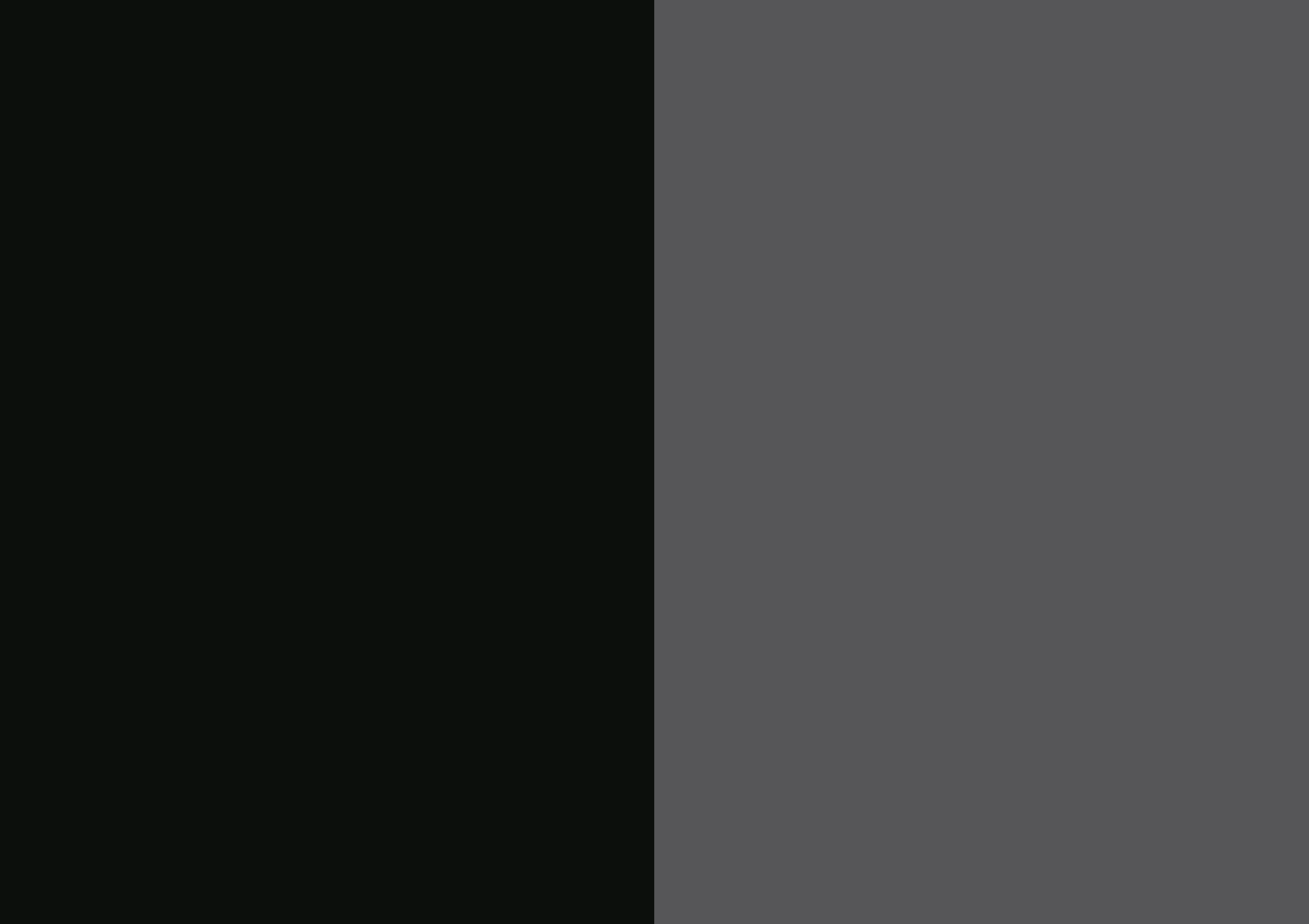


Rasmus van Overhagen

SUBWAY SPACE IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

parallel to the film

In Transit: Exploring Subway Space



SUBWAY SPACE IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

Exploring The Architectural Experience of Everyday Life in Subway Spaces under Dense Urban Cities

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Exploratory Research into the everyday experience of transit in the underground railroad systems of urban cities for a better understanding of what lies in the seam between human life and the built world or architecture.

This booklet accompanies the film: In Transit: Exploring Subway Space. The booklet can also be read separate. Stills from the film and other collages are made by the author.

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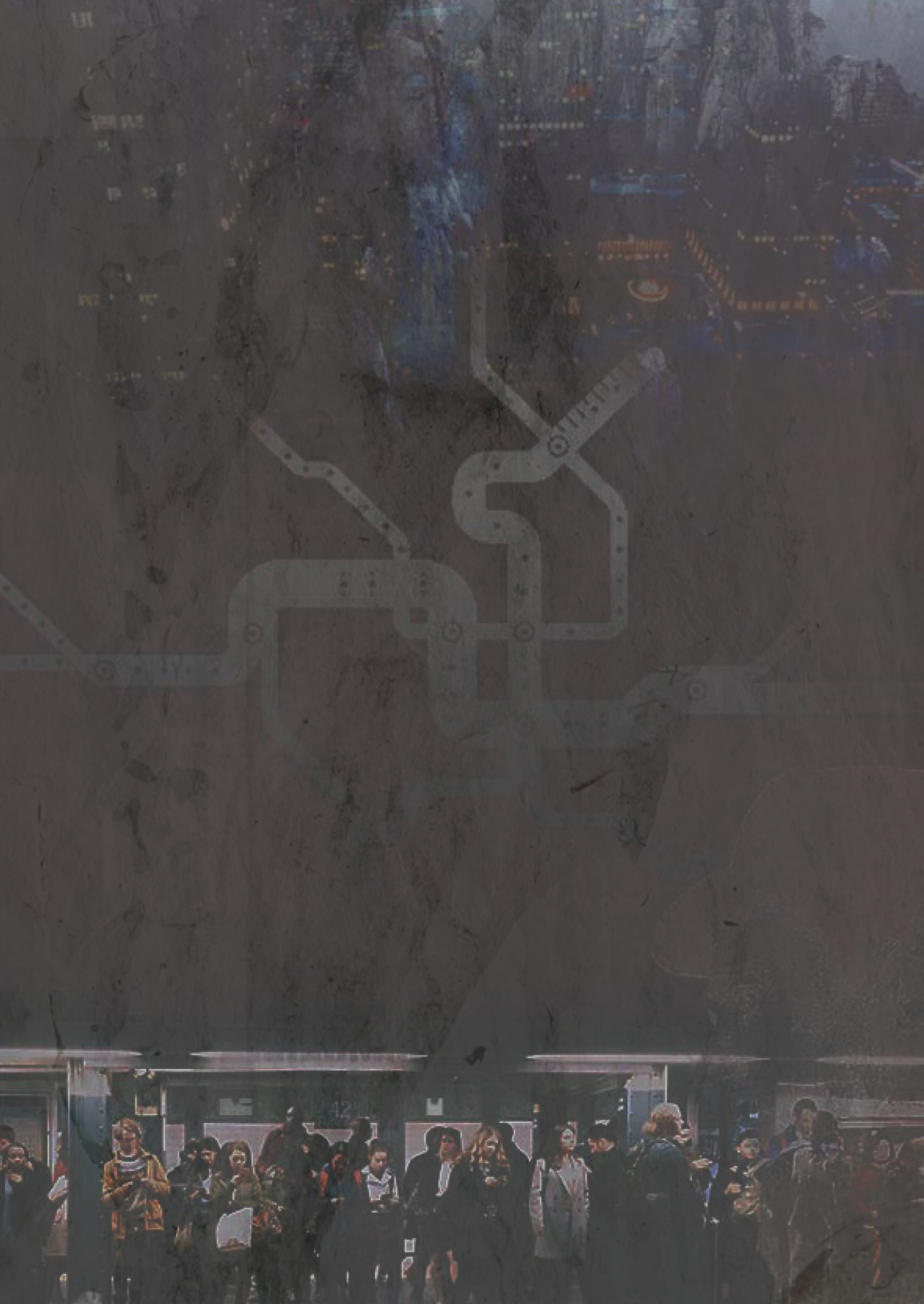
INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,

All good things come in three. This booklet can be read along the film: *In Transit: An Exploration into Subway Space*, as an experimental study into the everyday experience of architecture. The film, story and essays are an attempt to better understand the relationship between architecture and human life and to question the way the subject of architecture can be studied. The triadic work is a layered study that combines actual footage of subway systems and stations, which is edited into a narrative. This narrative is structured and accompanied by a written account of a fictional figure, who starts as an outsider and slowly progresses into an everyday commuter of subway space. Lastly, each chapter is accompanied by an academic essay about the nature of the architectural phenomena and the observed phenomena through exploring a number of theories about perception, atmosphere, materials, semiotics, habits, space, time, rhythms, the everyday, and public space.

Overall, this work is an attempt to study architecture by actually participating, to experience lived space while also observing and writing about the abstract processes that produce it. In the words of Anne Buttimer and Henri Lefebvre, it is an attempt to be both an insider and an outsider, and to situate oneself in the seam, between practice and theory, ordinary and special. In doing so this study linger on the edges of the architectural discipline that touches upon subjects such as philosophy, sociology, biology, anthropology, geology, urbanism, storytelling and filmmaking.





This letter is for my kin, who wander, in empty lands, between the mountains, ridges and ravines, where men is never seen.

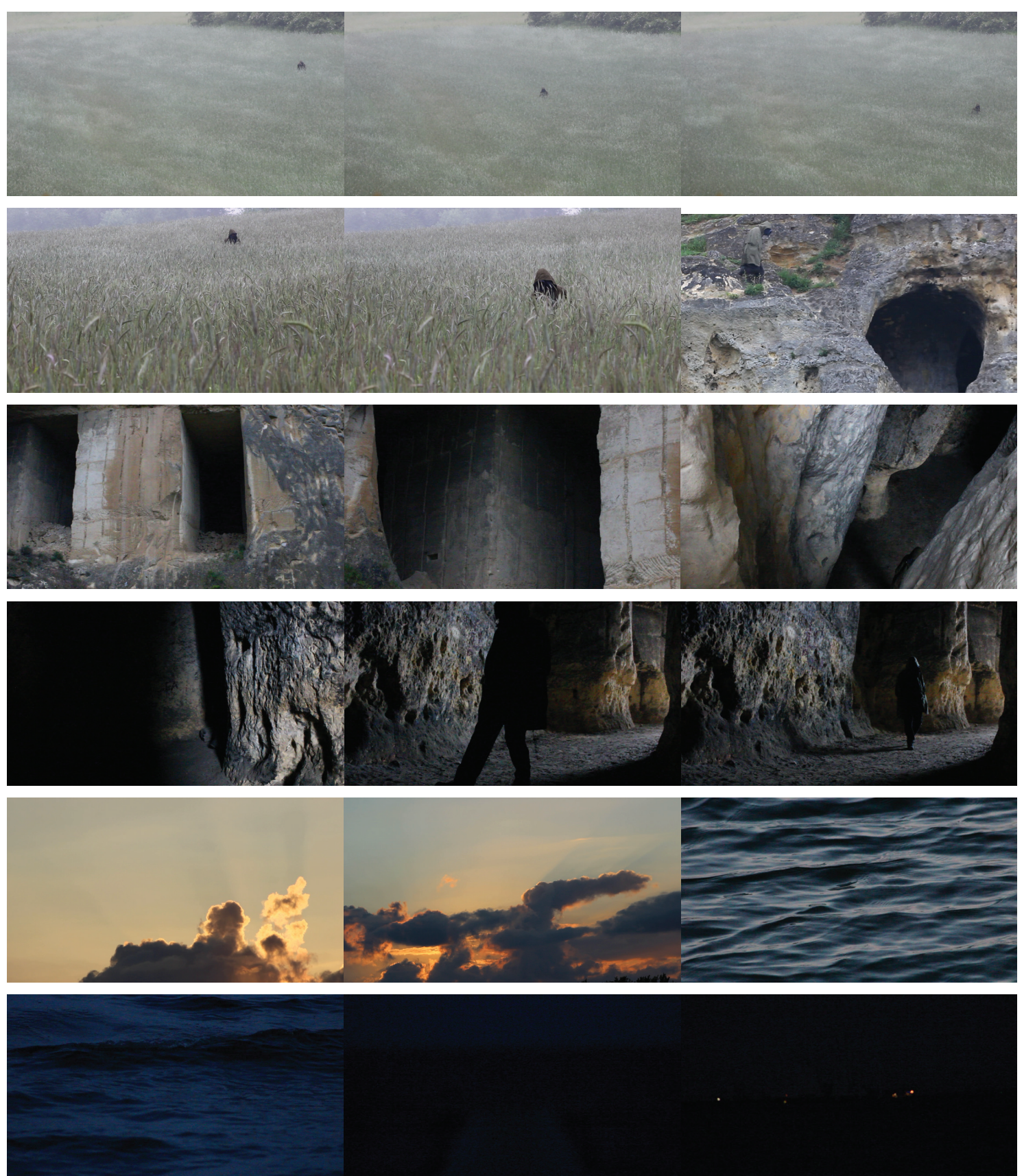
This letter is for my kin who dwell along barren beaches, seabeds and sand dunes.

This letter is for my kin who drift through forgotten ruins and under thick canopies of shadowy forests.

This letter is for my kin who live in rocky crevices under the surface of the earth.

I hope this package finds you amongst good spirits. Writing this, I wonder how this package will reach you. Perhaps it will be brought under the veil of a starry sky while you are all resting in tall grass, or it will catch up to you while floating across some grey and barren tundra. Maybe it will come to you while seated amongst a fire in the cracks of a sleeping mountain or while you are descending down some oceanic trench.

In this parcel you will find a rapport. It is all neat and tidy. It is printed on squared cheap paper and accompanied with the vision of my eyes and the sounds in my ears. The experience was too big to draw into a map, which is not usefull anyway when navigating this underground world. Instead, you will find a story of the quest I was asked to undertake. I hope that it will help those curious enough to navigate the chaotic sensations of this busy world and to find your way in it. I wish that I could have told you this story myself but alas. I must stay a little longer. There is still much to explore in the human world of city dwellers. In due time I will return and I will find you, camped along the path.



Let's begin

The search starts here. The chase of the source, that makes deep rumbles in the dark, brought me into the belly of the modern human world. Deep under their stacked homes and enormous cities. Here, long and hollowed tunnels go far into the soft earth. The tunnels are constructed of grey walls with snakes crawling along its surfaces, marking a track. Some are shiny and straight, others are dark and twisted. Upon those tracks, announcing its arrival with bright hollow lights, large iron beasts plough through at great speeds. Loud is its passing, like a rumbling storm. Its movement makes the sound of thunder while lightning sparks from its wheels. Long after it passes, you can still smell the sharp fumes of iron from the steel wheels turning against the cold metal. Everywhere bellow, there is this unnatural scent that is produced when the air is blown in through metallic shafts, fans and machines. The rich and homely smell of earth and stone has long since disappeared. This world is not like ours. There is a tension in the air that tightens and releases you. Welcome to unnatural world, made by men and machine.

CHAPTER 1

CARVING

The world underground is dark and narrow. There is no vantage point or peak from which the land can be observed. The world can only be explored by moving further. Then slowly a world of sequences is constructed. You have no choice but to enter the metallic beasts which move you in one direction or the opposite, along the silver tracks in the dark grey tunnels. At fixed distances, the tunnels are speckled with small lights to mark the way. At random intervals the smooth texture of the tunnel walls is interrupted, and larger spaces are revealed. These caves are large and well lit. They are islands in the dark and take the shape of excavated chambers. Like beads on a string, the caves are connected by tunnels. A negative of a necklace swaying through the earth. Each bead the mark of a temporary destination, for human rule is, that each stop may only be visited temporarily. In the underground world, only two actions seem possible. Moving and stopping. Arriving and leaving, the machine moving like a caravan through the deserts from oasis to oasis. These caverns are havens for humans that are travelling underground. Each place is called a station.

