

# PERCEPTION AND MEMORY OF URBAN SPACE

A Psychogeographical study of the Cannaregio district in Venice



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A.Y. 2021/2022

Scuola Di Architettura, Urbanistica e Ingegneria delle Costruzioni

Master's Degree in Architecture and Urban Design (AUD)



**POLITECNICO**  
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## Abstract

As the production and obsolescence of images is becoming faster with rise of technology and social media, the quick and saturated information presented in fleeting displays creates an expectation of novelty and change in the people, and when this fails to satisfy our needs we are left to wander in space and experience it without the surplus of information. Perception of this space is never a mere image or representation, but an emotion, the experience makes memories of space where we become the actor and the spectator. It is this mental dimension of the urban experience, a pure looking into the essence of things which is the starting point for this research. A duality of space is further analysed in the form of two pillars: phenomenology and semiotics. The boundary that is created between these two terms becomes a core topic, their relationship, impact, contact and conflict help in conceiving a new interpretation of space in the city and help determine how human action can help symbolization and manifestation of everyday life so the image of the city becomes conceptual as much as it is perceptual. That being said, the boundary can be seen and experienced by everyone and this is a collection of interpretations and reflections of possible signs and perceptions in cities.

key words: **perception, phenomenology, semiotics, memory, metaphor, atmosphere, psychogeography**



## Introduction: Methodology

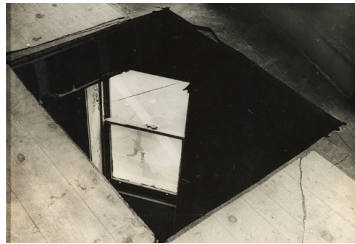
It seems that, in the discourse on cities, too much emphasis has been placed on the purely spatial aspect at the expense of other possible understandings. The idea of space has, especially in contemporary thought, been assumed to be an aspect of objective knowledge through various traditional representation and investigation methods, deeming the concept of space abstract and made fully present only to reason, with little focus on our everyday experience of it. The perceptual and psychological notions of space occur when we move beyond the limitations of space as a platonic concept of a pure, unchanging ideal. By walking around the city, perceiving, imagining, dreaming, remembering and connecting we may be compelled to consider the experience of space as an event or moment which includes all of architecture's contingent and fleeting qualities. This way, the transient nature of architectural and urban space becomes a condition that requires the presence of a subject and arises out of the subject's interaction with the surrounding space.

The research presented here under the title *Perception and Memory of Space* deals with the basic idea of discovering and learning rather than creating and expanding. Perception has the capacity to reshape our thinking of the built environment and

to work as an operational tool to investigate the invisible values and hidden potentials in the urban fabric of cities, indicating spaces that extend across program and scale. Meant to be used as a conversation piece, a first word not a last word, the thesis discusses subjectivity in space from different angles and becomes a reflective and operational means of rethinking our sense of place. Methods used in this research are thoughtful, introspective and analytical, always maintaining an innocence of spirit and an uninhibited exploration of imagination, like a wanderer searching for the unexpected. This searching of meanings between the lines, spaces, objects and subjects is found in many works of art and architecture, exploring the essences of poetic expressions and the underlying relationships that occur between spatially organized elements. Starting by defining the 'two pillars' of perception, or rather, two approaches, phenomenology and semiotics, the discourse creates a boundary between these two that is later elaborated, analyzed and explained through four subjective views of space, namely: memory, metaphor, atmosphere and psychogeography. After setting up a definition for the boundary, it gets further examined by an image based chapter inspired by Oswald Mathias Ungers' *Morphologie*, where a set of images is analogically placed one next to the other in order to create a certain impression on the viewer. Next, through an author's psychogeographical wandering through the streets of the Cannaregio district in Venice, alongside case studies of works by architects John Hejduk and Peter Eisenman for the same site, a base is set for a *The Seven Seals* project that is meant to be an example of what derives from the theory presented in this research.

“The man who is traveling is traveling and does not yet know the city awaiting him along his route, wonders what the palace will be like, the barracks, the mill, the theater, the bazaar. In every city of the empire every building is different and set in a different order: but as soon as the stranger arrives at the unknown city and his eye penetrates the pine cone of pagodas and garrets and haymows, following the scrawl of canals, gardens, rubbish heaps, he immediately distinguishes which are the princes’ palaces, the high priests’ temples, the tavern, the prison, the slum. This – some say – confirms the hypothesis that each man bears in his mind a city made only of differences, a city without figures and without form, and the individual cities fill it up.”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 1972



## Two Pillars

There is infinite potential to relate ourselves with space in architecture. Describing a space from one point of reference (architectural, temporal, memorial, emotional) is not enough since its character changes depending on meaning that is given to it. In order to grasp the true nature of space, the observer must project through it. The question of space needs to be reassessed on new foundations, for space shouldn't be just a form of exteriority, a screen, an impurity (form) disturbing the pure (thought) or a relative opposing to the absolute. Space needs to be based in things, in relation between things and between durations. The space is experienced this way, we make the memories of space, we are the spectator, we are the actor, and it is our involvement which makes possible both the finiteness of our perception and its opening out upon the world. For example, a house can be viewed from a certain angle, but it would be seen differently from another angle, from the inside, from an airplane, from memories we have of the house. The house itself is none of these projections alone, it is not the house seen from nowhere, but the house seen from everywhere, like a translucent object being seen from all sides by an infinite number of projections. The city is a cluster of these houses that have

1. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Bronx Floor: Boston Road*, 1973, photo.

been here before us, making it geological and it is impossible to step outside without encountering the past and landmarks that draw us toward the past. It becomes a playing ground of unconventional meetings of places, objects and people, which then become the basis for a narrative structure that uncovers a dimension of the city not usually visible. This intersection and communication of individual and collective narratives become memories, an encounter with the self and its positioning in the city. Certain angles or perspectives allow us to have a glimpse at the original conceptions of these spaces, but our visions and experience remain fragmentary. “Just like memories, architecture is composed of images and feelings, so it constructs through a relationship between the two, as a framework for understanding space and time” (Hopkins, 1996; 5). Oswald Mathias Ungers writes in his 1982 book titled *Morphologie: City Metaphors* that “the way we experience the world around us depends on how we perceive it. Without a comprehensive vision the reality will appear as a mass of unrelated phenomena and meaningless facts, in other words, totally chaotic.” (Ungers, 1982; 7) If we position ourselves within this framework, it forms a subjective view of a place, a recognition of the relationship between one space and another, one space and a form, one space and a memory, and realizes a perceptual whole. As the meaning of a whole sentence is different from the meaning of the sum of single words, so is the creative vision and ability to grasp the characteristic unity of a set of facts, and not just to analyse them as something that is put together by single parts. The consciousness that catches the reality through sensuous perception and imagination is the real creative process because

it achieves a higher degree of order than simplistic methods of testing such as recording, proving or controlling. (Ungers, 1982; 7) Architecturally, and, more important for this research, spatially, the relationship can be demonstrated in many ways. The architect can include these narratives into the architectural work, it can become scenery allowing spreading and alteration of the narratives, and space itself can, through memory and association, physically and formally, exemplify these narratives. In any case, citizens develop associations with some parts of the city, and the association is based on memories and meanings. At that moment, we quit the role of being simply observers of a spectacle and become part of it, we gather, modify and distort the narratives of our lives in these spaces and engage in a careful exploration of the urban to discover impressions of the invisible. It is this mental dimension of the urban experience, a pure looking into the essence of things and unaware of the professional rules of the discipline, that is the starting point for this research. Keeping in mind these dimensions, a duality of space is further analysed in the form of ‘two pillars’, one being phenomenological and the other semiotic.

A **phenomenological** approach implies a looking at the essence of things, unburdened by conventions or intellectualized explanation. The goal is to describe, not to explain or analyze. In 1945 French philosopher Merleau-Ponty, in his book *Phenomenology of Perception*, develops his own distinctive interpretation of phenomenology’s method, where psychological research complements and, at times, serves as a counterpoint to phenomenological descriptions of perceptual experience across a wide range of existential dimensions, including language,



2. Andrei Tarkovsky, *Nostalgia*, 1983. scene from movie.

nature, intersubjectivity, time, and most important, space. He defines phenomenology as “the study of essences, including the essence of perception and of consciousness,” stating that phenomenology is a “method of describing the nature of our perceptual contact with the world, concerned with providing a direct description of human experience.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945; 7) It is understood that perception is the background of experience that guides every conscious action, assigning meaning to the world and we cannot separate ourselves from our perceptions of it. However, perception isn’t purely sensation or purely interpretation, but a mixture of both. (Scott, 2002; 2) According to Merleau-Ponty, the experience of space is a condition that includes the existence of conscious beings (us) and of nonconscious things (space around us), but the idea of a body can’t be separated from the experience of a body. This may be defined as a form of external experience, rather than as a physical setting in which external objects are arranged. The relationships between objects in space are revealed by the experience of the perceiving subject, according to which the basic level of perceptual experience is the gestalt, the meaningful whole of figure against ground, and that the indeterminate and contextual aspects of the perceived world are phenomena that cannot be eliminated from a complete account. If the physical reality is understood as an analogy to our imagination of that reality, we can approach it in a morphological sense, developing knowledge of it without machine or apparatus. This imaginative process of thinking applies to all intellectual and spiritual areas of human activities but it is always a fundamental process of conceptualizing an unrelated, diverse reality through the use

of images, metaphors, analogies, models, signs, symbols and allegories. (Ungers, 1982; 8) Sensing the space around us, in contrast to knowing, is a “living communication with the world that makes it present to us as the familiar place of our life.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945; 53), meaning that we invest the perceived world with meanings and values that refer essentially to our subjective bodies and lives.

According to Ungers, there are three basic levels of comprehending physical phenomena: first, the exploration of pure physical facts; second, the psychological impact on our inner-self; and third, the imaginative discovery and reconstruction of phenomena in order to conceptualize them. (Ungers, 1982; 7) Phenomenology can also be explained through analogy with poetry, painting or film. When a writer, painter or a director presents a scene, they must define a setting for the act. Since creating space is the primal act of architecture, these artists take the role of the architect and unknowingly perform an architect’s task, unaware of the professional rules of the discipline, they approach the mental dimension of architectural experience and reveal the phenomenological basis of creating space. Juhani Pallasmaa in his essay about phenomenology writes that “Films contain some of the most touching and poetic images of space and light ever created in any form of art. They touch upon the existential basis of architecture, which is saturated by memories and experiences lost in childhood. The images exhibit the poetics of space – a poetry that does not require construction or function. Through images of space, they evoke an experience of pure existence, the poetry of being” (Pallasmaa, 2008; 143). The ‘pure existence’

is something rarely analysed when discussing space, mostly because it lacks material basis to support the idea. When this happens, we go to emotions and memories for comfort, we look at the city through eyes of a child, without much reasoning of why an urban space is what it is. The idea of ruins is a good example of a phenomenological approach to space, since they have a special hold on our emotions because they challenge us to imagine what was there before. We are moved by them more readily than with new structures because they have been stripped of their mask of utility and rational meaning. A ruin doesn’t play the role of a building anymore; it is a skeleton of memory or a melancholy presence. Trying to understand our relationship to past forms and use them today is a vivid way of observing architecture phenomenologically, which, according to Umberto Eco, is referred to as the consumption of forms or the obsolescence of values and it tries to explain the rapid changes in social mobility, technology and communication that is taking place, finding ways to help and shape the relationship with the past and reasserting our values concerning objects that either do or don’t carry their original meaning. (Eco, 1979; 51) Rediscovering some of these meanings can help us shape our current value systems. This brings us to the second pillar of the research: semiotics.

The **semiotics** and the study of signification in the built environment is a topic that has been researched by many theorists in the twentieth century. According to urban sociologist Mark Gottdiener, the foundation of all semiotics is the concept of the *sign*, which is composed of a *signifier* (a sign’s physical form such as a object, sound, printed word, or



3. Thierry Mallet , *Notre-Dame fire*, Paris, 2019. photo.

image) and the *signified* (meaning or idea expressed, underlying concept to be conveyed). (Gottdiener, 1986; 2) There are different approaches to semiotics founded by Gottdiener's contemporaries which will not be pursued here in order to keep the concept of the thesis clear, but some common definitions have to be set. First is that signs in space relate to the recognition of the environment of an individual and their internal world. Secondly, it must be kept in mind that even though this research is based on subjective experience, there are undeniable values that are socially and culturally ascribed to the urban space. This has uncovered some important means by which inhabitants of the city organize their behaviour. Conceptual stimuli in space play more of a fundamental role rather than being mere formal perception, so that physical forms are assigned certain meanings which then aid in directing this behaviour. One of the earliest accounts of looking at the environment this way was the commentary by Italian architect Sebastiano Serlio in his treatise *Architettura* from 1545. Serlio here describes a semiotic approach to urban space in a way of selecting particular scenes in space and framing them, investing them with new meanings and showing how a specific environment affects the perception of space or society. In particular, the existing city, the ideal city and finally the nature itself are described as three paradigmatic views of the city in the forms of three illustrations for the comic, tragic and satyric stage-like sets. (Serlio, 1545) Urban and natural structures act as stimuli because they have become symbols and not because they facilitate movement or pure functionality. Particularly for this thesis, the works of Geoffrey Broadbent and Umberto Eco had a lot of impact and have proven to



be seminal regarding the study of semiotics in architecture, which at its basis states that urban design and the built form should be treated empirically (through perception, experience and memory). The interplay between forms and history is an interplay between spaces and events, the configurations of space that are physically stable as significant forms and the constantly changing play of circumstances which confers new meanings on them. The 'change', according to Eco, has become critical to our understanding of this relationship. In *The Sign and the City*, Gottdiener explains how "For urban semiotics in particular, material objects are vehicles of signification, so that the symbolic act always involves some physical object as well as a social discourse on it. In the case of urban semiotics these objects are the elements of urban space - streets, squares, buildings etc." (Gottdiener, 1986; 3)

There are countless writings of the city in terms of signification, like Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, in which there is a subtle and perceptive chapter titled *This Will Kill That*; 'this' meaning the book, 'that' meaning the monument. By expressing himself in such a way, the author gives proof of a rather modern way of conceiving the monument and the city, as a true text, as an inscription of man in space, consecrated to the rivalry between two modes of writing, writing in stone and writing on paper. By reading it we rediscover an old intuition of the city being a writing: the user of the city is a reader who, following obligations and movements, appropriates fragments in order to actualize them in the mind. Philosophers and semioticians such as Lefebvre, Koenig and Eco in *Production of Space* (1974), *Analysis of the Architectural Language* (1964),

and *A Componential Analysis of the Architectural Sign* (1972), respectively, each frame their own discussions derived from the crossover between architecture and semiotic theory. A unifying thought in these discussions is the notion that the city is a 'poem' tidily centered on a subject. The elements composing it, architectural objects and the spaces between them, are the *signifiers* that together defined the *signified* of a city - namely, its identity along with its specific rhythm and cultural character. The union of the signifier and signified creates the *sign* of the city, which is the image it projects into the world. Therefore, in order to grasp the city's sign it is necessary to take into consideration the multiple levels the urban environment is built on, including its architecture and space, everyday life, society and culture. (Barthes, 1986; 21)

Umberto Eco says that spaces are a form of meaning, produced under economic and cultural conditions, which convey the language of a particular society and at the same time a part of everyday life. He compares architectural structures to written words within a narration that describes the atmosphere and the sense of lived experience. Architecture also plays an active role in producing messages that appeal to and are experienced by the public, in the same way they would experience advertisements, therefore, Eco deduces that architecture has the same characteristics of mass communication, since spaces carry out two fundamental aspects, one functional and one symbolic. However, as both spatial forms and architectural objects are created to signify something, both can embody a certain corresponding ideology. Roland Barthes shares the same approach when he writes that "The city is a discourse, and

the discourse is a language: the city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak to our city, the city where we are, simply by inhabiting it, by traversing it, by looking at it.” (Barthes, 1986; 23)

Since these two pillars are defined, we can dwell into the core topic of this thesis, which is the boundary created when phenomenology and semiotics collide in architectural and urban space. Their relationship, impact, contact and conflict help conceive a new interpretation of space in the city and human action can help symbolization and manifestation of everyday life so the image of the city becomes a conceptual one as much as it is a perceptual one. The principles applied are somewhat one-sided, partly because of the struggle to not branch out into psychology and because in some cases it is better to state a point of view with simplicity. Because of the complexity and sensitivity of the topic, it is beyond the power of a student to give a satisfactory survey of the relations between theory of space and visual perception. Trying to match the two pillars, although related, it becomes obvious that there need to be adjustments and many gaps have to be closed with speculation where something cannot be proven and using my own eyes where I could not rely on those of others. That being said, *the boundary* can be seen and experienced by everyone. What is presented in this thesis is a collection of interpretations and reflections of possible signs and perceptions in cities. Under what conditions, or rather, with what precautions or what preliminaries would this boundary become visible?



4. Sigurdur Gudmundsson, *Collage*, 1979, 85 × 91 cm. photo.

## The Boundary

“Everything leads us to believe that there exists a spot in the mind from which life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the high and the low, the communicable and the incommunicable, will cease to appear contradictory.”

