

ARCHITECTURE OF AFFECT

conceptions of concrete in brutalist buildings

Marijke de Wal

MA Thesis

2017

Supervisor: László Munteán

Department of Literary and Cultural Studies

Radboud University Nijmegen

László,
köszönöm hogy hittél bennem

CONTENTS

PREFACE	4
INTRODUCTION	6
I	
WORLD OF CONCRETE	10
ubiquitous utopias	12
critical regionalism	15
brutalist sensibility	17
II	
ARCHITECTURE OF AFFECT	21
concrete aesthetics	26
architectural polemic	27
as found	29
human habitat	33
refrain	36
urban poetry	38
kate wood	39
affective voices	41
nostalgic remembrance	42
refrain	47
radiant city	49
solid darkness	50
the alchemist	53
déjà vu	57
refrain	60
CONCLUSION	62
SAMENVATTING	67
REFERENCES	70

PREFACE

‘Het is lente maar beton bloeit niet’. As long as I can remember, this slogan adorns one of the many nearby railway bridges. Tasting the typographical delights of this particular urban art, I believe I was seven years old, must have marked the beginning of my feelings for concrete. Somehow it was able to comfort me—just being *there*. Only much later I realised that in concrete I recognised the mother I had missed. We both grew older, the railway bridge and me, and my love for concrete gradually developed into an interest in architecture with a preference towards the tactility of genuine building materials. I’ve always preferred touching and laying bare instead of concealing and covering up, which, I guess, is rooted in my perpetual quest for authenticity. And so is this thesis.

Marijke de Wal

Voorburg, spring 2017

It wants to be in touch. It wants to be touched.

Kathleen Stewart

INTRODUCTION

‘It didn’t seek to be pretty; it didn’t seek to soothe’. In the first part of the diptych ‘Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry’ (2014), writer and film-maker Jonathan Meades presents the rather disturbing context of the architectural movement of the mid-twentieth century. Today, much of its architecture has fallen out of favour and many of its structures have fallen into decay. Consequently, the Brutalist label has become quite contemptuous.

The following work originates in affective experiences of architecture. Born broadly from my love for both fields—architecture and affect—it was driven by a desire to consider Brutalist architecture less the contemptuous label it has now become but rather a metaphor in which its concrete challenges the corporeal. Over the past decades, and parallel to a renewed interest in the built environment, architecture and affect have taken an increasingly important position in cultural and urban studies. The attention to the precarious topic of Brutalism and to the material and cultural significance of concrete has increased as well, although on a smaller scale. For example, John Grindrod’s *Concretopia: A Journey around the Rebuilding of Postwar Britain* (2013) and Adrian Forty’s *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (2012) offer valuable insights into the topics of Brutalist architecture and concrete. However, except for a few crossovers such as Juhani Pallasmaa’s *The Eyes of the Skin* (2007) and Jill Stoner’s *Toward a Minor Architecture* (2012), there is a lacuna in the literature on the interrelation between these topics. They function largely independently, not in the least aware of each other’s existence. Contemporary critiques regarding the use of concrete in modern architecture, and in particular the often ruthless criticism on Brutalist concrete, have made further research in this area perhaps an ungrateful task. A task, maybe, of trying to meet the unspoken expectations of discarding both movement and material of a certain dissonance.

Increasingly, our tactile impressions of the built environment are antagonising in a sense that ‘our visual world is not always congruent with our spatial one’ (62), as Jill Stoner explains in *Toward a Minor Architecture* (2012). We turn our heads, literally or figuratively, as if not to face our deepest pain—in the words of Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, ‘because we do not have the means for understanding and coming to terms

with what is right before our eyes' (2009, 6). In his essay 'Beauty and Desecration' (2009), Roger Scruton describes the state which we find ourselves in, and to which modern society has contributed considerably, as follows:

The haste and disorder of modern life, the alienating forms of modern architecture, the noise and spoliation of modern industry—these things have made the pure encounter with beauty a rarer, more fragile, and more unpredictable thing for us. Still, we all know what it is to find ourselves suddenly transported, by the things we see, from the ordinary world of our appetites to the illuminated sphere of contemplation.

It's a thin line between this lingering desire for aesthetics and the fervent pursuit of prettiness as hinted at in Meades' programme. As the emergence of Brutalism's disturbing architecture was possible only within a similar context, so was the degeneration of values, and the fallacy that followed has ruled out the lesser-understood movement of the kind of aesthetic experience Scruton defines.

This thesis is intended to excavate some of the preconceptions that have contributed to the connotation of a disquieting force in architecture, with all its consequences. At this point, I consider them the basis for my research question, namely: in what ways does the disquietude of Brutalism turn the everyday experience with concrete into an affective architectural encounter? Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to question, and ultimately show, the intrinsic value of Brutalist buildings, in other words, the architecture's ability to affect, by indicating the affective qualities of the manifestations that I hereafter analyse, or, how these affects are built. I argue that it is precisely the movement within which these structures have been erected that enables us to experience its architecture at full strength for its ability to affect. Affect takes place in the encounter with architecture regardless of our emotions and reactions; our bodies become aware of it through a full range of sensations. In an effort to explain the binary opposition between perception and sensation, or, as Bryan Lawson argues in *The Language of Space* (2001), 'the difference between unconscious expectation and experienced reality' (43), and to show that it is not just a visual rejection but a real, visceral force which has its roots in the depths of our being, I will return to the semiotics of the metaphor and (re)connect the building with the body through theories of affect.

Architecture and the body have always been closely related. In *The Eyes of the Skin* (2007), in which this interrelation is discussed, Juhani Pallasmaa writes: 'Every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of space, matter and scale are measured equally by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle. Architecture strengthens the existential experience, one's sense of being in the world, and this is essentially a strengthened experience of self' (41). Pallasmaa herewith emphasises the importance of corporeal contact, and mainly that of the tactile sense, in the experience and understanding of both ourselves and the world that surrounds us; through touch we meet. Contiguity, in turn, is truly touching. Touch offers an honest confrontation with ourselves: it not only questions but also lays bare what is hidden, what wants to be known—regardless. It awakens within us a susceptibility for the literal yet oft-forgotten impact the built environment has on us through these affective experiences of architecture. Pallasmaa recognises the (re)discovery of our neglected senses in a new awareness that 'is forcefully projected by numerous architects around the world today who are attempting to re-sensualise architecture through a strengthened sense of materiality and hapticity, texture and weight, density of space and materialised light' (37).

Insight into the work of Stoner, Lawson and Pallasmaa, among others, has helped me lay bare some of the sometimes painful similarities between concrete and the corporeal in the signification of three different manifestations of Brutalist architecture. Theories of affect have proved essential in the identification and recognition of the different processes at work; they allow for a true understanding of this architecture from within.

This thesis consists of two parts. In the first part, I theoretically explore the world of concrete. In the first chapter, the appearance of fair-faced concrete in modern architecture is studied with a clear focus on the onset of Brutalism. Overall criticism on the cultural content of concrete is discussed in the second chapter. In the third chapter, the sensibility that lies at the heart of Brutalism is contemplated. Together these chapters reconstitute the context in which Brutalism will be further analysed in the second part of this thesis. In that part, and as far as possible, I set forth a theoretical framework of affect, which is complimented by three case studies. Each case study

partly represents Brutalist architecture, ultimately providing a multidimensional depiction of the movement.

The correspondence between Brutalism's rationale and theories of affect is striking. What Irénée Scalbert identifies as the vantage point of Brutalism, namely the aspiration 'to dispose with the notions of beauty, of language and of form' (2000, 78), reflects my purpose for the following case studies. The first one is a close reading of Reyner Banham's essay 'The New Brutalism' (1955) in which I will argue the disposal of classical notions of beauty. In the second case study, a film analysis of Joe Gilbert's short documentary *BARBICAN / Urban Poetry* (2015), I shall try and dispose of the notion of language. The third case study, which is a visual analysis of Le Corbusier's building Unité d'Habitation (1952), contains my suggestion for the disposal of the notion of form. In Brutalism, these dispositions enabled the material 'to order itself with little or no intervention on the part of the author' (Scalbert 2000, 78). What Scalbert identifies as the only accepted practices in Brutalism, namely those of 'finding, choosing and juxtaposing' (78), resemble my applications in this thesis to ultimately argue the anti-aesthetic, or the affective, of the previously mentioned manifestations.

From different viewpoints, the essay, the documentary and the building clearly critique Brutalism. Hopefully, the following discussion will not only contribute to a better understanding of the overall criticism on Brutalism but will also allow for the emergence of a 'sensate perception' (Highmore 2010, 121). Thus, Ben Highmore beautifully summarises Alexander Baumgarten's aesthetic experience which entails the resolution of the difference between expectation and reality. This difference often appears from contemporary criticism on Brutalism and is the starting point for this research. Terry Eagleton explains the field of Baumgarten's aesthetic experience as 'nothing less than the whole of our sensate life together—the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion into the world' (121). Affect arises in this sensate life—it is affect. How the world strikes the body resembles an architecture of affect.

I

WORLD OF CONCRETE

Concrete is everywhere. As the fabric of the city, it is the most widespread material in the modern building practice. Known since ancient times, it has been hyped for its availability, constructive strength and resilience, and heckled about its supposed cheapness, its frequent use in repeated and standardised elements and, ultimately, its visual unease. In any case, concrete is part of a lively discussion.

I have always been deeply touched by the fact that concrete is essentially ‘innocent of architecture’ (9), as Adrian Forty surprisingly starts his journey into its wondrous world in *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (2012). Yet at the same time I’m well aware that my feelings do not represent the prevailing tendency—not by far. Forty describes it beautifully:

An element of revulsion seems to be a permanent, structural feature of the material. Much of what has been written about concrete has tried either to ignore this, or to convince people that their feelings are mistaken. It is not my purpose to try to explain away the negativity that concrete attracts, nor to persuade people that what they find ugly is really beautiful. This is not an apology for concrete, meant to win people over to it. The many attempts, mostly originating from the cement and concrete industries, to put a better face on concrete strike me as misguided and pointless. There is more sense, I believe, in accepting the dislike people have for concrete for what it is, and in finding room for that repugnance within whatever account of concrete we are able to give. (10)

Therefore, the discussion in this part shows a parallel with Forty’s work in the sense that I first and foremost seek to understand the materiality of concrete. Forty identifies this as the ability ‘to deal with its presence everywhere’, namely ‘concrete in all the diversity of its applications’ (9). Within this diversity it is neither the technical proportions nor the constructional qualities of concrete that I would like to discuss but rather its cultural significance or, to use Igor Kopytoff’s concept, its cultural biography. For there is yet another thing, next to the fair amount of criticism to which it’s exposed,

that characterises concrete: time and again it manages to escape the attempts of categorisation. Forty refers to this remarkable quality as the 'resistance to classification' (11), resulting in a certain slipperiness that keeps it an actual topic in the critical discussion of its material meaning. In her essay on the force of things, Jane Bennett would consider this the 'material recalcitrance' (2004, 348). Kopytoff, on the other hand, discusses the evolution of cultural singularities through the metaphor of the biography in an attempt to grasp the changes in the life of these things, all things, over time. He states: 'A culturally informed economic biography of an object would look at it as a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories' (1986, 68). Starting from an economic viewpoint, Kopytoff describes how things are valued in various contexts and for this he indicates commoditisation as the process in which exchange value is being ascribed to singularities—the grey area, and by far the largest, between the two opposite poles of singularities and commodities. 'In no system is everything so singular as to preclude even the hint of exchange' (70), he states. In other words, at a certain point in their life classification *will* occur, which means that even singularities of the non-valorisable and the non-exchangeable kind will be categorised. The fact that singularities always exist within a certain context, an economic framework in Kopytoff's discussion, causes the classification of their cultural content to a greater or lesser extent eventually. Such as the quest for opportunities to participate in the exchange process can be regarded as an essential part of the biography of a singularity, so can cultural capital be considered its destination at a given moment.

