of Duchamp himself. By definition a copyright is "the exclusive, legally secured right to reproduce (as by writing or printing), publish, and sell the matter and form of a literary, musical, or artistic work (as by dramatizing, novelizing, performing or reciting in public, or filming) for a period in the U.S. of 28 years". It differs from a patent, which is a right of exclusivity granted to an inventor. We presume *Fresh Widow* to be art –art whose authority lies not in its uniqueness or physical form, but in the careful contrivance of an idea. Are painting and sculpture traditionally considered copyrightable material? What is the domain of the copyright? How is it that we can assign rights to an idea? Is this not a form of tyranny? By signing the piece, Duchamp problematized its categorization. Each question uncovers an aspect of representation typically left cloaked.

OTHER WINDOWS AND DOORS

In Paris, in 1921, as he himself later recalled, Duchamp "had another small window made, quite different from [*Fresh Widow*], with a brick wall. I called it *The Brawl at Austerlitz* in French *La Bagarre d'Austerlitz* which is a simple alliteration on Gare d'Austerlitz, an important railroad station in Paris"²³. Schwarz describes this work as, "A miniature window made by a carpenter following Duchamp's instructions". His elaboration on the piece is short. It is, he writes, "A variation on the theme of *Fresh Widow* [...] again with a pun in the title". The piece is approximately two feet high by one foot wide and two and one-half inches thick. It is signed on one side: 'Marcel Duchamp,' on the other: 'Rose Sélavy/Paris 1921.' Schwarz also notes: "back painted in imitation brickwork, the front painted gray". White glazier's marks appear on the glass like the figure '8.'

Presumably, the title refers to the famous Battle of Austerlitz fought by Napoleon against the allied forces of Austria and Russia in Moravia on December 2, 1805. In this battle, Napoleon evacuated the Pratzen Plateau west of Austerlitz to create a trap for the allies who subsequently occupied his vacated position. Napoleon, whose army was considerably smaller in number, attacked the allies on two opposing flanks. Dividing their army, he eventually crushed their weakened center. Two days later Austria agreed to a suspension of hostilities and the remaining Russian army was sent home²⁴.

Duchamp's strategy is not unlike Napoleon's. Napoleon divided his own troops, pushing them to the periphery of the plateau, ultimately creating a central void in the allied forces. *Bagarre d'Austerlitz* echoes this. With its double signature and its two distinct faces it hints at a voided middle. The condition it portrays is apparently irreconcilable, for despite the continuity suggested by the window, its condition –if real– would be

quite impossible²⁵. To assume this window real though seems entirely fallacious, for unlike *Fresh Widow* it is not a replica of an object but rather a model of sorts that represents a possible or probable condition. But what condition? And why the glazier's marks? It seems, in a sense, like a stage set –one that simulates a temporal condition suggested by glazier's marks indicative of a recently completed installation. In that case it would be –like Seurat's painted frame– a representation of a representation. And as with much of Seurat's work, the 'crisis of telescoping telescoping' representation leads one to reduce the piece to its physical essence: wood, glass, paint. Overt representation and 'reality' are inevitably conjoined.

With the *Brawl at Austerlitz*, Duchamp presents us with a condition of permanent argument. Like *Fresh Widow* the piece is three dimensional, but unlike the earlier piece, it's to be viewed from two sides. We assume an inside and an outside. Unlike *Fresh Widow*, its literal subject is, one suspects, not the window but the wall. Is it a wall with a window in it, or a window and its surround? The window is transparent, but serves as a kind of billboard presenting us with a sign, the glazier's '8,' a symbol that adds a temporal dimension to this work. This mark designates a particular moment in time –the moment of completion, a fresh window. A coded message, the '8'-mark makes painting into a kind of writing encouraging us to read the imitation brickwork as also coded, and ultimately even to read in a similar way the paint on the wood window frame. Again our attention is drawn to the spectral surface, to the 'infrathin,' the superficial. Only through this surface, this outermost layering, are we informed. It is as if all else were merely structural prop for this guise. Duchamp presents reality itself as coded and in so doing confronts us with our biases. "I was endeavoring to establish myself as far as possible from 'pleasing' and 'attractive' physical paintings", says Duchamp, noting that "That extreme was seen as literary"²⁶.

A language teacher by profession, Duchamp recognized the potential poetry in the slip, the mistake in translation or pronunciation. Such 'mistakes' often bring together not just two words, but two worlds. Invoking diverse cultures, they remind us of the impossibility of exact translation.

Duchamp works with integers; he knows negative numbers. His work is a kind of balancing act. His fulcrum is a void. Like an ancient mathematician, he has uncovered the most magical number: the number zero. Duchamp focuses on the gap, the number zero, the space between. Zero is not a beginning really, but exists only as the summation of two other entities. Zero is the absence brought about by the presence of equal opposites. In *La Bagarre d'Austerlitz* Duchamp displays the irreconcilable void. He presents us with a condition of untranslatability. His strategies for presenting this condition build on one another and multiply. Again, he insists on the cumulative quality of his work and the importance of wit in its execution. "Wit, as you know", Samuel Johnson once wrote, "is the unexpected copulation of ideas".

