

architectural teaching.” Bringing them together at Nous offered a rare opportunity to evaluate their results and analyze their methods, not in the conventional terms of success or failure but for their ability to generate exciting and even infuriating research that attempts to push the boundaries of technology, form-making and pedagogy. Beholden

as most design education is to accreditation and assessment, there is little room for spontaneity in contemporary schooling which is exactly why the workshops of *Spontaneous Schooling* were so valuable.

*Brooks Atwood*

### **HomeLessHome Museum on the Seam**

RAPHIE ETGAR, curator  
Jerusalem

January 21, 2010–September 3, 2010

<http://www.mots.org.il/Eng/Exhibitions/HomeLessHome.asp>

Haleh Anvari, *Chador-dadar*—London Piccadilly, 2006 (Photo courtesy of Museum on the Seam).



It has become a rite of passage in architectural education for students to explore the poetics of space, treating architecture as a discipline not limited to the objecthood of a designed artifact, but, instead, as something more intangible: the performed, subjective experience. More often than not, this is an exercise that treads a merry path to some kind of lived pleasantry—the memory of a childhood site, the manner in which sun strikes a wall, or a psychogeographic mapping of an urban space. It is the taste of a madeleine—not an architectural artifact—that allows Marcel Proust to remember his aunt's house in Combray. Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, the text *de rigueur* for this type of inquiry, recalls the spaces of his childhood home, a poetic nostalgia for the cellar and garret that he once knew.

"HomeLessHome," a recent exhibition at Museum On the Seam, builds on this theoretical genealogy, engaging its architectural poetics. Based in Jerusalem, the museum positions itself as a social-political contemporary art museum, taking on human rights, the environment and politics. In the most recent exhibition, curator Raphie Etgar turns to the home. The results, though, are not the nostalgic memories of childhood curiosities that Bachelard examines. Here, the poetry is transient, haunting, violent, and desperate. Etgar situates the home amidst exile, war, and poverty, proposing a new poetic tenor. To do this, he invokes Foucault, citing *Of Other Spaces*:

the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space.

Though Etgar's argument is fundamentally architectural, and though it engages the politics of form, the exhibition tackles not the house as a constructed artifact, but rather the "set of

relations," as Foucault calls them, which constitute a home.

In "Excerpt," for example, a video installation by Guli Silberstein, the artist presents a four and a half minute clip that shows a scene familiar to anyone who has watched CNN: gunfire begins in a Middle Eastern urban corridor, and a father whisks his child to the edge of a street, crouching behind a wall for safety. Unlike the newsreels, though, Silberstein slows the shot to provide a frame-by-frame account. This change isolates, on one hand, this family's immediately instinctual set of relations, and, on the other, the vulnerability of their homelessness.

In other works, the ravages of war lay bare the relations that might otherwise go unnoticed in more tranquil conditions. Palestinian photographer Eyad Baba shows the front of an apartment building completely torn apart by bullet holes. Two groups of children on separate balconies laugh from one to the other, the crumbling façade accentuating the playfulness of the children. Etgar also includes two photographs by Farida Hamak, from Lebanon, who documents the lives of Shiite refugees displaced by the Lebanese Civil War. Squatting in a former palace, this group occupies a space left over from war. They do it temporarily, but indefinitely, and poetically.

Not all works are related to war. Etgar includes two photographs by Iranian artist Halen Anvari, depicting women in brightly colored chadors, the traditional cloaks that satisfy the Islamic dress code hijab. In one, three women walk along an unpaved road in a broad desert valley, the only trace of inhabitation is their own presence. In this context, their relationship to place is rendered very clearly—the moving colors trace a trajectory through space, revealing a legible relationship between human subject and the earth. In the other photograph, Anvari depicts one woman in a bright red chador in the opposite condition: navigating London's crowded Picadilly Circus. Despite these different contexts, each reveals

the authorial capacities of individuals in displacement.

