



Delft University of Technology

Theory, embedded and embodied

Pimlott, Mark

Publication date

2023

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Villardjournal

Citation (APA)

Pimlott, M. (2023). Theory, embedded and embodied. *Villardjournal*, (3), 27-55.

Important note

To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable). Please check the document version above.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download, forward or distribute the text or part of it, without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license such as Creative Commons.

Takedown policy

Please contact us and provide details if you believe this document breaches copyrights. We will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

villardjournal

chief editors

Pippo Ciorra
(Università degli studi di Camerino)
Giovanni Corbellini
(Politecnico di Torino)

advisory board

Sean Anderson
Francesco Benelli
Matevs Celik
Maristella Casciato
Alberto Ferlenga
Pedro Gadanho
Christof Grafe
Alicia Imperiale
Sylvia Lavin
Mari Lending
Hrvoje Njiric
Luka Skansi
Axel Sowa

vdh faculty

Aldo Aymonino
Fernanda De Maio
Alberto Ferlenga
Sara Marini
(Università Iuav di Venezia)
Piotr Barbarewicz
(Università degli Studi di Udine)
Robertino Cavallo
Heidi Sohn
(Technische Universiteit Delft)
Virginie Picon-Lefebvre
(Ecole Nationale Supérieure
d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville)
Sergio Martín Blas
Guiomar Martín Domínguez
(Universidad Politécnica de Madrid)

editorial board

Chiara Carrera
Marco De Nobili
Martina Dussin
Giulio Marchetti
Alessandra Pelizzari Corbellini

graphic design

xycomm Milano

publisher

LetteraVentidue

print

Printed in July 2023
by TheFactory, Rome

This publication has been supported
by Iuav University, Venice (Italy)

ISSN 2533-297X

ISBN 978-88-6242-417-2

© 2023

All rights reserved.

All material is compiled from sources
believed to be reliable, but the
publishers takes no responsibility for
errors or omissions.

Nothing in this publication can be
copied or reproduced without written
permission of the publishers.

<http://www.iuav.it/villardjournal>

villardjournal@iuav.it

03.023

edited by Alessandra Pelizzari Corbellini

villardjournal

interf- ere

03.023

• • • • • LetteraVentidue

villardjournal is a publication of the Villard de Honnecourt PhD in design and theory, based at the Iuav University of Venice, and currently connected with ENSA Paris-Belleville, ETSAM Madrid, and TU Delft.

villardjournal is an open project whose aim is to compare and integrate different approaches, fields, disciplines, generations.

villardjournal is a boogazine, devoted to criticism, theory, and research in the field of design at different scales.

villardjournal focuses on monographic issues, each edited by one or more authors. The articles are written by scholars, invited by the editors and selected through public calls.

villardjournal draws on the advice of an advisory board of international scholars and it is run by faculty, alumni, and candidates of the Villard de Honnecourt PhD.

contents

009

foreword

pippo ciorra

013

intuition as interference

alessandra pelizzari corbellini

027

theory, embedded and embodied

mark pimlott

057

eterotopia, a defective satellite journey

eterotopia

079

a raw wholeness

matteo corbellini

093

in practice, the exploration of design processes: a conversation

harold fallon, benoît burquel,

benoît vandenbulcke

(agwa) with aslı çiçek, freek

dendooven, gijs de cock

(raamwerk)

111

in connotation

ex figura

131

**practice, theory
and filter bubbles:
understanding
architectural
communities of tacit
knowledge**

*filippo cattapan, hamish
lonergan, claudia mainardi*

165

**principles vs
interventions on
architectural heritage**

camila burgos vargas

181

geometries of time

*mariacristina d'oria,
taufan ter weel*

theory, embedded and embodied

mark pimlott

abstract One's own practice is a constant articulation of one's position in relation to actual conditions, in which one's work appears. One relies upon one's own readings of the conditions the world offers, in which one is immersed and formed, and an innate sense of resistance to its coercions and restraints. One seeks further means of understanding those conditions, which inform, sometimes direct, and at other times deepen one's own convictions as to what must be done. One might call those means, embodied in texts and in other practices, past and contemporary, *theory*.

The observations and the work one makes in light of this are not enactments or realisations of theory. Rather, aspects of that theory consciously and unconsciously become part of one's world-view, and find themselves embedded in what one says, writes, teaches, proposes, and makes. They accumulate. And as one finds one's practice, through necessity, needing to use various means and media, needing to appear and engage in different actual and discursive contexts, one's points of reference or guidance in other practices, discourses, and texts are correspondingly, inevitably, varying, diversified, eclectic. This paper proposes a chronology of exchanges between *theory*

and *acts* within my own multi-disciplinary practice, beginning in 1964, before I was aware of the very idea of either theory or practice, but conscious of a world of *relations*.