Of all Duchamp's 'things,' nothing seems as witty as the door he designed for his Paris apartment at 11 rue Larrey in 1927. The door itself is a conventional wood door about two feet wide and a little over seven feet high. Hinged on a jamb shared by two openings at right angles to one another, the door serves two thresholds (and three rooms) at once. It is not simply useful; it exudes functionality. Duchamp explained: "In Paris I was living in a very tiny apartment. To take full advantage of the meagre space, I thought to make use of a single door which would close alternatively on two jamb-linings placed at right angles. I showed it to some friends and commented that the proverb 'A door must be either opened or closed' was thus caught in *flagrante delicto* for inexactitude. But people have forgotten the practical reason that dictated the necessity of this measure and they only think of it as a Dada provocation"²⁷. There is concision and economy of gesture in Duchamp's effort. He creates with an act of elimination. Where once there were two doors, now there is one. Like *La Bagarre d'Austerlitz* it is a gesture that presents absence, but it does so by subtraction as opposed to the additive superimposition of that earlier work.

With his door at 11 rue Larrey, Duchamp did not do away with the traditional door and frame. What he countered, he countered with the conventional. He re-presented traditional artifacts. In them resides traditional thinking. Like the body cast, the fingerprint, the photographic negative, the door is an index of reality. It is a part of our everyday world. Reframing converts it to a coded message.

Duchamp's door at 11 rue Larrey provided an escape from the tyranny of stale ideas and overbearing classifications. In this it closely parallels the 'circular binding'

Duchamp designed for a book in which the end is introduction to the beginning, and where the reader never quantitatively progresses through the book. A paradox, it resembles Duchamp's verbal puns and might be thought of as a physical manifestation of his stated position: "I don't believe in positions, therefore when I commit to one, I attenuate it by irony or sarcasm".

The door as first conceived in Duchamp's apartment had use value. It economically fulfilled real requirements. Its wit had functional purpose. It was an operation. It literally 'worked' and did so in space and time. It was visceral and empathic, and when operated, the operator moved with it. But it was removed from 11 rue Larrey to become a museum piece –*Door: 11, rue Larrey*. Museumizing stripped the door of its essential feature, function. In its re-presented form, it relies on narrative to complete its meaning.

In 1937 Duchamp designed a door for André Breton's gallery *Gradiva* at 31 Rue de Seine, Paris. Breton named the gallery after the title of a novel by W. Jensen. According to Schwarz, the novel "included fictitious dreams [and] Freud found in these dreams a confirmation of the correctness of his method of dream analysis"²⁸. Schwarz goes on to say that "Duchamp designed the entrance to the gallery, cutting in the glass door the silhouette of a couple entering the gallery hand in hand (a reminiscence of Magritte). The item was very fragile. When *Gradiva* closed down, the door was stored by Charles Ratton, a friend and a dealer in primitive art. About eighteen months later Duchamp called on Ratton with Breton and asked that the door be destroyed"²⁹.

Like *Fresh Widow*, the *Gradiva* door is an appropriation of an 'art idea.' Whereas *Fresh Widow* might be seen as re-presenting, or at least referencing, the Renaissance 'view,' the *Gradiva* door appropriated the already appropriated. It re-presented and in doing so transformed again the ideas of Magritte, which arguably are a two-dimensionalization of Duchamp's three-dimensional take on Renaissance windows. In a sense then Duchamp framed the double frame. As with *Fresh Widow*, the *Gradiva* door three-dimensionalized a two-dimensional illustration of the third dimension. Later, it was again transformed to a bi-dimensional image when it appeared on the cover of the 'Doors' catalogue. The door was reconstructed in plastic in the sixties. As simulacrum, the plastic door is a representation of the framing of the double frame.

Schwarz's description, "the silhouette of a couple entering the gallery hand in hand", is curious for, in fact, no hands appear in the photographs of the door. Rather the 'couple' –others have described the shape as "a pair of lovers"³⁰– appear melded together but perhaps not amorphous. As a transparent cut-out of a translucent (?) door, and as a figure-ground reversal that frames both the gallery's patrons and the street beyond, the 'illustration' is surely "a reminiscence of Magritte". But as pure shape, the 'couple' resembles the subjects of two Seurat crayon drawings. In both of these drawings, one figure is considerably darker, more clearly delineated than the other. The woman would seem to be dancing with a man, but the male figure fades away at the bottom suggesting its fabrication from an orchestrated accretion of the scratched lines that envelope it. In the other drawing, the lighter figure appears as a shadow of the darker one –so dark it seems almost a void. This might account for the unusual height and bulk of the larger 'figure' in the *Gradiva* door. The smaller figure appears to be life-size.