It is precisely this cultural content that is already hinted at on the book cover of *Concrete and Culture*. One of Forty's many images shows the detail of a scallop shell that was cast in the concrete of Le Corbusier's Chapelle Notre Dame du Haut, symbolising the baptism of Christ. Although Forty considers concrete a universal medium, this example shows that it is always both within a certain cultural context and through the public's culturally driven gaze that it should be valued or understood. Therefore, this part contains a literature review that aims at an in-depth exploration of the world of concrete. It is structured as follows. In the first chapter, the application of fair-faced concrete in modern architecture is studied within a post-war context, mainly based on the work of John Grindrod (2013) and Adrian Forty (2012). In the second chapter, its often problematic cultural content is explained on the basis of a number of

important concerns that have appeared in the critical discussion of the use of concrete for which the ideas of Kenneth Frampton (1983a; 1983b) have been used. In the third chapter, the true sensibility characteristic of Brutalism is explored through the work of Alex Kitnick (2011), Irénée Scalbert (2000) and Dirk van den Heuvel (2002). Together, these chapters serve as the theoretical framework in which affective encounters with concrete will be further discussed.

ubiquitous utopias

In Brutalism, a new aesthetic—an anti-aesthetic, as I will argue—arose which was mainly seen in public building in the 1950s and 1960s. Its most important feature is the exposure of rough cast material—*béton brut*, literally ‘raw concrete’—and, thereby, the basic structure as part of the final construction, emphasising its functional relations. Sarah Briggs Ramsey, who studied the global concrete consumption with a clear focus on Brutalist buildings, established a link between the movement’s materiality and its etymology:

Though the provenance of the term ‘Brutalism’ seems forever unsettled—Brut as a nod to Le Corbusier’s *Béton Brut* (raw concrete), or as a play on Peter Smithson’s rumored AA nickname ‘Brutus,’ or, even further, derived from Hans Asplund’s use of ‘Nybrutalism’ in referring to the small cabin of his contemporaries Bengt Edman and Lennart Holm—concrete would prove to be a favored material of Brutalism for its dynamism of form, its versatility of function (structure/enclosure/partition) and its unapologetic appearance. (2015, emphasis in original)

Briggs Ramsey considers the changes in meaning from their origins to later use a consequence of the adoption of the terms ‘brutal’ and ‘Brutalist’. Separated from its original context and reduced in meaning, ‘Brutalism’ gradually became a term suggesting that ‘these buildings were designed with bad intentions’, she points out (2015). And while most criticism relates to their architectural physiognomy, the opinions on the brutality of these buildings are not unanimous. In *Concretopia: A Journey around the Rebuilding of Postwar Britain* (2013), for example, John Grindrod questions their unapologetic appearance in the context of post-war urban planning.

The scope of this work is succinctly summarised and aptly expressed in the central question: 'And yet, was that what actually happened? Were these architects and planners the philistine barbarians of popular myth?' (26).

It is not without reason that any such questions are posed in contemporary contemplations of an architectural movement that made its global appearance at the time concrete was rediscovered as an important building material. Unlike earlier critiques, these works add a different layer to the discussion by taking into consideration the prevailing criticism on the movement and, moreover, by testing its dominant narrative. 'There is an accepted narrative to the way we think about our postwar architectural legacy', writes Grindrod (25). He explains, 'That narrative is somewhat akin to the plot of a superhero blockbuster: a team of supervillains—planners, architects, academics—have had their corrupt, megalomaniac way with the country for 30 years. Then, at long last, a band of unlikely heroes—a ragbag of poets, environmentalists and good, honest citizens—rise up against this architectural Goliath and topple it in the name of Prince Charles' (25). Grindrod's critique would not only jeopardise a set of national beliefs regarding Brutalism but it would also provide the discussion with the necessary historical context. The author stands up for those who committed themselves to the British public interest from 1945 onwards, a fact often forgotten in debates on both the ethics and aesthetics of Brutalist architecture. To Grindrod, the history of the movement first and foremost embodies 'a story of ingenuity and humanity' (33) in which factories had been repurposed to provide shelter for the homeless in order to give them 'a decent start in life' (63)—a life characterised by the determination to make things better, despite austerity.

In the immediate post-war years, the 'Make Do and Mend' attitude was rampant. In many places life had to be built from the ground up and it had to be done as quickly and cheaply as possible. Grindrod discusses the post-war situation in Britain, where the government guaranteed the realisation of a tremendous number of housing projects. No longer could be relied upon conventional building techniques; a different method had to be used in order to meet the exorbitant demand. While previously used in the assembly of simple dwellings, prefabricated concrete was reintroduced for the realisation of large-scale urban projects in a limited period of time. Grindrod describes one of the earliest responses to the reception of these projects:

We opened the door and my wife said, 'What a lovely big hall! We can get the pram in here.' There was a toilet and a bathroom. I'd been used to a toilet in the garden. The kitchen had an Electrolux refrigerator, a New World gas stove, plenty of cupboards. There was a nice garden. It was like coming into a fortune. (40)

For most, the new homes were better than anyone could have hoped for; they were a godsend in the winter of 1946-7. With their heroic forms and robust materials these buildings offered a new paradigm for urban reconstruction. Concrete enjoyed a global revival after years of being somewhat dormant.

Long before its public revaluation, concrete had similarly been the subject of Thomas More's *Utopia*. More had imagined its qualities and ascribed them to 'the material that would transform people's lives' (Forty 2012, 8). In More's *Utopia*, which was originally published in 1516,

all the homes are of handsome appearance with three stories. The exposed faces of the walls are made of stone or cement or brick, rubble being used as filling for the empty space between the walls. The roofs are flat and covered with a kind of cement which is cheap but so well mixed that it is impervious to fire and superior to lead in defying the damage caused by storms. (Forty 2012, 8)

In the introduction to *Concrete and Culture*, Forty demonstrates the long-standing association between More's depiction of concrete and other utopian movements, proving that 'concrete has a metaphysics as well as a physics, an existence in the mind parallel to its existence in the world' (8). Utopian thoughts meander across the surface of Brutalism's post-war concrete, legitimising its inception. The tectonic eloquence of the layers beneath conveys the materials in which their concrete was cast and reveals their construction. Concrete is singularly expressive; it possesses an enigmatic identity of its own. A deep but difficult richness lies within its raw texture and tone, resonating. The plasticity of concrete allows for an authentic architectural expression. With its versatility, the possibilities are sheer endless and its mutability may result in many different appearances. Timeworn and weathered, each of its structures is a silent, somewhat antagonising witness of change. Through their biography, Brutalist buildings have become honest reflections of culture, climate and age, sharing an immediate

kinship with one another through the commonality of concrete. However, amidst their ubiquity this authenticity is easily missed and affect is often lost in the dullness of their everyday existence.

‘Concrete is the material of modernity; the material of industrialization; the material of infrastructure; the material of the banal’, writes Briggs Ramsey (2015). What she recognises as the ‘very intentioned use of concrete as a finish material’ indicated a new modernity: ‘that short window of time in the mid-century when Brutalism reigned and concrete’s use seemed universal in its built application, serving as a structure, envelope and partition’ (2015). However, the emerging debate on Brutalism was the predictor of its uncertain future. Even now, Brutalist architecture is struggling to meet contemporary standards of performance and, more often, aesthetics, which appears most clearly from postmodern critiques on its heritage. Not only are these buildings burdened by the ever-increasing demands for preservation but they are also permanently threatened by urban renewal lying in wait.

critical regionalism

At the end of the twentieth century, a number of unanimous critiques on modern architecture were publicly communicated and brought together in what would be identified as Critical Regionalism. Following historian Liane Lefaivre and architect Alexander Tzonis who, in 1981, first presented their criticism under the name ‘Critical Regionalism’, architectural historian Kenneth Frampton elaborates these thoughts on the lack of identity in this particular architecture in his essay ‘Prospects for a Critical Regionalism’ (1983). Frampton provides an explanation for the use of the term by stating that it

is not intended to denote the vernacular, as this was once spontaneously produced by the combined interaction of climate, culture, myth and craft, but rather to identify those recent regional ‘schools’ whose aim has been to represent and serve, in a critical sense, the limited constituencies in which they are grounded. Such a regionalism depends, by definition, on a connection between the political consciousness of a society and the profession. Among the pre-conditions for the

emergence of critical regional expression is not only sufficient prosperity but also a strong desire for realising an identity. (1983a, 148)

Critical Regionalism seeks to contest Modernism mainly for ignoring the cultural and poetic meaning of a building. 'The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, [...] but also of [...] the creative nucleus of great civilizations and great cultures, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, [...] the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind' (148). This striking argument of philosopher Paul Ricoeur serves as the introduction to Frampton's essay. Modern architecture, continues Frampton, is often conceived without taking into account the influences of culture and place, resulting in the persistent refusal to enter into dialogue with its surroundings. In these buildings specific qualities of place and region have been replaced with an alienating international style, which led to a backlash against the use of standardised elements, the repetition of forms and the use of concrete as a finishing material.

