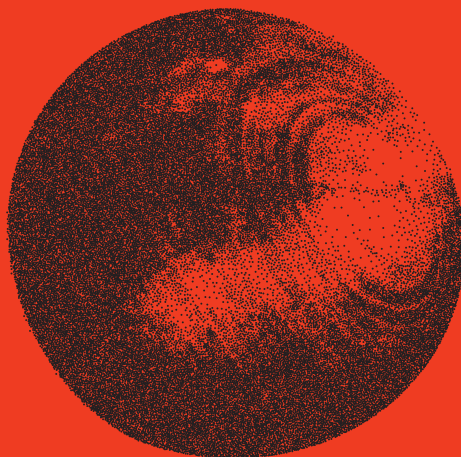# The Fallen Church:

From the Ambivalence of the Ellipse Towards the Ambiguity of Its Fragments

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to explore the transition from ambivalence to ambiguity within architectural discourse. Drawing upon Gilles Deleuze's concept of *"le monde à deux étages"*, ambivalence can be interpreted as a movement within a "two-storey", binary world—characteristic for mannerism, baroque, but also the avant-garde, as emphasized by Siegfried Giedion. In contrast, ambiguity represents a hesitation among the world's multiplicities, offering a more nuanced approach to engaging with architectural spaces. This approach, embracing uncertainty and a multiplicity of meanings, provides a framework for the case study on the adaptive reuse of the "Fallen Church," a 17th-century ruin in Grottole, Italy. This methodology enables the structure to encapsulate diverse histories and envision various futures, opening up a possibility for engagement with the fragmented realities of today.

INTRODUCTION

The exploration of architectural evolution through the lenses of ambivalence and ambiguity offers a nuanced understanding of shifts in architectural styles and philosophies. Ambivalence, derived from the Latin *ambi-* ("both, on both sides") and *valentia* ("strength")[1], signifies a dynamic interplay of opposing forces: it is a dialectical struggle, acting as a catalyst. This thesis proposes that ambivalence has shaped the trajectory of architecture, influencing periods from the Baroque to avant-garde movements. It manifests as a continuous oscillation between contrasting narratives, fostering the evolution of forms and spaces that embody these tensions.

Building upon this notion of ambivalence, Gilles Deleuze characterized the Baroque as *"le monde à deux étages,"*[2] (two-storey world) defined by two vectors: descending to depth and ascending upward. The two storeys are dependent on each other, interconnected like folds of fabric, However, a fissure runs through them, separating the external and internal worlds, the metaphysical and physical, the possible and real, the world of the body and the soul, surface and depth. Marked by an emphasis on the interplay between opposing forces, the Baroque serves as a prime example of ambivalence in architectural history.

Conversely, ambiguity—a term from the Latin *ambiguus*, signifies "having double meaning, shifting, changeable, doubtful."[3] The adjective is derived from *ambigere*, meaning "to wander, go around," and figuratively "to hesitate."[4] This hesitation undermines the prefix ambi, which ambiguity shares with ambivalence, for hesitation is what introduces the possibility for multiplicity to emerge. Here lies the primary difference between ambivalence and ambiguity: Ambivalence is defined by a strong movement between the two-storey, strictly dual world. Ambiguity, however, encapsulates uncertainty, and this uncertainty opens the door to multiple interpretations, recognizing the fluctuating nature of meanings. As such, it represents a departure from the dichotomies inherent in ambivalence. It embraces openness and sustains a multiplicity of interpretations, acknowledging the complexity of the contemporary world. This shift allows architecture to address the fragmented realities of modern existence. Through ambiguity, architecture accepts uncertainty and indeterminacy to create spaces that reflect diverse needs and possibilities.

This thesis thus seeks to map the transition from ambivalence, focused on binary oppositions and dialectical tensions, to ambiguity, which doesn't stretch between dualities but multiplicities. Hence, ambivalence and ambiguity do not stand in contrast; rather, the latter is an evolution of the former, both reflecting the ethos of the era from which they emerged.

The ambivalence, in the context of the Baroque period, signifies a shift away from the Renaissance ideal of perfect unity. During the Renaissance, art, architecture, and philosophy were characterised by an idealised pursuit of harmony and proportion, mirroring a belief in a well-ordered and coherent universe. This belief aligned with the era's scientific understanding of divine cosmic harmony. In contrast, the Baroque period embraced ambivalence, highlighting dualism and complexity rather than the simplicity and balance of its predecessor. This shift, from which Severo Sarduy constructs his analysis of the Baroque, mirrors a significant scientific transformation of the time: Kepler's discovery that planets move in elliptical orbits, not perfect circles, challenging prior notions of celestial perfection. The ambivalence, which continued to resonate in various forms within the avant-garde, as further explored by Josef Vojvodík in the context of the poetic avant-garde and Siegfried Giedion in the context of the architectural avant-garde, later transitioned into ambiguity as cultural changes unfolded. This shift occurred as the grand narratives that had previously dominated cultural and intellectual thought began to fall away. In response, ambiguity emerged as a means to navigate and sustain the increasingly fragmented world.

Ambivalence and ambiguity, as conceptual frameworks, thus provide a lens to analyse the evolving complexities of thought and expression that mirror cultural dynamics and reshape architecture. This thesis aims to map this evolution, highlighting that the changes observed in architectural discourse are not arbitrary but are deeply rooted in the intellectual and cultural currents of their times.

This thesis is structured to analyze the progression from the Baroque's oscillation between a two-storey world to a contemporary embrace of fragmented, open-ended interpretations of reality. It includes an examination of the philosophical foundations, illustrated with architectural examples that embody these theories, ranging from Borromini's sacral architecture to Derrida and Eisenman's proposal for Parc de la Villette. As the analysis progresses, the theme of fragmentation becomes increasingly significant, highlighting its crucial role in understanding and representing reality within both historical and modern contexts.

The relevance of this research is pro-

1   Online Etymology Dictionary. "Ambivalence." Accessed May 3, 2024. https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=ambivalence.
2   Deleuze, Gilles. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque.* Praha: Herrmann & synové, 2014. 41.
3   Online Etymology Dictionary. "Ambiguous." Accessed May 3, 2024. https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=ambiguous.
4   Ibid.

nounced in the context of contemporary adaptive reuse practice, which demands spaces that accommodate various shifting needs and at the same time sustain multiple histories with their inherent meanings. A design research project, focused on the adaptive reuse of the church of Santi Lucca e Giuliano, in Grottole (MA) in southern Italy, will present the application of the theoretical concepts of ambiguity to contemporary architectural practice.

In addressing the methodology of this thesis, it is guided by Bernard Tschumi's perspective that architecture is among "things that cannot be reached frontally. These things require analogies, metaphors, or roundabout routes in order to be grasped."[5] Consequently, this thesis employs a strategy of literary and philosophical detours to delve into the theoretical underpinnings of architecture, later applying these concepts to the design research project.

Furthermore, the structure of the thesis is conceived to mirror the theoretical framework it presents: it is constructed from a multiplicity of interconnected fragments of thought, used as a means for "the restorative mapping and articulation of the world".[6]

5   Tschumi, Bernard. 1996. *Architecture and Disjunction.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 182.
6   Veselý, Dalibor. 2004. *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 344.
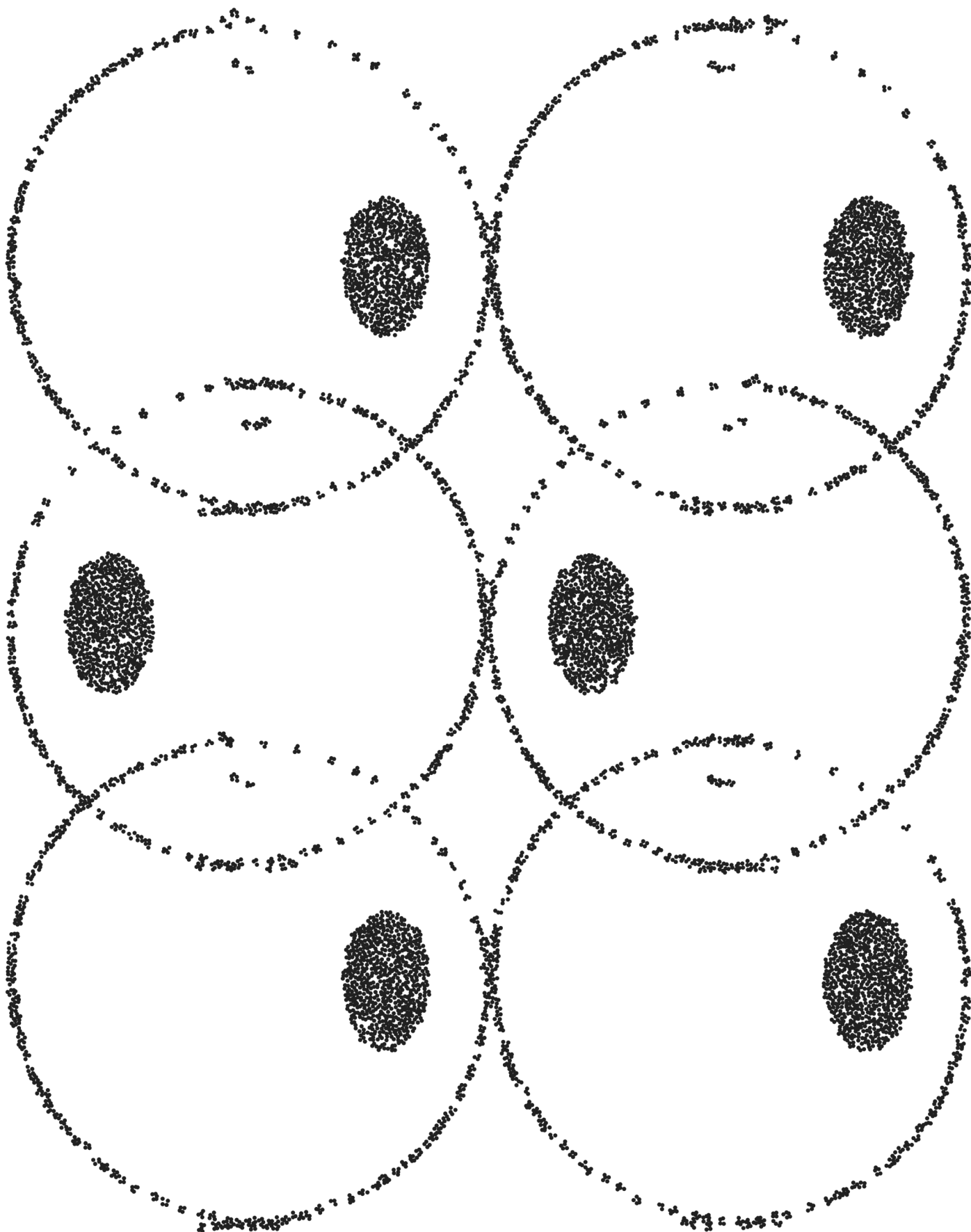
Figure 1. Chiesa dei Santi Luca e Giuliano

(1)

"Para elucidar el campo simbólico del barroco, la retombée se define como oposición de dos formas - el círculo de Galileo y la elipse de Kepler."

- Severo Sarduy, *Barroco* -

In the waning years of the 17th century, the church of St. Luca and St. Giuliano in Grottole — soon to be dubbed "The Fallen Church"— began to descent into its fallness; precipitated by the failure of the centripetal dome. This laid bare the most distinctive architectural feature of the church: the base of the dome, an *ellipse* - reframing the sky. (Figure 1.)

Around the same time, another ellipse emerged to reframe the human perception of the celestial sphere: Kepler´s ellipse; disintegrating Galilean centripetal model of the cosmos.[7] Galileo, steeped in Aristotelian thought, was an unwavering believer in the circular orbit's perfection, emblematic of divine cosmic harmony—a belief echoing an age-old tradition that elevated the circle to the pinnacle of geometric purity. Against this backdrop, Kepler's proposition of the ellipse as the authentic trajectory of planetary orbits stands as defiance: a rupture in the continuum of scientific orthodoxy. With mathematical certainty he faced an undeniable conclusion: planets navigate not in perfect circles, but in elliptical orbits, with the sun occupying not a central, but a focal position.

According to Severo Sarduy, a Cuban poet, author, and critic, known also for his work on the semiotics of the Baroque, the opposition —Galileo's circle vs. Kepler's ellipse—embodies a conflict between two cosmological visions: the singular, immaculate cosmic order versus a complex, dual-centred schema.[8] This divergence signals not merely a scientific pivot but an epistemological upheaval, transitioning from a conventional, idealized notion of celestial dynamics—synonymous with Renaissance aspirations for clarity, order, and symmetry—towards an embrace of tension, contradiction, and the hybridity emblematic of Baroque sensibility.

For Sarduy, the ellipse's role transcends mere geometry: it assumes a "generative pictorial figure"[9] of Mannerism and Baroque art:

"What the circle had once been to the divine halos in Raphael´s paintings, the ellipse was now to the oval architectonic figures of Borromini. In other words, if Galileo and his Aristotelian adherence to the circle were pre-Baroque - an inheritor of the High Renaissance, perspectival imaginary of Leon Battista Alberti

- Kepler was the scientist of the Baroque. And the Baroque, represented by the ellipse . . . was the aesthetics of a newfound freedom of expression."[10]

Where the circle represents static perfection, the two centres of the ellipse suggest dynamism, a principle central to the Baroque's dramatic reinterpretation of space and form. In this manner, the ellipse symbolises the continuous flux within dualities, a constant oscillation within the binary world: the Baroque ambivalence. This ambivalence invades every aspect of Baroque sensibility:

"The Baroque man wants to reach heaven on earth . . . he breaks his temple domes into airy feriae that carry the spectator upwards, he builds false perspectives in his architectures, to satisfy the hunger for space and to build a kind of mirror to infinity, in a torrential rain of unusual colours and lights he tries to take you out of this world, to transcend you into some other world . . . he wants to capture the spirits, the absolute, God, with the maximum of matter. It is a terrible inner struggle, in which on the one hand there is a dramatic alertness to the tendency that is directed towards this world, to its depths, a kind of insatiability directly for matter, and on the other hand there is an equally fierce desire for the spiritual."[11]

Here, Zdeněk Kalista, in his analysis of Czech Baroque, challenges the traditional narratives that characterize the Baroque period with its opulence, grandeur, and monumental materiality, by positing a counterdiscourse: it is the materiality that is a prerequisite for the experience of dematerialisation and the approximation to transcendence by the "weight of matter"[12]: notion linked to the 17th-century scientific and philosophical quandary of the "weight of air" (gravitas aeris), which recognized air as a material substance with actual weight, despite its apparent intangibility and invisibility The paradox of "air's weight" - of air as something material, and on the other hand the idea of "immaterial ethereal matter"[13] - is mirrored in Baroque architecture, which crafts an illusion of dematerialized architectural mass: ethereal, as if floating, ecstatic; marked by a dynamic infinitude: such spaces are envisioned as "sublimat-

7   Sarduy, Severo. "Baroque Cosmology: Kepler." in: *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup, 292-310. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. 292 - 318
8   Ibid.
9   Perez, Rolando. 2011. *Severo Sarduy and the Neo-Baroque Image of Thought in the Visual Arts*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press. 2.