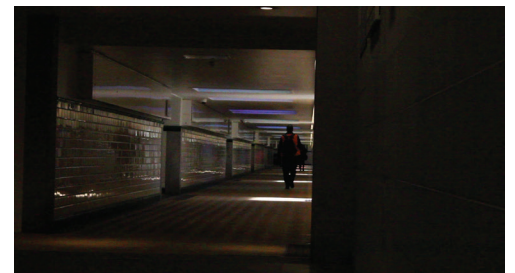
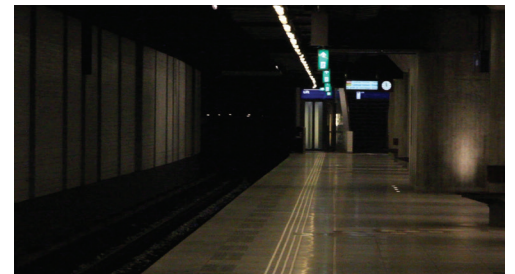
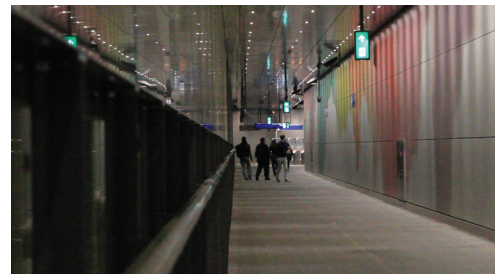
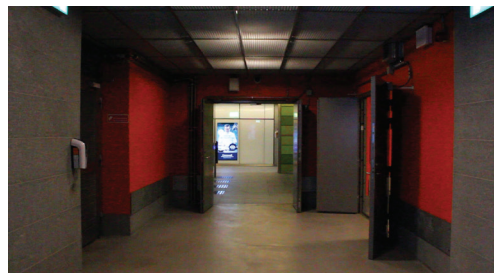
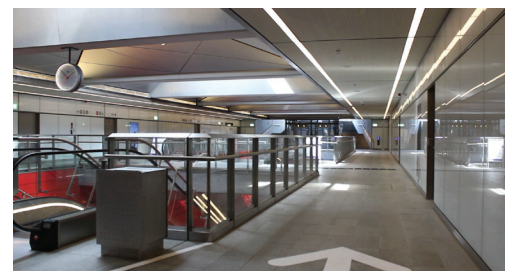
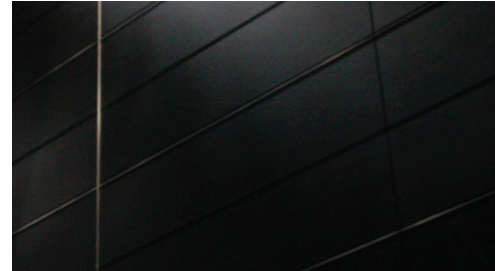
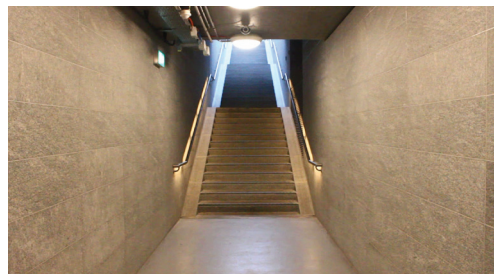
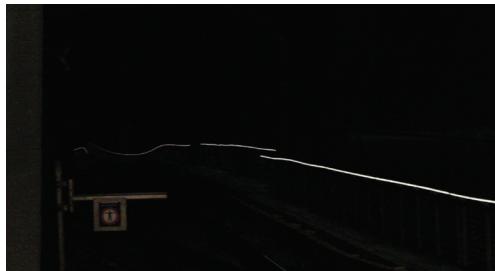
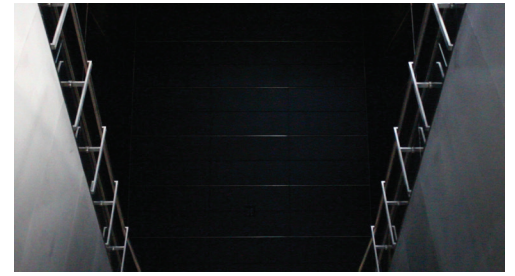
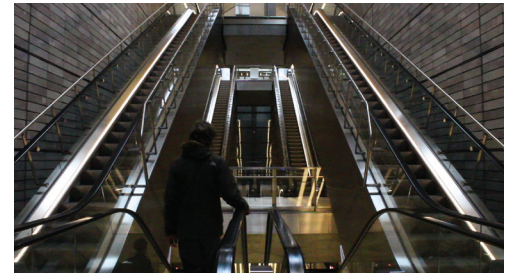
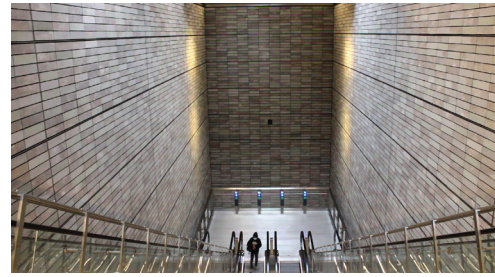
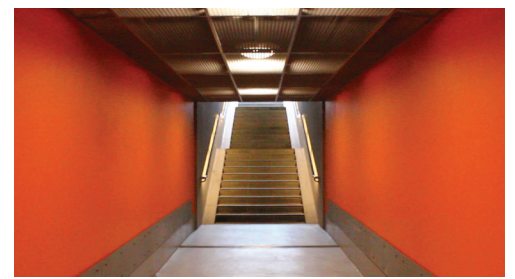
By moving, it becomes clear that the underground places possess a system. Tunnels are often narrow, carved in the shape of the machines. Long tubes that are always pulling or pushing you forward. Straight long lines that split up and come together, twisting and turning through the earth. Slow turns shoot left and right into sharp angles, then left, right, up or down again. Each place, each station, is marked by a different shape, size and material. Some are cramped and suffocating, almost as small as the body of trains themselves, while some are spacious like negative of monolithic blocks grazing the surface. The stations bear strange names, but it is through their appearances that they can be understood, grouped together or set apart. Though to understand this underground world, you have to observe the humans that use the rules and systems of this world. These humans are called commuters.

On the one hand the machines are treated as tools, while at the same time they construct the way people live in this world, the places they go and how their time is divided. For those who travel through the underground, these subway spaces appear as temples. A place where speed and the machine are deified. For the machine takes over movement of humans. Travelling faster with only the resistance of air in front of it. On the platforms occurs a strange meeting between forces. Static forces resist the great weight of the earth which continuously presses against the concrete geometry of the roof and walls, while the long machines display a terrible kinetic force. With small breaks, the trains



move horizontally at terrible speeds, the sound of their force reverberating through the tunnels, eager to expand their terrain.

Even now, with drills and mechanical tools, wet mush is sucked out along with sand, mud and rocks. More hollow boxes and pipes are carved out. The earth is covered with walls out of a liquid stone that hardens into a smooth surface. The artificial underground is still expanding and hollowing out thin cylinders in the dark, following its ever-growing opposite above.



Nature of perception – To perceive is to engage

In the everyday, the experience of our built environment is a practical and actual process. It is a multi-layered process that is continuously exercised by a living human with a lived spatial reality. In theory this process is often called perception. So, perception is an active and embodied engagement with our surroundings, through which we interpret and construct a personal/existential relationship with the world.¹ It might sound logical that abstract thoughts through perception begets action or kinesthetic engagement, but theory teaches us that this is not the case nor is the opposite. As Francis Mallgrave stresses in his book *From Object to Experience*, mind and body are very much intertwined and should not be considered as separates.² Humans enact or act out perception with their bodies. Not only do we engage with the world through our bodies, our perceptions are also immediately acted out by our corporeal forms. Thus our lived experience of space goes two ways. The experience of space shapes us and our enactment of our perception shapes space. Summarized, our perception of a place is a product of earlier construed perceptions in the form of memories, our pre-set intentions or motivations, our mood, the bodily-sensed affordances of our surroundings, physical and non-physical, and finally the actual kinaesthetic actions of our body in space.

Men and the built environment – The embodied architectural experience

The human body is the key to understand how humans experience space. Not only by dissecting and elucidating all the diverse sensory organs and receptors our bodies possess, but more importantly by understanding the human body as the original model from which all perception is measured.³ Mallgrave argues that when perceiving a building, we grasp its mass and the flow of forces compared to our own bodies, when viewing a material, we simulate its texture against our skin, when crawling through a cave we project our bodies moving forward between the dimensions of the tunnel. Many of these processes take place in the subconscious. Mallgrave further explains these phenomena by highlighting the role of our sensorimotor systems in perception. First, the mirror mechanisms in these systems are responsible for “embodied simulation” which is responsible for our capability for empathy, which allows us to engage with, to understand and to communicate with other people.⁴ Phenomena which in the past have been called “form-gefühl” or “einführung”.⁵ Second, that each experience of space is rooted in this sensorimotor system as it precedes our conscious decision-making, meaning that our body’s reaction to space is immediate. Without realizing it, our bodies are already in a state of action. This is internal communication works via “proprioceptors” and is fundamental for our emotional experience of space.^{6,7} Thirdly since experience of space is a lived experience, we subconsciously process space for its potentialities for action. According to Edward T. Hall, the space around us is subconsciously dimensioned in distances, in which certain actions are possible. The area around the body which allows for action that immediately has effect upon its surrounding is called “peripersonal space”.⁸ Mallgrave stresses that no space or object is therefore neutral. Not only viewed from the objective capabilities of our bodies in that space but also from the perspective of emotion. Each place is loaded with emotional meaning through enculturation and each place is approached with personal moods. We might say that we are active bodies, which are sources for kinetic actions in space and transform that space through movement over time. However, subway space contains another moving body. That of the machine which not only transforms the space but is the other body upon which the designs for underground spaces are measured.

Subway space and architecture – Underground carvings and cavities

Although subway stations could be called an everyday space, underground spaces are anything but ordinary. As building underground has defining limitation which has consequences for the type of spaces that can be produced. For underground space Steen Eiler Rasmussen would rather use the term “cavities” as he makes a fundamental distinction between space that is created out

of solids and space that created by taking away mass.⁹ A windowless hallway might look like a tunnel underground, the experience of it is very different. Instead of building a floorplan by making a structure out of planes, it better resembles a sequence of volumes carved out of the earth. And instead of balancing the vertical forces of materials to make a structure, it is now the geometric shape created by a hollow volume which balances out the forces of the mass around it.¹⁰ Harries would argue that although they have a similar shape, the interaction with each space is different, “*First of all and most of the time the body, especially the moving body, mediates our experience of space: the street to be walked down, the mountain to be climbed, the bridge to be crossed.*”¹¹ What then should we say when encountering caves and cavities. Can we say that they need to be explored, or to be entered and exited? Underground spaces are after all turned inwards since they are surrounded by mass and offer no openings. Distances are hidden since it cannot be viewed from afar like a landscape. The only way to navigate through the space is by moving forward and uncovering its layout. And, going back to Harries, if an open landscape with “a spacious horizon” embodies freedom than perhaps, these carved spaces are a form of subjugation.¹² Forcing the traveller through a spatial sequence of experiences and actions.

Everyday transit - Mental mapping the underground

When we take a step back, subway architecture can be approached by its two main characteristics apart, being made up out of subterranean pathways and being a railway. Firstly, reading Harries, the underground becomes a space of descent. Harries mentions the sacredness and mysticism of caves, Bachelard’s interpretation of the cellar as the dark entity of the house, where reality mixes with dream and imagination, and even gives an opposite view through Frank Lloyd Wright’s dismissal of the cellar as a darkness and stubbornness of the past.¹³ The railway however is equally revered for its easiness and speed of travel. Arto Haapala beliefs that railway buildings are the embodiment of the modern era, where continuous progress, freedom to be anywhere and haste rule our daily lives.¹⁴ Going as far, to compare the monumental rail waystations to the temples of the Hellenistic era that serve as centering structures for the daily life of the inhabitants. On a similar note, Michel Decerteau perceives the train as a “god undone” which turns its users into passive practitioners.¹⁵ Yet when thinking of subway space, few of these sacred properties come to mind. From the embodied perspective of the everyday commuter, the subway stations are mostly compromised out of brightly lit subterranean tunnels that leave little space for much else than crossing and waiting. These spaces become more like tools of transit and invisible instrument for our daily routes, than monumental structures which should be praised.¹⁶ De Certeau argues that our daily experiences are better understood as “tours” than as “maps”¹⁷ Through this approach De Certeau further shows, the fundamental different language and understanding of space from the scientific perspective and the perspective of the everyday users. Indeed, when using the labyrinth like spaces of the underground, we are more concerned with constructing and following our route than constructing a map. What then becomes noticeable and memorable are not only the independent architectural qualities of the spaces we cross but the transitions in our ascent/descent, the “borders” and “boundaries” of the spaces we cross, and the sequential relation of the different spaces.¹⁸ Not only through the difference in the dimensions of space, but also the differences, contrasts and juxtaposition in materiality, ordinance and detailing.

- 1 Francis Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience, The New Culture of Architectural Design* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 45.
- 2 Ibid., 89.
- 3 Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 157.
- 4 Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience*, 106.
- 5 Ibid., 100.
- 6 Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, (New York, Anchor book editions, 1990 [1966]), 54.
- 7 Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience*, 73.
- 8 Ibid., 113.
- 9 Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture*, (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1993 [1959]), 46.
- 10 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 181.
- 11 Ibid., 156.
- 12 Ibid., 170.
- 13 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 202-213.
- 14 Aarto Haapala, 'The Everyday, Building, and Architecture: Reflections on the Ethos and Beauty of our Built Surroundings'. *Cloud-Cuckoo-Land: international journal of architectural theory* 22, (2017). 171-182, 178.
- 15 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988 [original version in French: Arts de Faire, 1984]), 113.
- 16 Haapala, 'The Everyday, Building, and Architecture: Reflections on the Ethos and Beauty of our Built Surroundings', 178.
- 17 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 119.
- 18 Ibid., 122-129.