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, the concept of space had a predominant role in architectural discourses at the expense of tectonic thinking, according to Frampton. In complementing the normative visual experience, he sees a role for Critical Regionalism in readdressing the tactile range of human perceptions. In so doing, Frampton foresees,

it endeavors to balance the priority accorded to the image and to counter the Western tendency to interpret the environment in exclusively perspectival terms. According to its etymology, perspective means rationalized sight or clear seeing, and as such it presupposes a conscious suppression of the senses of smell, hearing and taste, and a consequent distancing from a more direct experience of the environment. This self-imposed limitation relates to that which Heidegger has called a 'loss of nearness.' In attempting to counter this loss, the tactile opposes itself to the scenographic and the drawing of veils over the surface of reality. Its capacity to arouse the impulse to touch returns the architect to the poetics of construction and to the erection of works in which the tectonic value of each component depends upon the density of its objecthood. The tactile and the tectonic jointly have the capacity to

transcend the mere appearance of the technical in much the same way as the place-form has the potential to withstand the relentless onslaught of global modernization. (1983b, 29)

Frampton provides an overview of cases where the tactile and the tectonic are clearly interrelated and in which the process of creating architectural space largely depends on this interrelation. He explains them as best practices of the kind of building design that goes back on the most fundamental aspects of architecture: materiality, the process of building and the spirit of the place. Tadao Ando, one of the most prominent examples in the work of Frampton, explains it rather clearly when considering his own creative process in the light of Critical Regionalism 'an open, universalist Modernism in an enclosed realm of individual life styles and regional differentiation' (1983a, 158). The space-time factor allows for a multidimensional understanding of the built environment; it relates present personal and local influences to a certain historical awareness in the interpretation of this universalist architecture.

Frampton's belief in the importance of the coherence between form and origin can be considered a backlash against the suggested lack of identity in Brutalist architecture and, more importantly, the negativity that overshadows the entire movement. The considerations coined within the context of Critical Regionalism and in particular those offered by Frampton may open up new possibilities in the understanding, and possibly also the appreciation, of the true sensibility by which Brutalism's concrete can be characterised.

brutalist sensibility

Following the rough and spontaneous Art Brut of its propagandist Jean Dubuffet, Brutalist architecture, too, pays respect to materiality in its purest appearance—a structural and physical honesty. But perhaps even more than its architecture it was the underlying affective process that characterised the movement.

In 1953, the architects Alison and Peter Smithson, together with sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi, photographer Nigel Henderson and engineer Ronald Jenkins, among others, organised an exhibition of photographic documents, *Parallel of Life and Art*, which was held at the London Institute for Contemporary Arts. During their regular meetings, the

artists of the Independent Group, as they called themselves, brought forward material they considered important and it was assembled 'like cuttings on a pinboard' (Scalbert 2000, 62). Thus, a substantial body of images was generated. 'What the editors chose', explained Henderson, 'was what moved them; no particular theory had been mapped out beforehand' (Kitnick 2011, 70). Simultaneously, they positioned themselves as an affected audience, namely, 'artists who do not so much express themselves as much as they are impressed upon by an outside world' (72). And it is precisely this affective interrelation which is characteristic of Brutalism; it appears from its different manifestations including its images. Art historian Alex Kitnick clarifies:

The images that comprise *Parallel* are less signifying objects than they are objects stripped of references, less juxtapositions of things than ambiguities of form. As distinguished from a sign, which binds together signifier and signified in the service of representation, the image lacks such a composite dimension; it is simply a presence, an enigmatic appearance, a 'thing itself,' and as such, it possesses a visceral quality as well. (82)

Affect arises in the autonomy of each image. *Parallel of Life and Art* emphasised this autonomy by the spatial arrangement of the images and derived its existence from spontaneous correspondences between them. The casual choice of their size and location, together with these emerging correspondences, 'evoked the format of a scrapbook' (Scalbert 2000, 64).

The 'as found' was the novelty of *Parallel of Life and Art*, writes architecture critic Irénée Scalbert and, moreover, 'its proposition that art could result from an act of choice rather than an act of design' (65). The Brutalist concept was clearly reflected, for example, in the headings for the images, which, according to Scalbert, 'emerged from the material itself' (62). The exhibition symbolised 'a compilation of personal interests' (62); it was largely autobiographical. Kitnick explains, 'In making public the private interests contained in their scrapbooks, however, Henderson, Paolozzi, and the Smithsons nevertheless allowed an audience to explore the impact that a new realm of images was having on contemporary artistic and architectural practice' (2011, 70). The distinction between high and low culture was discarded, which appeared from the renewed interest in the everyday. In this context, the everyday, observes Dirk van den

Heuvel, 'is not an innocent, idyllic position. On the contrary, it acts as the field for an often unexpressed political (and cultural) struggle' (2002, 54). What followed was a visual analogy between disparate themes devoid of any artistic expression. The artists were especially touched by 'the overwhelming beauty of the occasional throwaway image', which they recognised in, for example, news photographs and X-rays (Scalbert 2000, 65). In his essay 'Architecture as a Way of Life: The New Brutalism 1953-1956' (2000), Scalbert also discusses Reyner Banham's review of *Parallel of Life and Art*. Banham emphasises the *brut* aspect of the material, as seen in the raw and uncoded messages of these accurate representations, above everything else. According to Scalbert, the architecture critic also recognises the spontaneous correspondences between the images and ascribes them to the levelling medium of photography; even in the absence of any contentual connection, similarities of outline and texture could be established. Opinions differ, however, on the degree of randomness of these correspondences. Banham identifies them as 'of a purely arbitrary and formal kind' (65), whereas Tom Hopkinson, another critic and one-time editor of *Picture Post*, argues quite the opposite. In his opinion, *Parallel of Life and Art* demonstrated 'a unique penetration into the material world, equivalent to a new faculty developed by man' (66). Hopkinson imbues the chance connections Banham made between the images with a deeper hidden meaning by ascribing the basic idea of the collection to 'the visual likeness between objects of a totally dissimilar nature ... as if one had stumbled upon a set of basic patterns for the universe' (66).

Ultimately, it was the idea of Hopkinson that Scalbert applied to the material of *Parallel of Life and Art*, or, more precisely, to the iconic image of a typewriter with its components taken apart, which resulted in the following visual analysis:

The parts were laid out in such an artless way that they appeared to reflect the desire to do without composition. Presented in outline as if on a light table, their texture became invisible and the sense of their material was suppressed. Every part being discreet, the image gave no clue concerning their functioning. It was no longer the signification of the whole which mattered, but that of the parts. These, now lost to the manufacturer, drifted in a semantic field of their own, open to the musings of the observer. The parts had become constituted as signs. They became pictograms of a language shorn of its syntax, of a language whose grammar was not so much

forgotten as it was waiting to be spontaneously invented by the observer. Like signs, they belonged in a realm which was parallel to the world of things. (66)

Scalbert draws a striking parallel between the parts and the fact that together, these constituent parts belonged to a machine that was used to transcribe language. 'To the jingling of functioning parts, to the teeming of their infinite formal complexity', writes Scalbert, 'corresponded the proliferation of language' (68). The image of the typewriter shows the Brutalist belief that everything, in essence, is language; all things constitute, and can again be broken down to, a set of basic patterns. This constant breaking down and building up of patterns allows for the possibility of making connections between the autonomous images of *Parallel of Life and Art*. What follows is that all languages, images and, thus, all things are (possibly) parallel and connected. 'By virtue of this immanence of language, a secret yet more real intimacy could be established between the observer and the teeming life of the world. This', concludes Scalbert, 'rather than any material factuality, was the essential meaning of Brutalism' (68)—it was (at) the basis of its sensibility.

II

ARCHITECTURE OF AFFECT

Affect is all there is. In this thesis I imply the existence of certain emotive qualities of architecture, or an affective architecture. But is this also the architecture of affect? Although this work is rooted in affective experiences of architecture, I mainly discuss how these affects are built. It is, in essence, affect's architecture that I explore and I will do so by carefully observing what constitutes affect (in a body, in us).

Affects are 'things that happen' (2), explains Kathleen Stewart in *Ordinary Affects* (2007); '*Something* throws itself together in a moment as an event and a sensation' (1, emphasis in original). In *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010), a comprehensive collection of essays on affect, editors Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg delineate the phenomenon as follows:

Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations. (1, emphasis in original)

Thus, affect comes first. The order of the 'happening' of affect and our response to this happening is significant in the understanding of the phenomenon. As Stewart emphasises, 'However it strikes us, its significance jumps. Its visceral force keys a search to make sense of it, to incorporate it into an order of meaning. But it lives first as an actual charge immanent to acts and scenes—a relay' (2007, 39).

Affect is (about) perceiving, it is the lived, a bodily or corporeal experience in all its richness; a sensation, a becoming, the shock that goes through us, 'resonating' (Stewart 2007, 12). Affect is (about) energy; from Ernst van Alphen we learn that affect has 'an

energetic dimension' (2008, 23). It exists in 'intensities' (Stewart 2007, 10) that extend beyond the individual; it is at the same time intersubjective and impersonal. Van Alphen refers to Gilles Deleuze's explanation of affect as 'an intensity embodied in autonomic reactions on the surface of the body as it interacts with other entities. It precedes its expression in words and operates independently' (2008, 23).

Affects are non-semiotic and non-representational, which makes them difficult to understand. Language is based on modes of signification, whereas affects are not 'infected' by meaning or content; they 'are not so much forms of signification, or units of knowledge, as they are expressions of ideas' (Stewart 2007, 40). Affective experience, or 'the embodiment of sensation' (Alphen 2008, 22), could thus be regarded as 'an *explosion* of information, but an *implosion* of meaning' (21, emphasis in original). Van Alphen considers our struggle with ascribing the ability to affect to objects in the context of our deep-rooted belief that objects are passive and unconscious matter. Instead,

there is no reason not to acknowledge matter and objects as possibly active. The transmission of affects by texts, films, or paintings is then no longer an imprecise, metaphorical way of speaking of our admiration for, or dislike of, these cultural objects. On the contrary, it is an adequate way of describing what cultural objects can do to us, and of how they are active agents in the cultural and social world. It is precisely because of the activity of matter and objects that literature and art can be affective, and that we can speak of the affective operations of art. (25)

What follows, is the observation of Ben Highmore in which 'the words designating affective experience sit awkwardly on the borders of the material and the immaterial, the physical and the metaphysical' (2010, 120). Any such experience requires the kind of understanding that breaks with signification and does not articulate it within a discursive framework (Alphen 2008). Moreover, again following Seigworth and Gregg, 'these affective moments [...] do not arise in order to be deciphered or decoded or delineated but, rather, must be nurtured [...] into lived practices of the everyday' (2010, 21).

Affects are timeless. The turn to affect, however, is regarded primarily as a backlash against Structuralism. At that time, and driven by demand for the concrete, as

Highmore explains, 'cultural inquiry turned toward a materialism where a body would be understood as a nexus of finely interlaced force fields' (2010, 119). As a result, critical studies 'of emotions and affects, of perception and the management of attention, and [...] of the senses, the sensorial, and the human sensorium' (119) appeared. Affect abruptly ends this past relationship between language and philosophy; it is pre-verbal and anti-verbal at the same time.