theory, embedded and embodied The work of my practice has never been a translation or enactment of some theoretical text; rather, the ways it comes into being are more complex, responding to conditions, contexts, desires, varied discourses (social, cultural, political, theoretical), and my own volition. The form the work assumes always coexists with other forms, other things in the world, other manifestations of complex considerations, within conditions contested by many agents. My work is to give attention to these conditions, and the narratives, projections, compulsions, and errors that have made them, in order to disclose their significance; and, in picturing or making modest additions to them, changing those conditions to render them visible, so that they might offer themselves to imagination and use, suggesting connections with and reconciliation between the past and the present, here and elsewhere(s), and others, known, unknown, unknowable. This requires empathy, movement towards the other, surrender, and generosity. My position arises from a resistance to institutions and systems, seeing them as iterations of an ongoing project of control of the highly diverse lives and desires of people and their myriad forms of association in favour of obeisance, predictable performance, and narrowly defined subjectivities by powers who colonise, conquer, extort, extract, eradicate; who conjure up false dreams to disguise their motives to entrance, ensnare and enslave those they regard as inexhaustible resources. The theory that brings me to this position is similarly aligned with resistance: critique that has seen and described the damage of capitalism (which declares itself as non-ideological) as a foundation or invitation for new ways of imagining the world, and the world of relations. The reading of Foucault, Debord, Tafuri, Benjamin, Barthes, Berman, Berger and others has armed my outrage, and in part suggested ways in which I might act.



1



2

1 Mark Pimlott, Parking Lot, c 1965.

2 Mark Pimlott, Flims CH, 1989.



3

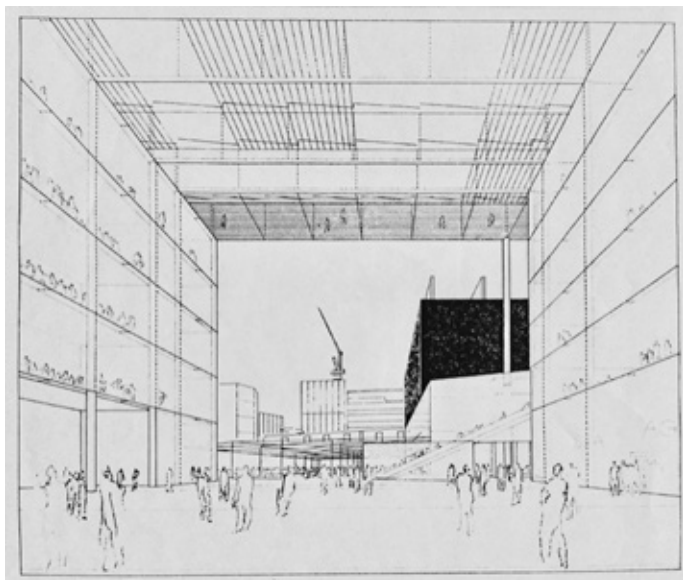


4

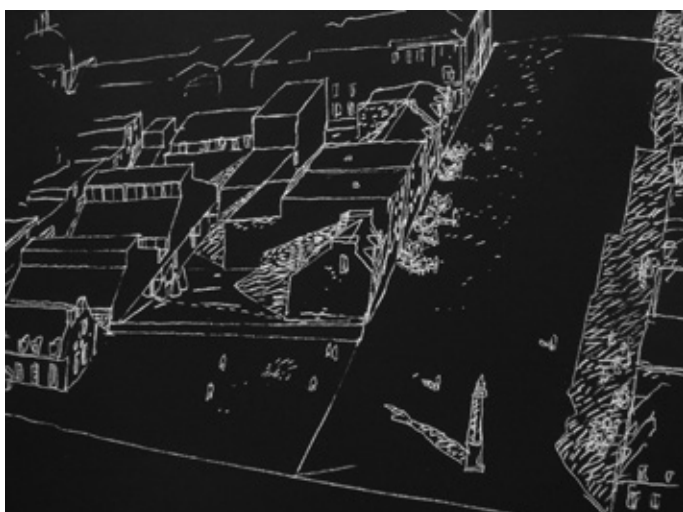
3 Mark Pimlott and Peter St John, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi, 1986.

4 Mark Pimlott and Peter St John in collaboration with Tony Fretton, Neckinger Mills, London, 1987-88. Photograph © Lorenzo Elbaz.

beginnings of a sensibility My sensitivity to conditions was formed when I was very young, at a specific moment that I consider the beginning of my 'consciousness'. (This perhaps was a projection – the first of a life's worth – of productive misinterpretations.) At the age of six in a suburb of Montréal, I sat on ground being prepared for the laying of an asphalt driveway, set apart by a boundary of wooden pegs and string, in front of our tract house on one street of many such streets of tract houses, a hundred metres from parallel lines of service roads, a transcontinental motorway, a transcontinental railway, electrical and telephone cables and the flightpaths of airplanes in and out of the nearby international airport. I saw, heard and felt all of this while reading a catalogue essay on the political situation surrounding the brief reign of Tutankhamun.¹ This was in 1964. I perceived or even understood at that moment that all places and all times were connected, and all were present at once in the present, available and only requiring attention to be seen. As if to reinforce this perception of connectedness, an urban utopia was being built at that time in the heart of the city in the form of a multi-level downtown core and continuous interior, as was a system of raised motorways, an underground transit system, and an 'ideal city' built in the river, complete with utopian architecture and its own infrastructural support system, for 'expo67', the Universal Exposition of 1967² its theme, 'Terre des Hommes/ Man and His World'. I was raised in a delirious atmosphere conjured up by media. I had seen Lee Harvey Oswald being shot on television after Kennedy's assassination; I was captivated by images of advances in medical science; of the civil rights movement and the violence visited upon it; of the space race. I was attuned to the excitement and anxieties tied to the rapid developments in communications technology, automation, and weapons. I had absorbed, or had been inculcated, by an idea that would reach its zenith in 1969, with the landing of Apollo 11 on the Moon. The full consequence of the Enlightenment was inscribed in the place I occupied: in the territory, the landscape, the buildings of the city, its infrastructures, equipment, movements, mores, norms, images, media, mediums, and their messages. This