10   Ibid.
11   Kalista, Zdeněk. *České baroko: Studie, texty, poznámky*. Prague: Evropský literární klub, 1941, 20-21, translated by author.
12   Ibid.
13   Vojvodík, Josef. *Povrch, Skrytost, Ambivalence. Manýrismus, Baroko a (Česká) Avantgarda.* Prague: Argo, 2008. 105, translated by author.

ed and illuminated matter"[14] - infinite; breaking free from all confines. Space, matter, and light converge into a dynamic unity; birthing new liberated spaces and volumes. This quest for the infinite, a yearning for verticality and levity, revisits Siegfried Giedion in Space, Time, and Architecture. Giedion observes that Baroque architecture, "eschewing perspectival illusion or the painted sky"[15], achieves a dematerialisation of space through structural innovation: it conjures "a feeling of infiniteness ... produced by architectonic means alone."[16] This paradox, where matter is both present and absent, underlines Baroque's novel approach to form and space: matter here is the potentiality for the immaterial. Hence, the Baroque's contemplation of matter unveils its inner contradiction: it is through matter's density that its dematerialisation and transcendence are realised. In this sense, architecture follow the principle of *stretto*, a mean of expression of Baroque music:

> "... it is the tightening and densification of basic spatial units that are in intersection with others that build upon them, interpenetrating and densifying them, and potentiating the dynamic effect of the building by their rhythmic and articulated nature ... Individual spatial units are tightened before the previous ones have reverberated, creating intermittent "*strettoes*".[17]

This is the principle of the pleating of folds in the sense of Deleuze's conception of Baroque culture and the image of the world as a pleating of an infinite fold that separates / passes between matter and soul, facade and enclosed space, outside and inside: "A world, but only of two floors, separated by a fold that acts differently on either side, this is the Baroque contribution par excellence."[18] The fold, Deleuze's central metaphor, signifies the endless modalities through which substance, space, and identity are both differentiated and metamorphosed, yet tethered to a cohesive totality. This notion parallels an understanding of matter's elasticity contemplated by Leibnitz concerning the folds and curvature of the universe and addressed by Sarduy in his discussions on Borromini:

> "Among the myriad ways to engender the ellipse, one stands out for its geometric fidelity: the method that imbues the circle with elasticity, transforming its center—akin to a cellular nucleus—into a fount of fission. This approach, likely mirrored by Borromini in the blueprint of San Carlino, reexplores the circle's latent dynamism."[19]

Sarduy then advances the idea that the Borrominian ellipse de facto acts as the anamorphosis of Galileo's circle: (Figure 3.)

> "Through the expansion of the contour and the center's duplication ... transitioning from its head-on stance to utmost laterality ... anamorphosis manifests. The quintessential ellipse of the Baroque, the Borrominian ellipse, at the core of the definitive plan, herein explicates ... the anamorphosis of the circle."[20]

Thus, the Borrominian ellipse pronounces the Baroque era's philosophical and visual dialogue with anamorphosis. Anamorphosis, a technique involving distorted projections or perspectives, requires viewers to find a specific vantage point to correctly perceive the intended appearance of an image. Similarly, Borromini's architecture manipulates spatial perception: its dynamism enables the structure to reveal different facets of itself depending on the viewer's position. This manipulation marks a significant shift from the moral and aesthetic absolutes epitomized by Galileo's circle, inaugurating a new paradigm for perceiving and understanding the world.

> "Paradoxically, the anamorphic image, albeit inadvertently ratified by Kepler's astronomical pursuits in the realm of fine arts, heralded the twilight of Keplerian naïve realism and the genesis of Cartesian epistemology."[21]

14   Horyna, Mojmír. Několik poznámek ke vztahu hmoty a prostoru vrcholně barokní architektury. in: *Barokní Praha – Barokní Čechie 1620–1740. Sborník příspěvků z vědecké konference o fenoménu baroka v Čechách*, edited by Olga Fejtová, Václav Ledvinka, Jiří Pešek, and Vít Vlnas, Praha: Scriptorium – Archiv hlavního města Prahy, 2004. Documenta Pragensia. 200.

15   Giedion, Siegfried. *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941. 126.

16   Ibid.

17   Pavlík, Milan, and Jaroslav Smolka. Princip těsny v barokní hudbě a architektuře. *Umění* 33 (1985): 485.

18   Deleuze, *The Fold*: Leibniz and the Baroque. 41, translated by author.

19   Sarduy, Severo. 1999. Obra Completa. Vol II: Theatre. Essays. History of the Text. Critical Writings on the Text. Dossier (Critical Reception). Interviews. Bibliography. Critical Edition, ed. Gustavo Guerrero and François Wahl. Paris: Ediciones UNESCO. quoted in Rolando Pérez, "Severo Sarduy on Galileo, Kepler, Borromini, and the Coded Language of the Anamorphic Image," *Romance Notes* 55, no. 1 (2015): 5. https://doi.org/10.1353/rmc.2016.0026, translated by author.

20   Sarduy, quoted in Pérez, "*Severo Sarduy on Galileo, Kepler, Borromini*", 6.

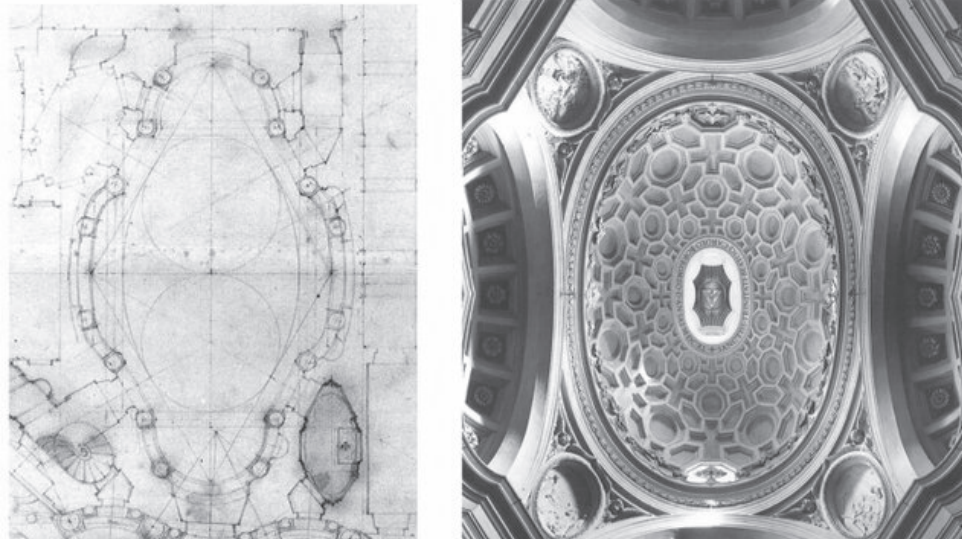21   Pérez, "*Severo Sarduy on Galileo, Kepler, Borromini*", 7.

Figure 2. San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane by Borromini: a plan and a dome photograph showing the oval impost.

Plano de San Carlino, de Borromini, obtenido por anamorfosis del círculo.
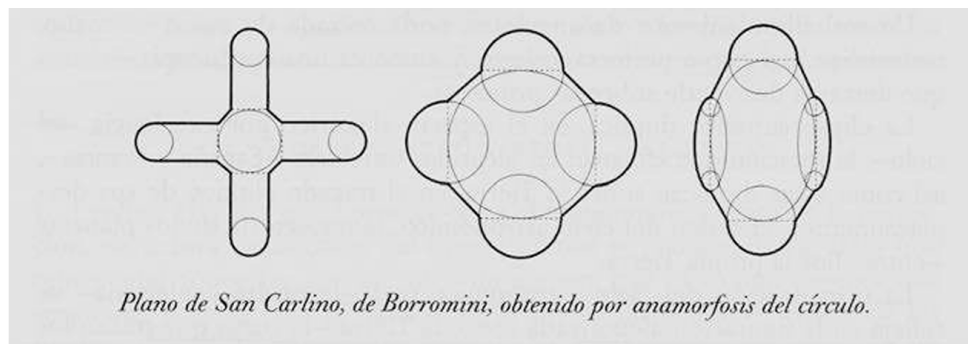
Figure 3. Sarduy's schema of Borromini's San Carlo, showing the "the anamorphosis of the circle."

This shift fundamentally alters our relationship with perception: the world is no longer accepted as a given truth but is instead subject to systematic doubt.

For Sarduy, this trajectory—from Galileo to Kepler, from Borromini's architectural innovations to the conceptual realm of anamorphosis— surpasses mere historical or artistic curiosity: it is the evolution in aesthetic consciousness, resonating persistently within our contemporary ethos. It accentuates the legacy of the Baroque and the potentialities it opened: to delve beyond the visible, to question the given: to hesitate.

*

"Here, there also, who hesitates, endlessly hesitates, / to finish his plan!"

- Vladimír Holan, *Arch* -

Josef Vojvodík highlights a thematic continuity between the Baroque period and the historical avant-garde, identifying several elements that these eras share:

"Purification, an iconoclasm that seems to be already contained in the eccentric images of Baroque imagery, the morphoclasm of Baroque silence and inexplicability in the opulent rhetoric of Baroque discourse, the constant and confusing movement between fragment and postulated (but unattainable) whole ... a sense of constant transgression of the norm, of breaking with tradition and aesthetic provocation, of maximizing phenomena, of pluralization and decentralisation, of the principle of variation (the Baroque idea of the world as a plurality of worlds, for example in Giordano Bruno), all these are common points of contact, linking Mannerism and the Baroque with the historical avant-garde."[22]

In terms of architectural discourse, a link between Baroque and avant-garde principles is established in 1941, when Kalista publishes *Czech Baroque*, and Siegfried Giedion releases *Space, Time and Architecture*. Here, the sacral Baroque architecture, primarily Borromini's and Guarini's, is originally linked to avant-garde architecture, notably to Le Corbusier, who, according to Giedion, sought what Borromini aimed for: the interpenetration of internal and external spaces.[23]

The avant-garde architecture revisits the architectural dynamism as a sculpting force of space - originating in the 17th-century Baroque; blending internal and external space into a fluid, "flowing" space purely through architectural means, creating a space that becomes simultaneously open and enclosed, transparent and opaque. As Julius Posener reports about the Villa Savoy, which he visited shortly before its completion: "It had transparency, spatial camaraderie, an abstraction of union: slender, rounded supports—les pilotis—and walls that seem immaterial."[24]

The idea of immateriality can be perceived as the central theme of avant-garde architecture in the 1920s. Villa Savoye and the German Pavilion at the World Exhibition in Barcelona are prime examples of attempts to realize floating and immaterial architectural volumes.

The effect of immateriality is achieved not only through open floor plans but primarily through materials capable of reflecting light: marble, glass, chrome, and even water; as with the Barcelona Pavilion, where the water of the pool reflects the roof, creating the impression of it floating, with light reflections penetrating the pavilion spaces. (Figure 4.)

Just as the Baroque is inseparable from the dominance of light - where "light penetrates every monad and "deepens' its matter"[25] , as Deleuze highlights in *The Fold* - avant-garde architecture also aspires to dematerialize matter through the „light's diaphanization of physical space"[26]. In this sense, the light opens up infinity: "Light, by its fundamental nature, is indestructible, and therefore, given perfect conditions, can extend infinitely (posse progredi in infinitum)". For Guarini, the perfect conditions mean "the absolute translucency of an object (diaphanum subjectum)."[27]

This is what the Cubists sought to achieve by making the surface of the painting transparent by

22   Vojvodík, *Povrch, Skrytost, Ambivalence*, 104.

23   Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 109.
24   Posener, Julius. 1995. *Was Architektur sein kann. Nuere Aufsatze*, Basel-Berlin-Boston. 187, translated by author.
25   Deleuze, *The Fold*, 44.
26   Vojvodík, *Povrch, Skrytost, Ambivalence*, 106.
27   Veselý, Dalibor. Světlo a nekonečno v barokní architektuře, in: *Barokní Praha – Barokní Čechie 1620 – 1740*, (edd.) Olga Fejtová, Václav Ledvinka, Praha 2004, 229, translated by author.
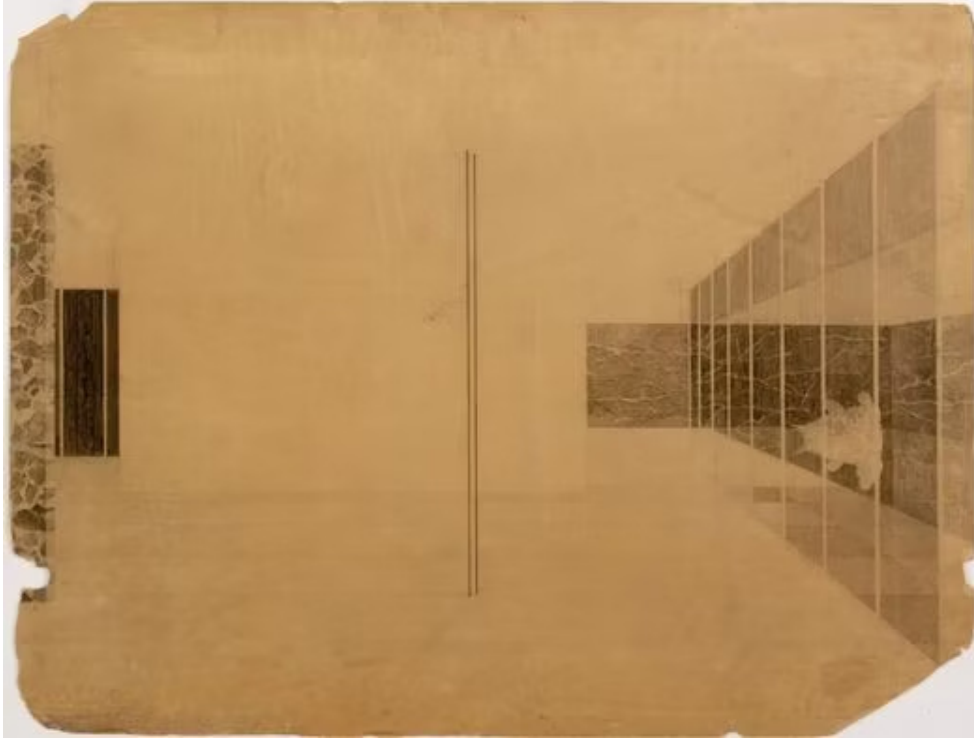
Figure 4. Mies van der Rohe: Interior Perspective of the German Pavilion at the International Exposition, Barcelona, Spain.

overlapping translucent surfaces. It is an approach later referred to as "phenomenal transparency"[28] , introduced by architectural theorist Colin Rowe and painter Robert Slutzky in their essay "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal." Unlike literal transparency, which refers to the physical properties of materials that allow light to pass through them, phenomenal transparency involves the overlapping and interpenetration of forms, creating a perception of depth, complexity, and multi-dimensionality.