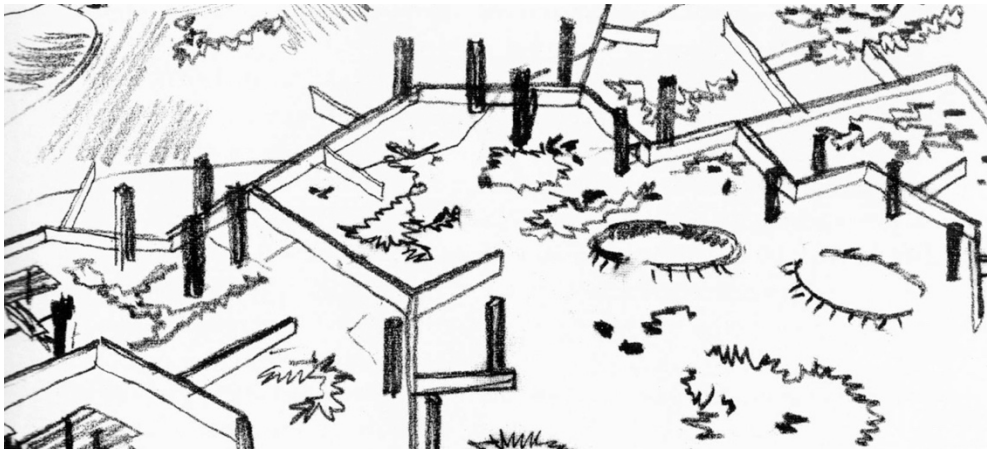
Finally, affect exists in small things. 'It's one of the many little *somethings* worth noting in the direct composition of the ordinary' (Stewart 2007, 48, emphasis in original). Mostly, however, as Nigel Thrift states, 'The affective moment has passed in that it is no longer enough to observe that affect is important: in that sense at least we are in the moment after the affective moment' (2010, 289). Within these moments after affect, the by Gay Hawkins described 'vivacity of an impression' can be explained as something 'that was only meaningful retrospectively' (2002).

Perhaps in an attempt to show that affect itself is minor in the world of *things*, I will hereafter address three issues that seemed appropriate for my research and in which the effects of affect become apparent. And because affect is a relational phenomenon, as it arises within the relationship between two entities and it, therefore, requires an (affective) object, I establish a link between architecture and affect. Like affect, Brutalist architecture, too, 'does not speak to us, it does not sign. [...] But whatever properties we invest it with are the products of our sensibility, our reason, our wonder, our disavial' ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014). Jonathan Meades gradually strips away everything that has been added to this particular architecture in the course of time, leaving only what is truly important. Thus, Brutalism has proved valuable because of its corporeal structures, or, as Alison and Peter Smithson stated in their 1955 manifesto, for its 'reverence for materials', by them already at that time explained as 'a realisation of the affinity which can be established between buildings and man' (Banham 1966, 46).

As will become clear in this part, I adhere Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie's theory in which they propose affects as forces that 'come from the outside, as a challenge to established forms' (2010, 145, emphasis removed). It can be applied as follows: something (in their case a ship, but it may as well be an essay, a documentary or a building) 'is defunctionalized [...], removed from the sign systems and material

processes [...]. It becomes the mark, the possibility of a new event (a new virtual potential for things to happen differently), of a new set of physical territories [...], and of a new set of existential territories (these include virtual potentials, physical places, new modes of living, new laws, new sign systems, discourses, rhetorics, new emotions and feelings, new powers to affect and be affected). In sum, a new field of expression arises' (142, emphasis removed). To this the authors add Félix Guattari's interpretation of affects as '*transitions* between states' (145, emphasis in original) and Manuel DeLanda's understanding that affects 'are *virtual* in that they carry "unactualized capacities to affect and be affected"' (145, emphasis in original). A parallel exists between the trichotomy of defunctionalisation, transition and virtuality that appears from Bertelsen and Murphie's theory (and hopefully also from this thesis) and Irénée Scalbert's conclusion of the quest for 'an unarguable truth which resided beneath the trappings of form' (2000, 78) that underlies Brutalism. Brutalist artists, Scalbert recognises, considered their works of art 'cast-offs from the ceaseless flux of life. They were signs or impressions lifted from the formlessness of matter. Once wrenched from the velleities of matter, these impressions obtained an autonomy of their own, even a kind of life' (2000, 78)—the kind of life I'm after.

Affect is all there is. There is nothing (else) to hold on to.



Alison and Peter Smithson, Golden Lane Estate (sketch proposal).
London, United Kingdom, 1952.

concrete aesthetics

In retrospect, Reyner Banham's essay 'The New Brutalism' (1955) can be considered the first critical reflection on the architectural movement. It explains the rebirth of Brutalism in a post-war context, mostly based on the oeuvre of the architects Alison and Peter Smithson, and aims at a firm (re)positioning of the movement, which is further elaborated in Banham's later work *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (1966). However, a theory and questions of aesthetics can already be identified in the first piece. In the context of this thesis, I focus on the questions as raised in Banham's essay in relation to Brutalism as well as the cultural implications of a classification, ethic or aesthetic, of the architectural movement by a close reading of the text.

In 1953, Alison Smithson gave the first account of what would become The New Brutalism after designing a small house in Soho, London, of which the structure was to be exposed entirely; Smithson referred to it as 'warehouse aesthetic' (Scalbert 2000, 60). And although this particular description would not return as a fundamental principle in later accounts of the movement, it did in some way establish a link between Brutalism and a certain aesthetic.

After Smithson, the architecture critic Reyner Banham adopted the concept of a Brutalist aesthetic, first in his essay and later as the objective of his work. 'The tone of response to The New Brutalism existed even before hostile critics knew what to call it', writes Banham, and it was thought of as 'a cult of ugliness' (1955, 356). Banham, who introduced the movement to the Architectural Review in 1955, defined the Brutalist style as follows: '1, Memorability as an Image; 2, Clear exhibition of Structure; and 3, Valuation of Materials "as found"' (361). His essay was considered hegemonic in the demarcation of Brutalism's activities, although its values and objectives have always remained far too vague to ensure the coherence necessary to the constitution of a movement.

Despite his previous position, Banham has not been able to fully refrain from some serious criticism—a stance indicative of his future work. By stating 'what characterizes the New Brutalism in architecture [...] is precisely its brutality, its *je-m'en-foutisme*, its bloody-mindedness' (357, emphasis in original), Banham not only contributes to the already negative connotation of the movement but also clearly distances himself from

it. It is for this reason that Dirk van den Heuvel (2002) considers Banham's essay trendsetting for the architectural discourse at the time of Brutalism's revival. Although such expressions were initially used by critics who sought to indicate the sensibility towards materials, Brutalism gradually became associated with harsh and unaccommodating architecture by a public 'which apparently craved [...] prettiness. Not beauty, just prettiness' ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014).

architectural polemic

It is precisely within the often strained relationship between a public and the urban environment it inhabits where the visual qualities of that particular environment are assessed, which is also Kevin Lynch's main argument in *The Image of the City* (1960). Lynch states:

Environmental images are the result of a two-way process between the observer and his environment. The environment suggests distinctions and relations, and the observer—with great adaptability and in the light of his own purposes—selects, organizes, and endows with meaning what he sees. The image so developed now limits and emphasizes what is seen, while the image itself is being tested against the filtered perceptual input in a constant interacting process. Thus the image of a given reality may vary significantly between different observers. (6)

Thus, Lynch identifies the potential biases that might occur in the referential process between a force field and its observer. In architecture, like in many other things, this tension between a critic and his object of criticism equals the ability to affect and to be affected. Sara Ahmed describes this process as follows:

To be affected by something is to evaluate that thing. Evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn toward things. To give value to things is to shape what is near us. [...] Those things we do not like we move away from. Awayness might help establish the edges of our horizon; in rejecting the proximity of certain objects, we define the

places that we know we do not wish to go, the things we do not wish to have, touch, taste, hear, feel, see, those things we do not want to keep within reach. (2010, 31-32)

Parallel to the process as described by Ahmed, Banham opens his essay with what could be identified as the starting point for any affective state: 'Introduce an observer into any field of forces, influences or communications and that field becomes distorted' (1955, 355). Throughout his work, Banham's thoughts on modern architecture, and in particular those on the emergence of The New Brutalism, gather around similar issues of the mutual influence between that particular architecture and its critics, in other words, the interrelation between observers and the force field that is being observed. But instead of acknowledging the vast range of new dynamics that might arise from this interrelation, Banham narrows down the outcome of critical interference to only two options. According to Banham, the architectural movement develops either into a 'label' or a 'banner'; in the former historians or critics tend to describe an architecture on the basis of certain consistent principles, whereas in the latter the architecture and its overarching artistic style are explained within a wide range of phenomena surrounding the movement by the artists themselves.

What Banham in his essay describes as the dichotomy between a label and a banner would return even more radically in the rationale of his later work. In *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (1966), Banham clearly distinguishes between a stylistic label, or an 'aesthetic', and an 'ethic', which he loosely describes as 'a programme or an attitude to architecture' (10). According to Banham, Brutalism's programme was primarily based on the social ethics of Alison and Peter Smithson, 'to which they attached quite as much importance as to formal architectural aesthetics' (47). Parallel to this process in which the social ethics were further developed, people started to identify The New Brutalism with Jean Dubuffet's Art Brut as well as other artistic expressions of that time. As a result, Banham saw himself compelled to classify the assets that had emerged from the architectural movement into the narrowness of the previously mentioned categories in order to contextualise, and even legitimise, their cultural content.

In what seems to be the polemic of Brutalism, Banham's use of the word 'or' implies an either/or opposition, whereas in fact the terms 'ethic' and 'aesthetic' are not mutually exclusive. This becomes particularly evident in the closing argument of his

work, which is, in his own words, largely based on the rhetoric of the movement itself and in which Banham bluntly expresses his disillusionment: 'But the process of watching a movement in gestation and growth was also a disappointment in the end. For all its brave talk of "an ethic, not an aesthetic", Brutalism never quite broke out of the aesthetic frame of reference' (134). In the envoi, Banham even refutes his 1955 essay, as well as an earlier manifesto of the Smithsons, for the same reasons. In so doing, Banham not only puts the term 'aesthetic' in a bad light but he also presses a mark on all subsequent manifestations of the movement.

as found

It is remarkable that, throughout his work, Banham uses the terms 'beauty' and 'aesthetic' inconsistently and interchangeably when applied to Brutalist images (and, implicated, to its architecture). The author recognises a number of significant and, for that time, less common design applications, whereas a comprehensible visual aesthetic is absent—a study by Banham identified as an 'exploration into the anti-architectural' (43). And although gestures like these were greatly appreciated by the young followers of this new movement, much of its architecture was defined in the sense of "'anti"-buildings' (43). Banham describes the images produced within Brutalism as a 'particular aesthetic' (61), sometimes even as 'bizarre or anti-aesthetic images' (61) and, thereby, holds the architectural movement responsible for the subversive innovation of 'the exploitation of these visual qualities to enhance the impact of subject matter that flouted humanistic conventions of beauty' (61-62).

