

THE CITY

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS
Editor: Marc Schoonderbeek
Project: Simone Pizzagalli
Studio: **Border** Conditions | **City:** London
Authors: Simone Pizzagalli,
 Nicolò Privileggio, Marc Schoonderbeek
Serie: TU Delft | Modi Operandi 01

TU Delft | Modi Operandi Series
SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

A&N Press

TU Delft | Modi Operandi Series
Architectura & Natura Press

SPACES! POSSIBILITIES AND VARIABLES

entrance antechamber library library class class
computer-room storage office office bathrooms
corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

entrance praying-room office discussion-room discussion-room
discussion-roombathrooms private-roomprivate-roomprivateroom
corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

prisoners-entrance waiting-room visit-room visit-room visitroom
visit-room waiting-room dentist storage bathrooms
staff-room changing-room bathrooms office office office
office antechamber hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room bathrooms storage facilities-room corridor
stairs passage landing elevator paths

antechamber waiting-room office office visit-room cell cell
cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell
cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell
cell cell cell cell recreation intensive-treatment-cell
bathrooms facilities-room storage changing-room corridor
stairs passage landing elevator paths

antechamber	office	office	office	visit-room	visit-room
bathrooms	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	recreation

segregation-cell segregation-cell facilities-room storage
changing-room corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

```

recreation room cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell
cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell
cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell recreation-room
corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

```

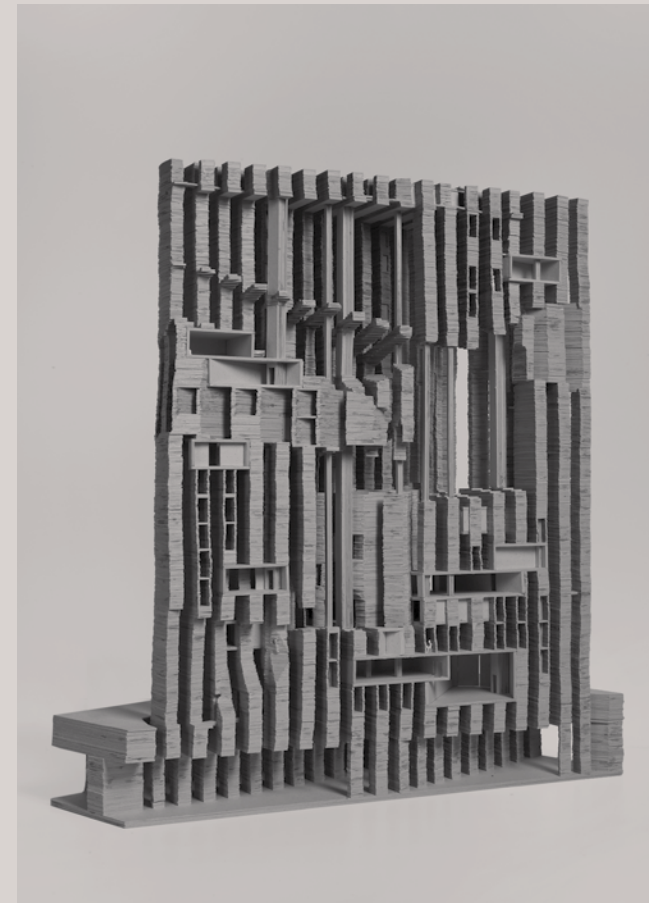
corridor	recreation-room	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	recreation-room	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	recreation
room	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	recreation-room	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell	cell
diningroom	isolation-cell	isolation-cell	isolation-cell	isolation-cell	isolation-cell	isolation-cell	isolation-cell	isolation-cell
corridor	stairs	passage	landing	elevator	paths			

A PRISON

Places

A PRISON

THE CITY



Sectional model of the building: **POSITIVE** [The Model p.113]

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

Editor: Marc Schoonderbeek

Project: Simone Pizzagalli

Studio: **Border Conditions | City: London**

**Authors: Simone Pizzagalli,
Nicolò Privileggio, Marc Schoonderbeek**

TU Delft | Modi Operandi Series

Architectura & Natura Press

006 **Introduction**
 MODI OPERANDI 01
 Stefano Milani, Marc Schoonderbeek

012 **LONDON**
 Simone Pizzagalli
 London, 3 September 1666
 Representations
 East London Railway Line
 Structure of a reading
 Photographs taken in the proximity of the East London Line
 Shoreditch
 Whitechapel
 Shadwell
 Wapping
 Rotherhite
 Canada Water
 Surrey Quays
 Textual description

044 **SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS**
 Simone Pizzagalli
 Void as a Technique
 Framing
 Narratives

064 **THE CITY — A PRISON**
 Premise
 Sequence one: THE CITY
 Sequence two: A PRISON
 Voids
 Sequences
 Places
 Erasures
 Borders
 Repetition
 Rhythms
 Correspondence
 Silence
 Representations
 Traces
 Composition 1: Sequenced Forms
 Composition 2: Form of a Sequence
 Composition 3: Notation
 Composition 4: Structures and Spaces
 Narrations

100 **THE LONDON PRISON**
 Simone Pizzagalli
 Premise
 Masterplan and View
 Plans -9 m > +60 m
 Legenda plans and sections
 Schemes
 Plans +27 m, +9 m
 Sections and Isometric +24 m
 The Model
 Making the model [08-08-08 till 08-11-08]
 Sectional model of the building, NEGATIVE
 Sectional model of the building, POSITIVE
 Sectional model details
 Detail Models
 Entrance hallway
 Access to the main visitors' area
 Path spanning between two structural elements
 Recreational activity room
 Open air auditorium
 Cell interior

134 **BEYOND THE 'HOUSE OF LANGUAGE'**
 Nicolò Privileggio
 Language as Construction: A Prison in the Heart of the City
 Two Parallel Texts
 Narrative Shifts

146 **GHOSTS IN THE CELL: thematic speculations on architecture, the city and the body.**
 Marc Schoonderbeek
 City: surface and otherness
 Poetics: chaos or differentiated detachment
 Prison: subordination through architecture
 Body: folded silhouette or divided shadow

156 **Bibliography**
159 **Colophon**

Introduction
MODI OPERANDI 01
Stefano Milani,
Marc Schoonderbeek

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

MODI OPERANDI 01
Stefano Milani,
Marc Schoonderbeek

This new publication series, *Modi Operandi*, aims to become an influential platform for a new generation of architects through its presentation and critical examination of innovative ideas regarding the conception and elaboration of the architectural project. The series is based on an attempt to understand the practice of architecture today, with a particular focus on ground-breaking approaches to the architectural project, which is currently in need of reconsideration, not only with respect to many of its instruments, but also the specific knowledge on which it is 'constructed'. The intrinsic relationship between analysis and design, which is consistently yet variably embedded in the architectural project, will be examined via the explicit elaboration of theoretical and historical **traces**, exploratory techniques and new forms of architectural expression. The emphasis on the 'modus operandi' of a project implies a clarification of its embedded methodological or procedural apparatus in close relation to the chosen means of expression. Both aspects will be addressed in each publication through a careful examination of the various disciplinary techniques operational within the architectural project.

At the same time, the *Modi Operandi* series plans to encourage collaboration with the new generation of architects by engaging in an academic debate at a time when the architectural project as a whole — its research and design approaches, its disciplinary knowledge and, last but not least, its educational procedures — are undergoing radical transformation as they head towards as yet unknown territories in terms of both intent and extent. Consequently, the *Modi Operandi* publications do not intend to take a prescriptive position or follow a particular tendency in architectural style, but rather to participate in the challenge and the struggle to map a range of approaches to architectural research and design, the processes involved in their elaboration, the theoretical reflection they give rise to, and the idea of architecture inherent in them.

In addition, the graphic design and publishing format will give particular importance to the presentation of **representational** constructions, images, maps and drawings, etc. acknowledged here as a privileged field of architectural study.

Modi Operandi 01 presents '**Spaces, Poetics and Voids**', a project for a prison in London by Archiprix 2009 and Archiprix International 2011 award winning architect Simone Pizzagalli. In the book, Pizzagalli's project is '**framed**' by the contributions of scholars familiar with the topics raised. Nicolò Privileggio elaborates the relationship between architecture and **language** by emphasising the **void** as an appropriate design technique for an architectural construct. Privileggio argues that the analogy between architecture and **language** is not necessarily located in **representation**, which he considers more or less obsolete.

Language can operate as a tool for architectural design and result in a personal, yet extremely relevant, architectural formal language grounded in relationships. Marc Schoonderbeek discusses overlapping themes that relate to the topics inherent in Pizzagalli's project and those of the Border Conditions graduate studio at the Faculty of Architecture of Delft University of Technology, within which the project was developed. Rather than present an introduction to the project, Schoonderbeek has chosen to examine four of its themes: 'city', 'poetics', 'prison' and 'body'. In doing so, he calls for a general reconsideration of the architectural project, by relating the radical differentiation at the basis of contemporary readings of the city to the human body, for which architecture intends to provide space.

Delft, May 2012
Stefano Milani, Marc Schoonderbeek
Modi Operandi Series Editors

Space
Language
Grammar
Framing
Voids
Sequences
Places
Erasures
Borders
Repetition
Rhythms
Correspondence
Silence
Representations
Traces
Notation
Narrations
Fragments
Poetics

Representations

representing

traces

void

representational

places

representation

poetic

repre-

sent

spaces

void

void

void

spaces

poetic

representation

spaces

representation

representation

notated

void

traces

London, 3 September 1666
Representations
The East London Railway Line
Structure of a reading



Wenceslaus Hollar's map of London after the Great Fire of 1666
The map depicts the extent of the damage to the city centre caused by the Great Fire. The void, created by the devastating event, is presented as a collection of traces and memories of the former streets, squares, public and religious

buildings listed in the map legend. In this representation, the images and memories of the lost city are revived in the spaces situated between writing and drawing, in the imprecise gap between the visible and the notated, between meanings and their typographical representation on the map, and between reality and myth.

London, 3 September 1666
Found between the pages of an old book: a drawing or, more specifically, a map representing the city of London in 1666. The map describes the extent of the damage to London's inner city after the Great Fire of September 1666, which destroyed the central district located within the former Roman fortifications. The drawing clearly shows the brickwork and stone buildings left standing after the fire, traces of the complex and probably unhealthy street system, and the ring of remaining neighbourhoods and suburbs stretching around the main void created by the fire. A number of representational levels can be found in the map: firstly, a journalistic intention to describe and report on the fire in terms of places burned down and surviving buildings (which is also extensively addressed in the legend); secondly, a topographic and cartographic intention to provide a precise description of the urban destruction, including how the structure of the city was deprived of several central neighbourhoods, which buildings survived the destruction and, most importantly, where in the city these remains were located. But even beyond these possible readings and the beauty of the hand-drawn representation, a testimony to the artistic skill of its author, perhaps the most important interpretative key to this drawing is a poetic intention, probably a more intrinsic, formal one than was consciously pursued by the cartographer, one that goes beyond the physical presence of the damage or the location of surviving buildings, or indeed any other technical objective: the intention to represent an absence, something missing, vanished, a loss within a centuries-old city structure.

The map immediately reminded me of the first time I saw the pictures of Rotterdam taken after the bombing in the spring of 1940. The image of a few surviving buildings standing in a field of destruction had considerable influence on my reflections, but even more striking was the desolation of the spaces and the streets between the piles of rubble which, in their obscene formlessness, substituted the former houses, shops, factories, commercial buildings, churches, ateliers, etc. The absence produced by the bombing, the tension between this formless void and the surrounding city with its still recognisable form, a void surrounded by neighbourhoods where nothing seemed to have changed, where life appeared to continue in the streets, shaping spaces and memories through the flow of events, the void's presence within the familiar context of everyday life, the sudden disappearance of the very core of the city, the moment when certain spaces froze in their last possible composition, now only perceivable in pictures and memories — all these elements greatly influenced the following considerations about the London map.

The assumption that the importance of the poetic intention extends beyond a representation of the destructive consequences of the fire, plus the great interest inspired by the formal repercussions of the

fire on the city structure, altered my approach towards the map. Every other accepted reading and interpretation of the map, every aspect of the **representation** it provides and **fragment** of the story it **narrates**, was suddenly transformed into something more interesting than the physical evidence of an historical event. Everything had to confront and somehow relate back to the **void**. The absence constituted by the blank **spaces** in between the surviving buildings **represented** the centrality of the entire map and its real meaning. The extreme event of the fire was able to sublimate and abstract the form of the city into a limited set of adventitious and arbitrary elements. This process of abstraction and **erasure** of a constituted form returned the city to a state of possibility and openness. Not only a physical openness, given that the structure of the city had indeed been broken up, but also an openness in terms of any formal, theoretical or interpretative point of view. This does not mean that the **void** simply became a *tabula rasa* ready for reconstruction, but that it presented the possibility of choice. Within the empty **space** the set of elements and **traces** (fortuitously chosen by the event and the cartographer) constituted, in fact, the formal memory of the vanished metropolis. This memory reveals in all its intensity a potential imaginative 'filling' of the blank **space**: an urban composition that might complete the missing centre of the city, one that not only refers to the city of the past, but also, and most importantly, to an infinite number of new formal substitutions.

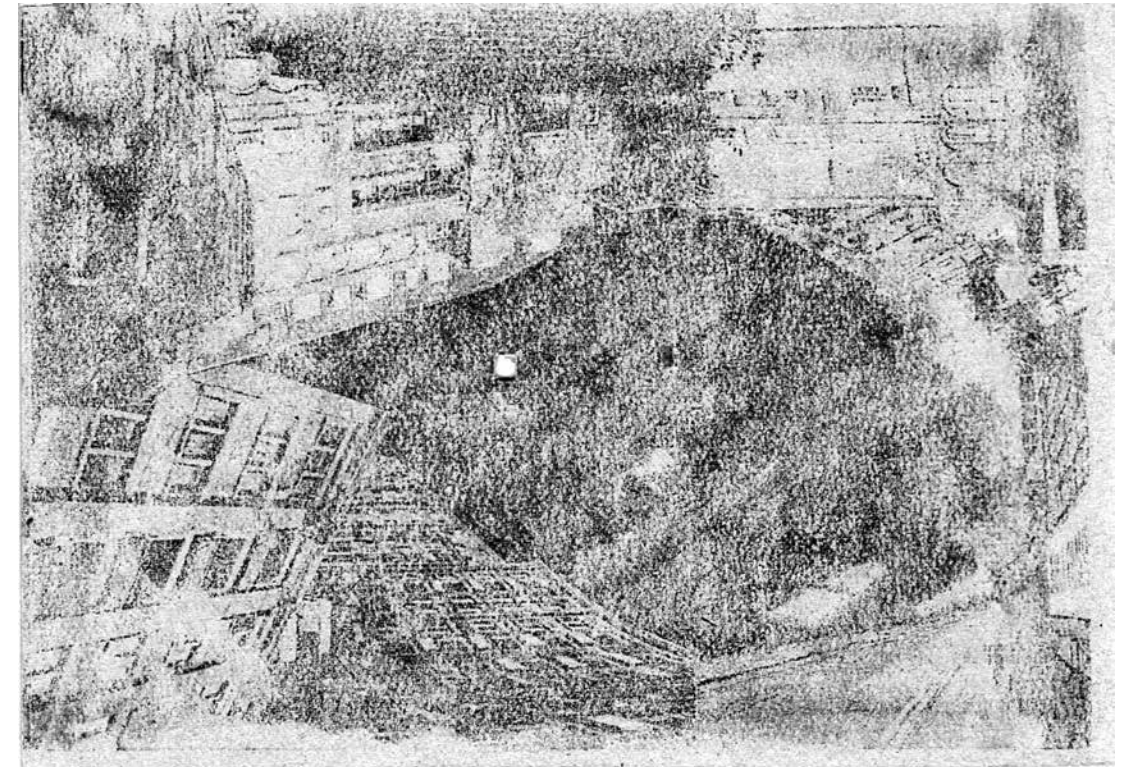
The violent rupture of the city thus discloses its real form and future alternatives. Reality is revealed by means of an involuntary excavation that unveils its true formal character beyond and in opposition to the pre-existing structure and recognised historical form of the city. The remaining buildings and those vague **traces** of a former street system assumed a totally different value in this context. Their relationships and connections, invisible before, were laid bare. This act of exposure not only tells us about the structure of the old city, but also opens the possibility of discovering new interpretations for those relationships, ones that ultimately become more important than the physical aspects themselves.

The **void** becomes the main interpretative entry point to both the map and the city of London. The empty **space** becomes the stage for a new set of potential relationships and spatial compositions. The annihilation of the city invites a new, written and descriptive definition, with text, legend and list of destroyed **places** as the only means for **representing**, in a non-cartographical way, what was left in an almost unrecognisable state on the field of destruction. The threads of a new architectural discourse on the city after its disappearance therefore seem to be stretched between understanding the **void** in terms of possibility and absence: its capacity to arouse memories and, simultaneously, its openness towards infinite formal interpretations; the presence of **traces** of a former spatial definition and the absence of rules

and constraining forms. And, moreover, the impossibility of achieving a physical **representation** of the **void** except in an indirect way: namely, by approaching the absence as a 'negative presence' of the leftover structure of the city or as a textual description.

Representations

The contemporary analysis of London presented here, which aims to produce a map of a significant location based on a thematic interpretative reading of the complex body of the metropolis, began from an awareness of the inadequacy and limitations of any previous knowledge of the city and its form. The difficult task of finding a relevant point of entry into the city resulted in a navigational exploration that enabled me to analyse the partial, disorganised and limited set of information I had already gathered from the most diverse sources,



Spaces and voids (photocopies transferred onto grey cardboard).

As in the London map, the disappearance of an area reveals the inner logic of the complex structure of the city while opening up infinite possibilities for the recomposition of its **fragments**.

among them high school books, novels, magazines and movies. Despite their apparent superficiality, these materials began to delineate an elaborate **representation** of London, gradually becoming a proper compendium, a **fragmentary** yet reliable point of view composed of different types of media. This heterogeneous collection of sources ranged from novels and short stories set in specific neighbourhoods of the city, to documentation about passenger traffic on the subway and railways, pictures of newly-built projects, visions for the future city of London, movies, maps of every kind and argument, pictures, unrealised urban plans for the city, myths and stories, statistical charts on population, unemployment, birth rate and crime, maps illustrating the countries of origin of the immigrant populations in the city, and drawings, diagrams, restaurant flyers, commercials, graffiti, poems etc. Everything was held in an undefined **fragmentary** state of confusion without being formalised into proper research. Nevertheless, this set of **fragments** both **represented** and constituted a synthetic abstract image of the real London, a mythical depository of the city's origins, where the reasons for its form and aspirations could be understood and recomposed into a **representation** of my expectations, in the form of an analogue image of the city itself.

The state of ignorance and vague indifference that accompanied my wanderings in the city gave me the opportunity to approach each newly-discovered **space** or neighbourhood with a greater degree of curiosity, noticing more distinctly every variation there was from the image of the city I had already created in my imagination, or from every story I had previously been told or had read. Indeed the information, texts, images, maps and stories I had gathered in a different time and **place** became themselves something like a **representation** of the metropolis: a precise set of **spaces**, relationships, **sequences** and **fragments**, which together created the mental construction of a subjective city form, an interpretative and revealing **narration** running parallel to the **sequence** of real **places** opening up before me. This composition of information and images was now confronted by the real structure of the city, creating a shift between its pragmatic form and abstract **representation**, a dialectic confrontation between present and past, visible and invisible, history and the future, myth and form, expectations and reality: two cities acknowledged in their parallel unfolding, in their accidental overlapping and sometimes in their coincidence.

The East London Railway Line

The area that matched the particular abstractness of my expectations was an insignificant and **fragmented** strip of city extending north to south from the business centre around Bishopsgate Street, to the former Greenland Docks and Surrey Quays Station in the district of Southwark. The East London Railway Line, now part of London's over-

ground transportation system (despite being for most of its length underground, and crossing the Thames in the oldest tunnel connecting the two river banks) became the main subject of analysis, the 'guide-line' to discovering the overground world unfolding in new forms and compositions at every station, and the means of transportation for moving from one point to another in the fastest, most efficient way. A series of station areas were considered in the research: Shoreditch, Whitechapel, Shadwell, Wapping, Rotherhite, Canada Water and Surrey Quays.



The East London
Railway Line
1 Shoreditch
2 Whitechapel
3 Shadwell
4 Wapping
5 Rotherhite
6 Canada Water
7 Surrey Quays

The specificity of the experience of these **places**, made possible by the railway, became clear when they were analysed in terms of the concepts of **sequence**, **fragmentation** and **repetition**. The idea of **sequence**, derived from the particular way the railway allows for the discovery of **spaces** and their rigid organisation, was not only addressed on a larger scale, in the ordered linear composition of the stations, but also at street level, in the way the elementary parts of a **space**, or the **sequences** of **spaces** themselves, were perceived from the point of view of passers-by. The infrastructural continuity of the linear connection was, however, cut up into clear, successive pieces. The very fact that the means of transportation was underground, completely hiding, obscuring and abstracting the passage from one **space** to another, amplified the feeling of subdivision and **fragmentation** in the succession of above ground areas, allowing for an even sharper and clearer analysis of the **repetitions** occurring in the character and the structure of certain spatial compositions, and the emergence of particularities and uniqueness.

Being able to pass in the course of a few minutes from the mass of city skyscrapers to the green, empty and almost suburban areas of the south, smoothly but sharply shifting from one **space** to the other, encountering and acknowledging the different forms in which the city unfolds, the different building styles, the busy streets or deserted alleys, intensified my awareness of the transition and fluctuation of the city pace, even in the minimal variations of its constituent elements and their recurrence in the body of the city. The journey from one **place** to the next assumed the form of a continuous transformation, a **fragmented** continuity, a never-ending **sequence** constructed out of the same elements and part of the same system of **spaces** and rules, but differently aggregated each time into specific forms and **spaces** in an almost cinematographic **narration**.

Structure of a reading

This analysis of the areas connected to the East London Line has been based on a clear set of rules: **being there every day, being there multiple times, being there alone, travelling from one station to the other by rail and exploring each station's surroundings on foot**. The repetitiveness of my visits, plus the concept of pace and **rhythm** introduced by the railway structure, featured time as a fundamental characteristic and component of the general interpretative reading of the city: it was present in the urban systems observed — each constituted by a railway station in relation to its neighbourhood — and in the stratification of the resulting map structure. My **representation** of the areas shifted from an initial photographic survey to a textual description.

The interpretation of the **places** visited as compositions of repeated elements, part of both the physical form of the city and its invisible patterns of an epic nature, led to the compilation of several

sequences of words (nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc.) describing, and at the same time ordering, the **fragmented** perception of this composition. This descriptive method allowed more precision and, concurrently, extreme vagueness in the choice of the words, which sometimes referred to purely subjective impressions and at other times aimed to define a concept by seeking the most general idea at the source of a specific perceived form. Naming reality contributed to the composition of a structure of **sequences** that in some way reproduced the pace and **rhythm** of the exploration of the city itself.

However, the most interesting part of the entire process was my occasional encounter with undefined and indefinable elements, unrepresentative **fragments**, gaps and **voids** of sense in the **grammar** of the city. As in the case of the Great Fire of London map and its **representation** of an absence, these **voids** were the only elements of the structure free of any previous definition and unable to be defined as **spaces** or objects; they were **places** with no memory, in a state of unformulated spatial and formal relations, capable of telling something different about their surroundings. **Places** where the threads of memory, imagination and reality could still be picked up and woven into new formal **narratives**.

Photographs taken in the proximity of the East London Line

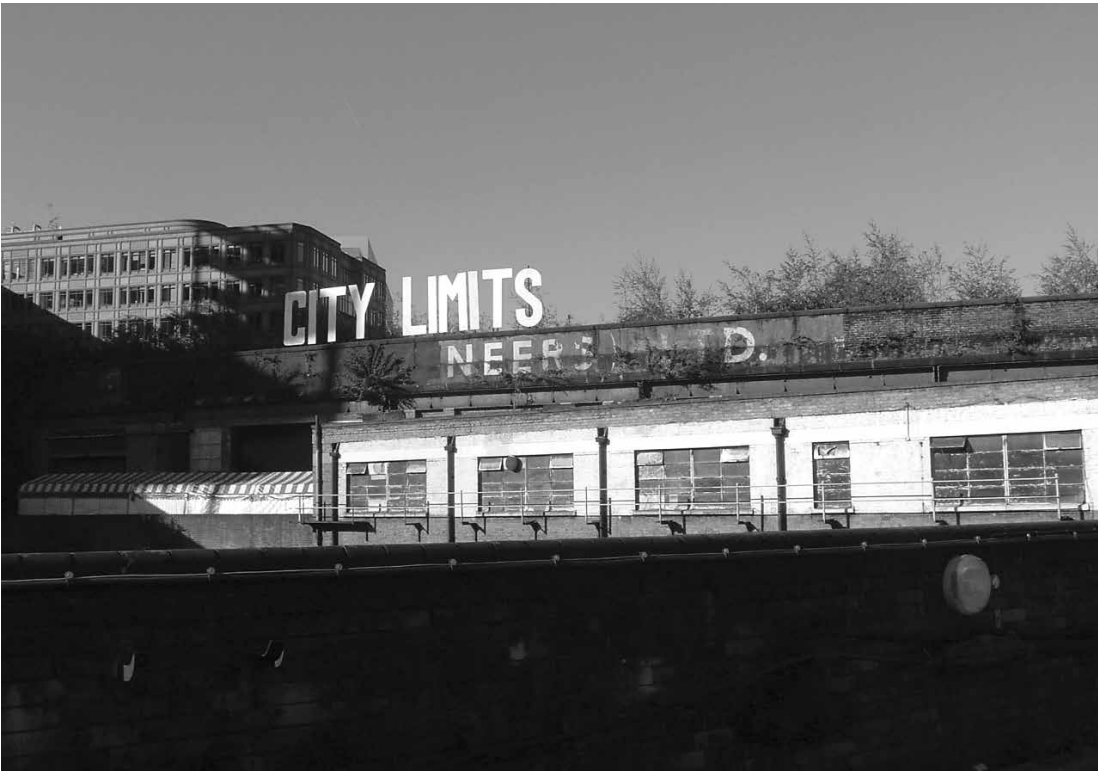
On the **border** between form and disappearance, the city reinstates its presence (London in particular and the 'city' in general; the 'idea' of the city). The **place** where nothing is pronounced forms the counterpart to the composition of urban elements and turns them into a 'readable' **space**. A street and a forgotten city area **represent** these realities, juxtaposed within the same metropolitan **language**.

The East London Railway Line
Shoreditch
Whitechapel
Shadwell
Wapping
Rotherhite
Canada Water
Surrey Quays

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

LONDON
Simone Pizzagalli

Shoreditch



Language

Shoreditch



Whitechapel



Shadwell



Shadwell



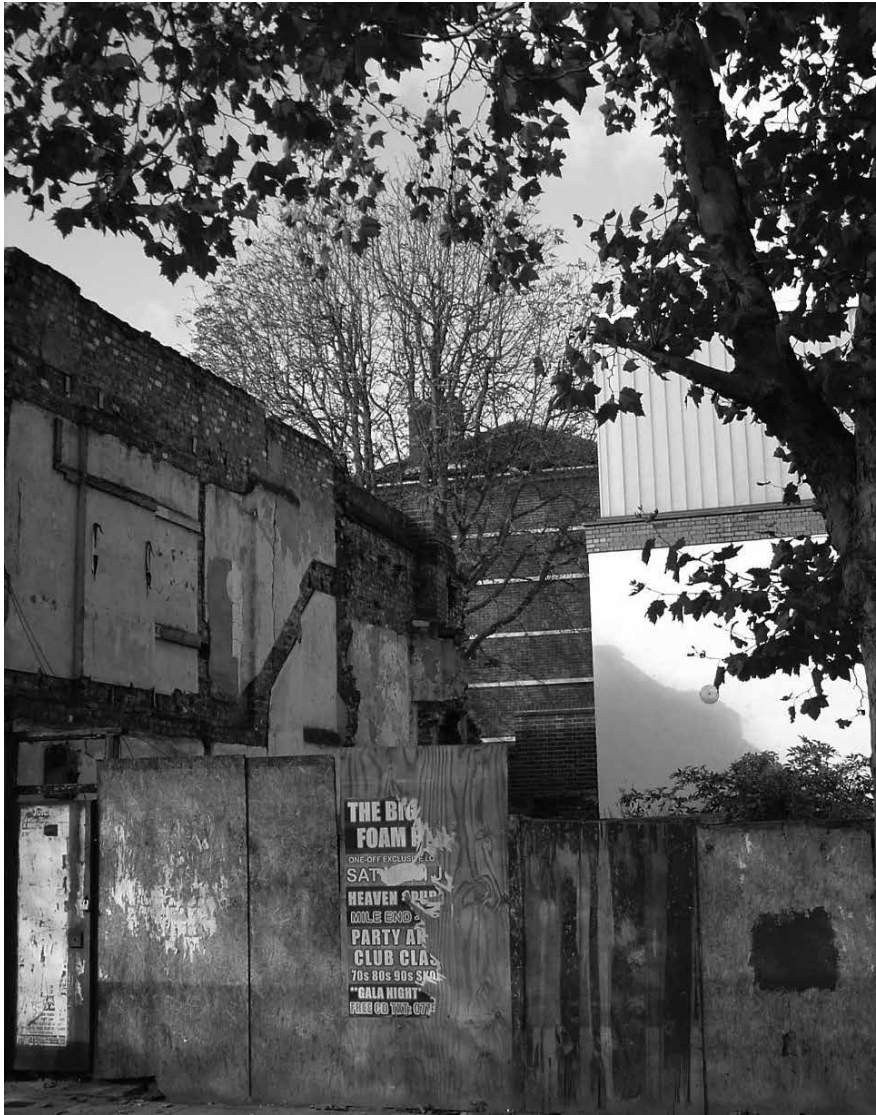
Wapping



Rotherhite



Rotherhite



Canada Water



Surrey Quays



**Being there every day.
Being there multiple times.
Being there alone.
Travelling from one station to the other by rail.
Exploring each station's surroundings on foot.**

Day 01
19 10 2006

Day 02
20 10 2006



20 10 Shoreditch



20 10 Whitechapel



20 10 Whitechapel



20 10 Whitechapel



20 10 Wapping



20 10 Wapping



20 10 Wapping



20 10 Rotherhite



20 10 Rotherhite



20 10 Rotherhite



20 10 Rotherhite



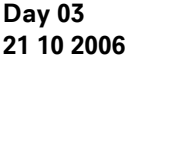
20 10 Rotherhite



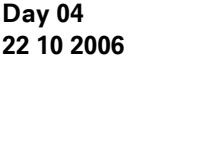
20 10 Rotherhite



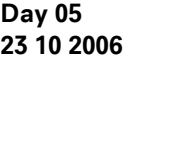
20 10 Rotherhite



Day 03
21 10 2006



Day 04
22 10 2006



Day 05
23 10 2006



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch



23 10 Shoreditch

Day 06
24 10 2006



23 10 Shoreditch



24 10 Whitechapel



24 10 Whitechapel



24 10 Whitechapel



24 10 Whitechapel



24 10 Whitechapel



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Shadwell



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Canada Water



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



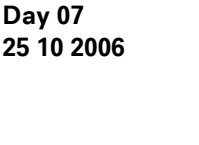
24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



24 10 Surrey Quays



Day 07
25 10 2006



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Wapping



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



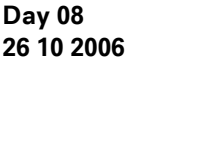
25 10 Rotherhite



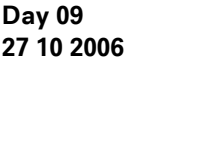
25 10 Rotherhite



25 10 Rotherhite



Day 08
26 10 2006



Day 09
27 10 2006



Shoreditch



Shoreditch



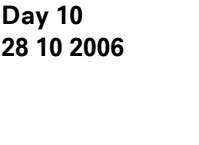
Shoreditch



Shoreditch



Shoreditch



Day 10
28 10 2006



28 10 Canada Water



28 10 Canada Water



28 10 Canada Water



28 10 Canada Water



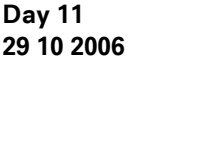
28 10 Canada Water



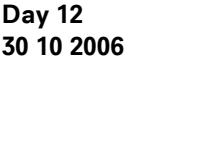
28 10 Canada Water



28 10 Canada Water



Day 11
29 10 2006



Day 12
30 10 2006



30 10 Whitechapel



30 10 Whitechapel



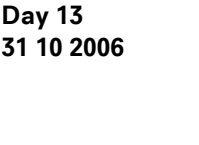
30 10 Whitechapel



30 10 Whitechapel



30 10 Whitechapel



Day 13
31 10 2006



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Whitechapel



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Shadwell



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Wapping



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Rotherhite



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Canada Water



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



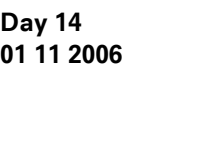
31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



31 10 Surrey Quays



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch

Day 14
01 11 2006

The **representation** of the areas shifted
from an initial photographic survey to a textual
description.