CHAPTER 2

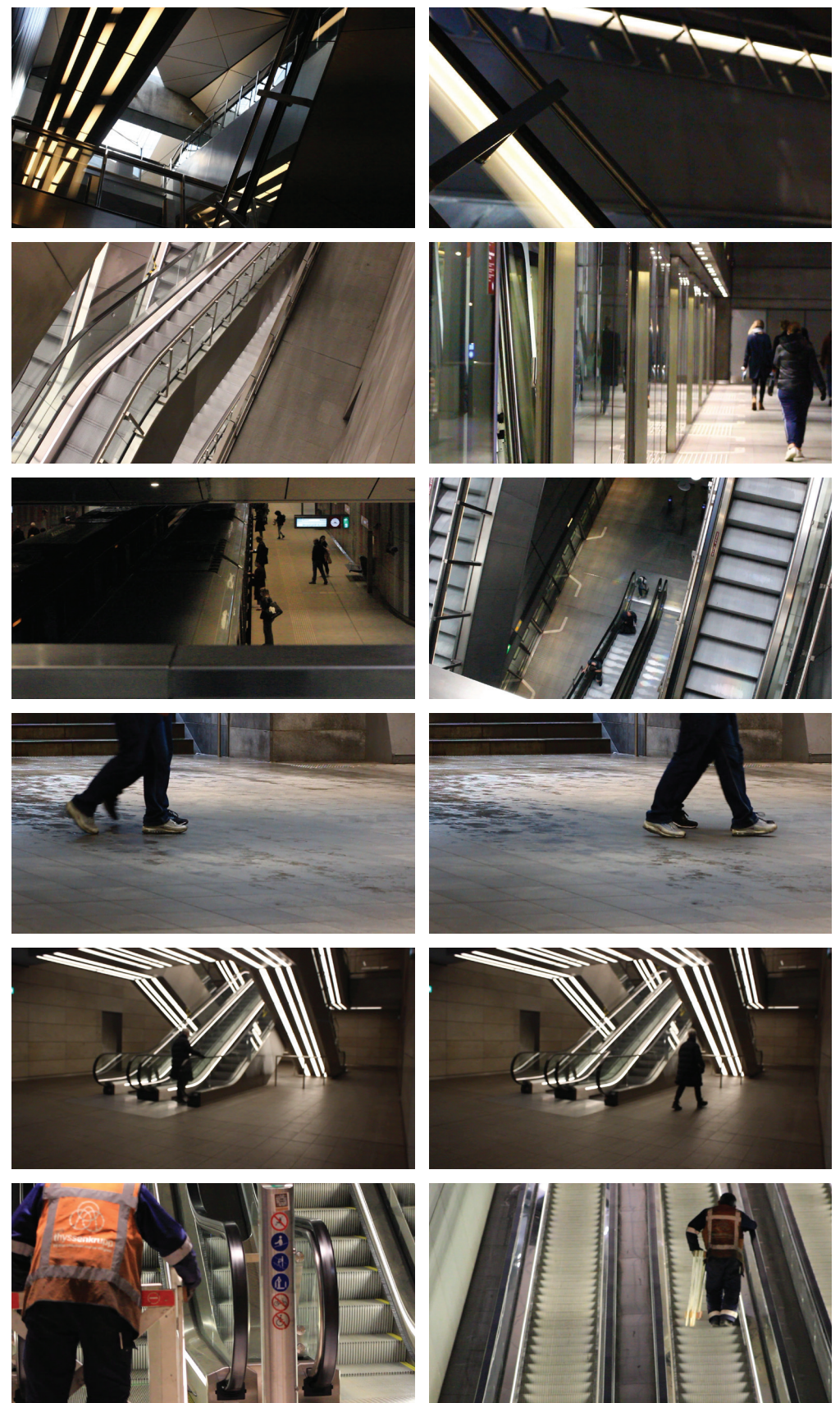
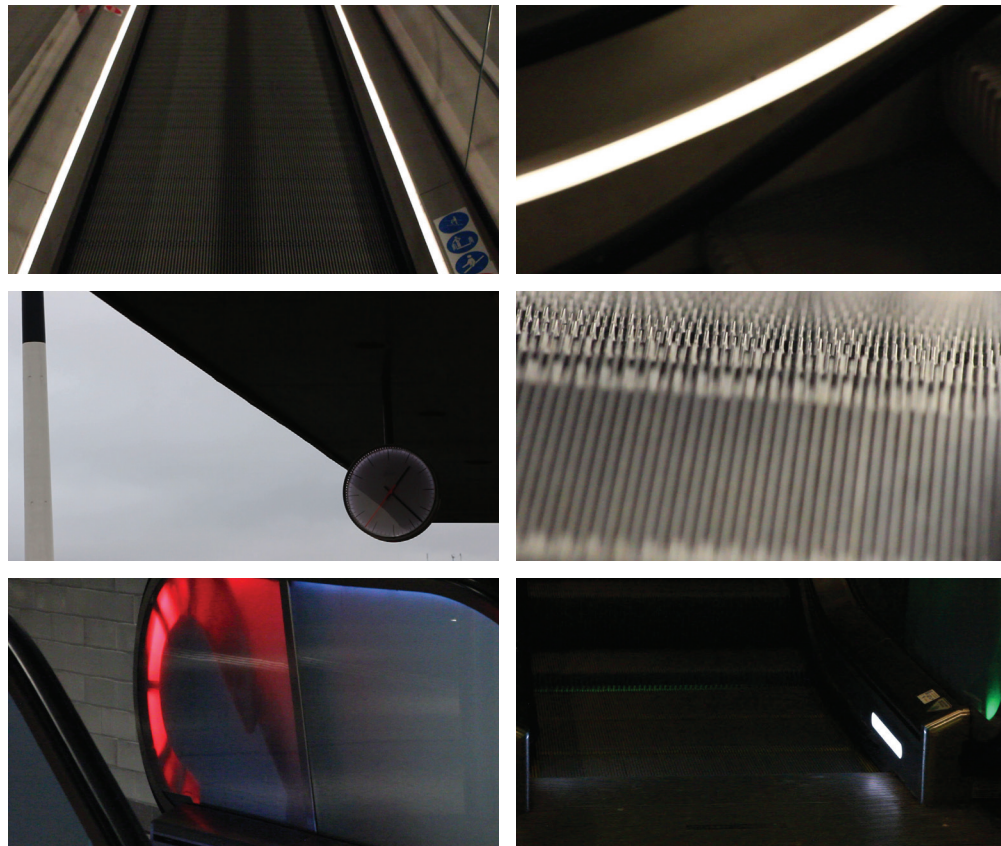
CONTINUITY

After drifting through the earth for a time, you notice that time behaves very different than it does at home. Compared to the subways, time turns itself over slowly. It is no longer dictated by long rumbles from the deep-core and the shifting of tectonic plates. In the subway spaces the underlying tone is produced by different instruments. Instruments of steel, producing a beat. The composition is mechanical and the tones are pre-recorded. Monotonous and flat. Air conditioning systems continuously breathe out a stale air like a long sigh, never reaching a climax. An arrow on the wall moves, that never ticks nor tocks. There are lights that fail to produce shadows, never blinking. Upon this continuous sound, in regular intervals the train arrives and departs. A heavy mass moving and stopping on a slippery track produces a screaming melody. Unlike a stone that stops falling or a tree that comes crashing down, its pitch is a high mechanical sound and its movement always the same. Controlled and exact. Monotonous and linear. Strict and formal. Like waves of a sea that has no tides. Where each crashing, flowing and pulling back, is a replay.

Arrivals and departures lead people into a mechanical waltz in an underground hall on music with beats of equal strength. The machines are the conductors and take the lead. They offer only a short window to embark or to leave. Bodies move quick and life goes fast. Travelers are caught in a tunnel-vision that moves them forward, while through the clacking of the shoes, movement of the legs, they exercise the same motions as the machines. These conductors are relentless, without need of rest and no room for error. The travelers, lacking the same punctuality and precision, make small mistakes and rebel against the regime with small out-of-sync steps. At some point each traveler recognizes in the crowd their own body. Moving up the stairs, walking in a crowd along the platforms or standing still on the escalator. They realize, as I have, that they have fallen under the spell of the machine. You can't do much to stay awake and after a while the mind drifts off into a dream. Dreams of other places. I will tell you what I dreamt.

I dreamt of another place. A memory. A place in a mountain valley of black stones and green grass, where a single white church stands against a wall. The structure does not move but is transformed by the sound of flowing water from the melted glaciers, the spread of white and yellow light through the scattered clouds, sweet smells of flowers that bloom in spring or silent snow that falls in winter, a cold crisp air against a warm vibrating breeze or shadows on the church walls, moving in opposite directions from morning to evening like a melody. So, the place in my dreams turned into a hundred places. After waking up, at first, the disappointment crept up for the underground place still looked the same. Soon the feeling of discovery rises for something seemed different than before. The machines are approached with new energy,

and instead started to move along the pace of the traveller. Now, the moving humans awaken a reaction inside the machines and the metal boxes and wires make sounds to announce their arrival, presence and leaving. With beeps and shuffling gears, they engage with their hosts. In sync with their bodies. Together their punctual response becomes random. Their repetition, a lie, their act, humane.



Nature of perception – A multi-sensory experience

Through reading Mallgrave it becomes evident that the perception of space is an intrinsic multi-sensory event. In his book *The Eyes of the Skin* Pallasmaa encourages the designer to look past the ocular centric tradition which has been dominant in the western architectural discipline.¹⁹ It must be addressed again but to experience architecture is not to experience a still image, it is a kinetic and temporal experience where “*qualities of space are measured equally by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle*”.²⁰ Pallasmaa further dissects the senses that subconsciously process our surroundings into an integrated experience. He categorizes these sensations into “*visual system, auditory system, the taste-smell system, the basic orienting system and the haptic system*” according to the work of James Gibson.²¹ These systems interact with each other and allow for the experience of sensory input as an integrated whole, as bodily feelings. As the word implies, the bodily multi-sensory experience of space is not an objective reading of sensory input but an interpretation that is loaded with emotion as Mallgrave concludes “*We are sense-making machine...*” after all.²²

Additionally, Pallasmaa reminds us that this sense-making of the architectural experience is not confined to realm of the visual system alone, but he does acknowledge the importance of vision. He makes an important distinction between focused vision and visceral vision.²³ The first being important for exploration while the latter allows for the subconscious processing of our surroundings through the sensori-motor systems of our bodies.²⁴ It is through the subconscious that we immediately grasp the world around us. We perceive a lot more than we think we do and as Pallasmaa argues, the visceral realm is the right dimension of the architectural discipline. The peripheral situates itself between the attentive and unfocused, the direct and indirect, which allows for more than the passive appreciation of an architectural object, in the form of a lived coexistence.

Men and the built environment – Atmosphere

Besides the architectural structures and the dimensions of empty space, there are more things that exist in space that are perceived through our senses. There are elements which directly affect our perception of our surroundings, like sounds and temperatures. Other elements do this indirectly by transforming the appearance of structure and space, like moving objects and lighting. Rather than experiencing these elements separately, we “feel space” as a whole. A word often used to bring together all these actors in space into the integrated whole as we perceive it, is “atmosphere”.²⁵ Atmosphere is however, as Gernot Böhme argues, not all elements in space. Atmosphere is produced by our personal sensitivity towards the “objective constitution” of the space we inhabit.²⁶ In the practical, our experience of it is immediate and instinctive, loaded with emotion and meaning or as Zumthor puts it: “*We perceive atmosphere through our emotional sensibility*”.²⁷ In his books Zumthor shows a poetic sensitivity of atmospheres and a sharp deduction to what produces that particular atmosphere. Following the theory of Böhme, Zumthor’s texts can be viewed as the product of a “mindful physical sensation”.²⁸ The atmosphere that is described, is the product of a “mindful physical presence” in space.²⁹ Zumthor possesses a great sensitivity and awareness of his sensitivity to the surroundings, but in the everyday where we approach architectural space with a certain indifference, or what Heidegger calls “*indifferenz der alltäglichkeit*”.³⁰ Humans lack this constant awareness in their day to day business. Perhaps, rightfully so. In the everyday our sensitivity fluctuates between awareness and unawareness. Böhme writes “*...there is a mean, a link between space and sensitivity, and is in fact always virulent here*.” He goes on, “*The sensitivity associated with feeling where I am at a particular point sets a kind of underlying tone, that colours all other moods that rise in me or dog me*.”³¹ showing that the atmospheric qualities of a space produce a “basic mood” which subconsciously sets up our experience of that place.³² The affect of this mood may change according to our awareness but it is somehow always there.

Subway space and architecture – Different kinds of materials and generators

Böhme writes that there a number of generators in space that produce atmosphere. He makes a distinction between two types. One type is defined as bodily things, tactile bodies, like the architectural structure, objects in space or the texture of materials. The other is defined as non-corporeal things, such as light, temperature and sound. We might think of the sun that produces moving shadows, but also the shadowless light in metros. This example shows another layer to these kinds of “generators”.³³ The architect Sambuichi works with a design location through the moving materials of that place. In his interview for the Louisiana Museum he speaks of sun, water and air.³⁴ Generators whose behaviour changes over time and through the seasons. The constant motions of these elements help to better grasp the qualities of the static and the site as a whole. From this perspective of temporal and the spatial, we can also make the distinction between “moving materials” and “static materials”. Moving materials have different behaviour, different rhythms, and transformative capabilities, and both moving and static materials can be corporeal or non-corporeal generators.

Pallasmaa once said that the things we build help us to concretize the seasonal change, let us experience the flow of time and enables us to construct our lives spatially.³⁵ Things are not built for their picture but to be inhabited, to be lived and to be dwelled in. Looking at underground spaces, a world appears that is anything but conventional. The deeper we go underground, the more unusual the atmospheric generators behave compared to those above ground. The conditions of the underground environment do not annually change. Light, air and climate are static and in a “perfect” condition. So, there is no weather, no wind and no sunlight. Instead, the moving materials can be divided between the machine and the humans. The machine is represented by the movement, sound and light of trains, escalators and other small machines. This technology creates movement that is punctual instead of melancholic or a-rhythmic, creating an atmosphere of precise mundane repetition. Dusk and dawn, summer and winter, do not exist in this place. However, in this inward-looking space, humans are moving materials too. Their bodies and actions transform space. Though their actions seem to mirror the traits of the machine, humans also have the ability to react, improvise and rebel through their individual behaviour. The atmosphere of daily transit moves between the machine and the humans, as its most important generators.

Everyday transit – Perceiving the flow of time

Our experience of a place is not an isolated event but a temporal experience. This temporality can be measured in seconds, minutes or hours but this is in no way representative of the experience of time. Rather, we perceive time through the moving and static materials of a place and our own bodily movements and moods. Although a picture can capture the tension of an atmosphere, it is depicting a moment frozen in time. In our everyday lives, our experiences are moments with beginnings and ends, where although time is continuous, we may perceive it through its qualities, ranging from long, slow and steady to short, fast and chaotic. The movie *Koyaanisqatsi* opens with a sequence of the Grand Canyon and the formation of the clouds.³⁶ The unpredictable and mesmerizing scenes are put in contrast with a sequence of an American city and traffic. The movie captures the movement of things in space but more importantly captures the flow of time. As if time were something liquid. In the wild landscape there is not rhythm of ticking but a fluid flow. Time really can feel different in the city than in the wild. Does the passing of an hour feel the same? Or is the time in wilderness not given by the seconds and hours on the clock but by the shifting of the lights and the change of the weather and seasons. In contrast, the clock is a human invention. One necessary for machinal continuity of contemporary society. The “Tyranny of the Clock” dictates our daily life and agendas.³⁷ Though in different seasons, the days are longer and our modes of life change, our everyday business is largely fixed. Underground, the variables that bring change become less, and the underground atmosphere becomes perpetual. Looking at the subway, the vehicle of the working man, daily life is represented as a cycle without change. It is not surprising that the subway is often used as the embodiment for the repetitiveness and grind of our daily lives.

- 19 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 22.
- 20 Ibid., 45.
- 21 Ibid., 45.
- 22 Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience*, 122.
- 23 Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 12, 27-41, 73.
- 24 Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience*, 75.
- 25 Peter Zumthor, *Atmospheres. Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects* (Basel: Birkhauser, 2006), 11.
- 26 Gernot Böhme, 'Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space', OASE 91 (Rotterdam: nai010Publishers 2013): 21-52, 27.
- 27 Zumthor, *Atmospheres*, 13.
- 28 Böhme, 'Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space', 27.
- 29 Ibid., 25.
- 30 Heidegger, Martin 'Sein und Zeit' (Tübingen:M. Niemeyer, 1967 [1927]), 45, quoted in Haapala, 'The Everyday, Building, and Architecture: Reflections on the Ethos and Beauty of our Built Surroundings', 171.
- 31 Böhme, 'Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space', 27.
- 32 Ibid., 27.
- 33 Ibid., 27-29.
- 34 Hiroshi Sambuichi, "Building with Sun, Water and Air | Sambuichi," online video, 17:55, Louisiana Channel, 2017, June 7, 2017, <https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/sambuichi-sun-water-air>.
- 35 Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 44, 56.
- 36 Godfrey Reggio, director. Koyaanisqatsi. Institute for Regional Education, 1983, 46:25.
- 37 George Woodcock, "The Tyranny of the Clock", *The Chesterton Review* 22 (1996), 393-398.