André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 1924.

The primary elements and images in space are the means by which the city can be understood in terms of its significance. As the production and obsolescence of images becomes even faster with new technologies, the quick and saturated information presented in fleeting displays that are easy to consume and easy to delete creates an expectation of novelty and change in the public. As soon as this change fails to satisfy our needs for new images, there is a loop of boredom we fall into as we are left to wander in space and experience it without the surplus of information. Perception of this ‘pure’ space is never a mere image or a representation, it is always an emotion, as sociologist Raymond Ledrut explains, “whether it [image] impels us toward or away from an object, whether it terrorizes or charms”. (Ledrut, 1986; 21) When a city is considered from this point of

view, we both perceive and understand that there is no image of a space without an affective resonance, and its strength is linked to the extent of these repercussions. The forms and figures that make a city as we know it don't belong to the order of objectivity and concepts, through a phenomenological and semiotic analysis we can say that the functional image of the city is an image only from the moment when it becomes the locus of a certain 'investment' by ourselves (the ego). Symbolic expressions like this imply the existential relations between us and reality. The image of the city expresses less the city than a global relation of man to city. This shift of focus from things that can be observed to subjectively defined terms (sensation, perception, desire, purpose, thinking, emotion) describes the boundary that is created between the two pillars.

Meanings created by urban forms are achieved through signs and symbols, and their social connotations are related to ideology. It happens often that we see and feel qualities of a space but cannot express them in words and according to perceptual psychologist Arnheim Rudolf the reason for our failure is not language, since we cannot expect it do the job directly, and having no sensory contact with reality, language can only name what we see or hear or think. (Arnheim, 1974;2) There is no clear point to visual shapes in space apart from what we are taught. This is why there needs to be a shift from what is perceived to the meaning it conveys. Arnheim points out that many of his psychological thinkings derive from the *gestalt theory*. The word *gestalt* is a common German noun for *shape* or *form*, and has been applied since the beginning of the 20th century to principles that were derived mainly from sensory

perception. In line with what the theory states, architectural and urban visions of reality prove that most natural phenomena are not described adequately if they are analyzed piece by piece. The whole cannot be attained by the accumulation of isolated parts. A space cannot be made understood by a mind unable to conceive and integrate a structure into a whole.

In an essay that gave Gestalt Theory its name, Austrian philosopher Christian von Ehrenfels refers to an experiment where observers were asked to listen to one of the twelve tones of a melody, resulting in the sum of their experience not corresponding to the experience of someone listening to the whole. In the same manner, the appearance of any space in a context depends on its place and function in the city.

Vision proves to be the first step to apprehending of a reality that is imaginative and inventive. Same principles apply to various mental capacities because the mind always functions as a whole, all perceiving is also thinking and all reasoning is intuition. The creation of a space inside a city isn't a self-contained activity, unrelated to other human activities, instead, it is an exalted kind of seeing that leads to the creation of space that is humbler to the activity of the eye in everyday life. As long as the raw material of experience was considered an amorphous agglomeration of stimuli, the observer seemed free to handle it according to his arbitrary pleasure. Seeing was entirely a subjective imposition of shape and meaning. (Arnheim, 1974;6) However, it is made clear that more often than not the situations we face in urban space have their own characteristics, which demand that we perceive them appropriately. Looking at the world proved to require and interplay between properties

supplied (object) and the nature of the observer (subject). Any of these conceptions could be expected to contain a common core of truth, which would make any space potentially relevant to any person, which is a trust in the objective validity instead of relying on subjectivism and relativism.

Granted, perception is not a mechanical recording of elements but rather the apprehension of significant structural patterns, the architect or urban designer is not more of a mechanical recording device than his instrument of sight. That being said, understanding of space can be valid even if it may be far removed from reality. The capacity of understanding space phenomenologically and semiotically isn't a privilege of only architects and specialists, but is available to every person.

Reading through different analogies and theories, it's always stated how architecture draws from sources outside it's own discrete disciplinary boundaries. Much of the premodern history of architecture relies on the search to identify what exactly distinguished architecture from mere object, and the answer always lies outside of utilitarianism. Since space in an urban context is incapable of autonomy, as noted, it is open to many associations and comparisons. To address the status of *desire* in spaces that we encounter today, much can be learned from a critical examination of architecture's haunting presence in surrealist thought, surrealist tendencies in the theories and projects of modern architecture, and the theoretical and methodological concerns of surrealism informing past and future urban architecture. (Mical, 2005; 2)

French writer André Breton claims that this is "pure automatism, by which one intends to express verbally, in

writing, or by any other method, the real functioning of the mind" adding that "surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of association heretofore neglected, in the omnipotence of dreams, in the undirected play of thought." (Breton, 1972; 274) Breton's vision of the practice drew upon the role of estrangement in art, the slippage between form and content, described as defamiliarization, "by making the familiar strange, we recover the sensation of life" and "art exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony." (Shlovsky, 1965; 12) It seems as if the task of architecture is to give form to the transgressive and formless desires of the subject (us), often reduced, especially in modern architecture, to voids within rationalized frames. The voided spaces are usually reductivist, abstracted and designed to suppress the individuated, theatrical. Surrealist thought offers a repeatable process of experiencing and representing space that is other than rational, but grounded in individual subjectivity. According to Breton, it doesn't intend on disfiguring the subject, but on substantiating perception often through "a marvelous faculty of attaining two widely separate realities without departing from the realm of our experience, of bringing them together and drawing a spark from their contact; of gathering within reach of our senses abstract figures endowed with the same intensity, the same relief as other figures; and of disorienting us in our own memory." (Breton, 1972; 115)

The following text will go through examples where the boundary was analysed, illustrating some of the ideas from different architects, poets, writers stage designers etc. The examples are heavily influenced by the Surrealist movement



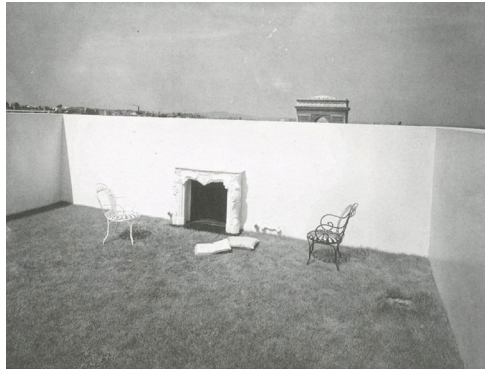
5. Henri Matisse, *Porte-Fenêtre*, 1914 (private collection). This painting appears in Aragon's memoirs, *Je n'ai jamais appris à écrire*. oil on canvas.

in art, which acted as one of the fundamental groundings for post-modern semiotics, its attack on language, and the crisis of the object and the image. In the cases we see a relationship take markedly different forms and inventive expressions of architectural images, of the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional practices employed in the creation of images and texts, in the interpretation and explication of these pieces by critics and by architects.

In Gray Read's essay "*Aragon's Armoire*" she notes of a surrealist poet from the 1920s, Louis Aragon, who described essential architecture in his plays and prose poems, evoking the box, the coffin, the room and other objects, as containers of mystery. (Read, 2007; 31) His writings linger at the visible and invisible surfaces of objects, exploring them as boundaries between light and dark. At these boundaries, Aragon gathered sparks of poetry in the friction between outside and inside, light and dark, as well as between words and substance. In particular, a written play from Aragon, published in 1923 under the title *L'Armoire e à glace un beau soir* (*The Mirrored Wardrobe One Fine Evening*) and his novel *Paysan de Paris* (*The Paris Paesant*) from 1926 turned out to be great examples of the boundary.

The play centers on a piece of furniture, an armoire, as a mythic architecture of enclosure that holds its interior darkness between a husband and a wife. The novel is a stroll (more about strolling in later chapters) through Aragon's favorite places in Paris: an aging commercial arcade slated for demolition and a nineteenth century landscape park, the *Passage de l'Opera* and *le Parc de Buttes Chaumont* respectively. In both the play and the novel, Aragon describes architecture as atmosphere and as





6. Le Corbusier, *fireplace and Arc de Triomphe*, Beistegui, 1930. photo.

boundary, building a subtle poetry of perception that moves easily between fact and dream. (Read, 2007; 31)

Aragon engaged architecture and objects not as metaphors but as real spaces which one might enter and inhabit. He describes spaces twice, once as a matter-of-fact structures seen objectively, then again from a subjective point of view, as expanding realms that one experiences physically in gradations of shadow, limitless interiors and strange artificial illumination. The most powerful architectural moments he found at thresholds (the boundary) which he describes as points of friction where two realms are simultaneously present yet unresolved in their differences. They offer instants of poetic paradox in the physical world that escape definition to stand open to imagination.

In the play, he presents the armoire as a simple enclosure that serves as the underlying device driving the action, and then expands the implications of its architecture outward. The play leads the audience through three layers of enclosure from outside the curtain to a scene inside a room to a hidden interior of the armoire, which remains the central character of the drama, holding a mystery that opens the speculative imaginations of the actors and the audience. At the end of the play, when the audience is making a mental transition from the story back to reality, Aragon moves the fictional space of the play out into the real space of the city at night, defining it as “the eruption of contradiction within the real” (Aragon, 1926; 204) suggesting that a city might be both fictional and real simultaneously, as experienced through its enclosures. In *Paysan de Paris*, he released himself into the city, constructing a series of images with his words that specify an approach to urban and architectural

space. Closely tied to the topic of the boundary, there is a part in the novel where the writer stands at a threshold between reality and dream, arriving at an opening to a street: “in the farthest reaches of the two kinds of daylight which pit the reality of the outside world against the subjectivism of the passage. Like a man at the edge of the depths, attracted equally to the current of objects and the whirlpools of his own being. Let us pause at this strange zone where all is distraction, distraction of attention as well as inattention, so as to experience this vertigo.” (Aragon, 1926; 47) At the boundary, he is illuminated twice: by light cast from real objects outside and by light emanating from his own subjective reveries within the passage. Two kinds of light, objective and subjective, balance one another in an equal measure for one fragile instant.

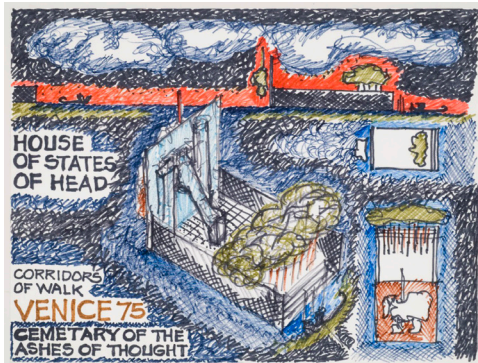
Another study of the boundary exists in the various works of Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier dealing with themes such as ambiguity, ruins, ghostly presences and perception. Since the issue of the thesis is based on visual impression, the main source for dissection are Le Corbusier’s photographs of his architecture. These seem to be an active commentary on his world, being an integral part of the presentation. Solely, an image of an outdoor room of Corbusier’s project for the Beistegui apartment from 1930, serves as a perfect example of architecture as a phenomenon and semiotics. In the photograph a roof garden is shown, barely furnished with a set of chairs and a fireplace, enclosed by walls on every side. In this outdoor room, the sky is the ceiling and the carpet of grass is the floor. Visible above the walls is the urban chaos of Paris, where the *Arc de Triomphe* stands out alongside other great monuments.

The monuments are decapitated and severed from the past and their context in the city. The image contains a memory not of the apartment’s former state, but of the cycle of creation and destruction. (Gorlin, 2007;112)

Going back to Breton, in his 1928 novel titled *Nadja* there is a strong urban sensibility where perception of space in the city is described first-hand. In the book, Breton walks the streets of Paris aimlessly seeking to find something but not knowing specifically what. While walking, the writer engages both the conscious and the unconscious, noting every and each of his discoveries. Banal environments become emotive, paradoxical and always changing depending on the point of view. (Magallanes, 2007; 220) These situations refer to the patterns and compositions of different architectural and urban elements, cultural, historical or symbolic, offering them new meanings as they are thrown together in various obscure relationships. His observations lead to debates about the clarity and ambiguity in what exists in a city. This new understanding of the space around him and the psychological aspect of wandering led to conclusions about how different subjective factors affect the perception of the world and its relationships. By studying the space, people and the effects between them, Breton brought a new approach to urban space that deals with psychology, semiotics and phenomenology of a city and expressed it in literary form. (Breton, 1928; 27)

American architect John Hejduk’s urban and architectural projects are examples of the relationship and the boundary between the alchemical and the attacks made upon the common sense of architectural and urban thinking. The most





7. John Hejduk, *Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought*: Perspective, plan and elevation, 1974, 21,5 × 27,8 cm. drawing.

inspirational project of Hejduk that served as a starting point for the exploration of the topic and opened a way into analysing a case for the city of Venice in the later chapter of the thesis is his *Masque*. Projects such as the *Thirteen Towers of Cannaregio* and the *Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought* are one of the reasons why Venice proves to be significant for the development of this paper. In his countless references to the city of Venice, Hejduk refers to readings of the city as a type of psychic labyrinth located within his mind, where to walk down the street is thus to traverse the labyrinth within, to explore the circuits and networks of thought, the recesses of emotion and desire. (Williamson, 2007; 327) He incorporated the tools of language (sign and narrative) and myth as the ‘physics of poetry’ for his constructions, heeding the importance of language and in doing so using everyday life, the stories of the city we all hold in common, ascribing to his projects a diffusion of the sacred with the profane. The stories and the objects may incorporate the repressed analogies, modern references or may simply employ functional language.

Richard Cardinal in an article titled “Soluble City” says that what is demonstrated in these modes of reading the city is that “signs are there not only to be coded but also to be felt. Intellectual decipherment is not enough: one must also attend to one’s irrationality, to the hints of obscure emotion and unspoken desiring, in order to achieve a total illumination of the meaning of a building or a street.” (Cardinal, 1971; 142)

Hejduk’s masques open out to physical and psychological inhabitation made possible by a profusion of signs (visual, typological, with the word and stories themselves), where one

moves not only amid things, but also amid signs and above all amid words. “Urban systems are only livable by virtue of their being completed and reinforced by semiotic systems. These are the intermediaries between urban architecture and urban consciousness.” (Bense, 1971; 149)

In the projects for Venice, Hejduk’s intermediaries include the profusion of signs as linguistic mechanisms to achieve the transformation of type as semiotic, as well as architectural, construction that occurs at a formal level and at the level of re-contextualization. Clearly, this is a semiotic act based on a “reading” of a context and the semiotic operations of a particular typology (in this case the city landscape) and suggests the redefining of that ground. Like a text or a narrative, these objects themselves may incorporate personification of the repressed, although they might be connotations and suggestions of memories (individual or collective), or gestures toward the fantastic. In the case of Hejduk, the spaces are both an embrace of disassociated images and the acceptance of an architecture no longer devoted to strict functionalist programming or a platonic ‘good, true and beautiful’. Strategies applied conspire together acting as a force which alters and transfigures the context of a city, in this case Venice, and thus produces its rewriting or reinscription. This occurs through the placement of these objects and images as means of reconstructing a city’s repressed narrative and rethinking the city as a field of operations at a psychological level.

What Hejduk’s masques demand is that we go beyond objects themselves and engage in the urban fabric as a life to be lived outside the architectural object. This makes the myth real,

livable, inhabitable, socially responsible. It is attention to the social that acts as a significant counter to criticism of his work as being unrelated to larger social, political and cultural issues. “In the Masques we encounter an architecture overtly anthropomorphic but not quite human: we see not the reflection of ourselves we had hoped for, but another thing looking back at us, watching us, situating us. The differential play that usually takes place along the axis between the viewer and the object is now internalized in the object itself and turned back on the viewer.” (Hays, 2002)

Through these examples, it is understood that although the first instinct when analyzing or designing spaces rejects the symbolist approach, the essential vision of the city, its form or its affective discourse is undoubtedly shaped by phenomenology and semiotics. The visible and perceptive parts of the city, their manifestations, are there to foreground the architecture not as object or as ‘thing’, but as event or happening, that which works and in working permits relations of visibility to be maintained as self-conscious developments of this conception of spatiality in terms of place as the experience. (Breton, 1928; 150)

Experience of space, conceived in terms of transition, passage and temporality, is concerned with the city as a support for wandering of the body and the mind, uncovering a city-scape marked by absences, non-time, remnants, residues and relics for which architectural forms become means of articulating the muted shapes of an inner experience that is not separate from the spatiality of city forms. These necessary relations of projection and introspection become a transitional state

between phenomenology and semiotics, a consequence of absorption and assimilation of thought, which through collective memory and endeavor may come to play a role at the level of the imaginary and the re-organization of the forms of the city. “The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to man his outlook on himself. This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it.” (Heidegger, 1971; 43)

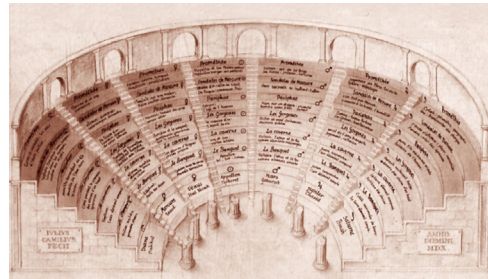
In further text, the boundary will be additionally interpreted through four terms that relate to the relationship created between phenomenological and semiotic qualities of urban and architectural space, in hopes of reaching new explanations and understandings of the subjective experience of the city: *memory, metaphor, atmosphere and psychogeography*.