5



6

5 Mark Pimlott and Peter St John, Tokyo International Forum, 1990.

6 Mark Pimlott and Tony Fretton, Place Jacques-Cartier, Montréal, 1990.



7



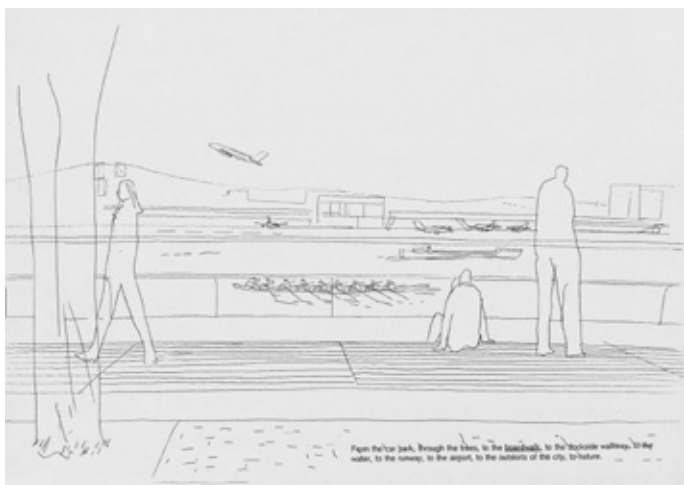
8

7 Mark Pimlott, Praha, 1991.

8 Mark Pimlott, Studiolo, 1995, installation at Todd Gallery, London.
Photograph © Peter White/FXP.

was clear, and visible, and I could read it. I had a copy of Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage*,³ which further reinforced this idea of a projective network as the device for extending Western impulses towards influence, possession, and power. This remained with me. It was *theory*, embedded in my sense of the environment around me. I studied architecture at McGill University in Montréal, where I bemoaned the despoliation of its downtown's utopian Modernism. The city's tattered fabric needed care. At the time, I thought this might be achieved through dialogue with the architecture made just before Modernism, within the world of modernity. I read Stuart Wrede on Gunnar Asplund⁴ and his 'meaning-laden' architecture; I read Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*,⁵ whose essays made it clear that a project of recovery, of the past into the present, may establish some continuity. This was reinforced by working in a practice influenced by Pop, Charles Moore, Edwin Lutyens, Jože Plečnik and Ernest Cormier.⁶ As yet, I had no knowledge of this project of continuity as it had been articulated in Milan – notably within Ernesto Rogers' writing in *Casabella* and his presentation to CIAM at Otterlo in 1959⁷ – or of that city's ongoing notion of *ambiente*.⁸ Later, Rodrigo Perez de Arce, my mentor at the Architectural Association in London, introduced us to concepts of urbanisation, through study of the re-forming of Paris by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann and Barcelona by Alfonso Cerdà: their calculated destruction of the historical city,⁹ their imprint of administration, their notions of the production of an urban *subject*,¹⁰ the *everywhereness* of the city.

the beginnings of practice In the mid-1980s, I had remained convinced that ideas were inscribed into the arrangements and appearances of the human world, and that in reconfigurations or additions or alterations to that world achieved through buildings and things, it may be possible to make those ideas visible and available; and that these ideas, consciously or unconsciously, were inscribed within or alongside other, perhaps more direct intentional communications, contained or represented, imperfectly, like



9



10

9 Mark Pimlott, A higher place, 1997.

10 Mark Pimlott, To other places, 1998.



11

11 Mark Pimlott, Guinguette, 2000. Permanent installation at the Mailbox, Birmingham. Commissioned by Birmingham Mailbox and the Public Arts Commissions Agency. Photograph the author.

all utterances, in the entire environment. This was articulated in projects – for very large buildings, interiors, and objects of radically reduced or modest features – that deflected attention toward other things that they resembled or the environments in which they were situated. In 1988, I started teaching at the Architectural Association with Tony Fretton, an architect with a broad sense of Modernism who had recently been a performance artist. We set programmes and projects in London and other cities, engaging with the ‘ordinary’ and the possibilities of a situated, modest architecture. In evening walks in Fitzrovia and Soho, we looked at nondescript aspects of city streets and ‘unconscious’ design. We talked about Minimal and Conceptual Art, and looked closely at art spaces, their directness, and their accommodation of relations between art, the viewer, and the city. We talked, too, about exemplary architectural practices. I was working on projects with Peter St John; I was also beginning to make art. All of this – the teaching, talking, learning and making of projects, interiors, things – occurred at between the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. This was an important, formative period for me, not yet directly affected by theory, but by theory embedded or embodied in practices, of art, photography, and architecture. Alvaro Siza Vieira’s swimming pool on the coast at Leça de Palmeira and its embrace of the entire man-altered environment in its composition and outlook had a profound impact on my work and thought, extending directions that had been tentatively explored with Peter St John. Our conversations, around teaching, art, photography, music, and our practices (Fretton was designing the Lisson Gallery at the time) were woven into my thinking and work. Making connections visible between very local circumstances and larger histories of human intervention became central to my projects for architecture and places and my photographs, which took up the topographical character of the pictures I had made as a child. (Figg. 1-6.)