Through phenomenal transparency, cubists disrupted the dualism between the external and internal world. Vojvodík exemplifies this notion in his analysis of a preparatory sketch for the painting *St. Sebastian* (1912) by Bohumil Kubišta: (Figure 5.)

"The experience of the thing, of the body, which the artist creates on the two- dimensional surface of the painting, means breaking through and removing the "skin" of the optical surface, and thus penetrating the transparent spiritual reality."[29]

The drawing opens a view into the body of the saint, into the sphere of intimate reality, formed by a system of ellipses, rhythming the entire composition, evoking dynamism via a constant spiral movement.

"Body, matter and space . . . become transparent, they become signatures of the aperspectival world transcending the dualism of time and space by making all contents transparent from all perspectives."[30]

This multiplicity of perspectives signifies fragmentation, a hallmark of the avant-garde that marks a ceaseless oscillation between the quest for a complete form and its inherent incompleteness. In the work of Vladimír Holan, the poet of avant-garde ambivalence, the contradiction and incompleteness are to be perpetually challenged, but never overcome:

". . . It is only in the externalizing sense that a lasting harmony, or rather peace, can be achieved, but only at the cost of an inner stiffening, mortification. Man in his essence is, on the contrary, a flow. Holan's poetry tries with all its strength to grasp this complex, unfinished, ever-changing stream, to arrive at a yes or no - and always arrives at a new uncertainty . . ." [31]

Holan's quest for answers always results in more questions, highlighting the fragmented and incomplete nature of understanding: the poet is in his cyclical process of seeking certainty to encounter further ambiguity.

"We were never quite it. We only resembled it,
But we resembled it completely.
Now, when we begin to be it summarily
we only shape ourselves to part of the image
We're going to abandon totally in the future.
What we will become, I wonder. "[32]

28   Rowe, Colin, and Robert Slutzky. "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal." *Perspecta* 8 (1963): 45–54. https://doi.org/10.2307/1566901.

29   Vojvodík, *Povrch, Skrytost, Ambivalence*, 120.

30   Ibid.

31   Blažíček, Přemysl. 1991. *Sebeuvědomění poezie. (Nad básněmi V. Holana)*, Pardubice – Praha, 45, translated by author.

32   Holan, Vladimír. 1985. *Mirroring: Selected Poems of Vladimír Holan*. Translated by C.G. Hanzlicek and Dana Habova. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Figure 5. Bohumil Kubišta: Preparatory Sketch for the Painting *St. Sebastian* (1912).

(2)

"Fragments seem key to this century, whether as comments on composition, decomposition, personal thinking, on this century itself, on theories of design or a theory of the end of design, or on someone else's fragmentary commentary or approach."

- Roger Connah, *Writing Architecture* -

"Fragmentation is continually being brought about . . . We will thus be led to the illusion that the world is actually constituted of separate fragments . . ."

- David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* -
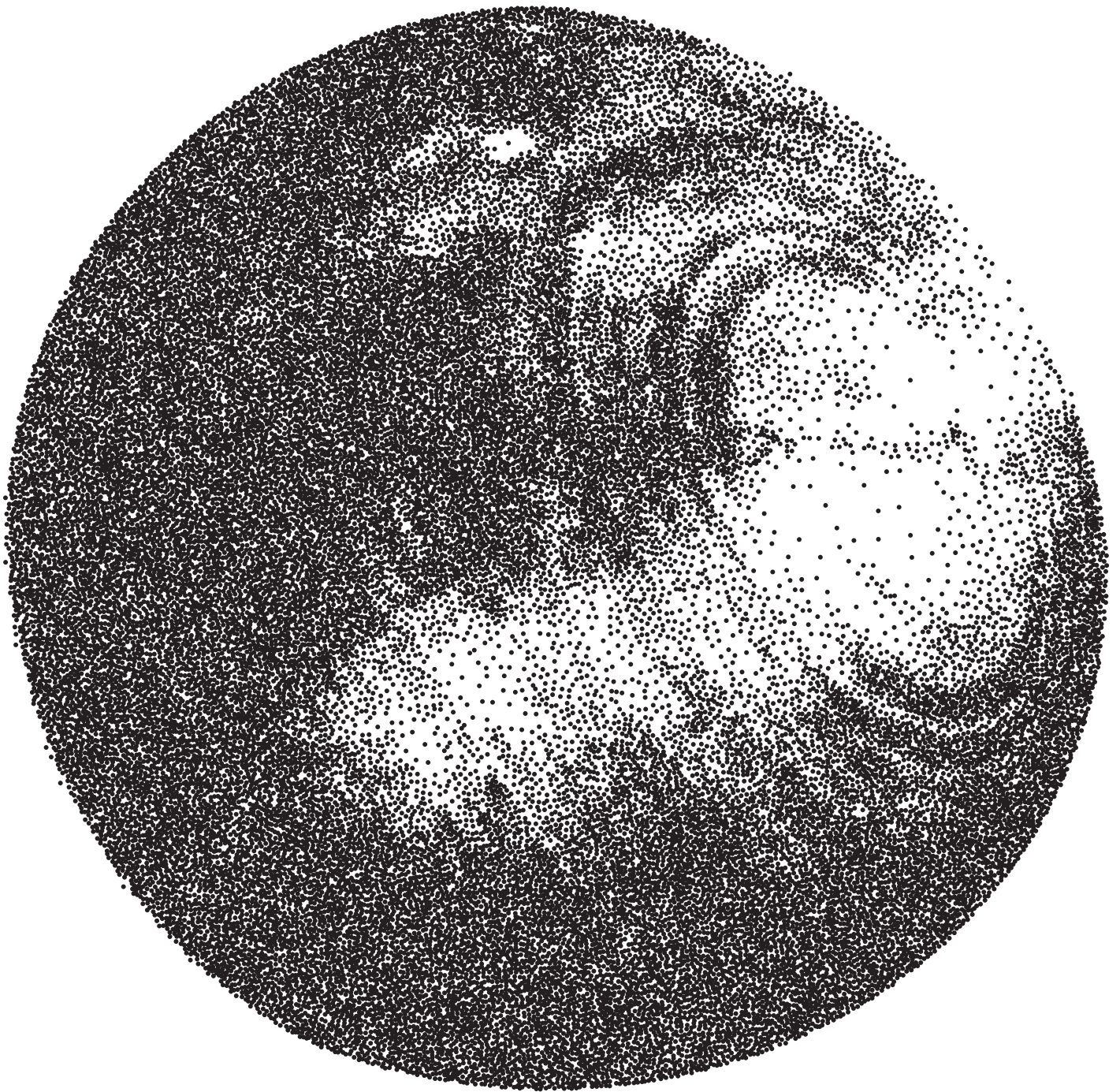
The decentralization of the world by ellipse[33] culminates in the contemporary understanding of the world as inherently fragmented. Fragmentation, often cast in a shadow of negativity, "as a result of isolation and disintegration and thus as potential chaos"[34], derives its infamy from a traditional notion that aligns unity and coherence with order and stability. This perspective, which prized singularity and seamless narratives, faces its counterpoint in the reality of modernity, marked by cultural diversity and the compartmentalization of knowledge. And yet, fragmentation emerges here as a paradoxical force: according to Dalibor Veselý, an architectural historian and theorist, it's a phenomenon that contributes "to the formation of meaning and a sense of wholeness"[35].

Fragmentation catalyses the creative reassembly of ideas, practices, forms: it is in the juxtaposition of disparate elements that new meanings and aesthetic experiences are born. Veselý draws attention to the paintings of Paul Cézanne, the collage work of Georges Braque, and cubism and surrealism in general, to underscore the restorative potency of fragmentation - the fragmented image, the multiplicity of perspectives, the embrace of ambiguity - all converge to forge new patterns of understanding, being. This recombination suggests fragmentation not as a terminal state but as a transformative process that Veselý terms "the restorative mapping and articulation of the world".[36]

This transformative aspect of fragmentation is expanded by Gloria Anzaldúa in her germinal work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Anzaldúa shifts the normative definition of mestiza as a figure embodying mixed heritage, notably of Indigenous American and European lineage, and expands the concept: *The New Mestiza* emphasizes the idea that fragmentation—whether cultural, identity-based, or linguistic—acts as a catalyst for the creation of new, hybrid forms of identity. Rather than viewing fragmentation as a form of division or weakness, Anzaldúa positions it as a productive force that enables the emergence of a mestiza consciousness. This consciousness leverages the complexity and multiplicity resulting from fragmented experiences to "break down the subject-object duality and show ... how duality is transcended."[37] Hence, she emerges as a synthesis, carving a path toward wholeness in a fragmented world, proposing not a resolution but a continual process of becoming, where identity is not fixed but fluid - continuously reshaped by the tides of various experiences, interactions and their perceptions.

Within the aesthetic discourse, the transformative power of existing "in-between", beyond the confines of established boundaries and categories, was articulated by Paul Valéry in his Socratic dialogue *Eupalinos ou l'Architecte*, where Valéry recounts a moment when a young Socrates, strolling along the seashore, encounters "*une chose blanche*" - a white, mysterious object washed ashore. This object, "the most ambiguous object imaginable"[38], resistant to identification, becomes for Socrates "a matter for doubt"[39]. Its very unidentifiability challenges the Platonic ideal: When Phaedrus in Valéry's dialogue exclaims: "What is most beautiful finds no place in the eternal!" Socrates asks: "Is Plato not in these parts?"[40]

Indeed, not so: *objet ambigu* - an object that exists beyond the realm of fixed ideas - cannot occur at all in the Platonic idea of the world with which Valéry's dialogue polemics. Hence, Valéry's young Socrates throws it back into the sea.

Valéry uses this episode to critique the Platonic philosophy, which posits that forms or ideas are eternal and immutable, residing in a transcendent realm separate from our material world: in this view, engagement with material objects is a passive reflection on the imperfect manifestations of these higher, absolute truths. However, Valéry's dialogue suggests a departure from this passive engagement towards a dynamic interaction with the aesthetic object: *objet ambigu*, "which poses all questions and leaves them open"[41], demands a creative engagement from the viewer, who is potentially transformed into the creator of the object itself.[42]

The dialogue thus marks a shift from static contemplation to a dynamic understanding of creation and perception. Valéry posits that the aesthetic experience is not merely an act of passive observation but an active, creative process. This process involves a mutual influence between the viewer and the object, where each encounter with the aesthetic object is a creative act contributing to its ongoing existence and

33   Sarduy. "Baroque Cosmology: Kepler." *In Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest.*

34   Veselý, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production.* 318.

35   Ibid. 334 – 343.

36   Ibid. 334.

37   Anzaldúa, Gloria. 2012. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

38   Valéry, Paul. 1956. "Eupalinos, or The Architect." In *Dialogues.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 79-80. 110.

39   Ibid., 114.

40   Ibid., 75.

41   Blumenberg, Hans. 2020. "Socrates and the Objet Ambigu." *In History, Metaphors, Fables: A Hans Blumenberg Reader.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 418.

42   Ibid., 408.

meaning: "Aesthetic object", suggests Hans Blumenberg in his essay on *objet ambigu*, "does not possess the determinateness of a point, but rather the potentiality of a horizon."[43] The aesthetic object, therefore, is constantly in the process of becoming, shaped by the perception of the viewer.

Four years after Valéry published Eupalinos, André Breton revives the discussion on ambiguity and perception by declaring a "crisis of an object". Set against the backdrop of the 1936 Surrealist Exhibition of Objects, Breton argues similarly to Valéry: he demands to move beyond mere physical or utilitarian dimensions to embrace objects as carriers of latent, ambiguous, and potentially transformative meanings. Breton emphasizes the importance of perception, context, and interaction in revealing the hidden, latent aspects of objects.[44] This approach sought to challenge and expand the observer's understanding and experience of reality.

Breton's discussion connects to broader surrealist aims of undermining conventional perceptions and expectations, linking the crisis of the object to wider philosophical and scientific revolutions that questioned foundational assumptions about reality, space, and the nature of existence.