**Memory** and its ability to utilize time and image in architecture to its advantage is mainly expressed through the creation of spaces as stage sets where history is connected to experience, being that in a city, space is constructed of layers, each associated with a moment in history and distinguished from time only by experience. These moments are often given form by a monument or a reference, which stands among and against the permanence and timelessness of context. In the traditional city, urban memory was easy enough to define as the image of the city that enabled the citizen to identify with its past and present as political, cultural and social entity. It was neither the reality of the city nor a purely imaginary utopia, but rather the complex mental map of significance by which the city might be recognized as something not foreign and as constituting a space

for everyday life. (Vidler, 1992; 177)

In the book *Invisible Cities* by Italian writer Italo Calvino there is a passage about cities and memories that can be useful to further understand the importance that a memory of space has for the understanding of the boundary. “Leaving there and proceeding for three days toward the east, you reach Diomira, a city with sixty silver domes, bronze statues of all the gods, streets paved with lead, a crystal theater, a golden rooster that crows each morning on a tower. All these beauties will already be familiar to the visitor, who has seen them also in other cities. But the special quality of this city for the man who arrives there on a September evening, when the days are growing shorter and the multicolored lamps are lighted all at once at the doors of the food stalls and from a terrace a woman’s voice cries ‘Ooh!’, is that he feels envy toward those who now believe they have once before lived an evening identical to this and who think they were happy, that time.” (Calvino, 2008; 10)

The common relationship between architecture and memory is their ability to make connections in space and time, where the fragmentation between present and past disappears and becomes one, through imagery. A relator for the two is human perception of imagery and human empathy to recall certain aspects of a place, the connection to the city’s parts with each other, and the ability for these connections to be explained in tangible and perceivable terms. Architecture for memory signifies a point of reference in time, a sort of stage against which experience can be recalled. As for memory, through architecture it reveals the basis of form which allows the city to lend itself to human spatial apprehension. (Hopkins, 1996; 5)



8. Francis Yates' imagining of Giulio Camillo's *Theater of Memory*, 1966, drawing.

When thinking about means of engraving memories into a city space, intuitively the first association is a monument. These markers in the city owe their very name to their function as 'agents of memory', but still, it is not so much the monuments themselves that construct memories so much as what they stand for. Monuments act semiotically and phenomenologically in the sense that they are objects and instruments that operate to say one thing by means of another. (Vidler, 1992; 178)

Space is where these memories unfold for the dwellers of cities, spaces that are above all scenic and in these places remembrance emerges. Since our impressions rush by, one after another, it is the space that we occupy, traverse and have continual access to, that we must pay attention to. Urban space, by its capability to hold time stationary, is a signifier of memory, recalling a past concerning an event or other such incident in time. Therefore, memory cannot operate without a spatial context and can be infinitely referenced in the boundary as the virtual coexistence of separate versions of time in the present, meaning the coexistence of the past and present (and possibly the future).

At the beginning of this research, a remarkable treatise by English historian Frances Yates titled *The Art of Memory* paved a way for a lot of topics that are discussed here. The book is a research of a series of methods allowing better memorization of information through the association of mental places to information, or, through the spatialization of memory into ideal places. "Places are chosen, and marked with the utmost possible variety, as a spacious house is divided into a number of rooms. Everything of note therein is dilligently imprinted on the mind, in order that thought may be able to run through all the parts

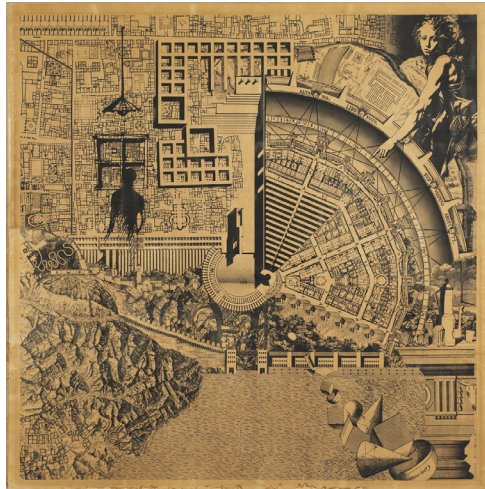
without let or hindrance. Then what has been written down, or thought of, is noted by a sign to remind of it. This sign may be drawn from a whole thing, as navigation, or from some word, for what is slipping from memory is recovered by the admonition of a single word.” (Quintillian, 95; 17. quoted in Yates, 1966; 37) Yates describes a few ways in which memory places were fabricated throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, spaces that are half real and half imaginary, perfectly standing in the boundary, named ‘memory theaters,’ that lead to and inspired the project done for this thesis. For Yates, the relation between the city and this utopia is mediated by mental maps that include real events in order to imagine the unreal and the ideal, or simply, events that need to be remembered. (Yates, 1966; 129) The most famous project referenced in this book is the Theater of Memory by Giulio Camillo from 1519. This ideal device was meant to “locate and administer all human concepts, everything which exists in the world”. (Yates, 1966; 130) It is not very clear whether the memory theater was an actual space you could enter, and if so what it looked like (with descriptions varying from a building in the form of a classical amphitheater to an elaborate chest with drawers), but either way, great quantities of memory were experienced at a glance and organised around a mnemonic scheme represented not in words but in peculiar and memorable images. The images were at the time nearer to the truth of what they signify than any description, and their order was respective to one another. To memorise was to understand and to experience with the mind, when internalised and digested, was to really see. Yates reconstructed the theater and imagined it as a wooden structure based on the Vitruvian

description of the Roman theater but the canonical relationship between audience and stage was reversed, since it was meant for a single spectator. Ideally, all human knowledge would have been archived on these half circular steps, projecting the human mind through mental associations with images and symbols, closely related to the analyzed boundary. (Yates, 1966; 132)

When talking about memory in urban space and architecture it is impossible not to come across research done by Italian architect Aldo Rossi, who mentions one of the conditioning factors which effect urban intervention - locus. “Rossi sees the city as a theater of human events, the locus solus that not only contains events but is itself an event; it constitutes an event. The locus defined is an intersection of space, time, form and site of a succession of both ancient and contemporary events.” (Jo, 2003; 233) Rossi identifies locus as a relationship to the specific location, related to the memory of the society, describing the city as “an artifact that possesses its own history” (Rossi, 1982; 32) These artifacts leave traces of history and the traces embody the memory of the city, what Rossi defines as permanence, or urban spaces that preserve the history of the city as built form. In his book *A Scientific Autobiography* he is concerned with the concepts and fragments of the city, disregarding scale and context, but searching for the relationship between memory and city. This way of experiencing the city in the way of wandering fits well into this thesis since he attempts to observe and locate the traces of memory within the context of urban space. The argument here is that the city is the locus of collective memory, gathering the traces of lived experience in order to create monuments.

*Analogous City* from 1976 is a drawing by Aldo Rossi where a





9. Aldo Rossi, *La città analoga*, 1976. collage and drawing.

city is shown depicted using the meaning that resided within the identifiable or referenced forms. This way of thinking about the city analogically makes it possible for space to become part of history and be associated with events, people and ideas. With association, time and space are infused into the medium of memory, where an object or a place become an experience for everyone that participates. Time and space can exist now while integrating, interpreting and modifying experience. These structures in space can always be reinterpreted, for there doesn't seem to be any universal truth about space, but rather a constant experience of memory, continuous juxtaposition of city fragments, alteration of typologies which invest monuments with abilities to hold a discourse with the city, letting memory represent a highly personal confrontation with the built space.

**Metaphor** becomes vital in this thesis for understanding how the space around us and ordinary life go hand in hand since with very little information we instinctively find a common place. "If you do not like metaphor, you do not throw it away, you dig into it to find out what it represses." (Eisenman, 1988; 130) The question here is about what architecture represents within the context of everyday life. In urban space, metaphors can be found everywhere, in building's silhouettes, volumes, heights, details, and it is by these metaphors that the mystery of who we are in the universe, as well as what lurks in books, people, society, politics and government, is found. This way, metaphor can be used as a mental guide to understanding of the environment. The origin of metaphor comes from linguistics but it has always been applied to other contexts, it

talks about one thing in terms of another and makes the strange familiar. (Barrington, 2012; 2) “A metaphor is the application of a noun which properly applies to something else. The transfer may be from the genus to the species, from the species to the genus or according the rules of analogy.” (Aristotle quoted by Heath, 1996; 37) It must be pointed out that metaphors cannot be described through logic, since they will never have a proper meaning. There have been some attempts to establish a metaphorology that opposes the general and historically determined negative bias associated with metaphors and on the other hand with the absence of a theory of metaphors, meaning that every discussion - due to the nature of metaphors - will remain on unstable ground. (Gerber, 2013; 16) Among these was the case of German philosopher Hans Blumenberg and his *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* from 1960. According to him, metaphors are something productive, representing on the one hand what remains in the translation from myth and on the other they are an indicator of something that cannot be translated to a literal condition. (Blumenberg, 1960; 3)

Charles Jencks, in his writings about post-modern architecture, implied the importance of metaphors for understanding of space. He recognized that the architecture of his time lacked the acknowledgement of the importance of metaphor and thought that it would change since “metaphor plays a predominant role in the public’s acceptance or rejection of buildings.” (Jencks, 1977; 60) Here it is also pointed out that architecture and urban space need to be understood as language, and this understanding through metaphors of another discipline is often conducted through references, comparing a building to a sculpture, a

painting, a musical composition or a poem. This should be questioned given the common knowledge that architecture is mainly a spatial art, but there is a hesitation to state this as a simple truth because space alone does not communicate what is associated with architectural space, which is the aesthetic qualities and its emotional emanation. (Böhme, 2013; 47)

Our conception of this space is highly influenced by its geometry, the formal intuition, a three-dimensional representation, and while the architect or urban designer has a lot to do with these geometrics of space, they also have to arrange it in the context of things so what matters in the end is the space in which we live - the bodily space. Each work of architecture creates or constructs a space, in which we, the users, move and in which we feel something. In this way, the application of metaphors in space allows seeing it in a particular light, and is transferred on this space from other fields of reference, transporting a scheme and organizing the perception. (Kant, 1965; 171)

In ancient Greece, there was a far bigger knowledge of the city than of the body, being the reason why they used metaphors depicting the body as a city made of different parts. The human body books of medicine is where many fluids flow, mixing, conflicting and reciprocally reacting, where different elements struggle for power. Health of a body and health of a city is assured by an absence of internal conflicts. (Vegetti, 1983) In fact, the human body and the city have been metaphorically linked since, when the human body was difficult to understand, it was the body to be like a city. On the contrary, the Renaissance popularised the thought that it is the city that has become like a human body and this metaphor became the most pervasive



10. Robert Venturi, Steven Izenour, Denise Scott Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas, The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, "The order in this landscape is not so obvious", 1977. photo.

in any discourse on cities. This type of metaphor is one of the two groups of metaphors when looking at a discourse about city and urban space. It speaks of the city in terms of some other field or physical experience (the city as a forest, a human body, a banal machine, a factory, playing field, network). The second group of metaphors works on a different, more abstract level and can be called conceptual metaphor. It speaks of the city in terms of an abstract concept (continuity, regularity, order, transparency, equilibrium, process, fragment). This second group is more closely tied to the topic of this thesis since it builds a bridge between reality and a more abstract way of reading and interpreting it, and has an important role for the physical project of the city. We find these metaphors in discourses, literature, visual arts and language, crossing the space between words and facts. (Secchi, 2013; 126)

Spatial forms have been created by architects and analyzed by critics largely in terms of their metaphoric qualities and at the expense of their symbolic meanings derived from association, which is akin to the second pillar of semiotics. American architect Robert Venturi, in his great book *Learning from Las Vegas*, recognizes the system of symbols that prevades our environment largely existing in history and how the complexities of iconography have continued to be a major part of space. Preoccupation with space as the architectural quality caused a reading of buildings as form, the piazzas as space, and the graphics as color, texture and scale: the city became an abstract expression. (Venturi, 1977; 104)

**Atmosphere**, similar to concepts of memory and metaphor in urban space, isn't a primary focus for urban studies since



criticism tends to focus on form, structure, scale etc. For the importance of this thesis, there needs to be an experiential view that enriches this formal understanding of space. "A door is not architecture, whereas passing through a doorway, crossing the threshold between two realms, is a genuine architectural experience. Similarly, a window in itself is not yet architecture; it is the act of looking through the window, or of light falling in, that turns it into a meaningful architectural experience." (Pallasmaa, 2014; 99) Juhani Pallasmaa in his treatise *Space, Place and Atmosphere* titles the introductory chapter *Fusion of the World and the Mind* where he expresses that the character of a space is not merely a visual quality. "The judgement of environmental character is a complex fusion of countless factors that are immediately and synthetically grasped as an overall feeling, mood, or ambiance - an atmosphere." (Pallasmaa, 2014; 19) The experience is described to be multisensory and it involves judgements beyond the five human senses adding to them orientation, gravity, balance, stability, motion, duration, continuity, illumination etc. As mentioned before when talking about perceptive qualities of space, the immediate judgement of space depends on our existential sense, and is perceived in a diffused manner rather than a precise observation. In addition, this complex process of feeling a space fuses previous concepts of perception, memory and metaphor in the shape of imagination. (Pallasmaa, 2014; 19) This concept gets compared to the phenomenon of *genius loci*, the spirit of place, which is a similar, non-material experiential character of place, giving a unique perceptual and memorable character and identity to a place. American theorist Robert Pogue Harrison explores the idea of

the space entering us as we enter a space, where experience is essentially an exchange and fusion of the object and the subject. "In the fusion of place and soul, the soul is as much of a container of place as place is a container of soul, both as susceptible to the same forces of destruction." (Harrison, 2008; 130) In the same way, atmosphere can be defined as an exchange between the material, existent properties of space, and our immaterial realm, imagination and projection. (Pallasmaa, 2014; 20) What is interesting and correspondent to the explanation of the boundary is that atmosphere of a space is grasped before we can identify or understand it intellectually, in fact, sometimes it is completely impossible to say anything of meaning about the characteristics of a space, yet there is a memorized image that we can recall of it, as well as an emotional reaction towards it. Same case is when entering a new space, a new city, where its overall character can be grasped without having consciously analysed its elements. "We perceive atmospheres through our emotional sensibility - a form of perception that works incredibly quickly, and which we humans evidently need to help us survive." (Zumthor, 2006; 13)

A described innate capacity to fathom and apprehend atmosphere is connected to our capacity to project imaginatively and emotionally suggestive settings of an entire space, or any other type of art form. As we read them, we simultaneously live in material and mental worlds that are constantly interconnecting, constructing settings and situations at the suggestion of images or words. While reading a text about space for example, we move seamlessly from one setting to the next, as if they existed as physical realities before us reading about them, as we move



11. Olafur Eliasson, *Double sunset*, 1999. Producing urban atmospheres. installation.

from one scene to the next, the setting seems to be there ready for us to enter it. These imaginary spaces aren't only experienced and lived in our minds as mere images but in their full spatiality, and more importantly, atmosphere. Related to this are dreams, which are not pictures but spaces and experiences that we imaginatively live, entirely produced by our minds. (Pallasmaa, 2014; 29) Literary work serves as a great analogy for explaining some of the concepts in this thesis since the most amazing feature of our mental acts is the synthetic completeness of the imagery. Literary imagination is discussed in Elaine Scarry's book *Dreaming by the Book* where she explains the vividness of a profound literary text, stating that "In order to achieve the vivacity of the material world, the verbal arts must somehow also imitate its persistence and, most crucially, its quality of givenness. It seems almost certainly the case that it is the instructional character of the verbal arts that fulfills this mimetic requirement." (Scarry, 2001; 30) Urban space also calls for a deepened sense of materiality and reality, this ability lies in the strengthening of the experience of the real, and its imaginative dimension arises from this re-sensitised sense of reality, an experience of space and time. These atmospheres fill spaces; they emanate from things and persons, where the individual as a recipient can happen upon them, be assailed by them, in other words, we experience them as something quasi-objective, the existence of which we can also communicate with others, yet they cannot be defined independently from the person emotionally affected by them; they are subjective facts. That being said, there is a way to produce atmosphere consciously, as explained through the case of art, with objective arrangements,

light, music, text, but what they are, their character, is always felt by exposing ourselves to them, we experience the impression that they make, becoming manifestations of this co-presence between subject and object, between the phenomenological and semiotic definitions of space. According to Gernot Böhme it is not unusual to speak of the 'atmosphere of a city', finding the expression in everyday life, used in ordinary language. Here, she applies two things: first, the atmosphere is mentioned from or for the perspective of a stranger, secondly, it is an attempt to identify something characteristic about a city. (Böhme, 2014; 46) It has to be noted that when spoken of atmosphere as something experienced by strangers to the city it's not meant to be taken to imply the city from the tourist's perspective, rather, that which is commonplace and self-evident for the inhabitants and which is constantly produced by the locals through their lives, but is noticed first by the stranger. This is why there has to be a defined difference between the atmosphere of a city and the image of a city. Image is a consciously projected self-portrait and the sum of its advantages that an outsider might enjoy, whereas, atmosphere in this case is something characteristic, peculiar to the city, what makes it individual and therefore cannot be communicated in general concepts, it is something that has to be sensed. A lot of talk about this concept is looked over by restricting it to the visual and symbolic, placing it in this thesis to the pillar of semiotics. Following this trend set by semiotics it can be hard to realise that this age of representation has long since come to an end. The multi-cultural world of the city does contain more and more universally understood imagery, but it isn't strictly restricted or sometimes doesn't even contain a

symbolism that is understood by the community as a whole, that which appeals to us in a city then fails to be construed as language and instead, enters our disposition through the impression that it makes. (Böhme, 2014; 48)

Although for the sake of this thesis most of the concept is explained to be found on the subjective side, there cannot be denial of the importance of the objective. Atmosphere cannot solely be studied from the side of the subject but also from the side of the instances by means of which they are created. Best explained is the notion of stage design where the general aim is to create atmosphere with the help of lights, music, sound, spatial constellations and the use of characteristic object. The analogy of stage, however, falls short in the case of city planning, since the atmosphere in cities is created not for the audience (outside observers) but for the actors (citizens) and participants in urban life, together producing the urban atmosphere through their own activities. (Böhme, 2014; 50)

The semiotic side of the pillar in this case applies to the discourse on signs best described as the historical depth of a city. Deciphering a city through its history becomes transparent through stylistic features, heraldry, epigraphs and the materials used, but it cannot be expected for the average citizen to experience all of this historical information. The concept of atmosphere in this case changes perception, directing attention to the relation between the qualities of surroundings and dispositions, being a subjective experience of urban reality that is shared by everyone. People experience this as something objective, as a quality of the city and it is indeed the case that by analysing generators of atmospheres from the point of

view of the object we can bring about the conditions in which atmosphere is able to develop. Pallasmaa argues that people tend to seek more humane spaces under rather humble conditions, as opposed to the big projects we are exposed to. As we are speaking here about atmosphere, there needs to be an acknowledgement that traditional and historically rich spaces, arising from local conditions, are often highly atmospheric. (Pallasmaa, 2014; 106) In conclusion to this, an important definition of atmosphere can be its conceiving as space, space with a mood or emotionally felt space. It underlines that emotions do not always have to be internal but can be on the outside, they can strike us.