Duchamp's final door is only one part of his masterwork *Etant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage* (*Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*) begun in 1946 and completed in 1966. The door of *Etant donnés* is a fragment of a larger door-gate found by Duchamp in Spain. In Duchamp's installation, the wood door is mounted on concealed hinges fastened to a track, permitting the door to slide open. This opening allows only for special access –including photographic– to the 'interior' of *Etant donnés*. Normally the door functions more as a wall with peep holes. It permits a restricted view while preventing access to the interior space. *Etant donnés* is located in the remote wall of a small, private room adjacent to and entered through the large Duchamp gallery in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. As one enters the room, the door appears as a 'boarding up' of a dimly lit arched opening in the far wall. Two holes exist in the door at about eye level.

Two holes: the duality is important. It is a door that mimics our own structure. The holes in the door are like the holes in our skull. The gesture recalls Brassai's *Troglodyte* (1936), a photograph of a cave entrance taken from the inside looking out.

In this image the dual openings are eerily reminiscent of the openings in the skull, the lens-less apertures through which we view the world. Through mimicry Duchamp calls attention to our own physical construct, our own bodily frame, a frame we carry with us always. We cannot get outside ourselves. We are made to realize our own biases, our personal 'point of view,' a position we can never escape.

When we look through these holes, we see another frame. The frame is a masonry wall from which a few bricks have been removed to provide a view. The view beyond the brick wall is of a nude in a provocative position. The double frame prevents us from seeing the face. We want to shift our position, to physically jockey for a better angle. Repositioning, however, is impossible. The dual openings, our only access to this private viewing, are fixed and immovable. The frame seems intolerable.

Looking through the holes, we see 'real' three-dimensional space. Unable to alter our view, however, we cannot verify that what we see is really real. Indeed, intuitively one senses something construed and artificial about the view. In fact, it is a highly contrived false perspective, but our perceptive faculties deny us knowledge of that. What we do understand, if only 'sensorially,' is that an 'infrathin' image of a three-dimensional construct is seemingly being projected onto our two-dimensional mental 'screens.' The sensation is uncanny, and inescapable. Seemingly reversing his *Gradiva* door position, with *Etant donnés* Duchamp underscores the mental recording of three-dimensional space in two-dimensional format. The visceral and the retinal act in tandem.

Etant donnés is democratic. Everyone is offered the same view. Yet only one person can see the '*Etant donnés*' view at any given time: a private viewing of private parts. The act is ritualistic, and as such the antithesis of the democratic. Like much of Duchamp's work, the piece simultaneously exudes contradictory values: exhibition and cult at one and the same time.

With *Etant donnés*, as with many of his works, Duchamp created a double frame. We peep through its two holes assuming the posture of a voyeur and become acutely self-conscious. Our private viewing is itself on display. We are a part of the exhibit –watched by all who wait to see what we are seeing. As they observe the observer, those waiting observe themselves observing³¹. In role reversals typical of Duchamp, figure becomes ground and ground becomes figure. The museum itself is framed. Its institutionalization of the view is underscored. "It is the onlooker who makes the museum, who provides the elements of the museum", Duchamp once mused, and then asked rhetorically, "Is the museum the final form of comprehension, of judgement?"³².

RE-PRESENTING REPRESENTATION

Duchamp re-presents representation. He arrests the act of delimitation, altering boundaries and underscoring the artificiality of imposed limitations by artificially imposing new limitations. His trajectory is all encompassing and telescopes, for its logic suggests that at any moment another frame might reframe the displayed act of 're-framing.'

Duchamp devised many strategies for the presentation of representation: figure-ground reversal, the conjoining of different 'worlds' of thought, transformation from one medium to another, surface emphasis as a means of 'retinal' dissolution, balancing about zero. Doors and windows provided 'real life' parallels of a condition of simultaneous separation and conjunction that such strategies underscored. To recognize these strategies is perhaps to take issue with one of Duchamp's most celebrated disciples, Jasper Johns. Johns viewed Duchamp's art as a "persistent attempt to destroy frames of reference"³³. A frame of reference is a set of presuppositions that constrain or refrain one in some way. It is a context or viewpoint or system of thinking. Duchamp does not destroy, but rather employs the frame of reference. Our biases, our viewpoints make his 'things' work. Each strategy deployed by Duchamp depends intrinsically on such frames of reference and their collision with other frames.

It was Duchamp's unique strength to economically invoke systems of reference that combat one another and yet never manifest themselves physically. We understand them to be our own mental constructs, our cultural baggage, our biases, and so begin to understand our values as being fabricated from the outside, as constructs which might easily be dismantled. The non-presence of these constructs prevents us from assaulting them directly. So it might be said that Duchamp assists us in our system-

atic thinking while at the same time reminding us that such was not his way of thinking. A system is promoted, but always conjoined with its anti-system. Because this occurs habitually, we might reasonably consider it to be Duchamp's style – a style of thinking that exposes the fallacy of stylistic thought, an “obscurity of another order”.