This reexamination of reality was propelled by the advent of quantum physics, which introduced a "new reality" characterised by principles that deviated from classical physics, leading to an epistemological crisis, or, in the words of Gaston Bachelard "epistemological break"[45], caused by the "entirely new forms of rationality, demanded by the seemingly nonsensical results achieved by physicists observing behaviour on the subatomic scale."[46] The new paradigm, defined by quantum mechanics, was initially met with resistance due to its departure from the conventional understanding of the world. However, the Surrealists, with their inherent defiance against commonsense, immediately embraced the paradoxes of quantum mechanics.

Gavin Parkinson delves into the symbiotic relationship between Surrealism, quantum mechanics, and modern physics in his article 'Surrealism and

Quantum Mechanics: Dispersal and Fragmentation in Art, Life, and Physics', highlighting their collective impact on the conceptualisation of reality in the early to mid-20th century.[47] Parkinson illustrates how Surrealism was at the forefront of assimilating the disruptive discoveries of quantum physics into its artistic and theoretical frameworks.

Parkinson invokes Henri-Charles Puech—a historian renowned for his work in comparative religion and ancient philosophy—who offered insights in an article for the journal Minotaure, deeply influenced by Surrealist thought. The article "Signification et représentation", probes into the evolving challenges of artistic representation in an era where traditional notions of object and subject—once clearly defined within the paradigms of totality and wholeness—were becoming increasingly elusive.

" . . . the most recent developments in physics seem not to allow representation to rediscover "invariants" this side of apparent reality in the form of content. Solids dissolve and are reconstituted as fluids, matter as radiation, particles as "wave packets." The exact delineation of reality gives way to a vaguer consideration of unities more or less arbitrarily defined: strict determinism vanishes before a calculation of probabilities which tries hard to come to terms with chance. In future, in place of points of reference – now abolished – that the atom as the "final thing" supplied to representation, there is nothing more – to still cling to an illusory scrap of an image – than the slow and indeterminate swelling of waves of space or of something that could still be like pure space, as the ultimate expression of reality." [48]

Puech reflects on the impact of quantum mechanics, on our conceptualization of reality and its representation. He articulates a shift from a classical, deterministic understanding of the universe to a quantum view where uncertainty, probability, and fluidity become central: the solid, reliable entities of classical physics dissolve under quantum scrutiny, and determinism is replaced by probabilities. This highlights the quantum behaviour where particles don't have a definite state until measured, and their properties are better described by probabilities rather than definite values.

In classical physics, the universe operates

43   Ibid., 437.
44   Rudosky, Christina. 2021. "Surrealist Objects." In *Surrealism*, edited by Natalya Lusty. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 153. doi:10.1017/9781108862639.009.
45   Bachelard, Gaston. 1934. *Le Nouvel Esprit scientifique*, quoted in Gavin Parkinson, "Surrealism and Quantum Mechanics: Dispersal and Fragmentation in Art, Life, and Physics," *Science in Context* 17, no. 4 (December 2004). 558.
46   Parkinson, "Surrealism and Quantum Mechanics: Dispersal and Fragmentation in Art, Life, and Physics." *Science in Context* 17. 558.

47   Ibid.
48   Puech, Henri-Charles. "Signification et représentation," *Documents 3*, no. 1 (1934-5): 18-22, quoted in Gavin Parkinson, "Surrealism and Quantum Mechanics: Dispersal and Fragmentation in Art, Life, and Physics," *Science in Context* 17, no. 4 (December 2004). 561.

under strict laws of cause and effect (determinism), where knowing the initial conditions of a system allows for precise predictions of its future state. Quantum mechanics, however, introduces inherent unpredictability and indeterminacy, where outcomes are only probabilistically determined, challenging the notion of strict determinism. Hence, from this perspective, reality's ultimate expression is no longer in definite, tangible entities, but the fabric of reality is seen as more of a probabilistic field of potentialities rather than fixed, discrete particles. This perspective resonates with the essence of quantum mechanics, where the act of observation fundamentally transforms potential into actuality. Contrary to the traditional view that measurement merely disturbs an already determined state, quantum mechanics reveals that particles like electrons do not possess specific attributes until they are observed. This, according to Heisenberg, leads to a conceptualization of the universe as a "duplex world"[49] , where our realm of actualities emerges from an underlying fabric of potentialities.

This understanding introduces a paradigm in which reality is inherently ambiguous: reality itself becomes *objet ambigu*; constructed from the interplay between observer and observed. Such a viewpoint dismisses the notion of an objective reality independent of our perception, suggesting instead that reality is created through the act of observation.[50]

In 1982, Alan Aspect's experiments provided empirical support for Bell's Theorem, which fundamentally challenges our conventional understanding of space and time by demonstrating that the observation of one particle can instantaneously influence another, regardless of the distance separating them. This phenomenon suggests a reality where particles that share a common origin remain interconnected in such a profound way that an action on one can instantaneously affect the other, even if they are separated by vast distances. This quantum entanglement further implies that the universe is an undivided whole, where the fragmentation is merely an illusion. However, this notion, confirmed by modern physics, had already been posited by Leibniz:

> "Now, this interconnection, or this adapting of all created things to each one, and of each one to all the others, means that each simple substance has relationships which express all the

others, and that it is therefore a perpetual living mirror of the universe."[51]

Building on this idea of interconnectedness, Deleuze extends it into the domain of time, proposing that any moment in time "is a vibration with an infinity of harmonics or submultiples."[52] This conceptualization challenges the linear, sequential understanding of time: Deleuze proposes a multidimensional temporality where the past, present, and future do not stand in isolation but coexist in an ever-evolving continuum. Each event is then a confluence of forces and potentialities that resonate through time, affecting and being affected by other events in a constant process of becoming.

This view ties back to the notion of the universe as a fragmented, yet perpetually reflective, interconnected whole—a theme that resonates through both scientific and philosophical explorations of reality, spanning the Baroque era and the present day.

49   Herbert, Nick. 1985. *Quantum Reality: Beyond the New Physics*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday. 193–195.

50   Heisenberg, Werner. 1958. *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*. New York: Harper & Row.

51   Leibniz, G.W. 1989, *Philosophical Essays*. Edited and translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. 220.

52   Deleuze, Gilles. 1993. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. London: The Athlone Press. 77.

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"It is not the clash between fragments of architecture that counts, but the
invisible movement between them. Desire."
- Bernard Tschumi, *The Pleasure of Architecture* -

20H30

In *Collage City*, Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter present two contrasting views of modernity. The first, prevalent in architectural discourse, aligns with figures such as "Zola, H.G. Wells, Marinetti, Walter Gropius, and Hans Meyr"[53]. This view promotes a forward-looking, efficiency-driven urban design. Conversely, an alternative perspective—echoed in the works of 'Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, and Joyce'[54] —offers a more critical, reflective, and fragmented interpretation of modern existence and its cultural manifestations.

Surrealism, as part of the poetic avant-garde, resonates with this latter perspective. It delivers a critique of architectural modernism, emphasizing the necessity for temporal and experiential depth in urban environments that reflect the fragmented, disjointed, and paradoxical nature of human existence. The Surrealists' critique suggests scepticism towards totalizing narratives of progress and efficiency, instead valuing subjective experience, memory, and the multiplicity of human experiences. Figures like Hausmann and Le Corbusier are scrutinized by surrealists for espousing a vision of urbanity that favours efficiency and order over the hidden, intangible aspects of city life.[55] Instead, surrealism imagines an urban and architectural landscape defined by "interrupted temporalities—caesuras, intervals, voids, negative spaces, absences, and uncanny (insolate) moods."[56] This vision reflects the movement's embrace of Freudian psychoanalysis, which posits that the unconscious mind operates independently of chronological time, allowing memories, desires, and traumas to resurface in the present, blurring the lines between past, present, and future. In this sense, fragmentation, central to Surrealism's mission to unearth the latent narratives of urban existence, "is the form for the articulation of what is without time."[57] This involves delving into hidden and archaic realms, accessible only through a deliberate break from the conventional, the rational, and the expected. This approach confronts the linear, progress-focused outlook that has dominated architectural modernism. Surrealism calls for more: a recognition, a resurrection of the city's complex temporal layers. It calls for an urban experience that acknowledges the multiplicity of times and narratives coexisting within the same space.

Sites highlighted by surrealists, such as La Tour Saint-Jacques and La Place Dauphine[58], exemplify these disrupted temporalities. (Figure 6.) These places are valued not for their functional roles within an urban plan but as potent disruptions to a rationalized, uniform spatial order. They stand as fragments of an alternative urban fabric, resisting the seamless uniformity of modernist planning and suggesting "a city as a support for latent desires."[59] Disruption, which destabilizes the state of completeness, introduces a longing for something absent or unattainable: desire both necessitates and creates a form of disruption.

Le Corbusier, often lauded for his rational, functionalist approach to architecture, paradoxically embodies the Surrealist impulse through his innovative use of fragments. As Veselý notes:

"The first consistent use of fragment as part of a positive vision can be found in the work of Le Corbusier: His use of fragment was first labeled phenomenal transparency. However, it is clear that phenomenal transparency, described as a result of the overlapping of figures or elements, as a simultaneous perception of elements in various spatial locations, and as a dialectic of visual facts and their implications, is only a different name for the role of fragment. Such relations are certainly apparent in Le Corbusier's interiors, where the juxtaposition of elements and the overall layering of space are motivated by situational criteria."[60]

This technique is demonstrated in the design of the terrace of the Bestegui apartment, i.e. its solarium, treated as an open room: the sky and the grass signify the outdoors, yet when juxtaposed with indoor features such as furniture and a fireplace, the room become "simultaneously an open space and a closed interior". (Figure 7.) [61]

Above the enclosure of the terrace, the grand monuments of Paris—Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame—appear not as complete icons but as decapitated fragments, severed from their past and context within the urban mosaic. This setup acts as an optical device, reframing Paris's iconic skyline and encouraging a reinterpretation of these monuments not as fixed historical or cultural landmarks but as symbols of a reimagined, dislocated Paris. In this setting, the garden and its partial views serve as metaphors for perception, memory, and the

53   Rowe, Colin and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (1978). 137,. quoted in Stone-Richards, M. 2021. "Latencies and Imago Surrealism and Architecture." 258. In *Surrealism and Architecture*, edited by Thomas Mical.
54   Ibid.
55   Stone-Richards, "Latencies and Imago", In *Surrealism and Architecture*," 256.
56   Ibid.
57   Ibid.
58   Ibid., 256.
59   Ibid., 276.
60   Ibid., 256.
61   Veselý, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production*. 344.
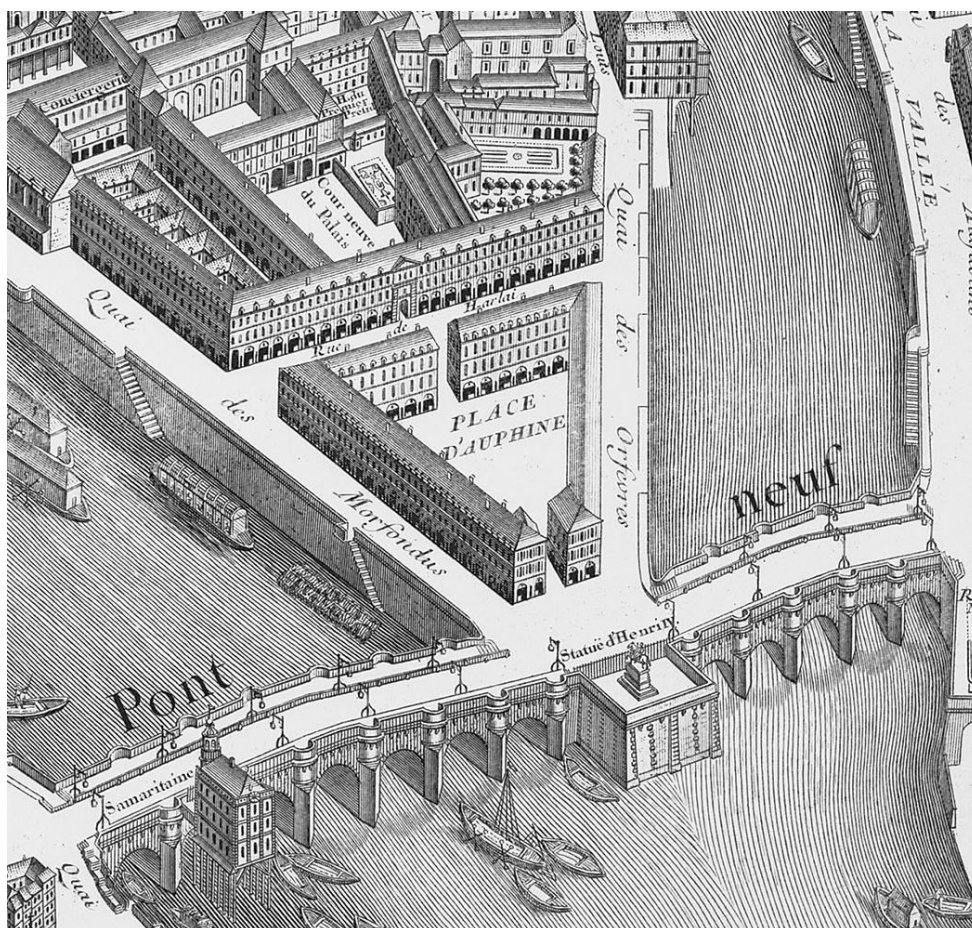
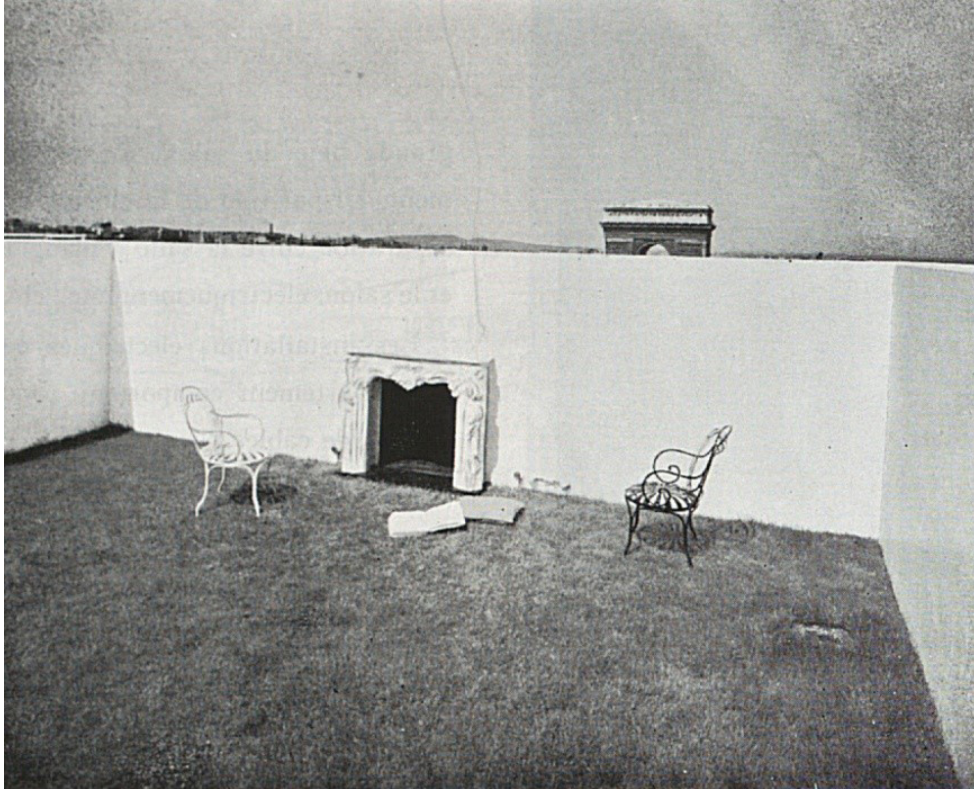Figure 6. Place Dauphine, Turgot map of Paris (1739).
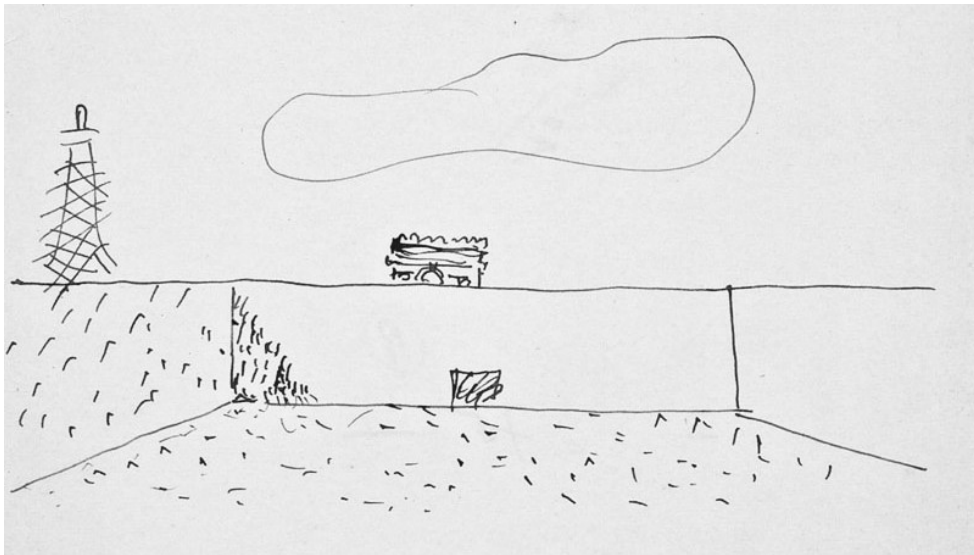
Figure 7. "Outdoor Room" of the Bestegui Apartment.

