

Many thanks to Henley Halebrown and John Marshall, who has been patiently pursuing me for some time.

What do I mean about an interior without boundaries, a continuous interior, a condition of interior?

Peter Sloterdijk writes of a 'world interior of capital', and we probably recognise this as characterising the ways money and goods move around, our shared consumer experience

Superstudio and Archizoom offered pictures of the condition of an US-dominated worldwide environment of consumption, a continuous monument or a no-stop interior. One can actually read this in the forms and spaces of the contemporary urban environment, even in these streets of London

The notion of a condition of interior, characteristic of colonial settlement, and new forms of colonialism was an essential feature of the colonial settlement and its system of territorialisation

Romans, according to Rykwert: an interior carved out from the space of the world; Branzi speaks of a continuous policy or systematisation of occupation, including architecture and agriculture

Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch colonies in Americas and Asia

Jefferson in America, the Ordinance Survey and the device of the grid

A condition of interior that absorbs all territories, eliminates resistance, and others—this is a story of genocide—and, accumulates effects that reinforce its myths; a condition of interior that thereafter forms its subjects and the contexts of subjective experience. Most myths are passed down through the ages; this one is manufactured in a very short time and based upon the ownership of both property and human beings. They are turned into commodity or equipment or liquidated. The endgame is the continuous interior, something Rem Koolhaas has referred to as Junk Space. The trajectory linking Thomas Jefferson to Junkspace was elaborated in [Without and within: essays on territory and the interior.](#)

However, my paradigmatic example of the continuous interior is not the decrepit internationalised mall (a mall for all purposes), but the multi-level downtown core of Montréal, a design led by the office of I M Pei, whose most memorable spaces were those of its public interior, organised along a perceptual horizon. It offered a series of spaces that evoked other spaces; from the streets and lots of the city to the hypostyle hall of Karnak to the Baths of Caracalla and the passages of Paris. It made me think that be that the freedoms it suggested were beyond those typical of the continuous interiors of American international capitalism, primarily oriented toward consumption, eased by the borderless conditions of this condition of interior (unless you were indigenous or black)

It seemed that its interiors, designed by a typical Canadian mix of a Chinese American, ivy leaguer, ItalianAmerican, English ancestry old-boys and Hungarian emigrés, communicated their desire for their suggestions, inferences, references and evocations to be interpreted. In other words, along with the conditioning or forming of its subject, its interiors also invited subjective interpretation. Therein lay its freedoms, rather than those of movement, association and action, to which they offered illusions.

This, along with a way of looking at our condition of interior through photographs, which I will speak more about later, and the task of thinking about how to teach students at TU Delft what the public interior was, led to addressing them in terms of operative and communicative ideas rather than types: that public interiors (and for the sake of the

course, this needed to be interiors in the identifiable sense) were designed to be seen, experienced, interpreted and understood, all the better to affect certain states of behaviour for want of a better word in their temporary occupants.

These ideas were simplified into themes, derived very quickly—and I think Tony was in the room when I blurted them out in a chair meeting—and were meant to describe essential ideational and figurative characteristics of a large number of interiors, the majority of which resided within the Western condition. I understand the limitations of this, as the limitations of considering only this condition rhyme with my own limitations of being raised within it. Nevertheless, I wanted to connect Idea and Project. The book that followed was The Public Interior as Idea and Project.

The ideas were the Garden, the Palace, the Ruin, the Shed, the Machine and the Network.

And of course, within these themes, certain public interiors—those spaces in which we regard ourselves as appearing in public with others we are unlikely to know—had deep and lasting potency, and emerged within discussions of a number of ideas.

The Crystal Palace being perhaps the most potent of all, its influence felt not only within the development of its own function—the International exposition building—but the department store, the passage or galleria, the train station, the museum and the shopping mall.

Among the many examples drawn from history, some had particular potency in my discussion: the Crystal Palace and le grand magasin Au Bon Marché, the Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto (definitely not a public interior but a model, regardless), the Residenz in München, the Winter Palace in St Petersburg, the Palazzi Ducale in Urbino and Venezia; Cedric Price's Fun Palace, the Maisons du Peuple of Victor Horta and Beaudouin, Lods and Prouvé, Owen Williams's Pioneer Health Centre, the Palast der Republik in East Berlin, Peter Celsing's Kulturhuset in Stockholm and Piano + Rogers's Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris; the Gare du Nord, Mies van der Rohe's projects for a theatre and a congress hall, Frank van Klingeren's Meerpaal and Lina Bo Bardi's SESC-Pompeia and Teatro Oficina; the early nineteenth-century passages of Paris and the bazaars of Shiraz; Grand Central Terminal in New York and the Opéra Garnier in Paris; John Soane's Bank of England and the Palais de Tokyo; Foster Associates' Willis Faber Dumas Building, Roche and Dinkeloo's Ford Foundation and Union Carbide headquarters; Herzog and De Meuron's 1111 Lincoln Avenue thing, and Robbrecht en Daem and Van Hee's markthal/stadhal in Gent. In no particular order, and of varying merit. All were discussed and students thought about them, and so did I.

Talking about them as constructions and interiors as articulations of ideas towards appearances that were meant for interpretation—and this true of even the most avowedly ahistorical Modernist project—made them, in the course, available for students as young, thinking designers; while I hoped for readers, who I imagined to be architects, they became available for further inquiry into allusive and operative motifs and directions within their own work.

Central to the book, and to my approach to my entire practice, if that is what you can call it (I might say simply, how I look at things and how I do things) is the act of interpretation, and the recognition that all appearances are, inevitably, representations; and that artifice is both abundant and necessary.

How I look at things, as things among other things that bear conscious and unconscious resemblances or allusions to other things and phenomena, finds itself in the way I design, but mostly in the way I make pictures (photographs), and have done since I

was a child. Photographs of man-made terrain and man-framed nature, of buildings and interiors, of the ground and walls and windows and things, and, importantly, with wonder or bemusement or confoundedness, have been part of my being in the world. The photographs, almost exclusively of inanimate objects and their outward appearances, bear the residue of the ideas and acts of people and their relations; they bear the residue of pictures I have made before. They are all made within a condition of interior, in part a legacy of the transformation of the West following the conclusion of the Second World War, with a consciousness about the features of that condition, and the promises and failures of its particular brand of Utopia, and its imprint upon the formerly more distinct characteristics of European urban culture. A selection of photographs from as early as 1965 until 2010 was published as In passing. And since then and as of late, they have been made with an eye to deeper patterns of that culture as they manifest themselves in the present.

Some of you will have seen these last pictures as posts on Twitter, from which I have taken a long sabbatical. Its end is currently set at the demise of contemporary fascism, and real acts to stop our terrible damage to the earth and all the other creatures that dwell upon it. As that might be a long time, there are some pictures you will not have seen.

If there was one last thing to say, it is that making these pictures is an important means for me of being in the world and interpreting or misinterpreting it; understanding it as a vast and elaborate fiction, an interior without borders (un intérieur sans frontières) that one should be generous with and fascinated by, which one might, by dint of good fortune, add to with humility, modesty and grace.