Other works define home as the place for artifacts. Alfredo Juan and Maria Isabel Aquilizan build a solid cube the size of a typical bedroom tightly stacked with domestic objects—clothes, lamps, kitchen utensils, and children's toys. In this way, the objects read as the commodification of domesticity, where the home becomes the repository for throwaway objects spewed out by capitalism. American artist Jeffrey Aaronson also includes a cube stacked with domestic objects. But his project, "Trailer to Mexico," does not concern the disposability of household trinkets. Instead, he depicts objects to be held onto most tightly—bed mattresses, a couch, a dresser, and a single child's toy. These objects constitute the makings of a home when the space of a home might mean an undetermined area somewhere around Nogales, Arizona. Farther into the exhibition, commodities experience a second life as scraps of refuse—corrugated metal, chicken wire, and sheets of plywood—are repurposed to form temporary shelters for Bedouins in southern Israel. In all three, objects are paramount in the creation of home, but each project reveals a fundamentally different role: disposable commodity, urgent necessity, and repurposed materiality.

The museum's building itself underscores the exhibition's intentions, sitting as it does on the seam that was once a militarized border dividing East and West Jerusalem. Arab architect Anton Baramki designed the building in the 1930s, and its residents were forced to flee following the 1947 Partition Plan. Though the border's explicitness has faded (the turrets are gone), the area marks a transition between the cultural realities—both historical and immediately contemporary—that distinguish East from West, Arab from Jewish. The institution positions itself not only physically, but also culturally, as a vehicle to short-circuit that tension, including art from all religious and political

affiliations. Compellingly, though, with this exhibition, curator Etgar manages to transcend the politics of Arab evictions and Jewish settlements, finding, instead, a more nuanced condition. In taking on the politics of the HomeLessHome, he discovers the poetics of home.

John Gendall

### People Meet in Architecture

KAZUYO SEJIMA, director

12th International Architecture Exhibition La

Biennale di Venezia Venice, Italy

August 29 to November 21, 2010

Tetsuo Kondo and Transolar, *Cloud-Room*, from 12th International Architecture Exhibition of the Biennale de Venezia, 2010 (Photo courtesy of author).



Like a well-spoken word, like a well-timed knock upon the door, the experience of the first day of the 12th Venice Architecture Biennale was of architecture returning to a relevant position in society. With curator Kazuyo Sejima's declaration that *People meet in architecture* hanging in the air, architects, members of the media, and the general public met at the Arsenale, the venue for the main exhibition. Moving from one exhibition room to another, each one very different, was like walking the keyboard of a strange architecture instrument. With every step one hit a different tone that resonated with a different architectural orientation. Every new room tells us something about where architecture has been and allows us to

guess where it might be going. The exhibition displayed an architecture of being *there*, but in the most provocative rooms, the displays also invoked a dialogue with wider cultural issues and world views.

Filmmaker Wim Wenders' contribution illustrates a total split of world views. By filming SANAA's Rolex Learning Center in Lausanne in three-dimension, as if it was the true reality, he makes the world more post-Cartesian. At the same time, "If Buildings Could Talk" creates a monologue that seems to "make the building speak," and the work changed the whole setting of space concepts into an uncertain and paradoxical middle ground. Facing this ambiguity of space first in Wenders' installation, that room made an excellent starting point for the rest of the thought-provoking exhibition. From there on, Biennale visitors encountered the word "space" repeatedly in the exhibitors' texts, even though it was rarely articulated in relation to the dynamic potential of the director's theme. What about the coherence between thinking about space and making it? In most project descriptions, the use of the word space—which Sejima characterized as "a built form"—indicated a limited idea of architecture as continuous with the space in professional drawings and models. It was, in other words, the dead space of descriptive geometry. Ultimately, though, the exhibition turned out to be richer than that, better than that.

As different rooms in the Arsenale opened up questions about space related to cultural development, for example, they allowed for a bodily experience far better than the texts and the spoken rhetoric suggested. The architecture one actually entered moved far beyond the exhibition language. It became a place for existential orientation that interrupted the space of geometric instruments and let us enter into the spaces of cultures: spaces that are continuous with life—and discursive to humanity in general.

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