making art and encounters with theory With this feeling of a practice – which, incorporating architecture, places, objects, and photographs, felt both whole and fragmentary – I

wanted to make work that could accommodate my thought that ideas were manifest and representation was present in things, buildings, and environments with more immediacy. I wanted to make things that would be perceived at once as themselves and as pictures of themselves. I steeped myself in appearances, their reading and their interpretation. In my MA studies in visual arts at Goldsmiths, University of London, from 1990 to 1992, I encountered theory 'proper' for the first time: Saussure's and Barthes's writing on language and semiology became immediately relevant.¹¹ I made objects that although resembling useful things, were detached from use, so that their idea-characteristics might come to the foreground. I made photographs of 'places' and interiors, which seemed to be awaiting something happening; film stills made at in-between moments.¹² The character of these photographs was poised between the informal, immediate 'snapshot'¹³ and the topographical photograph.¹⁴ It became a topographic photography witnessing the ruins of the Enlightenment project of a man-made utopia at the end of the trajectory of Modernism. My mentor Jean Fisher encouraged me to continue to look closely at the positioning, framing, othering, and replacement of the other in nineteenth-century American survey photography, and the different order of space, respect for the other and *attention* in Timothy O'Sullivan's views. I learned to distinguish between the projective, possessive nature of the image versus those that moved toward the other. In making pictures, I recognised the place of the subject in environments and time, affected by the movements – and violence – of ideas and history. I benefitted from conversations with Craigie Horsfield and Dan Graham. Horsfield spoke of the indifference of history, and how photographs might attest to this in portraits of people and environments.¹⁵ Graham saw how power relations had been long inscribed in architecture and planning.¹⁶ Both settled on one of my photographs as *the best I would ever make*, looking out from Adolph Loos's Haus Müller in Prague, that featured various stages of a city's iterations of its idea of itself, at different periods in time, from rural village, with cottages and topography, to late nineteenth- and early twentieth - century

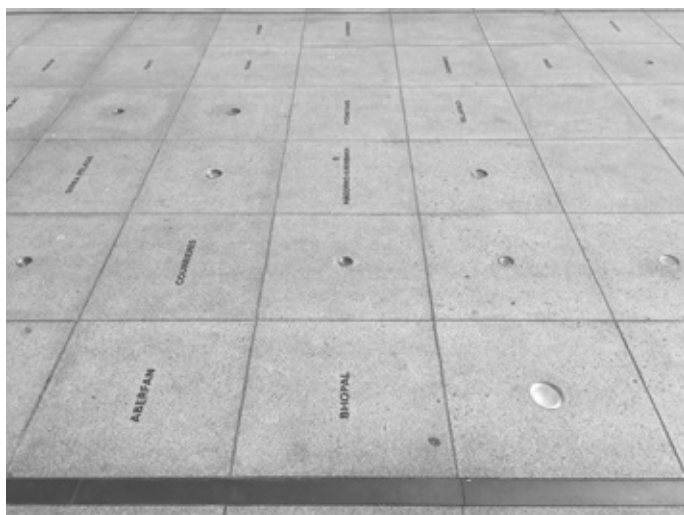


12

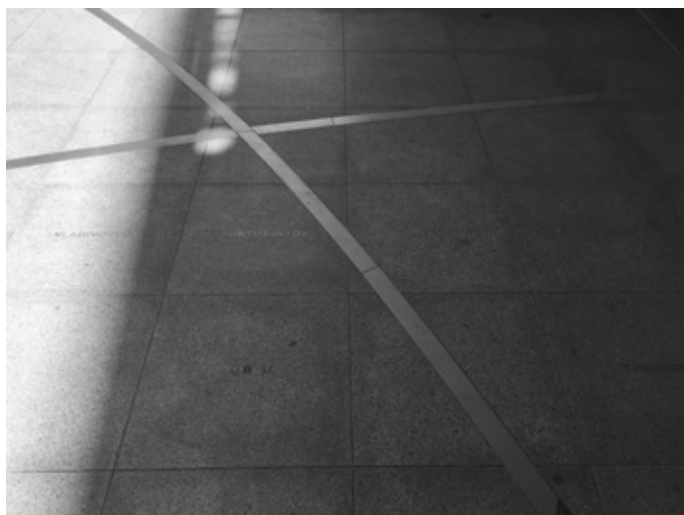


13

12, 13 Mark Pimlott, *La scala*, 2003. Permanent installation at the University of Wales, Penglais Campus, Abersytwyth, 2003. Commissioned by modus operandi art consultants from the gift of the estate of Mollie Winterburne and Nora Gibbs. Photographs the author; © Hélène Binet.