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



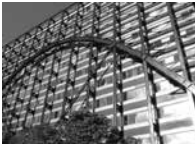
01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Shoreditch



01 11 Whitechapel



01 11 Whitechapel



01 11 Whitechapel



01 11 Whitechapel

Day 15
02 11 2006

Shoreditch

narrowness bricks closeness trains sky traffic bridge
gap void railway bridge slabs highrises newness door
streets gap noise fences inside enclosure cranes ground
construction destruction city cranes skyscrapers
voids walls gap sky traffic history openness voids park-
ing wall ground gravel chimney working construction
railway market Sunday tourism rhythm centrality cul-
tures colors food fakeness cut fashion east station
silence fences cut trees emptiness railway nothingness
park bricks wall industries warehouses chimney bricks
market stones parking murals narrowness food smells
banks tourism silence secondary history goods shops
richness market Spitalfields colors fashion newness
glass oldness tourism city roof inside fullness sky-
scrapers glass newness trading moneys banks city market
limits traffic walls railways construction steel
future newness filling rhythm cranes arch steel glass
banks station square public richness newness suites
glass skyscrapers newness modernity trains pas-
sage narrowness traffic arches people crowd darkness
crowd station roof inside clocks cities trains pos-
sibility highrises in-between emptiness goods ware-
houses docks bridges arches silence wires

gaps bridges cut traffic rhythm shops bridges fences
car park murals in-between silence emptiness objects
nothingness directions arches city cranes fences cars
traffic

glass bricks highrises narrowness emptiness trading col-
lage gap history newness mirrors narrowness brick
collage nothingness emptiness objects confusion

newness color biology glass steel cold geometry church
collage differences density functions

highrises rhythm bricks lowrises houses shops void cut
railway highrises gap rhythm shops chimney enclosure
houses parks shops destruction nature gap

Whitechapel

market stalls food goods trading gap traffic hospital
walls car park back closeness fences cut gap rhythm
cranes construction traffic pigeons street good indus-
tries hospital Samaritan construction collage newness
oldness fullness church citadel cranes

people colors food smells shops city oldness history
elephant traffic street direction housing hospital
density old mixture collage oldness rhythm gaps
bricks in-between newness green arches renovation
highrises parking gap fences royal hospital clock
central building void gravel bushes railway cut gap
city traffic library culture housing slabs parks
parking back graveyard walls closeness gravestones his-
tory memory fences housing richness slabs enclosures
parking mall shopping consumption market silence
emptiness slabs highrises walls fences writings murals

history bridge railway arms wall arches bricks ware-
houses labour slabs gardens clothes slabs popular
street murals walls silence graveyard gravestones
church peace abandoned disappearance field railway
arches bridge void stones street bushes rhythm city di-
rection west rhythm in-between repetition bridge narrow-
ness direction east shops

fakeness residential newness emptiness tobacco dock car
park church traffic traffic traffic lights direction
business car park in-between direction railway
bridge cranes construction highrises walls fences
back slabs housing fragmentation voids hugeness
housing car park trading rhythm traffic noise co-
lors gaps shop crowd fullness watney market food enclo-
sure smalls unity shops colors world stalls
rhythm shops east façade smells slabs high-
rises void silence housing school sport park enclosure

Shadwell

Wapping

warehouses trading bricks cranes narrowness walls, courts fences slits houses pubs wharfs commerce narrowness history closeness newness residential openness **silence** lakes bridges trading ships

walls enclosure citadel castle gaps trading walls river docks Rotherhithe disappearance bridges graveyard leafs grass paths walls park **silence** strength walls cinnamon history warehouses docks trading **silence** disappearance

redevelopment narrowness walls highrises traffic shops slabs parks green warehouses enclosure history labour housing gentrification fences walls sport graveyard leafs grass, paths peace gravestones grass **void** colonial gravel

fences phoenix porch arches barbed wire water industries abandonment fences shops traffic walls canal

Rotherhithe

density warehouses narrowness bricks chimney stones tunnel station history

walls cut tunnel gap traffic **void** street history sand openness wall wapping river city water tide **rhythm** trading goods ships warehouses bricks hugeness complex emptiness flowers gasometer emptiness **silence** bridge gravel fences

gap tunnel street cut residential stairs crossing housing balconies emptiness warehouses slabs lake water canals canary wharf openness sky nature emptiness gravel fences gaps river tunnel bricks density tunnel road graveyard church narrowness chimney romantic houses in-between trains school cut

Canada Water

water emptiness malls **silence** bushes cranes grass paths station stairs bus highrises city chimney walls houses cars car park asphalt emptiness mall consumption Sunday **fragments rhythm** gap traffic fullness houses shops crowd

malls pals highrises glass station sky green fences park bushes paths gravel residential emptiness canal water **silence** newness chimney highrises gardens park walls emptiness trees traffic history oldness of-fices park **repetition** doors perspective

Surrey Quays

cut railway highrises bricks walls newness density **voids** developments housing emptiness bridge in-between back highrises railway abandonment railway car park **silence** colours gentrification **voids** bushes nature sky chimneys fences walls residential oldness bricks traffic street car park cinema bus traffic separation stairs levels bridge goods history death fear housing loneliness trading water rives emptiness pubs shops infiniteness canals

narrowness park openness green nature cut railway trains bridges tunnel small houses emptiness slabs back-sides gaps history trains slabs newness concrete leafs ground grass emptiness fences wild sky paths fences bridges arches **silence** light bricks residential gap traffic canary wharf arches ships trees, leafs history

SPACES POETICS

VOIDS

Void Framing Narratives



Gordon Matta-Clark
Phaidon, New York 2003

SPACES POETICS

VOIDS

The Void as a Technique
Framing
Narratives

1 I am referring to examples such as Fontana, Matta-Clark, etc., discussed extensively later in the text, and exemplary cities like London, Rotterdam or Berlin, which were heavily affected by events that **erased** large parts of their historical city fabric.

2 The idea of **'boundary'** refers to the analysis of the idea of **space** provided by Heidegger in his essay 'Dwelling, Building, Thinking': 'A **space** is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras*. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*.' I would like to think that this concept might be appropriate in the definition of 'absence' introduced earlier in the text. Despite differences in the use of terms, what is interesting is the idea of *peras*, or perimeter, as the fundamental element for a **space** to exist and therefore to be able to accommodate objects, events and relationships. This can be compared to the ancient myths when cities were founded by defining their limits or boundaries, designating a **space** characterised by different jurisdictional and spatial values from the rest of the surrounding world: a **place** set apart.

A **void** can be regarded as a **representation** of an absence, if not an absence itself, as I mentioned when describing the 1666 map of London. In opposition and in relation to the concept of **space**, the **void** as a concept is understood to be a feature with distinct characteristics that allow the development of architectural form. A **void** is also a tool for analysing the structure that contains it; in this particular case, London's urban context and history. This process of analysis introduces the possibility of establishing a formal, architectural **narration** of the city in which an understanding of the **void** can be used as the main tool in assisting this process.

From a formal, **representational** point of view, the perception of the **void** as something absent, missing or even invisible, is possible simply by delineating its limits within a containing structure and identifying the presence of a number of **traces** dispersed in close proximity to it. These two elements — boundaries and **traces** — are therefore helpful in circumscribing what is rather difficult to define. Boundaries and **traces** both constitute parts of formal compositions and spatial structures that are generated and understandable outside the realm of the perceived **void**.

In the first interpretation, where the **void** is perceived due to the existence of a boundary, it is accommodated within an existing formal structure, which enables it to be distinguished by the emergence of **borders** between matter and nothingness. This more conceptual understanding of the notion of **void** can be found in several examples of formal interpretation developed in art, and in its intentional or coincidental application in large-scale systems, such as the modern city.^[1] The very limits and **borders** that give 'shape' to our perception of the **void** are nothing other than constituent parts of that same containing structure. The **void** mirrors, as a negative presence, a given spatial set of elements and relations, creating a tension that not only explicates the creation of the **border** but also precipitates the desire to complete the disassembled and **fragmented** part of the structure. In the map of London a tension is established between the **erased** area and the surviving metropolitan fabric, where the **border** itself becomes a clear and stark element of transition, an osmotic membrane between what exists and what is missing, between life and death, movement and stillness, certainty and possibility. The **boundary** constitutes the condition for the **void**, and the urban structure that accommodates it, to be fully perceived and understood as parts of the same spatial **narration**.^[2]

The **void** is therefore the negation of the form in which it is contained due to the interposition of a **border** that somehow becomes more important than the elements it separates. The attention of the viewer looking at the map, and thus probing the consequences of the Great Fire on London's urban fabric, is diverted in the first instance to this boundary, creating a state of confusion and anxiety about the

representation of the two opposites. In the second instance, the city structure surrounding the void can be analysed in order to understand the formal characteristics of the void itself, which leads to a rational understanding of the functioning and constituent elements of the accommodating system, as well as addressing the need for some kind of formal continuity in the interrupted composition. Therefore the sense of uneasiness and estrangement that a viewer experiences initiates an understanding of the accommodating structure (in this case the city of London), its form, the essential meanings of its existence, and its constituent elements and relationships. At the same time, this awareness allows the irrational revelation of infinite possible ways in which the gap might be filled, the structure completed. The threads stretched between the material world and human life within the metropolis are again ready to be woven into a new composition. The clarification of 'what was there' and 'what is still there' is a premise for constructing 'what could be there' in the void. The boundary is the entry point for this process of analysis, composition and re-composition; the vanished parts of the structure are understood notwithstanding their absence and are substituted by an unlimited set of potential formal compositions gathered from intuition, memory and imagination.

In the second interpretation, where the void is perceived and identified through the disclosure of a set of traces, the situation differs from the first in that these fragments are involved in potentially new interpretations of the accommodating structure or system. If the presence of the void, understood as an element that either creates or is circumscribed by a boundary separating matter from nothingness, does not allow for the complete reconstruction of the formal values of the accommodating space — given that the latter has been ruptured and broken and so is no longer intelligible as a structure — then the void is conceivable as an assemblage of traces that permeate both entities. Both the void and its accommodating structure reveal interrelating patterns of elements and fragments that are intrinsic to understanding and interpreting their forms.

Small-scale voids and erasures in the city fabric fall under this second category, together with the idea of the city as a large-scale system evolving in time and space and therefore producing overlaps and discrepancies within its form. Voids that occur in the city, whether on a small or large scale, can become part of a process of disclosure whereby layers and fragments belonging to different periods and spaces are revealed. The varying degrees of scale and speed typical of this evolutionary process inform us about the condition of the city as a permanently changing system. The emergence of small-scale deletions, forgotten spaces, temporary voids, gaps and small marginal areas in the metropolis is the result of a process of formal changes occurring over time. Such transformations do not always seamlessly substitute established forms with new ones. Economical, political and

social choices, private and public endeavours, visions and utopias, temporary events, history, war, etc. are all involved in shaping the urban fabric, thus producing formal and structural changes that result in spaces clashing, overlapping or substituting one another in a sort of continuous collage of systems. The marginal areas discussed here, the small gaps and interruptions, are residual evidence of this process of overlapping; they become hosts to an accumulation of fragments belonging to the remote and complex history of a place. Once again referring to Hollar's map of London, an example of this condition is the impressive and intriguing set of traces incorporated in the representation of London after the fire, in which, as I indicated, both the lines and the remaining buildings are part of a kind of non-literal reconstruction of the city's previous form.

This interpretation shows how the void can be understood not simply as something blank or abstract, as was the case in the analysis of its boundary discussed above, but as a real and concrete composition of actual fragments belonging to its accommodating structure. The void becomes a place of formal recollection emerging out of unclear and incomplete parts that are impossible to interpret and understand and thus remain mute. This silence is what distinguishes a void from an empty space. The absence of any rational and conclusive formal value is a sign of the rich potential and profound otherness of the void. Its capacity to evoke analogous meanings and forms in our memory and imagination³ defines a void as an excavation into all the possible formal overlapping interpretations of a space, whether realised or hypothetical.

Therefore a void can either be understood as an absence circumscribed by a boundary, or as a discrete area typified by disclosed, overlapping signs and traces. In the former case, the void constitutes an undefined, empty and disconnected otherness; in the latter, the absence is tangible as something inseparable from the formal development of its accommodating structure. The first interpretation sees the void as an element mirroring reality, revealing how it is composed and assembled, and disclosing its formal characteristics through the definition of boundaries and absence, whereas the second interpretation of the void acknowledges the complexity of its accommodating structure, recognising the void as an irrational superimposition of

3 This recalls the famous Adolf Loos quote from the essay 'Architecture': 'When we come across a mound in the wood, six feet long and three feet wide, raised to a pyramidal form by means of a spade, we become serious and something in us says: somebody lies buried here. This is architecture.' The simple, almost silent form of the mound in the wood has the power of

stirring the emotions of the onlooker, eliciting an acknowledgement of the multitude of meanings and formal reasons such a simple composition of elements is able to convey. I see the fragments involved in the exposure of an urban void as having the same formal evocative power, but this time on manifold and extremely complex interpretative levels.

fragments, open to interpretation. Both points of view define the relationships that occur between **silence** and a structured and formalised **grammar** of elements.

The Void as a Technique

A **void** can be the result of a voluntary act that establishes a number of complex spatial relationships and formal consequences; or, conversely, it can be the accidental outcome of a specific form or act of **representation**. A **void** may be the consequence of a process of subtraction or **erasure**, destruction or cutting. For artists Lucio Fontana and Gordon Matta-Clark, the **void represented** part of their artistic practice since it constitutes a specific formal approach to the idea of absence and its spatial, conceptual **representation**. The **void** as a technique involves precise procedures that are relatively similar and always involve the action of cutting. As an act that creates a **void**, the cut in Fontana's case aims to violate and reveal specific spatial qualities of matter, whereas in the work of Matta-Clark the aim is the preservation of the qualities found in the city and in complex architectural compositions.^[4]

4 The theme of the **void** as an element capable of preserving certain urban characteristics and at the same time evoking infinite possible urban forms is strongly present in Wim Wenders' idea of the modern city; in particular, with reference to Berlin: '[...] When I filmed *Himmel über Berlin*, I took shots of the paths created by people passing by, nobody had **traced** them, people chose to pass there. In the film, when the children were playing in an absence of organised **places** for games, they were free. The **voids** that I defend, the city **spaces** that for me make the city alive, are these.' And again: '[...] you don't only have to create new buildings but also **spaces** for freedom: free and empty **space** in order to conserve the equilibrium of **voids**, so that the overabundance does not render invisible the world that surrounds us.' From: C. Lamberti, 'La Città di Berlino nel cinema di Ruttmann e Wenders' (09.12.2001) www.architettura.it. [<http://architettura.it/movies/20011209/index.htm>, accessed on 11 April 2011]

5 The photographs shot in Milan by Ugo Mulas in 1964 portray the process of creating the painting *L'Attesa*. The photo-

grapher describes the artist's actions, though rapid and concluded in a few seconds, as something more precise, more complex than mere movements, something more than an operation: a real 'moment' worth photographing. '...Forse fu la presenza di un quadro bianco, grande, con un solo taglio appena finito. Quel quadro mi fece capire che l'operazione mentale di Fontana (che si risolveva praticamente in un attimo, nel gesto di tagliare la tela) era assai più complessa e il gesto conclusivo non la rivelava che in parte. Vedendo un quadro di buchi, un quadro di tagli, e' facile immaginare Fontana mentre fa il taglio o i buchi con un punteruolo, ma questo non lascia capire l'operazione che e' più precisa e non e' solo una operazione, ma un momento particolare, un momento che capivo di dover fotografare...' From: U. Mulas, *La Fotografia* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1973).

6 The same theme is discussed in the book *Art as Technique* by Viktor Shklovsky. Here the formalist goal of the artistic act performed on reality is to make the object 'unfamiliar' and thus perceived in a new way by the spectator due to its transformation into an art object.

Fontana challenged the concept of pictorial surface by physically cutting it and therefore literally creating a rupture, a **void**, as a 'spatial concept', transforming the flat monochrome surface of what was simply a canvas into something completely different. The margins of the cuts bent and curved towards the created **voids**, turning a flat surface into a three-dimensional object. This act of cutting triggers a completely new and unexpected set of relationships between the edge of the cut, the surface, and the dark mysterious inner **space** behind and beyond it. Acknowledging the materiality of the canvas reveals its concrete and tangible nature and the specific spatial relationships happening between its surface and the perimeter of the cut. The complex system of meanings, spatial relations and mythical evocations set up in the resulting piece of art are all woven together in an act performed in **space** and time. This performance and its constituent elements have been captured in a **sequence** of photos^[5] that show Fontana slowly approaching the canvas, studying the surface, choosing a spot and cutting the material with precision and an awareness of the pressure, position and trajectory of himself as the cutter. The **sequence** of images tells us not only about the composition of the freshly created spatial relations on the white surface, but also how the **voids** are bound to time and **space** and, most importantly, how the action of the artist takes **place** at a precise instant, with a deliberate and determined **sequence** of movements, and is then frozen in time and **space**.

Matta-Clark cut buildings that were either destined to be demolished or substituted. For him and the group of artists involved in this kind of intervention on real objects '[...] Cutting is an act of conservation. Cutting an anonymous building means preserving it forever, and with it the life of the persons who were living there.' (Richard Nonas). The buildings were not only preserved, but also rendered even more precise in terms of their spatial characteristics, scale, presence in the city, 'inside versus outside' relationship, construction and use. This type of cut can be considered as a formalist act of estrangement^[6] from the object's specific form and function: the artist provides an entry point to an understanding of the object-building, revealing part of its hidden elements, drawing attention to the inside **spaces** by making them visible from the outside, and reducing them to a non-usable composition of **spaces**. The cut reveals the complexity of the volumes through a new and unexpected perspective, transforming the object's 'good form', as Umberto Eco described it in his book *The Open Work*; namely, the static, perfect shape that satisfies the mind and the aesthetic perception of the viewer. The cut becomes a source of stimuli for the mind and the imagination. It starts a process of assemblage using different sets of information gathered from the object, composing these into new surreal forms, and imagining stories unfolding within the boundaries of this newly created **void**. The geometrically-shaped **voids** are apprehended as even more substantial elements than the

building itself: they seem to be recognised and formalised in the viewer's mind even before s/he becomes conscious of the construction materials the building is made of, the **spaces** it once contained, the relationships between these or their former use. The **voids** become sites where meanings originate, **places** where the history and myths of the building can be unfolded and understood. As I said at the beginning of this essay with reference to the map of the Great Fire of London, this recognition of the formal and historical explanatory quality of the **void** can be compared with the analytic reading and re-composition of a structure via the perception of the **void**. Hence the **void** within the urban fabric is simultaneously a manifestation of the formal values of the now-interrupted city structure, and a collector of new **narratives** to complete it. A similar process towards imaginative completeness can be observed when the mind becomes lost in the **poetic** 'de-collage' of partially demolished buildings found within the complexity of a metropolis, with their exposed **traces** of everyday use, the memories and residue of family talks, echoing words, mealtimes and sleep in **spaces** that were once kitchens and bedrooms but are now perceived as almost unrecognisable **fragments** of a multidimensional past.

Matta-Clark's interest in emptiness and **voids** was not limited to cutting openings into existing structures, it also included research related to abandonment and forgetting within city structures and daily routines: '[...] we were more interested, from a metaphorical point of view, in **voids**, gaps, abandoned **spaces**, undeveloped **places**, etc. For example the **places** where you stop to tie your shoes, **places** that are interrupting your everyday movements.' For the **An-architecture**^[7] group of artists, collecting, intervening in, and preserving those **spaces** from disappearance, drawing them into a structured artistic **representation**, was a way of proposing a critical alternative to the commonly accepted concepts of architecture, urban planning and the American myth of land ownership. At the same time, this interest led them to conduct experiments that produced new forms of **representation** and interpretation of the emptiness of those forgotten and **fragmented places** in the city.^[8] This approach, which considered metropolitan leftover **spaces** as important idiosyncratic elements within the structure of the urban fabric, was, despite the novelty and polemical nature of the intervention, more similar to an act of editing aimed at stimulating public awareness about the subject in hand, than an actual project to reconstruct formal meanings in the city. The **spaces** were re-presented, juxtaposed, but never really subject to a compositional or formal interpretation. As for other works by Matta-Clark — especially his photographic **representation** of the acts of cutting — the work of art was translated into yet another new one, this time made of paper, texts, images, and collaged assortments of information. The work became subject to a journalistic 'reportage' and, as it became part of an information and **narration** process, it

7 **An-Architecture** is the name of a group of artists (Laurie Anderson, Tina Girouard, Suzanne Harris, Jene Highstein, Bernard Kirschenbaum, Richard Landry, Gordon Matta-Clark and Richard Nonas) active in New York during the 1970s. 'We knew it had to be a kind of "anti" name, but that by itself seemed just too easy. And we were not at all clear what the second half — the cultural thing to push the "anti" against — should be. Architecture did not start out being the main point for any of us, even for Gordon. But we soon realized, however, that architecture could be used to symbolize all the hard-shelled cultural

reality we meant to push against, and not just building of "architecture" itself. That was the context in which Gordon came up with the term an-architecture. And that, perhaps, suggests the meaning we all gave it.' Richard Nonas, letter to the IVAM, August 1992, in: *Gordon Matta-Clark*, exhibition catalogue, IVAM Centre Julio Gonzalez (Valencia: 1993), p. 374, from www.mattaclarking.co.uk (accessed on 11 April 2011).

8 I am referring more specifically to the *Fake Estates* project, which took **place** during the 1970s in New York.

became something different, estranged from its own original physical presence: something independent, though similarly doomed to disappear without any capacity to transform reality.

Several other examples can be given, albeit partial and inconclusive ones, on how the **void** may be expressed as a negation, an accumulation of **traces**, or an **erasure** of an existing structure, as well as how, in more architectonic terms, this concept of absence can be embodied by a spatial composition of elements (and therefore positively, in the sense of 'constructing an absence'). The Cemetery of San Cataldo in Modena designed by Aldo Rossi is exemplary in its opposition of **void** and **space** and the way these are taken into account in a complex and articulated public building. Both Aldo Rossi in his *Scientific Autobiography*, and Rafael Moneo in the interpretative essay 'Aldo Rossi: The Idea of Architecture and the Modena Cemetery', describe part of the building as an example of an architecture and a spatial composition aimed at expressing an absence; namely, the expressive power of lifeless **spaces** where time is suspended, where relationships are no longer possible and where memories are **represented** in the **silent**, hollow and lonely **spaces** of the cemetery buildings. The **representation** of the idea of loss and absence is embodied in the composition of the architecture, which is based on references capable of generating both memories and feelings of abandonment and emptiness. For the Italian architect, the 'empty house' exemplifies a building where any ongoing personal **narration** is impossible, but where **traces** of past events and human interaction are still visible. In the Modena cemetery, Rossi is referring to '[...] the Roman Tomb of the Baker, an abandoned factory, an empty house.' In these kinds of buildings, **spaces** are empty and unused yet filled with **traces** of events that happened at various times in the past, and whose characteristics, qualities and unfolding within the spatial composition we can only try to imagine, while remaining unable to understand or

be part of them. For Rossi, this is especially true when a house has been abandoned, when personal stories have ended unresolved, or when someone has died: 'I also saw death in the sense of "no one lives here any more" and hence as regret, since we do not know what our relations with this person were, and yet we still search for him in some way.'

The central building of the Modena cemetery is therefore the bearer of meanings of loss and detachment, but also of expectation, and a tension straining towards something tangible yet not completely intelligible — where the possibility of a completed **narration** is negated, and so instead is **represented** by suspended and surreal **spaces**. Lack and absence are the ingredients of a composition imbued with profound meanings and capable of explicating them in a truly spatial and architectural way. In Fontana's work or the instance of the Great Fire of London, a **void** can be either the result of a deliberate action or an accidental event; or again, as in Rossi's cemetery, it may be determined by a composition that is able to **represent**, in an analogous way, the same meanings and formal consequences as the more direct, interpretative action of cut and rupture.

Several artists have developed their own techniques and skills to stretch the potential of the **language** of art toward the **border** between matter and absence, sound and **silence**, or **language** and a random juxtaposition of words.^[9] Though not directly related to this topic, a relevant example of an intervention situated between land art, architecture and art is the famous *Cretto* by Alberto Burri, completed in the village of **Gibellina** (Sicily) in 1984.^[10] By applying the technique of the **cretto**,^[11] the artist created a sculpture in the form of a vast spatial composition that people can physically experience and explore. In this way, the work of land art not only becomes

9 A good bibliographical reference to this theme can be found in a short article by Giovanni Corbellini in which he analyses the impact and influence of the term 'absence' on the cultural production of the 20th century. In this schematic bibliography, the author focuses on the theme of **void**, absence and disappearance, and has created a history of this concept through research in different artistic and non-artistic fields. The article 'Assenza' by Giovanni Corbellini is published on the website www.architettura.it. [<http://www.architettura.it/parole/20041204/index.htm>, accessed on 9 April 2010]

10 **Gibellina** is a small town in Sicily. It was completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1968 and reconstructed some kilometres away from its original location. Numerous artists and architects contributed to the reconstruction of the village including Ludovico Quaroni, Vittorio Gregotti and Franco Purini.

11 The **Cretto** technique consists in producing the natural formation of cracks and splits within a thick, dense pictorial or sculptural surface left drying in open air.

12 **Syntax**: from Greek, *syn* = together, *taxis* = **sequence**, together in a **sequence**, the arrangement and conjunction of phrases and sentences.

a monument and thus a memory of a collective emotional state or event (the calamity of the earthquake that destroyed the village in 1968), but also a new set of interpretable elements, volumes and **spaces** that have been detached in a specific way from their former use. The concrete volumes and the chasms between them become a **silent** reminder of urban life, the visualisation of an absence that underlines the relationships between the urban fabric and its streets, since the limited height of the blocks allows visitors to walk both between and on top of them, thus emphasising the invisible relationship between a home's interior environment, now destroyed, and the village's public **spaces**. The composition allows the entire village to be viewed at a glance: a desolate **space** where events can be imagined to happen again within the frozen memory of a complex structure of forms and relationships.

As the examples above illustrate, making a cut can be regarded as an act that turns a number of formally defined spatial relationships into a temporal state of potentialities, while simultaneously maintaining them in a state of abstract otherness. The cut freezes the meanings and formal qualities of a **space** and its collected temporal layers of **narratives**, while opening them up to new interpretations in both a conceptual and physical way. The act of cutting and the creation of an absence, both characterised by the disclosure of a set of **traces** and non-interpretable **fragments** and boundaries, can therefore be considered a point of connection between the concepts of **void** and **space**. The action of cutting is a technique that allows the formal relationship between an absence and a defined **space** to occur and become tangible, mediated (as it was for Fontana) by a deliberate, interpretative act performed to alter reality. This act can be recorded as a **sequence** of operations, an ordered and precise syntax of steps that allows these formal relations to be achieved, culminating in a suspension of sense or non-sense that will form the basis for a new construction of meaning. This **syntax**,^[12] established through a **sequence** — a collection of moments, movements and **fragments**, arranged according to defined, though arbitrary motivations — permits the creation of a continuity of elements which, within the same **sequence**, the same **narrative** logic, and in the created or acknowledged **void**, will make room for the development of form. Beyond the deconstructive intention of using the technique of cutting to create an absence and expose a set of **fragments**, a further, more complex construction of sense is possible: the **narration** of forms and meanings within a spatial interpretation of reality, as occurs in Rossi's cemetery. **Space** once again becomes the repository of a **narrative** of forms and spatial relationships; the architectural project constitutes the tangible element that re-establishes a meaning within the chaos of the metropolis, a meaning situated somewhere between interpretation and preservation, **void** and **space**, form and **fragmentation**.

Framing

Pier Paolo Pasolini gives his own precise reading to the idea of **framing** in cinematography, extending it to include a more general interpretation of reality as a **language**. For Pasolini, the act of **framing**^[13] is an intentional ordering of the parts that constitute reality in order to communicate a specific meaning. The film director and poet associated reality and cinematography with **language** and writing, whereby reality **represents** the 'oral' equivalent of what cinema formalises into a normative, 'written' **language**. Therefore one could say that reality shares its roots with spoken **language** since both are determined by factors such as **place**, time, history, traditions, habits, regionalism, etc. Cinema, understood as a written **language** formalised into syntactical structures, **notational** compositions of elements and a **grammar**, selects and organises elements that are spontaneous and unfiltered in the real world. Selecting specific elements in order to film them is already an interpretative **representation** of reality. The film **frame** is the boundary within which the selected object and **spaces** are organised in a delimited field of existence, either included or excluded from the image. Pasolini states that we cannot disregard the fact that reality hosts a multiplicity of objects present in countless compositions and relationships to one another. This fact renders the task of selecting and composing objects within a **frame** ambiguous and delicate since the corpus of their relationships will always transcend the boundary.

Every composition of objects within a film **frame** assumes a specific meaning engendered by the combination of selected elements and their associative relationships. An important aspect of this interpretation is that reality is already considered as a non-formalised **language** in whose infinite variety of compositions and forms the content of cinema is rooted. The role of the 'individual' within this constellation is not only that of 'actor', an 'object' that affects reality in combination with other objects and forces, but also that of 'spectator': an external and independent viewer. The elements selected in the **framing**

13 Among other things, '**framing**' means to form or make by fitting and uniting parts together; to construct; to conceive or imagine as an idea; a structure for admitting or enclosing something.

14 **Sequence**: from Latin *sequi*, a 'thing that follows'; list of objects (or events) arranged in a 'linear' fashion, either finite or infinite.

15 What is intended here is a **composition** of elements within a **frame**, one that combines the most basic **fragmented** pieces of reality into

a recognisable part-object, defined by specific and autonomous characteristics and forms. In his essay 'Nuovo e moderno in architettura', Ezio Bonfanti writes an extensive analysis and interpretation of Aldo Rossi's work, focusing in particular on the concepts of 'pieces and parts'. According to Bonfanti, Aldo Rossi uses a simple vocabulary of already formalised architectural forms (parts and pieces: the staircase, the corridor, the wall, etc.) composed and recomposed every time according to implicit and different logics spanning memory, rationality and biography.

process are subsequently involved in a further composition, that of **sequencing**^[14] all the single **frames** in an ordered linear structure, connecting them to each other according to syntactical and **grammatical** rules. The composition of cinematographic **language** is therefore articulated on two levels: first, the single **frame**, and then the **sequence** achieved by the technique of montage.

The specifics of Pasolini's linguistic interpretation will not be considered here, but two further concepts are important in clarifying a **narrative** interpretation of architectural composition. Firstly, the act of sequencing not only enables a linear composition of elements, but also the formulation of complex and unexpected meanings and formal statements. Secondly, the film **frames** remain incomplete and insignificant when separate and unrelated, whereas they acquire a new **narrative** dimension and sense when arranged in a **composition**.^[15] **Framing**, editing and arranging the **framed** material in a **sequence** is a synthetic process that affects the **language** of reality, and transforms it into something that Rossi has defined as 'analogous' to reality itself; namely, a meaningful **representation** that has the same characteristics and qualities as reality but produces completely new formal results.

Given this interpretation of the concepts of **framing** and editing, it is possible to relate the idea of **space** to Pasolini's theory about the cinematographic **representation** of the **language** of reality. **Space** can be considered as a **narrative** composition of elements: by definition, the three-dimensional repository of objects, events, memories, people and their reciprocal relationships. **Space** constitutes the inhabited realm wherein these elements, objects, relationships and memories exist. The city is where **spaces** of different types and qualities are organised according to a given logic and in a syntactical manner, namely through a process of selection and the creation of clearly defined boundaries within which the formal composition of the parts and their **sequencing** is possible. This in turn leads to the **narration** of forms that express a specific meaning.

The construction of a basic alphabet of forms and relationships, arrived at through an analysis of the urban context, allows for the composition of complex formal sentences, which can then be organised and **sequenced** into spatial **narratives**. The city can be imagined as a written text with the characteristics and nuances of an oral **language** expressed through the transformation and composition of **spaces** by human actions. According to this interpretation, Pasolini argued that one of the primary **languages** of man is constituted by the impulse to transform reality, an act that both reconstructs the world and **represents** to other people the inclinations of the 'individual' acting on reality. Political, physical and economic actions therefore include shaping **spaces** and creating relationships between objects, forms and meanings in the city. This transformation unfolds over time within a process of addition, substitution and overlapping, and in

doing so produces discrepancies, **fragments** and **erasures** within an existing urban fabric, thus obstructing the formulation of one unique, absolute and indisputable spatial **narrative** that can encompass the totality of the urban form.

The **language** of the city is established by **spaces** that express only partial and inconclusive meanings, and are constituted by indefinable **fragments**, **voids**, and more complex formal compositions. The architectural project is the point of synthesis for this raw **language**, it is the discipline that presupposes the existence of these elements and composes them into a readable **representation**, namely, a formalised 'written' interpretation of reality. Just as Pasolini interpreted the synthesis of cinematographic **language** as a **representation** of reality capable of expressing some of the latter's otherwise undecipherable meanings, so, in the same way, the architectural project provides a normative, readable construction of the indeterminate realm of parts and **fragments** that make up the city. This process of formal composition is articulated on two levels, similar to the way Pasolini describes it in his interpretation of cinematographic **language**. The first level is the one in which materials, objects, forms and **spaces** are selected from within the realm of the city. Then, as in the '**framing**' described above, boundaries are **traced** in a process that encloses the chosen **spaces** and objects with the aim of expressing partial, though meaningful formal compositions. Subsequently, these compositions are arranged into **sequences**, characterised by their ability to express unexpected meanings that unfold in new and more complex spatial **narratives**. On the basis of this interpretation, the evolution of the city form can be understood in reverse. As I previously mentioned, social, economical and political forces continually stimulate the evolution and transformation of the urban fabric. The composition of completely new spatial **narratives**, derived from what Pasolini described as the twofold process of interpretation and reconstruction of the raw **language** of reality, interacts with this evolutionary process and constitutes one of the main factors in the transformation of urban form. In fact, the autonomous architectural object that results from a process of spatial **narration** can be regarded as both the consequence and the cause of the transformation of the socio-political and economical premises at the base of the actual construction of the city. Architecture that is the result of a clear syntactical composition of parts rooted in reality is able to restore the urban fabric and its inner logic, and at the same time influence social, political and economical changes.