ARCHITECTURE, OPPORTUNISM AND THE PLANNING OF AN IMPERIAL FACE¹

Ian Morley

The career of Sir Aston Webb (1849-1930) is arguably one of the most impressive of all late-Victorian and Edwardian architects. Living in an important era in British social, political and cultural history, Webb's career and rise to prominence paralleled one of the most exciting and transitional periods in the history of British architecture, with his course reaching its peak by achieving the rank of Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) President, the President of the Royal Academy (RA) and RIBA Town Planning Chairman. Renowned architectural historian Alastair Service (1977 and 1979) for instance, noted that regardless of the architectural ideals of the period the greatest practice in terms of the sheer volume of work or money earned was that of Webb's, yet history has largely ignored Webb's importance partly due to his designs lacking the stylistic creativity of many of his generation. This proposed paper therefore will thus rectify this situation through highlighting Webb's largest work, the Queen Victoria Memorial Scheme (1901-12) – a monumental undertaking on a par with contemporary American City Beautiful projects, which with the London County Council's Kingsway-Aldwych plan 'Hausmannised' the metropolis. By this means the work will also demonstrate how Webb was not merely an architect of unappreciated ability, a designer who arguably more than any other of his time helped define British civic design and town planning in practice prior to the onset of World War One in 1914.

THE QUEEN VICTORIA MEMORIAL SCHEME: A BRITISH CITY BEAUTIFUL

The death of Queen Victoria in January 1901 signalled the conclusion of an epoch for Britain and her empire. Immediately a board, the *Queen Victoria Memorial Committee*, was created with the purpose of producing a national memorial dedicated solely in her honour, in so doing instigating an opportunity to implicate some great architectural and scenic change in London. The popularity of the Queen meant that the occasion called for a grand plan, it gave a chance for London to emulate other memorial/planning schemes on mainland Europe, to build on its already impressive urban scale and to physically manifest something worthy of an imperial capital. Prime Minister Arthur Balfour speaking about the plan said that it would be “of kind of which other nations have shown examples, which we may imitate, and can easily surpass”². What was to develop was one of the most cherished pieces of urban planning that Britain has ever manufactured, a piece of urbanism evolving from developments dating from mid-19th century Europe, e.g. Haussmann's Paris, plus late-1800s City Beautiful-inspired America.

In April 1901 the Memorial Committee announced the decision that sculptor Thomas Brock was to be directly commissioned to produce the Memorial Statue³ whilst five architects – Ernest George, Dr. Rowland Anderson, Sir Thomas Crew, Thomas Jackson and Aston Webb, would be asked to submit designs⁴. The crux of the competition for the architects was their planning skills, to devise a worthy scheme of vistas, site planning, open spaces, fine avenues, etc., so as to provide a better London. Almost everyone became involved in the project. The King, for example, had his own ideas. He wanted Buckingham Palace to adjoin to the main axial lines of London because the Palace was isolated from Whitehall and Trafalgar Square. Therefore a new road, in an area originally landscaped by French architect Andre Le Nôtre for Charles II, could fill this link whilst doubling as both a functional public and ‘Processional Road’, that is a royal way that would allow great pageantry and cavalcade with promises of pomp and its vastness of length and width⁵. *The Building News* wrote that the roadway demanded “dramatic presentation as to immediate requirements and prospective ideals”⁶ and for Webb it gave him a superlative opportunity to express not only his architectural ambitions and one of the strivings of his life - the development of London: “So passionately had he openly defined and pleaded for such lines to be given the attention to all in public planning, that his success must have meant to him peculiarly keen satisfaction”⁷.

In July 1901 Thomas Brock's design of the statue and Aston Webb's plan won approval from King Edward VIII and the Memorial Committee. *The Builder* commenting on

Webb's win said “we are decisively of the opinion that Mr. Webb has fairly won his position on the ground of the superiority of his plan – the plan of course working up to Brock's statue”. This win confirmed Aston Webb as the establishment architect of his time, and arguably architectural opportunist *par excellence*, but the practical ingenuity of the plan served to confirm his ability on architectural and civic planning matters. However, significantly, in a broader context Webb's work was vital in asserting London's civic and cultural aspirations, an ambition allied to imperial sentiments – fed in 1887 and 1897 by Queen Victoria's jubilees, and between 1899-1902 by jingoism associated with the Boer War in South Africa – and one means which such a feeling could be affirmed was via the grand scale for new roadways. Using the boulevards of Paris, Barcelona, Brussels, Copenhagen, Vienna, Düsseldorf and Cologne, as well as the local Thames Embankment as possible sources of encouragement, Webb appreciated that boulevards could provide bigness but grandeur too and so help fulfil the city's desires.