14



15

14, 15 Mark Pimlott, World, 2013, Permanent installation at BBC Broadcasting House, London, 2013. Commissioned by the BBC and modus operandi art consultants. Photographs the author.

apartment villas, adjacent to a long boulevard in park-like settings, to *plattenbau* social housing blocks of the 1960s surrounding industrial facilities. All of these were visible, all were sensed at once, a series of projects of urbanisation shaping all citizens. Each of these identities reflected social and economic ‘realities’ of their period. Each was also the product of a narrative, idea, projection regarding the city’s form and the conditioning – the creation – of its subjects. Describing, picturing, rendering visible these narratives as inscribed in appearances so that they might be read, interpreted, and used, became central to my work, not only in photography, but in all aspects of my practice, in which the central question remained: how might these narratives and their representations be revealed and made available so that new freedoms might emerge? (Fig. 7.) Stories of representation came to the fore: in William Shakespeare’s *A Winter’s Tale* (1623), the sculpture of Hermione moves from stasis to life, and, crossing the threshold from representation to the Real, moves all. This moment is echoed in Lorenzo a Ponte’s libretto for Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (1787), the dead *commendatore* returning as *uomo di sasso*, whose crossing of the boundary between death and life delivers retribution rather than love. The passage from Representation to Real (and *vice versa*) was embraced for its redemptive potential by the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto, whose *Oggetti in meno* (1965-1966)¹⁷ offered the viewer to enter into the objects’ field of representations, and so to see the ‘real’ world as one of fictions that could be engaged with and changed. This aspect of representation, its role as vehicle for bringing something to life, was very important to me, and indeed inherent to the origin myth of painting itself: a woman traces the shadow of her lover – soon to depart for war – on a flat surface, leaving a likeness in the form of a silhouette, that would re-present him to her, and at a specific moment, for all the time he would be apart from her. This story of representation, this ‘lie’, shared with the story of Plato’s cave and his description of artists as deceivers, with hope and love as primary motives, affected me deeply. Its impact was felt in my continuing understanding of photographs and objects, and ultimately, buildings, cities, and their

territories. The fragility of the boundary between representation and Real, as demonstrated by Shakespeare and Pistoletto alike, seemed to be a central tenet of *Arte Povera*.¹⁸ poor, or weak art, with which one could not help but consider the notion of ‘poor theatre’ (Jerzy Grotowski), or weak thought (Gianni Vattimo). In response, I made groups of sculptures, in which each could be described an incomplete artefact, proposed as an image, its character either established or reinforced by its neighbours, its contingent relations.¹⁹ Ultimately, this led to groups of works bound to the conditions in which they were presented. In a gallery, appearing as a drawing of itself derived from Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s Altes Museum’s rotunda, were paintings of ‘nothing’ representing openings to other spaces and each other (as well as the idea of painting); sculpture depicting the gallery floor and a typical Carl Andre work; an object-painting correcting the slightly abnormal geometry of the gallery itself. As the boundaries between the works were blurred, so were the distinctions between the fictive spaces of the works of art, and the ‘real’ spaces occupied by the viewer, who was invited to enter the environment’s fictions. The contingency of the works, their dependence on each other and their situation, was a model for how I would continue to picture, think, and write about the city. Considerations of cities and their own operative fictions, their dreams of being like other cities, could be seen in my photographs and my films, which furthermore dwelt upon the failed promises of a technologically driven utopia.²⁰ The photographs in particular suggested relations between different places, shared patterns, spaces, types, representations. Aldo Rossi’s *The Architecture of the City*;²¹ Johan Friedrich Geist’s work on the arcade;²² Georg Kohlmaier and Barna von Sartory’s work on glasshouses;²³ Bernd and Hilla Becher’s photographs of industrial and domestic typologies;²⁴ and Dan Graham’s *Homes for America*²⁵ all acted as confirmation that appearances, arrangements and relations were ‘genetically’ bound. Finally, colonial settlements, which replicated the administrative systems and appearances of their imperial source, as described by Joseph Rykwert²⁶ reinforced the notion that ideas – associative, allusive, fictive –

were both formative and normative. This continued to affect my work in photography, public art works for places, and soon thereafter, my writing. In the first case, resemblances and echoes of *elsewheres* characterised my photographs of interiors and 'views'.²⁷ In the case of art made for places, the specificity of conditions led to investigations into their histories and attendant fantasies. In Coventry (*To other places*, 1998), these were attached to the city's associations with other cities destroyed by war or acts of terror, which became formal 'twins.' In London's Royal Docks (*A higher place*, 1997), it was the industrial site's nineteenth-century history as a place of collective leisure. In the case of Birmingham (*Guinguette*, 2000), it was a residual notion of the city periphery and its latent freedoms. The *piazza* at the Penglais campus of the University of Wales in Aberystwyth was the product of its architect's²⁸ dream of political spaces of the ancient world and the civic *piazze* of medieval Italian hill towns, which *La scala* (2003) 'completed', with the aim of reviving its civic ideal, reconciling the present and the past's repudiated ideas. At BBC's Broadcasting House, the notion of connection to the world through radio broadcasts and 'soft power' acted as a premise for *World* (2013), whose surface was a landscape for the body and the travelling mind. Names inscribed on the ground evoked associations, recollections, connections with others and other places. (Fig. 9-11.)