Narratives^[16]

The process of **framing**, composing and **sequencing** the materials available in the urban realm in order to define complex formal **narratives** is only possible when all the constituent parts, characteristics and relationships that make up the urban context are understood and

16 **Narration**: in Italian *narrare*, from Latin *narrare*, and the root *gna*, meaning 'to know', to let someone know something, to tell a story. **Narrative** is the process of transmitting connected events or information by means of a story.

17 The work of Aldo Rossi provides an example of how an architecture structured within a rigid logic, and research on the contamination of **notational languages**, have been developed by the architect in the formulation of a specific point of view about the architectural project and its **representation**. In his book *A Scientific Autobiography* the architect explains the generative process of his projects and introduces the themes of **silence**, the impossibility of speech, muteness or, as he preferred to call it, the 'absence of words'. Rossi links these themes to his interest in and fixation about the differences between drawing and writing. He writes: 'the difficulty of the word often creates an inexhaustible verbal continuity as with certain expressions of Hamlet or Mercutio. "Thou talk'st of nothing" is a way of saying nothing and everything — something similar to that graphic obsession I spoke of just before. I recognize this in many of my drawings, in a type of drawing where

the line is no longer a line, but writing.' This 'graphic obsession' leads to a convergence of the two **notational** systems and thus it becomes difficult to discern and complex to understand — a mixture of ambiguous and mysterious **languages** and compositions that clearly recall some of Rossi's most enigmatic and **poetic** projects. Rossi comments that '[...] the union of different techniques resulting in a sort of realisation-confusion has always impressed me. It has to do with the boundary between order and disorder; and the boundary, the wall, is a fact of mathematics and masonry. Thus the boundary or wall between city and non-city establishes two different orders. The wall can be a kind of graphic sign **representing** something like the difference between drawing and writing, or the meaning can emerge from the conjunction of the two.' Rossi considers the composition and meaning of an architectural project to be viable only within a partial and inconclusive interpretation of reality. Furthermore, the architectural composition is the assemblage of meaningless **fragments** and parts that become meaningful only within a **sequence** whose premises, for Rossi, lie somewhere between autobiography and logic.

visible. This can only be achieved by creating a **representation**. The difficulty in constructing architecture that **corresponds** to a meaningful formal interpretation of the urban fabric is due to the lack of adequate **representational** tools for interpreting the urban elements involved in the architectural composition and, paradoxically, not to the actual technical realisation of the architectural artefact itself. The relationship between the architectural object and its **representation** lies in the differences between realisation and imagination, reality and utopia, written **language** and drawing, the act of composition and the analytical process.^[17]

A distance separates the architectural artefact from its analogous image, which has been drawn within the complexity of two-dimensional **notational languages**. The apparent fictional character of the unrealised architecture opposes its actual material form, unexpectedly making the image more influential and specific than the completed construction itself. In his essay 'The Flatness of Depth' John Hejduk wrote that for the spectator 'the most profound confrontation of all'

with a **representation** of an architectural object ‘takes **place**’ in front of a photograph of the architecture when ‘the mind of the observer is heightened to an extreme, exorcising out from a single fixed photographic image all its possible sensations and meanings — a **fragment** of time suspended, a recapturing of the very image that has been photographed.’ In other words, as if the mere act of excluding a part of reality from a composition presented on a static **framed** surface could invest the image with more impact, power and clarity than the real object itself. However, despite the evocative power of a single photograph, it is impossible to convey all the qualities and characteristics of a spatial composition in a single image. No single, invariable **representation** can contain the meaningful overlapping of the different interpretative levels of the urban fabric, its complex physical unfolding and construction, and the history of its evolution into a specific form. Hejduk described how a truthful **representation** of a building or a **space** is impossible and will always be limited to compositions of two-dimensional **fragments** and partial **representations** (schemas, pictures, drawings) organised as far as possible to be consistent with the original. He stated that a **representation** is in itself already an architectural reality,^[18] and concluded that a three-dimensional entity can only be **represented** as a composition of discrete, two-dimensional elements and parts. The intuition that gives rise to an architectural form is just as **fragmentary** as any of its **representations**, and both architecture and **representation** are generated by means of a specific **notational** system. If it is impossible to understand reality as a whole, as Aldo Rossi concluded in *A Scientific Autobiography*, then what is left is a form of relativity expressed by means of a **sequence** of partial and inconclusive truths.^[19]

One can also argue that an entity can be understood and **represented** only when removed from its context, when it becomes ‘other than itself’. The process of making meaningful architecture in an urban context evolves by arranging the city’s constituent parts into a formalised **sequence**, so that relationships are created within a fundamental formal discourse. In his essay ‘Observations on the Long Take’ (‘Osservazioni sul piano-sequenza’, [1967]) Pasolini argues that if reality is something we experience as temporally present, then cinema renders these realities as something past and concluded. ‘Only the facts that have already happened can be coordinated and thus acquire a sense [...] it is therefore necessary to die, because as long as we live we lack sense, [...] and it is not possible to translate the **language** of our life, which is a chaos of possibilities, an endless search for relations and meanings.’ Therefore, only within a **narration**, the act of telling a story by coordinating and **sequencing** some elements into a plot, is it possible to separate reality from itself and understand it objectively. To paraphrase Pasolini: **narration** is the act of converting the present into something belonging to the past, thus making both time **frames**

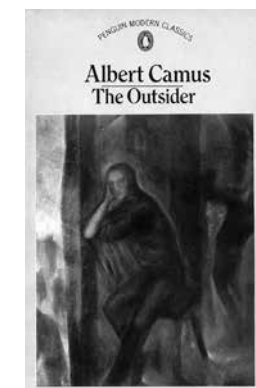
comprehensible and able to be **represented**. **Representation** in this context is intended as a process that implies a logic, a **grammar** and a syntactical structure of **sequenced** materials. As I said earlier, the specificity of Pasolini’s approach to **representation** and visual **narration** lies in the way he sees the process as comprising a first stage, which entails the selection and organisation of reality into **sequenced frames**, and a second, editorial phase, which requires the syntactical correlation of the parts. In this regard it is important to note that a **narration** achieved through **framing** and editing is different from a process whereby reality is reproduced through a mere bricolage and juxtaposition of elements unable to transcend their actual **fragmentation**.

If editing is understood as a linguistic tool that coordinates different elements selected from reality, in the way that montage is for Pasolini, then it is part of a process aimed at a synthetic **representation** of reality, but a reality removed from the present, whereas **editing**^[20] in the form of a **bricolage**^[21] of **fragments** constitutes only another empty and static reproduction of the present. **Representation**

18 Matta-Clark developed this same concept in the materials he produced to record his performances and interventions on buildings. As I mentioned before, the juxtapositions of texts, sketches and images developed by the artist during and after the completion of his interventions were composed as a means of recording **traces** of the **spaces** and forms destined to disappear. Once the original building had been demolished, its **representation** became the only real object for any intervention and the only remaining reality. In this way, any **representation** of reality assumes an independent existence once the world it **represents** disappears.

littérature potentielle formed by Queneau, Calvino, Perec, etc.) and *The Outsider* by Albert Camus. In this last example, the act of writing consists in reporting a reality that appears before the eyes of the author and main character as nothing more than a quantity of juxtaposed objects. In the book, writing becomes a mere listing of events — no questions are raised and no answers are given — the text sketches in a dry, essential style the interplay and relationships of living and dead objects, man and things. Another important source that deals with the idea of multiplicity and openness of meaning and **language** is Umberto Eco’s *Aperçu Aperta*.

19 Among the theories I considered during the design process were those of Roland Barthes and Robbe-Grillet concerning the end of the traditional novel and the idea of **language** and literature recommencing from a tabula rasa of meaning and form. Other interesting references regarding this topic are Raymond Roussel’s *How I Wrote Certain of My Books*, where the quasi-mathematical method of composition the author used for his novels is revealed; the work of Jorge Luis Borges; the experimentations on meta-literature of groups like the OULIPO (*Ouvroir de*



20 Referring to the concept of **editing** and the figure of the artist in post-modern society in an interview with Bennet Simpson, the critic Nicolas Bourriaud states that 'artists today don't really "create" any more, they reorganise. There are two dominant figures in today's culture: the DJ and the programmer. Both are dealing with things that are already produced.' Brian Eno expressed the same idea in the interview 'Gossip is Philosophy' with the magazine *Wired* in 1995. An artist is now a curator. An artist is now much more seen as a connector of things, a person who scans the enormous field of possible **places** for artistic attention, and says, "What I am going to do is draw your attention to this **sequence** of things." If you read art history up until 25 or 30 years ago, you'd find there was this supposition of succession: from Verrocchio, through Giotto, Primaticcio, Titian and so on, as if a crown passes down through the generations. But in the 20th century, instead of that straight kingly line, there's suddenly a broad field of things that get called art, including vernacular things, things from other cultures, things using new technologies like photo and film. It's difficult to make any simple linear connection through

them. [...] What postmodernist thinking is suggesting is that there isn't one line, there's just a field, a field through which different people negotiate differently. Thus there is no longer such a thing as "art history" but there are multiple "art stories". [...] You have made what seems to you a meaningful pattern in this field of possibilities. You've drawn your own line. This is why the curator, the editor, the compiler, and the anthologist have become such big figures. They are all people whose job it is to digest things, and to connect them together [...] To create meanings — or perhaps "new readings", which is what curators try to do — is to create.'

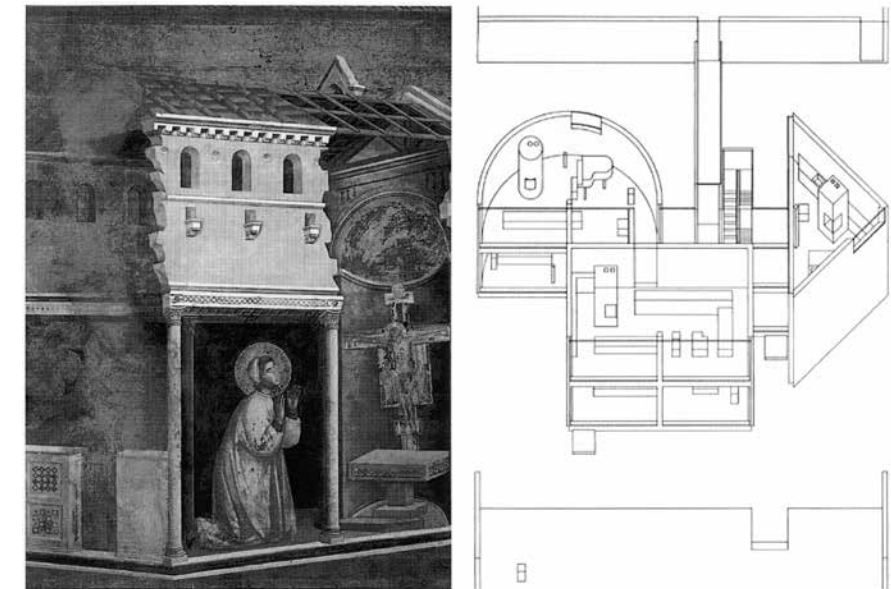
21 **Bricolage**: a construction made of whatever materials are at hand; something created from a variety of available things randomly selected.

22 The word '**poetic**' used in the text and title of this project derives from the Greek root *poieo* and the word **poiesis**, meaning to make, construct, compose, or combine forms. Its specific meaning here refers to the possibility of creating a **language** that can be put to use in the process of constructing reality and architectural forms.

can therefore be understood as the degree of formal synthesis of reality the architect achieves as a result of a spatial **narration**. **Narration** is therefore not only the process by which reality is objectified in order to be understood, but also the **representation** of reality itself, a reminder of both Fontana and Matta-Clark's approach. The synthesis achieved by **framing**, **sequencing** and editing the elements of the urban fabric means the city can be **represented** in new formal **narrations** while at the same time acknowledging the **narrated** and **represented** reality, and understanding the meaning and logic of forms and **spaces**.

In this way the concepts of **void**, **framing** and **sequence** acquire a specific value in reference to the spatial **narration** and its formal outcome. From this perspective, the **void** becomes the unrelated and timeless **place** where the possibility of form is suspended between nothingness and **silence**, and, at the same time, the entry point for a possible interpretation of the **language** of the city. If the process of selection — the starting point for the linguistic arrangement of the city's **fragments** into a formal **narration** — is to be developed from the contents of the urban fabric, it will probably start from a **place** where there is nothing, such as the area of destruction shown in the map of

Caption



the Great Fire of London, which I referred to at the beginning of this essay. The delineation of **borders** or limits within the formal possibilities of the modern metropolis is a first step towards understanding the 'infinity' of different realities and **languages** present in the city. The deliberate constraint imposed by choosing and **framing** a delimited group of elements is not only an act that interprets reality, but also the way to achieve a meaning that is no longer a random juxtaposition of elements but a composition of interrelated, **sequential** parts, a structure that **narrates** and transmits meaning.

As I said in reference to Pasolini's interpretation of the '**language** of reality', the individual is both the object and spectator of the same **narration**, and constitutes the primary force in transforming and evolving the urban form by assuming the twofold role of actor and interpreter: citizen and architect. In this way the architect acquires a role that is no longer external to reality or confused with that of a sociologist, economist, developer, sculptor, designer of objects or editor, but one that is an inherent part of reality, and essential for understanding and formulating **spaces** and forms for everyday life. Through interpreting, **representing** and constructing new formal **narratives** the architect is able to formalise transformations in the **language** of the city; thus, within defined boundaries, the '**poiesis**'^[22] of form occurs during the spatial **narration** of an architectural form. Just as Hejduk claimed was the case for painting and sculpture, architecture generates objects that are simultaneously conceived, **represented** and realised within a process of constructing sense.

Sequence
Sequence
Voids
Sequences
Places
Erasures
Borders
Repetition
Rhythms
Correspondence
Silence
Representations
Traces

Sequenced
Sequence
Notation
Spaces

Narrations

sequences
representation
notation
represent
sequence
sequence
spaces
sequences

sequences
representation frame fragments
language void space repetition
sequence narration

THE CITY — A PRISON

Simone Pizzagalli

Premise

Sequence one: THE CITY

Sequence two: A PRISON

Voids

Sequences

Places

Erasures

Borders

Repetition

Rhythms

Correspondence

Silence

Representations

Traces

Composition 1: Sequenced Forms

Composition 2: Form of a Sequence

Composition 3: Notation

Composition 4: Structures and Spaces

Narrations

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

THE CITY — A PRISON

Simone Pizzagalli

Premise

The relationship between the process of urban analysis and the formulation of an architectural project for a prison is based on the parallel unfolding of two **sequences**. The first is bound to the idea of the map, to cartographic **representation** and to exploratory **notation** systems that **represent** specific aspects of the London metropolis. The second **sequence**, despite being a compromise between certain graphic and conceptual indications found in the first **sequence**, is more related, at least in its intent, to the conception of the prison in terms of its location, **spaces**, functionality and spatial performance.

The two **sequences**, 'THE CITY' and 'A PRISON', constitute the basic material and fundamental ideas for the prison design by providing a conceptual definition and framework for the project. The analysis of the city, its linguistic interpretation and graphic elaboration, are the foundation for a wider research that includes the production of drawings and conceptual typographical compositions which have a clear point of origin in the mapping of the area of interest but, ideally, can be expanded indefinitely. The elaboration of this material has led to a conceptual structure that functions both as a key to the interpretation of urban form and as a foundation for the design of the prison.

The original concept for the prison was based at least in part on the logic of this reading and mapping. However, at a later stage the results of the design process diverged from the mere adoption of certain graphic and formal outcomes of the analysis and instead became more independent and exclusively focused on the architectural composition.

At this point the relationship between the design of the prison and the interpretation of the city becomes more conceptual and subtle, less obvious and more oriented towards defining a specific and autonomous form and composition of elements. The concepts relevant to both **sequences**, namely **language, void, space, repetition, representation, frame, fragments, syntax, sequence and narration**, have been expanded upon theoretically in the essay. At both the mapping and design level, the concepts mentioned have developed into a project-specific internal logic, used in the clarification processes relevant to the building's formal relationships and design, and aimed at delineating a renewed idea of architecture developing within a broader *modus operandi*.

THE CITY Voids

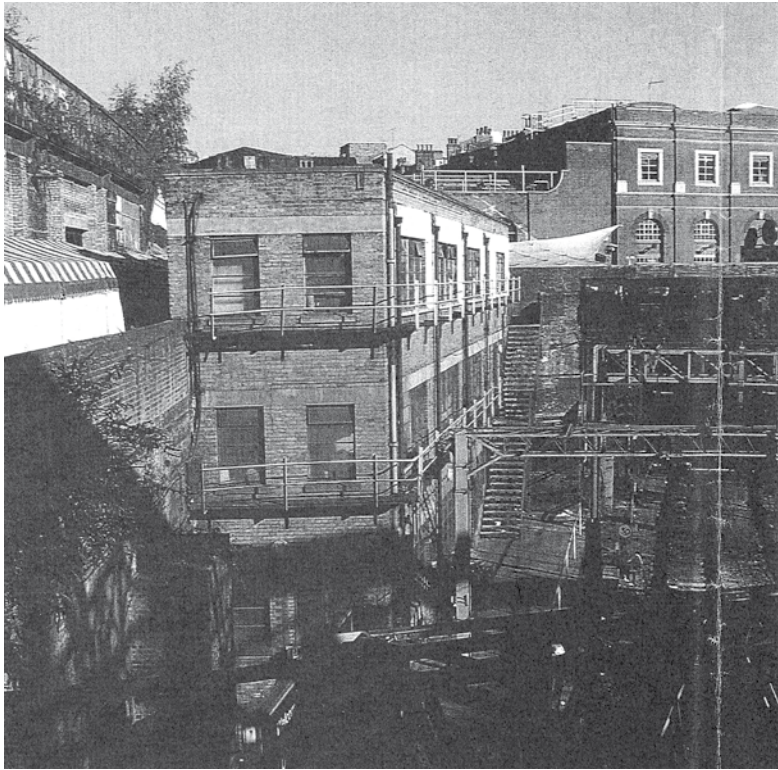
Map indicating the voids along the East London Railway Line.



A PRISON

Voids and deletions in the city texture are the start and end points of this modus operandi. The uncovering of a unique pattern and a sequence of repetitive elements began at this location, with the project establishing its roots right beside the city centre. The city appears as a sequence of perpetually changing elements among which the only permanent characteristic is silence: the recurring gap, the space between words, the pause between two steps.

Site for the prison project





The experience of the city starts from the perception of its basic formal language constituted by concrete elements, spatial and volumetric characteristics, structures and pieces, walls, streets, fences, buildings, etcetera. Written language has been chosen as the means for representing this multiform reality. Through a kind of primordial act of creation or definition, the named elements are transformed into descriptive concepts, arranged in temporal, narrative sequences.

collage nothingness emptiness objects confusion narrowness bricks closeness limits traffic walls railways construction steel future newness filling rhythm cranes

street noise gate entrance checkpoint office narrowness antechamber waiting information corridor stairs search office talking darkness bathrooms storage corridor cell elevator cell walls corridor repetition closeness recreation diningroom isolation narrowness darkness elevator rhythm silence antechamber waiting visit bathrooms bar openness garden playroom nursery playground children-visit silence paths stairs landing light corridor office recreation changing bathrooms diningroom storage elevator rhythm repetition entrance storage fullness kitchen fridge laundry bathroom darkness office corridor elevator parking installations playground openness showers corridor bathrooms garden path gym stairs office entrance office bathrooms library reading-room class antechamber openness light computer-room entrance playground class office bathrooms colors openness garden path kitchen storage diningroom sleeping installation nursery corridor stairs cell corridor nursery recreation playroom kitchen diningroom colors garden light path silence workshop corridor changing bathrooms elevator office storage landing entrance antechamber chapel room office closeness corridor talking-room entrance waiting visit storage office light dentist bathroom corridor cell changing antechamber rhythm entrance visit corridor office closeness isolation bathroom cell storage elevator antechamber corridor cell storage office visit isolation walls recreation stairs landing closeness cell antechamber recreation openness shop diningroom kitchen storage corridor

traffic gap trains bridge sky void railway bridge slabs highrises newness street gap noise fences inside enclosure cranes ground construction destruction

Shoreditch

narrowness bricks closeness ~~tea~~ trains sky traffic bridge
gap void ~~d~~ railway bridge slabs highrises newness door
streets gap noise fences inside enclosure cranes ground
construction destruction ~~Chin~~ city cranes skyscrapers
voids walls gap sky traffic history openness voids park-
ing wall ground gravel chimney working construction
railway market Sunday ~~it~~ ~~ps~~ tourism rhythm centrality cul-
tures colours food fakeness cut fashion east ~~es~~ station
silence fences cut trees emptiness railway nothingness
park bricks wall industries warehouses chimney bricks
market stones parking murals narrowness food smells
banks tourism ~~us~~ silence secondary history goods shops
richness market Spitalfields colours fashion newness
glass oldness tourism city roof inside ~~his~~ fullness sky-
scrapers glass newness trading moneys banks city market
~~l~~ ~~gr~~ limits traffic walls railways construction steel
future newness filling rhythm cranes ~~rks~~ arch steel glass
banks station square public richness newness suites
~~es~~ glass skyscrapers newness modernity trains ~~ki~~ pas-
sage narrowness traffic arches people crowd darkness
~~is~~ ~~hi~~ crowd station roof inside clocks cities trains pos-
sibility highrises ~~in-between~~ emptiness goods ware-
houses docks bridges arches silence wires ~~gaps~~
bridges cut traffic rhythm shops bridges fences car
park murals in-between silence emptiness objects noth-
ingness directions arches city cranes fences cars
traffic ~~glass~~ bricks highrises narrowness emptiness
trading collage gap ~~history~~ newness mirrors narrow-
ness brick ~~collage~~ nothingness emptiness objects
confusion

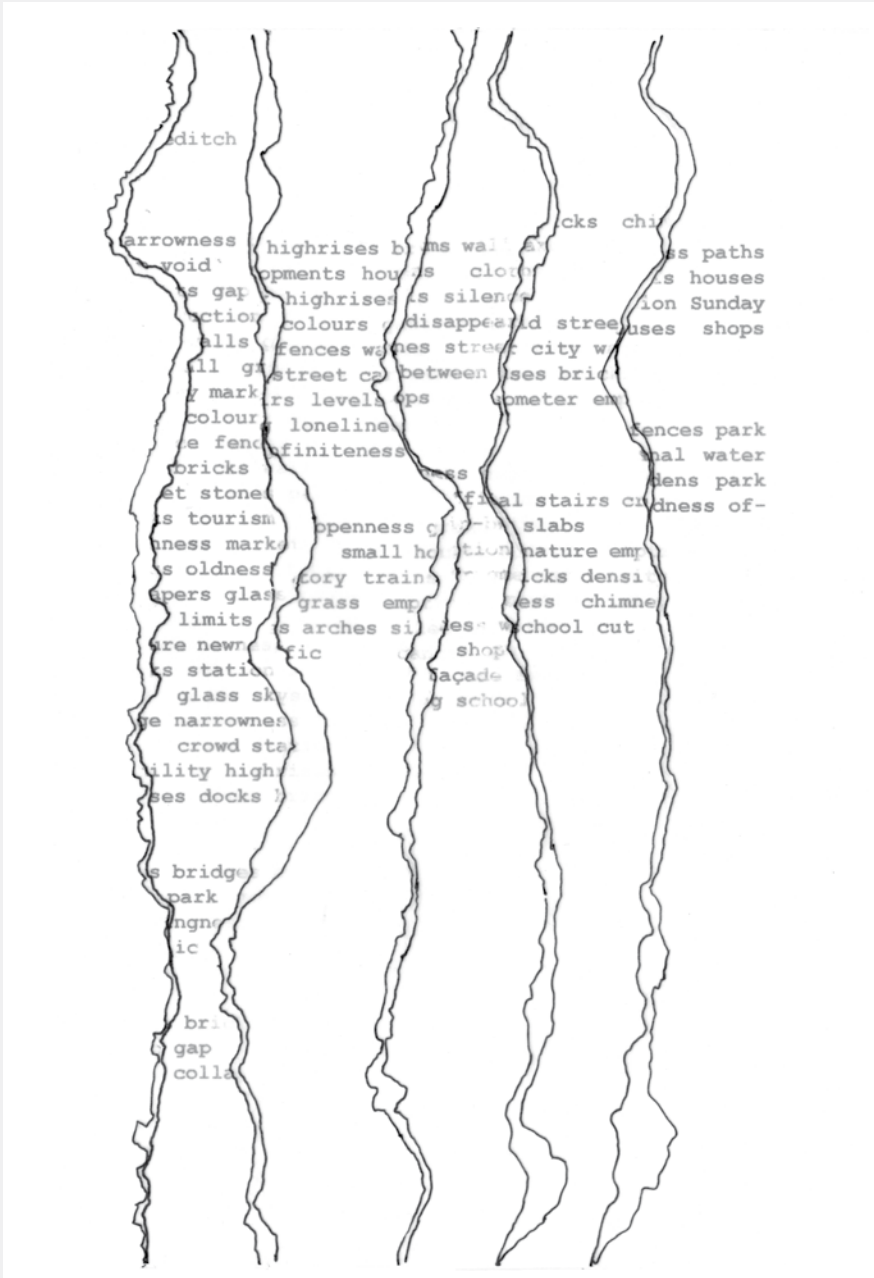
Behind the page on which the ordinariness of the metropolis is inscribed in stark words, and between the worn stone pavements and separating walls, memories and **fragments** of other stories are preserved unnoticed. Things are hidden between the elements of a structure: a **place**, an object, a sound or a **fragment** from another time or **place**. These remains are difficult to understand and locate since they **represent** a remote memory of the past as well as a present enigmatic reality, a forgotten corner of the city, a gap or simply an **erasure**.

collage nothingness emptiness objects confusion nar-
rowness bricks closeness limits traffic walls railways
construction steel future newness filling rhythm cranes

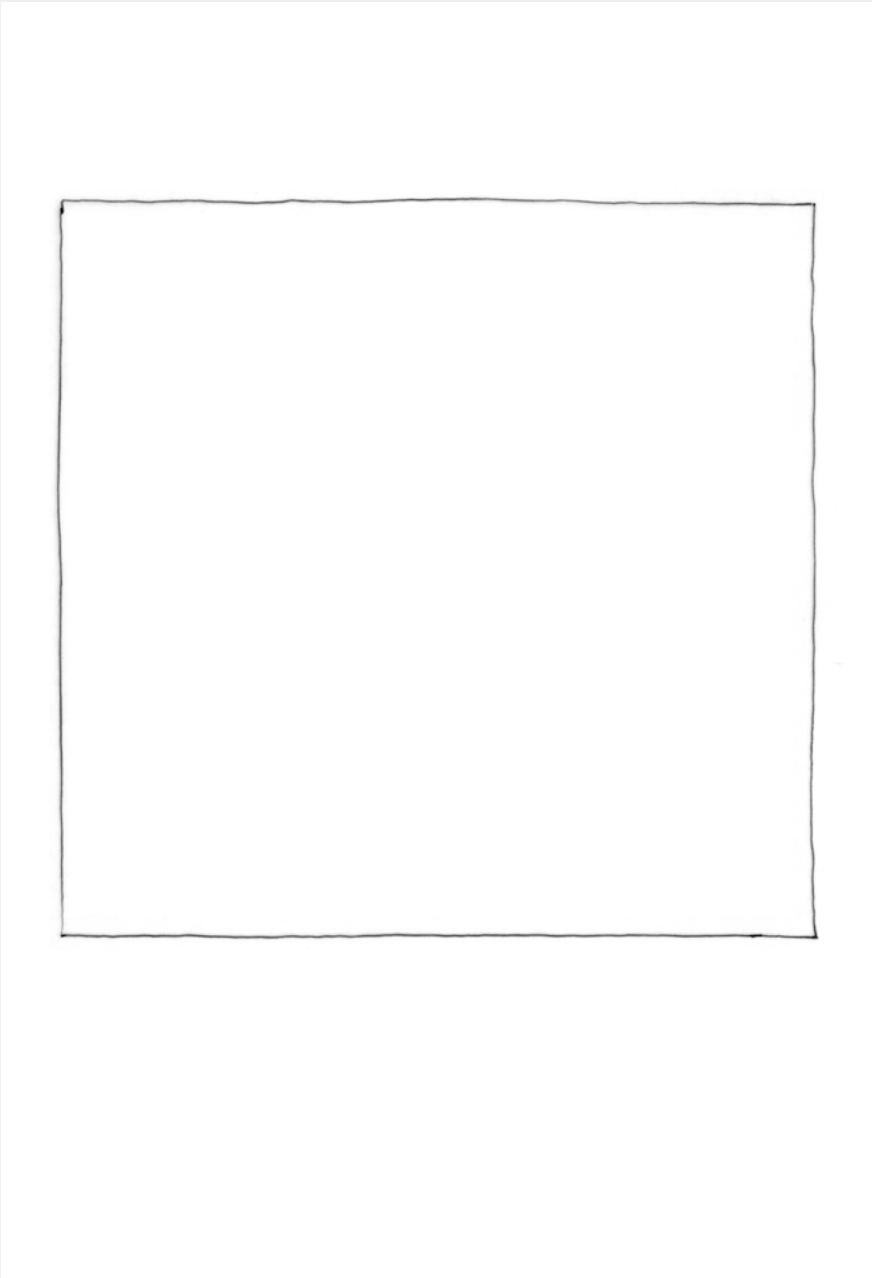
street noise gate entrance checkpoint **office** narrowness
antechamber waiting information corridor stairs **search**
office **talking** **darkness** **bathrooms** **storage** **corridor** **cell**
elevator **cell** **walls** **corridor** **repetition** **closeness**
recreation **diningroom** **isolation** **narrowness** **darkness** **al-**
evator **rhythm** **silence** antechamber waiting visit bath-
rooms bar openness garden playroom nursery playground
children-visit silence paths stairs landing light
corridor **office** **recreation** **changing** **bathrooms** **diningroom**
storage **elevator** **rhythm** **repetition** entrance **storage**
fullness **kitchen** **fridge** **laundry** **bathroom** **darkness** **of-**
fice **corridor** **elevator** **parking** **installations** **play-**
ground **openness** **showers** **corridor** **bathrooms** **garden** **path**
gym **stairs** **office** entrance **office** **bathrooms** **library**
reading-room **class** **antechamber** **openness** **light** **computer-**
room entrance playground class office bathrooms colors
openness garden path **kitchen** **storage** diningroom sleeping
installation nursery corridor stairs **cell** **corridor**
nursery **recreation** **playroom** **kitchen** **diningroom** **colors**
garden **light** **path** **silence** **workshop** **corridor** **changing**
bathrooms **elevator** **office** **storage** **landing** entrance **an-**
techamber **chapel** **room** **office** **closeness** **corridor** **talking-**
room entrance waiting visit **storage** **office** **light** **den-**
tist **bathroom** **corridor** **cell** **changing** **antechamber** **rhythm**
entrance visit **corridor** **office** **closeness** **isolation**
bathroom **cell** **storage** **elevator** **antechamber** **corri-**
dor **cell** **storage** **office** **visit** **isolation** **walls** **recreation**
stairs **landing** **closeness** **cell** **antechamber** **recreation**
openness **shop** **diningroom** **kitchen** **storage** **corridor**

traffic gap trains bridge sky void railway bridge slabs
highrises newness street gap noise fences inside enclo-
sure cranes ground construction destruction

VISITOR



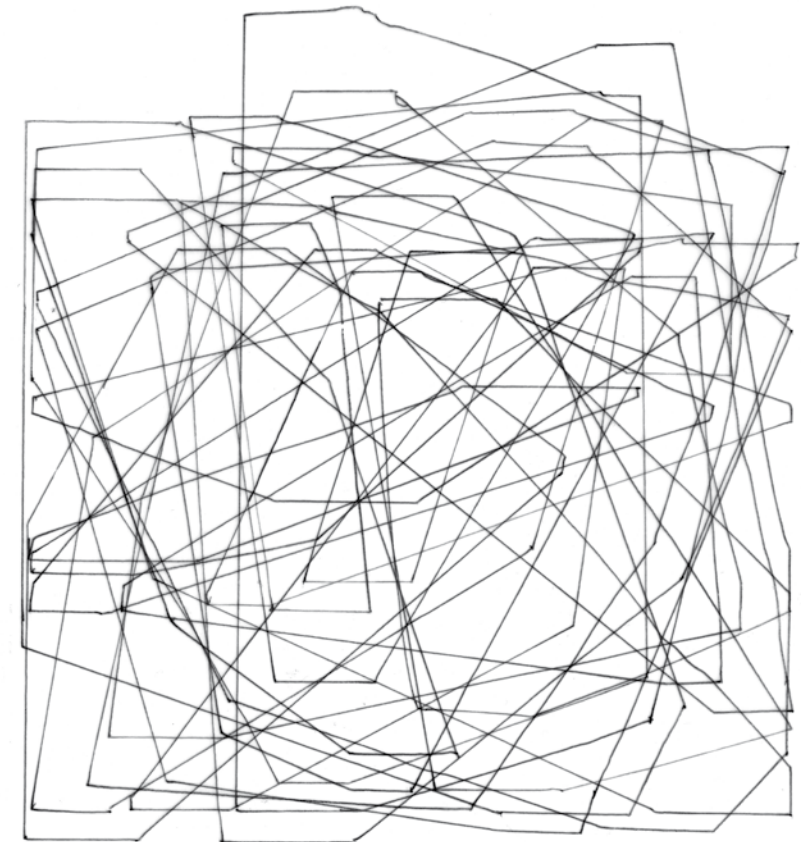
Defining **borders** is the tool used to determine within the urban fabric what is superfluous and what is worth keeping, what is necessary and what can be forgotten. Creating **borders** is a way of deciding the **place** where things will be initiated, the **space** where events can occur, things emerge, people move, where **traces** can be left behind and memories created. **Borders** are the limits beyond which the unexpected can unfold and the invisible becomes apparent.