The shape of London's new processional thoroughfare, The Mall, was obvious to all – directly straight and broad, as this afforded the most dignified approach to the Memorial and Palace. The main challenge in terms of planning was the eastern end of The Mall, particularly in how to link the processional way with Whitehall/Charing Cross. Webb, forever turning troublesome architectural quandaries to his advantage, put the Mall in a non-arbitrary relationship to the road network and hit upon the solution that the central axis of the Strand, if extended westwards, would obviously intersect with the central axis of the Mall. By inserting a circular court at the eastern end, just in front of the northern façade of the Admiralty building and westwards of Drummonds Bank, this allowed the Mall to be centrally connected via a very small purpose built link-road to the Strand instead of the more obvious Whitehall or Northumberland Avenue. This had the architectural advantages of masking the irregular lines of Pall Mall and Whitehall it disentangled the tricky problem of the sharp angle at which The Mall would join onto Whitehall whilst this simple circle shape of the court would allow the Mall to unite with The Strand opposite⁸. The point of axial intersection between the lines of the Strand and the new boulevard was to be marked by a statue of a young Queen Victoria, from which the radius of the court could be drawn from. For Webb the statue was to act as a tool for terminating the vistas from the west and east. Moreover, establishing a space about the point of intersection was a practical ploy to suppress the fact that the two roads/vistas did not meet directly. John Belcher, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) President, described this as a very important, interesting, and ingenious part of the scheme and although Webb had planned for a statue of the young Queen Victoria to stand at the east end of the Mall, as mentioned previously, it was the King's wish for an archway to be built as an archway would have greater symbolic, practical and architectural benefits. Here lies the origin of Admiralty Arch although being familiar with the history of the Buckingham Palace King Edward VIII would have known that prior to the mid-1800s an archway, Marble Arch, had stood at the front of the palace, coincidentally being sited near to where Brock placed the Queen Victoria Memorial Statue.

At the far western end of long, broad boulevard – known as The Mall – which runs to and from Buckingham Palace, Webb placed, on Queen Alexandra's wishes, a “sacred enclosure” which was to become a serene public garden complete with fountains. This semi-circular space, the Queen's Garden, was to house the Memorial Statue. The site for the garden was obviously important. It stood directly in front of the Royal centre of London and the Empire – the Palace. Therefore it was an important architectural place. Webb's employment of basic symmetry in his plan, by now his planning trademark, was again brilliant and original, allowing his plan to work up and off Brock's monument, and won him much applause. *The Builder* wrote that “The whole of this design, in fact, is calculated to secure centralised lines of vista; and that is one of its great merits – it is all laid out on a symmetrical system”⁹.

To integrate nearby Buckingham Palace into the overall scheme a sturdy looking but low-height stone colonnade, deliberately kept low so not to impair the view of the Memorial Statue from the Palace balcony, replaced the existing iron grille and gates. The idea behind this was aesthetic and practical, similar to the ‘beautility’ concept popularised by Charles Mulford Robinson under the banner of the US City Beautiful Movement and the utilitarian smaller-scale schemes undertaken from the 1850s in Paris by Georges Haussmann. It made this wall appear homogenous to the scheme at large and disguised the fact that it was to act as a screen. In practical terms alone it divided John Nash's Palace courtyard from the ornamental garden far more effectively than an iron grille could ever do.

To enclose the Queen's Garden Webb ran another stone colonnade, punctuated by small pavilions placed on lines of symmetry with the garden layout, which ran away towards the Mall in a semi-circular shape from the centre-point of the scheme, the Queen Victoria statue. One commentator described this particular colonnade as giving the effect of the columns being like soldiers guarding the Queen. But, as with other elements of the Webb's grand scheme, this was not just for aesthetics as it acted as an architectural screen and stopped traffic from entering into the courtyard although Webb cut the colonnade at 90° angles so to create vistas towards it. Webb also placed exits from Buckingham Palace on lines of symmetry that corresponded with the ends of the eastern façade of Palace and the position of the Memorial Statue and the notion of being able to leave the Palace from the front of the building was important to the King as he was becoming increasingly embarrassed of leaving his home through what was considered an undignified back-door.

Despite his competition success Webb had realised that his original proposals were far from perfect and flaws needed to be ironed out before construction began. A critic in *The Builder* described the plans for the whole scheme as "Triumphal architecture, crippled by a sense of duty". Edwin Lutyens remarked, "The Queen's Memorial is horrid as I have seen it. Aston Webb has got it all inside out and far too small in detail and too funny for words..."¹⁰. Architecturally it did contain weak and awkward points but Webb had acknowledged this early in the planning process. Subsequently the plan altered. The major change which resulted was that the semi-circular colonnade, seen by critics to be clumsy, was removed. The circular symmetry was retained however by setting out of the statue on a *rond-point*, around which Constitution Hill and Buckingham Palace Road ran towards the mouth of the Mall. These roads thus acting as a ploy to architecturally frame the statue's picture allow it should be noted that the traffic would pass through the area as part of a connective journey to Central London and did not form a *carrefour à giration* as proposed by Eugène Hénard at about the same time as a means to facilitate traffic movement in Paris. The critics were silenced though by Webb's simple yet adroit move. The *rond-point's* middle, the statue, had thus become the culminating point of the huge vista from along the Mall and it now coupled as a radiating point for traffic. This was 'beautility' at its finest in the Edwardian Britain.