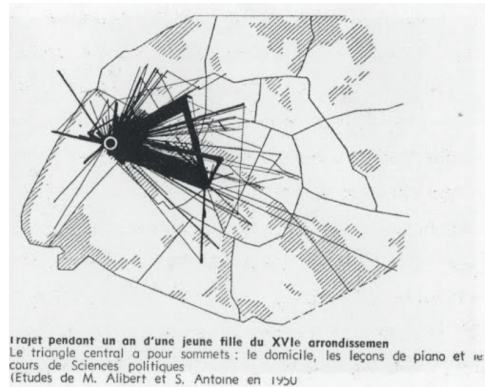
**Psychogeography** is a concept that encapsulates this external emotion the best way. The term was defined in 1955 by Guy Debord as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.” (Debord, 1955), it is just about anything that sways everyday people in the city from their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the surroundings. The root of psychogeography can be traced to the avant-garde lettrist movement originating from Ivan Chatcheglov and his highly influential 1953 essay titled “*Formularly for a New Urbanism*” where he reimagines the city in aspects of surrealism. This idea of urban wandering relates to the older concept of the flaneur termed by writer Charles Baudelaire and later analyzed by Walter Benjamin in his text *A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* who drew on the poetry of Baudelaire that described it as a person who takes on the idea of strolling about everywhere in the city, commonly an ambivalent figure of urban affluence,

who represents the ability to wander detached from society with no other purpose than to be an observer of contemporary life. (Benjamin, 1964) The flaneur is thus seen as having a key role in understanding, participating in, and portraying the city, combining sociological, anthropological, literary and spatial notions of the relationship between the individual and lived space. “The street becomes a dwelling for the flaneur; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafes are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done.” (Benjamin, 1964; 37) The importance of psychogeography, however, for the understanding of the boundary systems from its conceptualization in the works of a movement called Situationism. This group believed that a person is constantly exploring a space, free of determining factors, finding contemporary space both physically and ideologically restrictive, combining with outside cultural influence, and forcing oneself into a certain system of interaction with the environment. “Cities have a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.” (Knabb, 1996; 50) Situationists responded to this with creating designs of new urban spaces, promising better opportunities for experimenting, doing so by combining two different ambiental factors, the soft (light, sound, time, idea) with the hard (actual physical space). Guy Debord’s

vision was a combination of these two realms where the play of soft was considered in the rendering of the hard, creating possibilities for activities not formerly determined or set by anyone besides the experiencing individual. (Debord, 1958; 62) One of the basic practices that blur the boundary between the two pillars of this thesis is explained in the Situationist manifesto *Situationist International* under the chapter *Theory of the Dérive*, defined as a “technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances, involving playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects.” (Debord, 1955; 62) This unplanned journey through a space on which the subtle aesthetic contours of the surroundings subconsciously directs the actors (us) is the ultimate goal of encountering an entirely new and authentic experience. It fits into *the boundary* by means of being entirely directed by the feelings evoked in the individual by their surrounding space, and serving as the primary tool for investigating the psychogeography of an area. Continuing to be a critical concept in the theory, it serves as a great way of exploring the urban and engaging in experiences that space has to offer, setting aside all usual motives for movement or action in space, and being drawn by the attractions and the encounters found ‘in situ.’ An argument as to why concepts like these are needed is the increasingly monotonous and predictable experience of everyday life created by political and cultural settings, where these concepts can act as opportunities for completely new experiences of the different memories and atmospheres generated by urban space. “The sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the

path of least resistance that is automatically followed in aimless strolls; the appealing or repelling character of certain places - these phenomena all seem to be neglected.” (Debord, 1955)

Social theorist Henri Lefebvre also draws onto the importance of the urban space psychogeographically in his 1970 text *The Urban Revolution*. “The street is a place to play and learn. The street is disorder. All elements of urban life, which are fixed and redundant elsewhere, are free to fill the streets and through the streets flow to the centers, where they meet and interact. This order is alive. It informs. It surprises.” (Lefebvre, 1974) For him, the street is the locus of confrontation of the body and the mind. The practice of subversion, what Situationists call *détournement*, manipulative use of images within advertising is appropriated in order to sharpen rather than dull critical consciousness, with the goal of engendering a shared criticism of the physical environment within the commodity of capitalism, which is first in relation to visual culture and second in relation to the built space. This polemical indictment of our image-saturated consumer culture is best described in Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* from 1967, where he examines the concept of spectacle, terming it as the everyday manifestation of capitalist-driven phenomena (advertising, television, film). For Debord, this constitutes an unacceptable ‘degradation’ of our lives, reducing reality to an endless supply of commodifiable fragments, while encouraging us to focus on appearance rather than feeling. It is made clear several times in the text that the spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images. (Debord, 1967) These images influence our lives and beliefs on a daily basis and

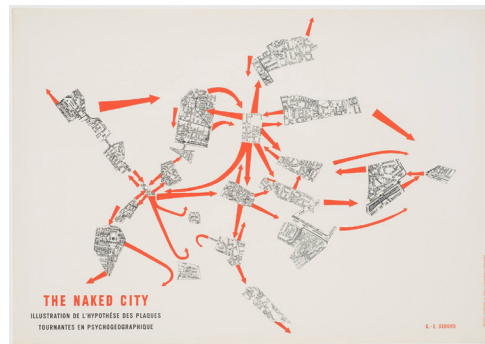


12. Paul-Henri Chombart de Lauwe, *Trajectory of the route taken by a student as she circulates between three locations*, 1957. drawing.

interprets the world for us with the use of simple narratives through photography, collapsing time and geographic distance, providing the illusion of universal connectivity. “*But for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, representation to reality, appearance to essence. Truth is considered profane, and only illusion is sacred. Sacredness is in fact held to be enhanced in proportion as truth decreases and illusion increases, so that the highest degree of illusion comes to be the highest degree of sacredness.*” (Feuerbach, 1841) The spectacle in *the boundary* appears simultaneously as society itself, as part of society, and as means of unification.

As material examples of these concepts Situationists used mapping to create counter-maps as products of their *dérives*, which were often collective rather than individual, of no preset route or duration and driven only by intuition. Mainly, two maps plot the alternatives as Debord and his contemporaries envisioned new urban life. The first is a map of Paul-Henri Chombart de Lauwe depicting tracing of routes taken by a student over the period of a year as she circulates between her school, her residence and the residence of her piano teacher. The result was an insectoid cloud of heavily scored, angular lines on an otherwise vacant field, lacking any hint of the swerves celebrated by Debord. In contrast, Debord’s collage with Asger Jorn titled *The Naked City* maps a stylish, capacious and transgressive event-space. This map had to devise a form to capture a city’s psychological and social, as well as spatial layout. To make this map, they used excises from two municipal tourist maps of Paris and set them into a spiral, striking them with arrows to mark junctions and transfer points into “in and out





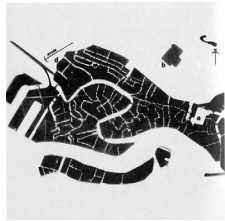
13. Guy Debord, *The Naked City*, 1957. litograph.

zones conducive of the practice of the *dérive*.” (Sadler, 1999, 60) These maps are almost forensic, emerging from atmospheric sweeps of the city during which the mappers follow their own memory and feelings and adjust their routes on the go. This invites citizens to generate maps for themselves by maximizing their own experience of a dense and fluctuant space-time.

The boundary determined and explained by these four concepts takes a new found importance in the current state of heightened global awareness and human impact on space. Not only urban planners and architects, but also common citizens should reconsider the basic idea from which to develop these spaces, by looking and learning rather than creating and expanding. These concepts have the capacity to reshape our perception of the built environment and to work as operational tools to finding hidden potentials in the urban fabric. This thesis seeks to bring attention to, and find a different starting point in thinking about urban space suggesting these perceptive, performative, investigative and imaginative concepts that can be expressed through writing, mapping, discussing and thinking. The idea is not only to find these new ways of expressing the boundary and inscribing space with new contexts but also seeing it as event in the grand scheme of things. In order to further examine the qualities of space, the study will take a sample of the city of Venice, illustrating it from the angle of internal events until it becomes reflective, dissolving and rethinking our sense of the city as we know it. Methods used and case studies presented in further text serve to find new intersections and relations, which are then articulated and tested through a meta project,

in attempts to materialize them in a setting, namely the part of Cannaregio ovest, with architectural and urban interventions around analyzed points. It will consider the potential for this area to be revitalized as a cultural and social part of the bigger city and serve as a conversation piece used to discuss the boundary created between the two pillars of this research. The reason why is that with a specific site it is easier to develop a methodological intention of discovering an existing landscape and test if the boundary has means of working in practice.





## Analogies

Inspired by German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers and his book *Morphologie: City Metaphors* from 1982, the purpose of this visual chapter is to accompany the theoretical basis as a parallel work found on images. In the book, Ungers collected and categorised found pictures as well as photographs of his own trips, in a visual essay with a short introductory text. He conceptualised his procedure of design as a method guided by analogies and metaphors and explained how visual thinking operates. Throughout the book, Ungers sets up a series of spreads where city maps are associated with a single picture mostly from the domains of science, biology and technology, where the format stays the same, with a map on the left and an image on the right, both framed as squares, accompanied by a single descriptive word, in both English and German.

The essay accompanying the book is an insight on the role of imagination in the construction of knowledge and the fact that visual thinking is the most effective procedure to relate ideas to form. Ungers attributes a strong significance to the role of vision and imagination as the guiding principle upon which consciousness comprehends the world. Imagination here is

described as an instrument of thinking and analysing, where the process of thinking is an application of imagination and ideas to a given set of facts. He describes the imaginative process in relation to perception and psychology, elaborating on the theory of imagination as a process of conceptualisation through the use of metaphors, analogies, signs and symbols. “In every human being there is a strong metaphysical desire to create a reality structured through images in which objects become meaningful through vision and which does not exist because it is measurable.” (Ungers, 1982; 7)

Similarly, what is intended in this chapter is to interpret images in a metaphorical sense, open to subjective speculation and transformation. Referencing Ungers, the synthetic discourse is constructed by two images that explore the boundary as a conceptual atmospheric dimension emerging from the relationship between them. The analogies will not be titled in order to not influence subjectivity of the viewer. Images shown here are not analysed according to form, function or other measurable criteria but interpreted on a level demonstrating atmospheres, metaphors and analogies. Another referential point is *Conformi*, founded by Davide Trabucco which has brought the notion of analogical thinking through images to a wider public using his websites and pages. The goal is to show a more transcendental aspect and the underlying perception that goes beyond technical analysis. Through a juxtaposition, the importance of perception is further explored in addition to the previous theory. Images are associative and primarily based on a feeling they convey, perceived analogically in order to give them meaning and a new outlook.

As Ungers writes in *Ten Chapters on Architecture*: “It is not an invention, but a discovery, a constantly new reinterpretation of known concepts – it is to see the world with different eyes, to experience it anew, to find it again and to fill it with new content.” (Ungers, 1999)



15. Luigi Ghirri, *Modena*, 1985.



16. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Hunters in the Snow*, 1565.



17. Hal Morey, *Sun beams into Grand Central Station*, New York City, 1930.



18. Lygia Pape, *Ttéia I, C*, Serpentine Gallery, London, 2011.



19. Olafur Eliasson, *Din blinde passager*, 2010



20. Bill Roberts and Paul Satterfield, *Fantasia*, 1940.





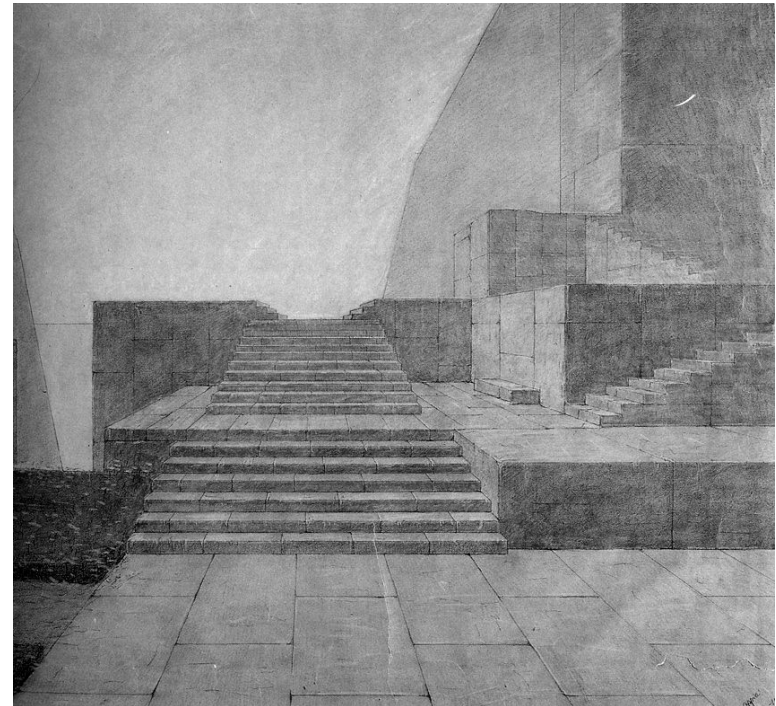
21. Paul Landowski and Heitor da Silva Costa, *Cristo Redentor*, Rio de Janeiro, 1922.



22. Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*, 1818.



23. David Chipperfield, *BBC Scotland Headquarters*, Glasgow, 2001.



24. Adolphe Appia, Set Design for *Orpheus and Eurydice* by Gluck, 1912.





25. Zaha Hadid, *Hoenheim-Nord Terminus and Car Park*, Strasbourg, 1998.



26. Dorothea Lange, *Tractored Out*, Texas, 1938.



27. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Children's Games*, 1560.



28. Martin Handford, *Where's Wally?*, 1987.





29. Dominique Perrault, *Ewha Womans University*, Seoul, South Korea, 2004.



30. Cecil B. DeMille, *The Ten Commandments*, 1956.



31. Giuseppe Momo, *Staircase*, Vaticane, 1932.



32. Anish Kapoor, *Descension*, 2015.



33. Nick Heinimann, *Venice Beach Skate Park*, 2009.



34. Andrej Tarkovskij, *Stalker*, 1979.





35. Luigi Ghirri, *Nei pressi di Fidenza*, 1985.



36. Ippolito Caffi, *Venezia di notte*, 1809.



37. Alfred Stieglitz, *A Venetian Canal*, 1894.

## Cannaregio

Continuing the research on the boundary, it is important to dwell into an analysis of a specific place due to its favour of the development of the methodology, discovering how everything mentioned applies onto an existing landscape and testing its eligibility in practical terms. In this thesis, the site chosen becomes testing ground for the development of parts of the research where specific conditions of a place become elements which constitute further understanding. It is one thing to draw inspiration from phenomenological, participatory and context based theories, but it becomes clearer when the theory is put into practice.