Shoreditch

narrowness bricks closeness trains sky traffic bridge
 gap void railway bridge slabs highrises newness door
 streets gap noise fences inside enclosure cranes ground
 construction destruction city cranes skyscrapers
 voids walls gap sky traffic history openness voids park-
 ing wall ground gravel chimney working construction
 railway market Sunday tourism rhythm centrality cul-
 tures colours food fakeness cut fashion east station
 silence fences cut trees emptiness railway nothingness
 park bricks wall industries warehouses chimney bricks
 market stones parking murals narrowness food smells
 banks tourism silence secondary history goods shops
 richness market Spitalfields colours fashion newness
 glass oldness tourism city roof inside fullness sky-
 scrapers glass newness trading moneys banks city market
 limits traffic walls railways construction steel
 future newness filling rhythm cranes arch steel glass
 banks station square public richness newness suites
 glass skyscrapers newness modernity trains pas-
 sage narrowness traffic arches people crowd darkness
 crowd station roof inside clocks cities trains pos-
 sibility highrises in-between emptiness goods ware-
 houses docks bridges arches silence wires
 gaps bridges cut traffic rhythm shops bridges fences
 car park murals in-between silence emptiness objects
 nothingness directions arches city cranes fences cars
 traffic
 glass bricks highrises narrowness emptiness trading col-
 lage gap history newness mirrors narrowness brick
 collage nothingness emptiness objects confusion

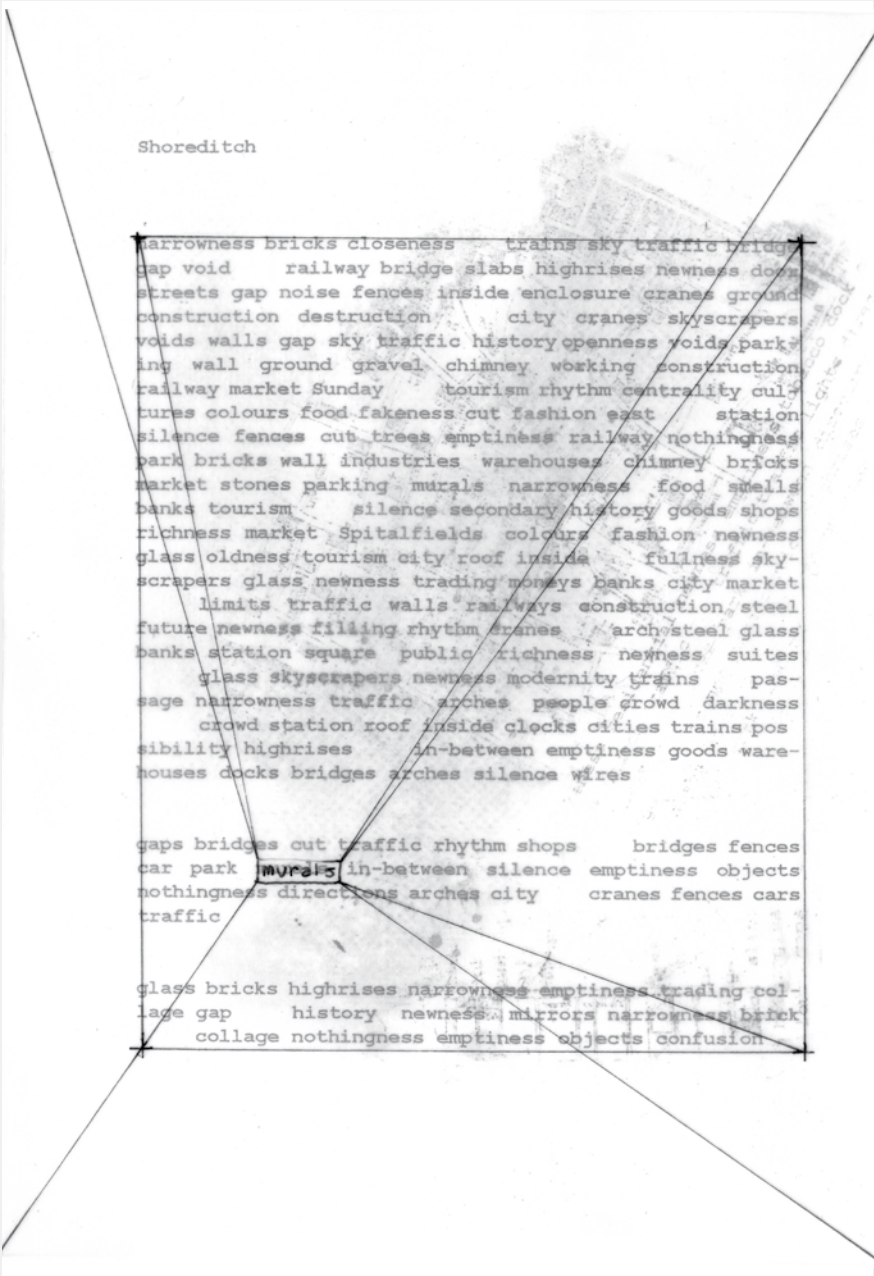
The city is an accumulation of interweaving stories. In this agglomeration of plots, re-
 ccurring parts are always in transformation, and multiform realities that share a simple
 originating idea are **represented** in countless different ways. However, there are also el-
 ements that are unique and static, specific, timeless and part of our memory: these are
 the mythical memories. While walking in the street, opportunities for getting lost emerge
 from the infinite overlapping possibilities. You turn at a crossroad and chance upon one
 of the most beautiful cityscapes; you stop somewhere little known and remote and end
 up home; you encounter something and either get trapped in a dead end or eventually
 find the exit.



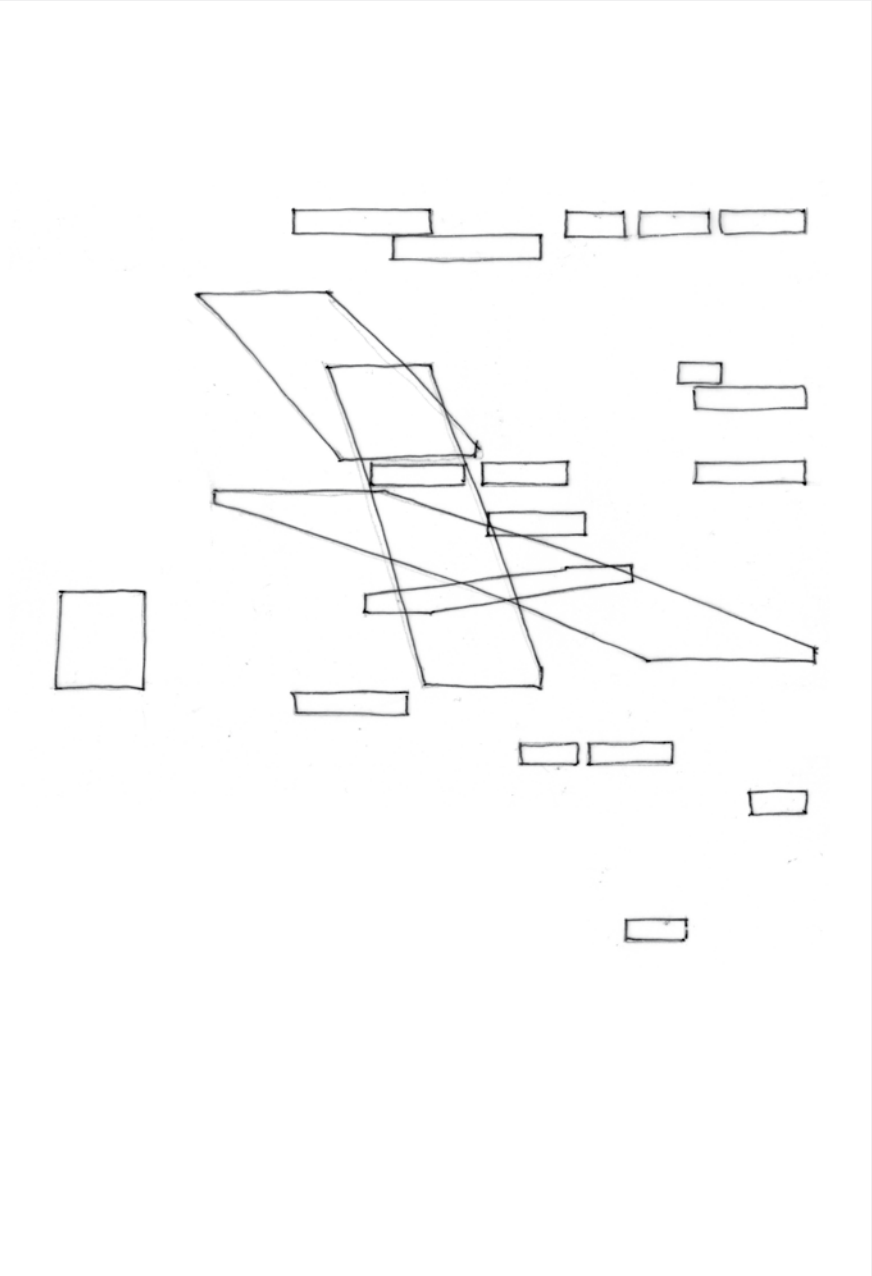


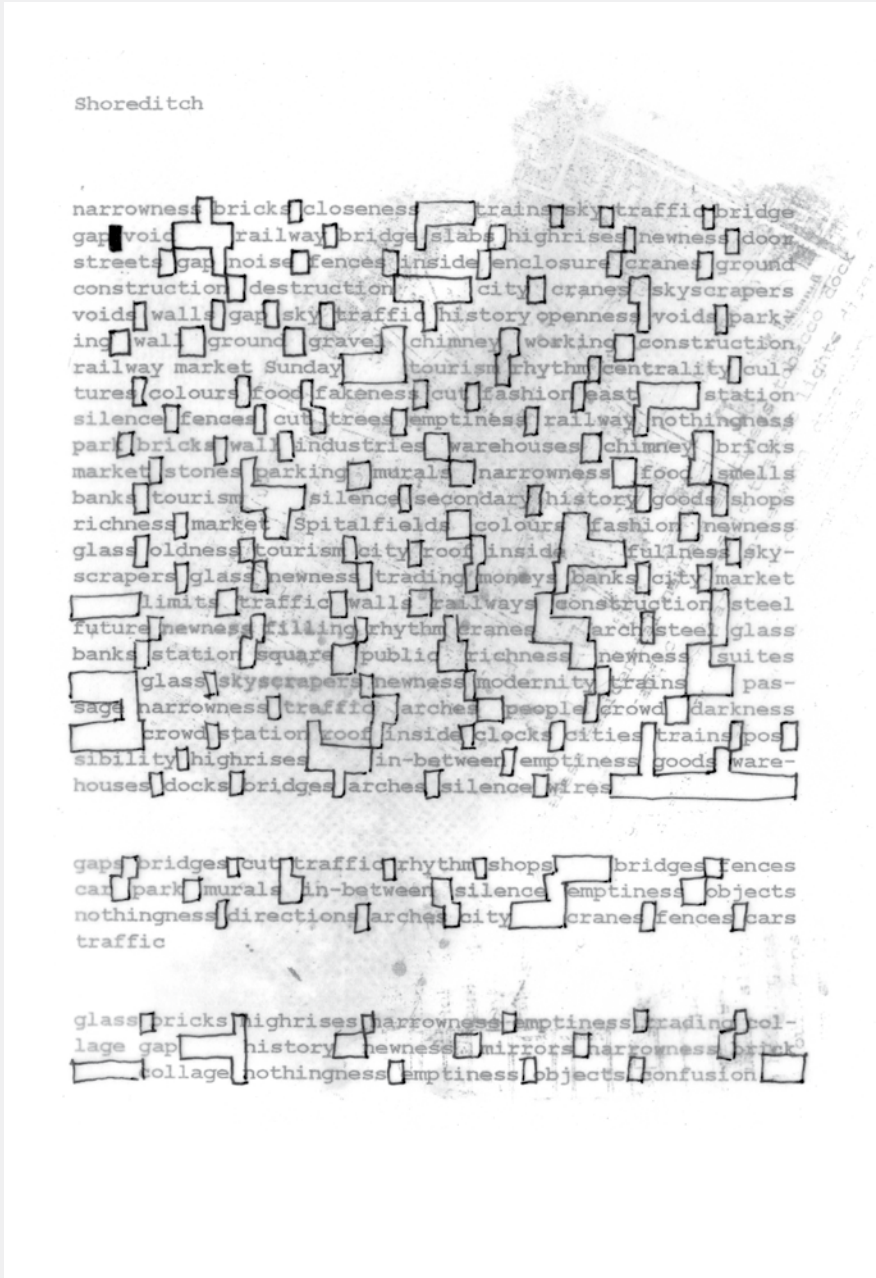
The quasi-musical arrangement of the parts of an architectural **narration**, important and visible to a greater or lesser degree, allows specific **rhythmical** structures and qualities of **space** to be perceived: the way volumes succeed each other, the thickness of the walls, their **repetition**, the visual qualities of the materials, the dimensions of the tiles, columns and beams. Everything could be important when constructing a spatial **narrative**: its starting point, pauses, moments of tension, ramps and stairs, open and quiet **spaces**, every smaller element constituting the functional phrases within the main plot. The **rhythmic** tensions sometimes become more important than the actual object itself, dematerialising into patterns of repeated surfaces, lines and shadows, or into an almost graphical arrangement of signs.

collage. nothingness emptiness, objects confusion.
 narrowness, bricks closeness, limits. traffic. walls. rail-
 ways construction, steel future, newness filling, rhythm.
 cranes.
 street noise, gate entrance, checkpoint office. narrowness.
 antechamber waiting, information. corridor. stairs.
 search office, talking darkness, bathrooms. storage. corri-
 dor. cell. elevator.
 cell walls, corridor repetition, closeness. recreation din-
 ingroom. isolation. narrowness. darkness. elevator, rhythm
 silence.
 antechamber waiting, visit: bathrooms, bar, openness, gar-
 den, playroom, nursery, playground, children. silence paths;
 stairs. landing. light.
 corridor: office, recreation, changing, bathrooms, dining-
 room; storage, elevator; rhythm repetition.
 entrance: storage fullness, kitchen, fridge, laundry, bath-
 room. darkness. office, corridor, elevator, parking, instal-
 lations.
 entrance: office, bathrooms; library reading; class, ante-
 chamber. openness light. computer.
 entrance playground; class, office, bathrooms; colors open-
 ness, garden path; kitchen storage, diningroom, sleeping.
 installation. nursery. corridor, stairs.
 cell. corridor; nursery recreation, playroom. kitchen din-
 ingroom. colors garden light path: silence.
 workshop, corridor: changing bathrooms. elevator. office,
 storage, landing.
 entrance antechamber, chapel, room, office. closeness cor-
 ridor. talking.
 entrance, waiting, visit, storage. office. light. dentist
 bathroom; corridor, cell, changing, antechamber: rhythm.
 entrance, visit. corridor: office. closeness isolation;
 bathroom; cell; storage. elevator. antechamber.
 corridor, cell. storage, office, visit. isolation walls.
 recreation. stairs, landing: closeness.
 cell. antechamber: recreation openness; shop, diningroom,
 kitchen, storage, corridor.
 traffic. gap. trains bridge, sky void, railway bridge. slabs
 highrises. newness, street gap, noise, fences. inside en-
 closure. cranes, ground, construction destruction.

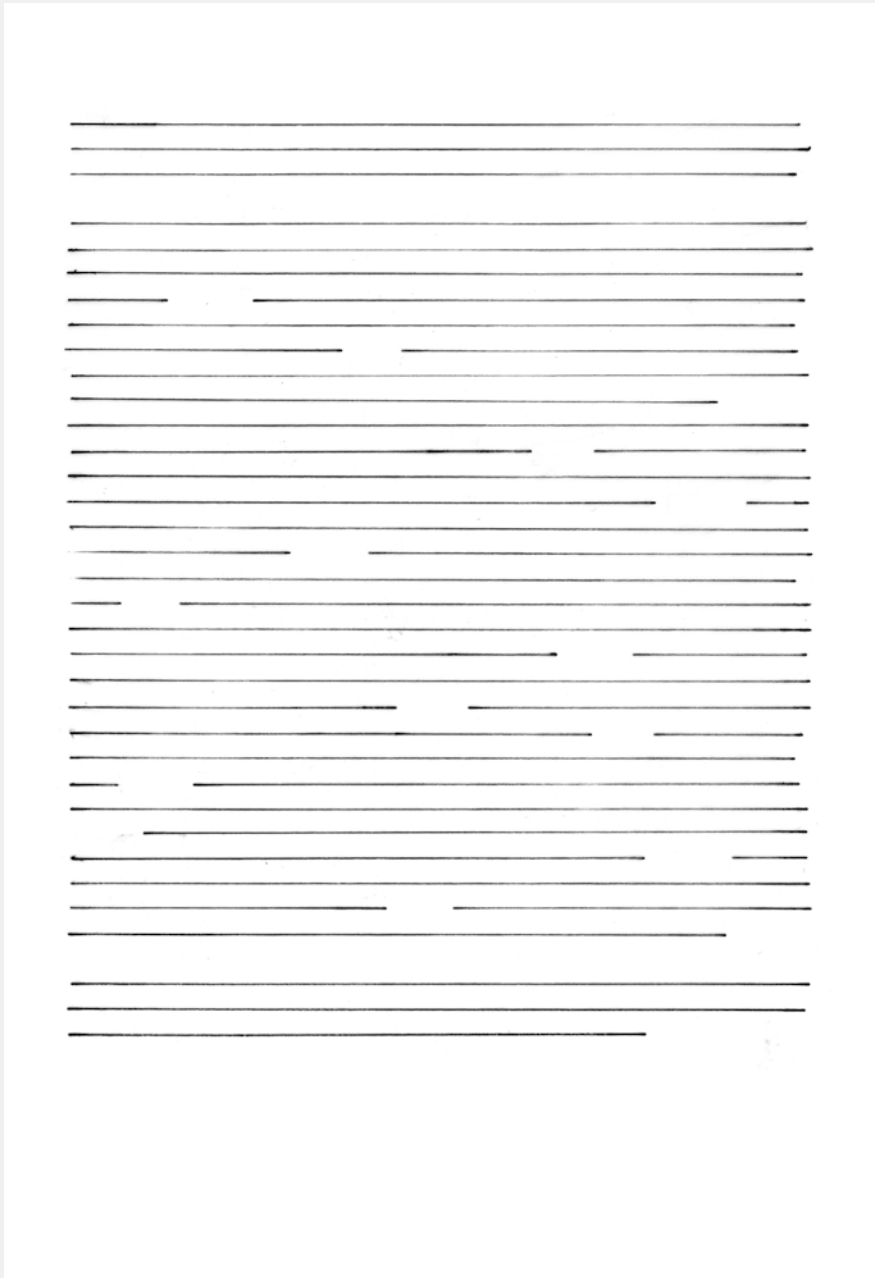


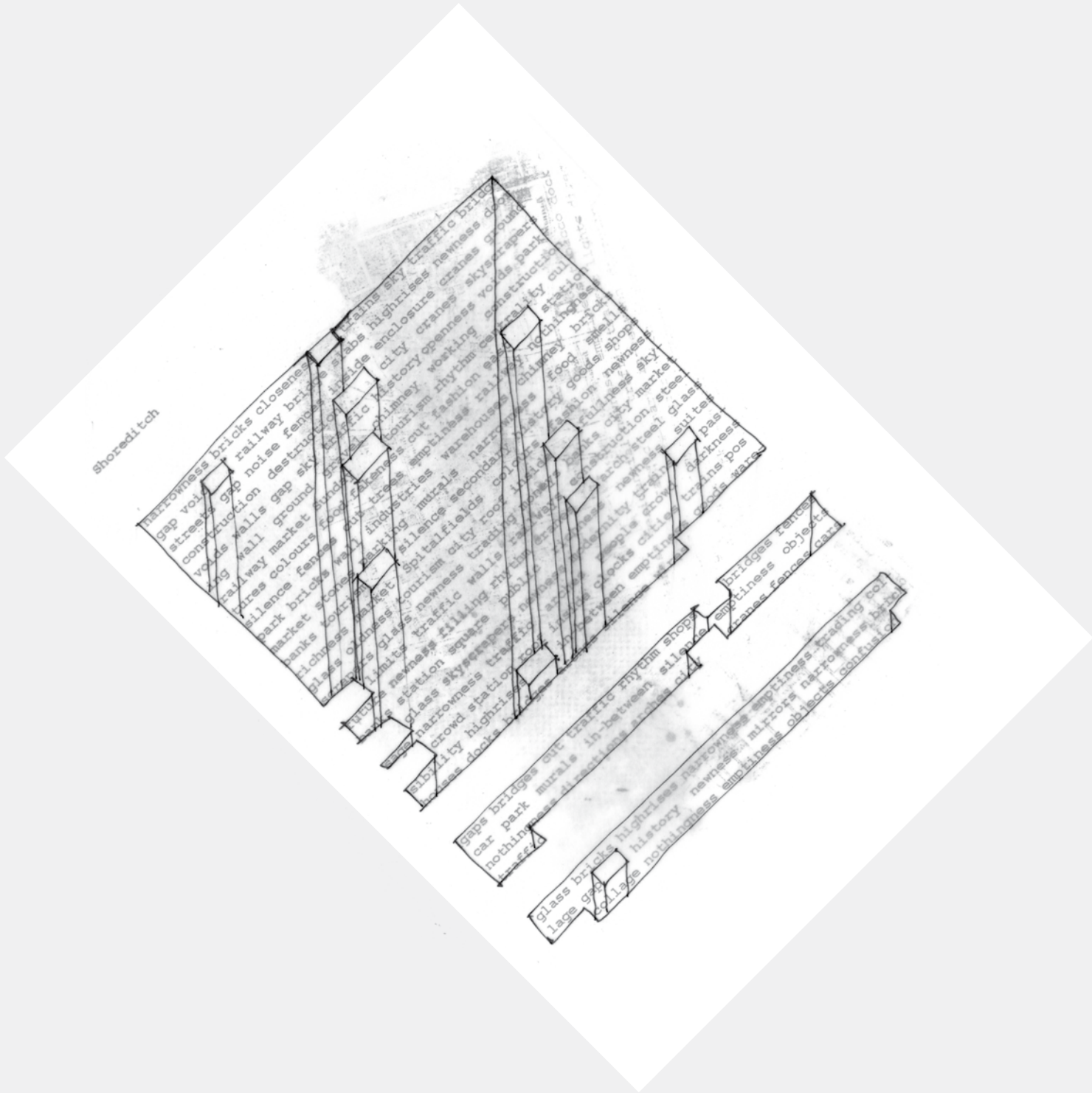
Spaces and places circumscribed by subtle lines drawn between absence and possibility, between images and texts or words and signs. Within the relationship between architecture and silence, it is the threshold between one story and another that separates and unifies, allowing the connection between otherwise distant spaces to happen and establish a narration.



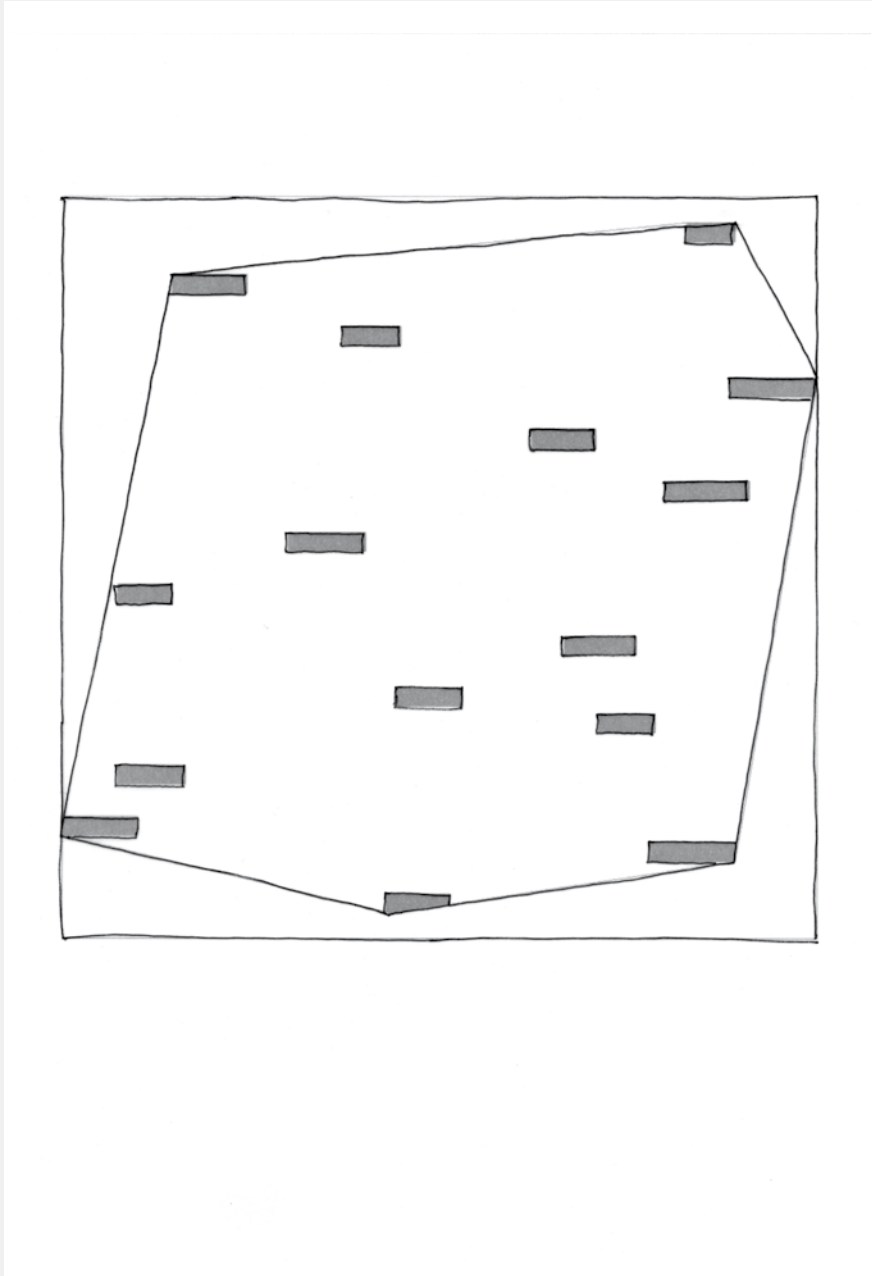


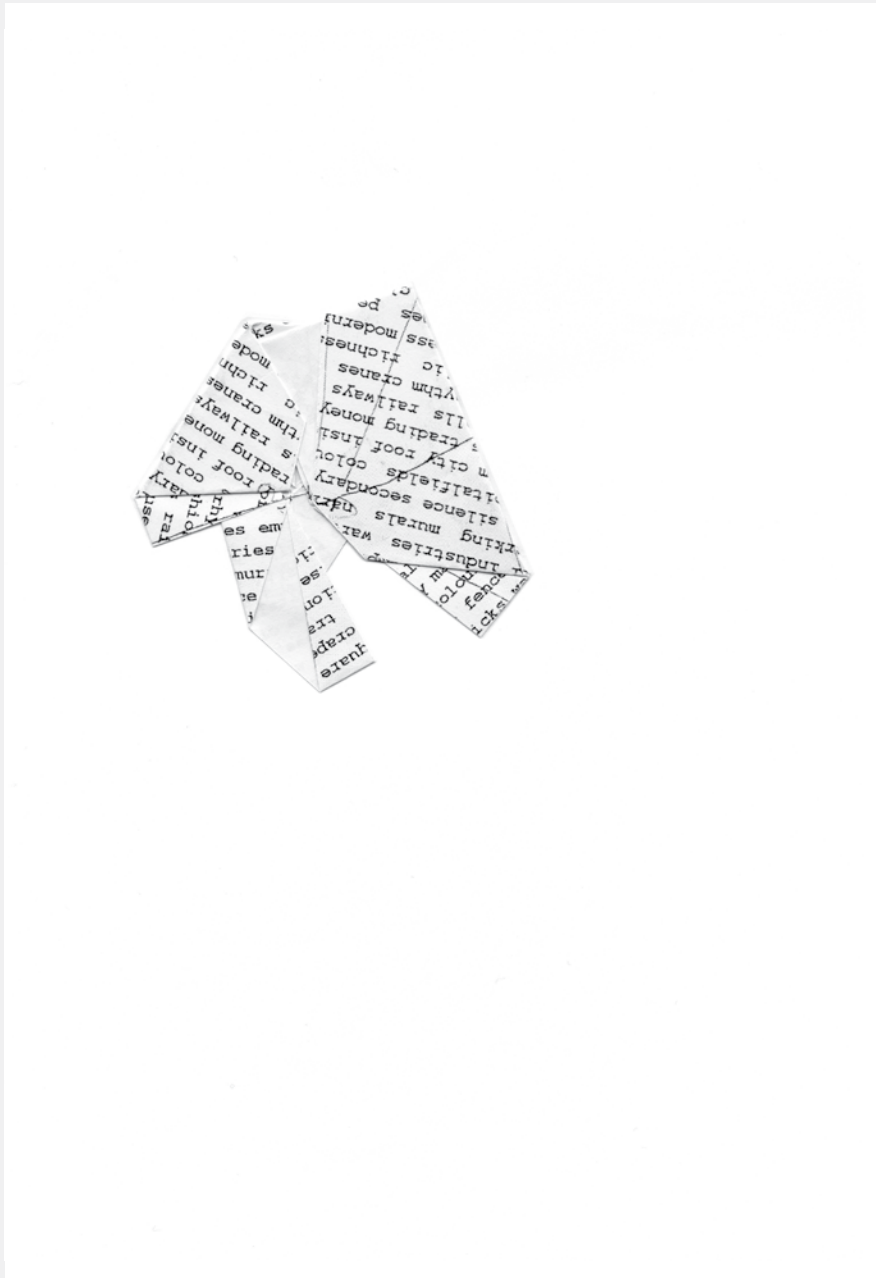
In any architectural composition, the unused and undefined spaces where people can just stop and have a look around, have a chat, discover the plot of a spatial narrative, elaborate new ideas in the peaceful emptiness, relax and dream about being free from the persistent structure of forms and spaces, are of great importance and at the base of an architecture that could be truly comprehensible and meaningful.



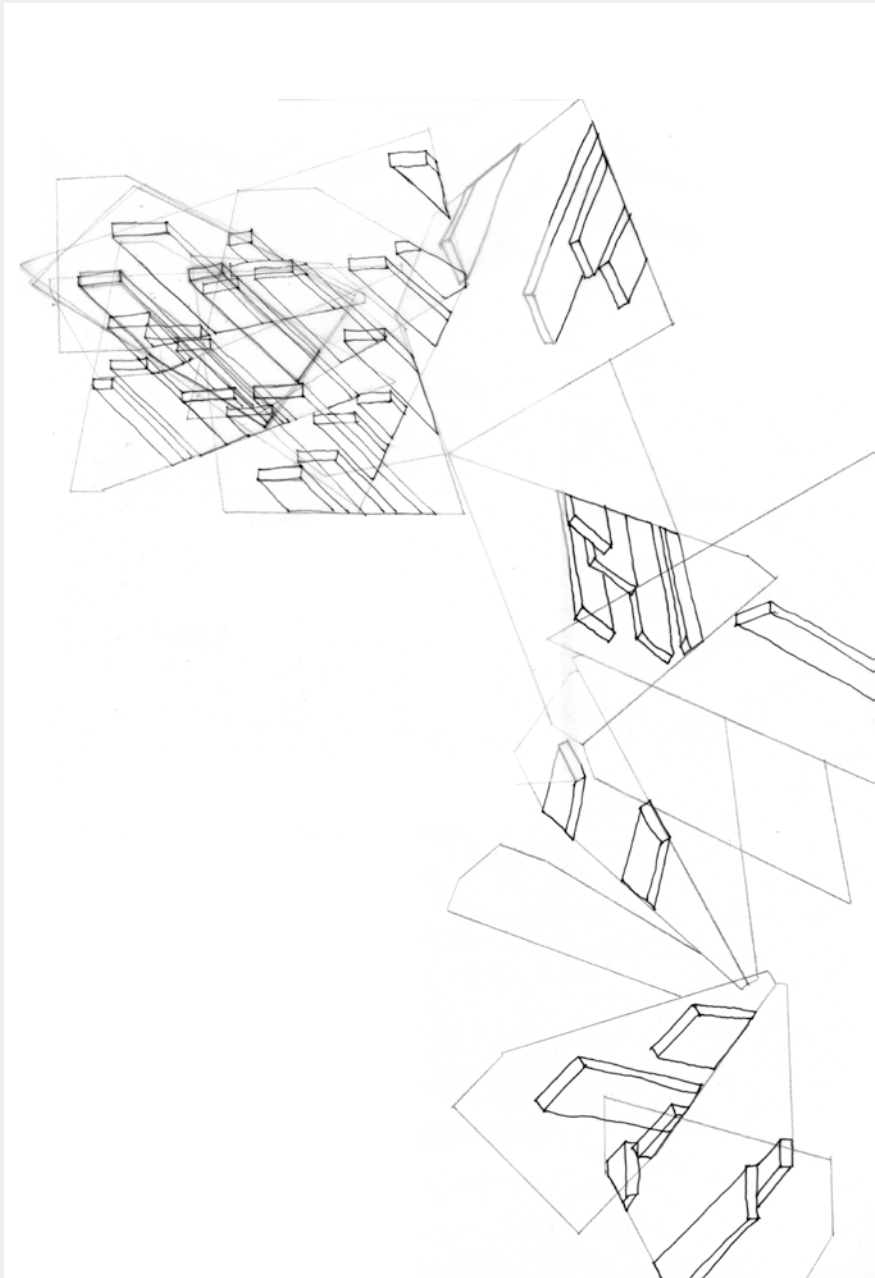


The heterogeneous, peculiar, unexpected, invisible or hidden spaces present in the city are revealed by a change in perspective that is only possible within a new approach towards the canonical understanding of the urban form and its approximate representation. When reality is decoded as a proper formal language it will offer the possibility of writing specific spatial narrations established within a set of elements and forms intentionally framed and reclaimed from the city as a whole.