In spite of the above, Banham does indeed recognise the importance of images in that '[a] great many things have been called "an image". [...] "Image" seems to be a word that describes anything or nothing. Ultimately, however, it means something which is visually valuable, but not necessarily by the standards of classical aesthetics' (1955, 358). Banham identifies the image in this context as 'one of the most intractable and the most useful terms in contemporary aesthetics' (358). Therefore, and, moreover, since the image is one of the main characteristics to identify Brutalism by, a reconsideration of the different terms might be in place.

In complementing Thomas Aquinas' thoughts on beauty—the frequently cited '*quod visum placet* (that which seen, pleases)' (358, emphasis in original)—with his own idea

of the image as something that, then, 'may be defined as *quod visum perturbat*, that which seen, affects the emotions' (358, emphasis in original), Banham seems to touch upon affect again. However, according to the author, his own interest in the image opposes that of The New Brutalists in their consideration of images as 'anti-art, or at any rate anti-beauty in the classical aesthetic sense of the word' (358). And although Van den Heuvel agrees with Banham regarding his ideas of Brutalist artists who, in Van den Heuvel's words, 'were not interested in absolute beauty' (2002, 54), he refutes Banham's interpretation of the meaning of the image in Brutalism. Van den Heuvel observes that

[i]n his definition of New Brutalism, Banham sees the 'as found' aesthetic not as the outcome of a process but as a 'concept of Image' [sic], which takes leave of the abstract idea of beauty as an objective worthy of pursuit in either architecture or fine art. This New Brutalist 'concept of Image' is 'anti-art' and 'anti-beauty'. In Banham's words, 'What moves a New Brutalist is the thing itself, in its totality, and with all its overtones of human association.' [...] The aspect of the process that the Smithsons accentuate in their description of the 'as found' concept is completely ignored, whereas this aspect is of overriding importance regarding the realisation of the 1953 exhibition. Alison and Peter's words—'the picking up, turning over and putting with'—apply as do no others to the way they, together with Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, selected images for the exhibition. For that matter, this method of 'picking up, turning over and putting with' is not unrelated to the fact that the exhibition is the result of collaborative work, a fact that should be kept in mind at all times when discussing the work of the Smithsons. (60)

The Brutalist approach to aesthetics, or, more precisely, to the anti-aesthetic is highly affective. Affect, as I wrote in the introduction to this part, always comes first. It 'happens' in the encounter between a subject and an (affective) object—the encounter becomes affective, becomes affect.

'Aesthetics', writes Ben Highmore, 'in its initial impetus, is primarily concerned with material experiences, with the way the sensual world greets the sensate body, and with the affective forces that are generated in such meetings' (2010, 121). The phenomenon springs from affect; Highmore's consideration alone shows that aesthetics lies at the

heart of material experiences. He continues, 'Aesthetics covers the terrain of both "the vehement passions" [...] and the minor and major affects and emotions [...]. It is attuned to forms of perception, sensation, and attention [...]; to the world of the senses [...]; and to the body [...]' (121).

An almost seamless parallel exists between Highmore's ideas and those of Virginia Postrel stating, 'Aesthetics is the way we communicate through the senses. It is the art of creating reactions without words, through the look and feel of people, places, and things' (Thrift 2010, 291). Furthermore, Postrel offers insight into the difference between aesthetics and what Jonathan Meades identified as prettiness, in Postrel's words, entertainment:

Hence, aesthetics differs from entertainment that requires cognitive engagement with narrative, word play, or complex, intellectual allusion. While the sound of poetry is arguably aesthetic, the meaning is not. [...] Aesthetics may complement storytelling, but is not itself narrative. Aesthetics shows rather than tells, delights rather than instructs. The effects are immediate, perceptual, and emotional. (291)

And although the concept of aesthetics apparently caused confusion among the admass, the literature on the subject is mostly based on the kind of aesthetic pleasure that is generated by, in Nigel Thrift's words, 'that side of sensation that is sheer formless enjoyment' (292). He continues, 'Aesthetics is bound up with the discovery of new and alluring imaginative territories that reflect upon themselves. Though these territories are usually vicarious they are no less real for that' (292). Within this relatively unknown field of self-reference, Thrift explains aesthetics as 'an *affective* force that is active, intelligible, and has genuine efficacy: it is both moved and moving' (292, emphasis in original), thus referring to the Spinozan distinction between '*affectus*' and '*affectio*'. Affect is herein identified as both 'the force of an affecting body and the impact it leaves on the one affected' (Watkins 2010, 269), in other words, the ability to affect and to be affected. In her account of the Spinozan distinction, Megan Watkins emphasises the lasting impression or residue which remains after affect itself, *affectio*, has disappeared. And although she recognises both qualities of affect, 'its ability to function as force *and* capacity' (270, emphasis in original), Watkins explains affect above all as the relational phenomenon in which '*affectio* is very much a product of *affectus*, and

so affect as force or the processual aspect of affect is in fact embedded in a discussion of affective capacity' (270, emphasis in original). Ultimately, the trichotomy that arises in Thrift's explanation of affect as a force may bridge the gap between the opposed theories of the image and its significance for Brutalism. Thrift states: 'It is a force that generates sensory and emotional gratification. It is a force that produces shared capacity and commonality. It is a force that, though cross-cut by all kinds of impulses, has its own intrinsic value' (2010, 292, emphasis in original).

Returning to the antagonism existing between Banham's ideas of the image and those of The New Brutalists, it can be concluded that ethic and aesthetic, like force and capacity, can coexist in the same force field. Moreover, the Brutalist 'as found' aspect suggests a practice that has replaced the attempts to cognitively understand critical processes with the corporeal experiences of 'the picking up, turning over and putting with'—a reintroduction of affect in the anti-aesthetic experience of Brutalism and, therefore, the revival of its phenomenology. The demerits of speech that have undeniably emanated from this revitalisation are an important indication of the essence of a visual culture which is dominated by, in the philosophy of Hugues Boekraad, a certain 'ferocity' (n.d., my translation) of the image that cannot (and, or so it seems, does not want to) be tamed by speech or any other form of cognitive categorisation. However, even with his affective question about 'the influence of contemporary architectural historians on the history of contemporary architecture' (1955, 355), Banham still clings to the urgency of understanding which underlies the need for cognitive categorisation. What can be considered the rationale of his essay returns as the critical intention of his later work. In the preface to this work, Banham observes that 'large and important aspects of Brutalism were already in need of historical explanation' (1966, 5). And although the demand for some context of the movement appears in the right place at the right time, there is little discussion of the sensibility, or ethics, of the movement in both his essay and his book. Moreover, the either/or opposition between ethic and aesthetic re-enters, this time already on the book jacket. And with the contemplation, 'Was the New Brutalism a moral crusade for the reform of architecture [...], or was it simply another post-War style, or even several styles?' (inside cover), Banham seems to have broken with Brutalism's sensibility forever.

human habitat

The influence of the Second World War on the emergence of the Brutalist style can hardly be overestimated; it is perhaps even the most important reason underlying the aesthetic choices that have been made during its early years. In a short time, large parts of devastated cities had to be rebuilt with a minimum of resources. The search for a workable approach for these large-scale urban projects resulted in the rise of new construction methods and materials and was reflected in the strong and modern identity of Brutalism. Consequently, traditional architectural styles were massively abandoned by a generation of young architects who were actively involved in the reconstruction of these urban regions.

Alison and Peter Smithson's ideas preluded this 'completely new attitude and a non-classical aesthetic' (66) that followed upon human associations and their renewed relationships with the community and the built environment that both characterised the post-war years. The architects explain,

In the immediate post-war period it seemed important to show that architecture was still possible, and we determined to set against loose planning and form-abdication, a compact, disciplined architecture. Simple objectives once achieved change the situation, and the techniques used to achieve them become useless. So new objectives must be established. (66)

The Smithsons had been familiar with the dissatisfaction experienced among each new generation of architects; it is the ongoing process leading to new ideas of order which they simply identified as architecture. 'The word "city" still stood for something of positive human value expressed as an emotive artefact—as an "image"' (71), concluded the architects of the urban image that was no longer, in the words of Van den Heuvel, 'an intricate web of Picturesque accident and variation with a special role for urban decoration such as iron fences, neo-Victorian advertisements and shop windows' (2008, 28). On the contrary, in their discourses on architecture and urbanism, and born from their relationship with the everyday, Brutalist artists developed the idea of an "'expendable" aesthetic' that represented 'their curiosity about what would constitute ordinariness in the future' (Heuvel 2002, 58). And although Banham already in 1955 identified The New Brutalism by the term 'une architecture autre', implying an

architecture that abandoned, or even violently broke out of, the more traditional concepts of expression, composition and materiality that had been generally accepted until then, he indeed recognised the fact that with this new form of subversive building Brutalist architects tried to 'drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work' (1966, 66). Actually, it was just another manifestation of the 'as found' and, thereby, 'Brutalism's attempt to be objective about "reality"' (66).

Alison and Peter Smithson explain the 'as found' concept within the then architectural context as follows:

Setting ourselves the task of rethinking architecture in the early 1950s we meant by the 'as found' not only adjacent buildings but all those marks that constitute remembrancers in a place and that are to be read through finding out how the existing built fabric of the place had come to be as it was... Thus the 'as found' was a new seeing of the ordinary, an openness as to how prosaic 'things' could re-energise our inventive activity. (Heuvel 2002, 60)

It was their way of responding to society's desire for an environment for human activities, on the one hand, and symbols of its cultural objectives, on the other, both needs that until then had been met by the classical synthesis of structure and form. By comparison, the affective, collage-like method of 'the picking up, turning over and putting with', or the 'as found', that was used in order to define these new urban forms was a different visual language indeed, and the tendency was widely acknowledged.