My teaching and my writing assumed similar aims, continuous with practice. In 2002, I became visiting professor at TU Delft. I was asked by Tony Fretton, then Professor of the Chair of Interiors Buildings and Cities, to write a 'theory' of interiors. It was clear to me that in the Western constructed world, the interior was not an insulated condition, but one connected to and conditioned by that world and its ideology. Similarly, the interior, which had become characterised as a private realm distinct from the public world, was in fact fully implicated within that public world, and that the public invaded the private.²⁹ Rather than writing a 'theory of the interior', it became important to connect those spaces premised upon a *condition* of interior – the 'continuous interiors' typical of malls, airports and



16



17

16, 17 Mark Pimlott, interiors of Red House, London, (2001, 2004, 2011): Tony Fretton, architect. Photographs © Hélène Binet; © Peter Cook.



18



19

18 Mark Pimlott, interiors of Red House, London, (2001, 2004, 2011) Tony Fretton, architect. Photographs © H  l  ne Binet;    Peter Cook.

19 Mark Pimlott, interiors restaurant Puck, Pip, PS, The Hague, 2007 (in collaboration with Zeinstra Van Gelderen architecten). Photographs    H  l  ne Binet.

city centres – with the idea that I posited to be at their source: namely, the rendering-interior of the continental United States through the enactments, in their various forms, of Thomas Jefferson's Land Ordinance of 1785. A remark by Leonardo Benevolo struck me: the Ordinance was a projection separated from the involvement of or reference to the human body, an abstraction.³⁰ This abstraction would bear terrible consequences for those who dwelt within its perceived as unknown, unseen territories. They would be ensnared then annihilated by the Ordinance's systemic devices and the agents of its realisation. In positing a connection between the American territorial interior and continuous interior, I was obliged to examine those devices and the tools and ideas that came to be appended to them, permitting Jefferson's projection to be fully achieved. Joseph Rykwert's writing helped me understand Jefferson's system in relation to the planning of Roman colonial settlements and their ideas of interior and world,³¹ which Jefferson had extended in order to imagine an infinite interior that was non-hierarchical, promising individualised self-realisation. Simon Schama's writing in *Landscape and Memory*³² helped me understand the ideological import of the American landscape, charged with religious significance – such as William Gilpin's ideology of Manifest Destiny – even as it was being overrun and despoiled; Manfredo Tafuri's writing allowed me to understand the ideological nature of significant elements of American legislation that enabled and reinforced the fantasy of American exceptionalism in urbanisation.³³ The book, *Without and within*,³⁴ also examined how articulation of American ideas appended to the scaffold of Jefferson's grid gained credence from observations and uses of European representational models, from the phalanstery to the panopticon, the *passage* to the Crystal Palace, the Great Expositions, the *grands magasins*, Haussmann and Cerdà, Ebenezer Howard's *Garden City of Tomorrow* and Eugène Hénard's *Paris of the future*; and then, how these same models, transformed in American (and European émigrés) hands, were exported back to Europe and the world beyond, in yet another wave of colonialism, in the guise of *laissez-faire* and then neoliberal capitalism. Michel Foucault's

writing concerning the manifestation of the institution and bio-politics, as well as Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co's exposition³⁵ of capitalist development embedded in processes of urbanisation were particularly important, reinforcing, through their renderings of what passes within capitalist societies as natural and transparent, a heavily state-driven project. The interior was the pre-eminent site of representation to audiences gathered for consumption. The roles of fantasy and spectacle were features of a continuous, unfolding interior, the landscape of neoliberalism. The writing of Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord, Susan Buck-Morss, Joachim Schlör, Marc Augé, and Peter Sloterdijk all contributed to my own descriptions of the interior worlds one was compelled to occupy and their moulding of the human subject, their contribution to the shaping of subjectivities.

My practice, as it addressed the interior – private and public – unconsciously embodied aspects of the theories of spectacle and subjectivities, and offered, in addition to more evident pleasures, something of their inverse, accommodating uncertainties, ambivalence, temporality and, deep within, voids.³⁶ This increasingly found itself represented in my photographs, which, while maintaining their character, became more sensual, less didactic. My practice came to feature parallel and complementary strands, each informing and occasionally reinforcing the other, affecting, furthermore, my teaching and writing in architecture.

In 2013, I was again asked to consider the Western public interior as it might be understood by students involved in its design. This was to be another 'theory' of the interior. It should be evident that I am neither a theorist nor a historian; a scientist or, in that same sense, an academic, either. I responded to this request by intuitively – rather than scientifically – suggesting that the public interior might be described through the device of six persistent themes, namely: the Garden, the Palace, the Ruin, the Shed, the Machine, and the Network. These themes could be ascribed to two worlds: the first, one of allusions, narratives, fictions, and myths; the second, much like our own: a world of administration, regulation and control. The