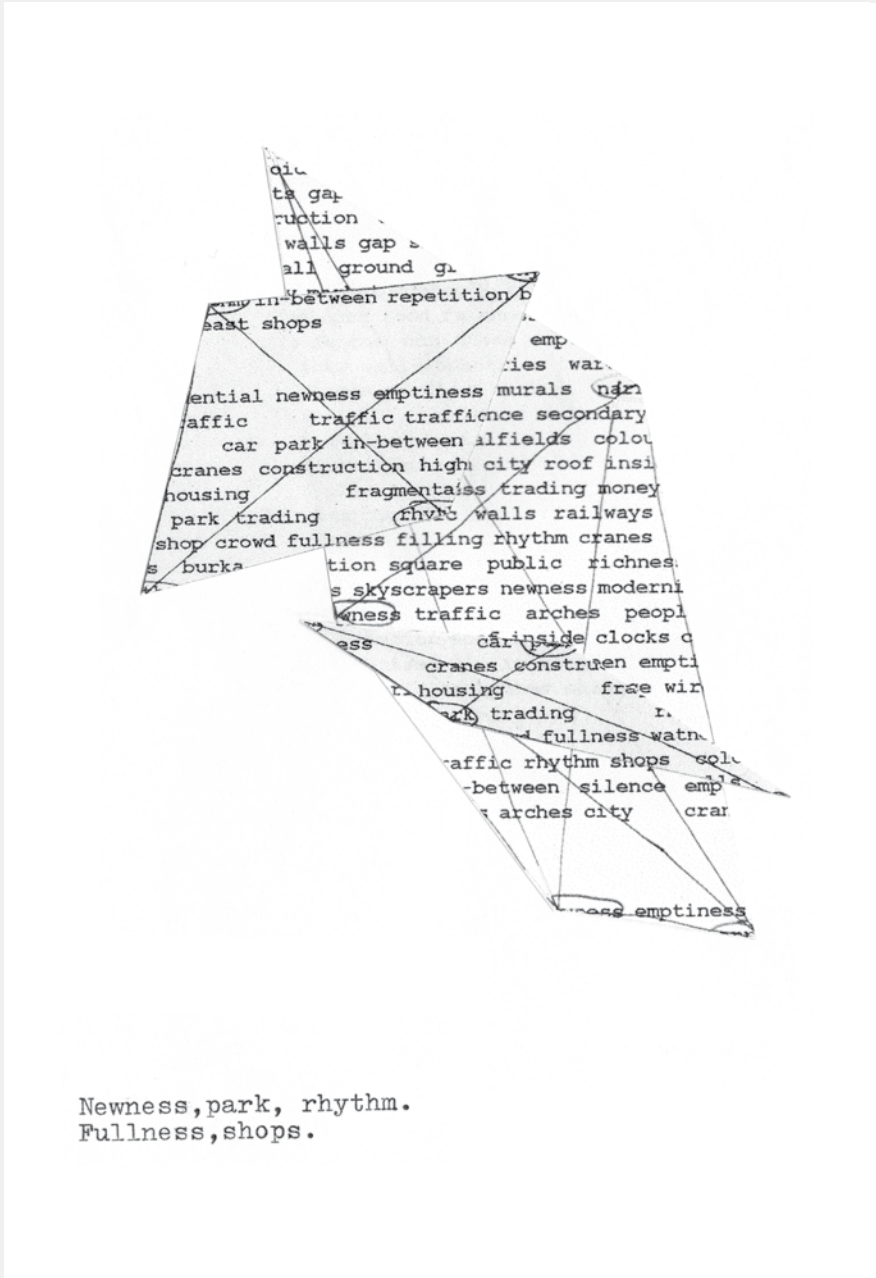
Some **spaces** are comparable to public squares or monuments in the way they kindle recollections and memories. **Voids** are the repositories of **traces** left by people moving, events happening, time passing, history evolving, stories being **narrated**. In these **places**, time starts to fold as the past overlaps the present and becomes something unique; in other words, capable of being immutable and multiform at the same time.



THE CITY

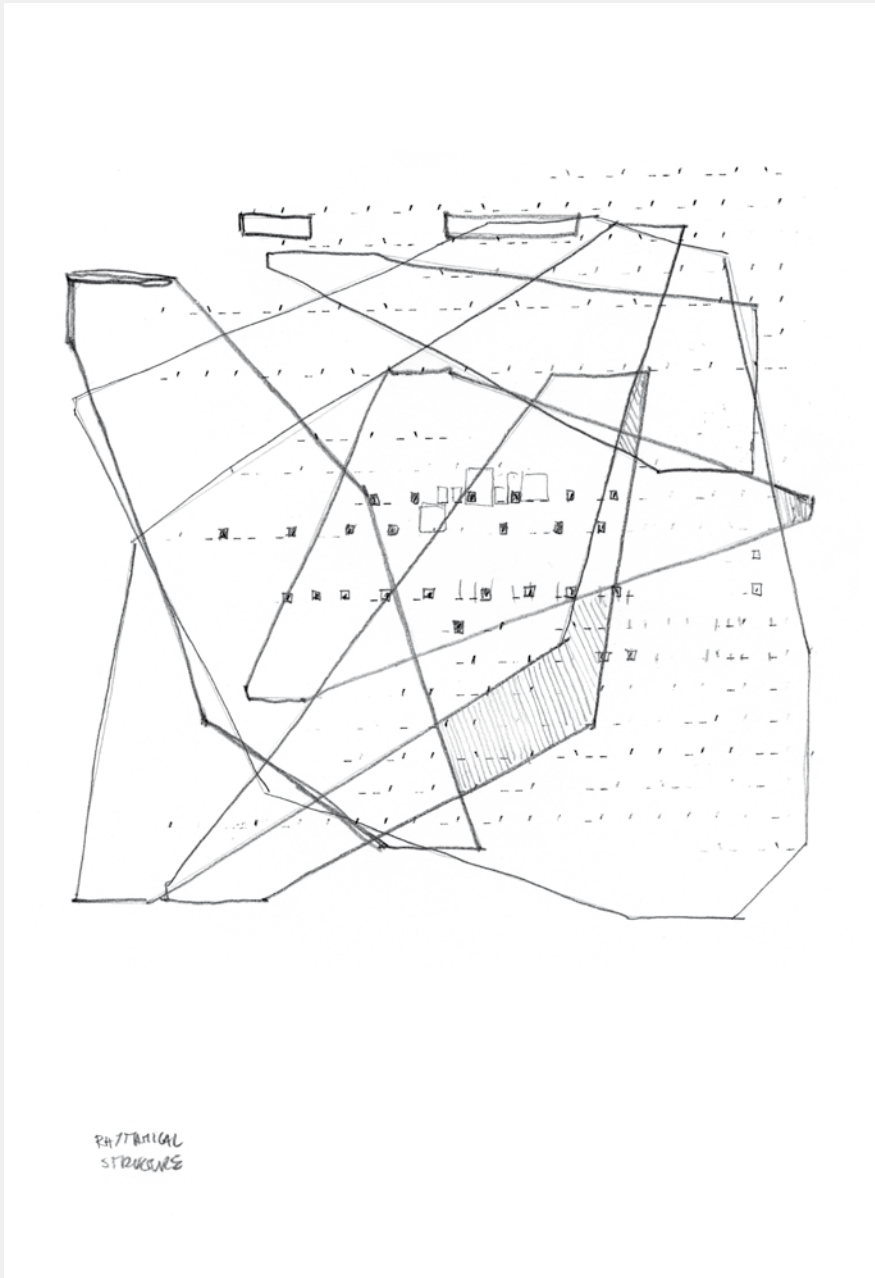
Composition 1

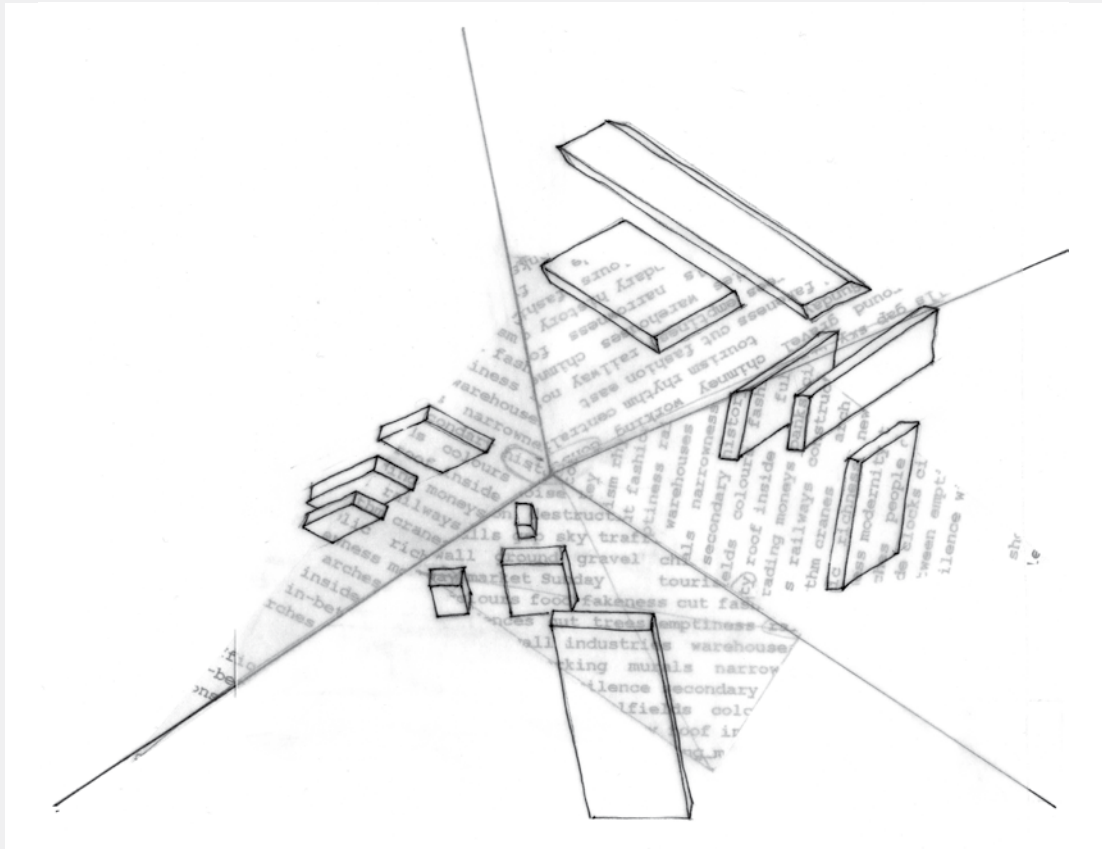
Sequenced Forms



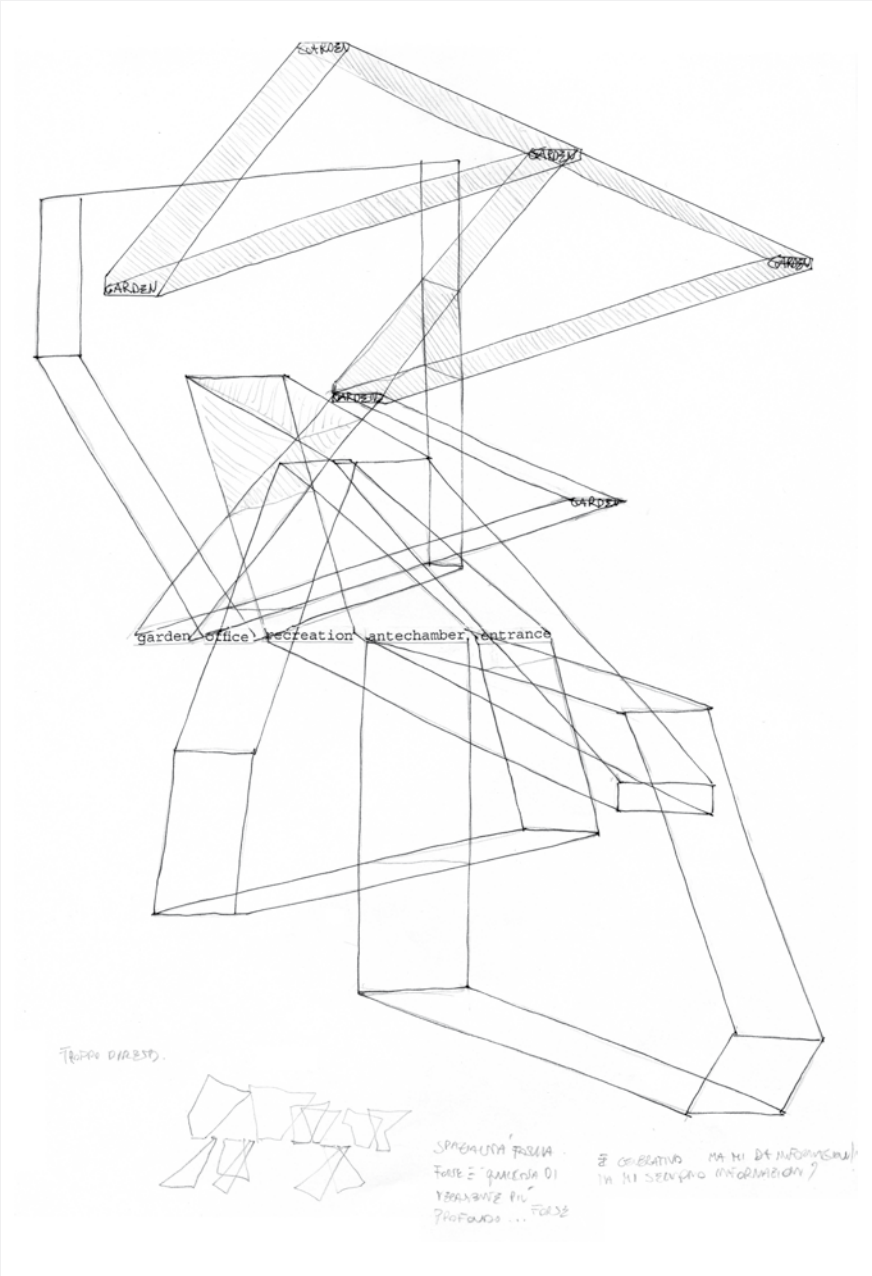
A PRISON

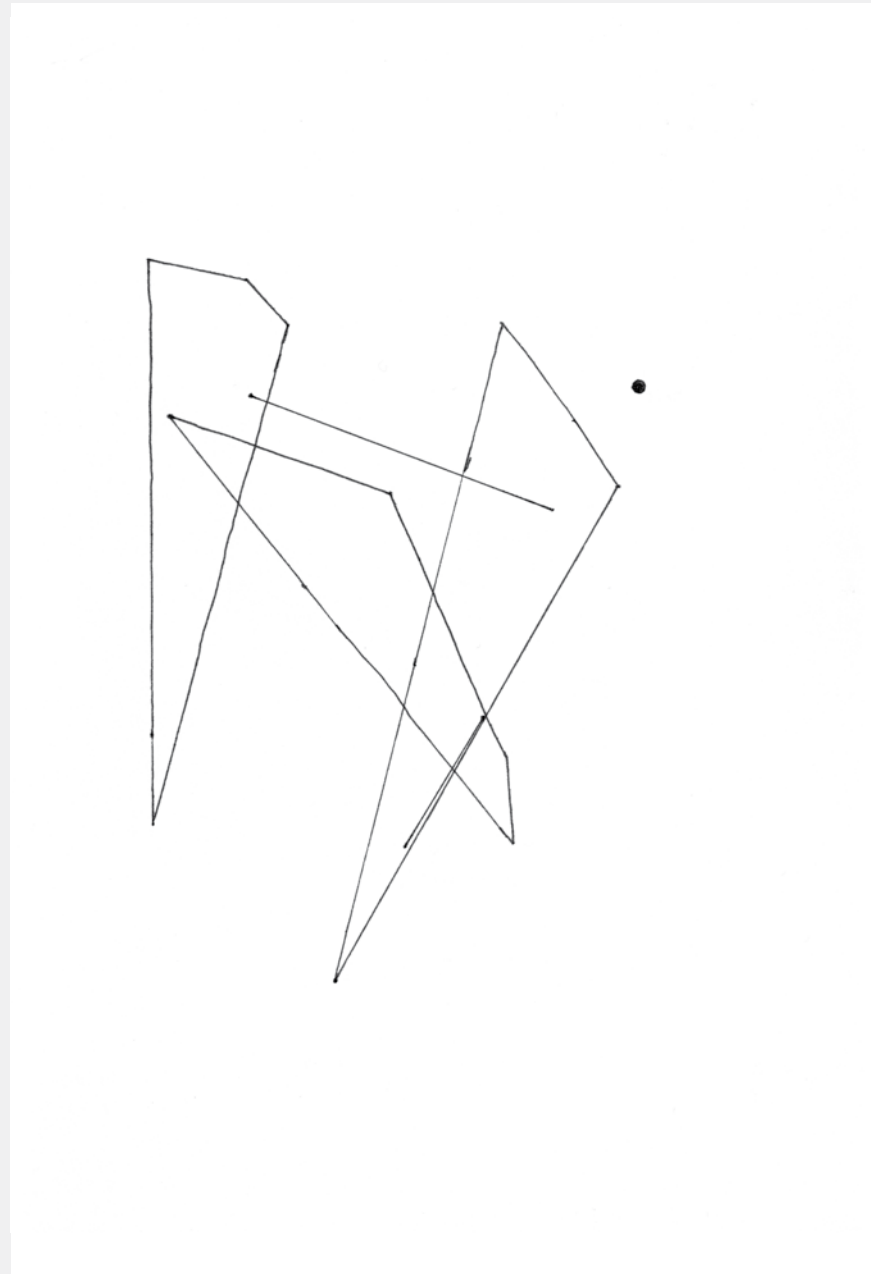
The formulation of systematic relationships between a number of defined elements chosen from the multitude of possibilities is always a process of trial and error: combining, separating, overlapping, flipping and sequencing them in order to get as close as possible to a formal representation of a concept, idea, object or memory. These elements are therefore sequenced and composed to become meaningful pieces within the narration, a composition of elements tending towards a form, and thus conveying a meaning.



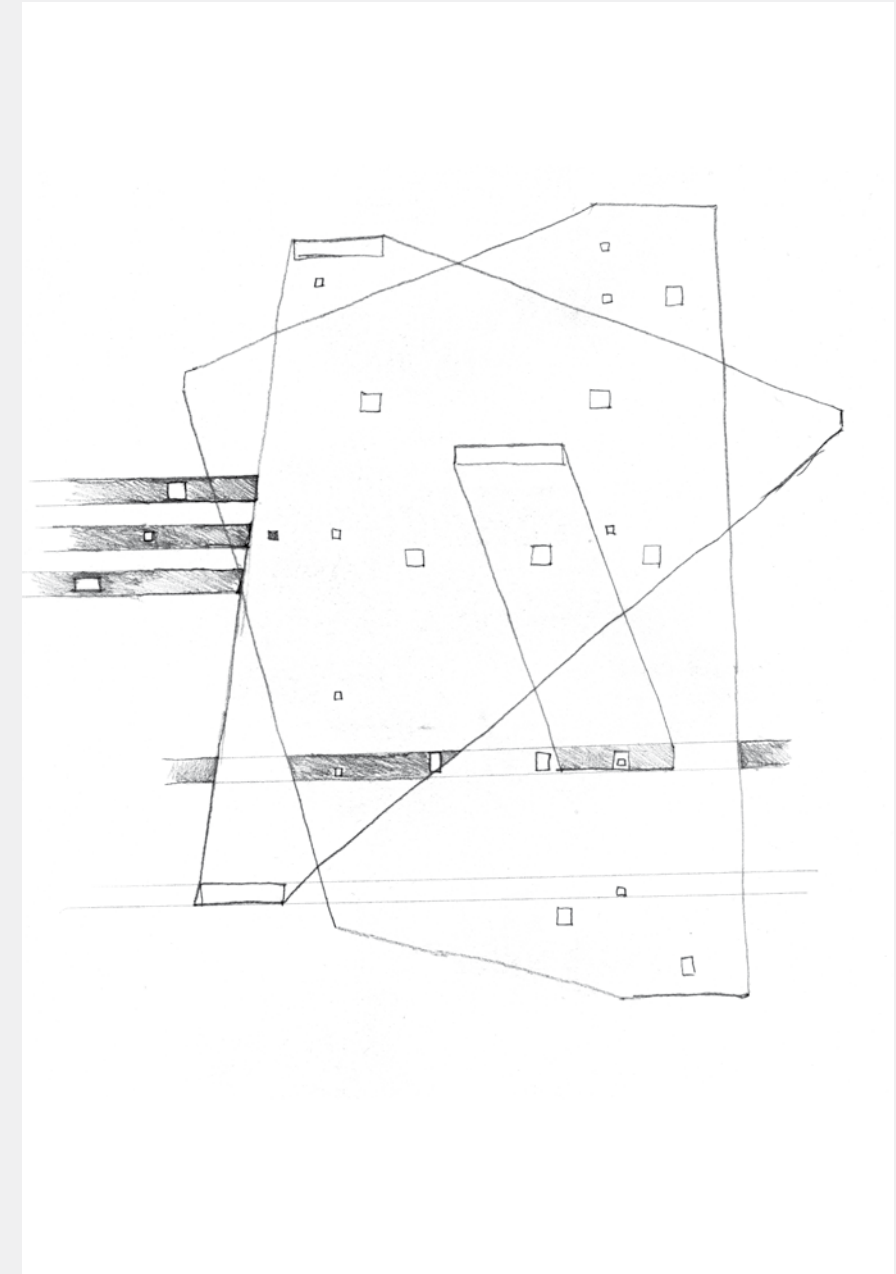


By following a given rule or set of criteria, the composition of different spaces, volumes or architectural elements leads to a system of internal relationships. A flat notational representation becomes volumetric and temporal when these relations are interpreted into a narration of spaces and volumes: an ordered sequence of fragments suddenly rendering familiar forms within unexpected spatial arrangements; banal and ordinary pieces re-composed and framed within a sequence of compositional procedures.





The abstraction of the sequenced elements into a sign notation reduces the ordinariness and triviality of the raw fragments into an understandable representation. A new and unpredictable composition emerges and results in an enigmatic form which could be comprehensible, whose principles, compositional rules, narrative logic and proportions could perhaps be understood, but without really being able to say how and from where they originated.



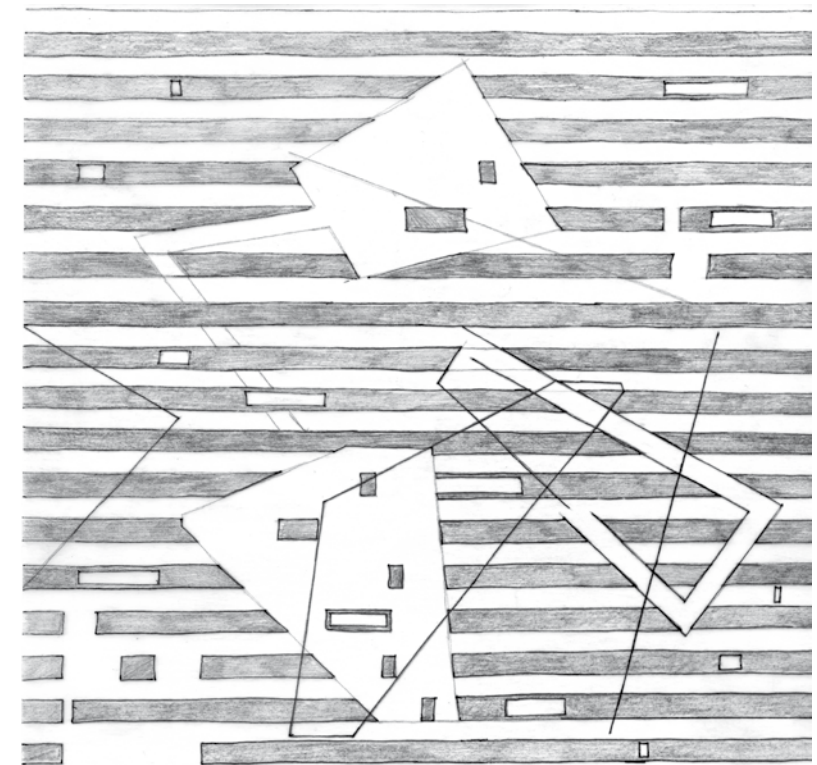
Shoreditch

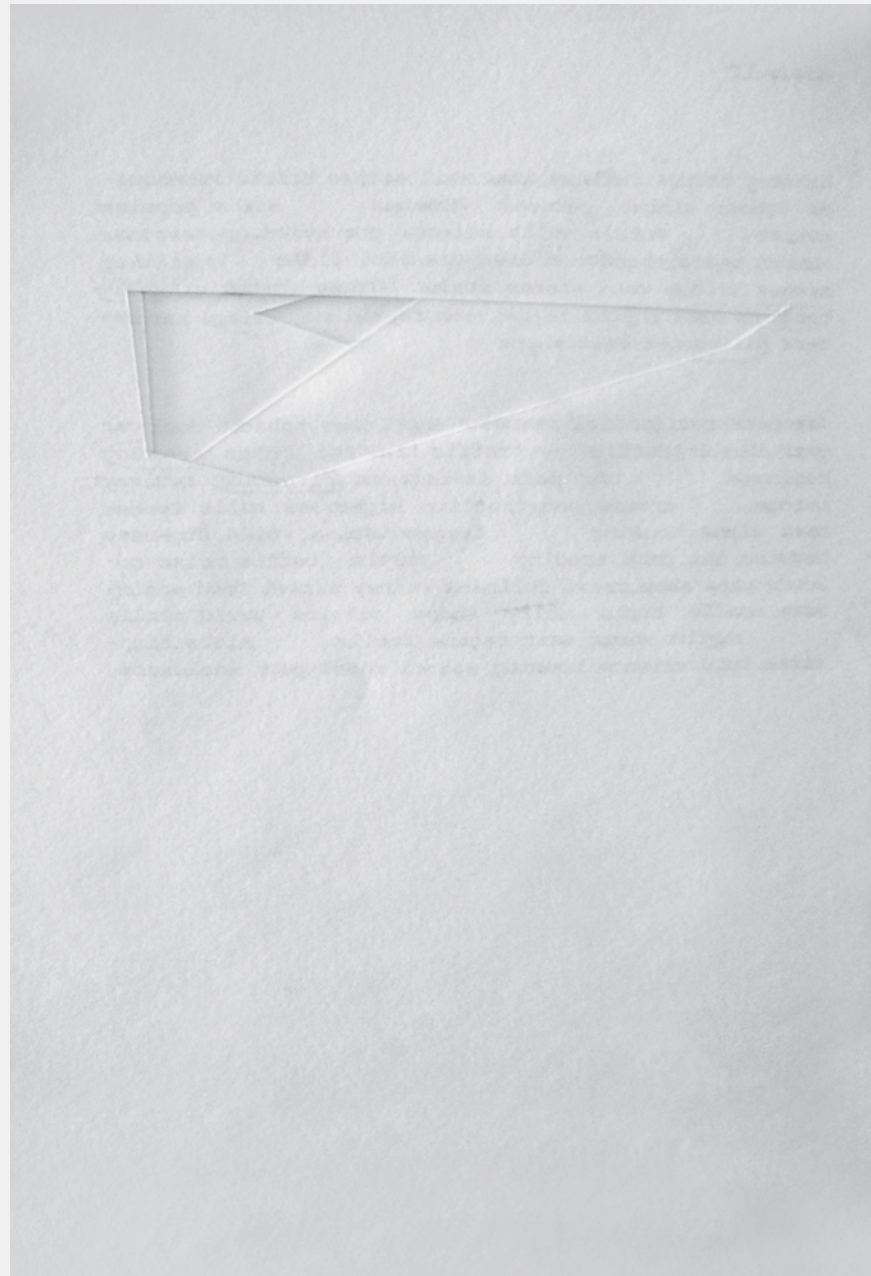
narrowness bricks closeness trains sky traffic bridge
 gap void railway bridge slabs highrises newness door
 streets gap noise fences inside enclosure cranes ground
 construction destruction city cranes skyscrapers
 voids walls gap sky traffic history openness voids park-
 ing wall ground chimney working construction
 railway market tourism rhythm centrality cul-
 tures colours cut fashion east station
 silence fences fitness railway nothingness
 park bricks warehouses chimneys bricks
 market stones parks narrowness food smells
 banks tourism history goods shops
 richness market spaces hours fashion newness
 glass oldness tourism fullness sky-
 scrapers glass newness banks city market
 limits traffic walls construction steel
 future newness filling rhythm arch steel glass
 banks station square public newness suites
 glass skyscrapers newness trains pas-
 sage narrowness traffic arches darkness
 crowd station roof inside clouds trains pos-
 sibility highrises in-between empty goods ware-
 houses docks bridges arches silence walls

gaps bridges cut traffic rhythm shops bridges
 car park murals in-between silence emptiness objects
 nothingness directions arches city cranes fences cars
 traffic

glass bricks highrises narrowness emptiness trading col-
 lage gap history newness mirrors narrowness brick
 collage nothingness emptiness objects confusion

This formal **representation** manifests its novelty in an unexpected structure of **spaces**. The **sequence** of elements unfolds in the existing urban texture, assuming a new value within an old and unreadable context, demarcating or occupying a **space** where the construction of new meanings is possible, due to an altered logic and a system of **grammatical** structures.





The composition is therefore resolved in a new interpretation of elements, **spaces**, forms and relationships, bound together in a unique **narration** of architectural forms within the city. The architecture becomes **representative** of a specific idea of city, disclosing its true formal reasons, **rhythms**, remote historical memories and underlying meanings in an understandable unfolding of forms, volumes, structures and **spaces**, thus reconstructing the plot of a formal **narrative** in the **fragmentary** urban fabric.

Shoreditch

narrowness bricks closeness trains sky traffic bridge
 gap void railway bridge slabs highrises newness door
 streets gap noise fences inside enclosure cranes ground
 construction destruction city cranes skyscrapers
~~voids walls gap sky traffic history openness voids~~ park-
 ing wall ground gravel chimney working construction
 railway market Sunday tourism rhythm centrality cul-
 tures colours food fakeness cut fashion east station
 silence fences cut trees emptiness railway nothingness
 park bricks wall industries warehouses chimney bricks
 market stones parking murals narrowness food smells
 banks tourism silence secondary history goods shops
 richness market Spitalfields colours fashion newness
 glass oldness tourism city roof inside fullness sky-
 scrapers glass newness trading moneys banks city market
 limits traffic walls railways construction steel
 future newness filling rhythm cranes arch steel glass
 banks station square public richness newness suites
 glass skyscrapers newness modernity trains pas-
 sage narrowness traffic arches people crowd darkness
 crowd station roof inside clocks cities trains pos-
 sibility highrises in-between emptiness goods ware-
 houses docks bridges arches silence wires

gaps bridges cut traffic rhythm shops bridges fences
 car park murals in-between silence emptiness objects
 nothingness directions arches city cranes fences cars
 traffic

glass bricks highrises narrowness emptiness trading col-
 lage gap history newness mirrors narrowness brick
 collage nothingness emptiness objects confusion

voids

voids borders
space

represent

place

narratives

void

correspond

represent

space

sequence

place

sequence

notational

represent

spaces
narrative

narrative

spaces

THE LONDON PRISON

Simone Pizzagalli

Masterplan and Perspective views

Plans -9 m > +60 m

Legenda plans and sections

Schemes

Plans +27 m, +9 m

Sections and Isometric +24 m

The Model

Making the model [08-08-08 till 08-11-08]

Sectional model of the building, NEGATIVE

Sectional model of the building, POSITIVE

Sectional model details

Detail Models

View of a prisoners' recreational activity room

View of the open air auditorium

A cell interior with desk, bed and window

Entrance Hallway

Path spanning between two structural elements

Access to the main visitors' area

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

THE LONDON PRISON

Simone Pizzagalli

The London Prison

The prison structure was determined by mapping the boundaries of one of the **voids**, which in turn generated the outline for the volume of the prison building. The prison is located next to the heart of the City, the core of the business district, which was historically an area situated at the edge of the Roman *castrum*. A sign with the words '**CITY LIMITS**' [p. 021] indicates the specific location and the nature of this anonymous and degraded spot. By situating a prison in this location, an institution usually relegated to the margins of a city has instead been set in close proximity to its very centre, beside the city's historical and physical **borders**. Furthermore, the building occupies one of the city's **voids**, which has been made conspicuous by transforming the emptiness of a leftover **space** into a public and communal architecture.

The proposed design expresses values that go beyond the mere logistics of a public building. The architecture of the prison intends to **represent** and display the true motivations underlying its form. The rationale behind the choice of a penitentiary and its location in the centre of London is related to the idea of a detention centre as a **place** of recollection and reconstruction of personal '**narratives**', which would otherwise inevitably be lost and forgotten within the chaos of the city. The prison and its specific location within a **void** deliberately emphasise ideas of otherness, isolation and rupture with the linguistic disorder of the city, proposing a solution that could **correspond** to and **represent** this condition as well as that of its inmates.