The city of Venice was an apparent choice after having visited it several times before and during the development of this research. Its history, social relations, culture and most importantly physical constitution and urban fabric serve as ground for perceiving and experimenting of *the boundary*.

Personally, the uncanny mood of Venice is closely associated with dreams and the unconscious, experienced on an axis of reversible time, where distant past and imaginary futures coincide. The streets and spaces of the city express an experience of interiority in the exterior, where outside and inside the urban





fabric sky and water are mutually reflective, with inversions of light often occurring and buildings that are built on and among canals sometimes appearing upside down. As a city that is constantly being designed and at the same time 'preserved', it denies any rules of contemporary sustainability, with its permanence and longevity being threatened by the surplus pollutions, primarily touristic, which makes it a valuable object of reflection upon issues of perception and subjective analysis. While facing the excessive challenges, the city still remains, by popular opinion, a major cultural centre and has been ranked many times 'undoubtedly the most beautiful city built by man' with its perception being skewed and a lack of genuine inspection of values important for this research.

The city is structurally divided into six historic districts, 'sestieri', with the second largest by land area and largest by local population being the Cannaregio district, which becomes the focal point of further analysis. Historically, the Cannaregio Canal was the main route into the city until the construction of the railway that exists today connecting the island to mainland. The area primarily grew thanks to working class housing, and part of it was restricted to Jews beginning from 1516, from which derives the name *Venetian Ghetto*. During the 19th century streets, railway bridges and walkway bridges were built to connect parts of the city, and while most of Cannaregio stays relatively tourist-free, the portion between the Santa Lucia train station and the famous Rialto Bridge following the Grand Canal is today packed with tourists while the back of the Cannaregio is residential and relatively peaceful, with morning markets, neighborhood shops and small public spaces.

38. Photographs of Cannaregio.

Strolling the district it reveals itself not having a beginning nor end, being a field of connections, relationships, extensions and potentials, but it takes the experiential level to new heights when the mind is focused on the feeling, the perceiving and the remembering, referencing different ideas, places, dreams and memories. Following the side streets leads even further off regular tourist trails into authentic neighbourhoods displaying the character of everyday life, with residential houses, churches and places that seem to resemble public squares.

Walking through the area in the way of the 'flâneur' helps articulate the places of interest, each time trying to experience these spaces in a new way. Movement in this way means that there isn't a clear goal or endpoint in mind, but the mind directs the motion, being attracted to different points, whether geographical, architectural or aesthetical. Public life in the streets of Cannaregio, as mentioned, is at a glance lived in the edges of the buildings, canals, little squares, parks and semi-public spaces. The architectural forms become expressions of the 'mood', just like in the *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture* by Heinrich Wölfflin from 1886, where he describes ways in which inanimate objects (in this case buildings, spaces) convey impressions that are felt as expressions. The explanation here lies in the movement of the eye through the space, the feelings that images we see invoke, the memories we have of the space and the way we move through it. Questions that arise capture some essential problems of the relationship between form and content, or as Wölfflin puts it, between expression and impression. (Wölfflin, 1886) Cannaregio is full of these changing sensations, the movement and depth

are rendered as abstractions, where the tranquil continuity between body and space is disturbed. This metamorphosis from heterogeneous sensations felt when standing still, to moving while experiencing abstract forms, distinguishes the way space is perceived in the areas, shifting relations between material structures and their symbolic values. The district, due to its rich history and cultural impact, tends to be considered in terms of time over space, implying a challenge to the body that is traditionally concerned with permanence and stability. Psychogeographical analysis of different streets and spaces in Cannaregio leads into a shift in the general thinking about architecture and influences a change in the cultural emphasis we place on concepts of space, producing different architectural experiences. Namely, architectural experience as an event city or a museum conditions the presence of an individual subject that interacts with the environment, seemingly with no universally accepted system from which to construct a totalizing view of the city, producing heterogeneous experiences rather than having a central reference point. It is virtually impossible to summarize the full experience of Venice from a single perspective so the subject has to move around and produce engagement through the need to gather multiple perspectives and perceptions. The person that encounters Cannaregio and its buildings is phenomenologically 'disintegrated', traversing by contingency, overwhelmed by a surfeit of perceptual cues and influenced emotionally by the apparent architectural spaces. Without a summarized view of the city, the subject is challenged to assemble the fragmented views mentally, with the experience of the city becoming an exercise in assembling recollections,



connecting fragments of the past within the present by way of superimposition. Moving within the 'closed' landscape of Cannaregio's urban spaces constantly draws toward the past, allowing a glimpse of the original conceptions of the spaces, but if not felt subjectively, the visions remain fragmentary.

Not only form, but also smell and sound of the city generate a specific atmosphere for the subject. The multi-sensory nature of experiencing a city acts as a starting point for further research. To many, the Venetian atmosphere is closely associated with the sense of smell, namely, with the smell of the water from the canals, which becomes an essential element of the city's atmosphere, constituting the quality of a surrounding which most intensely allows a sensing of the disposition and location of the subject. In the same way, sounds and acoustics belong to the atmosphere of Venice, their character and composite noises emerging from the city's miscellaneous activities, human and non-human. To Venice's specific atmosphere belongs the sound of footsteps, voice, and splashing water. The city can be broken down into atmospheres where one can trace the atmospheres of port areas, railway station, cultural (event) areas, nightlife, commercial market zones, different housing areas and industrial districts. This atmospheric breakdown of the city, that is, the demarcation of areas where different types of atmospheres are sensed particularly intensely, tends to follow routes of architectural and urban perspectives different from the ones we are used to.



40. *10 immagini per Venezia*, curated by Francesco Dal Co, 1980. catalogue cover.

## Images for Venice

In the summer of 1978 *Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia* (Iuav) organised an international seminar of design with the intention of elaborating a series of hypothetical architectural and urban interventions in one of the areas of the Cannaregio district. The scope of this initiative was to create a discussion of different design ideas for Venice and to activate an exchange of opinions about the architectural culture with limited methods of intervention that are possible inside a historical city. (Dal Co, 1980; 7) During the seminar it was possible for the different architects to draft their initial ideas gathered throughout their stay in Venice. Many of the participants in the seminar are renowned names in modern and postmodern architecture as we know it today. In 1980, Francesco Dal Co curated an exhibition and book titled *10 Immagini per Venezia*, which heavily influenced the understanding of Cannaregio in this thesis. What was presented at the exhibition was the work of the architects that managed to conclude their projects for Cannaregio Ovest, namely: Raimund Abraham, Carlo Aymonino, Bernard Hoesli, Rafael Moneo, Valeriano Pastor, Gianugo Polesello, Aldo Rossi, Luciano Semerani, and, the two architects whose work will be studied in this chapter, John Hejduk and Peter Eisenman.



41. John Hejduk, *Dance, Zenobia*, 1990. litograph with blind stamp.

“A woman lives in the house; she has taken its name.  
A house knows who loves it.  
An empty house is one that metamorphoses into vacant space.  
The breath of a house is the sound of voices within.  
The house never forgets the sound of its original occupants.  
A house is only afraid of gods, fire, wind, and silence.  
God gave man two houses, his body and his soul.”

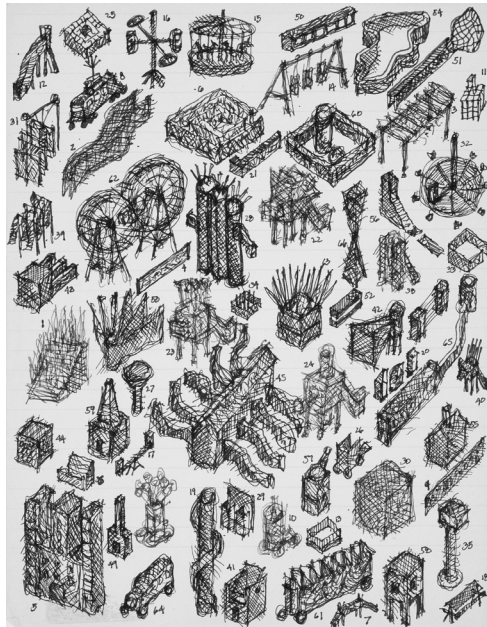
John Hejduk, *House, Mask of Medusa*, 1985.



**John Hejduk's** work encouraged a profound questioning on why and how spaces are perceived, allowing for more open discourse to enhance the phenomenology found in architectural experiences. Assessing investigatory, imaginary work in a historical context includes examination of its aims and methodologies and in this text the focus is on three projects by the American architect. In this study of his work, the progression of thought and depth inside his imagination is investigated through studying key projects from *Masques*, with a focus on the projects done for Venice. In a world seemingly dominated by pragmatism, where people are often jaded and disillusioned by life in the reality, the work of Hejduk is important since it illuminates the poetic dimension in architecture, providing a visual and physical clarity to the fleeting imagery we may experience in our daydreams while walking around the cities. His work was discovered at an early point of this thesis, challenging to forget the formal and functional and to trust imagination. "Architectural tracings are apparitions, outlines, figments. They are not diagrams but ghosts, x-rays of thoughts. Meditations on the sense of erasures. To fabricate a construction of time. To draw out by compacting in." (Hejduk, 1985) The use of narrative, allegory, metaphor and poetics is noted in his work, which allowed him to pull thoughts and images from the depths of his soulful ponderings and bring them into the light for him to analyze and absorb and for others to see, experience and contemplate. (Story, 2021; 3) The poetics attributed to Hejduk are the result of a lifetime exploration to understand form and spatial context, whether written drawn, built, physical or metaphysical.

The work is generally divided into phases and periods reflecting his theoretical and design research, addressing certain issues over a period of time until their conclusions are fixed through architectural experiments. As he states in his book *Mask of Medusa* from 1985, "Only in conscious retrospect does it become clear that a body of work is in fact a product of the time it was fabricated in. The work in this book ranges over 36 years, falling into distinct dates produced in particular cities. The production is framed in time, each frame providing a field for working within." (Hejduk, 1985; 23) This serial work corresponds to a continuous and progressive research into the means and ends of architecture, culminating in a poetic vision that encompasses the artistic, philosophical, and social aspects. As mentioned, most important of his work for studying cases related to *the boundary* is the series entitled *Masques*, developed since around 1979, which gathers a various number of projects, representing the core of his research on the architecture of the city. (Hejduk, 1985; 127) The projects here are narrated by Hejduk with extremely refined sets of drawings of different graphic nature (watercolour, sketches, technical drawings, urban plans, collages) accompanied by descriptive texts, short stories, quotations and above all by poems, which constitute a complete language of his work. (Rizzi, 2010; 20)

A research paper done by Luca Cardani in 2020 titled *The city as a theatre of characters. John Hejduk's Masques* dwells on the dense network of references and analogies established by Hejduk to create his *Masques*, trying to fix its origin in the idea of the city as a theater of characters composed of architecture. (Cardani, 2020; 52) The author examines how the origins of



42. John Hejduk, *sketches of structures Victims*, 1984. pen and ink on paper.

the title *Masque* can be found in a reference to the theatrical form developed in England during the 17th century. These were private theater productions for small audiences partly involved in the action, where the plot generally tells an allegorical story that establishes numerous analogies with the people to whom the performance was dedicated, or the occasion celebrated, narrating in parallel an idealistic life of the society and the city. (Cardani, 2020; 54) “The story and allegorical references were expressed mainly in visual forms: through the scenes, costumes, objects, mimicry and dance. The story and dialogue, spoken or sung, were used to illustrate what could not be communicated through visual language” (Brockett, 1988; 210)

The city by Hejduk can be compared to the theater because both are forms of representation of the life of society, each with its own (analogical) structure and language. He sought to bring, into the narrative of the city discourse, the spirit, mood and undertone in the making of space and place, interested in the human response to architecture.

“Hejduk heard the multimedia murmur behind Rossi’s silence. The daemons of the analogous city were whispering to him. And he wondered about unleashing all that Rossi had suppressed. Like the animals in a fable that speak with human voices, Hejduk’s objects seem, impossibly, to be aware of us, to address us. And yet we see not the gratifying reflection of ourselves we had hoped for, but another thing looking back at us, watching us, placing us.” (Hays, 2008; 21)

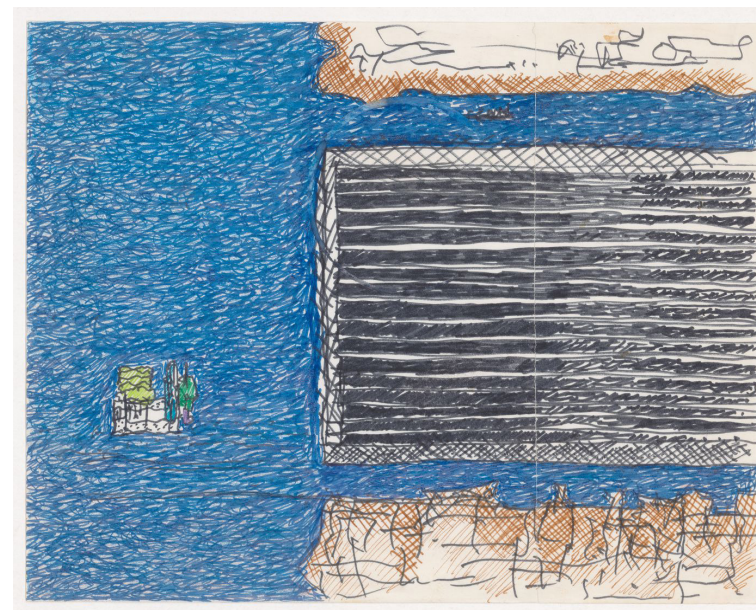
Hejduk uses metaphor as a means to define certain physically recognizable attributes of towns and landscapes, which opens a door towards a redefinition of the intrinsic values



of architectural expression. The result is an idea of the city as an addition of subjective architectures, giving shape to the programs of society, transforming them into characters, which, related to one another, build the character of the city. In the same way, each Masque project is accompanied by a narrative that explores character behind the architectural proposal, associated with the ‘undertones’ exhibited in the work. Hejduk’s description of the socio-political narrative of his 1975 *The Cemetery of the Ashes of Thought*, 1979 *The Thirteen Watchtowers of Cannaregio* and 1976 *The Silent Witnesses* reveal this undertone. (Story, 2021; 78)

**The Cemetery of the Ashes of Thought** is presented as a hut facing the empty shell of the Mulino Stucky in Venice. As a proposal for the refurbishment of the 19th century mill, instead of a small structure across from it, Hejduk designed a new building that would ‘speak’ to the old building and perhaps explain to it how the world had changed in the last hundred years - how modernism came along, and then the wars, and then the altogether different moment that we find ourselves in now. We were postmodern and postwar, and Venice was quickly becoming a post-Disneyland, a city turned into a tourist attraction. Hejduk’s work here seems to be rooted at the horizon of the subconscious where organizing and understanding are not enough, not even necessary.