The open spaces in the vicinity of Buckingham Palace, like St. James's Park and Green Park, were utilised and formed part of Webb's complete plan. In a City Beautiful-esque manner these parks were perceived to be an integral part of the whole scheme, an asset for providing views of Buckingham Palace and Memorial Statue, and creating attractive architectural scenes and vistas. Therefore the combination of a monumental public building, in this case Buckingham Palace, sitting in harmony with greenery around it was Ruskinian civic beauty of the highest order.

The already existing roads near the Palace, Buckingham Gate and Constitution Hill, were cleverly brought into play and unified into the overall Memorial Scheme as highlighted by *The Graphic*. Improvements were to "be introduced at the opening from Buckingham Palace Road into the park, so that a fine view will be uncovered towards the Foreign Office, a corresponding alteration being made at the foot of Constitution Hill. From both these points excellent views of the memorial will be afforded from north and south through gates"¹¹. Whole adjacent areas were thus brought into the exercise, being linked to each other by Baroque-esque large-scale sight lines within which each area complemented the other, producing an overall effect of helping establish a truly suitable and worthy environment for the Victoria Memorial Statue.

ARCHES, RE-FACINGS, PARSIMONY AND PLANNING

It was widely regarded that Webb had solved the planning of the junction of the Mall and Whitehall/Strand in a way which no other architect could have done in 1901. As has been previously noted Webb placed a circular 'court' where the axial lines of the Mall and Strand met but as the two roads met at an angle this created a difficult architectural/planning problem. This dilemma was compounded by the significance of the site. Webb knew that his open court at the east end of the Mall would not suffice as a dignified entrance for the ceremonial route up to the Memorial Statue and Buckingham Palace. The King had suggested an archway but it was not until 1905-06 that Webb was given the chance to create another important monumental building which, significantly too, maintained his involvement with the general Memorial Scheme¹² and so meant that he was rapidly becoming the first modern architect to fully complete an entire urban design scheme in Central London. However Webb's

involvement in the design of the new archway was far from simplistic due to the overbearing attitude of the Admiralty who were in desperate need of accommodation space. Their presence within the Memorial Scheme solved the Memorial Committee's dilemma of obtaining an arch given the context of an estimated £50,000 cost and a lack of funds. But the situation was set in such a way that it allowed the Admiralty to in effect dictate the form of the new triumphal arch which consequently was given a utilitarian bias. Aesthetically the resultant arch, Admiralty Arch, found few admirers. The result sadly was "a heavy amalgam of arch and building"¹³, although surprisingly no opposition was evident when the plans were first submitted. After construction ended the scenario dramatically shifted. Criticism rained down upon the Admiralty, the Government and the unfortunate Webb. The Arch was yet another lost (or spoilt) opportunity in British civic design. *The Architectural Review* summed up the debacle as "another pitiful example of national parsimony in Art. Only in our land would a Government be found to demand the combination of a triumphal arch, an office building, and an official residence in a block that shall be both convincing and expressive. The new building is neither"¹⁴. Yet whether people liked the arch or not was insignificant. Lord Alexander Thynne writing in *The British Architect* commented, "the site is a most important site, and the Arch, whether you like its design or not, is a most important edifice"¹⁵.

The furore over the Admiralty Arch did not end Webb's role in the Memorial scheme. In 1910 Webb resubmitted a plan for the widening of the eastern end of the Mall and its extension towards Trafalgar Square and in 1912 Webb was directly commissioned to reface the east wing of Buckingham Palace. Consequently a single architect had now overseen the entire operation. In this way alone the Memorial Scheme was important for British architecture/urban planning when taken as a whole but the Palace exercise was restricted due to a lack of funding and in effect Webb could do little more than reface the original elevation.

It was commented in architectural journals from as early as 1901 that "Buckingham Palace is a sorry background as it stands"¹⁶. The Palace, the only emblematic building in London that "approaches the idea of what a King's house should be"¹⁷, was perceived as being aesthetically unworthy of the spatial changes around it due to its apparent lack of dignity. Therefore a new front had to be built so to blend into the environment and thus stop the Palace becoming a misfit. In order to aid the Palace's stateliness Webb replaced the gateways and altered the front elevation's design.