Already at the start of Brutalism's revival, Lynch, too, recognised the development in which the controlled and limited sequences of early forms of urban design had been 'reversed, interrupted, abandoned, cut across' (1960, 1), making the art of shaping cities 'a continuous succession of phases' (2). Thus, the city no longer represented what was thought of as a totalitarian utopia—quite the opposite. The utopian promise implicit in the rising of new cities in a post-war context, on the other hand, was indeed recognised by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter in *Collage City* (1978). The authors propose modern urban planning as the collage design of cities, in their own words, 'a collision of physical constructs' (119). Rowe and Koetter even identify these so-called 'collusive intentions' (119) as the new concept within urban design, allowing for the experience of fragmented utopias; they accommodate the development of a collection of

miniature utopias. Herein, the authors advocate the affective role of the architect as a 'bricoleur' (102) and someone whose

universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of the previous constructions or destructions. (102-103)

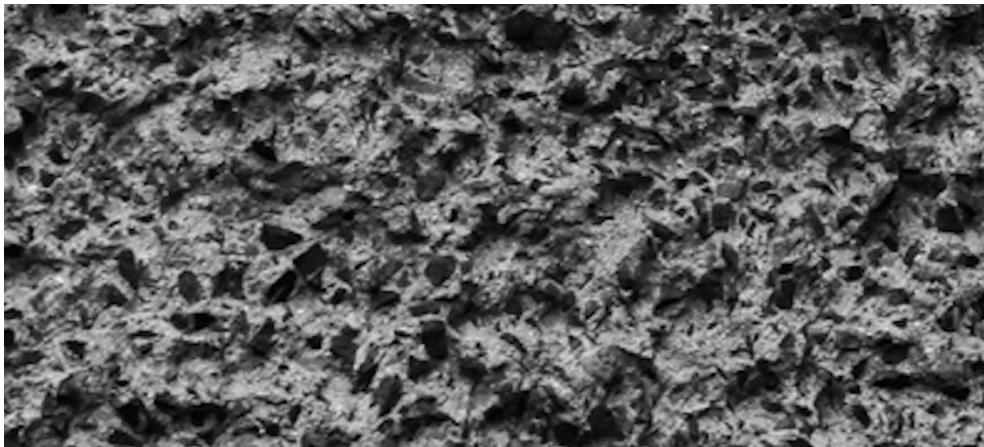
Rowe and Koetter adhere to the thought that the architect, at that time, needed to show the ethical content of society by means of urban design—a function Lynch attributed to the development of the city as a whole. His vision runs parallel to the Brutalist concept of urbanism concerning 'the identity and structure of single elements, and their patterning in small complexes' (1960, 118). Ultimately, these small complexes need to be understood within the coherence of the environmental image. The art of urban design, concludes Lynch, thus aims at 'a future synthesis of city form considered as a whole pattern' (118).

Eventually, the perpetual quest of Brutalist artists for the ideal habitat was reflected in their desire for today's pictorial truth, in Banham's words, 'une architecture autre', and for the expendable aesthetic of tomorrow, or 'vers une architecture' (1966, 69). Their process involved collecting representations of these miniature utopias, such as advertisement images from American magazines, which the artists regarded as the 'social symbology' (62) underlying the new way of life. Thereby, they found themselves on the verge of change; the representations of the new way of life contained the needs of a society, while the images were also used as a reflection of the artists' comment on the imminent emptiness of such a life. Their statement resembled what Juhani Pallasmaa would describe as human commodification: 'Images are converted into endless commodities manufactured to postpone boredom; humans in turn are commodified, consuming themselves nonchalantly without having the courage or even the possibility of confronting their very existential reality' (2007, 34). Brutalist artists found themselves in the middle of these events and were eagerly looking for opportunities to take a stand against them. While their annual exhibition in London,

The Ideal Home, combined both design philosophy and styled aesthetic, it had been these avant-garde activities of the Brutalist artists that resulted in yet another exhibition, which was the apogee of the Independent Group. As a visual representation of future domesticity, *This is Tomorrow* ultimately allowed for image and style, or ethic and aesthetic, to face the future together.

refrain

The confusion created by Banham's improper use of the terms 'beauty', 'aesthetic' and 'aesthetics' lived on in the building of his argument. Over the years, and increasingly biased, Banham's work turned into a self-righteous controversy, which not only precluded drawing any conclusions but also distorted the meaning of the terms, and for what purpose? *Affectus* and *affectio*—ethic and aesthetic—can indeed coexist, regardless of a critic's stance.



Peter Chamberlin, Geoffry Powell and Christof Bon, Barbican Estate (detail).
London, United Kingdom, 1960-70.

urban poetry

Joe Gilbert's short documentary *BARBICAN / Urban Poetry* (2015), which was part of the official selection at eight different film festivals around the world, had been awarded Best Short Film at Screen Stockport 2015 and Best Documentary at Thurrock Film Festival 2015. As the title already suggests, it was intended as an eloquent registration of the 1970's Barbican Estate in London. In less than six minutes the viewer gets an impression of how things *could have been*. In the context of this thesis, I explore the cultural importance of Gilbert's project to Brutalist architecture through an in-depth analysis of the director's conceptual choices as well as the creative elements and the post-production of the documentary.

Already at the beginning of the film the viewer is put on the wrong track by a quote of creative director Tom Dixon: 'For most, brutalism is a miserable danger zone of concrete... But the Barbican reminds us of how different it could have been' (*BARBICAN / Urban Poetry* 2015). Do we get to see a representation of what might have been, or will we see the Barbican as it was? And what exactly *is* that? From the beginning of the film we seek authenticity, (a) truth.

The term 'barbican' refers to the Latin *barbecana*, which was used to indicate the outer fortification or defence of a city. The Barbican Estate was built on the remains of the old City of London, being quite literally rooted in its history. In the layers right on top of a city's past, tucked deeply beneath the estate, a series of test samples shows possible finishes of the concrete that was used as the main building material for the Barbican. In her research on the local use of concrete in global Brutalist architecture, Sarah Briggs Ramsey describes her descent into the marrow of the Barbican as follows:

Stretching nearly 20 feet, the vast range of the myriad concrete finishing techniques demonstrates the ambition Chamberlin, Powell and Bon held for their concrete. Not simply selected for its inexpensive cost, this was a material that offered malleability of appearance and allowed for specificity of intent. Their bespoke bush-hammered solution would surely be impossible today by both safety and cost standards: pneumatic drills were used to chip away the finish surface by hand (with workers

suspended as much as 30 stories in the air), exposing the dark granite aggregate beneath to create the signature rough and dark mottled finish. (2015)

A palpable lushness might have served as the basis for Gilbert's *Urban Poetry*. Instead, a greyish black-and-white film, as though the colours had been removed during post-production, shows no images in particular. In what seems to be a random choice of footage, 45 almost photographic images—the average slideshow after a family holiday—present only the slightest movement (birds, clouds, the wind in the trees and, for some reason, a military helicopter taking off), although the camera holds still. Except for a few passers-by we do not get to see any people. It's just buildings. No zoom is used; neither are there any effects. Buildings are distorted by the use of a wrong wide-angle lens. The atmosphere is dense—thick and tedious.

We listen to the voices of three of Barbican's residents, two men and a woman, who remain anonymous throughout the film. It feels a bit like listening to an eyewitness account—no faces, no names. Hesitatingly, apologetically almost, they speak without conviction, pausing mid-sentence. Little intonation, no narrative. There's no place like this place. A possible utopia. Muffled city sounds swell.

kate wood

Kate Wood loves cats. At least, that's what a little research on the Barbican Residents website (barbicanresidents.co.uk) shows. A picture on the website displays Kate with a cat sweater and cat earrings surrounded by cats—photos, artworks, small statues. A friendly old lady in her own tiny (cat) world, or so it seems. Actually, we don't know her at all, not even her name. Throughout the film Kate Wood remains anonymous, a severe but broken voice, pondering.

[image 1] I've lived in the Barbican now for 39 years. [image 2] In the early 1970's, my late partner and I met, so we wanted somewhere central, somewhere we could [image 3] move easily, somewhere that wasn't too expensive. The estate at that time [image 4] was only for rent and the idea was to make it available to young(ish) professionals [image 5] working within the city or the immediate environments. When we came here, most people [image 6] only lived here during the week, so it

was, it was very much a transit population. Now there are a lot of elderly [image 7] people here, because people who bought then a lot of stayed. [image 8] To some extent, it was utopian, I suppose. Because don't forget that this was just after the war, the very idea that something could be [image 9] started afresh was terribly important to [image 10] older people and certainly to young people, I mean, I was young at the time, the idea you could do something [image 11] differently, it didn't all have to be as it had been [image 12] before. So it stuck out like a sore thumb. People thought it looked very strange, [image 13] all the domes on the top, why haven't it, [image 14] why hasn't it got proper roofs or why isn't it flat? [image 15] Some people found it very frightening, actually, and still do, or what on earth it's like living there, [image 16] or isn't that rather grim, how do you ever find your way 'round the place? [image 17] Either you really get the bug and you want to be here or you think why the hell did I ever come to live here, to live here in the first place and you'd get out. [image 18] I don't want to move here, so I don't go and look at somewhere else I'd like to move to there. (*BARBICAN / Urban Poetry* 2015)

Paradoxically, poetry (as we know it) in *BARBICAN* is far off. The residents' monotonous voices seem too mechanical to reveal their true stories about the estate. Yet all we have is their voices and words. Is there perhaps a truth hidden beneath the surface of these stories?

'In speaking we formulate words in order to refer to situations and events', writes Alphonso Lingis (2011). 'In listening to language', he continues, 'we attend to the stream of sound breaking into word-units, the conventionally coded sounds that relay us to the meaning, the message, and to the things or events being referred to' (2011). Before slowly uncovering what we unconsciously associate with the true meaning of communication, Lingis first describes its formal operations. Mostly, we're only marginally aware of what happens beyond words and meaning. Yet *Urban Poetry* indicates at least something authentic in the statements of Kate Wood, Peter Archbold and Jonathan Posner. Each in their own way, their somewhat melancholic accounts speak of what has been, or what might have been, although not by means of words.

affective voices

A voice is authentic. Lingis describes it as a 'climax of authenticity, in Heidegger's sense: *Eigentlichkeit*, being on one's own, existing all one's being. Being all there and being oneself, and giving oneself' (2011, emphasis in original). It is the unbounded awareness that manifests itself right through our conscious intentions; it is the pure and unintended self anticipating the manifestations of the ego. 'It takes everything we have', recognises also Kathleen Stewart of this life 'lived on the level of surging affects' (2007, 9). And there is one such moment in the story of Kate Wood. In her recollection of 'the very idea that something could be started *afresh*' (*BARBICAN | Urban Poetry* 2015, emphasis added), this single word embodies it all; 'her position, her stance, her implantation in the stable or quaking world are there in her tone of voice. Her confusion, her anxiety are in the pitch, accent, syncopation of her voice. Her vulnerability, her exposedness are in the timbre, resonance, overtones of her voice. Her vitality, her nervousness, fatigue, pain are in the lilt, volubility, intonations, pacing of her voice. Her singular inner life, her wellspring of energies and drives and aspirations are in the tone of her voice. Her life makes contact with us, penetrates us, animates our voice. Her life quickens our own' (Lingis 2011). Despite, or perhaps because of, the monotony of what is presented to us, synchronicity is embedded in one word, in Kate; it's the place where we come together. Do I know her well enough to let her in, I ask myself? But her speaking already corresponds with my hearing, captivates me, reverberates in me. Our feelings touch, coincide. She is the incarnation of the architectural experience which, in the words of Juhani Pallasmaa, 'brings the world into a most intimate contact with the body' (2007, 60).