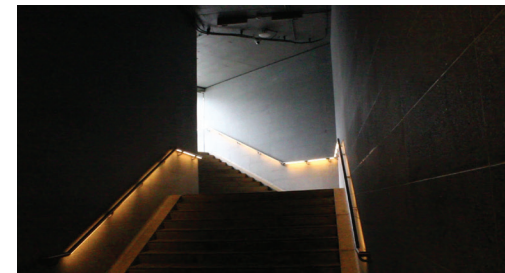
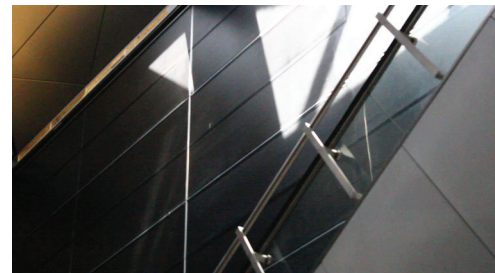
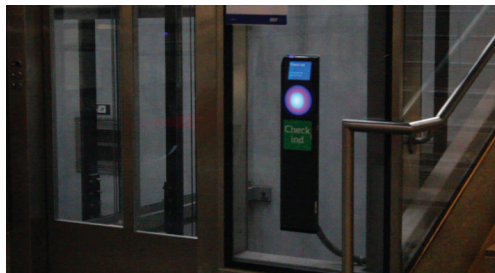
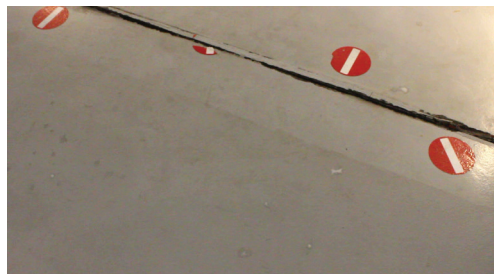
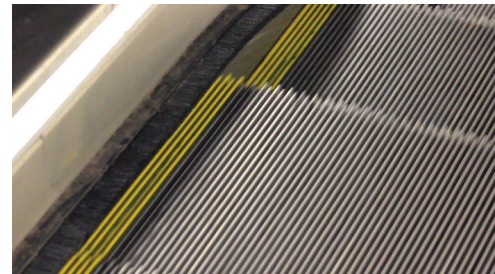
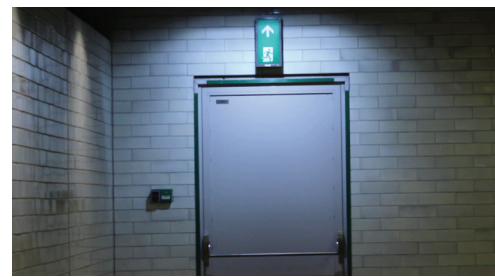


CHAPTER 3 SIGNS & SIGNALS

When you wander for a long time in the tunnels and voids, all interlinked, you won't know where you are. Although, in this labyrinth you are never totally lost. The commuters who inhabit this colony seem to have deciphered its system of signs and symbols long ago. Some novel travelers linger to decipher their code, but the more experienced only glance up to confirm their suspicion. Their bodies automatically react to the signs and signals on the wall, floor and ceiling while the eyes search for a next clue. A colour, arrows with names, a symbol or a stream of people. Something that marks a path to their destination. My journey however had no end, no landmark to reach and so these literal signs became empty of meaning. Still, for those like me, you are never lost. Signs and signals move you in the right direction. Even if you don't know what you are looking for, the going becomes easy. Hidden subway signs become like train signals. Go left or go right. Move forward, move down or move up. Stay and wait. Constantly moving, your body in conversation with the host of the subway, whose answers and question are hidden in the structure, materials, dimension, lights and sounds of the underground.

Buttons invite fingers to press
An arrow points the way
A name of a street steers the body in direction
A colour sets a route
A set of characters encodes a location
A symbol tells what to do and when
A timer fills the platform with a tension
A bright light points out where to stand
Another kind of light shows where to get out
An opening must be entered
Narrow tunnels propels to move out
Open voids compel to dwell
An oculus takes hold of the eye
Benches invite one to sit
A coarse floor allows for steady footing
Tiled floors make unsteady figures
Rough walls take hold of bodies
Smooth walls let hands trail their surface
Glass planes punish smudgy touches and prints
A heavy column allows the body to lean
Marks in a wall measure steps
A random pattern dictates free style
A stone edge allows fingers to follow
A Steel tube slips icily over your palm
A wooden handrail grasps hands firmly

A gust of wind warns the coming of the train
 A warm light or a cool breeze pulls you out
 A machine creates a song
 A crowd leads a rush
 A musician changes the dance



Nature of perception – Affective affordances

From the earlier writings it becomes apparent that our surroundings are directly tied to bodily actions. This time it is Mallgrave, who refers to the work of James Gibson, that in practice there is no such thing as a “neutral object” or neutral space for that matter for “*space is always pregnant with meaning or the suggestion of meaning related to some action*”.³⁸ In other words, space communicates with the perceiver, a range of potential actions, affordances, through architectural objects but also through atmospherical properties, which in turn leads to bodily movement and our experience of space. In his text, Böhme describes the way atmospheres are interpreted, by dividing our experience of it in three systems: “*intimations of movement in a broader sense (geometrical constraints), synesthetic properties and social characteristic*”.³⁹ All three systems belong to the realm of the design. The system of social characteristic is always in a state of change and brings up the social dimension of space which will become important in the coming sections.

Umberto Eco offers a very technical explanation of these architectural objects and the way we communicate with them according to the theory of semiotics.⁴⁰ According to Eco, all architectural objects are given meaning by the cultural codification of that object and that they are “sign vehicles” for behaviour.⁴¹ For a more practical understand, one can also look at the drawings and images in *Science of the Secondary* by Atelier Hoko, which depict a number of everyday interactions one can have with architectural objects.⁴² One sequence shows the different relations one can have with the world outside through different types of windows and openings, while another book shows the different ways of opening a door and thus the different ways of entering the next space/room. Eco makes the distinction between a primary meaning, denotation, and secondary meaning, connotations.⁴³ The first type of meaning is inherent to the existential nature of the architectural object. One cannot stuff Magritte’s pipe with tabaco, for it is, in essence, a drawing. This meaning is most often expressed by the form of the object, the conditions for its existence, which makes its primary intent possible and naturally communicates related actions. The form of an arch for example. The second type can be understood as the “symbolic” message of an object. The connotation of an object can exist out of multiple meanings, that often have a social function as well. An opening can have different sizes and shapes and can be made with different materials and details. An opening might have monumental proportions, covered with reliefs while an opening might also be a low passage constructed out of concrete with electrical lighting. However, over time, since the physical existence of the object is not bound to its connotative function, such meanings and interpretations can shift. Harries gives the example of a church.⁴⁴ A church is not approached like in the past. For those who do not believe in Christianity, the church is not experienced with its long holy songs, psalms, and rituals. Although we might approach the church as an embodiment of its faith, many do not practice that faith and, in general, the church does not play a centered role in the day to day lives of common folk.

Men and the built environment – Mass communication

On Eco’s theory on architectural objects, Harries writes that “*their form denotes that function only on the basis of long-established habits and expectations*”.⁴⁵ Each architectural sign relies on a generally understood codification which allows it to be associated with a certain family of meaning. For example, although there are endless variations of window frames, columns or arcades, we can still place them under the respective type of object. However, that codification, at one point needs to become part of the norm, part of a general way of understanding. It is not the masses as a group that consciously attributes a certain meaning to a type of architectural objects, nor is it the architect or designer who introduces to the people a completely original architectural sign. It appears that meaning of an object is not constructed, instead meaning produces itself. Eco describes the way architecture and people communicate as a form of “mass communication”.⁴⁶ Denotative and connotative meaning is established by becoming familiar through repetition. Connotative meaning naturally changes over time since there are cultural changes, societal changes, social changes, technological changes etc... Also, from the perspective of the designed architectural

object, newly introduced architectural objects are always related to some existing type. Not only because architecture “aims at mass appeal” or because “architecture is a business” but because architecture is a practical discipline.⁴⁷ Ideas always originate and are communicated from a familiar concept.

In the practical, meaning is experienced implicitly, because in everyday life architecture is not read with total focus. Instead, architecture is in subtle way “psychologically persuasive”. As Eco summarizes “*architecture fluctuates between being rather coercive, implying that you will live in such a way with it, and rather indifferent, letting you use it as you see fit*”.⁴⁸ It is exactly in this blindspot that meaning is formed and takes hold of an object. In the realm of everyday life and everyday indifference. Upon review, it seems though that the primary function of an object is often taken for granted. Perhaps because this denotative meaning communicates with us through bodily action that makes possible types of actions that come to feel completely natural and which allow us to subconsciously navigate and exist with these architectural objects. This understanding seems to be more instinctive, since it communicates directly with the natural capabilities of our bodies. The symbolic meanings however are formed through that seam that linger between coerciveness and indifference, between intention and accident, focus and visceral.

Subway space and architecture – Architectural objects as communicators

Although this theory of semiotics has its flaws, it does tell us how architecture and humans coexist. Not through a dialogue of words but through a physical practiced language. Meaning becomes a social product which has a life of its own but not separate of the physical body it belongs to. By taking away the architectural object from the total work, the theory of Eco explains our relation to architecture in hypothetical isolated event. It ignores the physical and functional context by removing architectural objects from the whole design. It is somewhat unclear what can be considered an architectural object and what can be considered the denotative meaning as Harries points out. It also does not consider the architectural detail and “the joint” where objects and materials come together. Marco Frascari for example gives a compelling argument to consider the joint, the meeting of materials into an architectural detail as the smallest unit of significance to a work of architecture.⁴⁹ The perspective Eco offers, does help us to recognize architectural signs in space and how they might affect people’s actions. Let’s look at an example of a type of subterranean space.

We will look at three examples of tunnel walls to get an understanding of how they might communicate. The architectural objects primary function is to create safe passage underground by countering the forces of the earth. The way these walls are designed and express their denotative meaning, enables the perception for the decoding of the architectural object as a sign that expresses a manner of interaction. In this case the walls communicate the safe passage through unpassable matter. However, this is only one half of the story. For a diversity of walls may offer the same denotation but may have different sets of connotations. Different textures, materials and detailing affect our experiences differently. A low tunnel wall made out of a thin silver membrane may be perceived as expensive, smooth and clean, compared to a curved wall hacked out of stone which may be perceived as chaotic, heavy and earthy, while a tall wall stacked out of bricks with different colours could be perceived as traditional, regular and colourful. Each has a different rhythm, a different tactile quality, a different symbolic meaning which impacts our experience and our actions (sub)consciously. So, these variants offer different possibilities of utilization and engagement with space, even only slightly. It is likely we will all pass through these examples without a problem. But the manner in which the action is performed, and the experience of each example will be completely different, without taking in consideration what spaces lie before and after these tunnels.

Everyday transit – The saturation of signs

If we were to consider the subway station as a composition of different architectural objects, we might employ a system to more clearly understand how subway space communicates. We may draw a line that acts as a spectrum upon which architectural objects are placed based on their communicative performance. The two ends of the spectrum are two extremes. On one end, meaning is communicated through focused vision of signs in the subway and requires conscious attention to be understood. An example is a code, name or arrow placed on a wall, operating like a signal. The other end represents elements that communicate through the visceral dimension and require tactile understanding. Subconscious processing of these signs plays a bigger role. Examples are the dimensions and details of an opening or the material texture of a wall. So, the one end can be understood as sign that directly communicate a literal message. However, these literal codes, letter types, clocks and colours form a string of common signs which creates a system of communication which can always be relied upon. In subway spaces these signs are especially important for wayfinding and to create a sense of order and logic to the transit system. Though for the everyday commuter, such signs can become empty of meaning, too obvious, distracting or oppressing because of its singular and unchanging meaning. Though artists like Ed Ruscha reminds us that the design of a word can be a piece of art itself. The signs on the other end communicate through a bodily understanding, and meaning is not literal but often open-ended. Such signs carry a multitude of meanings, are more subtle in their persuasions but the outcome can lie further apart. A certain ordering of details might be interpreted as a build up to an important space or a reference to a certain length or the consequence of a structural grid or hide some rule of the organization of a place. Both sides affect our bodily actions but differently. Also, most signs and objects fall in between these two ends. To give an example of subway signs, going from direct to indirect communicative capabilities: Warning sign, station name, arrow, commercial panels, bench, a rail, yellow warning tiles, special lighting, floor composition, openings, wall material, details, proportions, dimensions of space.

It is not the intent to reduce architecture to the reading of signs, indifferent to the passing of time, but this approach lets us organise our tools. Especially for spaces that are turned inwards like underground subway systems, it is vital to identify where to be common and clear, where to be creative, where to insinuate and where to confront. Going back to Pallasmaa, it is the visceral realm where opportunity lies for architect.⁵⁰ On the human scale and in the tacit dimension are the places where a designer can rebel against commercialisation, rules and demands. In this blind spot, indirect, implicit, excessive and vague, lies the skill of striking up a conversation with the everyday inhabitants of our designs.

- 38 Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience*, 114.
39 Böhme, 'Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space', 29.
40 Umberto Eco, 'Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture', In: Neil Leach (ed.) *Rethinking Architecture: a reader in cultural theory* (London: Routledge, 1997), 173-195.
41 Ibid., 175.
42 Atelier Hoko, *Science of the Secondary 4 – Window* (Singapore: Atelier Hoko, 2015)
43 Eco, 'Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture', 176-178.
44 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 90-96.
45 Ibid., 91.
46 Eco, 'Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture', 187.
47 Ibid., 187.
48 Ibid., 187.
49 Marco Frascari, 'The Tell-the-Tale Detail', in: John Deely, and Margot Lenhart (eds.), *Semiotics* (Boston: Springer, 1981), 325-336.
50 Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 70-71.





CHAPTER 4 SPATIAL RHYTHMS

When travelling through the subway systems, you will find that this world is nothing like the places we travel through. There are no stars, there is no sun, there is no change of weather. Seasons seem to have no effect on the living. To understand how this underground world behaves, I would first need to tell you how humans travel through this space. Because here, they are the only living thing. Every human moves in a personal manner. Sporadic or distracted, with desire or frustration, steadfast or lost. Most travellers are experienced navigators of subway systems who through meticulous repetition perfected their practice. Day after day they repeatedly exercise their limbs for wandering, corner-turning, stair-walking, wall-leaning, escalator-sliding, spelunking, coffee-cup holding, wallet juggling, crowd-crossing or pacing-around.

The travellers flow through space perpetually. Moving bodies turn into a larger body that empties and fills the underground voids, tunnels and platforms. The random assembly of people with different destinations perform a ballet upon a set stage. A stage filled with personal bodies with different rhythms in chaotic harmony. Bodies cross bodies in straight lines without colliding in complex weaving patterns, turning the rhythms of the day into a fabric with different motifs. As the next day is a repetition of the last, and the next of the next, each day is a grind. An unending practice of repetitive motions that seems to transport me from space to space without setting a single step.

A day goes something like this.