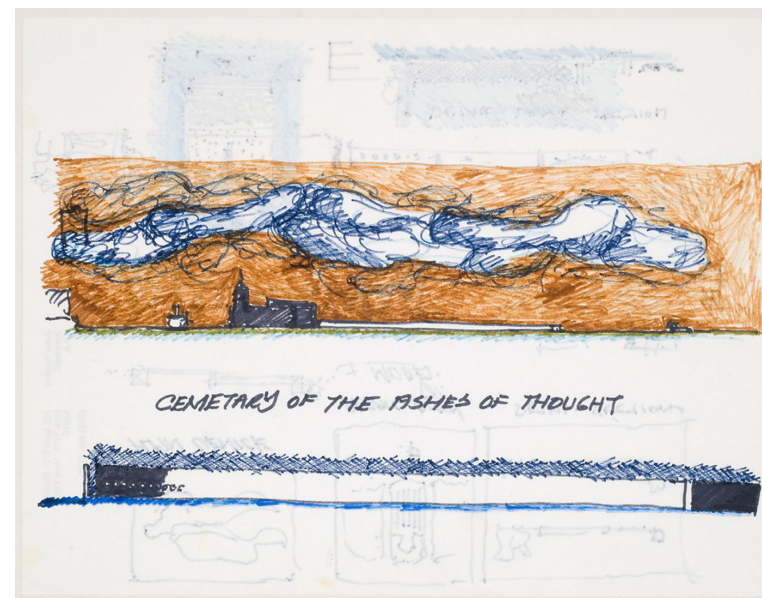
The exteriors of the Mulino Stucky are painted black, the interiors are white. The long, extended walls of *The Cemetery of the Ashes of Thought* are black on one side and white on the other. The surfaces of the long, extended walls are grey at the top and at their extremities. Within the walls, at human height,



43. John Hejduk, *The Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought*, Venice, 1975. Site plan.

square holes open up and inside each hole there is a transparent cube containing ashes. Under each hole on the wall there is a small bronze plate with the indication of a title of a work, for example, Remembrance of Things in the past, The Inferno, Paradise Lost, Moby Dick, etc. On the interior of the walls of the Mulino Stucky building are small plaques with the names of the authors of the works, Proust, Dante, Milton, Melville, etc. In the lagoon, on a man-made island, is a small house for the sole habitation of one individual for a limited period of time. Only one individual for a set period of time may inhabit the house, and no others will be permitted to stay on the island during its occupation. The lone individual looks across the lagoon to *The Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought*. (Hejduk, 1985; 80)

Hejduk develops a set of characters this way, the stories they inhabit become elaborate but maintain a silence. Once the subject sees themselves inside the cemetery or the small house they can begin to imagine the tales behind them and the play would come to life the moment they enter. The action would begin the moment they find themselves behind the mask, inside the building. The project itself seems to be the result of Hejduk's personal reaction to the work of Aldo Rossi, not simply a typology of reduced forms comparable to their work, but rather the discrepancy between Rossi's stated intent to subsume all of the architectural imaginary into a finite, iterable categorization of typed and the dimensions of his work that elude and exceed such enclosure. Hejduk saw the heterogeneities and singularities that geometry cannot hold. "Hejduk heard the multimedia murmur behind Rossi's silence, the demons of the analogous city whispering to him, and he wondered about



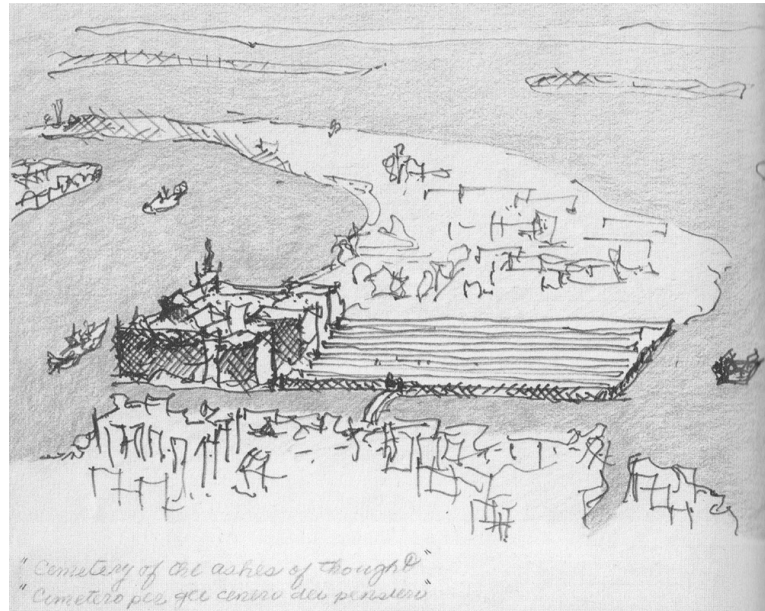
44. John Hejduk, *The Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought*, Venice, 1975. Section.

unleashing all that Rossi had suppressed.” (Hejduk, 1985; 80) Hejduk’s previous project of the *Wall House 3* from 1974 was included as a small house in this project, standing as a colored floating sentinel across the lagoon, overlooking his proposal for a radical and symbolic architecture. An analogy has to be made since the proposal conceived by Hejduk was on the same site as Gino Valle’s *Social Housing Complex* from 1980, as a response to the call by the organizers of the 1975 Venice Biennale to raise awareness of the degraded state of Giudecca Island. Valle’s project is organized around two main elements, both starting from a square grid, which define its unique character: a three-dimensional system of ninety-four apartments combined vertically so to obtain three different types of housing units, and a network of routes organized in accordance with a hierarchy of external spaces which reproduce the intricate spatiality of the historical part of Venice. (Alain Croset, 2014; 214) One of the most intriguing qualities of this project is the constant tension generated by its spaces, between the individual and collective dimension, between close and distant views, between rules and exceptions. On the other hand, Hejduk’s transitional project of the cemetery marks a threshold in the emotional territory of the work itself. The work extends, perhaps for the first time, the characteristic formal systematicity to the realm of the program and narrative. The cemetery is a place of mourning, it is the place that makes concrete the condition of loss, but it can also be a place for the positive exercise of memory, a place which, by traversing of - real or virtual - memory places, our active capacity for the construction of memory is restored. Hence, this architecture cannot be separated from program, from

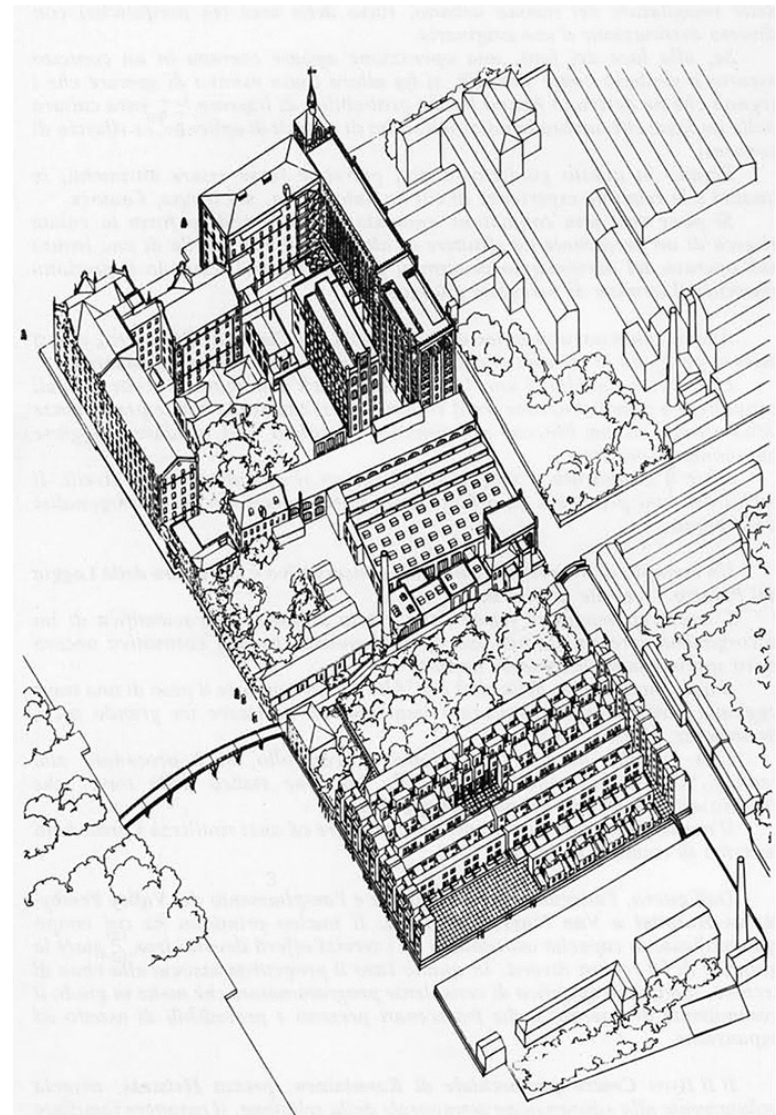
the written script, beginning to rethink the convention that architecture’s subject is an anonymous, faceless visitor.

The Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought also marks a new articulation of theory and practice in his work by collapsing the discursive privilege of language into the project. Rather than holding apart text and project, so that text can be compared to the project as verification, or vice-versa, architecture begins to encompass the discursive itself, which now operates within the form of the project, reformulating the relationship between architecture and language. Rather than appealing to the semiotic, and preserving the privilege of the linguistic over and above the architectural, Hejduk incorporates literary practice directly into architectural practice. A complex spatiality results: a textual architecture that is the exact counterpart to the compositional tactics of his projects; a textual architecture that necessitates a system of reading “inside and around the writing, a system capable of making each text the outside or absent center of another text.” (Sollers, 1976; 127) Meaning, an extreme autonomy of parts which nonetheless display an uncanny interdependence. Michael Hays in his 2008 essay *The Desire Called Architecture* notes that *The Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought* precisely constructs an elementary diagram of desire, according to which the unavailability or interdiction of a desired object (the thought - that is both dematerialized and made manifest in the ashes) becomes an attracting void of enormous significance. (Hays, 2008; 119) Projects like this twist the mundane urbanism of their sites into narrative events, opening the lens more daringly onto architecture’s otherness, erupting from the order of the real, as Hejduk catalogues his

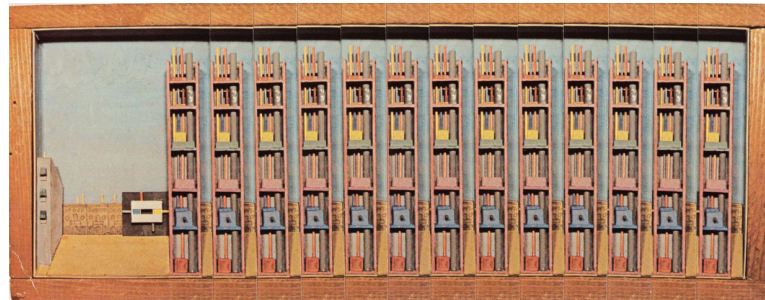




45. John Hejduk, *The Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought*, Venice, 1975. Axonometry.



46. Gino Valle, *Social Housing Complex*, Venice, 1980. Axonometry.



47. John Hejduk, *The Thirteen Watchtowers of Cannaregio*, Venice, 1979. section.

multiple, idiosyncratic codings of spatial elements (angels, animals, martyrs, machines etc.) combined with typological variations on theaters, periscopes, funnels, traps, chapels and labyrinths. This probably reached a culmination in his project for *The Thirteen Watchtowers of Cannaregio*, serving as an important case study for understanding the contextual possibilities of this area of Venice in terms of perception and signification.

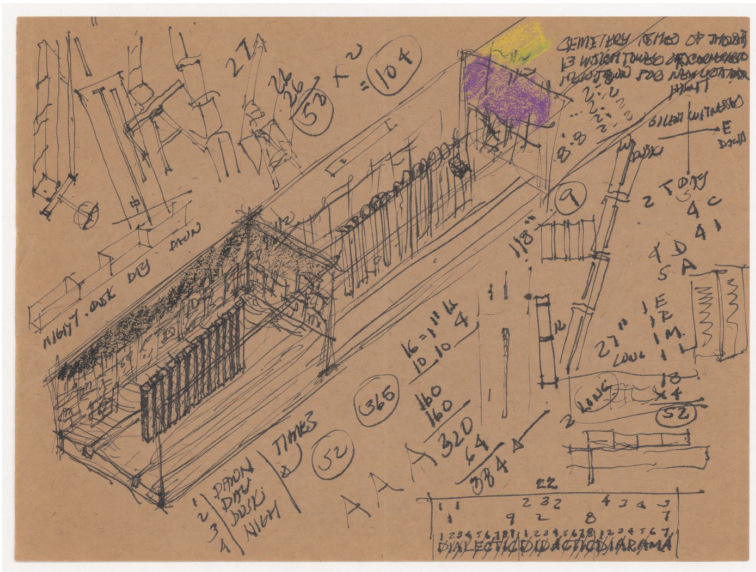
**The Thirteen Watchtowers of Cannaregio** became a symbol of Hejduk's narrative highly charged with sociological and political commentary, being his first *Masque* project from 1979. He mentions in *Mask of Medusa* that this project is his transition from architectural optimism to architectural pessimism, having undertones of psychological and physical isolation, separation, alienation, voyeurism, punishment and imprisonment. (Hejduk, 1985; 85) The innocuous, repetitive, almost banal exterior of the towers represent the socio-political connotation of the interior intrigue that lays beneath the harmlessness exhibited by the stone wall towers. Since 1974, Venice was the preoccupation of Hejduk's work and a forum for his inner thoughts on abstraction and historicism, the individual and the collective, freedom and totalitarianism, the colors black, white, grey, silence and speech, the literal and the ambiguous, narrative and poetry, the observer and the observed. (Hejduk, 1985; 83) This serves as a connection of Hejduk's work to the boundary expressed in this thesis.

The thirteen stucco-covered towers, each 29,26m high are placed in a row, containing one room per floor and meant to

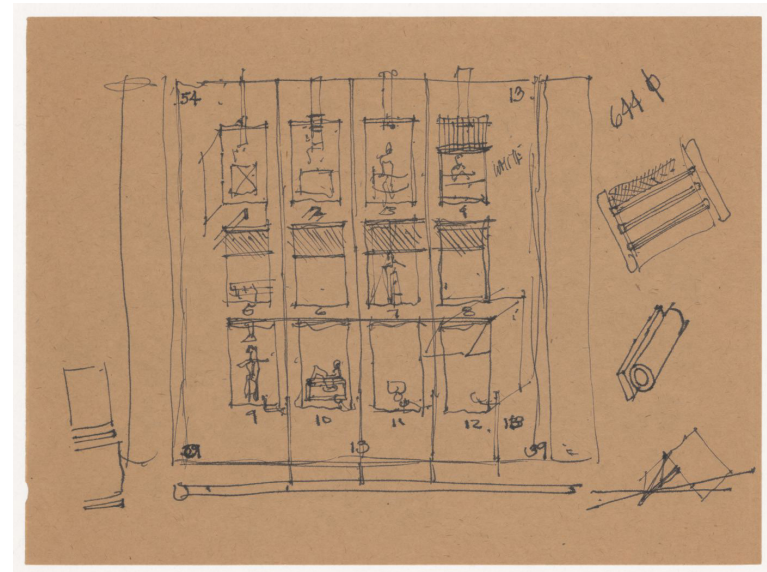
be erected in the Venetian piazza in Cannaregio. The exterior color of these towers is described by Hejduk as 'Venetian pink' with greens, greys and whites, whereas the doors and shutters are made of bluish wood. Eleven of the towers are painted grey inside, one is black and one is white. The first floor in each tower is consisted of an entry door, elevator and a large fireplace. The second level is the bathroom area, third level is the sleeping area, fourth level is the dining area, fifth level is living area with a periscope, sixth is the terrace overlooking Cannaregio and Venice and is reached by a ladder from the fifth floor. The seventh floor is the roof, or cap, of the tower. The towers are placed on a rectangular slab surrounded by water canals and on the other side of one of the canals is a campo on which there are two elements: a small white house suspended on one side of a black wall and the other is a wood table set covered with white cloth. (Dal Co, 1980, 66) "The city of Venice selects thirteen men, one for each tower for life-long residency. One man lives in one tower, and only he is permitted to inhabit and enter this tower. A fourteenth man is selected to inhabit the small house located in the campo. The table is placed in front of the small house and then each day is moved and placed in front of a following tower. When a cycle is completed another cycle is put into motion. Upon the death of one of the tower inhabitants, the man in the small house takes his place and another is selected to inhabit the house." (Hejduk, 1985; 83) There is a curious repetitive nature to the project that defines simultaneity of physical dimension, materiality, orientation and separation. On one hand, the towers are identical, which represents the power

and authoritative singularity of the body politic, but on the other hand the towers are meant to be autonomous individual entities occupied and experienced only by one inhabitant with the nature of the interior experience unrevealed to the social collective observing from outside, which is reinforced by the interior colors of the towers. This narrative recalls the propositions of Michel Foucault who studied the relationship between power and knowledge, as well as the implications of imprisonment, analyzing the merits of power imposed by any particular regime or authoritarian group. In *Discipline and Punish* from 1975, Foucault explored the invention of the *Panopticon*, a way for a guard to see others without being seen himself. The permanent visibility became a way to exercise power and in so doing induce the inmate "a state of conscious and permanent visibility." (Foucault, 1975; 31) This ties in with the idea of subject and object in the boundary, with perceiving and being perceived, where oppression from any group is essentially the same in its suppression of individual expressions of freedom. From this it can be postulated that Hejduk's intent requires the reader to ponder on the philosophical implications of the universality of individual isolation and imprisonment found in the programmatic proposal and its implications to the rights of the individuals to freely express themselves. The project of the towers provides questions about the human condition in space rather than solutions to a programmatic problem, creating a world within a world to explore. The thematic ambiguities presented in the project offer a rich landscape of spatial connotations of duality, tension, materiality, density and opacity. Using various expressions such as drawing,





48. John Hejduk, *The Thirteen Watchtowers of Cannaregio, Venice*, 1979. sketches.



49. John Hejduk, *The Thirteen Watchtowers of Cannaregio, Venice*, 1979. sketches.



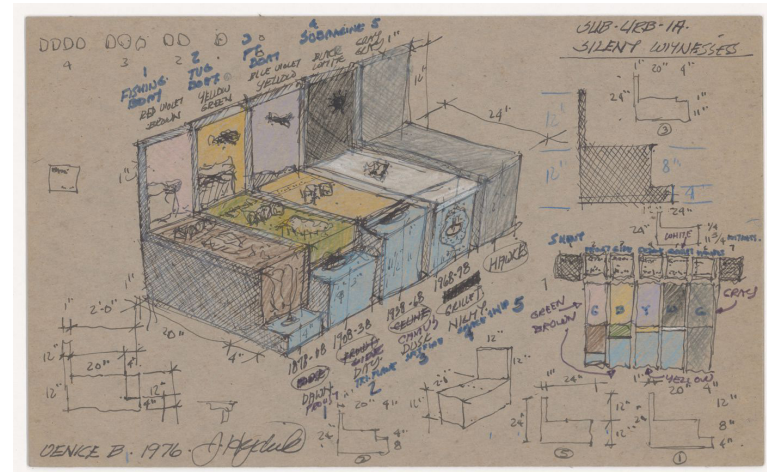
modeling and narrating he explores and activates the construct of abstractions to reveal the unrevealed. In a way, the project can be seen as a Situationist apparition since the interpretive analysis uses urban planning concepts as catalyst to consider the natura of the urban condition in his work. The project is in one hand a paper architectural commentary but on the other it is a sort of psychogeographical mapping of spatial conditions that are perfectly alligned for someone to perform a *dérive* and find authenticity of experience within a sphere of reference, causing a *genius loci* in the larger frame of our place and in the world around us. (Story, 2008; 83)