The interrelation between something shared, narratives that arise from stories about ourselves and others, and a latent vulnerability also becomes apparent from Lauren Berlant's editorial to the special issue of *Critical Inquiry* on intimacy. In imitation of Berlant, intimacy is the kind of communication with 'the sparest of signs and gestures' having its roots in 'eloquence and brevity' (1998, 281). Intimacy is (about) the relationship between entities in a world in which it is no longer possible *not* to communicate: 'intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation. Its potential failure to stabilize closeness always haunts its persistent activity, making the very attachments deemed to buttress "a life" seem in a state of constant if latent vulnerability' (282). Before suddenly opening up to us, which

happens only once, *in a word*, Kate is in this state of latent vulnerability. Then, in the awareness of her frailty, she quickly turns away, her voice extinguished. The intimacy of daily life, writes Berlant, is marked by these contradictory desires: 'people want to be both overwhelmed and omnipotent, caring and aggressive, known and incognito' (285).

In *Urban Poetry*, these ambiguities are accentuated by the juxtaposition of words and images. The use of a certain artlessness denounces the dialectics of self and other, of (collective) memory and reality, and of permanence and change. Architecture enables us to perceive and understand these dialectics, explains Pallasmaa, and it is by means of the architectural experience that we are able 'to settle ourselves in the world, and to place ourselves in the continuum of culture and time' (2007, 71). In their essay on the historical awareness evoked by photographic images, Tim Dant and Graeme Gilloch argue something similar. They state,

The most obvious way of treating the photograph is as a document of reality, one that accurately captures the physical presence of people, buildings, objects and nature. The scene we glimpse with our eyes fades in memory, some aspects of it remaining longer than others, but the view caught in the photographic image is complete and enduring. This is the powerful distancing in time that the photograph affords. (2002, 7)

The correspondence with the almost photographic images of *Urban Poetry* is striking. Gilbert's documentary directly evokes a corporeal response which is, according to Pallasmaa, an inseparable aspect of our encounter with architecture. He claims: 'A meaningful architectural experience is not simply a series of retinal images. The "elements" of architecture are not visual units or gestalt; they are encounters, confrontations that interact with memory' (2007, 63).

What lies beneath will surface eventually.

nostalgic remembrance

'Everyone experiences that occasional desire to look back at a bygone age, and to catch a glimpse of something that touches their heart and moves their soul, or throws fresh

light on the changes around us', writes Zoltán Kerényi on the website of his ongoing project *Ablak a múlt / Window to the Past* (2011), thus articulating a feeling we all share. Kerényi's work consists of recreating stories by superimposing photographs of a bygone era on present-day pictures of the same place, an art also known as rephotography. By carefully getting the given angle and vantage point Kerényi manages to seamlessly blend today's events with those of the past—an interrelation that is painfully, and probably also wilfully, absent in Gilbert's documentary. Both in word and image Gilbert's documentary is a (re)turn to 'the impoverishment of language—the language of repetitions, monosyllables, and stuttering, of words in the process of disintegration' (Stoner 2012, 77). Jill Stoner clarifies, 'In architecture as in literature, this is language purified of style, language stripped bare' (77). In *Urban Poetry*, present-day scenes, images of the city, indeed merge with those of the past, the residents' voices and their stories, although not in the classical sense of poetic proficiency. On the contrary, an almost still life of objects that 'stand as traces of a past still resonant in things' (Stewart 2007, 56) is created by illogical patterns of word and image, their apparent randomness and the residents' linguistic flaws. Altogether, this ostensible indifference, only rarely interrupted by an affective anachronism, results in the absence of an interplay of past and present on a semiotic level, leaving the division between two moments in time absolute.

Yet what moves us is exactly the occurrence of these, in Walter Benjamin's words, sparks of contingency which he, in 'A Small History of Photography' (1985), explains as tiny traces 'of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we looking back may rediscover it' (243). Benjamin identifies these traces as the distinguishing feature of the photograph in which 'a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconsciousness', the so-called 'optical unconscious' (243). It is the most authentic fragment of an image, something of which we unconsciously feel it has the quality of uniqueness that cannot be perceived by the conscious eye; Dant and Gilloch even consider it the basis for the interrelation between an image and its reader. 'Indeed', they say, 'the reader of the photograph is attracted to precisely those fragmentary and contingent irruptions which escape and confound the photographer's purpose' (2002, 11).

Writing about the poetics of photo albums, the Yugoslav author Dubravka Ugrešić also designates the imperfections in a visual narrative as the main reason for the fact that a viewer is moved, in the case of her mother's albums 'especially in places where something was missing or where a mistake had been made' (2000, 294, my translation). She calls to mind the act of arranging pictures in a photo album, 'a procedure of beautifying your everyday life and the construction of your own personal history', and explains, 'That's why it's so moving. And that's why it is so painful. Basically, it's a death mask' ('Van de schoonheid en de troost: De poëtica van het album' 2000). Throughout the years, Ugrešić has found only little consolation in this act of cherishing life as the magical version of what could, or should, have been. She considers photographs the only valuable evidence of having been *there*, proof of the fact 'that someone was alive at a particular time and place in history' (Sturken and Cartwright 2009, 17), yet at the same time the most fragile sign of one's existence—memories that can easily be forgotten or destroyed.

Ugrešić was one of the guests in Wim Kayzer's TV programme 'Van de schoonheid en de troost' (2000) in which Kayzer would interview people from different backgrounds (music, art, science, literature) and ask them the same question: 'Tell me what makes this life worthwhile'. Kayzer and Ugrešić spoke about the photo albums of her mother.

Mother's albums, the way she set out the facts of her life, revived before my eyes an everyday life I had forgotten. This everyday life was arranged by the mere fact of being posed. Then, it was resorted through deselection of photographs but perhaps just because of an amateur-artistic impulse that the facts of life should be nicely arranged, it sprang out in the gaps, in the mistakes, in the method itself, touchingly authentic and alive. ('Van de schoonheid en de troost: De poëtica van het album' 2000)

To Ugrešić, the memory prevails. 'The albums tell the story of life *as it was supposed to be*', she emphasises. 'It wasn't even close' ('Van de schoonheid en de troost: De poëtica van het album' 2000).

Like no other, Elizabeth Loftus, psychologist, memory expert and also one of Kayzer's guests, has shown the extent to which memory can be influenced. Her story may be living proof of the narrative dimension that Paul Eakin explores in *Living Autobiographically: How We Can Create Identity in Narrative* (2008) precisely because

of its absence. 'Memory is very constructive', explains Loftus. 'We take bits and pieces of information from other places, other times, and amalgamate them with other memories and construct something new' ('Van de schoonheid en de troost: Lieve moeder' 2000). Loftus finds solace in the ability of treating her patients by the power of suggestion in order to positively alter their autobiography but is herself unable to handle the trauma relating to her mother's mysterious death. The affective anomalies in Kate Wood's narrative resound in Loftus' memories. For Loftus, too, is holding on to the few bits and pieces that constitute these memories without 'the ability to construct a narratively coherent life story' (Eakin 2008, 30), leaving the viewer stranded.

Eakin introduces the concept of a narrative identity as 'the idea that what we are could be said to be a story of some kind' (ix). The conventions around our personal stories have become part and parcel of the fabric of society; they are normalised in a way that they constitute the narrative identity system to which we belong. Within this system, these narratives are available at any time, claims Eakin, not only demonstrating our identity but also underlying it. He explains: 'narrative is not merely about self, but is rather in some profound way a constituent part of self. [...] There is a mutually enhancing interplay between what we are and what we say we are' (2). Thus, the 'impaired self-narration' (47) in the life stories of Elizabeth and Kate can be held responsible for what Oliver Sacks, in this regard quoted by both Eakin and Kayzer, identifies as 'a loss of affect' (46). In *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales* (1985), Sacks describes the common human condition of his patients from his experience in the everyday practice of neurology. 'For it is not memory which is the final, "existential" casualty here', he explains, 'it is not memory only which has been so altered in him, but some ultimate capacity for feeling which is gone; and this is the sense in which he is "de-souled"' (1985, 59). The resemblance is striking. Whereas Wood's story clearly *is*, Loftus' memory is *no longer* present 'in the past, in a mind' (Eakin 2008, 62); the accountability of having her own narrative quietly recedes into oblivion—an irreversible process Elizabeth is fighting in order to keep her biographical self, however fragile, intact. 'We don't, though, tend to give much thought to this process of self-narration precisely because, after years of practise, we do it so well' (4), explains Eakin the often unconscious means of maintaining our narrative identity. Sacks, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of reappropriation: 'To be ourselves we must *have* ourselves—possess, if need be re-possess, our life-stories. We

must “recollect” ourselves, recollect the inner drama, the narrative, of ourselves. A man *needs* such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative, to maintain his identity, his self’ (1985, 57, emphasis in original). It’s the affective turning point in both stories: Kate harks back to her flat tone; Elizabeth utters with sobs. As the origin of self is mirrored in the beginning of these stories, the abandonment of self is closely linked with the loss of their narratives. ‘The verdict of those for whom we perform is virtually axiomatic’, finds Eakin, ‘no satisfactory narrative (or no narrative at all), no self’ (2008, 44).