As mentioned earlier Webb's final work for the Memorial Scheme included putting a new main gate for the Palace on a direct line of axis with the middle of the east façade on an axis that corresponded with the statue of Queen Victoria at the front. This was important as it acted as a marker for the frontispiece of the whole new composition¹⁸. The style chosen for the re-facéd façade was said in *The Building News* to be Late English Renaissance, "one fitting a Royal Palace, the site, and the occasion of its erection"¹⁹, a restrained and delicate Classical style used for Admiralty Arch at the opposite end of the Mall. Fluted columns decorated the front elevation and a balcony was pulled outwards over the main drive-in archway giving the impression that it was a plinth, helping thus to gel the new design together²⁰. The three pavilions (two end and one central) were made more prominent and the front, between the two end flanks, was topped by a parapet—another 'beautility' devise utilised by Webb as it hid the discordant skyline of the roof and the chimneys while concurrently helping offer a palatial and dignified character to the elevation.

With the re-facing of the Palace taking only thirteen weeks to complete the entire Memorial Scheme was finished in 1913. At the time, as the first modern example of urban planning in the metropolis, the scheme captured the spirit under which the competition was devised: "Whatever the faults of its individual parts, the overall scheme of triumphal arch, boulevard, *rond-point* and palace front, is a highly distinguished achievement of the move to give London a centre worthy of an imperial capital"²¹. The importance of the scheme in civic design terms though cannot be underestimated as together with the London County Council's Kingsway-Aldwych scheme, undertaken at about the same time, Haussmannised London.

Significantly, with regards to the Queen Victoria Memorial Scheme a single architect controlled and designed the project in its entirety. Consequently the undertaking wasn't just a lesson in civic design, but one in civic architecture and civic decoration too—a convention of architecture developed in Haussmann's Paris and re-energised in City Beautiful USA of which Webb had admired. The whole Memorial Scheme was

catered for from the smallest details such as street lights through to the major details, i.e., the placing of the Memorial Statue and the problem of the Mall's eastern exit. The result thus was a scheme that appeared then, and still now, as a dignified, complete and reposeful whole. So successful was the overall 'whole' effect of the project that even in the first set of plans *The Builder* wrote, "One could not find a better example of the principle that plan is the basis of design"²². The statue of Queen Victoria naturally took pride of place in a scheme worthy of her imperial destiny which reflects not only a revival British self-esteem at the turn of the century but a body of work that may be regarded as the high-water mark of London's self-confidence and metropolitan aspirations²³.

CONCLUSION

By 1914 Sir Aston Webb had established himself as one of the most renowned and respected architects of his time. This alone would have meant he would have had some form of contribution to the formative Town Planning in Britain and arguably Europe, albeit a very small one. However Webb's contribution was fairly substantial in Britain, at least. In practical terms his work in London, the focus of this paper, as well as his work in Birmingham, a city striving in the late-1800s to be known as the 'second city of the empire', pushed forward the parameters of British civic design at a time when it was somewhat insecure due to the need to display imperial tones and express 'Britishness', i.e. British national identity. Nonetheless, British architecture despite its austere face did follow European patterns, for most designers at the time chosen for this paper were familiar with, or had been directly educated in, the philosophies of the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Thus for numerous reasons civic design in Britain 'naturally' followed planning and design lines governed by geometry as widely used in the European mainland. But with reference to Town Planning which became a European-wide profession prior to 1914, at least in Britain and elsewhere (to varying degrees) was packed with civic design devices. As this paper on the Queen Victoria Memorial Schemes has demonstrated one prominent civic designer, Aston Webb, had a modern, rational and pragmatic approach to design and planning techniques, being influenced it seems by contemporary events in metropolitan North America under the moniker of the City Beautiful, as well as distinct cultural contexts in Britain. In particular the models established by Haussmann in Paris and the City Beautiful in cities such as Chicago, Boston, New York and Washington DC should be noted for having some impact on Webb's work, aside from the work of American writers such as Charles Mulford Robinson who emphasised the need for an aesthetic nature in modern urban (re)development. As RIBA President Webb offered the RIBA Gold Medal to Charles Follen Mckim (1847-1909), a Beaux-Arts architect who was pivotal in propagating the success of the City Beautiful in places like New York, Newark and Boston.

Although Webb's architectural forms and planning devices can be said to be historical, for instance displaying traits in keeping with former (Baroque) traditions, the nature of his planning thought was however new, just like it was in City Beautiful USA despite their baroque style planning forms from the 1890s onwards, and for this he can be perceived as contributing to British and European planning practice and its evolution. Importantly too, in the period 1900-1914 –an important epoch in British cultural history, was the fact that Aston Webb had his name against the largest and most important civic design schemes of the time. Certainly the Queen Victoria Memorial was of great national and imperial importance, but because of the social context at the time the scheme served as evidence to confirm the need for wholesale urban improvements and to display particular civic pretensions.