The poetics given rise by Hejduk's absorptions of allegory, metaphor and mystery open his spatial landscapes to be experienced with anticipation of the unexpected. Instead of being an urban landscape defined as a set of organizing lines providing hierarchical significance and spatial definition, he established a random landscape of elevational order. This provides a landscape of discovery through the narratives exhibited by character, asking questions about the role of architecture in urban space and providing the wanderer with an opportunity to detour from their daily routines in their search for the authenticity in urban spatial experiences. "The lesson taught by Hejduk's architecture rests in his unsurpassed skill in constructing mysteries and leading the viewer into a state of contemplation about society and about architecture's role in it – a critical and distanced contemplation that has neither beginning nor end that defies logical progression, taking instead a myriad of detours and digressions that circumnavigate, but never quite locate truth or meaning." (Mertins quoted in Hays, 2008; 90)

**The Silent Witnesses** brings to the front something that should be very evident in Hejduk's thought, but isn't much remarked upon, which is his concern with ambience and atmosphere. Not only is his work atmospherically sensitive, but equally condensates a particular atmosphere. "Certain places and specific friends created an atmosphere in which my work could move forward in exploration." (Hejduk, 1985; 58) "Overcast days have an analogous effect, humid days affect the quality of the lead, hence the density of the architecture, the cold-sickness, heightened sensuality of the body is derelict, impending doom." (Hejduk, 1985; 125) This is represented in the installation exhibited in Venice in 1976 under the title *The Silent Witnesses*, which acts as a sort of 'atlas of atmosphere.' (Dorrian, 2018; 4) Compared to the other two projects analyzed in this thesis, it seems to have received little attention and commentary, yet it appears to be a marginal project that clearly held a certain kind of centrality for Hejduk. The work takes the form of five models positioned one after the other, with a corresponding plaque below them containing an author's name and a date: Proust 1878–1908; Gide 1908–1938; Camus 1938–1968; Robbe-Grillet 1968–1998; Hawkes 1998. Through these five models runs a common datum line upon which one or more architectural elements are located, except the last one, which is empty. When seen from above, it is apparent that the elements step towards the viewer as the sequence develops. Each of the constructions has a panel on the back with the first four being painted with a continuous landscape. Looking at this installation, the observer wonders about what's going on in this allegorical story, within which world history and personal experience seem intertwined.



50. John Hejduk, *The Silent Witnesses*, Venice, 1976. site sketch.



51. John Hejduk, *The Silent Witnesses*, Venice, 1976. sketches and notes.



52. John Hejduk, *The Silent Witnesses*, 1976. photo-collage.

Key to Hejduk's self-understanding was the sense of belonging to a specific generation, coming after the modern masters of architecture. The five parts each meant to convey a thirty year generation and to compress one hundred and twenty years into five distinct models, while still being one single model, as if time zoomed back into space. In conclusion, the model appears to be a representation of the abstract concepts of time and thought. (Hejduk, 1985; 81) On the models there's illustrations of technical developments symbolized by boats and airplanes, or what he termed 'conditions', as well as different materials, times of day, architecture and types of spatial organization (the panoramic narrative) and other symbolic representations of a historical period expressed by spatial and visual means. The final box being nothing but grey matter, a conclusion seemingly pessimistic. However, the last model is also the only one that is not a representation to scale of an outer reality, it recalls the relationship between framework and fluid matter, structure and volume, geometry and movement, but moreover, it was an attempt at interrelating different conditions, spatial as well as symbolic. (Søberg, 2012; 116)

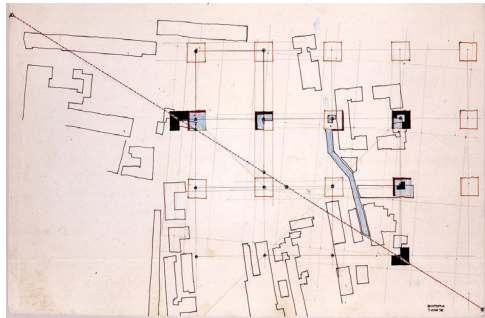
The same year, a photo-essay under the same name was published in *Parametro* demonstrating epistemological potentials of the method of iconic juxtaposition. The essay is symbolic and suggestive of psychological and empathic content, particularly focusing on the expressions of faces. It consists of various types of images: film stills, photographs of paintings, sculptures, architectural drawings and a few realized buildings, some shown only in detail. Figuration is predominant and by placing the images side by side he points to formal similarities

(i.e the representation of architecture in the paintings of De Chirico compared to the architecture of Aldo Rossi). (Søberg, 2012; 116) This collection of images can be viewed as a visual theory, arising from comparison and analogy, but also as a memory chart, noting that memory itself is a sort of repetition, as when we recall past moments and experiences we also re-create what is recalled and represented by our imagination.

After that, *The Silent Witnesses* returned in 1980, when Hejduk published *The Silent Witness and Other Poems*, as a collection of poems directly related to the images printed in the photo essay. Written with no rhymes and almost no punctuation, with complex interrelations, many of the poems describe situations, atmospheres and spatial conditions. The most famous poem from this compilation is one next to a portrait of Madame d'Haussonville:

“there are no reflections  
within Madame d'Haussonville  
only opacities which sink  
into the cloth and folds  
of a Fuseli monster  
the arm holds the drapes  
of a hidden birth  
the flower vase  
perpetuates the myth” (Hejduk, 1980; 103)

The three versions analyzed emphasize Hejduk's practice as world-interpreting and as world-making, expressing ideas of what the world is and could be, understanding the relationship between aesthetic expression and human behaviour.



53. Peter Eisenman, *Cannaregio Town Square*, 1978. sketch.

**Peter Eisenman** has during his career sought a space for architecture outside of the traditional and conventional realm, continually arguing that modern architecture was never fully modern as it failed to produce a cognitive reflection about the nature of architecture in a fundamental way. From his early houses there is a system of architectural meaning and an attempt to establish a linguistic model, the idea that buildings are not simply physical objects, but artefacts with meaning, or signs dispersed across some larger social context. The physical is merely a medium through which the conception of the virtual becomes possible. In an interview for *The Architectural Review* from 2013, Eisenman states that there is a debate in architecture today between architecture as a conceptual, cultural and intellectual enterprise, and architecture as a phenomenological enterprise - that is, the experience of the subject in architecture, the experience of materiality, of light, of color, of space and so on. "I have always been on the side opposed to phenomenology." (Eisenman, 2013) The meaning his spaces have and the role they play in the critical culture becomes an analogical relationship between language and architecture. "It was important in my work to learn that it is possible in language to separate the sign and the signified - that is, the thing and its sign. Architecture is about the relationship of the sign to the signified, that the column, for instance, is the sign of the column and the column itself, or the wall is the sign of the wall and the wall itself" (Eisenman, 2013)

Central to Eisenman's maintaining the distinction between art and architecture was his definition that architecture, unlike art, must be responsive to function and that there cannot be



a conceptual aspect in architecture which can be thought of without the concept of pragmatic and functional objects, otherwise it is not an architectural conception. In closing lines of the article for *Casabella* in 1971 titled *Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition*, Eisenman says that “The task for a conceptual architecture as opposed to conceptual art would be not so much to find such a sign system or a coding device, but rather, to investigate the nature of formal universals which are inherent in any form or formal construct. A more difficult task would be to find a way of giving these conceptual structures the capacity to engender more precise and complex meanings merely through the manipulation of form and space. This would require some form of transformational method - where the universals of the conceptual structure are transformed by some device to a surface structure and thus capable of receiving meaning. Whether it is possible to develop such transformational methods and at the same time to reduce both the existing semantic and cultural context of any architecture to produce a structure for new meaning, without developing a new sign system, seems to be a central problem for a conceptual architecture.” (Eisenman, 1971; 51)

Before going further into analyzing Eisenman’s work, a explanation of stratification of space must be set. Spatial stratification refers to the succession of spatial sequences, space between layers and in the context of this thesis is closely linked to narrative stratification, which refers to the layout or disposition of elements that carry a message exposed in a given chronological, linear, cause and effect relationship. These tools serve not only to create space but also to formulate

a certain atmosphere that links tradition and the past with the present. (Pjesivac, 2018; 2) This way, the layers of urban space chronologically follow each other and what was there earlier remains in existence like a kind of palimpsest and begins a communication with the newly added elements.

Eisenman toys with the construction of the role, sense and meaning of the narrative layers of the built environment, and by introducing this artificial layer, he questions the truthfulness of the layers of the past and their existence as unchanging and eternal. He brings into question also the concepts of the origin, beginning and end of a specific line of narrative, as well as the linear and reversible concepts of narrative history. The relationships between layers of urban tissue for Eisenman are not based only on the concept of stratification, but rather on the concepts of destratification and restratification. (Pjesivac, 2018; 2) He does not consider history linear or connected, but he visualises it as intersecting points. The fragmentation and intersection of layers of a city’s history clearly shows in his fragmented urban plans, all a means to achieve another goal: to create an architecture of fragmentation, instability, skepticism; an architecture that proposes more questions than it actually answers. Using these strategies, Eisenman achieves a transgression of the three fictions (representation, reason and history), by bringing narratives of memory and narratives of anti-memory, real and imaginary or artificial narratives, and narratives of classical and non-classical fiction into synchronic relationship. This culminates, as a field of communication between incompatible elements of ‘narrative’ in his project for Cannaregio from 1978.



54. Peter Eisenman, *Cannaregio Town Square*, 1978. site drawing.

**Cannaregio Town Square** is a project done by Eisenman for the international competition to design a major public open space in the city of Venice, held by the Municipal Government of Venice in 1978. “The project started from the notion of an architecture that invents its own site and program. Rather than trying to reproduce or simulate an existing Venice whose authenticity cannot be replicated, the project constructs another, fictitious Venice.” (Eisenman, 1978)

It’s an articulated series of voids in the ground, embodying the absence or emptiness of rationality, the basence of a potential past and the presence of artificiality. Based on three elements or three narrative layers, the project is a superposition of the grid of Le Corbusier’s *Venice Hospital* project that was intended to be built on the same location, red objects of different scales composed of elements in the form of the letter L, and a diagonal cut as a line in the ground. It is a narrative of non-classical fiction representing a transgression of the fiction of representation (referring to the unrealized project) and the fiction of reason (the absence of rationality, modernist grid as a rational form).

The sequence and the relationships between the objects are intended to place into question the idea of meaning as an effect of function. The fiction thus created acts as a notation and a critique of existing institutionalized definitions. The imaginary metaphysical landscape exists in contrast to the surrounding urban context, yet at the same time enhances its energy.

The red objects are based on the variations of Eisenman’s *House IIa* and appear in three different scales, first is smaller than a human, second is size of a house and third is twice the size of a house. They’re not positioned above the ground but in places



55. Peter Eisenman, *Cannaregio Town Square*, 1978. physical model.



56. Peter Eisenman, *Cannaregio Town Square*, 1978. site drawing.

where they cut into the ground, suggesting the play between the superficial and the repressed, the conscious and the unconscious, the figure and the ground. They're not functional, they're lifeless, solid blocks adjacent to the context, adjacent to the grid. The diagonal cut which links with the existing urban axis of Venice's bridges is the topological axis of symmetry for the objects, but also a physical cut in the surface of the earth, suggesting the existence of another layer, something that cannot forever be suppressed.

This is all a strategy for Eisenman to play with the temporality of narrative, superimposing layers of the unrealized past on layers of the realized present, creating interplay between the real and the imaginary and undermining the tradition of priorities and the authoritative chronology and hierarchy of elements. It's a construction of space of potentiality, immanent unpredictability and disjunctivity. (Pjesivac, 2018; 4)

Even though Eisenman's work before was concerned with isolating and elaborating architectural elements and operations that would ensure the autonomy and self-reflexivity of the architecture, Cannaregio witnesses a new order that initiated a characteristic of his work where there is movement from structure to site or text, or, from structuralism of the object to textualisation of the site. Eisenman says that it's a movement from "the linguistic operations to textual operations - because texts are quite correct about the site but they are no longer syntactic; they are other." (Eisenman, 2013). Continuing about Cannaregio he says that through his psychoanalytic sessions during his stay in Italy he realised that what was wrong with his architecture was that it wasn't "from the ground, from inside the

unconscious, beneath the surface." (Eisenman, 2013) So the first evidence of this occurs in Cannaregio, where for the first time he does a project that is totally in the ground, and is also urban. Confronted with the idea of a real site, in fact a very historically rich one, Venice, his approach was still to invent an 'artificial' site, where the discourse of absence is very important. By selecting from the rich palimpsest that defines the city real traces of the territory, but also absences and metaphorical traces that belong to the collective memory, elements are stratified in a series of layers, each of which is endowed with stories and own metaphors. With this project Eisenman denies the attempt to reproduce or simulate an existing Venice, whose historical authenticity can't be replicated, refusing to build yet another Venice. In affirming the emptiness of the future, present and the past, it seems nevertheless that he tries to erase all Venetian fictions, of which only the ghostly shadows remain - shadow of the loss of memory.

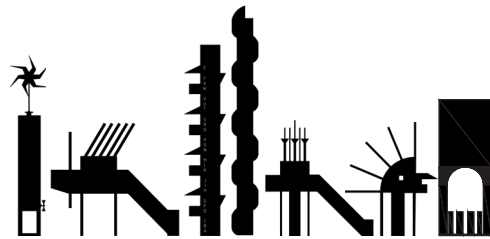


57. Ingmar Bergman, *The Seventh Seal*, 1958. scene from movie.

## The Seven Seals

“If the life that is held in tension between ‘I’ and Genius, between the personal and the impersonal, is a poetic one, the feeling that Genius exceeds and overcomes us from every side is one of panic, the panic that something infinitely much greater than what we appear to be able to endure is happening to us.” (Agamben, 2006; 96) The genius (meaning the prevailing character or spirit of something) of the individual human subject should be considered a resonance between the visible (formal, objective space) and invisible (the space we feel), and its potential to inform architectural thought, as the manifestation of invisible desires, is both a necessary and elusive stance in order to understand this metaphysical project. An epistemological foundation of spatial and architectural origins is juxtaposed with the poetic possibility of the invisible moment in the form of event, almost theatrical. It aims to make a subtle crossing between the visible and invisible, further giving importance to the before defined boundary analysed in this thesis. Work done for this meta-project strives to remain as a potential, where my task as an architecture student, in the uneasy position of an artist, is to remain subjective. Potential in architecture is that which is the visual ‘missing matter’, where





58. Six figures of Hejduk's *Victims* and the Memory structure.

a phenomenology of appearance is of particular importance for exposing this project as a product of memory of space and architecture. The phenomenology of this project is formed from the obscure origin of the invisible becoming visible, because “it is the invisible, and it alone, that renders the visible real.” (Marion, 1996; 4) It is shown how the visible increases in direct proportion to the invisible, and the more the invisible is increased, the more the visible is deepened. The image is only an apparatus of capture; the space within images is fragile, ephemeral, finite, visible.

Using John Hejduk's enigmatic and speculative work, that is in a way a research project of associative imaginaries crossing signifier and signified, is helpful for refining the question of what is possible within the contingency of the boundary for a new image of architectural space. (Mical, 2009; 11) Hejduk's work is an important reference because it exposes that which is concealed but affects the body in space, using minimally differential relations between fantasy, figure, angels, and machines. He attempts to re-familiarize what had been banished to the exteriority of space as we know it, and even thought as we know it. (Jameson, 1975; 52) The unique atmosphere in Hejduk's work serves as one of the two stratifying narrative layers for the development of this meta-project. The second layer is Peter Eisenman's obsession with fragments and grids. Trying to understand his work from a formal point of view, studying the space as geometric and proportional, there is an intention to establish the formal language of urban and architectural space, in this case for a specific cultural and geographical context which is Cannaregio. With his attention to connecting the

buildings with their ground and context, Eisenman expands on modernist grids, discovering and employing references that help organise a project's layout, diving into the layers of the past and intersecting them, later collaging fragments of these periods in one final outcome. History isn't linear or connected anymore, it is visualized as intersecting points, where this fragmentation and intersection of layers forms an architecture of skepticism. These two notions that are exemplified by Hejduk and Eisenman feel important for this project because this return to memory, metaphor and atmosphere is the main concern when conceptualizing such spaces.