They come when the world awakens. Slow and calm as dawn, until the crowd turns into a big mass. Their number rises until they come up to the wall. Another wave of people comes crashing down from the side but disappears into the chaos without causing a big collision. When the limit is reached, the masses slowly pull away again.

Then, the halls are slowly emptied. The masses turn into small packs. They push each other to the sides, or to slow down, speed up or stop. The groups seem to cling together with invisible elastic bands. For these groups, the underground becomes an adventurous space, small and concentrated.

They come alone, or alone with a child, wading through an empty void. These spaces under the ground become like a still lake. Where every movement creates shallow ripples upon its surface like the sound of steps in an empty hall.

The orchestra has toned down. The music has slowed its rhythms. Although the subway keeps coming at intervals, nobody seems to mind its urgency. It has lost the attention of the crowd and so the emptiness and quietness become longer.

They come again and the mood changes. Every time the crowd

crashes down the halls, the waves become bigger. The crowd is violent, intense, but disappears as quickly as it appears, leaving the space to stragglers with hollowed faces and the returning evening crowds and couples wearing perfumed coats and red faces of excitement.

Then, the day starts anew, and the world is inhabited by the same traveller. Each day the traveller transforms the spaces in which they dwell, and each passing day is a little different. Slightly different movements, more skilful, less attentive and more freely, different dressings, different music in

the ears and different moods. It starts with one human, their mood and actions against the dominant generators of the space itself, to produce for a moment a tone that with others becomes a longer piece. It's a long and patient practice. Always and never the same.



Nature of perception – Habits

One could argue that our perception, our experience, is enacted along the lines of sets of behaviour which according to the place, its atmospheres and its signs are deemed “appropriate”.⁵¹ Though the impressions of a certain space, the emotional load or the perceived atmosphere, can differ greatly between individuals, even if our behaviour seems similar. These sets of behaviour are configured through repetitive experiences and are constantly reconfigured as pointed out by Eco.⁵² What meaning is attributed to certain architectural objects and what actions are appropriate according to those objects seem to be layers of the same thing. The ongoing repetition of specific actions forms our standard perception and an everyday way of doing things, our habits. Habits are not just subconscious ritualistic movements of the body according to a specific place and time. It can better be understood as a “*performative understanding of being*”, performative through embodied action.⁵³ As Paul Harrison further puts it “...*habit is not experience, habit is not the result of a simple empiricism; it is prior to experience*”.⁵⁴ Our daily interaction with the world is loaded with and made possible through layers of habits. All habits are personal yet generic. We recognize them yet each person has their own sets of behaviour. Rita Felski argues that a set of behaviour loaded with emotional meanings which is acted out in a pattern, thus also these emotions are repeated at certain times and certain places.⁵⁵ Our identity is grounded in our routine and our habits. Like a morning routine, generic and personal. A large number of habits can be described as “unfounded sets of practices” which are such generic habits that we don’t realize their worth or their difference.⁵⁶ For example, using a pen to write or sitting down on a bench. Hall writes that between cultures or over periods in time, such generic habits have fundamental differences and so the experience of a place for two different parties is fundamentally different.⁵⁷

In *Rhythmanalysis* Henri Lefebvre argues that the differences lie in the way the physical act is performed, like walking, talking or standing. The manner, style or “gestes”, are just as important as the act itself.⁵⁸ It is through the layers of habit that the world around us becomes a stable constant because it is repeated and acted out every day. Our making-sense of the world is expressed through our bodies. Harrison summarizes, “*We have seen how habits solidify embodiment and thus the flux of everyday life, allowing for doubt to end in a shared form of life.*”.⁵⁹ Not only does the habit of the masses presuppose the bodily experience of space, but their habitual performance also actualizes place. It allows us to act rather than to consider every action. It is also through repetition of habit, that we are able to build upon our ability or sensitivity to experience architecture and master the daily usage of our surroundings. Walter Benjamin reminds us, that not through the eyes, but by doing that our understanding of space is formed, “*This mode of appropriation (optical reception), developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.*”.⁶⁰

Men and the built environment – Space as a social product

Habits do not only let us master our experience of space, habits also become a form of general movement and action according to a specific place. These general actions are formed by the individual and the group, as Dell Upton writes that “*Repeated individual actions become practices and clusters of practices become social formations through bodily memory instilled by repeated action in organized time and space*”.⁶¹ So practices are organised spatially. Yet these habits also organize space. For actions form and transform space through the movement of bodies, changing what is perceived and the way it is perceived. In *The Manhattan Transcripts* Bernard Tschumi dissects the architectural experience into space, event and movement and uses these three ingredients to fabricate extreme scenarios which he captures in sets of frames of 3dimensional drawings.⁶² In one scenario the extraordinary is the event, a murder in Central Park. In another movement is extremified by the perceiver falling down a skyscraper, while in another scenario football players use a street block

as their playing field. In these scenarios, space acts as the negative of form or “perceived space”, movement of bodies and limbs of individuals and groups, and events as the catalyst, produce a continuously transforming substance, which is another kind of space. Tschumi shows that one ingredient can transform the others through “reciprocity” or “conflict” while the relationship of these ingredients may also be complete a case of “indifference”.⁶³ Tschumi’s drawings depict space as a product of place, or architecture, and the continuous bodily movements and activity of the users, who also experience it.

By creating extreme fictitious scenarios Tschumi illuminates a rule which is otherwise hard to notice in everyday practice. Space continuously moves and reshapes itself in front of our eyes. Perhaps because the general movement of bodies produced by everyday habits, appear to us as such general phenomena that we don’t consider their significance in producing our experience. In everyday practice, it is the unnoticed unfounded sets of practice and our inventive ability which allow us to cross through places and have a “lived experience” without being pulled out. The mundane rules that construct a stable experience. These unremarkable habitual practices and their style of doing, the “gestes”, the way to enter, descent, turn, climb, linger, walk, cross, etc..., take part in the production of space as its smallest but most common and fundamental unit.⁶⁴ De Certeau writes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, “*space is like the word when it is spoken*” and it is the habits of the self and the other, the spatial practices of the loner, the couple, the group and the masses together with “*living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols*” that produces space as the fabric of everyday life.⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ A fabric woven out of forces, relations, meanings and practices, which is continuously pulled, stretched and folded around us.⁶⁷ A rough fabric which we encounter every day and presupposes our experience, though it is also a rough product where there is the unexpected, the free, the amazing and the terrifying.

Subway space and architecture – Rhythmic production of space

The spatial practices that produce space, are layered and numerous. Chapter 2 discusses the atmosphere created by mechanical moving materials and the lack of natural generators. Subway space is approached as empty, dominated by an unchanging continuity through the monotonous repetition of its generators. This chapter argues that such a view totally disregards human life and social activity. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre constructs a triadic approach to space through the theory of space as conceived, perceived and lived space.⁶⁸ Lefebvre makes the distinction between abstract space of power and concepts, and material space as something that can be perceived and mapped through its physical expression. The last approach defines space, when space is lived, when it constitutes the practical reality of our everyday life and space is produced in the actual. Then, space is a social product, that it is produced through the bodies of people and the collective body of the crowd together with all other things in it.⁶⁹

DeCerteau argues that from within this lived space and its set of visible and invisible operations that place is again experienced, organized and defined. Yet he counters, it is also place which forces upon us a way of being and that a place demands specific sets of action for “*space is a practiced place*”.⁷⁰ Similarly Yi-fu Tuan argues that place is brought to existence through the everyday practices of its users.⁷¹ However, to understand the production of a certain space, is not only to understand the specifics of actions and the relations between different spatial and social practices. To understand space, is to study the system of its perpetual production and the nature of its production to constantly change into previous forms. In other words, to understand the quantitative aspects of the social practices of a place. So, to understand place we must look at the everyday sequence of these social practices and their relative differences in order to discover a constant in its production and to compose a pattern on a spatial and temporal level. This brings us to the real, the repetitive and the mundane instead of the fictional.

In *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre argues for such an approach through the study of rhythms, that offers an understanding of space and time as one. According to Lefebvre: “*Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm*”.⁷² There is only rhythm through repetition. The body of space, of lived space, is composed of all kinds of

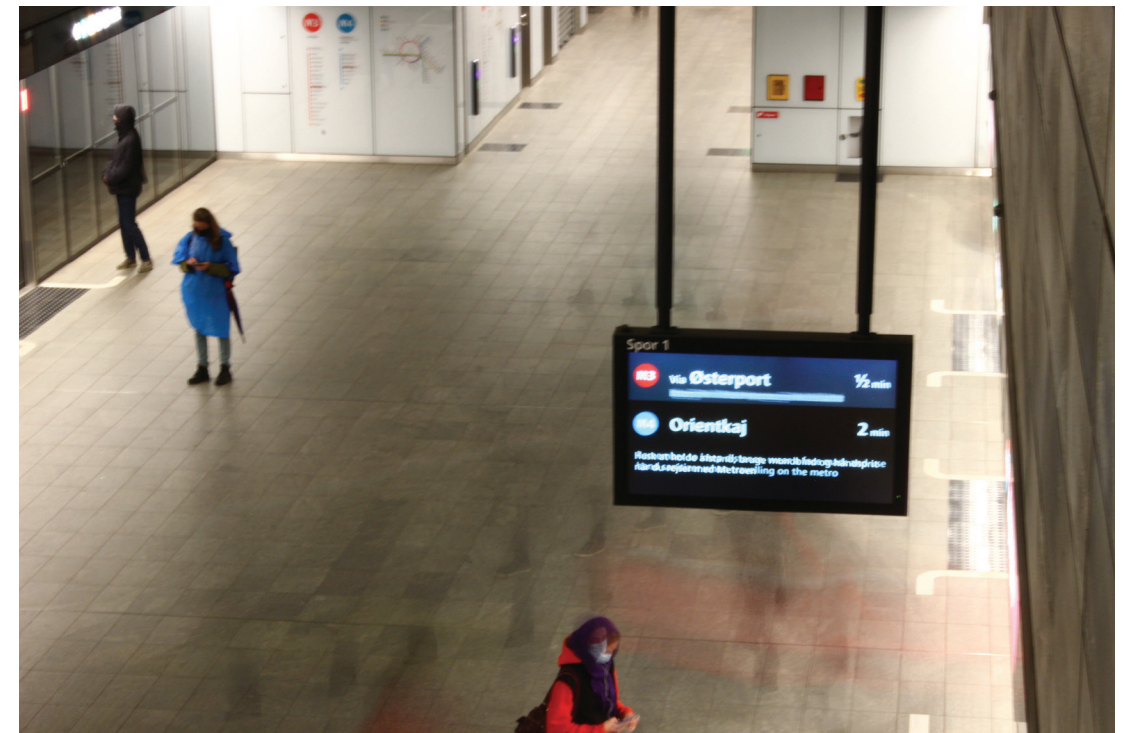
bodies, individuals and groups, with particular sets of practices and different rhythms. Space is layered with rhythm and is thus polyrhythmic. There are rhythms in physical bodies, rhythms in the performance of actions and habits, rhythms in the occurrence of practices, there is rhythms of scenes and there is rhythm of difference.⁷³ Each piece constructs itself through repetition and is composed by the silences in between. There are hard rhythms, soft rhythms, cries, noises, murmurs and whispers. In this theory Lefebvre writes that space is a product of social practices and relations, therefore an exact copy can never be reproduced.⁷⁴ Difference is fundamental in its repetition and so change is always present in the production of rhythms. This approach allows us to look further than a single romantic experience of a place and it also prohibits us from misplacing architecture into the making of a static sculpture. Architecture operates in the realm of living and social human beings. Architecture is not static, it becomes alive through predictable cycles of repetition which allow it to be perceived as a constant, as place where we can expect to have certain experiences, contrasted with irregular, unexpected and extraordinary practices in space.

Everyday transit – Attempt at the rhythmanalysis of subway space

To understand a place and its rhythms, Lefebvre argues, is to physically immerse oneself in the production of its space. To both participate and to observe space through a frequency, diversity and spontaneity that allows for the discovery of a constant in the spatial transformations and to figure out the system behind the perceived phenomena. To understand the world of underground transit we turn, not to the fictional scenarios of Tschumi, but to the regular and the real, the everyday.

To start, Lefebvre argues that rhythms either are produced through cyclical or linear repetitions.⁷⁵ The cyclical can best be understood as repetition with an end and a beginning, a cycle like day and night, where the next cycle will be slightly different.⁷⁶ The linear on the other hand is found in monotonous and mechanical repetitions where movement is produced like an exact copy. In subway space rush hours accompany the start and end of the day. Although in some cities the subway runs permanently, only changing its rhythms according to the moment of the day or the day of the week. The intervals of arrival and departure of the trains also creates a cyclical ritual through the filling and emptying of the station. In between arrivals more diverse rhythms can be observed when the crowd is split. These rhythms become more dominant as the rush hour nears its end. The relationship between the humans and the machines in the underground space becomes more independent. The linear repetition of crowds is overcome with more diverse, but more silent, rhythms. Machines though still employ their linear repetitions. The movement of the train, opening of doors, rolling of escalators, beeping of gates. The underground environment is dominated by these exact mechanical movements and almost identical cycles, since natural moving materials can't reach this space directly. However, without these linear repetitions, a space that is used everyday and relied upon by thousands would not be able to operate so consistent. So, subway space appears both gritty and lively. A space, through a monotonous eurhythmia dominated by the linear repetitions of the daily grind, shifting in balance between humanity and machines.

- 51 Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience*, 121.
- 52 Eco, 'Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture', 190.
- 53 Paul Harrison, 'Making Sense: Embodiment and the sensibilities of the everyday', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18 (2000), 497-517, 501.
- 54 Ibid., 506.
- 55 Rita Felski 'The Invention of Everyday Life', In: Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 77-98, 92.
- 56 Harrison, 'Making Sense: Embodiment and the sensibilities of the everyday', 506.
- 57 Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, 131-165.
- 58 Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004 [original version in French: *Éléments de rhythmanalyse*, 1992]), 47.
- 59 Harrison, 'Making Sense: Embodiment and the sensibilities of the everyday', 509.
- 60 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in: Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969 [original version in German: *Illuminationen*, 1955]), 217-253, 240.
- 61 Dell Upton, 'Architecture in Everyday Life', *New Literary History* 33, no. 4 (2002), 707-23, 718.
- 62 Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts* (London: Academy Editions, 1994 [1981])
- 63 Ibid., XXI-XXIII.
- 64 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1991 [original version in French: *La Production d'espace*, 1974]).
- 65 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.
- 66 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 101.
- 67 Ibid., 145.
- 68 Ibid., 38-41.
- 69 Ibid., 68-168.
- 70 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.
- 71 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).
- 72 Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 25.
- 73 Ibid., 25.
- 74 Ibid., 16.
- 75 Ibid., 40, 96.
- 76 Ibid., 82-84.





CHAPTER 5 (UN)EXPECTED

When one drifts through the underground for such a long time, the excitement of its discovery begins to fade. Without having an endpoint, the light at the end of the tunnel never comes nearer. Although one could argue that no reason remains to keep moving, you will do so anyway. You will go on, walk, wander, dwell and drift on. You will be swallowed by the crowd, cling to human figures travelling through the underground and let go before they leave it. For a long time, your body will move like a mechanical train transporting the mind as its passenger and slowly the structures around you turn into a blur. The vibration of the repetitive movements, tremble through your body and will make you lose track of time.