Figure 8. Le Corbusier: Sketch of the "Outdoor Room" of the Bestegui Apartment.

fragmentation of experience. (Figure 8.) They suggest that our understanding of the world, like our view of these monuments, is incomplete and constructed from fragments that both reveal and conceal. From this standpoint, the decapitated monuments can be perceived as a symbol of our disjointed engagement with history and reality—always partial, always mediated, and never fully graspable.

Le Corbusier's framing of the sky introduces a Surrealist experience, echoing André Breton's concept of *"faits-précipités"* from his novel *Nadja*. These moments disrupt conventional understanding and the flow of everyday life, infusing the mundane with the extraordinary, the unexpected, or the surreal. Breton views these incidents as portals to hidden layers of reality; where the intensity or oddity of the moment compels a renewed vision of the world, uncovering connections and significances typically obscured by daily routines and rational constraints. We can argue that the Baroque embraced a rather similar approach: it sought an ecstatic experience to transcend mundane reality and, thereby, access the unseen world— the divine. This ecstasy—drawing closer to God by stepping beyond oneself and the constraints of the material world—defined the disruptive temporality of the Baroque, forming the Baroque *ek-sistence*. Thus, both Baroque and Surrealism share a fundamental theme: the disruption of the ordinary serves as a gateway to what lies beyond.

Surrealism seeks this transcendental experience through the meaningful employment of fragments. The question then is: What constitutes meaning? On this account, Veselý suggests that 'meaning depends on the continuity of communicative movement between individual elements and on their relation (reference) to the preexisting latent world.'[62]

This implies that meaning is contextual and dependent on a broader, often implicit, backdrop: the "preexisting latent world," which refers to the underlying cultural, historical, or philosophical frameworks that predate the elements in question. Meaning thus arises from the connections of the elements to this wider, established context and from ongoing interactions and exchanges between elements within a system.

Similarly, Bernard Tschumi, in *The Pleasure of Architecture*, also emphasises that the meaning is not located within the concrete fragments themselves, but in the spaces that lie between them: "It is not the clash between . . . [the] fragments that counts, but the invisible movement between them."[63] This again reflects surrealists' fascination with the potentiality

lurking within voids, gaps, transitional spaces and in-betweenness. *The Pleasure of Architecture* stresses the concept of in-betweenness in a similar way to Barthes' *The Pleasure of Text*:

'It is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing . . . , between two edges . . . ; it is in this flash itself which seduces , or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.' [64]

Here, the intermittence is the essence of allure, of desire.

Lacan goes even further and articulates that desire is inherently directed towards an absence; it is a metonymy representing a lack.[65] This continuous movement towards an unattainable 'beyond' fuels a cycle of perpetual longing, defined by the absence it seeks. Unlike natural entities, which Lacan sees as fulfilled in their existence and self-perpetuation, human desire is a relentless pursuit of what it is inherently not.[66]

This perpetual quest for what is out of reach significantly shaped the Baroque and its defining expression: pathos: "pathos" rooted in its original Greek meaning of "suffering"; suffering which emerges from the immense span between the 'I' and the 'Other', the unreachable, between 'here' and 'there', between two foci of an ellipse.

Thus, Baroque stands as the first aesthetic manifestation of desire.

62   Ibid., 345.
63   Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction. 183.

64   Barthes, Roland. 1975. *The Pleasure of Text*. 9-10. quoted in Jormakka, Kari. 2021. "The Most Architectural Thing." In *Surrealism and Architecture*, edited by Thomas Mical, 310.
65   Dean, Carolyn. 1992. *The Self and Its Pleasures, Bataille, Lacan and the History of the Decentred Subject*, 193-195, quoted in Jormakka, "The Most Architectural Thing." In *Surrealism and Architecture*, 298.
66   Ibid.

The world, once conceived as a unity and cohesion, represented by the circle—a figure of divine cosmic order and harmony—finds itself disrupted and decentralized by the Baroque ellipse. Herein lies the shift from unity to binary, from the singular to the dual.

Later, around the time when the world became heavier by one billion souls, it broke into fragments. Yet, quantum mechanics uncovered entanglement between particles, which implies that the fragmented world is connected in a way that defies both time and space. Thus, fragmentation constitutes wholeness: unity is enacted - a circle is reformed.

At the center – what?

Desire.

Desire: a metonymy; its structure: a lack. The mastery of which is infinitely deferred: the fragments that compose the circle are in movement, the center, therefore, remains elusive, a mirage in between fragments that recedes as one approaches.

Since the center cannot be reached frontally, architecture, then, emerges as a circumnavigation, a detour around the perimeter.

*

In 2022, the crossing of transept and nave under the elliptical dome of Fallen Church hosted an exhibition by Hanne Lippard, drawing inspiration from the numerous cavities that mark the surrounding landscape of Grottole. Lippard explored these as foundational to the village's name, "*cryptulae*", which translates from Italian as "small grottoes." Within this context, she crafted a narrative on the duality of "whole" and "hole"[67] , the same narrative that resonates through architectural discourses from the latter half of the 20th century. This theme is particularly evident in the works of Peter Eisenman, who articulated his philosophical and architectural stance by stating, "We live in an age of partial objects … the whole is full of holes."[68] This assertion reflects broader post-structuralist ideas that challenge absolute structures and definitive meanings, thereby denying totalizing narratives. In this context, conventional perceptions of completeness and unity are not merely questioned; they are actively dismantled, revealing the limitations and biases inherent in traditional ways of understanding the world.

Within this framework, what is traditionally considered complete or whole is in fact "filled" with gaps, inconsistencies, or "holes". These holes signify the absence within presence, the spaces of non-completion, or the elements of uncertainty within what is traditionally considered solid or known. This discourse, both in Lippard's installation and in Eisenman's architecture, invites a reconsideration of how wholeness and absence coexist. In the context of Eisenman´s work, it can be particularly illustrated in his Cannaregio project in Venice, which shows a deployment of rhetorical strategies to signify the erosion of a central, organizing principle. In 1978, when the Municipal Government of Venice launched an international competition to design Cannaregio town square, Eisenman presented a provocative entry: Eschewing mere replication or mimicry of Venice's existing historical authenticity, his proposal advocated for the construction of a "fictitious Venice."[69] His approach was a radical departure from conventional architectural thinking, aimed at reimagining what urban spaces could represent and how they could function within their cultural and historical frameworks.

To do so, Eisenman employed a distinctive architectural approach: he superimposed a grid of negative squares onto which the positive grid of the endlessly folded L-shaped objects were set.[70] (Figure 9.) The structure is an extension and conceptual 'excavation'[71] of the grid of Le Corbusier's final, unbuilt project: the hospital of Venice. The recurrent use of L-shaped or '*els*' configurations in this project underscores themes of partiality and instability[72]. In contrast to the more stable, conventional geometric forms like squares or circles, *els* introduce a deviation or an absence, engendering visual and spatial tensions that subvert traditional expectations of balance and completeness.

These els are rendered in a pink-red hue. In his *Three Texts for Venice*, Eisenman explains: "This is a Venetian red, symbolizing the martyrdom of Bruno."[73] In the study *The Eisenman-Deleuze Fold*, focused on the incorporation of Gilles Deleuze's concept of the Fold into Eisenman's architectural philosophy, Tim Adams remarks:

"It was from the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) that Leibniz received the idea of the monad as a unity that folds a multiplicity, for which "the multiple is inseparable from the folds that it makes when it is enveloped, and of unfoldings when it is developed" (Leibniz and the Baroque:23). In short, Eisenman in Venice gives us an emblem for what Bruno tells us-that all matter is folded and folds divide infinitely into smaller and smaller folds."[74]

Thus, Eisenman's architecture is proposed to be "Baroque" in the Deleuze's universalized sense of the Baroque as an operation of the Fold.[75] In this sense, what Eisenman creates is a topological geometry, as topology examines properties of space that remain unchanged by alterations in size or shape. (Figure 10.) It explores whether one infinitely flexible shape can be continuously morphed into another without creating new openings or eliminating existing ones. Employing topological geometry, Eisenman transitions away from the static, absolute forms of

67   Una Bocca Tad Arte. "Ruin." Accessed April 17, 2024. https://unaboccatadarte.it/en/progetti/ruin.
68   Shapiro, D and L. Stamm. 1981. "A Poetics of the Model: Eisenman's Doubt, Interview With Peter Eisenman," In *Idea as Model*, New York: Rizzoli. 121-122. quoted in Jencks, Charles, "Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence" In *Architectural Design*. 127.
69   Eisenman Architects. "Cannaregio Town Square, 1978." Eisenman Architects. Accessed April 15, 2024. https://eisenmanarchitects.com/Cannaregio-Town-Square-1978.

70   Adams, Tim. 1993. *The Eisenman-Deleuze Fold*. University of Auckland, 81.
71   Jencks, "Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence" In *Architectural Design*. 129.
72   Ibid., 126.
73   Eisenman, Peter. "*Three Texts for Venice*." Domus 611 (September 1980). quoted in Adams, *The Eisenman-Deleuze Fold*. 81.
74   Adams, *The Eisenman-Deleuze Fold*. 81
75   Ibid., 6.

Euclidean geometry [76](like Galileo's circle) toward more fluid, dynamic forms that alter perception and interaction, a notion that ties back to Borrominian elasticity.

It was Leibniz who first explored the phenomenon of topology, although he referred to it as *analysis situs*.[77] The intricate geometric shapes uncovered through topology are known as manifolds. A manifold is a mathematical space that, at a small enough scale, resembles Euclidean space but can have a complex, interconnected structure on a larger scale. This property allows manifolds to be highly flexible in modelling various phenomena that might not fit into simpler, linear frameworks, e.g. the surface of the Earth can be modelled as a manifold because, locally, it looks flat (like a plane), but globally it has the curvature of a sphere. Thus, a manifold can be composed of simple, local Euclidean patches but presents a globally complex structure: it may be locally distinct or appear fragmented, yet, remains inherently interconnected. Consequently, manifolds became crucial in quantum field theory for describing the manifold nature of spacetime itself.

The manifold nature of the positive grid in Eisenman's Cannaregio project is complemented by the negative grid marked by a series of voids—creating spaces that are as much about absence as they are about presence. These voids serve as both literal and metaphorical excavations that unearth layers of meaning previously obscured. Eisenman's work brings latent narratives to the forefront and challenging observers to engage with both the visible and the invisible dimensions of space.

By 1987, Eisenman had articulated his concept of the "Rhetorical Figure", positing that architecture must embody both "presence" (as a tangible entity) and "absence in presence" (elements that are repressed, destroyed, or missing).[78] Thus architectural elements can be understood in terms of both what is physically present and what is conspicuously absent or suggested indirectly. This challenges traditional views of architectural space as merely physical or functional, introducing instead a conception of space as a 'crypt,' storing forgotten narratives, These narratives have the potential to disrupt conventional perceptions of identity and the atmosphere of a space, creating a gap - an opening for desire. This notion echoes the Surrealist emphasis on the roles of absences, silences, and voids, which are seen as just as essential to the identity of a place as its physical structure.