**Layer 1:** In 1986 Hejduk made his work *Victims* which is an imaginary place consisting of a suggested site plan and 67 designed structures. The site plan presented in the book is one possibility for the total completion and "the arrangement of the structures is only a suggestion, the concept of another structural ordering is open." (Hejduk, 1986) His idea was to "flood the place with missing letters and disappeared signatures. To gelatinize forgetfulness." For this study, six of the structures will be displaced and used as points to mark six spaces in Cannaregio, and one structure will be reimagined and reinterpreted under the name Memory. The structures taken from Hejduk's *Victims* are as follows: 1. Clock - At the top of the clock is a moving set of blades mounted on a shaft activated by a turntable. Suspended from the turntable is a shaft with a pendulum attached. The pendulum is fixed - no movement - fixed time. On the side of the clock tower there is a cantilevered hourglass. The hourglass spins perpetually - moving time. The particles of sand are in constant motion; 19. Accountant - Keeps

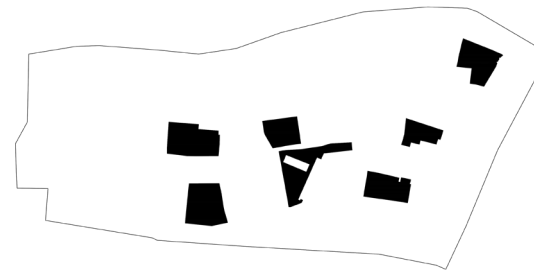
precise records of accounts, determined to keep the memory alive. Does not believe in the abstraction of numbers. For each number there is a name and a thought; 22. Painter - He thought he heard it enter the still life although the shutters were closed. He sat in the wood chair and waited for the return. He dreamed of the cliffs of Le Havre. The rooms somehow were always permeated in greens and browns. Suddenly, a lone gull silently flying appeared, wings interweaving within the vertical striped of the wallpaper. His soul was released inside, it became white; 23. Musician - The mandolin intestines of hollowed black crystals slide against the internal curvature, ultimately released through the hole of stretched fibers, held, then diminished, in a tap; 24. Poet - Stillness of heat, blue that does not move, clouds that do not echo, darkness that holds, endless twirl of fan. She reached out, and hugged the fog, to her breasts, light beam caressed, moist surgaces, night lips blow, sound Nantucket horns; 40. Security - A motorised vehicle (electric) which can move throughout the site. It is up to the city to decide if security is put into motion or whether it remains fixed still, or possibly if it is there at all.

**Layer 2:** According to Eisenman, there are three traditional approaches to urban planning: 1. As historical and physical context; 2. As grid; and 3. As object. It may be possible to posit a fourth alternative based on a topological geometry. The city is seen as the locus of a multiplicity of fragments, the residue of a decomposition from some more complex state of being. The relationships created by topological symmetries - in which the measure of scale and distance is no longer meaningful, but only position relative to some axis - are used as heuristic

devices to suggest this decompositional state. They provide an infrastructure which neither accepts nor rejects any other one. It simply exists side by side in a non-whole state, mute and incommunicative with respect to what is around it or invades it, yet silently articulate. It can be said to be intransitive.

Keeping that in mind, the part of Cannaregio is analysed through the studies of built and unbuilt forms, from which seven voids are derived that serve as chosen places for The Seven Seals. Six of the *Victims* structures and the Memory structure are placed on these voids according to the effect they will have in the chosen urban spaces, where the voids form a 2x3 grid and the seventh position is left for Memory. The characters / structures are meant to be seen as urban signifiers for each space, bringing a sense of temporality to Cannaregio and acting as focal points for certain areas that citizens and tourists can use as guiding points, symbols and conceive their own subjective idea on what each structure means for each space.

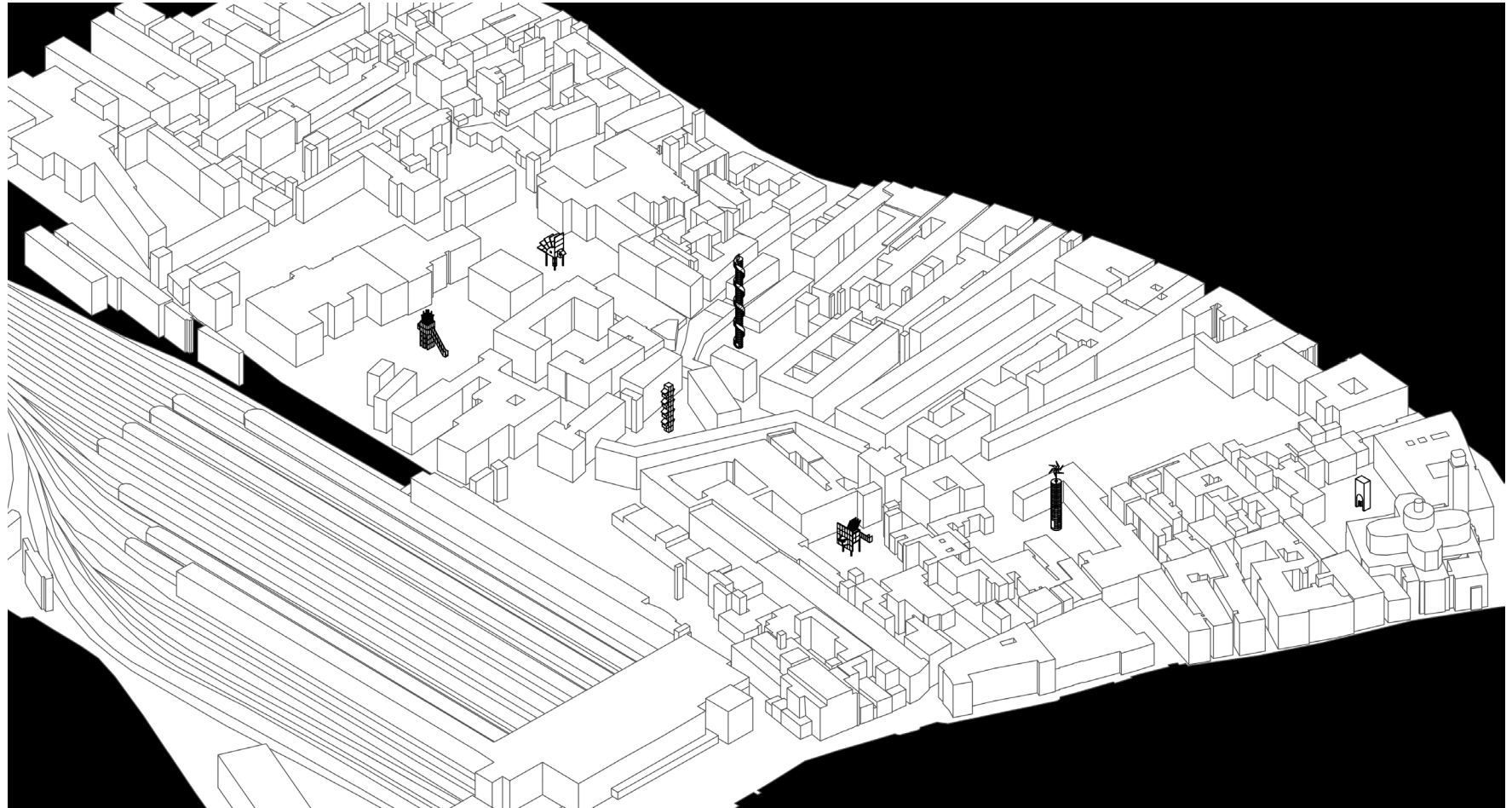
The seventh seal, Memory, is a rectangular structure with a span of 777 centimetres inspired by Hejduk's characters for the *Victims* project and acts as a signifier of city's memory, referencing Camillo's before mentioned *Theater of Memory* in the way that memories can be exposed to a spectator from the side of the actor and vice versa, and formally taking shape of Andrea Palladio's *Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza*, with the skewed perception of perspective in the narrow spaces. The concept of placing Hejduk's structures proves to be a way of injecting character into urban space in order to create new perceptions and memories of it, serving as an idea that can be further developed by designing particular structures for each space.



59. Cannaregio: built, unbuilt and seven chosen voids.

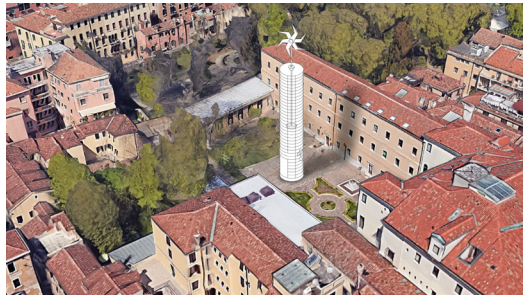


60. Cannaregio: voids with positioning of The Seven Seals according to the formed grid.

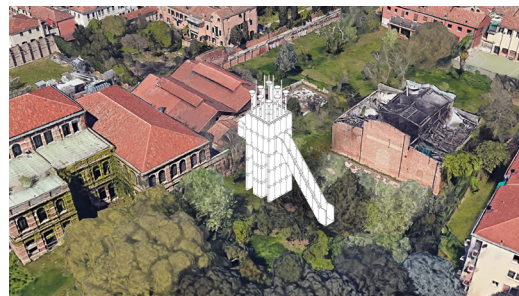


61. Cannaregio: view with The Seven Seals.

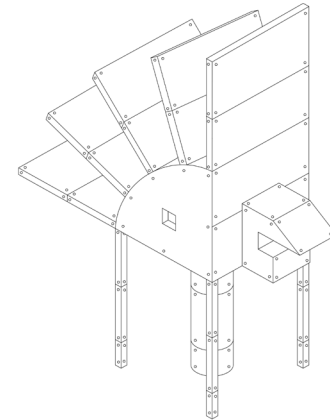
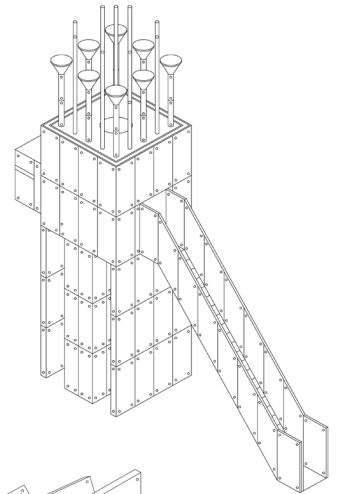
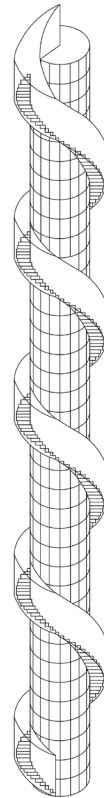
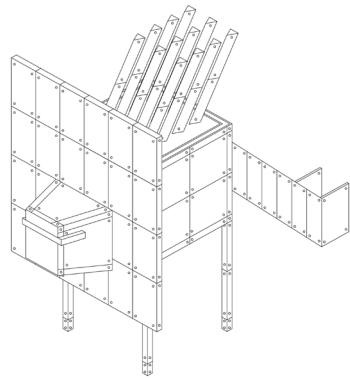
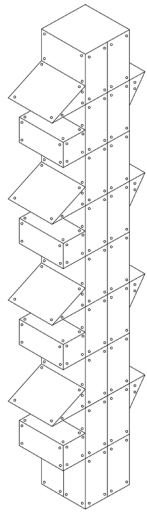
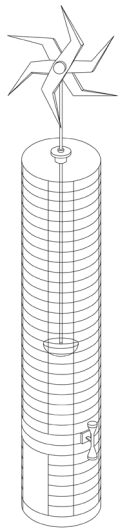




62. Clock, Security and Poet.



63. Accountant, Musician and Painter.

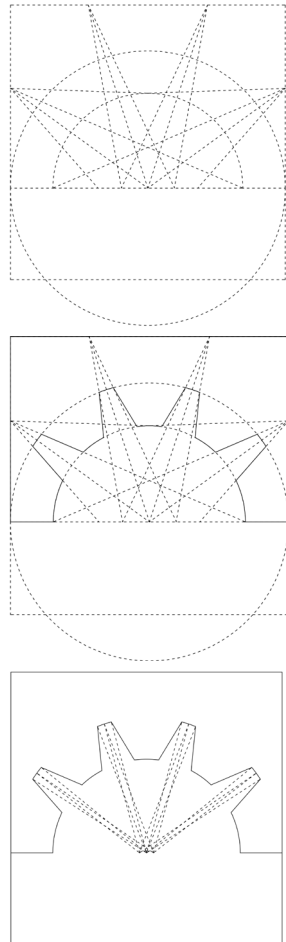


64. Clock, Security and Poet.

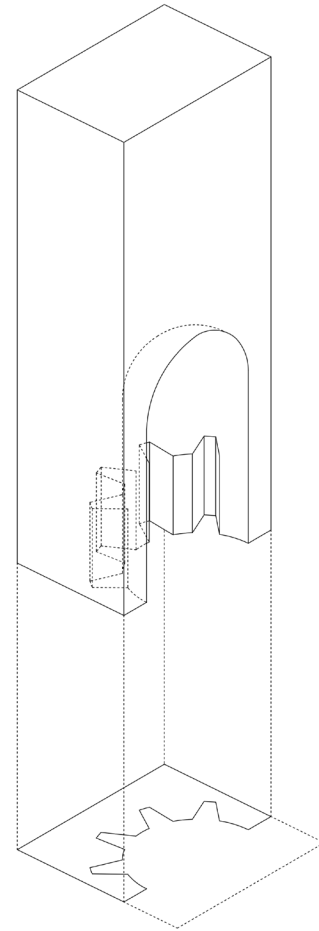
65. Accountant, Musician and Painter.



66. Cannaregio: positioning of Memory in Campo San Geremia.



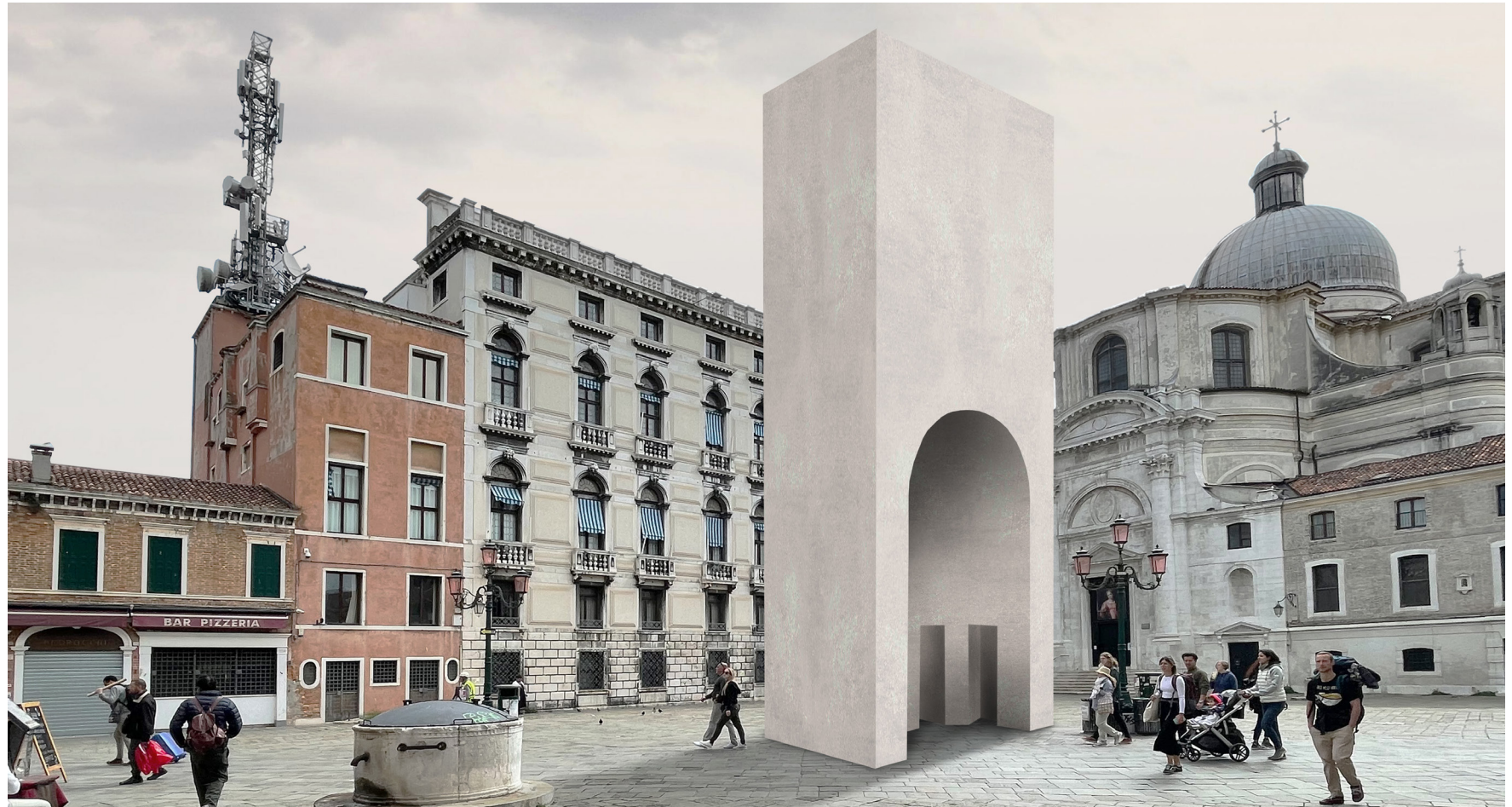
67. Memory: form derived from geometry, points of perception.



68. Memory: axonometric view, Stanford Visual Arts Services interpretation of the Memory Theater, Joseph El Khouri: Memory Theater, Palladio's Teatro Olimpico







69. Memory: view of Campo San Geremia with the structure.





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