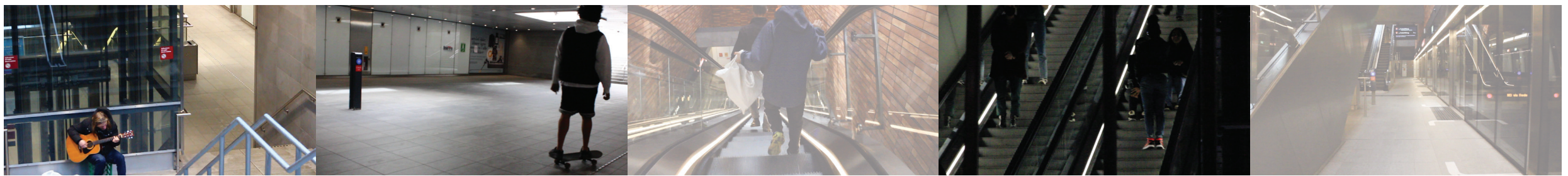
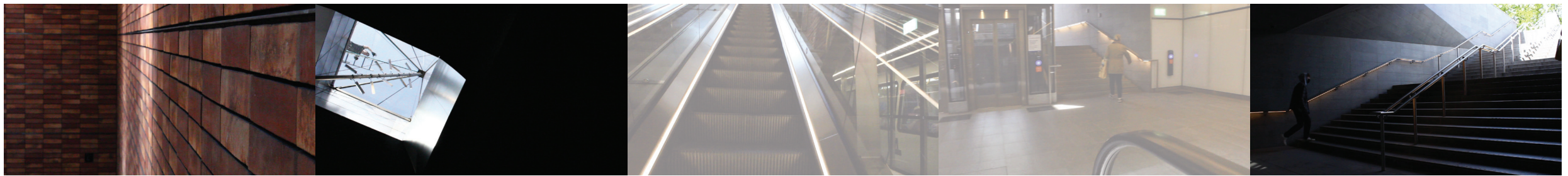
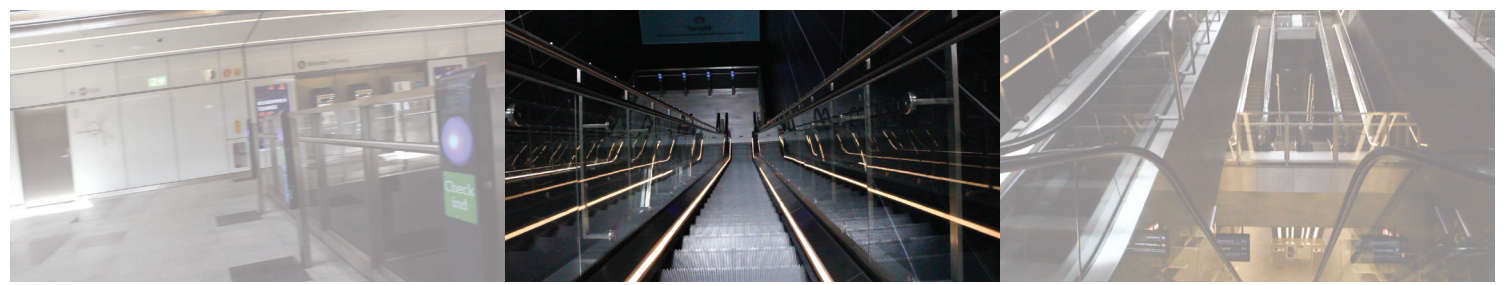
Like a machine in repetition. Exit the doors, find the stairs, up the stairs, down the hall, follow the lines, through the gates, out the hall, up the stairs, feel the breeze of the outside air, turn around, down the stairs, down the hall, follow the lines, through the gates, out the hall, down the stairs, onto the platform, find a spot, wait and watch, tap your feet, step around, watch the train, step aside, enter the doors, wrestle a spot, look out, look down, brace yourself, look around, get up, exit the doors, repeat

When you repeat these motions for such a long time, other things become noticeable again and a new layer of discoveries appears. The eyes, the ears and the body divert from its frontal path. Things happened. Singular events, that were new. Why did I not notice these before. For they were like splashes of colour in the repetition of the flame. A voice, singing on the low rumble of machines and the clack of heels against the stale repetition of footsteps. A red coat among a sea of grey fur. At first odd than beautiful. The homogenous crowd hides a nuanced collection of stories while the homogenous stations slowly reveal their individuality and character.

Children sitting in circles on the floor, looking over the crowd. A daft couple watching an opera from an isolated balcony. Gossiping about boys or the ridiculous shoes of that typical dresses like he is still 20 kind of man who doesn't want to walk in a straight line, a woman who is playing music on her violin with her eyes closed, a couple dancing between the columns of stone and of people, a boy dressed in black creeping back and forth across the wall to get a glimpse of a girl at the other side of the hall, an old woman talking a secret language to her handbag, a man with children running down the slopes while holding hands, laughing, sighing, kissing, shouting, clacking boots and keys ringing, people reading along in other people's books. What had I not seen? Familiar and unexpected. The way of the masses against the adventurous individual. Everybody watching.

Materials and places I had visited. To discover hidden lines and shadows

on the walls, a glitter or pattern in the mosaics of the floor which fitted my steps and not those of others. A hidden colour. A playful or strict order of details which themselves tell their own tale. A light that creates a shape on that one moment. The puddles on the granite steps tell me of rain, the lost leaves blown through the station call autumn, sunglasses and a yellow glow tell me of endless summers. Now the world becomes alive again.



Nature of perception – The everyday experience

This chapter concerns itself with the phenomenology of the everyday, a term which appears throughout this work. Each chapter discusses phenomena which takes place in the everyday. The operation which allows for experience of the ordinary and the extra-ordinary are isolated and expanded through theory. The topic of the everyday binds the subjects of the different chapters into a structured discussion and this last chapter attempts to put these operations in the spatial and temporal context of the actual and the real. The usage of the term is timeless, the understanding of the everyday is common-sense, but when it is practiced, the everyday becomes undefinable, for the moment that we become aware of it, it disappears.

In literary works, the everyday is often used to describe the opposite of the new and the spectacular. Without further exploration of the term, it is applied as the synonym for the repetitive, the boring and the mundane. Naturally, repeated experiences form expected daily routines where monotony seems inevitable, but there is more to everyday repetition than dullness. Lefebvre and Crawford understand the everyday as everything between the specialized activities and spaces in our life, such as work, pleasure and politics but also the home.^{77 78} It is not separate, but it is also not subjective to the conceived institutionalized spaces, organized practices. Lefebvre argues that it can be understood as a residue.⁷⁹ A connective tissue which itself is more important for human life, and our understanding of it, than the specialised institutions which it sustains. Everyday life is the closest to the authentic, the concrete and the lived experience of human life because it is produced through our actual, physical and social practices in lived space. It is, argues Haappala, something everybody has, an agency, close to being, which allows us to persist.⁸⁰ In 'The Invention of Everyday Life' Felski delivers a more concrete examination of the everyday through separating the subject into three layers: "time, space and modality".⁸¹ Time is understood as everyday repetition rather than seconds and hours. Felski addresses space as the reliance of the everyday upon a sense of home, while the topic of modality approaches the experience of the everyday through our habits, which has been discussed in the last chapter. The current section deals with time or more importantly the affects of repetition upon our experience and the opposite of repetition, the novel.

Cyclical and linear repetitions allow experiences to become and then to remain familiar. To become familiar with a place, a route to work, a neighbourhood, a street, a house or a room, is to actively experience it repeatedly. To become familiar is a mastering experience. It means creating stability and comfort through establishing spatial routines and standard ways to engage with a certain place, spatial habits. It is the same process which helps us master a craft. Familiarity also means to become used-to the sensory input of the places we frequently engage. It is not just a morning routine or blindly walking the way to the supermarket. Becoming familiar allows us to develop an agenda because around that physical place a world is constructed of expected events, actions and outcomes according to specific moments. The familiarisation of the mindful body results in a set of subconscious actions and bodily understanding of a particular place that is self-evident. Indeed, as Felski argues, these established routines of the body, allow for the end of doubt and "to get things done".⁸² Sometimes it is necessary to treat our surrounding with indifference, take it for granted, and to let our subconscious take over. So, to become familiar with a place, a room, a house, a street, a district, a city, is also to feel at home. And perhaps this familiarity also gives us the confidence to appropriate that space to our personal needs and desires.

However, through repetition, we can become insensitive towards our surroundings. Our daily experience can become dull. In turn, we risk becoming blind to the things that affect us, positive and negative. Mallgrave writes that the novel contrasts with tiring banality of our routine practice, though we might also define the novel that which contrast with the secure, the stable and the expected.⁸³ It is a form of experience which heightens our attention and creates tension, as a result from new sensory richness. Harries writes that it is novelty which allows us also to take leave from our everyday familiarities and to look back upon it, only "to return with eyes more opened".⁸⁴ A novel perception can alter our experience of space and consequently it may change our habits. Upton notes that change through the novel can be fundamental but it is mostly very small and unnoticed.⁸⁵ Rather than perceiving the novel and the everyday as separate, Lefebvre argues that

the novel and familiar are two sides of the everyday.⁸⁶ In *Rhythmanalysis*, he writes that inherent to repetition is change, in any form. Through repetition, we are able to discover from the past what is likely to be repeated, what things can change and which are likely to remain the same. Through a practiced familiarity the layers in chaos, the details, the hidden patterns and messages of our surrounding are revealed. Through our everyday experience we develop a practical knowledge of the world around us, which allows us to act upon the expected and to react creatively when encountering the unexpected, so that it may also illuminate and change the traditional cycles through the production of myths. Change then, might be ignited in novel space, but it is through repetition in everyday space that old cycles are broken and new ones emerge.⁸⁷

Men and the built environment – Everyday space

Between everyday human life and the built world lies a seam which is space. It is a product that comes before and after the two come together because it is a cyclical and linear product of the continuous existence of people and place. Space as a moving substance, the negative of form, space as a continuous social product, and space as a microcosm or a world with a particular set of relations of rules, of power and of rebellion. Everyday space is a physical layered reality which is both sustained and produced by countless complex and repetitive social processes in the form of spatial practices, but which are perceived as ordinary and insignificant phenomena. Felski challenges that everyday or "le quotidien" is not a given quality, like one would use "ordinary" to label buildings which are very common or of an unsurprising physical appearance compared to its function or its context.⁸⁸ Rather everyday, is a "lived relationship".⁸⁹ The nature of the relationship Lefebvre points out is that it is both a little event, a particular combination of place and time, and at the same time an infinitely complex operation. In the novel, *The Mezzanine*, George Baker investigates during a lunch break in New York city, the complex events that lead to the snapping of a shoestring which, like a butterfly effect, changes the course of his day.⁹⁰ In his book a number of daily products and habits are further investigated to lay bare the complexity of their existence and their particularities. Baker uncovers a complicated web of relations between people via products and what it means to live in a commercial society. It is conceptually similar to a passage in Lefebvre's book *Critique of Everyday Life* in which he exemplifies the layers of mundane practices in a scenario where a lady buys a pound of sugar, "the woman's life, her biography, her job, her family, her class, her budget, her eating habits, how she uses money, her opinions and her ideas, the state of the market, etc. Finally I will have grasped the sum total of capitalist society, the nation and its history. And although what I grasp becomes more and more profound, it is contained from the start in the original little event."⁹¹ The principle which is repeated is that everyday practices are complex, layered and unique but in practice very ordinary and simple. Concluding, everyday practices are perhaps more diverse in mannerism than in actual actions, but they tell a lot about ourselves and the world we inhabit. Similar to the of our everyday lives. De Certeau and Lefebvre believe that this gentle, unnoticed, unimportant and practical character of daily life is what allows the everyday to possess such a power.

In *The Practice of Everyday life*, de Certeau sets two ways in which our everyday lives are lived. Everyday space as a social product is composed out of "strategies" and "tactics".⁹² Strategies describe the dominant power of space which enforces a set of proper practices upon a place. In his view strategies are organized by the institutions, the politicians and the planner or whatever we understand as the orderly society. In practice these strategic practices may also be understood as the commonly understood way of engaging with a place. However as also Lefebvre understood, the lived experience of the everyday begins with the physical human body. It is the multi-sensory human body from which the everyday man is able to reclaim space for themselves and appropriate space for their social needs. Decerteau understood these practices as "tactics" through which we rebel with small and temporary assaults against the ruling structures. If we understand these rebel actions as varied mannerism, personal and novel habits and intentional or accidental appropriation of space for social needs, then tactics can result in a humanistic space. The film *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* of William H Whyte, shows that the consequences

of a little rebellion in the form of unplanned appropriation result in a natural vitality and liveliness which design often strives for.⁹³ Individuals, masses and place operate in eurythmia to produce a lively public space that contrasts with overly planned institutionalized spaces which DeCerteau warns us of. Similarly, Whyte shows that badly designed streets and squares can be intolerant of human life and consequently are only used when necessary, but not really inhabited. Having said that, intolerant and disproportionate rebellion can also result in fundamental a-rhythmic change, destruction of place or intolerance towards others. Now, if we may apply the reasoning of Popper upon the creation of myth and theory, then perhaps we should understand the production of everyday space as a cycle of repetitive traditional practices which are frequently challenged, not with written argument but with physical moving arguments.⁹⁴ There, new, and perhaps improved, practices come forth out of traditional practices through critique and rebellion, which after a time become conventional, destined to change again. So, novel places have the capability or chance to mix a planned experience with an undesignated excess of space which may be appropriated and used to give an answer to a current problem or need.

Subway space and architecture – An underground world with rules, rituals and rebels

Place, perceived as the physical and the real is fundamentally different from the design of streets, squares and buildings.⁹⁵ A design cannot be inhabited until it is realized and will in this regard always remain incomplete for buildings, streets and structures only speak to us through space.⁹⁶ In the end, it is in everyday life that design and architecture is given meaning. An architect can tell how a design might look, the materials, what kind of signs will be placed where, what the dimension are, etc... A designer has an idea about the plan and what one is supposed to experience. In terms of affordances a design is often made with certain strategies in mind. But it is beyond the designer to predict upon the independence of the everyday. For it has a dynamic chaos, a certain uncontrollability, which is let loose upon a design when it is finished. It requires a great deal of empathy, work and skill to have an idea how lived space will develop. How it will influence the spatial practices of perceived space and how the idea behind a place might change. In other words, a realized design is in control of the “physical characteristic”, somewhat the “synesthetic characteristics”, since the behavior of non-physical and physical entities is more diverse and unpredictable but has little control over the “social characteristics” the more time passes.⁹⁷ In the physical dimension place is a static element and more a permanent strategy. But in the temporal dimension architectural space becomes dynamic and transforms through physical negotiations, exploitations, conversations and accidents. Similar to Eco’s understanding of the connotative meaning, a design will follow its own trajectory, and the use is determined by a common sensibility, which often stems from a common memory of the type(s) to which the design refers to or from which it originates.