This concept aligns closely with Jacques Derrida's exploration of the crypt, as detailed in his collaboration with Maria Torok in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*. Here, the crypt is metaphorically described as a psychological space that conceals repressed memories from conscious awareness. This analogy suggests that narratives—whether textual or architectural—can incorporate hidden elements within their structures, thus complicating straightforward interpretation and challenging the reader or observer to unearth deeper meanings. This interest of Derrida in 'possible fissures in the system of the Symbolic' includes:

> "… playing with the allosemes and their synonyms … (such writing) swerves off at an angle in order to throw the reader off the track and make its itinerary unreadable. An art of chicanery: judicial pettifogging, sophistic ratiocination, but also (chicane = maze) a topographical strategy multiplying simulated barriers, hidden doors, obligatory detours, abrupt changes of direction (sens), all the trials and errors of a game of solitaire meant both to seduce and to discourage, to fascinate, and fatigue."[79]

To enter Derrida's texts mean to enter a labyrinth—a construction whose "folds" produce multiple, simultaneous meanings, making the text unpredictable; a labyrinth similar to Borges' "Garden of the Forking Paths", where each decision leads to a multitude of futures, portraying a universe filled with endless possibilities.

Derrida, in his analysis of Tschumi's design for Parc de La Villette, a park built on the site of an old abattoir on the outskirts of Paris, sees the architect as a weaver of such labyrinth: "He plots grids, twining the threads of chain, his writing holds out a net. A weave always weaves in several directions, several meanings, and beyond meaning."[80]

Bernard Tschumi, an architect–weaver, whose architecture was further characterized by

76   Jencks, "Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence" In *Architectural Design*. 126.
77   Serres, Michel. 1983. *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 46. quoted in Adams, *The Eisenman-Deleuze Fold*. 81.
78   Eisenman, Peter, "Architecture and the Problem of the Rhetorical Figure." In *A+U*, 87:07. 17-22. quoted in Jencks, "Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence" In *Architectural Design*.
79   Derrida, Jacques. 1979. "Fors: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok." In *Abraham and Torok, The Wolf Man´s Magic Word*. xi-xlviii. quoted in Castricano, Carla Jodey. 1997. *In Derrida's Dream: A Poetics of a Well-Made Crypt*. University of British Columbia. 176.
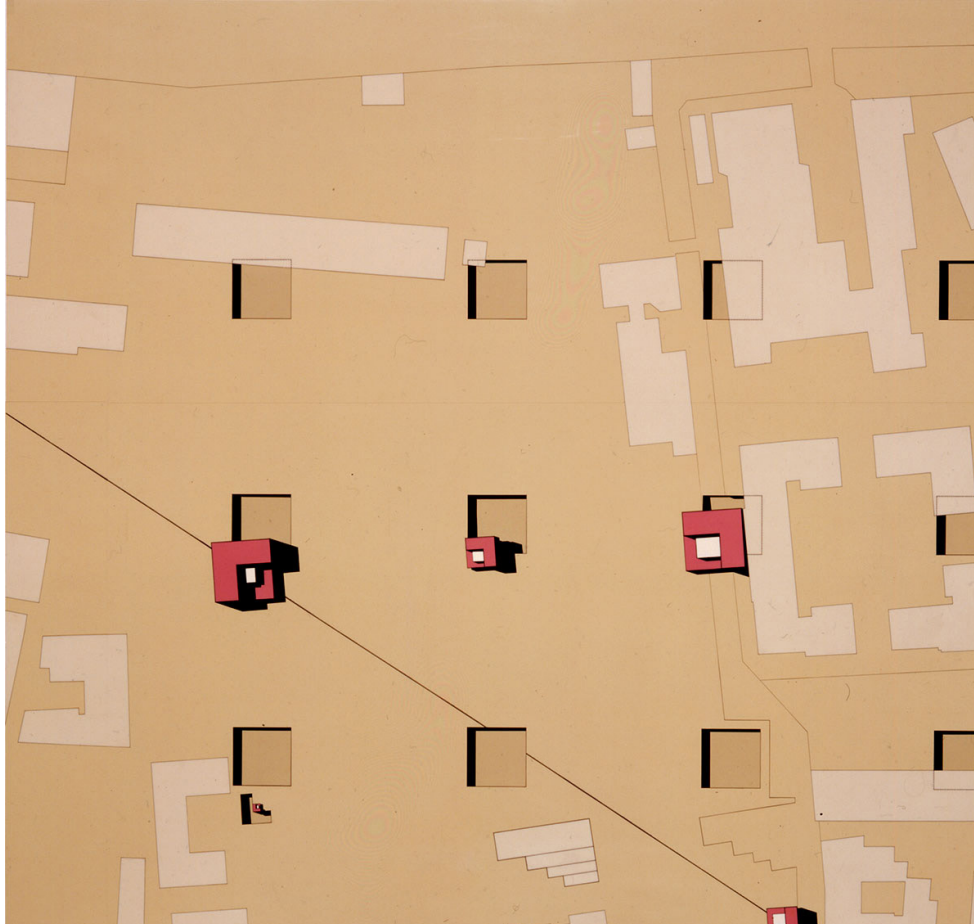80   Jencks, "Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence" In *Architectural Design*. 124.

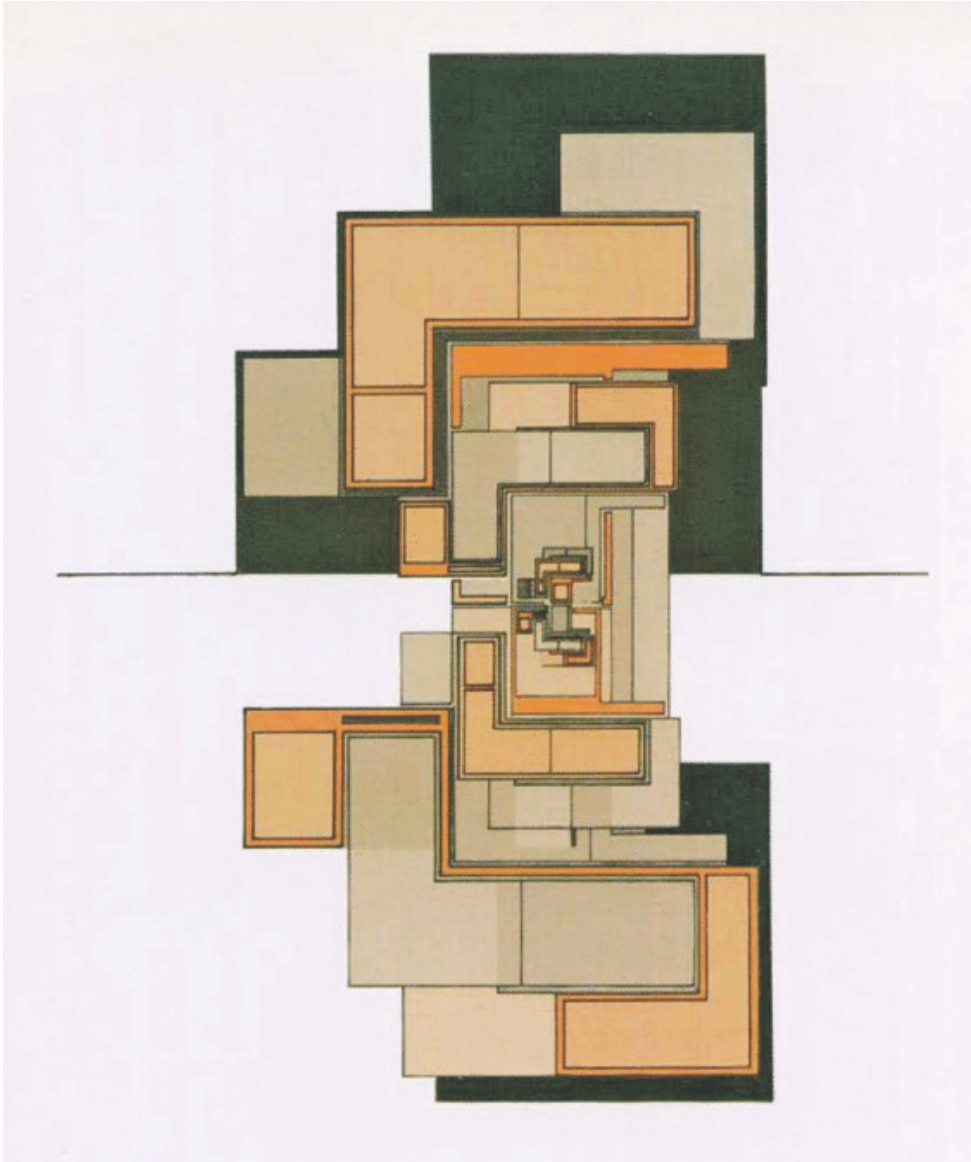Figure 9. Negative and Positive Grid of Cannaregio Square in Plan.

Figure 10. Peter Eisenman: House 11a; *Els* in Cannaregio Square Became Its Variations.

Derrida in terms such as dissociation, disjunction, disruption, and différance[81] —reflects an architecture of heterogeneity and interruption. Tschumi himself argues that the concept of disjunction challenges traditional static and autonomous views of architecture: it necessitates "constant, mechanical operations that systematically produce dissociation".[82] This conceptualization leads back to Derrida and his idea of différance, which merges the ideas of "difference" and "deferral," suggesting not just diversity but a delayed understanding. Derrida's philosophy asserts that the underpinnings of human experience and intellectual life are not rooted in certainty, but in the perpetual differences and delays in understanding. This notion, influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics, posits that words derive meaning not inherently, but through their differences and relations with other words. Derrida extends this to suggest that these relationships involve complex networks of relations and deferrals, meaning that understanding is constantly postponed, and each attempt at defining leads only to more words, creating an endless chain of signification.

This perspective invites a reconsideration of conventional notions about the essence or defining character of a place (*genius loci*)[83], city, or landscape, suggesting instead that identity and meaning are always in flux, perpetually shaped by past influences and future possibilities, and never fully knowable in the present. This ongoing negotiation unfolds over time, emphasizing that what we perceive as presence is always informed by past contexts and anticipates future transformations.

In the conceptualization of Parc de la Villette, Tschumi introduced a structure where interdisciplinary teams were invited to design individual gardens, underpinned by Tschumi's overarching "point-grid" design. One of the teams was Derrida and Eisenman.

The discussions between the philosopher and the architect centred on the philosophical concept of "*chora*"[84] from Plato's *Timaeus*. Derrida interprets chora as a 'third space' that exists between the immutable realm of forms (the intelligible) and the mutable, perceptible world of human experience (the sensible). This space doesn't partake directly in either realm but serves as a receptacle that is both elusive and dynamic, characterized by its capacity to receive and simultaneously erase impressions. This makes chora resistant to conventional representation, challenging it as neither merely a surface nor a container but a field where transformation is continuous.[85]

Eisenman's architectural response to the concept of chora explored the potential of creating spaces that embody the 'absence of chora' or the 'presence of the absence of chora.'[86] This approach aimed to engage with chora's inherent contradictions by conceptualizing spaces that reflect its elusive qualities.

However, this theoretical engagement led to criticisms of this type of architecture being overly self-referential and disconnected from the public it is meant to serve. The design heavily incorporated cross-references to Eisenman's previous works, suggesting an insular dialogue that potentially overlooked broader public engagement and practical considerations of the space from a user-centric perspective.[87]

In this case, as one of the critics, Charles Jencks, remarks, deconstruction contradicts itself:

"... in spite of the claims to pluralism, différance, 'a war on totality' and defense of 'otherness', this hermetic work is often monist, elitist, intolerant and conveys a 'sameness'. Perhaps, in architecture, this is a result of staring into the Void for too long: it has resulted in a private religious language of self-denial. Because of such suppressions and contradictions one could argue that a real Deconstructionist architecture of variety and humor has yet to exist."[88]

Hence, deconstructionist architecture contradicts itself when it becomes overly fixated on being "deconstructionist": it risks becoming static, reduced to "suspended objects" and "frozen fragments"[89] detached from cultural, environmental and temporal context, stifling the possibilities for ongoing reinterpretation and transformation: it risks sealing off the labyrinth.

In contrast, the task of the architect–weaver is to create a detour in space and time that proliferates meaning: a "delirium in the face of the multiple"[90];for

81   Ibid.
82   Tschumi, Bernard. 1987. "Disjunctions." In *Perspecta* 23. 119.
83   Coyne, Richard. 2011. Derrida for Architects. London: Routledge.
84   The concept of chora, while beyond the scope of this text, is mentioned to elucidate the design process that informed Derrida and Eisenman's proposal for the Parc de la Villette.
85   Ibid., 48-50.
86   Kipnis, J., and T. Leeser, eds. 1997. *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman.* New York: Monacelli Press. quoted in Coyne, Derrida for Architects. 48.
87   Ibid., 57.
88   Jencks, "Deconstruction: The Pleasures of Absence" In *Architectural Design.* 131.
89   Ibid., 128.
90   Castricano, *In Derrida's Dream: A Poetics of a Well-Made Crypt.* 176.

there it is, the mirage that recedes as one approaches:

Desire.

DESIGN RESEARCH PROJECT

Figure 11. Fissures in The Fallen Church.

If the village of Grottole is defined by its cavities, so too is the Fallen Church, nestled on the village's slope: both are characterized not by what is present but by what is absent. The voids in the structure of the church represent more than mere physical gaps; they signify absences within presence, areas of disruption, and elements of uncertainty. They open up possibilities for new narratives and interpretations, urging observers to see beyond the visible. Thus, a disrupted temporality emerges as a recurring theme here, a phenomenon that spans the history of art and architecture, consistently aiming to transcend the mundane, toward the hidden and absent: the Other.