lectures, which became a book,³⁷ were an accumulation of interpretations regarding characteristics, expressions and organisations of the public interior that might be useful as ways of approaching precedents, as means towards critique (of appearances as mediums bearing messages), and as reflections upon the impulses of design, as a means of thinking about what an architect – or a sponsor – might have thought about informing and shaping the experiencing subject. I relied upon the knowledge and experience of architecture that I had accumulated through my own practice, its points of reference and judgements. The lectures constituted a personal view, revealed through exemplary projects and ideas as they appeared to be manifest in them. Theory was present through its setting of terms and effects. This was particularly notable with regard to the notion of beginnings, and the scenes of the origins of architecture. Theoretical narratives were dependent on the evidence available to their authors. Yet they were speculative, projective. Genesis, Vitruvius, Alberti, Serlio, Palladio, Jones, Blondel, Perrault, Laugier, Chambers, Viollet-le-Duc, Semper, all sought, through their contact with what was before them – inevitably, ruins – to find inspiration as to how to make an account of origins and meaning, and in so doing, create an order that might stand on equal footing with Creation. Through this legitimisation of the human project, there might be a way back to the Garden. The lectures discussed how architecture – imperfectly – articulated, made, and embodied theory, and, in its projections and realisations, acquired the status of theory in its own right. They attempted to show students that the work they made in the studio also contained ideas, and might, in its own way, embody thought, ideas, desires; that they might reflect epistemological positions, implicitly or explicitly, as their mentors did in their own practices, operating tacit – rather than theoretical, academic or even scientific – knowledge. More recent lectures examined those implicit positions with the hope of revealing their terms and implications. ‘The complexity of experience’ addressed phenomenology, allusion and representation; ‘Context(s)’, concerned physical and socio-political conditions surrounding the architectural project,

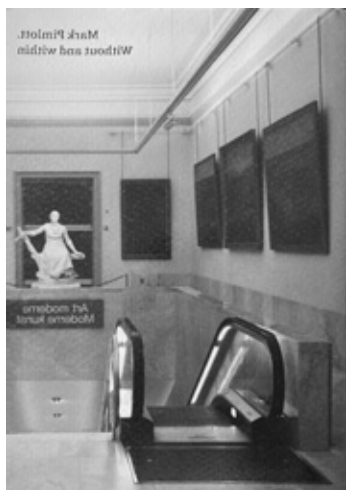


20



21

20, 21 Mark Pimlott, Tony Fretton, Piazzasalone, installation at 12. Biennale internazionale di architettura di Venezia, 2010. Photographs © Christian Richter.



22



23

22 Mark Pimlott, *Without and within: essays on territory and the interior*. Design Joost Grootens (Rotterdam: Episode Publishers, 2007).

23 Mark Pimlott, *The Public Interior as Idea and Project*, design Joost Grootens (Heijningen: Jap Sam Books, 2016).

as well as notions of tradition; and ‘The matter of attention’, described means of approaching the subject in other practices, and notions empathy. Complementary lectures concerned ‘the Festive City’ (structures and representation) and ‘the Intimate City’ (urbanism, subjects, and subjectivities).

Together, the lectures were designed to explore the attitudes an architect might assume in making work in the world, for others. As in my own practice, they were informed by theory, embodied and embedded in writing and making: in practices. T.S. Eliot’s essay ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’³⁸ served as a model, encouraging both deep inquiry and profound responses through practice that would, to paraphrase, both add to and radically alter the entire canon of what had gone before. Practices in photography, visual art, and art criticism served as models for approaches that ‘moved toward the subject’ in architectural practice. These other practices involved approaching the other, as in the nineteenth-century and contemporary topographic photography of Timothy O’Sullivan, and Thomas Struth, the portrait photography of August Sander,³⁹ and the writing of both John Berger⁴⁰ and Peter Brook;⁴¹ and the matter of the agency of the subject, as exemplified in the photographs of Cindy Sherman and the picture-sculptures of Michelangelo Pistoletto. The paintings of Wilhelm Hammershøi, the architecture of Lina Bo Bardi, Franco Albini, Dimitri Pikionis, Sigurd Lewerentz, Alvaro Siza Vieira, and Lacaton + Vassal showed practices that made attention, empathy, and affordances the centre of their concerns. All might be thought of as exemplars of thought into practice, for one’s beginnings in practice.

conclusion Practice is a conscious and consistent projection, marked by intentionality, an enactment of thought, of purpose. Its work is, to the practitioner, necessary. What is enacted assumes form, whichever is necessary. In the case of my own practice, this form has been specific to conditions in which I have worked. I have learned from looking. I have made work following the sense of what I have seen and interpreted. I have tried to place it, describe it, situate it in the world, among the

acts and thoughts of others. I have drawn support from such 'companions', lessons from what has been made and what has been written. After many years, it would seem that I have ingested theory in several forms, and that my own work, in its realised forms, has consciously or inadvertently embodied or articulated theory. The work, whether in pictures, things, places, or words, is an utterance of my thought, unavoidably indebted to the work and thought of others, encountered through their words, their works, and their companionship.

notes

¹ *Tutankhamun Treasures/ Trésors de Toutankhamon* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1964).