A type in the built environment which is widely used as the epitome of everyday life is the street. The street is interpreted as the residual space between home, work and other organized practices. Especially streets in dense urban areas, where the street is both a commonplace with a set of common codes and a public space with a continuous stream of diverse and unexpected groups with their own sets of practices. Jane Jacobs was a writer who had a keen eye for what entails life on the streets as an inhabitant and as a planner. Both observing and participating in the everyday life on the corner of her street, she described it as: “an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole”.⁹⁸ The experience of the street sounds chaotic but there is an invisible order to collective social production of this kind of everyday space. Tschumi teaches us, not only the activities of the residents, shopkeepers, schoolchildren, commuters, garbage men etc. are the actors that produce space.⁹⁹ The buildings, facades, squares, streets, the red bricks, steel benches and cheap advertisement panels, the city in other words play equal part, direct and indirectly. Architecture of the everyday physical fabric is not simply a backdrop of our everyday lives, nor are they simply tools to get things done. It is more than a physical “anchor” for our everyday life as Felski suggests or a stabilizing force to our daily lives as Haapala perceives.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰¹ It is in the complete physical context, the different scales of the buildings, the layout of shops, offices and houses, the dimensions of the street, the individual signs and details on the facades, the material and colours of the pavement that in the creation of this lively dance and its chaotic rhythm serve as a permanence. A quiet power without a clear agenda. A physical counterpart which through a tactile and visceral language stands against the erosion of time and lets us experience its passing and the change it brings.¹⁰² It is a layered event which cannot be decoded by a single experience. Concluding, Anne Buttimer surmises in her essay ‘Home, Reach and the Sense of Place’, that places of our everyday environment and how they are used, are more closely bound with our personal and cultural identity than we realize.¹⁰³

In the book *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg addresses the relation between human behaviour and place in a simplified sentence, “if the person is in church, he “acts church”, if he’s in a post office, he acts “post office””.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, if a person is in a metro station, that person will act “metro station”. Now, firstly we might state that the main function of a metro station is to connect the metro system with urban nodes and to allow humans to travel efficiently and safely with this transport system. In order to do this successfully we engage in a sequence of spaces and practices to accomplish its goal. In other words, a metro station, every single one, has a specific sequence of actions and transition between these spaces. From general to most diverse.

Platforms serve to board the train and are the deepest part. Exiting onto the platform or getting on, waiting, finding a place to lean or sit or just dwell, waiting, looking at the clock, constrained time. Diversity in action is limited through the slim dimensions and the caution for the train. People pass through in build ups. Not a lot of craziness. Free from worry but passive.

In between platform and hall there is often a set of gates and a small open space to choose a specific track. The gate needs to be opened in a particular way and are just big enough for a human to fit through. It also acts like a kind of sieve for big groups. The open space is dominated by signs that point one to the right direction.

Sometimes there is a descent/ascent after or before the gate. There are escalators, elevators and stairs. This space acts like a passage which moves user between spaces.

The hall is the main orientation area with multiple tunnels that bring you above ground or below. Like a square. Often has machines, instructions, maps (serving functions). Can have shops, artworks or a booth of some kind. Sometimes there is a place where subway workers hang out. People may wait there for others, investigate their journey, dress up, sit down, hang out, play music, beg, or eat.

The entrance or exit can be a set of stairs, an opening in the ground, a gate in a wall, a pavilion, an extend roof. In other words, how do these sequences rhythm and direct our entrance to another place, or how does it take leave of the street. The more we go up, the lesser becomes the control of the train on the organisation of space.

This overview is only meant to give a quick glance at subway stations, but it exemplifies how experience of commuting with the subway is simultaneous a continuous whole but also cut up in a sequence, where each part section has particular architectonic qualities and a set of common rules and rituals. At the same time, this sequence can be extended in two direction by continuing with the train and the last/next stations or the urban spaces which border the entrance/exit and ultimately the departure/destination. One starts questioning: What do we do when waiting for the train? Where can one sit? Is there a place to wait or to strike up conversation, and are there any rules that may be broken? When and where do I get the feeling of departure? How do we enter and exit the city above? How and what does one experience when transitioning between different places? What spaces allow for appropriation, unexpected action and rebellion so that besides its main function, our public spaces can also bring people together, let them have adventures and reflect upon their everyday life and style? With each question zooming out to a bigger scale until we arrive at the temporal context of the building in our everyday lives.

Everyday transit – Magic of the real and finding balance

In both *Thinking Architecture* and in *Atmospheres* Zumthor is interested in what he calls: “the

magic of the real".¹⁰⁵ ¹⁰⁶ Zumthor describes these moments as a deeply moving experience of a space, an atmosphere in a certain moment which comes forth out of the physical and the real. It is not an experience that is brought about through the perception of a beautiful design or artistic sculpture. Rather, it is the perception of a particular atmosphere which "...allows us the possibility of standing outside ourselves and transcending the ordinary and the everyday."¹⁰⁷ This atmosphere is something which both comes forth out of reality, inherent in the physical, and out of our own perception, as though a veil has been lifted. The real everyday surroundings suddenly come to our awareness and the blur of everyday doing turns into a crystal-clear moment. Our senses attuned to the everyday poetic things and rhythms. Nothing can be eliminated without destroying that beauty. Not the particular people, movements, gestures, not the objects, sounds and rhythms. Not the buildings, the architecture, the materials, the details and the lights and shadows. So perhaps, the magic of the real, is how these things suddenly become visible.

There is something extra-ordinary or something novel, which can be good, exciting, fun or even tragic, that serves as a catalyst which enables that moment of perception. What Zumthor is searching for, is a way to bring about these magical moments in his designs. In Atmosphere he tries to organise the sensuous tools which the architects possess: "the body of architecture", "material compatibility", "the sound of space", "the temperature of space", "surrounding objects", "between composure and seduction", "tension between interior and exterior", "levels of intimacy", "light on things", "architecture of surroundings", "coherence" and "the beautiful form".¹⁰⁸ The well-known projects of Zumthor are made to serve an extraordinary function or sit upon an extraordinary site and for more functional buildings, that play a big role in the routines of our everyday lives, we must design for functionality, varying sizes of groups, and social open-ended appropriation. However, this does not mean that we shouldn't design for a peculiar atmosphere or experience, or design for beauty. Böhme writes that places of everyday work, travel and living have another kind of atmosphere that can be explored.¹⁰⁹ There can also be beauty and excitement in spatial practices, especially with a strong communal character. Though thinking of magic of the real, it becomes clear that we must also defend ourselves from the mundanity of everyday life, it is the job of the architect to design for familiarity and the emergence of novelty, and to find balance between these aspects.¹¹⁰ To create unexpected experiences and practices through its physical language that allows different rhythms and practices.¹¹¹ To make makes us comfortable and uncomfortable, which both reassures our way of life and challenges it. The architect can decide where and when to create tension, to make a sound or to be silent. Additionally, the architect can design for expected change, which shows itself through cyclical rhythms. The start of the day, the seasons. For novelty we must also give some room to the inevitable occurrence of the unexpected. To design for movement and action of bodies and bodies of crowds and to treat the inhabitants as active participants in a social setting rather than passive consumers.

- 77 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 1991 [original version in French: Critique de la vie quotidienne, 1947]).
- 78 Margaret Crawford, 'Introduction', in: John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski (eds.), *Everyday Urbanism*, (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999).
- 79 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 86.
- 80 Haapala, 'The Everyday, Building, and Architecture: Reflections on the Ethos and Beauty of our Built Surroundings', 173.
- 81 Felski 'The Invention of Everyday Life', 81.
- 82 Ibid., 91.
- 83 Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience*, 92.
- 84 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 280-281.
- 85 Dell Upton, 'Architecture in Everyday', 712.
- 86 Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 37-47.
- 87 Liesbeth François and Maria Paz Oliver, 'Space and Everyday Life. Transformations and Tensions in Contemporary Fiction', in: *Interférences littéraires/Literaire interferences* 13, (2014), 25.
- 88 Felski, 'The Invention of Everyday Life', 95.
- 89 Ibid., 95.
- 90 Nicholson Baker, *The Mezzanine* (New York: Grove Press, (1988).
- 91 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 57.
- 92 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 29-42.
- 93 William Hollingsworth Whyte, director. *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces. Project for Public Spaces, New York*, 1980, 58:08.
- 94 Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge, (2010 [1962])). 161-182.
- 95 Andrew Blauvelt 'Strangely Familiar: Design and Everyday Life', In: Andrew Blauvelt (ed.), *Strangely Familiar: Design and Everyday Life* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre, 2004), 14-38.
- 96 Alan Colquhoun, *Modernity and the Classical Tradition: Architectural Essays 1980-1987* (Cambridge: MIT press, 1989).
- 97 Böhme, 'Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space', 29-31.
- 98 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1961]), 50.
- 99 Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts*.
- 100 Felski, 'The Invention of Everyday Life', 89.
- 101 Haapala, 'The Everyday, Building, and Architecture: Reflections on the Ethos and Beauty of our Built Surroundings', 173.
- 102 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 228-240.
- 103 Anne Buttner, 'Home, Reach and the Sense of Place', in: Anne Buttner and Seamon (eds.), *The Human Experience of Place and Space* (Kent: Croom Helm Publishers, 1980), 13-39, 14.
- 104 Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of the Community* (New York: Marlower & Company, 1999), 295.
- 105 Zumthor, *Atmospheres*, 19.
- 106 Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture* (Basel: Birkhauser, 2006), 83-87.
- 107 Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience*, 122.
- 108 Zumthor, *Atmospheres*.
- 109 Böhme, 'Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space', 27.
- 110 Haapala, 'The Everyday, Building, and Architecture: Reflections on the Ethos and Beauty of our Built Surroundings', 181.
- 111 Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 103-104.



CHAPTER 6

DESTINATIONS

This will be my final letter.

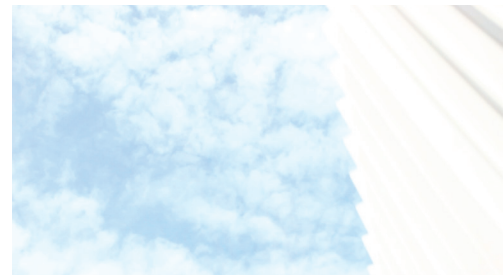
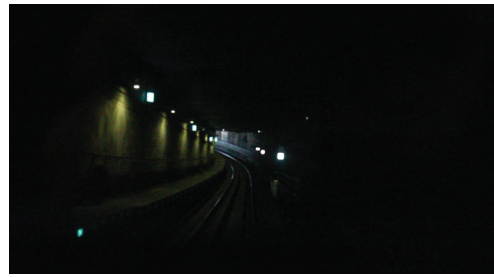
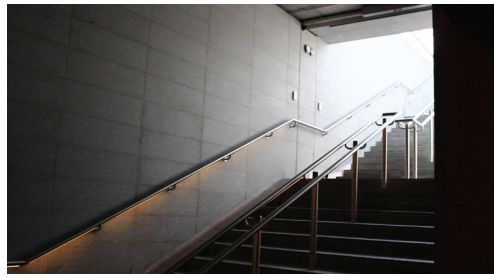
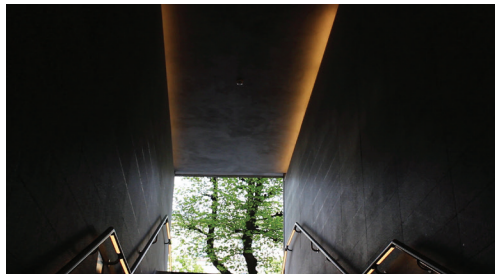
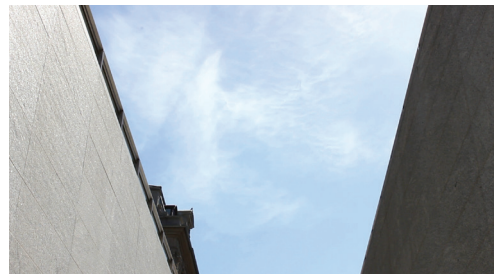
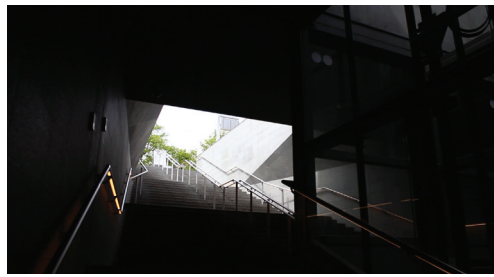
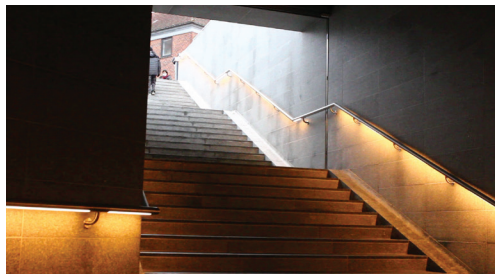
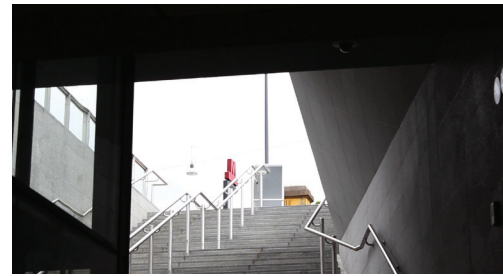
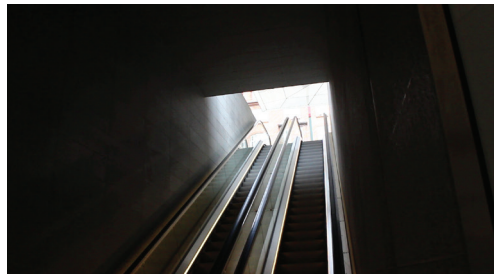
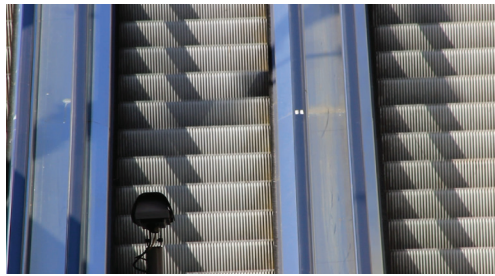
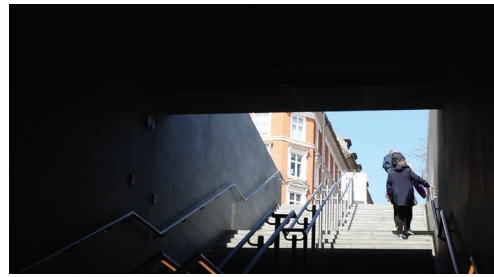
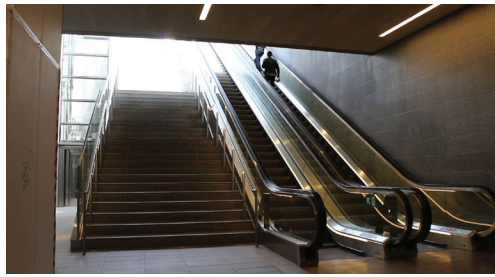
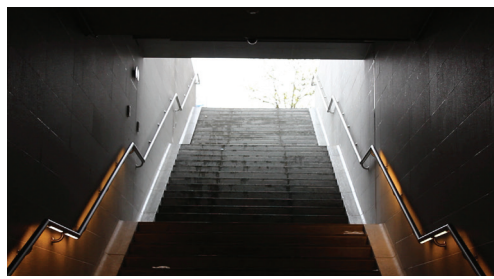
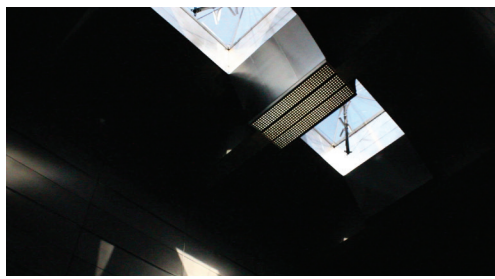
Listening to the crowd, to lone bodies crossing the hall and to people coming up and down the stairs. I hear snippets and bits of their stories. The workman goes to work or returns home. A group of friends goes to a café or a show. A family is shopping. A man goes to a doctor's appointment. A couple is on an adventure through the city. A tall lady is rushing to the corner on the street. In this light, this white and synthetic light, it becomes clear that they really do not belong to this world but the world above.

Coming here and escaping my home was a great adventure. Though over time my excitement has turned to loneliness. To the people with whom I share this world, I was only temporary company. Everyday I met them with excitement upon their arrival and turned loathsome upon their departure. To share this world with them is a fascinating experience, but the boundaries of the underground prohibit a deeper understanding. To fully get this place you must both understand what lies in it and what lies outside of it.