The "Fallen Church" encapsulates this theme for its capacity to challenge orderly perceptions of space: it is a fragment of an alternative urban narrative, that disrupts the expected and homogeneous and acts as a caesura in the rhythm of the city, demanding a pause for reflection. It is a fissure in the utilitarian and predictable urban fabric, with the voids in its structure acting as fissures within a fissure.

Each fissure in the structure of the church invites possible interpretations, challenging observers to question what is unseen and ponder the meanings these absences impart to the structure as a whole. The role of architectural intervention thus becomes to extend this invitation further, to engage with the gaps, to fill them with mortar only when it contributes to their meaning, and in doing so, to participate in the continual reconstruction of reality itself. In this context, the architect's role is to construct a reality framed as much by what is absent as by what is present.

Notable examples of absences include the missing portion of the front façade, the elliptical frame opening toward the sky left by the fallen dome, and the missing apse. These fissures bear the potential to forge narratives that diverge from a traditional/historical narrative: Traditionally, the apse serves to direct the viewer's gaze upward—achieved through architectural features like vaults and domes or symbolically, as in Byzantine iconography with a golden background representing the divine. In this reading, the apse serves as a metaphorical conduit: it invites the observer to engage with the spiritual or the eternal. The missing apse in the "Fallen Church," therefore, marks a shift in the expected narrative of ecclesiastical architecture, "haunts the visible space in which its buried"[91] and creates a new dynamic: rather than terminating the viewer's gaze, its absence allows the horizontal axis of the nave to extend uninterrupted toward the landscape beyond. This alteration not only shifts the church's internal dynamics but also creates a convergence of the celestial vertical axis of the absent dome reaching toward the heavens with the terrestrial horizontal axis that spans from the village to the infinite horizon.

This reconfiguration prompts a broader interpretation of space and symbolism within the church's architecture since it transforms the cross from a static symbol, represented in the layout of the church, into a dynamic, lived spatial experience.

The church, stripped of its traditional vertical endpoint, no longer simply directs the gaze upward but also forward, into the broader expanse of life. It no longer mirrors the ambivalent figure of the two-story world, characterized by two vectors: descending to depth and ascending upward. In the Fallen Church, a man dwells at the confluence of two axes extended to infinity: within the fourfold, where the earth, sky, mortals, and divinities come together.[92]

These new meanings—shaped by time—should be valued. Yet, such appreciation often finds itself overlooked in the sphere of architectural redevelopment. A recent architectural competition held in 2022 by the initiative Reuse Italy, which aimed at repurposing the Fallen Church, eschewed these potential meanings fostered by the fissures in its structure; instead, the proposals favored the introduction of new volumes that neglected the value of the existing. This approach seems senseless, especially given that the structure was proposed to be reused as a large concert hall, which—considering the village's mere population of 2,000 and reliance on seasonal tourism—appears unlikely to sustain.

In this proposal, the Fallen Church is envisioned as a place for community-driven cultural activities, coming from local cultural initiatives, such as Wonder Grottole. This organization is dedicated to transforming abandoned village houses into artist residencies, thereby enriching the village with cultural vitality and hosting events to support this cultural infusion. Hence the church's main nave can be utilized for open-air performances, concerts, exhibitions, or markets, alongside its adjacent and underground spaces for smaller events out of season. This approach not only respects the intrinsic historical and architectural value of the church and prioritizes open possibilities for the use of the space over strictly determined functions. It also fosters a more sustainable integration into the local community's life and economy.

91   Wigley, Mark. 1997. *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. 178.

92   Heidegger, M. 1971. "Building Dwelling Thinking." In *Poetry Language Thought,* edited by A. Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row. 145-161.
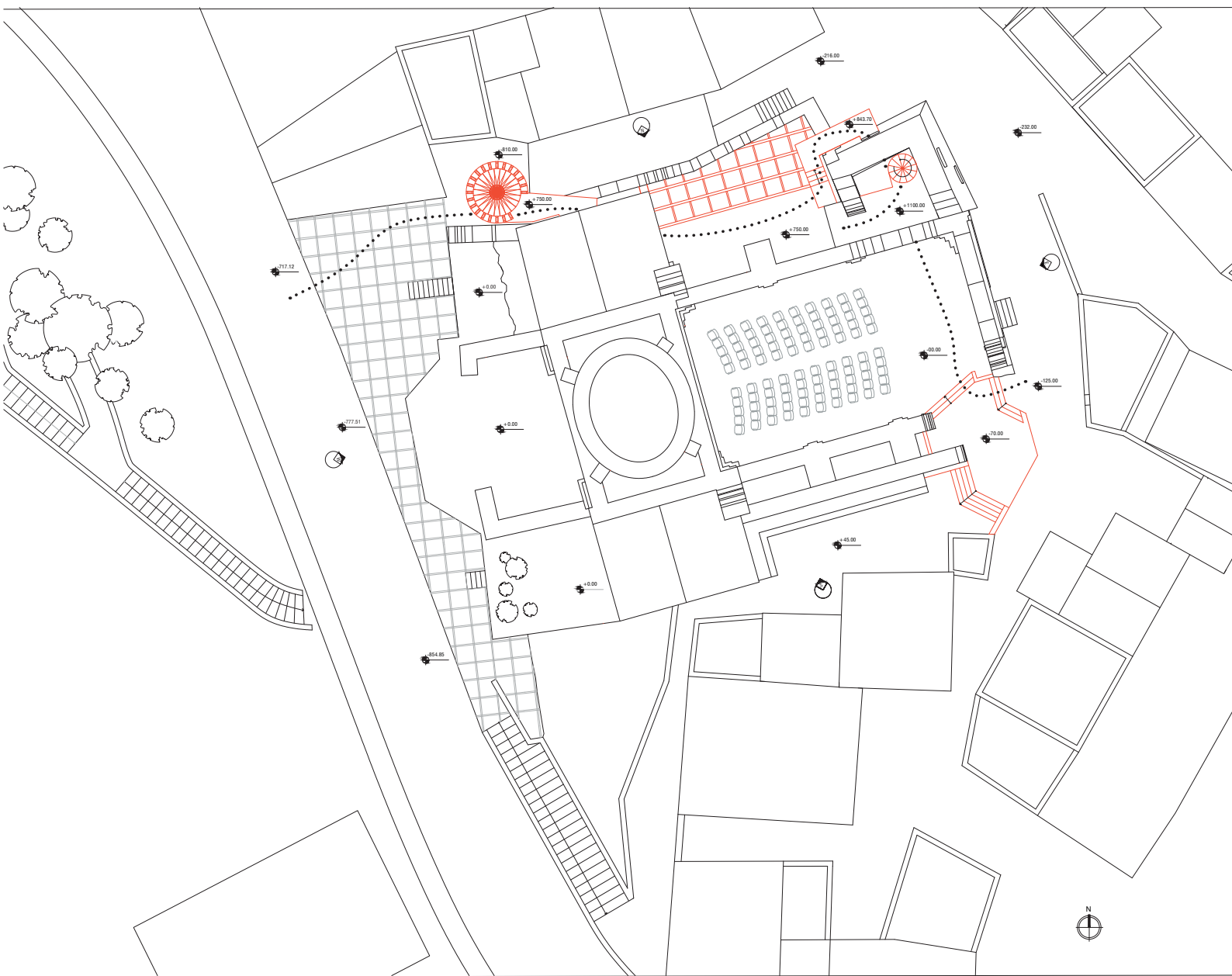
Figure 12. General Plan

Figure 13.

Figure 14.

The primary objective of the design of the Fallen Church was to valorize every fragment, considering what intervention is necessary and which fragments can be left as found. From there arose an essential question: if a fragment lacks inherent meaning, how can it be adapted to contribute to the narrative? And consequently: how to orchestrate movement between these fragments, so that each fragment becomes a signifier in a larger system, contributing a narrative force, not linear but multidimensional, a palimpsest where past and present coexist and interact. The church would then become a site of continuous interpretation and reinterpretation, woven from multiple threads—historical, cultural, architectural—that visitors are invited to unravel and re-weave according to their own engagement with the space. Essentially, what is proposed here is a soft kind of architecture: not architecture as an art of construction, but rather as an art of orchestrating attention.[93]

A major example of this approach is the treatment of the fragmented front façade. The missing section presents an opportunity to innovate by establishing a new side entrance, thus subverting the traditional central organizing principles of sacred architecture and introducing an unexpected element. This new entrance—beginning at street level, 1.25 meters below the church floor—leads to a platform that branches off into two additional staircases: one connecting directly to the street on the left side of the church, enhancing integration with the urban environment; and the other leading into the open interior of the church. (Figure 13.) This intervention embodies pluralization and decentralization, introducing a deviation or an absence, and engendering visual and spatial tensions that subvert traditional expectations of balance and completeness. It becomes an interval that disrupts the continuity of space, and as such, has an analogical function to a narthex, traditionally an area with a lower ceiling that transitions between the entrance and the nave of a church. However, in this design, the transition is achieved by lowering the floor, not the ceiling, marking a clear transition while reversing traditional architectural expectations. Considering the missing part of the façade as a fissure, this new structural intervention introduces an additional layer, enhancing the sense of a fissure within an existing gap and amplifying the presence of the first. This approach respects both the church's historical fabric and the meaning given by the void, but also introduces a new layer of meaning, engaging both with the church's past and its potential future.

Thus, this new entrance, by altering the expected flow and orientation, speaks to a more fluid, less hierarchical understanding of sacred space. The split staircases, diverging yet connected, reflect the complexity of the site—fragmented yet fundamentally interconnected.

The church's hillside position creates a natural disparity between its east and west sides: the west side situated one level below the east. To bridge this vertical gap, a new element has been introduced: a freestanding spiral staircase connects these two levels and extends up to the third, leading to the terraces along the north wall. (Figure 14.) The staircase, circular in design, contrasts with the rectilinear walls of the church, offering a visual and structural juxtaposition. It is supported by two sets of wooden structural columns distributed around its perimeter, which engage in a play of transparency and opacity.

The spiral form of the staircase introduces a motif of continuity and fluid motion, diverging from the static, angular forms of the ruins. The columns, in their arrangement, oscillate between revealing and concealing: they support the staircase while simultaneously crafting spaces of visibility and invisibility. This interplay of presence and absence, seen and unseen, enhances the narrative capacity of the architecture.

The staircase culminates at the window level of the transept, and the window morphs into an opening. This pathway extends through the transept, hosting temporary exhibitions, leading outward along the north wall of the ruin. It progresses upwards to a window that turns into an entrance to the tower, now serving as a gateway to the church's highest viewing point. This pathway is both constrictive and expansive: it alternately narrows and widens, manipulating the visitor's sense of space. The constricted parts—such as the staircase, the segments navigating through the transept, and the tower—induce feelings of intimacy, compelling visitors to focus inward on the objects exhibited. Conversely, expansive pathways offer a sense of liberation or openness, encouraging the visitor to feel part of the whole. This spatial experience culminates at the vantage point, the panoramic view from the tower, which acts as a full stop that invites reflection, offering a moment of synthesis where the visitor connects the microcosm of the church's interior with the macrocosm of the surrounding landscape.

93   Hendren, Sarah. "Design for Know-Nothings, Dilettantes, and Melancholy Interlopers." Lecture at Eyeo Festival, Minneapolis, June 2016. Accessed May 3, 2024. https://sarahendren.com/projects-lab/design-for-know-nothings-dilettantes-and-melancholy-interlopers-eyeo-2016/

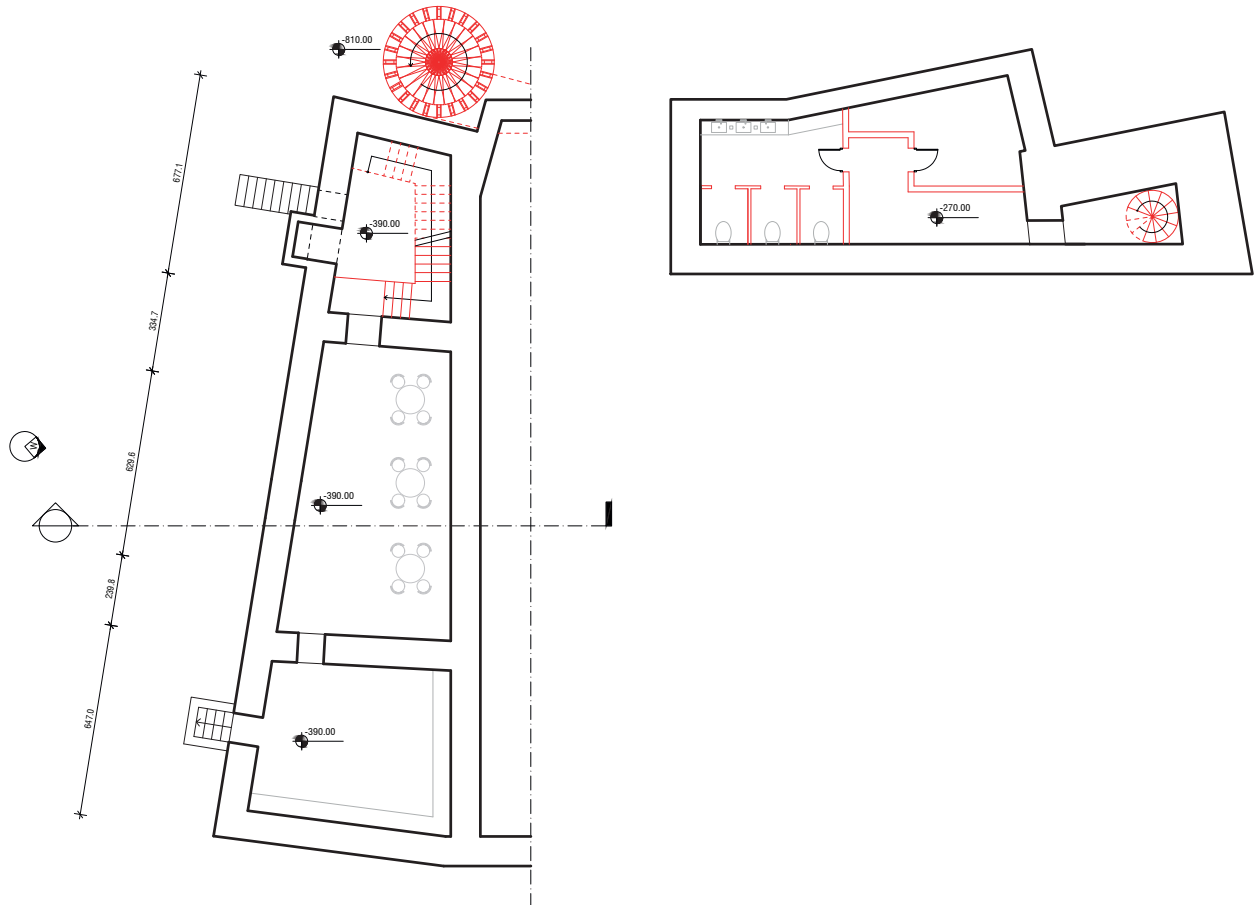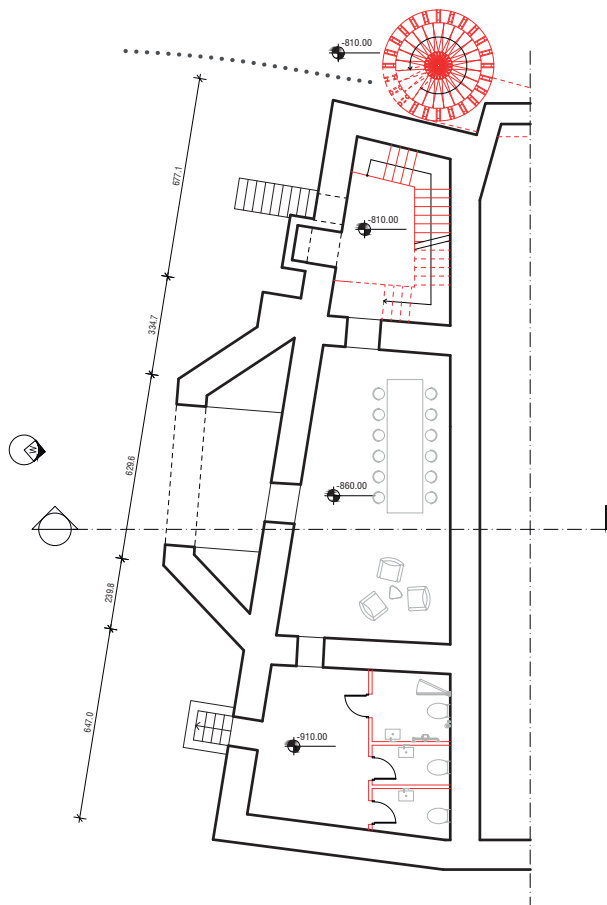Figure 15. Floorplan Level -1.