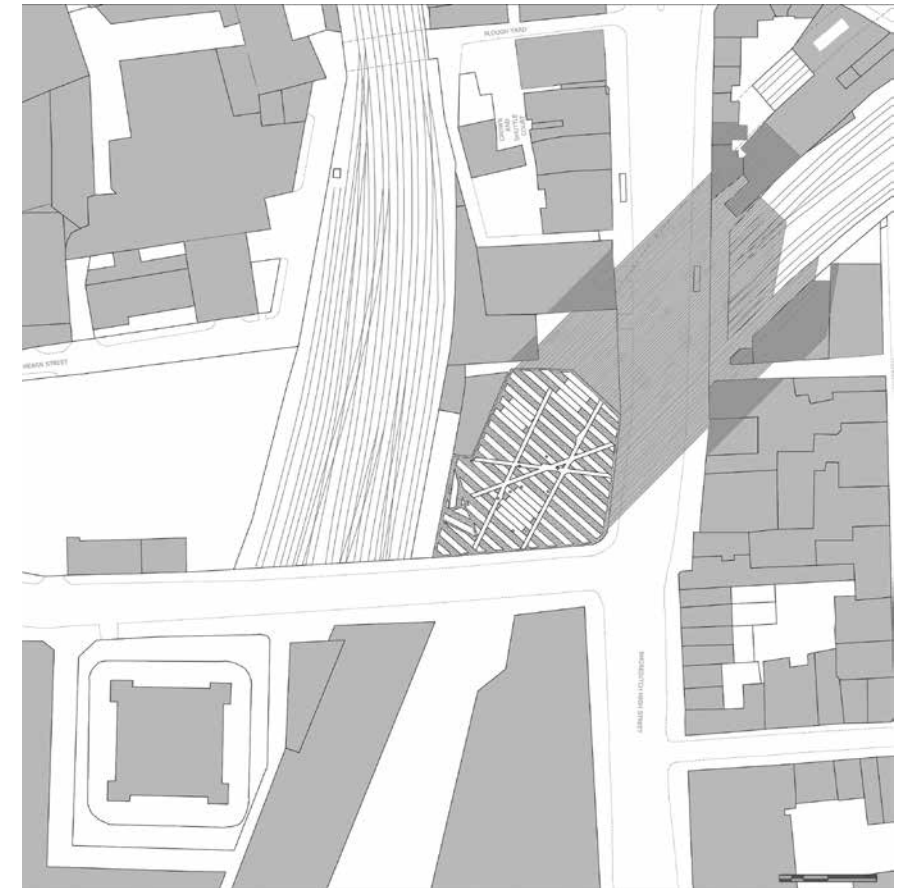
The prison is conceived as a closed and sombrely confined **space** constituted by a **sequence** of structural elements that allow a certain degree of communication between the internal world of the prison and the external world of the city, so that the **place** of reclusion impacts upon the surrounding city community and vice versa. The obsessively reiterated elements of the structure open up towards the city, letting light, sounds, smells and weather into the building. During the design process, some of the **notational** compositions developed in the mapping **sequence** were elaborated to generate spatial and volumetric relationships within the building. In the design itself, the idea of spatial storytelling was developed through the arrangement of the parts and the distribution of the **spaces**, which follow a logic that is not simply functional but primarily **narrative**. These **narrative** characteristics **represent** the different activities and experiences of the prison community, the distorted perception of time passing, the repetitiveness of the prison schedule, the daily movements of the prisoners within the structure, the openness of the building and its relationship with the outside world, all of which offer the inmates the chance to unfold their personal stories.

The project allows multiplicity and differentiation of **spaces** within a precise and rigorous structure. Confinement and openness

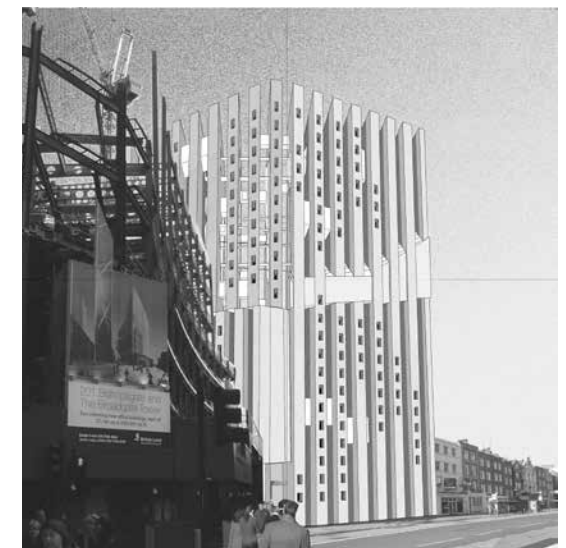
are rendered extreme in the composition of the **spaces**, where the repeated wall becomes both the unit of measure for a prison cell and for the gaps that allow the visual relationship with the city to occur. The ambiguity between open and closed **space**, mass and air, the alternation of concrete slab walls with empty **spaces**, and the **grammar** of elements that contribute to the completeness and functional performance of the building are **represented** in a powerful way in the sectional drawings. The structure of the building appears to be homogeneous and undifferentiated yet it is filled with elements, **spaces** and **fragments** that are important in the spatial **narration**, and crucial for the interlinking of the various organisational **sequences**.

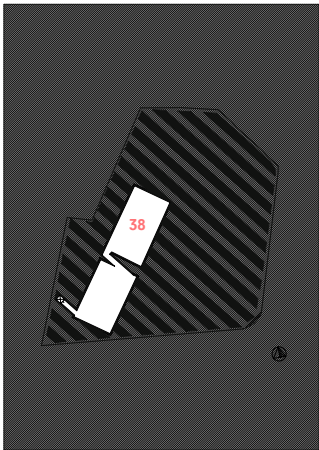
The cross section merges, interweaves and overlaps with the floor plan, revealing the continuous unfolding of the slab structure, **rhythmically** interrupted by **voids**, **spaces** and functional elements. The cut is once again the instrument of analysis and investigation of reality. The vertical section reveals the plot and the unfolding of the stories taking **place** in the building, the relationships and proportions of the volumes, the connected and overlapping **sequences**, the open **spaces** and the **places** of extreme solitude and segregation. The cross section presents an overview of all these **narratives**, which are contemporaneously displayed as they unfold. The opportunity to browse through the building structure, thanks to the **sequenced** drawings of the floor plans, provides a clearer understanding of the prison areas and their volumetric relationships, which in turn renders the experience of viewing the **representation** of the prison as temporal and sequential as the real navigation of the **spaces** by anyone using the building. The reiteration of the floor plans shows how things can change and develop within a structure which, despite some shifts and modifications, remains unchanged in its character and organisation, still hosting a differentiated composition of **spaces**. The floor plans describe how a limited alphabet of **spaces**, volumes and architectural **fragments** can be arranged to become short sentences within the more complex **narration** of the building.

Masterplan
Shoreditch High
Street

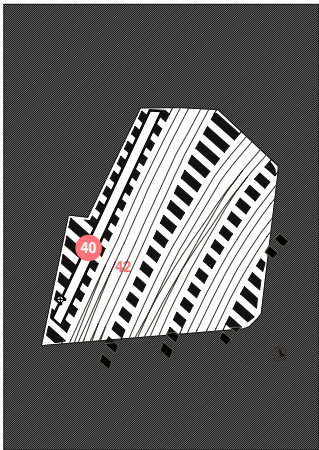


Perspective views
from Shoreditch
High Street

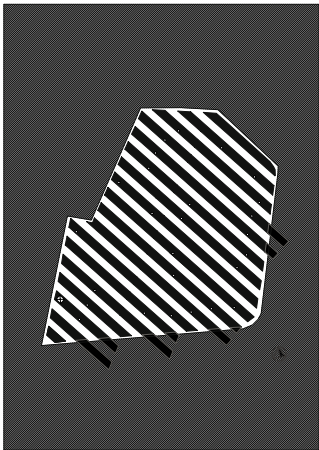




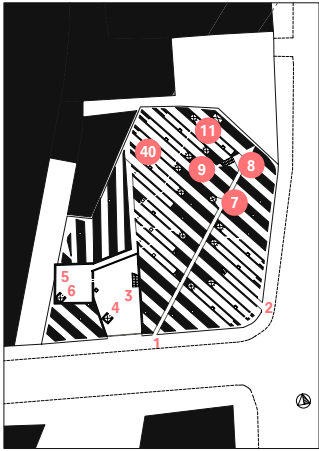
Level -9 m



Level -6 m



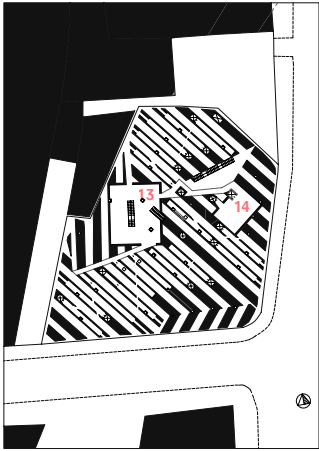
Level -3 m



Level 0 m



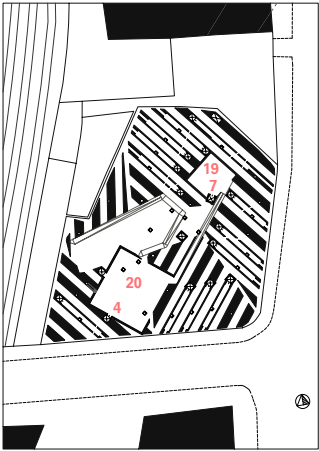
Level +3 m



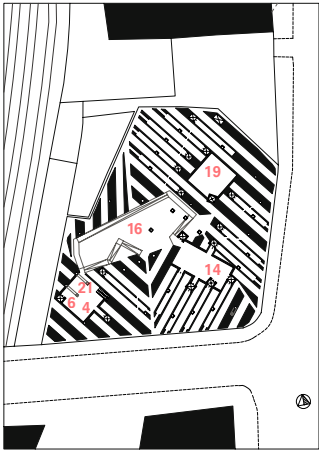
Level +6 m



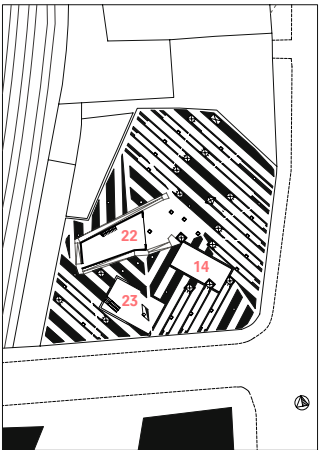
Level +9 m



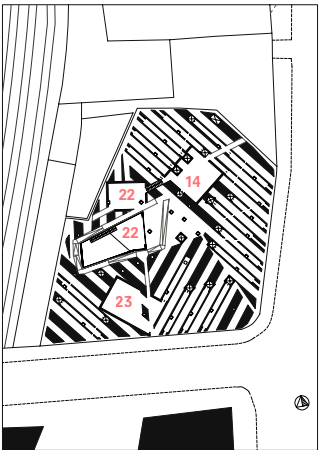
Level +12 m



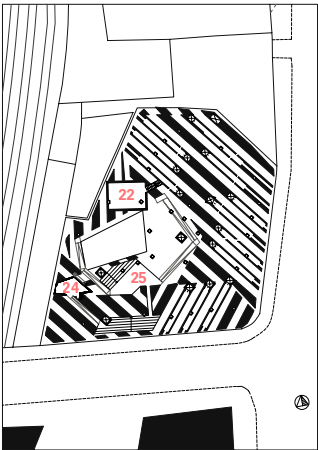
Level +15 m



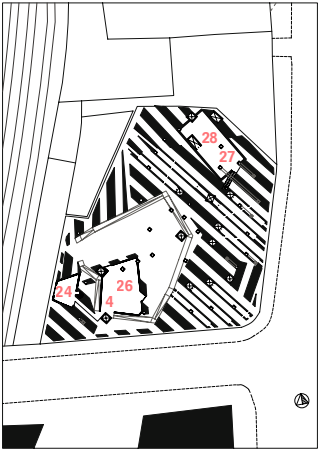
Level +18 m



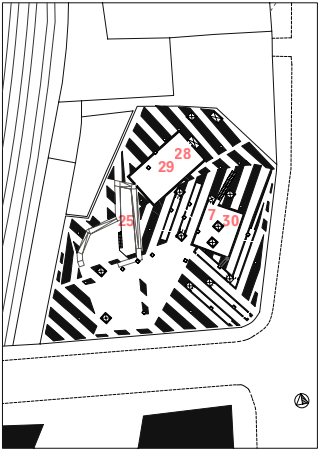
Level +21 m



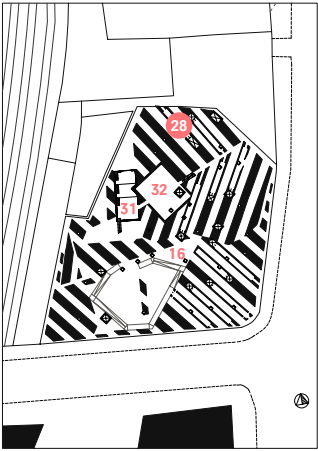
Level +24 m



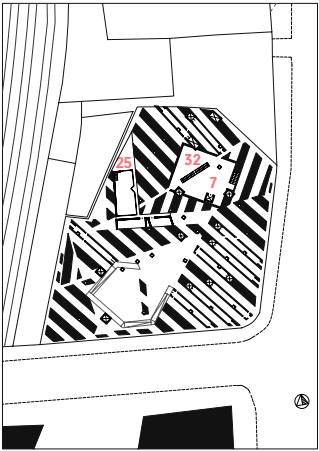
Level +27 m



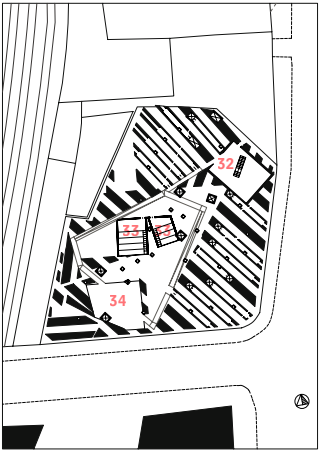
Level +30 m



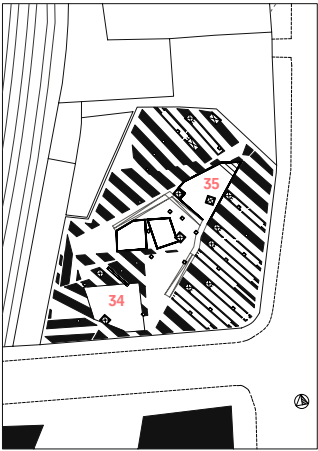
Level +33 m



Level +36 m



Level +39 m

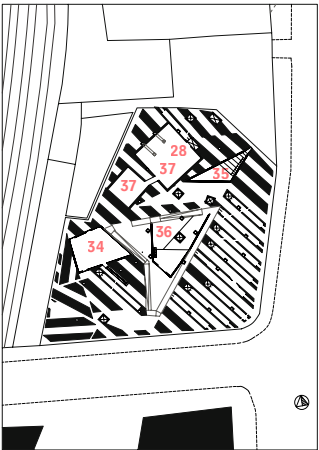


Level +42 m

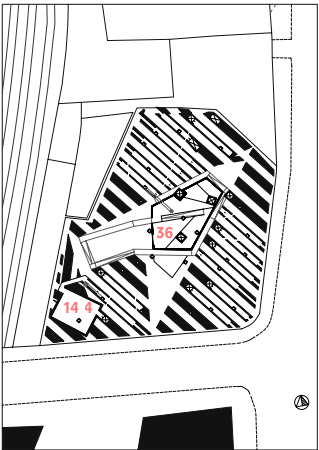
Legenda plans and sections

- 1 Visitors' access route; (Level +0 m)
- 2 Police access route; (L+0 m)
- 3 Access for security vans and vehicles. Here the prisoners are brought from the outside into the building and then transported into the check-in facilities and cells; (L+0 m)
- 4 Service elevator for technical facilities and deliveries;
- 5 Entrance room, registration office, search room; (L+0 m)
- 6 Elevator connecting the entrance to the search room and storage area;
- 7 Access elevator for employees;
- 8 Visitors' route and access staircase;
- 9 Elevator;
- 10 Pipes and installation shafts;
- 11 Cell. The prison hosts 280 cells including isolation cells, hospitalization cells, and mental rehabilitation cells;
- 12 Police service room; (L+3 m)
- 13 Offices, police service room; (L+6 m)
- 14 Prisoners gathering room. The gathering rooms are service guarded spaces where elevators connecting a limited group of cells are allowing the security service and prison police to reach every cell and lead the inmates to the open air areas and recreational facilities; (L+6 m, L+15 m, L+21 m, L+48 m)
- 15 Visitors' search room; (L+9 m)
- 16 Prisoners' circulation path connecting the prison internal facilities and recreational areas;
- 17 Security meeting room; (L+9 m)
- 18 Meeting lounge; (L+9 m)
- 19 Catering and kitchen service room; (L+12 m)
- 20 Kitchen and storage room; (L+12 m)
- 21 Search room; (L+15 m)
- 22 Canteen; (L+18 m, L+21 m)
- 23 Storage room; (L+18, L+21)
- 24 Library; (L+24 m, L+27 m)
- 25 Open air activity area; (L+24 m, L+30 m, L+36 m)
- 26 Reading Room; (L+27 m)
- 27 Medical facility, consultation room; (L+27 m)
- 28 Elevator connecting the medical facilities with the hospitalization cells
- 29 Psychiatric facility area; (L+30 m)

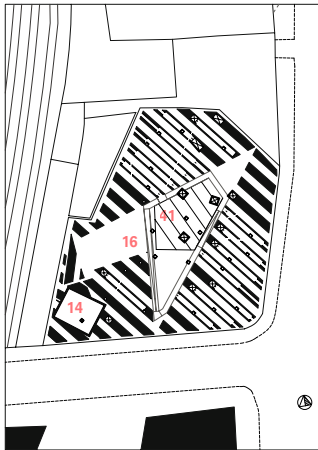
- 30 Doctors and nurses facility room; (L+30 m)
- 31 Multimedia rooms, computer rooms; (L+33 m)
- 32 Direction and offices; (L+33 m, L+36 m, L+39 m)
- 33 Classrooms, projection rooms; (L+39 m)
- 34 Open air sport facility and gym; (L+39 m, L+45 m)
- 35 Chapel; (L+45 m)
- 36 Workshops; (L +45 m, L +48 m)
- 37 Infirmary, small medical emergency room; (L +45 m)
- 38 Technical rooms, storage rooms; (L+57 m, L-9 m)
- 39 Laundry and waste room connected to a dedicated elevator; (L+57 m)
- 40 Inspection path connecting technical facilities, installations shafts and the elevators technical rooms situated on the roof; (L-6 m, L+57 m, L+60 m)
- 41 Open air auditorium; (L+51 m)
- 42 Railway (L-6 m)



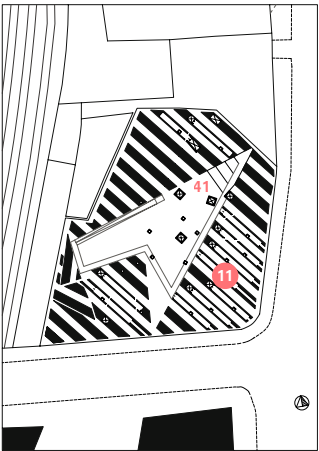
Level +45 m



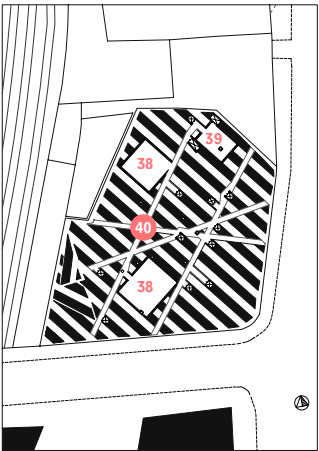
Level +48 m



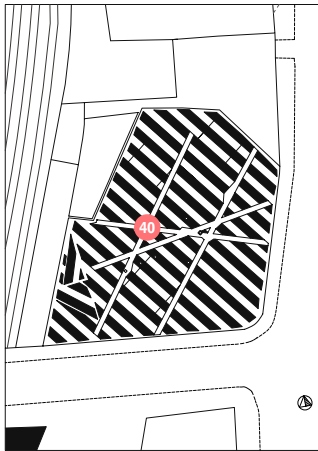
Level +51 m



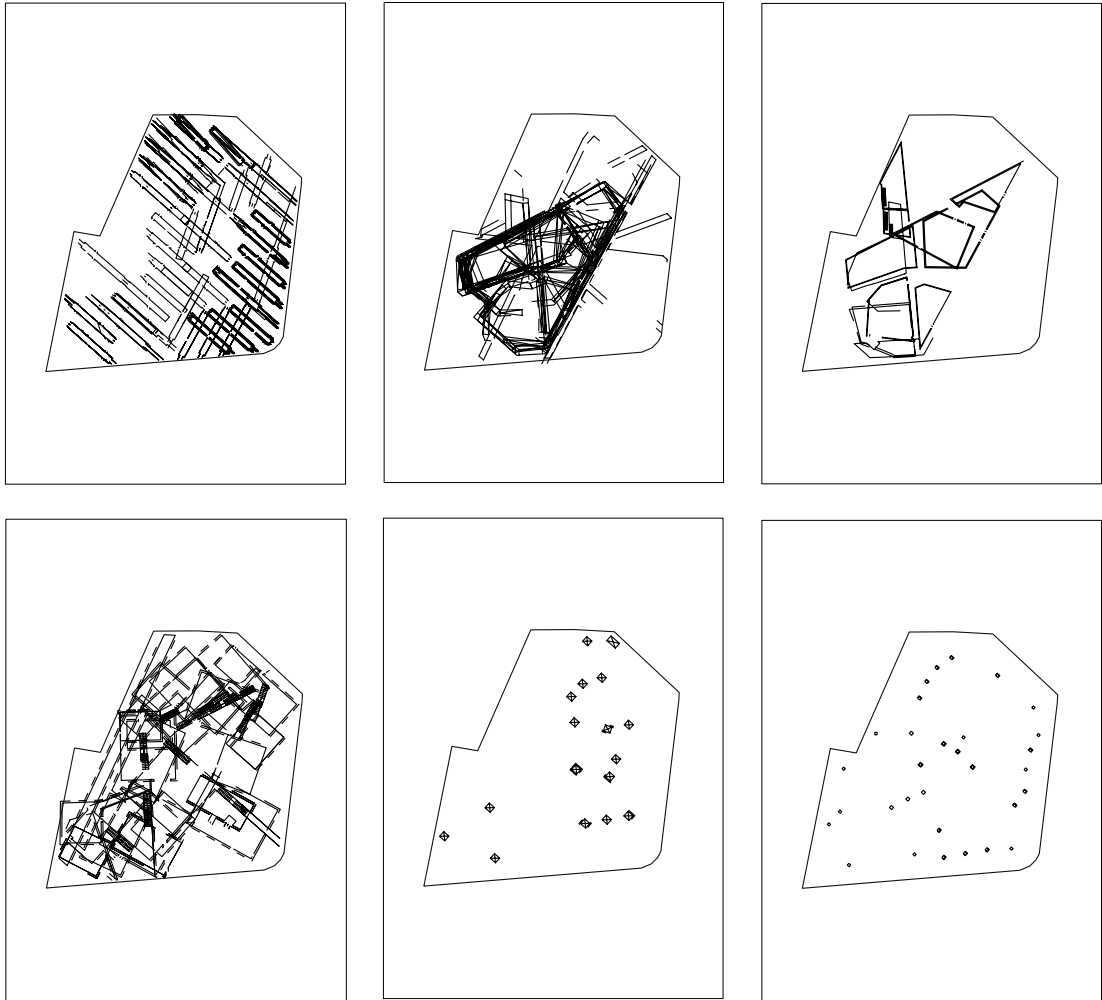
Level +54 m



Level +57 m



Level +60 m

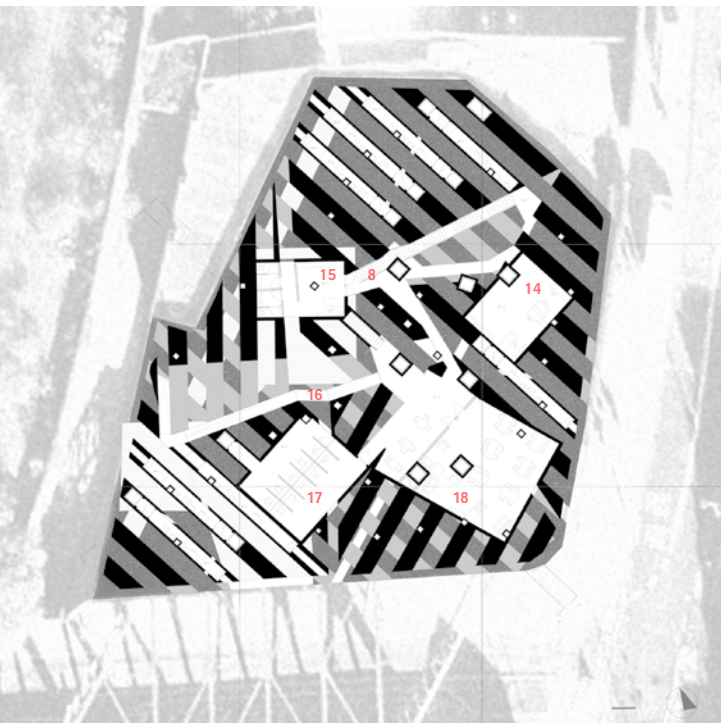


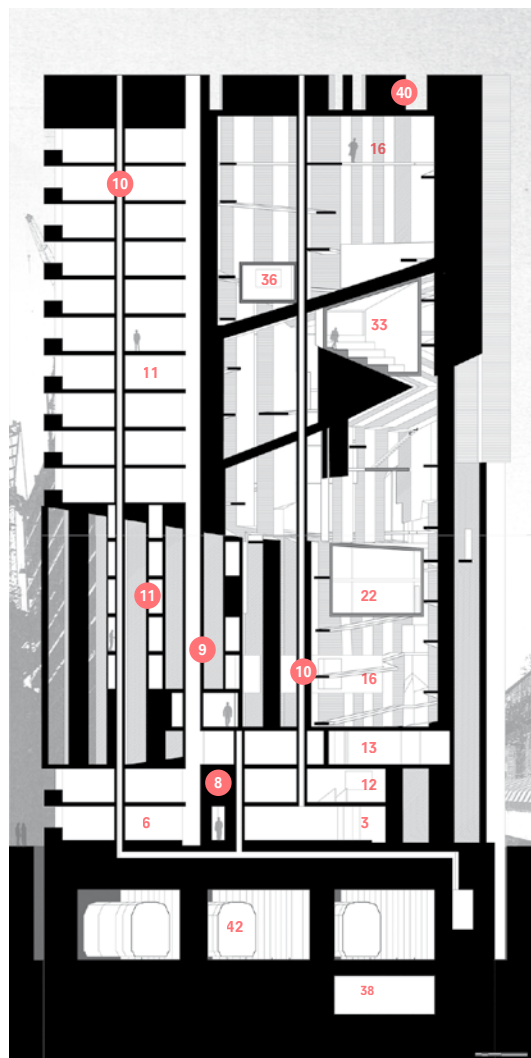
Schemes of the prison constituting spaces and elements: cells, paths, recreational areas, technical and administrative rooms, elevators and technical shafts, respectively.

Plan level +27 m,
recreational areas
and library
[Legenda: p.106]



Plan level +9 m,
entrance and
visitors' meeting
rooms
[Legenda: p.106]

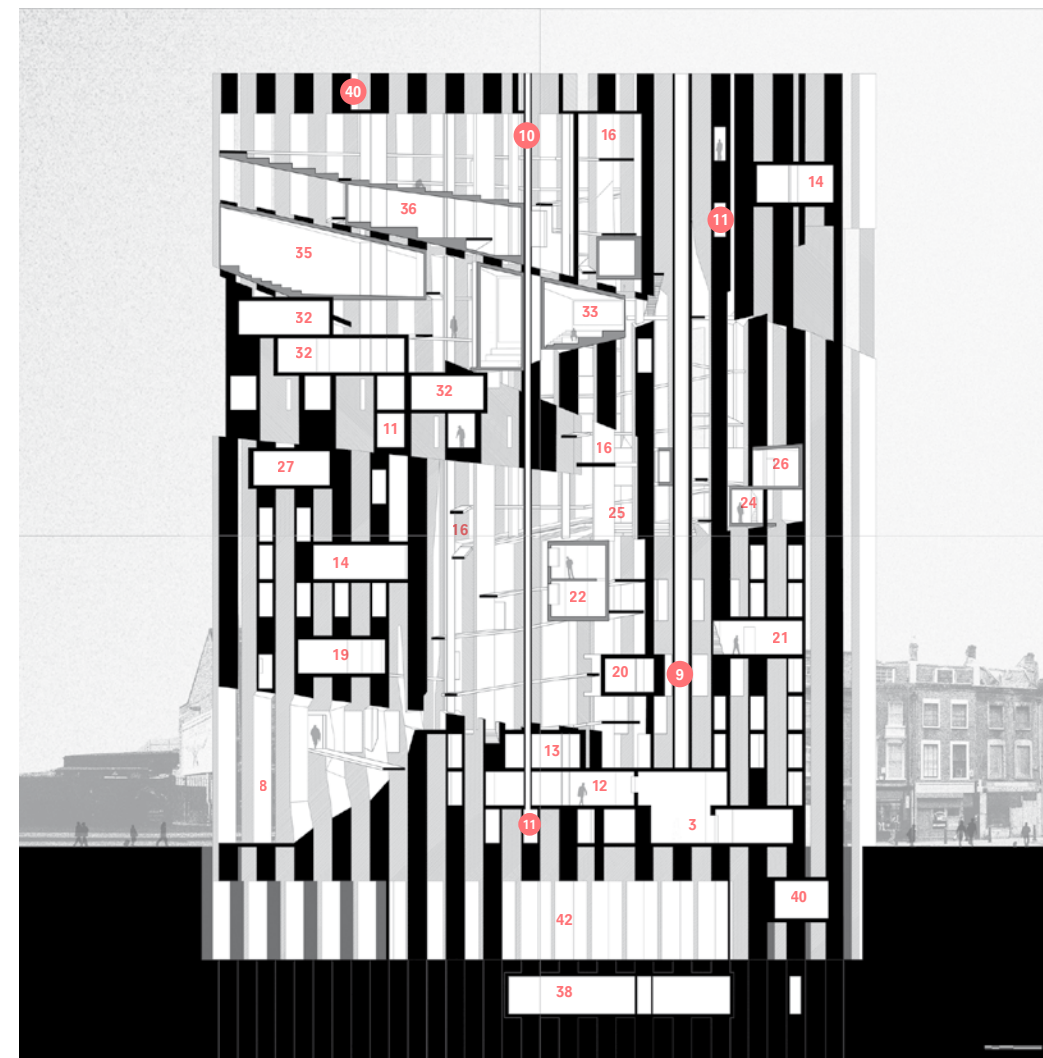




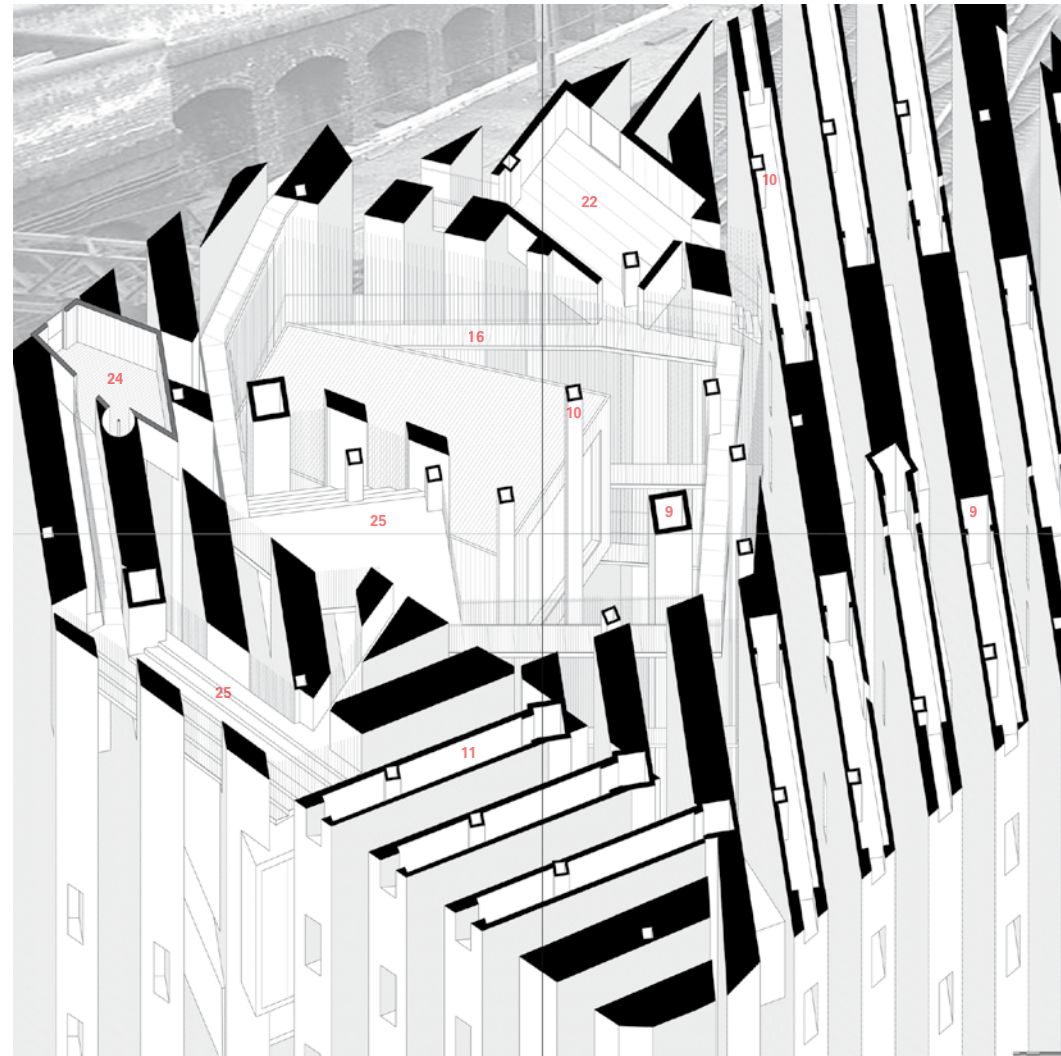
Slab section, looking south
[Legenda: p.106]