² Universal Exposition of 1967, 28 April-27 October 1967, Montréal, on three sites: Cité du Havre, Île Sainte-Hélène, and Île Notre-Dame, the last an entirely artificial island in the St Lawrence River, built on rock excavated for the construction of the city's Métro system, opened in 1966. The theme of the Exposition was derived from the philosophy of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: 'Terre des hommes/ Man and his World'. The utopian downtown core, bound by Place Ville-Marie (I.M. Pei associates) and Place Bonaventure (Affleck Desbarats Dimakopoulos Lebensold & Sise) was completed between 1962 and 1967. See Mark Pimlott, 'Montréal: The Ville intérieure as Prototype for the Continuous Interior', in *Underground Cities: New Frontiers in Urban Living*, ed. by John Endicott, Pamela Johnston, Nancy F. Lin. (London: Lund Humphries, 2020), pp. 24-41.

³ Marshall McLuhan, Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).

⁴ Stuart Wrede, *The Architecture of Erik Gunnar Asplund* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1980).

⁵ Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966).

⁶ See Peter Rose architect's office,

based in Montréal, in which I worked as a designer from 1980 to 1983. A key colleague was Erik Marosi.

⁷ Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi, *The Heart of a City: Legacy and Complexity of a Modern Design Idea* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁸ Angelo Lunati, *Ideas of Ambiente: History and Bourgeois Ethics in the Construction of Modern Milan 1881-1969* (Zürich: Park Books, 2020).

⁹ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1982).

¹⁰ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (London: Penguin, 2002 (1977)).

¹¹ Roland Barthes, 'The Rhetoric of the Image', in *Image Music Text*, transl. by Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana Press, 1977 (1964)), pp. 32-51.

¹² Nick de Ville, 'Mark Pimlott', in *Snapshotpolitics: The Camera as an Instrument of Art/ De camera als instrument van de kunst*, ed. by Nick de Ville (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie, 1992).

¹³ Robert Frank, *The Americans* (New York: Grove Press, 1959 (1958)).

¹⁴ Thomas Struth, *Unbewusste Orte/ Unconscious Places* (Münster: Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, 1987).

¹⁵ James Lingwood, 'Different times', in *The Epic and the Everyday*, ed. by Martin Caiger-Smith (London: South Bank Centre, 1994), pp. 9-20.

- ¹⁶ *Rock My Religion: Writings and Art Projects 1965- 1990*, ed. by Dan Graham, Brian Wallis (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993).
- ¹⁷ Michelangelo Pistoletto, Germano Celant, *Pistoletto* (Milan: Electa, 1976).
- ¹⁸ Germano Celant, *Arte Povera* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1969).
- ¹⁹ Tony Fretton, Greg Hilty, Mark Pimlott, *Mark Pimlott: Studiolo* (London: Todd Gallery, 1996).
- ²⁰ See Mark Pimlott's films: *1965* (1997); *One/The other* (1999); *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* (2005).
- ²¹ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, transl. by Diane Ghirardo, Joan Ockman, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1982 (1966)).
- ²² Johann Freidrich Geist, *Arcades: A Nineteenth-century Building Type* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1983 (1968)).
- ²³ Georg Kohlmaier, Barna von Sartory, *Houses of Glass* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991 (1981)).
- ²⁴ Bernd Becher, Hilla Becher, *Anonyme Skulpturen: Eine Typologie technischer Bauten* (Düsseldorf: Düsseldorf Art Press, 1970).
- ²⁵ Dan Graham, 'Homes for America' (1966), in Gary Dufour, Dan Graham, *Dan Graham* (Perth: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1985).
- ²⁶ Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).
- ²⁷ Mark Pimlott, *In passing: Mark Pimlott photographs* (Heijningen: Jap Sam books, 2010).
- ²⁸ Percy Thomas architect, Student Union Building, Arts Centre, Campanile, and Library of Penglais Campus, University of Wales, Aberystwyth.
- ²⁹ In the domestic sphere, research regarding this publicness of the private interior had been made by my colleague, cultural anthropologist Irene Cieraad; while notions of what constituted spaces of sociability (and interiority) in the public realm had been made by my colleague Christoph Grafe.
- ³⁰ Leonard Benevolo, *The Architecture of the Renaissance vol. 2*, transl. by Judith Landry (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978 (1968)), pp. 1026-1027.
- ³¹ Rykwert (1976).
- ³² Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Perennial, 1995).
- ³³ Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, transl. by Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1976); Manfredo Tafuri, Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture, vol. 1*, transl. by Robert Erich Wolf (London: Faber and Faber/Electa, 1986 (1976)).

³⁴ Mark Pimlott, *Without and Within: Essays on Territory and the Interior* (Rotterdam: Episode Publishers, 2007).

³⁵ Tafuri, Dal Co (1986).

³⁶ Mark Pimlott, interiors of Red House, London, Tony Fretton architect, 2001, 2004, 2011; Mark Pimlott, in collaboration with Zeinstra Van Gelderen architecten, Restaurant Puck, with Pip and PS, The Hague, 2007; Piazzasalone, 12. Biennale internazionale di architettura di Venezia, with Tony Fretton, 2010.

³⁷ Pimlott (2016).

³⁸ T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays* (Mineola NY: Dover Publications, 1998 (1919)), pp. 27-33.

³⁹ August Sander, *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts: Die Gesamtausgabe. Neuauflage* (München: Schirmer Mosel, 2010).

⁴⁰ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972); John Berger, *About Looking* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1980); John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, ed. by Geoff Dyer (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

⁴¹ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).