Figure 16. Floorplan Level -2.
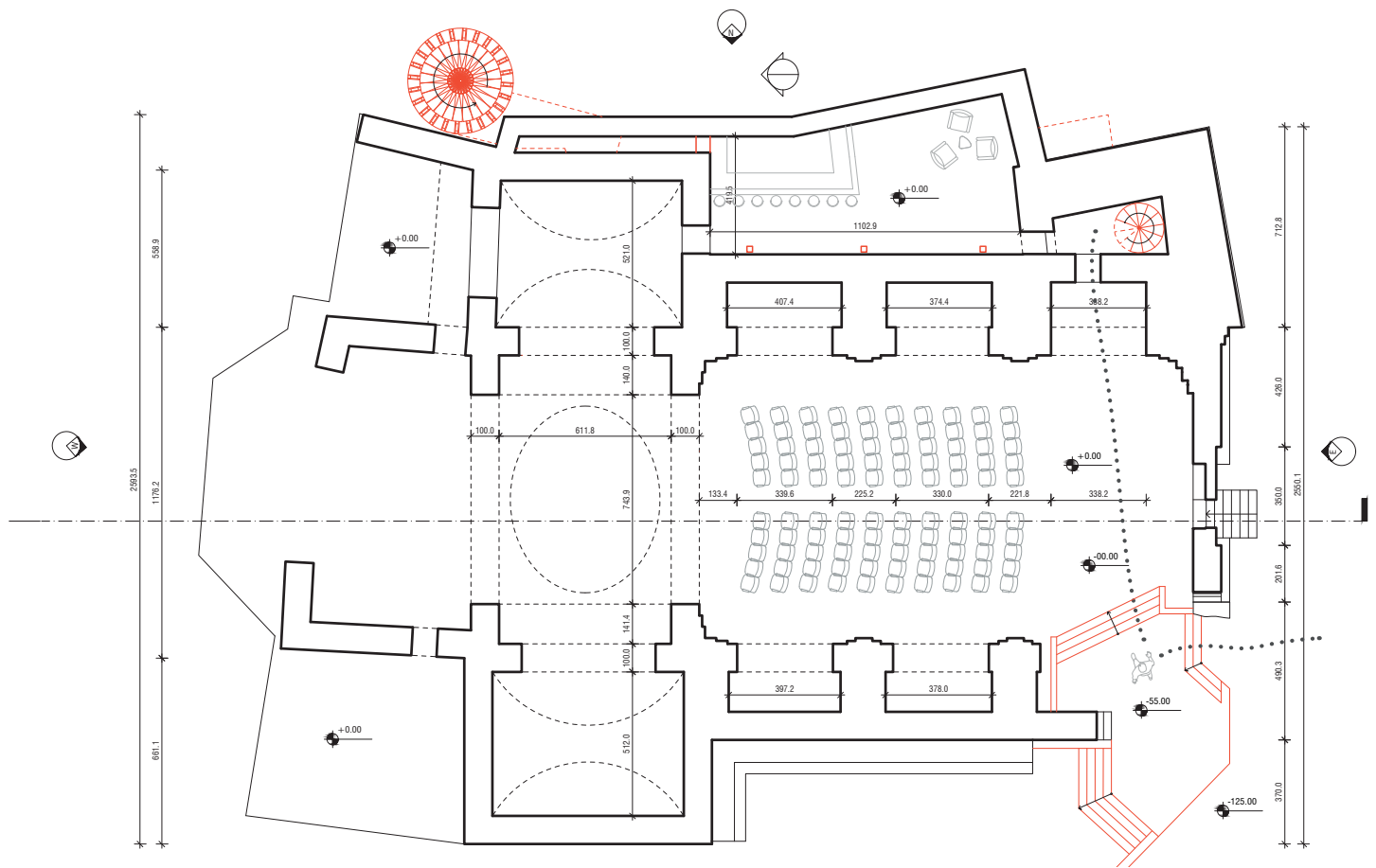
Figure 17. Floorplan Ground Level.

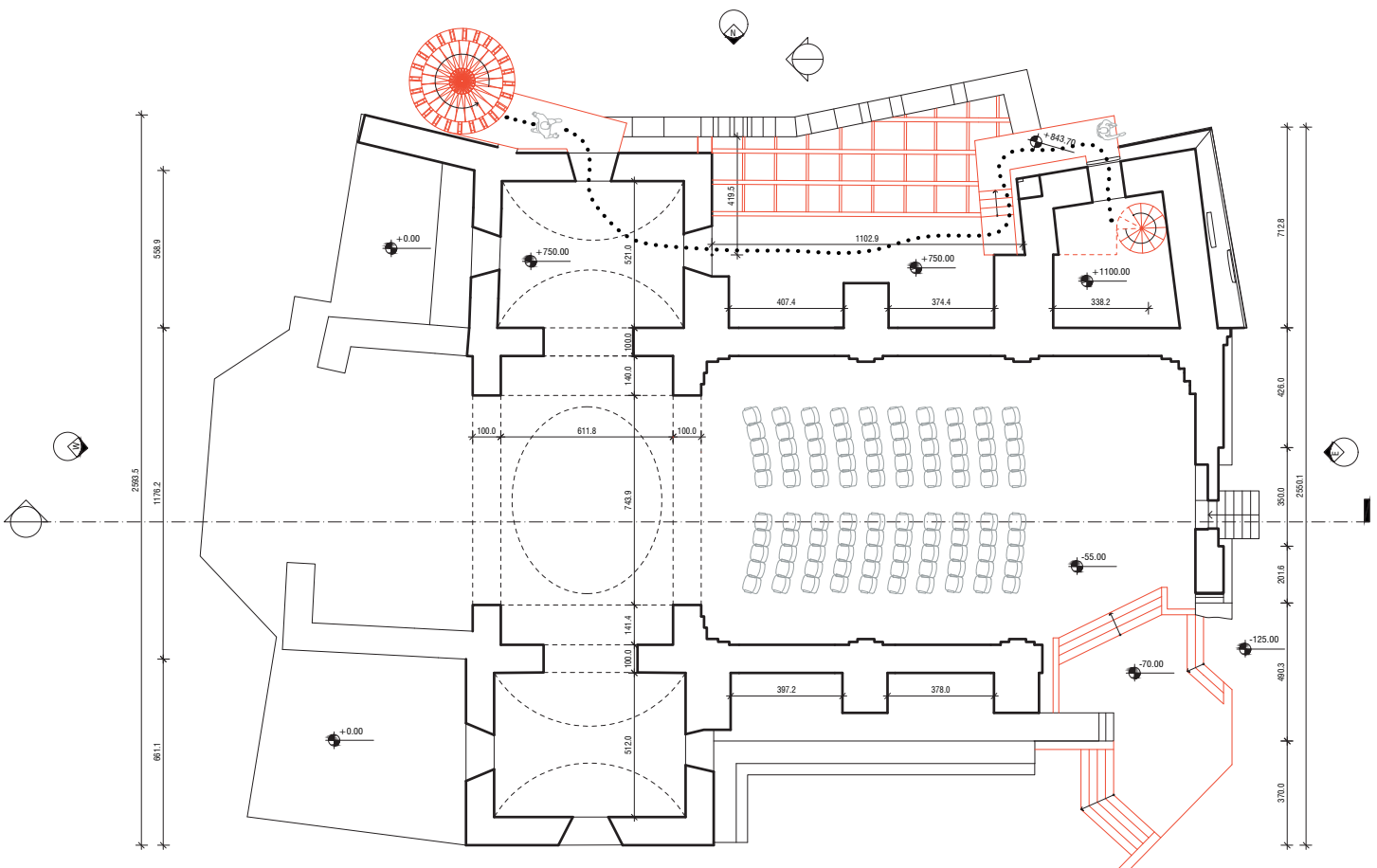
Figure 18. Floorplan Level 1.

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"Travel is useful; it exercises the imagination. All the rest is disappointment and fatigue. Our journey is entirely imaginary. That is its strength . . . It's a novel, just a fictitious narrative. Littré says so, and he's never wrong. And besides, in the first place, anyone can do as much. You just have to close your eyes. It's on the other side of life."

- Louis - Ferdinand Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night* -

Travel indeed proved useful: we travelled through centuries to demonstrate the capacity of art and architecture to transcend ordinary temporality, moving toward the Other: When the Baroque cosmology decentralized the world, the architects of the era laid a bridge between here and there, a bridge to be transgressed by ecstatic experience. The architectural avant-garde later echoed this approach, deploying architecture as a *"Machine à émouvoir"*[94] — to facilitate a detachment from the mundane through the rapture of conventional mechanisms and transcendental experience. Simultaneously, the surrealists were disrupting temporalities, enabling latent desires to resurface through the reality they ruptured. Their efforts, like those of their architectural counterparts, challenged the linear progression of time. Lastly, deconstructivism took the ideas of disrupted temporalities further and disrupted all established notions of time and space. For these constructs are not static; they are always in flux, perpetually in the process of becoming. In this indeterminacy, this ambiguity, lies a new form of ekstasis: existing outside of fixed categories, dwelling in transitions, in differences, in in-betweenness, from where an endless chain of signification unfolds.

Through the ages, artists and architects have employed diverse lenses to reveal latent realities, normally obscured by conventional viewpoints yet ever-present in the realm of potentialities. These potentialities are transformed into actualities through new perceptions. From this vantage, the role of the architect evolves: he is no longer solely a constructor in the traditional sense but rather an "orchestrator of attention" [95]; an orchestrator of fragmented experiences. This is demonstrated in the Fallen Church, where subtle interventions are designed to modulate the perception and interpretation of space, revealing a reality "not one that is imaginary or fabricated, but that has in fact been there all along."[96]

Approaching architecture as an orchestrator of attention is crucial in today's visual culture—a culture that bombards us with a relentless stream of perceptions, both rapid and superficial, diminishing our capacity to truly engage with what is seen to mere instant information processing. Yet, architecture that creates meaningful experiences requires time to root in the viewer. Regarding time, we should acknowledge a fundamental equation: "The degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting."[97] Consequently, architecture dominated by speed becomes an architecture besieged by amnesia: the frenetic pace of both creating and "consuming" architecture often results in the neglect of essential elements—history, memory, and experience.

Instead, architecture should deliberately place itself out of time: employing fragmentation as 'the form for the articulation of what is without time',[98] dismissing linear progression in favour of detours that proliferate meanings and transcend, returning us to where we started, beyond ordinary temporality.

Therefore, architecture that ignites the imagination and probes beyond the visible and ordinary is the architecture of slowness; of carefully orchestrated attention. Within this framework, architects should not march fast forward toward grandiosity, but proceed from sketch to final work kneeling all along.

However, the culmination of this research is a recognition that seeking a definitive conclusion contradicts the nature of its subject matter. The meaning of a text, much like the meaning of architecture, resides not in finality or closure, but in the constant movement between its fragments. This dynamic allows meanings to emerge, retreat, and re-emerge in a perpetual cycle of interpretation that defies the simplicity of a definitive end; it invites ambiguity.

To write a conclusion is to betray the text and the architecture I argue for: it imposes a limit on what should remain limitless. Here, *a conclusion should be forgone.*

94   Vojvodík, *Povrch, Skrytost, Ambivalence,* 13.
95   Ibid.
96   Ibid.
97   Kundera, Milan. 1996. Slowness. New York: Harper-Collins. 172.

98   Stone-Richards, "Latencies and Imago" In *Surrealism and Architecture.* 256

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