Section between two slabs, looking south



Section, looking east
[Legenda: p.106]



Isometric section of level +24 m
[Legenda: p.106]

The Model

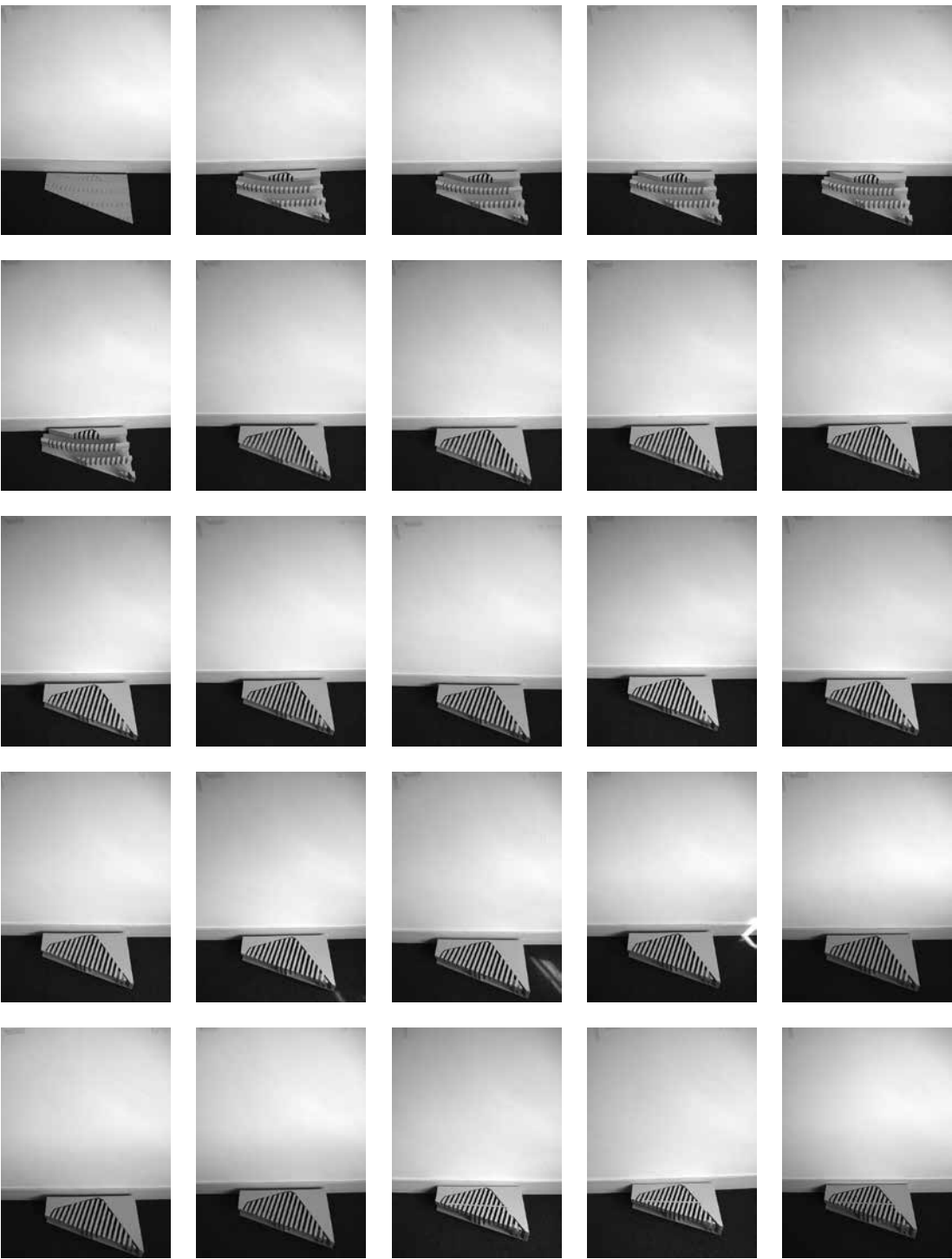
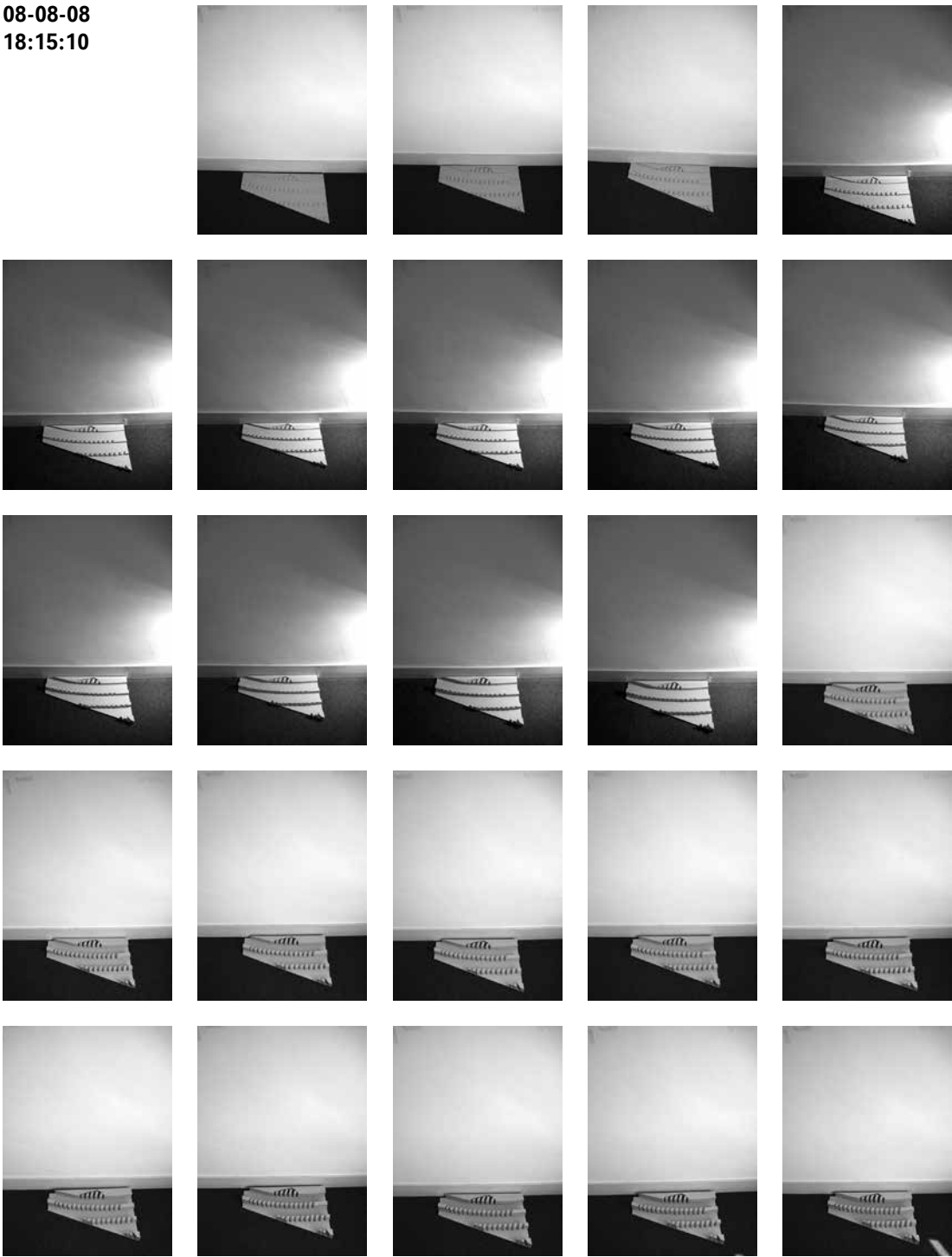
Making the model [08-08-08 till 08-11-08]

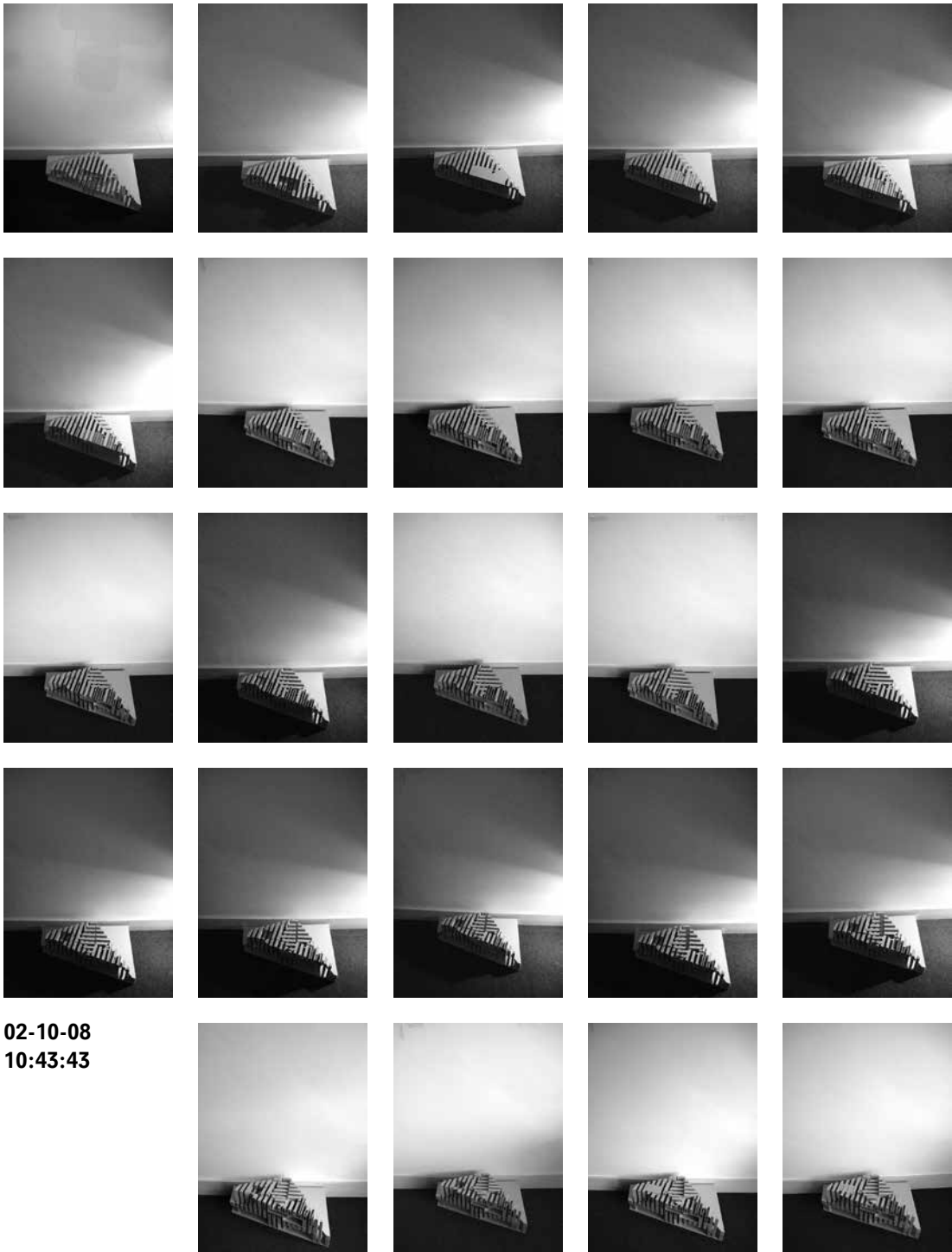
Sectional model of the building: NEGATIVE

Sectional model of the building: POSITIVE

Sectional model details

08-08-08
18:15:10







Sectional model
of the building:
NEGATIVE



Sectional model
of the building:
POSITIVE



120



121

NEGATIVE



POSITIVE



Detail Models

Entrance hallway

Access to the main visitors' area

Path spanning between two structural elements

Recreational activity room

Open air auditorium

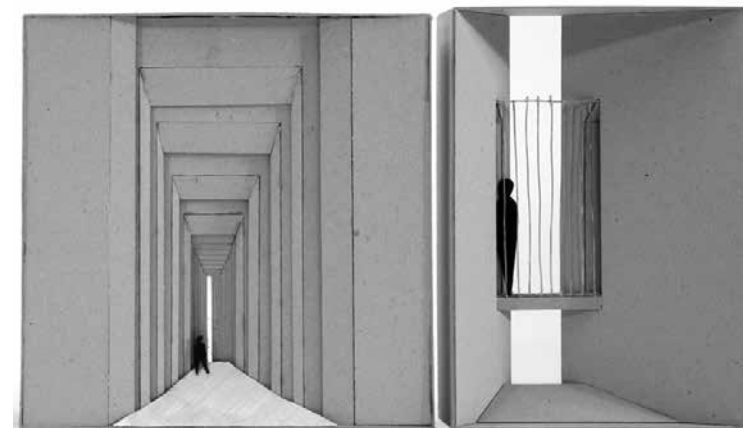
Cell interior

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

THE LONDON PRISON

Detail Models

Entrance hallway
Path spanning
between two
structural elements



Access to the main
visitors' area



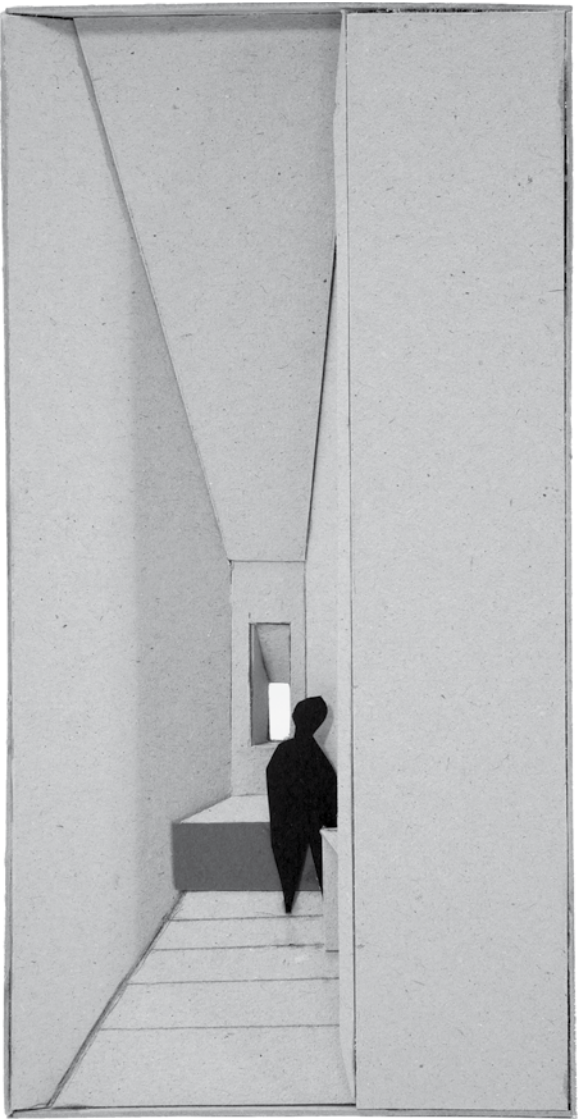
View of a prisoners' recreational activity room



View of the open air auditorium



A cell interior with desk, bed and window



Language

Narrative

language

language

space

representation

language

language

Language as Construction: A Prison in the Heart of the City
Two Parallel Texts
Narrative Shifts

1 In his essay 'L'architecture dans le boudoir' Manfredo Tafuri quotes this expression from Karl Kraus in order to criticise the flattening of architecture into a mere linguistic game. See Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto* (Torino: Einaudi, 1980), p. 335; Eng. tr. *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

'[...] a Mondrian painting is not an image of order but an ordering of things.'

G.C. Argan, 'Architettura e arte non-figurativa', in *Progetto e destino*, (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1965).

'[...] Points, lines, areas or volumes establish the syntax of sites. All language becomes an alphabet of sites...'

Robert Smithson, 'Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site', *Artforum*, June 1967.

The critical and cognitive role of architectural language in the modernist tradition strongly affected, though in different ways, the architect's commitment to society. This matter deserves reconsideration now that the theme of autonomy of the architectural 'text', introduced by the postmodern discourse, has marginalised theoretical reflection on the contemporary urban project; a reflection that for a period of time animated the European architectural debate from the Gregotti-directed pages of *Casabella*.^[2]

Today we are witnessing a progressive divergence between architectural practice, solidly locked within the symbolic sphere, and the mechanisms of space production, considered 'other' by architecture, since they are strongly affected by markets and political decisions. Increasingly, this separation seems to be a conceptual fracture between the dominion of form — degraded to a tool for representation — and that of processes, which seem to have become an exclusive matter for politics and strategic planning.

Conversely, in the recent debate on urban transformation, the crucial role of design research has been pointed out as a way to better understand how society and the economy are reorganising the 'form of the territory'.^[3] As a matter of fact, the discussion calls into question the increasingly self-referential nature of architecture's formal strategies, and requires further critical reflection on the agency of architectural language in the process of urban construction. How do the issues related to the urban project affect the traditional boundaries and categories of architectural language?

2 Vittorio Gregotti was the editor of *Casabella* from January 1982 to January 1996.

3 In recent years, the notion of **territorio**, elaborated in the French and Italian traditions of urban studies, has been the object of growing interest as it recalls a complex and wide set of interactions between the geographical

substratum, human activities and cultures. Significant within this context is the seminal text by Vittorio Gregotti 'La forma del territorio', originally published in *Edilizia Moderna* n° 87/88–1966, and only recently translated into English from the French revised version under the title 'The Form of the Territory' in *Oase Journal for Architecture* n° 80, 'On Territories', December 2009, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam.

Indeed, there are no immediate and exhaustive answers to this question, but, as a commentary to *Spaces, Poetics and Voids*, it seems important to return our attention to how architectural language can act as a tool for spatial investigation, in accordance with the fundamental link that connects the genesis of the language of art to a process of understanding reality.^[4]

It was Manfredo Tafuri who, at the end of the 1970s, raised the question connected to the theme of language. In his analysis of the work of certain post World War II architects, he challenged the tendency to consider the universe of forms as a closed system which, through its infinite self-reproduction, ratified its own programmatic, and perhaps fatal, incapacity to affect the 'structural' conditions of urban and territorial construction. His argument signalled the progressive and conscious intellectual estrangement of many architects from the conditions that govern the production and the processes of the transformation of inhabitable space. According to Tafuri, they were backtracking along the path trodden by certain exponents of architectural modernity, who had been committed to reforming the discipline in close alliance with planning practices and building production systems.

Drawing on certain passages from Walter Benjamin's *The Author as Producer*, Tafuri indicated the need to shift attention from what a work 'wishes to be' or 'wishes to say' to how it relates to the economy, society and the capitalistic organisation of the territory. A return to this principle makes evident the will to reclaim the authentic 'function' of architectural language through a significant shift from what language represents to how language (taken in a metaphoric sense) 'acts' within reality, while simultaneously being determined by reality itself.

Tafuri's reflection was also a radical investigation into how architecture could exert a critical role, not just as a science of signs abandoning itself to the abuses of 'writing', but also as *'techné'*, which roots itself in society and its emerging conflicts.

This is a question which is likely to resurface today in increasingly evident forms, particularly if we compare the space of the ac-

4 I refer to Konrad Fiedler's assertions from the end of the nineteenth century. According to Fiedler, the link between reality and the language of art is first and foremost cognitive, and secondly, *representational*; therefore, following Fiedler's line of thought, art can be understood as a tool for gaining knowledge. See Konrad Fiedler, *Über den Ursprung der künstlerischen Tätigkeit*, (Leipzig, 1887).

5 This topic has recently been discussed by Pier Vittorio Aureli in his analysis of the work of Aldo Rossi and Archizoom's *No-Stop City*. P.V. Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).

tual city — which continues to reproduce itself through mechanisms alien to the logic of architecture — with the symbolic redundancy on which architectural objects base their dialogue with the city, reciting the rhetoric of complexity, fragmentation and flexibility, or farcically re-proposing the non-figurative language of the avant-garde.

With reference to the present urban condition, it might be appropriate to draw on Tafuri's investigation into the function of architectural language in order to re-evaluate the role of 'intellectual mediator' that architectural knowledge can play with regard to new social conflicts, political responsibility and the construction of the city as a common good.

In the course of this analysis of Simone Pizzagalli's work, I would like to focus primarily on two aspects. The first is inherent in the constructive function of architectural language, intended in its broader sense as a procedure that orders reality with the aim of understanding it. Here, language is considered primarily as a tool for knowledge production. This understanding of architectural language is far removed from the idea of an 'autonomous' architecture, which asserts itself through a path of linguistic purification, a notion deriving from a revival of the concept of the 'autonomy of the political' that was theorised in the 1960s.^[5] In this sense, an analysis of the prison space designed by Pizzagalli will be useful in clarifying the meaning of a language that is both critical and constructive.

The second aspect emphasises Pizzagalli's investigation of the void as a design strategy. I propose the hypothesis that an authentic, analytic reflection on architectural language is not just a reworking or undermining of pre-existing expressive codes, but presupposes a constant 'openness' towards examining the transformations occurring within the entirety of the built environment. These transformations are the expression of different ways of living, of a new geography of powers, and of a different rationale of techniques and constructive processes that strongly affect the field of architecture.

Language as Construction:

A Prison in the Heart of the City

Contrary to what has been theorised in recent decades, the political role of architecture in the construction of the city and the architect's commitment should not be understood as a criticism of language, but as a criticism of reality *through* architecture's own specific language. The difference is substantial. A criticism of language is aimed at architectural form as a self-enclosed system of signs, such as in the historicist revival of post-modern architecture or in the aesthetics of deconstruction, whereas a criticism of reality penetrates the dense and magma-like depths of reality from within the language of architecture itself. Through this change of perspective, architectural form is never the ultimate goal of criticism, rather it is one of its tools.

The project for a prison in the heart of the city is without a doubt a political action. Yet its political value only partially depends on the building's specific programme; namely, the decision to use a vacant **space** in the centre of London's business district for the construction of a prison. The critical and political dimension of this building is strictly connected to its formal structure: a regular volumetric composition of full and empty **spaces**, which declares its own alterity with respect to the surrounding context, and reinterprets the **space** of reclusion as an area exposed to the city but also one that allows the city to be observed from within.

'Void and **repetition**' have been adopted as key elements in the construction of the architectural **language** of this building. The systematic and serial use of the 'empty interval' breaks the object's integrity as a 'shell', enabling a three-dimensional visual **frame** to emerge, formed by minimal compositional units. The cells, piled to form vertical blades, also constitute the weight-bearing structure of the building. The regular alternation of empty and full **spaces** transforms the **space** of reclusion, which is usually strongly secluded, into a **space** permeable to sight. Thus, the building establishes an unconventional and ambiguous dialogue with the urban context: it maintains its own institutional status of *enclave*, while the city, directly visible from within, becomes a concrete presence in the prison.

As with serial music, the **rhythm** created by the 'breaks' between the vertical blades alludes to an investigation into the economy of form. Yet, similarly to what can be said about minimalist art, this economy is not synonymous with simplicity of form, but with the ability to articulate a complex programme and a great variety of spatial situations, starting with few 'materials' and a few essential moves. The interval is functional in the construction of '**difference** and **repetition**',^[6] which assume the task of organising the internal complexity of the prison **space** without relinquishing an image of the whole. The three-dimensional texture is constructed by superimposing different spatial **sequences** in which serial elements alternate with cross cuts: large **spaces** dug into the building mass for the collective activities of the prison. Therefore, the prison **space** does not **represent** the alienation of subjectivity. On the contrary, it is a spatial device centred on the individual who experiences it, who encounters different situations in a continuous sensory dialogue with the city.

And finally, it is not by chance that in the presentation of the work more emphasis was placed on the design process than on the final outcome, a process which, through its unfolding, identifies its own specific formal logic, and contrasts with the intellectualistic application of a pre-existing expressive code. Recognising the ongoing instability of the form^[7] — opening the **language** to the field of experience, well away from the closed circle of **representation** — is implicit in the empiricism of the procedure.

6 The issue of '**difference**' and its relationship to '**repetition**' was discussed by G. Deleuze in his book *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968); Eng. tr.: *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

7 The issue of instability of form directly recalls the experience of the architectural avant-garde of the 20th century; for example the ABC group.

8 I consider Umberto Eco to be among the most significant critical contributors to this argument, as in *La struttura assente* (*The Absent Structure*) (Milan: Bompiani, 1968), and in addition, Cesare Brandi, *Struttura e architettura* (*Structure and Architecture*) (Turin: Einaudi, 1967). I refer also to the debate between Tomás Maldonado, Jacques Guillerme and the philosopher Enzo

Melandri in *Casabella* n° 560/1989, n° 568-569/1990, and to K. Michael Hays 'Objects, Texts and Object-Texts: on the Recent Turn toward Textuality', *Casabella* n°549/1988. More recent examples have been Mario Gandelsonas's reflections on architecture's rewriting of the city, in *X-Urbanism: Architecture and the American City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).

9 For an insight in the concept of '**composition**' in architecture, see A. Colquhoun, 'Composition vs. the Project' in *Casabella* n° 520-21 Jan-Feb 1986, and, more recently, J. Lucan, *Composition, Non-composition. Architecture et théories XIX – XX siècles* (Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques Romandes, 2009). See also P. Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* (1965) (McGill – Queens University Press, 1998).

In light of this project, and drawing on the recent discussion of the linguistic analogy in architecture,^[8] we can assert that if a similarity exists, it is not between **language** and the constructed work, but between 'making' architecture and the construction of **language**. The analogy is therefore not based on a semiological interpretation of architecture; i.e. on what architecture says, **represents** or signifies, but on the manner in which it organises its actual materials through formal structures. From this point of view, the expressive substance of architecture, or rather, the materials and elements that architecture organises in **space**, do not constitute a conventional code as in **language**, rather they define themselves only *a posteriori* through a direct confrontation with reality, through the concreteness of the work or the project.

Two Parallel Texts

The formal structure of the prison can be understood as the result of a more general reflection on the architectural interpretation of the **void**, both as a physical presence and as a conceptual image.

As I have already suggested, Simone Pizzagalli emphasises the empiricism of his design investigation. The **compositional** process^[9] unfolds through a **sequence** of diagrams that reveal the conceptual genesis of the project through the interaction between writing and drawing. Analogous to the 'lists' of Georges Perec, the written texts are mainly lists of nouns that reproduce in a literal form the chaotic experience of the **places** encountered: the areas immediately surrounding the East London Railway Line stations. The **sequence** of diagrams,

Caption

gate people-entrance car-entrance prisoner-entrance
checkpoint-office office office office waiting-room people-
waiting-room information-office corridor stairs passage
landing elevator paths

waiting-room visit-room visit-room visit-room visit-room
visit-room visit-room visit-room visit-room visit-room
visit-room visit-room visit-room visit-room antechamber
security-visit-roomsecurity-visit-roomsecurity-visit-room
antechambermale-bathroomfemale-bathroomprisoners-bathroom
lounge bar children-visit-room playroom garden games-garden
nursery corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

antechamber search-room search-room office office office
talking-room antechamber bathrooms storage cell cell cell
cell cell antechamber corridor stairs passage landing
elevator paths

antechamber corridor office office office office antechamber
office office office office office office dining-room
recreation-room male-bathroom female-bathroom changing-room
storage office office office corridor antechamber corridor
stairs passage landing elevator paths

storage kitchen-storage fridges kitchen washing-room
changing-room bathrooms fuel-storage cloths-storage
security-storage car-parking visitors-parking officers-
entrance laundry checkpoint-office corridor stairs passage
landing elevator paths

entrance room room room room room room room room room
room room room room room recreation kitchen diningroom
storage corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

gym volley-field showers changing-room storage kids-
playground garden yard corridor stairs passage landing
elevator paths

nursery-room storage games-room room room room room room
room room room room room room room room room room room
room room room room room room room room room room room
room mothers-recreation dining-room kitchen office bathroom
corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

entrance changing-room bathrooms workshop workshop workshop
office office office staff-room bathroom storage shop
corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

entrance antechamber library class class class class
computer-room storage office office bathrooms
corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

entrance praying-room office discussion-room discussion-room
discussion-roombathroomsprivate-roomprivate-roomprivate-
room corridor stairs passage landing elevator paths

prisoners-entrance waiting-room visit-room visit-room visit-
room visit-room waiting-room dentist storage bathrooms
staff-room changing-room bathrooms office office office
office antechamber hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room hospital-room
hospital-room bathrooms storage facilities-room corridor
stairs passage landing elevator paths

antechamber waiting-room office office visit-room cell cell
cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell
cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell cell
cell cell cell cell recreation intensive-treatment-cell
bathrooms facilities-room storage changing-room corridor
stairs passage landing elevator paths

in which we find references to both minimalism and conceptual art, from Sol Lewitt to Dan Graham, gives rise to progressive overlapping and contamination between drawing and the written word. Pizzagalli contrasts the city's fragmentary nature — represented by words naming the disordered succession of spaces and heterogeneous objects, whose significance seems to have been lost for good — with erasures, intervals, interruptions and excavations within the compact mass of words, so that various configurations of the void as a potential spatial structure are allowed to emerge. A new spatial narrative is explored through this contamination, one where void and repetition become the major instruments of the composition. But in the continuous and chaotic flow of sensations stemming from the experience of the city, the interruptions constituted by abandoned or residual areas, such as the one chosen for the prison, allow one to glimpse the possibility of an additional and wider story, one that goes beyond the dimension of the architectural object.

These nameless spaces where the fabric of the city is interrupted, areas of physical and social decay from which every meaning or value seems to have vanished, have in recent years provided a field of investigation for photographers, filmmakers and anthropologists, all of whom have contributed to the construction of a new urban imagery connected to an aesthetic of marginality and 'formlessness', reflecting the crisis and dissolution of the city's form as a value. The reclamation of these spaces has often been associated with their 'rediscovery' through neo-Situationist practices, or actions of temporary and informal re-appropriation, in search of a form of sociality that is free from conditioning and therefore more 'authentic'. Nevertheless, these multiple 'resistance tactics' have difficulty translating themselves into a real critical alternative to the construction of the city. The alterity of these nameless spaces, once sublimated into an image or into the theatricality of the Situationist event, is ready to be absorbed by the incessant reproduction of the 'generic city', where every difference, every conflict or value, appears to have been eradicated.

With respect to these interpretations, I feel a different intent in Simone Pizzigalli's work: the decision to consider the void as a strategy for an alternative, morphological reading of the city. Interpreting the urban context starting from its derelict areas entails removing these spaces from the sphere of representation in order to concentrate on their concrete structural form, on their actual physical 'existence'.

From this point of view, the void is not perceived as an absence or symbol of decline (of form and value), but rather as a space loaded with tensions and potentialities, a place where a variety of fragmentary traces have accumulated which are open to new interpretations. Voids are part of the city, and contemporaneously, they are places where everyday rhythms are suspended and where 'silence' emerges.

es as a conceptual image to be explored through design. As Simone Pizzagalli puts it: '...**silence** is what distinguishes a **void** from an empty **space**. The absence of any rational and conclusive formal value is a sign of the rich potential and profound otherness of the **void**. Its capacity to evoke analogous meanings and forms in our memory and imagination defines a **void** as an excavation into all the possible formal and overlapping interpretations of a **space**, whether realised or hypothetical.'^[10]

Conserving the otherness of these **spaces** without falling into the romantic contemplation of their marginality is an issue the contemporary city presents to architectural design. Hence, in *Spaces, Poetics and Voids* we find allusions to artists who have worked on 'the **void** as technique', from Gordon Matta-Clark to Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana. To these we can add the '**silences**' of Mies van der Rohe's urban projects. In the works of these artists, the strategic use of **silence** and **void** express a subversive potential: **void** and **silence** become the linguistic tools of a critical stance towards reality and the mechanisms of its reproduction.

Caption



Narrative Shifts

Finally, the question I am posing is how the issues related to the **void** as a technique, which Pizzagalli has analysed in his project, could become the subject of an architectural investigation that critically affects the construction of the city. The map of London after the Great Fire of 1666, which Pizzagalli presents in his introduction, is a powerful analogy for what happens within today's city. Abandoned

infrastructures, vacant open **spaces**, **fragments** of agricultural land and former industrial sites are some of the most relevant features of contemporary urban **space**. They are the residual products of different processes or events through which the form of the city is reorganised in **space**. In greater metropolitan areas, the residual **voids** produced by the transformation of the city take on considerable dimensions and proportions. Like a cross-section, they reveal the profundity of history through their morphological depth; they expose the successive stratifications and fractures produced by transitions between various forms of city and society. Nevertheless, in the absence of a comprehensive political vision of the city, in recent years the destiny of such **spaces** has been pragmatically left to the urban market or, in other words, to their condition as vacant **spaces** waiting to be filled. But how should the otherness of these **voids** be considered from an architectural point of view? Should these **spaces** be considered in their singularity and uniqueness, simply as isolated opportunities to build exemplary architectures?