With regards to formative British planning from as early as 1902 Webb, through practice as well as professional awareness, given his lofty vocational status apparently sensed that a 'new' subject based on distributing of buildings and urban spaces was emerging, later to be known as urban planning. This is evidently confirmed by the tone and language of his speeches at the time. By way of example as President of the RIBA from 1902-1904 Webb constantly tried to get architects to individually engage with other professionals interested in aspects of urban development. This included surveyors and engineers because urban planning as it emerged as a natural extension of architecture given its use of design principles within a large spatial extent required knowledge of laying out the urban place outside the natural architectural domain, and this need for professional union was compounded by a paramount anxiety amongst many architects that unless they forced their way into planning as an individual subject then they would become left out it as it grows in stature.

From 1904-1910, the period within Webb was especially active in the Queen Victoria Memorial Scheme, the evolution of modern planning began to sway away from individuals to the whole architectural profession and Webb despite being active in accomplishing his numerous public works further played a part in this transition, as demonstrated by the 1910 RIBA Town Planning Conference, Europe's first event on modern urban planning, where Webb's status within both his vocation and the planning movement as a whole was visible from his positions on prominent committees.

Moreover Webb both in his design/planning practice and by his design/planning ideology post-1900 broadening the architects' professional viewpoint and for this he rightly earned himself an enormous reputation –a standing at times enhanced it should be said by his opportunism. However it was the likes of Webb in the late-nineteenth century that developed a new orthodoxy in civic design in Britain, an orthodoxy from which town planning emerged and involved itself across Europe.

With so much ability as an architectural planner Aston Webb allowed the architectural movement to progress, establishing a bridge between the gaps from monumental building to full-blown urban designing and demonstrating that city planning involves more than the ease of traffic movement and the creation of light and air, as had been popular in the ethos of German city planning in the late-1800s which like London, was heavily influenced by the transformation of Paris by Haussmann. But at this paper has demonstrated, given the strength of his planning abilities and rational approach to urban planning, Aston Webb was an anomaly to the general British architectural rule at the time. For this he makes an extremely interesting historical subject during a period when greater rational design control of the built environment was exercised in Britain and modern urban planning emerged across Europe.

STEEL, GLASS AND APPLIANCES, ICONS OF THE BIRTH OF THE NEW SPANISH SOCIETY IN THE 1950'S, AS WELL AS OF THE OPEN AND INTERNATIONAL LIFESTYLE TO BE FOUND IN NORTH AMERICA

José Manuel Pozo

The International Congress entitled La arquitectura norteamericana, motor y espejo de la arquitectura española en el arranque de la modernidad (1940-1965) [North American Architecture, a Driving Force and Reflection of Spanish Architecture at the Beginning of Modernity (1940-1965)], held in Pamplona from 15-17 March 2006, served a dual purpose: it revealed that a considerable part of the American influence in Spain was a self-reference by clearly showing the influence of European masters living there. It likewise showed that one of the greatest influences during those first fifty years was that of Wright, who was in the vanguard of the critical revision that the modern movement was undergoing throughout the world.

The Baroque temperament of Spanish architects thus found support in Organicism, although it was almost not until the 70's that they were able to espouse the more industrial models of the modern classicism of Mies and his followers. At any rate, it would be impossible to comprehend the progress of Spanish architecture during these years without the impulse derived from the fascination with America and the power it held, and without the help which came from background training provided to our young architects by American technicians, who became true mentors for the Spanish architects. The current dismissal of those who have so clearly contributed to defining today's society, likewise contributing to democratic stability through the extension of the *American life style*, is entirely unwarranted and ungrateful.

From 15-17 March 2006, the 5th International Congress on the History of Contemporary Spanish Architecture was held at the School of Architecture at the University of Navarra, Pamplona. The various sessions were devoted to considering both direct and indirect influences of North American architecture on contemporary Spanish architecture in the 1950's and 60's, and through this, on the whole of Spanish society, which became entirely Americanised in the 60's and 70's and which now, like an adolescent child, refuses to recognize this heritage, turning its back on it.

As was pointed out in the text accompanying the notification of the Congress, the intention was not so much to study the reality of this influence, but rather the way in which the Spanish architecture of the 1950's incorporated American architectural and urban models and technique, accepted as the basis of a new culture and a determining factor for achieving the admired and coveted American model of life.

It is to the influence of these models, which both fostered and provided a solution to the desire for novelty and renovation which drove our architects, that we owe in great part some of the finest achievements made by those young enthusiasts who fought during the 50's to assimilate and interpret, ipso facto, everything produced in the international field of architecture during the first half of the 20th century.

The 1950's were years of discovery –discovery of the great masters working in North America and of their work, until then only vaguely known; of travel to see these works up close; and of the training and preparation in America of many technicians and architects who made American architecture an imperative reference for moving towards modernity and progress.

Also taking place at this time was a worldwide critical revision of the strict, European functionalism with the aim of recovering territory and tradition. As compared to the cold and repetitive decay to which a good part of functionalism had fallen prey during these years, the organic architecture of Wright was considered a propitious discovery which would make it possible to create new, modern forms using “customary” architecture.