And so like them, I have become restless. Unable to answer the question of their destination. What is the reason to rush at those great speeds? To be so detached from their physical place. As if there was never enough time on the other end of the line. As if the sooner you got there, the more would remain. As if those moments underground had not enough to offer. Now I try to follow as far as I dare. Always ending at the light of the tunnels. Maybe because I am afraid of my fascination or to ruin my imagination. I am overstepping the scope of my task. I want to stretch the tension for as long as I can, until my own body can no longer resist.

Now at the end, I stand on the invisible border between under and above. I feel my heart beating in my chest, my skin becoming numb. I take a deep breath and I let my body transition into the world above. I follow the steps of the human before me and I leave the underground world behind. A fresh air stings my face while heavy ventilated air pushes me in the back forward. Encouraging me to go.

What can I tell you. Where to start. What to show you all. All those different places which are strung along the wire of the underground. Homes, glass towers of work, pavements littered with shops, stone wall with houses, glistening metal wagon slugging by, the sky, the wind, the sun and the stars. It feels like the start of another expedition.



Where to now?

This study so far, has concerned itself firstly with the act of the architectural experience, then how we actually perceive it as atmospheres, then how these perceived things affect us, then how this leads to specific repetitive behaviour, concluding that space which encapsulates our experience is the seam between human life and architecture, place. The final chapter investigates the temporal context of our everyday experience and the everyday production of space. To finalise this research, what remains is to further investigate the physical urban context of subway space and the temporal context of commuting in daily life. This will be brief and general since such topics may ask for a separate investigation. Concluding, a small word on the current practice.

Spatial context of subway space

What places does the subway connect, what types of spaces precede and succeed the sequence of underground spaces. The underground subway systems have not only shrunken distances greatly, the blind transport system has also fragmented our daily experience of the city.¹¹² There is no overview, no orientation and no way to measure travel distance leading to a feeling of “displacement”.¹¹³ The peculiar dysfunctional combination of being extremely focused inwards but not being a destination itself, the subway occupies a residue in our day to day lives. It is in practice and physicality a world isolated from upperworld place and time, but also a world which enables access to the whole city. Upon the consequences of the shrinking of distance, Harries ponders, “if modern life demands minimizing the importance of distance and that means inevitably also the significance of place, does it also demand the death of and architecture that grants a sense of place.”¹¹⁴ Perhaps when taking a functionalistic approaching to subway system and only considering safety, costs, mass production, efficient maintenance and wayfinding one will end up with homogenous and uniform underground space. Yet, considering that our destination always lies somewhere beyond the subway station, one starts to question what places lie before and after we enter the underworld and how, from below, the city is organised through its system. In other words what transition do we experience when travelling from one place to another.¹¹⁵ Though the answer is numerous for a subway system possesses numerous potential narratives. Two subway stations can connect a new residential district with a city centre, or a historical square with a business district or one neighbourhood with another. Difference is a necessity, to answer the specific needs of a particular place, to react upon “the collective memory” of that place above and to orientate the underground traveller with the place linked to the world below.¹¹⁶ Additionally, because underground spaces can’t orientate upon urban structures, landscapes or the sun, then it must offer orientation through another language. That of architectural signs and system codes since it is a totally synthetic world. It remains for the architect to design for two world parallelly. To find a balance between uniformity and individuality. To find an architectural language between novelty and familiarity. To design for clear, subtle and invisible architectural experiences.

Temporal context of subway space

In terms of time, the subway intersects and makes possible our daily agenda. It falls between being a public space and a controlled organised space. For commuters, the subway plays a big role in the spatio-temporal organisation of their lives. In the words of Buttimer, a personal subway route is part of the daily reach, the everyday movements and the familiar world outside the home.¹¹⁷ A personal territory with “place-based networks of interactions and affiliations”.¹¹⁸ Most people approach subway space very different than a designer, since the subway provides a practical service which is set in an everyday space that takes them somewhere. Therefore subway space has more to do with “actual living than thinking” or practical knowledge, “habitus”, according to Upton.¹¹⁹ ¹²⁰ A type of knowledge known as “phronesis”. Subway space binds one event, one set of practices, to the next. Home, work, a family gathering, a party, a shop, a group of friends, a park. However, this space itself is a bubble of time, meaning that it also connects different times

or temporal situations.¹²¹ Because of its residual function, collectiveness and anonymity intersects our private and demanding spaces with blank or unproductive time. Buttimer is convinced of the importance of these spaces between our destinations since they are made up of small adventures, excitements and novelties.¹²² Additionally, in these common spaces we are confronted with the “the social organization” of our built environment, or the city as we know it. Indeed, subway spaces are like a biopsy of the local population, a great collection of people.¹²³ Underground routes far from the natural world and the passing of cycles, act out the daily cycles of modern life, of work, of haste, of style. It is a space that confronts one with modernity, with individuals and groups who possess commonalities and differences. As such the social experience is random. Amazing, positive, negative, indifferent. But what can be learned is that no way of life, of repetition, is fixed. There are always new things that are encountered and to be discovered between people and ourselves. Again, change is constant and inevitable. Functionality is important, sure. But equally important is that our public places offer a space of familiarities and novelties that allows for the development of a community, a cultural identity and confronts us to reflect upon others and our everyday life and identity.

Examples in practice and encouragement

Over the years there have been a number of architects and theorists concerned with the ordinary and the common in design. Tom Avermaete has a number of talks and papers about commonalities in the discipline of architecture.¹²⁴ ¹²⁵ ¹²⁶ Looking how projects concerned with the common are initiated from a planning perspective, how these projects deal with common resources and how certain projects are designed to sustain the collaborate production of a commonplace. Avermaete shows a great number of practical examples and strategies that search for a balance of cocreation between design and its inhabitants in establishing new practices while also solving a local problem in a creative and opportunistic way. The projects are never dictatorial and rely on cooperation between different actors to succeed. One example is a design by Steven Holl in 1976 for housing in Manila. The unbuilt project is a practical negotiation between the existing and a need for ordinance, by imposing “a set of codes that have to do with an allotment system” in the form of an arcade, functioning as a façade, in front of the existing shanty-town dwellings.¹²⁷ Another example Avermaete speaks about, is a large urban housing project by Michel Ecochard in 1952 in Casablanca.¹²⁸ The project employed a system of grids to create a balance between street, back alleys and public squares. The public spaces are enclosed with a diversity of dwelling types that were based on the pre-existing shanty-town houses and on the particular modes of life of the inhabitants. What is remarkable is the subsequent extension of the individual dwellings, according to the needs of the respective owners, while staying true to the original urban grid. A negotiation which developed over time. Another approach worth discussing is the design of the pathways to the Acropolis by the Greek architect Dimitris Pikionis.¹²⁹ The project used common materials and local craftsmen. On top of that, Dimitris situated himself between planner, craftsman and user by working and designing in situ every day during the whole project.

Among practicing architects, a number of Swiss architects of the ETH Zurich, who reached prominence at the end of the 20th century, lay emphasis on the subject of the everyday and the typical. In *Forms of practice: German-Swiss architecture 1980-2000* Irina Davidovici writes as one of the reasons for this shift in interest to the ordinary, “*The sense that the Swiss countryside is like false scenery, an anachronism supported by state subsidies for the sake of national pride, has led some to seek truth in the gritty, ordinary realm of cities*”.¹³⁰ Amongst the architects studied in the book are Marcel Meili, Marislov Šik, Diener & Diener Architekten, Herzog & de Meuron, Peter Märkli and Peter Zumthor. The works studied in the book linger between banality and a poetic beauty, employing very thought-out proportions, inventive usage of simple materials with subtle details and joints of a human scale. Marcel Meili concretely writes about architectural form which should come forth out of everyday use and routines in contemporary life.¹³¹ Similarly, Miroslav Šik calls for a shift in focus to everyday, typical and local qualities of the built environment. To look for the beauty of the ordinary in the context of the design location.¹³² It seems that all these architects have great

attention to the tactile qualitative of architecture and stress the importance to design place where an experience comes forth out of the inhabitant rather than forcing a particular experience upon the perceiver. Alternatively, Atelier Bow-Wow is another architecture firm whose designs come forth out of a negotiation between a particular mode of life and the context. The designs always appear very formal and playful. The precision in the design of this playfulness communicates a serious attitude towards the development of a novel and alternative style of life.¹³³

Final then, should we not study the context of our design locations and judge architecture by actually participating. Participating with our bodies until its rhythms become clear, by participating in the operations, actions and accidents. Should we not judge it through the moving and acting with other people and the architecture as the music, a waltz, a tango, a frantic piece of jazz or a deafening techno beat. Instead of an empty 3-dimensional sculpture, should we not consider a piece of architecture as a 3dimensional story with sequences, pauses, silences and events which make up the spaces of our everyday lives.

- 112 Buttimer, 'Home, Reach and the Sense of Place', 15-16.
113 François and Oliver, 'Space and Everyday Life. Transformations and Tensions in Contemporary Fiction', 28.
114 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 172.
115 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 115.
116 Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge: MIT press, 1982), 10.
117 Buttimer, 'Home, Reach and the Sense of Place', 19.
118 Ibid., 15.
119 Ibid., 20.
120 Dell Upton, 'Architecture in Everyday', 719.
121 Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 220.
122 Buttimer, 'Home, Reach and the Sense of Place', 19.
123 Ibid., 28.
124 Tom Avermaete, "Lex Communis: The Commonality of the Discipline and the Discipline of the Common Place | Tom Avermaete" online video, 1:23:32, IKA, 2016, November 7, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/260920937>.
125 Tom Avermaete, "Praxis Communis: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation | Tom Avermaete" online video, 1:30:11, IKA, 2016, November 21, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/262036902>.
126 Tom Avermaete, "Res Communis: Common-Pool Resources in Architecture and Urban Design | Tom Avermaete" online video, 1:28:05, IKA, 2016, December 5, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/263139886>
127 Avermaete, "Lex Communis: The Commonality of the Discipline and the Discipline of the Common Place | Tom Avermaete", 55:05
128 Avermaete, "Lex Communis: The Commonality of the Discipline and the Discipline of the Common Place | Tom Avermaete", 58:23-1:09:11
129 Dimitris Pikionis, The Acropolis path, Athene, built work, 1954-1958.
130 Irina Davidovici, *Forms of practice: German-Swiss architecture 1980-2000* (Zurich: Verlag, 2018), 13-102, 40.
131 Marcel Meili, 'Ein paar bauten, viele Pläne', in: *Architektur in der Deutschen Schweiz* (Lugano, 1991), 22-25.
132 Miroslav Šik, *Altneue gedanken. Texte und Gespräche 1987-2001* (Lucerne, 2002).
133 Atelier Bow-Wow, *Atelier Bow-Wow: Behaviorology* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2010).



INSTRUCTIONS, EXPLANATIONS AND REFLECTION

Instructions for reading

It is highly recommended to view the film before reading the booklet. The instinctive and personal interpretation of the scenes may offer a different explanation and narrative as the written story and essays which is exactly one of special qualities of film. The story and essay follow the same chapters as the film. These chapters can be considered the backbone of the project. Through the chapters, one transitions from an outsider to an insider and with each chapter another layer of subway space is examined. There are two ways to navigate the chapters. One can first read the story, which are the observations of the main character and thereafter read the essays. Or one can read the story and the essays of each chapter together. One of the main ideas of this project was to come up with a form which would make the subject more approachable. To show how reality, fiction and theory are interlinked. To make invisible daily reality visible and to make tough theory more concrete and digestible.

The main strategy was to make film and write story from the perspective of a character that is foreign to subway space and the modern world of humans. In the prologue it insinuated that the character belongs to a kind of humanistic beings who have dwelled for centuries through the remote and undeveloped parts of the world. Like Marco Polo in *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino, the character is tasked to construct a report about its adventures, experiences and findings of this unknown world. Thus, the story starts about empty spaces and forms as the character just arrives but develops to include the mannerisms and ways of life of the humans who use subway space.

Narrative and academic structure

Each layer tries to explain the same phenomenon in their own way. One is not better or more truthful than the other, instead each layer complements the other. The chapter binds the different layers together for each chapter explores a layer of our everyday experience of our built environment by looking through a different lens. The sub-themes of the essays, *Nature of Perception*, *Men and the Built Environment*, *Subways Space and Architecture* and *Everyday Transit*, serve to further structure the academic discussion of each chapter. Each theme is focused on a different fundamental component of our everyday experience of our built environment and offers a different perspective. *Nature of Perception* discusses how humans perceive their environment. *Men and the Built Environment* investigates the nature of the relationship between humans and their surroundings. *Subways Space and Architecture* is about the form and elements of subway architecture and offers more concrete lessons for the architect. The last theme *Everyday Transit* offers a perspective on the subject of time.

Benefits of film

Like the medium of writing there are different methods to use film to study architecture. William Whyte uses film to make clinical observations about the usage of public space with a documentary style narration, Pierre Pasolini dictates over his carefully composed shots to tell us about the traditional Italian landscape with old castellos ruined by modern expansions, Beka and Lemoine often let the users of a building act out how a building creates the way they inhabit that space, Frederick Wiseman on the other hand uses film to compose a story of a place or institution by capturing the atmosphere of a place and the daily activity and conversations of the people who inhabit those places. This film tries to investigate how we experience and use our built


environments in our day to day lives. The script where an alien character explores subway space produced a narrative or a way of looking at things for myself as cinematographer and director. In this way, I hoped to produce a truthful documentation/exploration of subway space without becoming fixated on scenes that are only special to somebody who uses subway space daily. An outsider's look can often illuminate principles which have become unremarkable for daily inhabitants. Still, an image or moving image is only a frozen composition of a place in a specific moment in time. An image tells us multiple things at the same time, whatever is outside the frame does not really exist. However, when the images are placed in a sequence, they are given context. It is in the editor's room that the story is constructed, and images are given more specific meaning.

For any academic group concerned with the built environment, this film and booklet offer a way of investigating and studying our surroundings from the perspective of the everyday inhabitants. The project overall was an attempt to offer a humanistic approach to our built environment without making assumptions about the experience of others. Simultaneously the project becomes more approachable for a broader audience, offering a set of concrete evidence through film and pictures which everybody understands. For our world has so many elements and layers that our understanding of it, is more instinctive than logical. So why not present it as such. In a way film restricts us from transforming place through our thinking into fantasies, utopias and dystopias. Of course, film can be an even greater manipulator when the narrative is distorted. Yet in empathic and honest hands, film can tell the real, personal and (un)exceptional stories that are woven through our everyday lives.

Reflection as a designer

After finishing this research, a design was made for the transformation of the subway station Beurs in Rotterdam. Because I used film, I felt that I had developed a finer sensitivity for subway space and the atmospherical generators that are dominant in our experience of the underground spaces. I doubt that any of the findings could have been as precise if I had worked from behind a desk. By working through film and a narrative, I also made the design from the principle that experience is always a sequence. One can approach the experience of particular subway station as a storyboard with multiple narratives, different directions, beginnings and endings. Through this storyboard I was able to select at what moments to create tension, to force upon a particular experience and where to let design become an aggregate for the production of a humanistic space containing a particular humanistic and unexpected quality which an empty building can never produce. If we want to design memories, magical moments and stories, than we must find the correct balance between the architect as silent directors and the inhabitants as the actors. Though rather than asking for a set of logical arguments for each design choice, I think it best to further develop our basic understanding and sensitivity to space and to form in the physical. Ultimately, the task of the architect is to make places for people and to design for the production of a humanistic space.





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KODAK SAFETY FILM

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