A different reading can be suggested. I propose to observe derelict and residual areas from a distance: from a point where one can comprehend the critical mass they create within the fabric of the city. A distant viewpoint would easily reveal that a **void** is not always an exceptional **space**, but in many cases the dominant feature of the major metropolitan areas. The **void** generates a counter-image of the city, made from patterns of continuity and **repetition** which allow the creation of open **spaces** that interweave with the built environment, or new relationships between diverse **fragments** of the city's fabric. From this perspective, the relevance of the wasteland **voids** produced by urbanisation and their effect on the structure of the city are issues still to be explored.

What is at stake here is, once again, the cognitive function of architectural **language**, which can be seen as analogous to the **narrative** process, in the shape of a tool that brings intelligible form to reality. But given that the contemporary city has become an extended urbanised realm, this implies remapping and, if anything, enlarging the 'field of architecture', its materials, its categories and its aims: a **narrative** that shifts its focus from the building as an object and expressive *unicum* to an expanded field of relationships involving all of a region's natural and man-made components.

10 Simone Pizzagalli, *Spaces, Poetics and Voids*, p. 047

Poetics

spaces

space

place

space

spaces

GHOSTS IN THE CELL: thematic speculations on architecture, the city and the body.

Marc Schoonderbeek

City: surface and otherness

Poetics: chaos or differentiated detachment

Prison: subordination through architecture

Body: folded silhouette or divided shadow

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

GHOSTS IN THE CELL

Marc Schoonderbeek

City: surface and otherness

As is well documented in a great number of films, short stories, novels, drawings and other forms of cultural expression, urban **spaces** have evoked a wide variety of artistic responses. If only based on the 'overwhelming evidence' found in these works, it seems that the profound experiences of condensed **space** have always been an intricate part of the metropolis. Numbing, exciting, paralysing, frightening, exhilarating, intoxicating; the metropolis has been the source of spatial sensations that are both transformed into works of art and often implemented as a principle, model or metaphor due to their unique construction. An impressive number of disciplines have dealt with the city, ranging from the philosophical contemplation in Georg Simmel's description of *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, in which he links the intensification of personal mental activity with the outburst of stimuli caused by metropolitan life,¹ to the more modern forms of art, such as Dziga Vertov's montages in *Man with a Movie Camera*, which is an enduring and breathtaking ode to the city and the revolutionary energies it holds.²

I deliberately chose these more classic examples of metropolitan exuberance in an attempt to clarify their similarities and important differences when compared with contemporary reflections. In the last couple of decades, spatial experiences of the city have been described by using theories taken from the exact sciences (for instance chaos or catastrophe theory³), and by implementing an equivalent terminology (using words such as complexity, network, multiplicity, topology and instability). This terminology marks the transition that has taken **place** in reflections on the urban situation, namely the shift from descriptions of the city as an undiversified **space** of densification, to descriptions that emphasise the city as a field of intensities and differentiation. In other words, the transition from an experience of being totally immersed in the overall congestion within metropolitan **spaces** (the pressure cooker model, based on a discourse on anxiety) towards an experience of navigating the intensities of urban spatial forces (the surfing model, based on a discourse on pleasure).

This distinction between being submerged and having to navigate describes the attitude apparently required today in order to manoeuvre one's way through the multiplicities of global and local realities that constitute the urban world; in other words, manoeuvring

¹ In: Neil Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture; A Reader in Cultural Theory* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 69-79.

² USSR, 1929, edition: Moskwood Media, based on a British Film Institute copy.

³ See, for instance: Sanford Kwinter, 'Landscapes of Change: Boccioni's "Stati d'animo" as a General Theory of Models', in: *Assemblage*, No. 19 (Dec., 1992), pp. 50-65.

along its different pathways, easily shifting focus or perspective, participating in different discourses and debates, being simultaneously engaged in several social and spatial practices, etcetera. As one becomes a potential player in different games on different boards, an appropriate form of navigation should enable one to move along different **surfaces**.⁴ Navigation therefore becomes a specific exploratory technique that enables connection and/or access to the multitude of relevant surfaces available. In this environment, one becomes an intrinsic part of strategic and dynamic spatial practices notable for their lack of severity and depth, the emergence of several masking practices and, ultimately, a level of dynamic superficiality. The embedded simultaneity of these contemporary surface conditions radically alters the experience of urban **space** and even one's involvement in it.

At the same time, the coexistence of several intensities of experience within this surface condition means that the **border** of otherness has been drawn increasingly near. The 'others' enter in close proximity, as an inevitable presence, yet they simultaneously maintain an insurmountable distance precisely because of the ephemeral nature of the practical and ideological engagements taking **place**. This 'distant nearness' is not only caused by the multitude of others involved in the different (disciplinary) actions, but also arises from the different roles a person plays at any given time. As a result, both the experience and exploration of metropolitan **space** have diversified, and our understanding of it is continually increased by a terminology that aims to distinguish minor differences. As a consequence, the tools for recording the contemporary urban condition also need to develop greater sensitivity and sophistication, which will, in the end, provide readings that can properly register this evolving condition of alterity.

Poetics: chaos or differentiated detachment

The numbing effect of the metropolis seems to be caused by the impossibility of digesting its chaotic experiences while simultaneously negotiating multiplicities of relationships. One could argue that nowadays the chaotic complexity rooted in the spatial experience of the surface condition is moving towards, or has begun to overlap, the 'original chaos' of sensory experience. In his reflections on 'poietica', Paul Valéry used the term 'original chaos' when describing the two constituent parts essential to the mental life of a 'highly developed' human being.⁵ Valéry distinguished between the efficiency and utility of social interaction (which is inherently limited) and the full experience of a personal mental state (which lies at the basis of artistic practice and is potentially unique). To **retrace** this 'original chaos', Valéry argued, entails acceptance of the entire range of sensory impressions, including 'personal impressions — the spots and stains — the "mistakes"'.⁶

4 I use the term '**surfaces**' here, and not for instance 'realities', as the terms that have become increasingly important in describing the spatial experiences of the city, namely 'intensity', 'movement', 'simultaneity', indicate the change that has led to our current understanding of urban **space**, namely from '**place**' to 'surface'. If the city is no longer theorised as a **place** of densification but a spatial field of intensities, then it makes much more sense to describe the contemporary urban condition as a 'surface condition'.

5 Paul Valéry, 1903, from the cahier 'Poiétique', in: Paul Valéry, *De macht van de afwezigheid* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij, 2004), p. 111. The translation from Dutch is mine.

6 Ibid.

7 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Lyndhurst (NJ): Barnes and Nobles, 2007).

Valéry used the term to clarify the specific limitations that result from the emergence of **language** and discourse. **Representational** devices such as words are invented to describe the original chaos, i.e. all matter and thoughts, concepts and things/objects in the world around us. In themselves, words are devoid of content but acquire their meaning through an historical process. However, Valéry warns us that meaning has a tendency to become rather fixed, at least in linguistic **representations**. The renewed opening up of sensorial experience towards the original chaos would 'guarantee' the endless fabrications of **language** games and sustain a wide variety of linguistic genres, from prose to **poetics**, idiosyncrasies to platitudes, and from chatter to debate. In this sense, the process of becoming aware of the original chaos is simultaneously a breaking open of fixed meanings and a deliberate attempt to detach oneself from the direct relationships embedded in discourse.

If the characteristics of contemporary urban spatial experiences can indeed be considered equivalent to the explicit nature of this 'original chaos' of sensorial experience, the contradiction embedded in this comparison is even more intriguing. Valéry describes a personal mental state which is not shared with others, as opposed to the social **space** which is, in principle, shared and filled with various forms of social control and discipline. The form of isolation Valéry seeks for artistic practices, and which is reminiscent of Nietzsche's 'light solitude',⁷ becomes an incredibly difficult, if not impossible, position to maintain in the current state of surface conditions described above, since the surface conditions presuppose an ability to navigate the different social structures, networks and constellations which have emerged. The 'unbearable lightness' of the surface condition seems to stand in stark contrast to the sensibility and sensitive isolation needed for artistic production. However, perhaps the fault lines that arise from this complex, schizophrenic situation — namely the cracks and open ends that extend infinitely within the various relationships, practices and discourses in which one engages — can initiate a different state

of imagination. This imagination would instigate a widening of the discourse towards an architectural design process that emerges from the characteristics of the contemporary surface condition itself.

If, as Valéry has defined it, architecture is an 'ode of space to itself'⁸ then the solitude required for architectural production should aim towards achieving a mental state that anticipates the poetic.⁹ At this point, two distinct historical interpretations should be mentioned with regard to the poetic and the poetic experience of space in architecture. These interpretations became apparent with the increasing use of the term *poiesis* in postmodern debates. The first understanding of *poiesis* refers to the Greek meaning of *poetics* as 'making',¹⁰ namely the bringing together of the immaterial and the material, the meeting of thought and matter, which is mostly discussed with reference to poetry in literature. The second understanding refers to *poetics* as 'creation', the processes out of which something transpires that is either an organism (*auto-poiesis*,¹¹ which is self-generating and basically creates more of the 'same'), or an artificial construct (*allo-poiesis*, which fabricates something 'other').¹² Following the argument thus far, any form of the poetic nowadays is probably only to be found in the superficiality and absence of any fixed 'ground' within the described current social constructs. If a form of 'detachment' is imperative when considering the consequences of the surface conditions for architectural design processes, then the issue of representation becomes equally crucial when, as I mentioned above, the relevant tools for recording also need to be reconsidered. In itself, detachment is already inherently part of any form of representation, including the architectural drawing, as both words and lines are disconnected from the object they intend to represent. This leaves only the form and degree of detachment as the 'means' towards achieving the levels of sophistication required to discern minor differences. As a consequence, both the tools for recording and the representational devices require less rather than more precision. However contradictory this may seem, the objective should therefore be an attempt to detect and analyse a greater number of minor differences through the implementation of a set of tools that 'suffer' from an increased lack of precision. This process of disconnecting from the apparatuses allows for an easier access to the 'others.'

Prison: subordination through architecture

The terms mentioned thus far, such as 'detachment', 'superficiality' and 'lack of precision', are generally seen as characteristics to avoid, and therefore 'negative'. In contrast, architecture is considered to be essentially 'positive' in nature and, at present, this attitude is more emphasised than ever. The desire to draw attention to this 'constructive' characteristic of architecture seems inexhaustible for those active in the field. According to this vision, the negative is acceptable in other

forms of art, such as literature or music, but not in architecture, which is perceived as fundamentally constructive because it deals with the 'bringing together' of substance and operates 'towards' a physical construction (i.e. what was described above as *poiesis*). What is neglected, however, is the fact that the poetic itself has another, inherently negative and disturbing side.¹³ Already in Plato's nation state, for example, the poet is actually the one who causes danger and might bring the city to ruin, and thus needs to be expelled. Plato's condemnation of art foresees the element of seduction, the experience of beauty, which overwhelms the spectator and provokes dysfunction, or at least unproductive distraction.¹⁴ If architecture is potentially poetic, or can offer a poetic experience of space, then the inherent negative aspect needs to be both acknowledged and dealt with.

The negative equivalent of construction, namely destruction, is then, in Nietzschean terms, the way through which new values and new work can emerge,¹⁵ or, as Giorgio Agamben recently stated, it is the correct way to escape from aesthetics and the silent pleasures of art, which would eradicate quite violently any possible way of understanding a work of art. Agamben argues that we need this 'loss' and 'abyss', for 'if it is true that the fundamental architectural problem becomes visible only in the house ravaged by fire, then perhaps we are today in a privileged position to understand the authentic significance of the Western aesthetic project'.¹⁶ In addition to the 'divine terror' of aesthetic distraction and the uncanny possibility of destructive disaster — two of the inherent 'dangers' of any architecture — one could point to a third inherently negative aspect of architecture: namely the levels

8 Valéry, op. cit., p. 40.

9 Francesco Dal Co, 'Excellence: The Culture of Mies as Seen in his Notes and Books', in: *Mies Reconsidered: His Career, Legacy, and Disciples* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1986), pp. 72-85.

10 See, for instance: *OASE, 'Poiesis en architectuur'*, no. 40 (1994) and *AA Words 4: Jan Turnovsky, Poetics of a Wall Projection* (London: Architectural Association, 2005).

11 see also: Patrik Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture; A New Framework for Architecture* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2011).

12 These two understandings of *poiesis* have, in a wonderful way, come together in Valéry's work, in general in his great

number of notes on 'Poietica' and specifically in his *Cours de Poétique* of 1937.

13 See, for instance, similar arguments in Anthony Vidler's *The Architectural Uncanny; Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge/London: The MIT Press, 1992), especially part 1 'Houses', in which he emphasises the 'haunted' aspect of architecture.

14 This reference to Plato's Republic comes from Giorgio Agamben, 'The Man without Context', on website: http://www.thebestrevenge.info/3126-the_man_without_content.pdf (accessed on 12 June 2012), p. 4.

15 Nietzsche's concept of 'Umwertung aller Werte'.

16 Agamben, op.cit. p. 6.

of control architecture inflicts on its users and inhabitants. To a very large extent, each architectural form or **space** determines the range of spatial possibilities, thus limiting potential movement and behaviour. This means that each work of architecture is also a device that imposes order and discipline, if only through its function of 'housing bodies'.

So, evidently, we are already *Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*,¹⁷ but in order to explore the impact of that insight on architecture, the current understanding of the nature of the prison needs to be clarified. The classical model of the prison, which makes a clear distinction between inside and outside, has already been wonderfully reversed in the Zone of Tarkovski's film *Stalker*,¹⁸ and in Rem Koolhaas's graduation project. More recently, Agamben introduced the prison camp as a model for the contemporary city, namely as the '*nomos* of the political **space** in which we are still living'.¹⁹ The camp is the permanent location to which one can be outlawed. For Agamben, the lawfully marginalised, the ones subjected to excessive control and fierce discipline, are no longer the exception, even though they have not necessarily become the rule either. The camp is the 'fourth, inseparable element' that needs to be added to the 'old trinity'²⁰ composed of the state, the nation, and land. The marginalised no longer inhabit the periphery; instead, the marginal and the periphery are dispersed within the field of differentiation. They are located everywhere and thus nowhere in particular. This has consequences for architecture as well, as the whole array of 'others', as described both in the contemporary surface condition and in the dissemination within the urban field, need to virtually find their '**place**' within the order that architecture proposes. Architecture is therefore no longer dealing with the (endless) **repetition** of the same order, as in Hilberseimer's *Groszstadt* for instance, but is supposed to enable the diversification of difference itself, *ad infinitum*.

From an architectural point of view, Agamben's argument requires elaboration. For instance, he does not make any specific distinction between different types of camps, nor does he explain the spatial organisation of the camp. Moreover, neither the camp nor the 'state of exception' can come into existence without a proper boundary or defence line, implemented to delineate the different sides. This concept of '**border** thinking' has also been introduced recently in the social sciences, and especially in post-colonial studies, in order to foster other ways of thinking about the project of modernity besides the dominant, Western one. **Border** thinking has the attribute of being able to balance the dominant versus dominated positions, while at the same time taking the marginal areas of exchange into consideration. It has an equally sensitive appreciation for both sides of any divide. In this context, J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* provides an intriguing reference, as it gives a wonderful account of the immanent possibilities (and, to be honest, disasters as well) of that **border** condi-

tion. In Coetzee's book, the outer edges of the empire slowly become the **place** where the outsiders, i.e. the barbarians, form the all too attractive counterpoint to established culture. In first instance, this state of affairs is met with hostile acts of protectionism and invasions, but after a while a slow process occurs whereby both sides of the divide become 'infected' with the characteristics of each other's culture.

Body: folded silhouette or divided shadow

The lingering questions that become apparent in this discussion are, in fact, tangible ones: how are the 'others' actually situated in architecture? How are their physical characteristics manifested in the spatial configurations of architectural constructs? If the human body is implicitly present in architectural projects, then what exactly would or could constitute this bodily presence? In other words, how are the 'others' simply re-presented? As stated, the tendency to open the discourse to a multitude of others introduces a 'new' set of possibilities and virtual movements in **space**.²¹ The 'others' have become diversified entities to such an extent that the dialogue with them suffers increasingly from a lack of clear definition. To solve this issue, the others can only be **represented** as vague physical beings. They start to resemble silhouettes or specters, bodily entities whose characteristics are never precise, never distinct, and which never form a clearly defined physical manifestation of a personality. Hence we are not dealing with disembodied entities,²² but ones that consist of such a multiplicity of non-related characteristics, each one becomes a '*Körper ohne Eigenschaften*': a body without qualities. Within the context of the discussion that sees all architecture as inevitably dealing with the **space** of the prison, this 'silhouette' is reminiscent of the prisoners who are on display as objects in a panoptic machine. Yet there is a fundamental difference, since in this case the prisoner incorporates an additional number of other 'characteristics'. The prisoner is no longer objectified, classified and numbered as s/he is in the Panopticon, but becomes a being who is additionally depersonalised upon entering the grandiose structure of architecture.

17 The title of Rem Koolhaas's graduation project, which proposed a Berlin-Wall-like structure running through London. Published, amongst others, in: O.M.A, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1995), pp. 2-21.

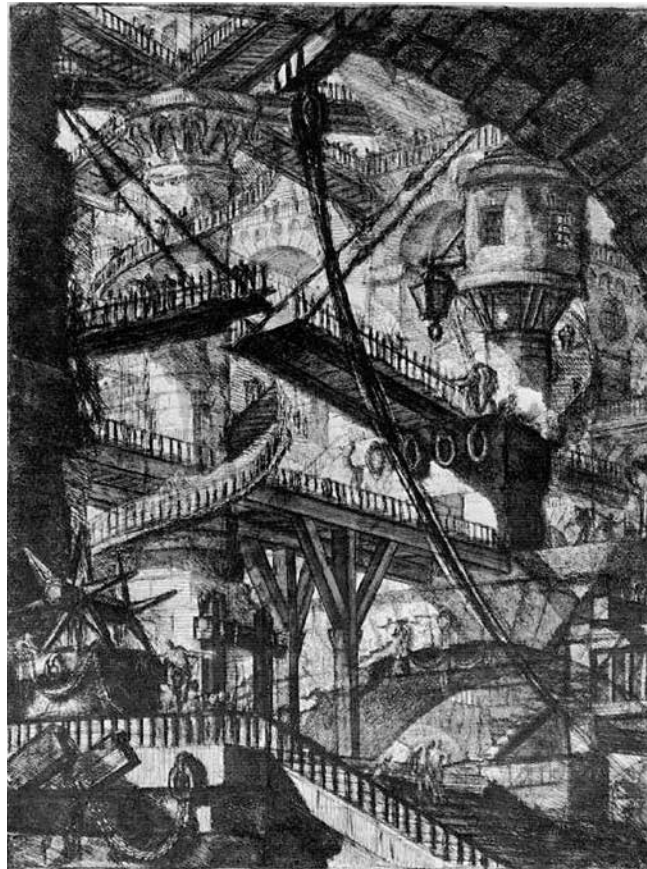
18 Mosfilm Studios, USSR, 1979.

19 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer; Sovereign, Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 166.

20 Ibid, pp. 175-176.

21 According to Valéry, the virtual movements of the architect need to overlap the virtual movements of the mind.

22 I.e. Guattari & Deleuze 'Body without Organs'. See: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism & Schizophrenia* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), chapter 6, pp. 149-166.



Giovanni Battista Piranesi,
Plate VII from
the series *The Imaginary Prisons*
(Le Carceri d'Invenzione),
Rome, 1761

I would argue that this is the reason why Piranesi's *Carceri* have remained so excruciatingly fascinating to this day: the architecture that was apparently made to impress and suppress actually offers, or inclines towards, a **space** of absolute freedom — however false that hope of freedom might be. This is a freedom that equals the opportunity to wander eternally in the ruins of a divine past, while surpassing it because of the apparent absence of any rule.

A similar attempt at spatial freedom can be observed in the enlarged city of *New Babylon*,²³ where Constant projected an extended

23 Mark Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon; The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998), pp. 184-230.

24 The 'epistemological shift' from the theological to the anthropomorphic and then mechanical body to the dissolved bodies of postmodernity has been

accurately described by Ignasi de Solà-Morales in: 'Absent Bodies', in Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.) *Anybody* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), pp. 16-25.

25 Geert Bekaert, *Architecture Devoid of Shadow* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1988), p. 45.

urban landscape in which the individual is both lost and subjected. Some structures that Constant proposed still use an architecture that is full of subordination. In others, the *homo ludens* would be able to find freedom in an all-encompassing structure that is 'ladder'-labyrinthine (some of these are even mobile!), and through which only vague silhouettes appear to move. It seems only proper that architecture casts shadows. Inside this structure, and under the spell of these shadows, one can perhaps find a deeper understanding of the other side of order and subordination. The notion of architecture as a form of protection recedes when one realises that the real possibility of danger lies inside the house, inside architecture. The shadow cast by architectural structures is, then, not so much a threat of subordination but actually an unfulfilled promise. This is a more meaningful interpretation of *poiesis*: the ability to extend beyond the **borders** of articulated thinking, confirmed spatial order and expected behaviour. The vagueness and desperation embedded in the shadow actually constitute the profound mystery of architecture.

This is the ontological **void** from which and towards which architecture operates. After the demise of the Pantokrator, usually understood as the 'ruler of all', but also **represented** as the one who oversees all, as in the Panopticon, and after His replacement by the naked Modern man, an individual to whom specific characteristics could be attributed, the inhabitant of today's architecture is a silhouette who certainly has basic human characteristics, but who remains as vague as a shadow.²⁴ As Geert Bekaert stated, architecture is indeed '[...] not innocent, not harmless, [...] its fundamental task is to break down reality, and, by means of an adventurous, uncertain reconnaissance, to grant that reality new opportunities'.²⁵ The body of the prisoner, the tissue of the city and the contours of the silhouette, all equally need to be coded, **represented**, transformed, and decoded. These entities firstly need to be textualised, i.e. made linguistic and/or discursive, then contextualised. When they start to be folded into a structure, an architectural statement will emerge where the body is simultaneously located in the text and in **space**. The map that can be drawn from this is a registration of the body inscribed into the city as well as into architecture. In an endless cycle of drawing and withdrawing, a dance of mirroring, the full and the empty are situated side by side. So, in the end, while at the end, are we then chasing ghosts? And, if we have been drawn near, then to what surface?

Bibliography
Colophon

SPACES, POETICS AND VOIDS

Bibliography

AGAMBEN, G. **Homo Sacer; Sovereign, Power and Bare Life**. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

AGAMBEN, G. 'The Man without Context', on website: http://www.thebestrevenge.info/3126-the_man_without_content.pdf, accessed on 12 June 2012.

AURELI, P.V. **The Project of Autonomy**. New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2008.

BARTHES, R. **Writing Zero Degree**. Hill and Wang, New York, 2003.

BARTHES, R. 'The Death of the Author' in **Image-Music-Text**. Hill and Wang, New York, 1978.

BEKAERT, G. **Architecture Devoid of Shadow**. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1988.

BENJAMIN, W. 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in **Illuminations: Essays and Reflections**. Ed. Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, New York, 1968.

BLOW UP, 1966, directed by ANTONIONI, M. Italy, UK, USA, MGM, Premier Pictures.



BONFANTI, E. **Nuovo e moderno in architettura**. Mondadori, Milan, 2001.

BORGES, J.L. 'The Library of Babel', in **Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings**, New Directions Publishing, New York, 1964.

Brazil, 1985, directed by GILLIAM T. UK, Embassy International Pictures.

BRANDI, C. **Struttura e architettura** (Structure and Architecture). Einaudi, Turin, 1967.

BUCCI, F. MULAZZANI, M. **Luigi Moretti: Works and Writings**. Electa, Torino, 2000.

CALVINO, I. **Le città invisibili**. Mondadori, Milano, 1993.



CAMUS, A. **The Outsider**. Penguin Classics, London, 2006.

COLLINS, P. **Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture** (1965). McGill – Queens University Press, 1998.

COLQUHOUN, A. 'Composition vs. the Project' in Casabella n° 520-21 Jan-Feb 1986.

CORBELLINI, G. 'Assenza', in www.architettura.it, 4 December 2004, accessed April 2011, <http://architettura.it/parole/20041204/index.htm>.

CROW, T. DISERENS, C. KIRSHNER J. R. KRAVAGNA, C. **Gordon Matta Clark**. Phaidon, London, 2004.

DAL CO, F., 'Excellence: The Culture of Mies as Seen in his Notes and Books', in: **Mies Reconsidered: His Career, Legacy, and Disciples**. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1986.

DAVIDSON, C. C. (ed.) **Anybody**. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997.

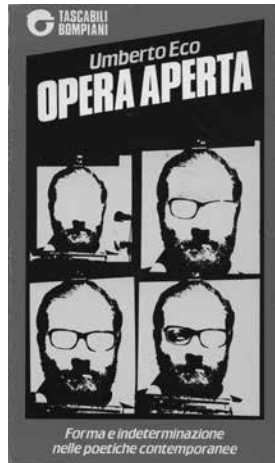
DE SOLA-MORALES, I. 'Terrain Vague', in **Anyplace**, Any Magazine, no.1, Ed. C. Davidson, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1995.

DELEUZE, G. **Différence et répétition**. PUF, Paris, 1968; Eng. tr.: **Difference and Repetition**. Columbia University Press, New York, 1994.

DELEUZE, G. and GUATTARI, F. **A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism & Schizophrenia.** London: The Athlone Press, 1999.

ECO, U. **La struttura assente** (The Absent Structure). Bompiani, Milan, 1968.

ECO, U. **Opera Aperta.** Bompiani, Milan, 1986.



EVANS-CLARK, P. **Gordon Matta Clark – L'architetto di rime eterree.** Domus, no. 700, December 1988, pp. 80-84.

FIEDLER, K. **Über den Ursprung der künstlerischen Tätigkeit.** Leipzig, 1887.

GANDELSONAS, M. **X-Urbanism: Architecture and the American City.** Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1999.

GREGOTTI, V. 'La forma del territorio', originally published in *Edilizia Moderna* n° 87/88 – 1966 (English translation from the French revised version under the title 'The Form of the Territory' in *Oase Journal for Architecture* n° 80, 'On Territories', December 2009, NAI Publishers, Rotterdam.

GRILLET, R. **For a New Novel.** Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1996.

GRUPPO SUBURBIA, 'Specie di spazi', in www.architettura.it, 24 November 2002, accessed April 2011, <http://architettura.supereva.com/collection/20021124/index.htm>.

HAYS, K.M. 'Objects, Texts and Object-Texts: on the Recent Turn toward Textuality', *Casabella* n°549/1988.

HEIDDEGER, M. 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in **Poetry Language Thought.** Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1975.

HEJDUK, J. 'Flatness of Depth', in **Mask of Medusa: Works 1947-1983.** Ed. Kim Shkapich, Rizzoli International, New York, 1989.

KRENZ, A. 'An interview with Peter Greenaway', in www.architettura.it, 27 April 2003, accessed January 2012, <http://architettura.supereva.com/movies/20030427/index.htm>.

KWINTER, S. 'Landscapes of Change: Boccioni's "Stati d'animo" as a General Theory of Models', in: *Assemblage*, No. 19 (Dec., 1992).

LAMBERTI, C. 'La città di Berlino nel cinema di Ruttmann e Wenders' in www.architettura.it, 9 December 2001, accessed January 2012, <http://architettura.supereva.com/movies/20011209/index.htm>.

LATOUR, B. 'Paris: Invisible City', in www.bruno-latour.fr, February 2006, accessed January 2012, <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/virtual/PARIS-INVISIBLE-GB.pdf>.

LEACH, N. (ed.) **Rethinking Architecture; A Reader in Cultural Theory.** London/ New York: Routledge, 1997.

LEFEUVRE, L. **The W-hole story.** *Art Monthly*, April 2002, accessed April 2007, www.artmonthly.co.uk/lefeuvre.htm.

LOOS, A. **Parole nel vuoto.** Adelphi Edizioni, Milan, 2003.

LUCAN, J. **Composition, Non-composition.** *Architecture et théories XIX-XX siècles.* Presses Polytechniques Romandes, Lausanne, 2009.

MALDONADO, T., GUILLERME, J. and MELANDRI, E. in *Casabella* n° 560/1989, n° 568-569/1990.

Man with a Movie Camera, 1929, directed by VERTOV, D., USSR, 1929, edition: Moskwood Media, based on a British Film Institute copy.

MANNINO, S. 'Matta-Clark and Anarchitecture: Infinite lettura per infiniti spettatori', in www.architettura.it, 16 April 2006, accessed January 2012, <http://architettura.supereva.com/artland/20060416/index.htm>.

MATTA-CLARK, G., **Gordon Matta-Clark,** Exhibition Catalogue. IVAM Centre Julio Gonzalez, Valencia, 1993, cited in www.mattaclarking.co.uk, accessed January 2012.

MONEO, R. 'Aldo Rossi: the Idea of Architecture and Modena Cemetery', in **Oppositions Reader**, Ed. Hays M. Princeton Architectural Press, 1998.

MULAS, U. **La Fotografia.** Giulio Einaudi Editore, Torino, 1973.

NIETZSCHE, F. **Thus Spoke Zarathustra.** Lyndhurst (NJ): Barnes and Nobles, 2007.

OASE, 'Poiesis en architectuur', no. 40 (1994)

O.M.A, KOOLHAAS, R. and MAU, B. **S,M,L,XL.** Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1995.

PANOFSKY, E. **La proseptiva come forma simbolica.** Feltrinelli, Milan, 2001.

PASOLINI P.P. **Empirismo eretico.** Garzanti, Milano, 2003.



PEREC, G. **Species of Spaces and Other Pieces.** Penguin Books, London, 1997.

Roma, 1972, directed by FELLINI, F. Italy, Ultra Film, Les Productions Artistes Associés.

ROSSI, A. **A Scientific Autobiography.** The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1981.

ROWE, C. **Collage City.** The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1984.

SCHUMACHER, P. **The Autopoiesis of Architecture; A New Framework for Architecture.** Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2011.

Stalker, 1979, directed by Andrei Tarkovski, Mosfilm Studios, USSR.



TAFURI, M. **Architecture and Utopia – Design and Capitalist Development.** The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1976.

TAFURI, M. **La sfera e il labirinto.** Einaudi, Torino, 1980; Eng. tr. *The Sphere and the Labyrinth.* Cambridge, MIT Press, 1987.

TSCHUMI, B. **Manhattan Transcripts.** Academy Editions, London, 1994.

TURNOVSKY, J. **Poetics of a Wall projection** (AA Words 4). London: Architectural Association, 2005.

VALÉRY, P. **De macht van de afwezigheid.** Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij, 2004.

VIDLER, A. **The Architectural Uncanny; Essays in the Modern Unhomely.** Cambridge/London: The MIT Press, 1992.

WIGLEY, M. **Constant's New Babylon; The Hyper-Architecture of Desire.** Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998.

This publication was initiated and developed by the **Border** Conditions & Territories research group and financially supported by the Faculty of Architecture (Delft University of Technology) and the **Border** Conditions Foundation.

EDITOR
Marc Schoonderbeek

AUTHORS
Simone Pizzagalli, Marc Schoonderbeek
and Nicolò Privileggio

EDITORIAL BOARD
Stefano Milani and Marc Schoonderbeek

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
Prof. Mark Dorrian, prof. Neil Leach and
prof. Axel Sowa

INVOLVED EDUCATIONAL STAFF
Raviv Ganchrow, Freerk Hoekstra,
Oscar Rommens, Marc Schoonderbeek
and Heidi Sohn

COPY EDITOR
Patricia Brigid Garvin

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Michaël Snitker, Amsterdam
www.snitker.nl

FONT
Neuzeit Office

PRINTING
??

BINDING
??

PUBLISHER
Architectura & Natura Press / August
Kemmer Foundation, Gaston Bekkers, and
Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of
Technology

DISTRIBUTION
??

IMAGE, PHOTO AND MAP CREDITS

The publisher has attempted to meet the conditions imposed by law for the use of the illustrations. Anyone who nevertheless wishes to assert any rights to this material is invited to contact the publisher. All images and photographs presented in this book are provided by the authors and contributors, with the exception of pages xx-xx, photographs by Hans Schouten.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks and sincere gratitude to:

- Dean prof. Karin Laglas for moral, financial and organizational support.
- Prof. Mark Dorrian, prof. Neil Leach and prof. Axel Sowa, for sharing their insights and providing scientific reflections.
- em. Prof. S. Umberto Barbieri and prof. Michiel Riedijk, for their continuous and firm support of the **Border** Conditions program.
- Nicolò Privileggio, for the precious theoretical reflections and feedbacks.
- Michaël Snitker, for taking this publication to an unexpected, profound level of clarity.
- Gaston Bekkers and Harmen Kraai, for their persistent dedication towards publishing astonishing books.
- Patricia Brigid Garvin, for meticulously improving and clarifying all texts.
- all involved scholars and dedicated teachers in the **Border** Conditions graduate program and the **Border** Conditions & Territories research program.
- Simone Pizzagalli offers special thanks to Afer Pastor for her constant support and patience, and to Fonds BKVB for supporting his work as an independent architect during 2010.

www.borderconditions.org
www.menabo-architecture.com

Copyright © 2012 by
Architectura & Natura Press and TU Delft
ISBN: xxxxxxxxx