The threads interweaving the nostalgic memories of Kate Wood, Dubravka Ugrešić and Elizabeth Loftus, in Stewart’s words, ‘things like narrative and identity’ (2007, 5-6), can be considered in the light of ordinary affects. They then become

tentative though forceful compositions of disparate and moving elements: the watching and waiting for an event to unfold, the details of scenes, the strange or predictable progression in which one thing leads to another, the still life that gives pause, the resonance that lingers, the lines along which signs rush and form relays, the layering of immanent experience, the dreams of rest or redemption or revenge. (5-6)

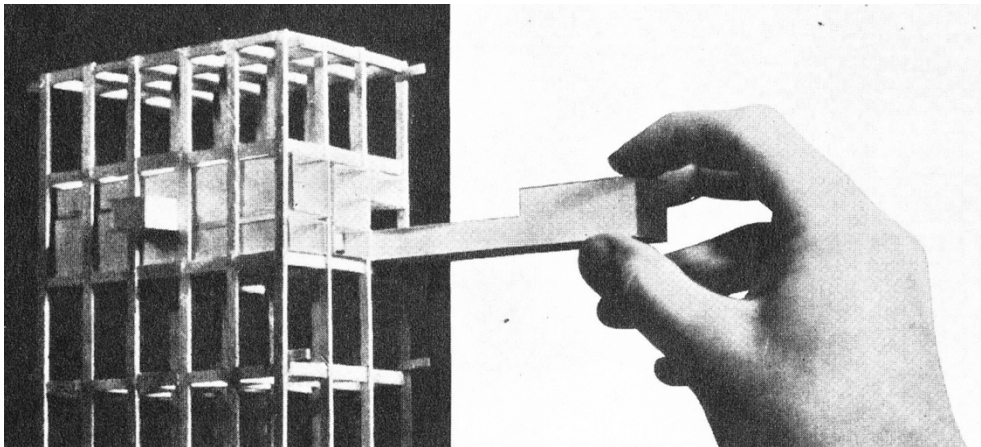
By extension, Gilbert’s conceptual choice of the non-definition of people and places in *Urban Poetry* reinforces the alienation effect, or *Verfremdungseffekt*, which is typical of Modernism. In his essay about the sensitivities of Brutalism, in particular its necessity of context, Dirk van den Heuvel identifies this ‘threat of modernisation’ as ‘the perceived loss of identity and sense of place’ (2008, 23), an estrangement caused by the absence of a certain historical setting. This painful lacuna in *Urban Poetry* can be explained on the basis of Marc Augé’s concept of non-places. A non-place, Augé explains, is ‘a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity’ (1995, 77-78). Stripped bare of almost all forms of remembrance, Gilbert’s *BARBICAN* demonstrates precisely such a (non-)place. And for most, any such depravity is unbearable; cultural artefacts thus induced with nostalgia are no longer able to soothe, as their referents are void.

In imitation of Roland Barthes, Dant and Gilloch argue that ‘[i]t is only through the use of *judgement*, of some identification with the past in the image, that it truly speaks to us’ (2002, 9, emphasis in original). Could we, in the case of *Urban Poetry*, still be

looking at a concatenation of scenes from a past reality, images as indicative evidence of having been there, or are we confronted with the illustrative metaphor of an anterior future, the phenomenon as identified by Roland Barthes and of which he noted, 'I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*' (1993, 96, emphasis in original)? It must be the latter, following Dant and Gilloch when they state, 'There is something profoundly sad about the "that-has-been" [...] as the newly found form of the *punctum*—no longer a detail but now that intensity of the image which locates the referent of the spectrum as always alive, real yet in the past' (2002, 13, emphasis in original). *Urban Poetry* offers a true and affective look into the past that comes to us in the present but is therewith irretrievably lost.

refrain

An awkward beauty—one that's cruel and harsh—lies in this real yet in the past. Gilbert's *BARBICAN* refers to someplace *real*, its coordinates indicating an estate which can be exactly located on a map, although without a lively connection to the present. In a single act of the director, Brutalism is not only deprived of its possible poetry but also burdened with an inarticulate truth. And it is only in retrospect that we understand it couldn't have been otherwise.



Le Corbusier, Unité d'Habitation (photomontage of cut-away model).
Marseille, France, 1947-52.

radiant city

The iconic Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, familiarly known as La Cité Radieuse, is one of Le Corbusier's five residential housing projects throughout Europe and was inaugurated in 1952. Designed as a 'city within a city', it was intended to fulfil the needs of the many. A plethora of possibilities sprouted from Le Corbusier's Modulor; his well-known anthropometric scale of proportions had been archetypal in the building process. But did the Unité ultimately live up to people's expectations? In the context of this thesis, I focus on the difference in outcome between the architect's ambitions and the reception of the project by means of a visual analysis of (representations of) the building and the architect's concepts preceding the construction of the Unité.

'The moment was right for a new archetype, for a new model, for the devoted, flocked copy', states Jonathan Meades of the re-emergence of Le Corbusier's architecture in the early 1950s ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014). And it is quite possible that any such utopian consciousness has formed the basis of the architect's concepts for the Unité. 'Le Corbusier (1887-1965) bequeathed to the world a structurally rigorous but spatially flexible method that no other pioneer of the modern movement would equal' (2002, 6), explains Kenneth Frampton in the introduction to his monograph on the projects of the architect. Designing a complex equipped with all possible facilities for a large and diverse audience needs such a grand idea. Le Corbusier's ideas, however, were generally not well received.

One of the major causes of failure has been described by Bryan Lawson in *The Language of Space* (2001) as the fact that 'many people have not followed architects in the journeys they have made over the last century into the development of architectural form' (97). Lawson continues, 'all forms of art by their very nature move forward, and thus their contemporary manifestations may seem strange to those less involved in the movement' (97), which can be regarded as his explanation for 'the initial hostility' (97) as well as 'strong feelings of alienation' (98) in the overall reception of modern architecture. In addition, Lawson identifies some specific context-sensitive aspects of the architectural design for large-scale social housing projects that have to be taken into account as well: 'The residents of such dwellings will inevitably show huge variations in lifestyles and tastes, and will be pressed fairly close together and need to

express their identity at least partly through the house' (210)—a lack, in the case of Le Corbusier's Unité, of 'social sensitivity' (54).

Human response to the built environment can be inferred from behaviour. The awareness of our sensory perception can be valuable in gaining a deeper understanding of our relationship with space. And in order to comprehend this 'language' of space, Lawson first explains how we experience it:

Primarily of course we see it, since it is largely evident to us visually. The processing of visual sensations into perceptions of the world around us involves a complex interaction of the eye and brain. Our own characteristics are such that our visual sensations largely dominate our perceptions, since over two-thirds of the nerve fibres that enter our central nervous system are from the eyes! Because of this we have come to live in a very visually dominated culture, and it is easy to forget that space is also perceived through the sensations of sound, smell and even touch. Perception is actually more than just sensation. Perception is an active process through which we make sense of the world around us. To do this of course we rely upon sensation, but we normally integrate the experience of all our senses without conscious analysis. (42)

solid darkness

As the basis for our relationship with architecture Lawson states that 'we have our own ways of sensing space and of moving through space' (14). He continues, 'At the more sophisticated level, we have our own ways of making meaning of space' (14) and when the author speaks of 'architecture as a system of signs and symbols' (3) he refers primarily to our ability to comprehend: 'buildings can be read as texts' (4). But should they? As I will argue, the Unité d'Habitation is living proof that things have gone wrong in the referential process.

According to Lawson, buildings are able to denote, exemplify, express and refer, either literally or metaphorically. They are connoted and denoted by a large public, which means that they get imbued with new meanings, *our* meaning, and then all different meanings, the qualities that have been ascribed to them before, are discarded again. Either way, a building is tainted with meanings that do not really matter but can,

and mostly do, have far-reaching consequences. Our habits of phrasing and categorising are tantalising and senseless; the harder we try and grasp things by means of words, the more they evade us. In our struggle with semiotics it is fair to conclude that *giving meaning* ultimately becomes meaningless. After all, who is giving what to whom, and why?

In his notes on semiotics and visual rhetoric, Hugues Boekraad discusses the role of a designer as the producer of an image, pretending to be able to direct a viewer's eye by exploiting the tension between symbols and the imaginary. In order to achieve this, the designer's gaze first needs to be 'undirected' (n.d., my translation), detached from the trappings in which visual media have strained it. Boekraad seems to be touching upon the essence of a visual culture, both challenge and pitfall, as it can be seen but it cannot be said, or, as Roland Barthes identifies, 'I grasp it through my eyes' (1972, 117). In 'Myth Today' (1972), his essay about a supposed signifying consciousness, Barthes admits, 'in language, the signifier remains mental' (122). Lawson explains this process as follows: 'Our perception is integrative of sensory modality in a way that allows both pattern and structure and external meaning to be appreciated. We struggle to explain this to ourselves, often by using cross-sensory modal words to describe our experience' (2001, 81-83). Ultimately, Lawrence Grossberg's essay forms the link between semiotics and Michel Foucault's valuable ideas on the relationship between the 'sayable' and the 'seeable'. Grossberg states: 'The structure of feeling is about the limits of signification, of representation, and [...] the kind of "excess" or "surplus" that is always there through discursive production that is not captured by notions of signification or representation' (2010, 318). It is Foucault's approach that may offer comfort, though little, in a possible return to a corporeal experience of the Unité.

It is *mystère*, 'the ineffable alienness beneath the surface familiarity of the world' (Foucault 1983, inside cover), that not only underpins the entire oeuvre of the surrealist painter René Magritte but also resembles how certain cultural artefacts constantly seem to escape our frantic attempts to capture their meaning. What underlies this rhetorical urge towards reference may best be understood by means of Foucault's notions of resemblance and similitude. Foucault's *This Is Not a Pipe* (1983), from which this theory springs, can be regarded as his attempt to unravel (part of) the mystery of the work of Magritte, among others, including his famous painting of a pipe, which is part of a series of paintings entitled *La Trahison des Images*. Based on Magritte's

surrealistic work, Foucault distinguishes between resemblance and similitude. Resemblance, on the one hand,

presupposes a primary reference that prescribes and classes. The similar develops in series that have neither beginning nor end, that can be followed in one direction as easily as in another, that obey no hierarchy but propagate themselves from small differences among small differences. Resemblance serves representation, which rules over it; similitude serves repetition, which ranges across it. Resemblance predicates itself upon a model it must return to and reveal; similitude circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar. (1983, 44)

Situations in which resemblance occurs can thus be considered conditions of reference that appear from the relationship between an object and a referent, in the case of architecture often a building and all that has preceded it, such as the concepts on which its design was based. Similitude, on the other hand, 'is restored to itself—unfolding from itself and folding back upon itself. [...] It inaugurates a play of transferences that run, proliferate, propagate, and correspond within the layout of the painting, affirming and representing nothing' (49). Thus, similitude, having neither an external referent nor the disturbing factor of (our) critical intervention, draws from itself and keeps referring back to itself in an infinite circular reference. It restrains us to intervene, as in fact does Brutalist architecture. With similitude, things remain highly changeable and ambiguous; they have escaped the stable forms that have been established by some authority, leading us straight into the unknown—no system, no well-known forms to rely on. 'Things are cast adrift', as beautifully put by James Harkness in the introduction to Foucault's work, 'more or less like one another without any of them being able to claim the privileged status of "model" for the rest' (10), which is exactly what makes Brutalist architecture in fact so delicate: being its own model, it has nothing to refer to or to draw from *but* itself. And, in the end, that is all there is for us to hold on to.

Starting from Lawson's iconic and symbolic representations of buildings, I am indeed trying to follow a different path. I would like to revisit the building *as* the building, as the retinal and tactile experience of the building, in other words, the sensory. Meades rightly observes that Brutalism 'was a signifier in search of an object, an -ism that lacked a movement or school or tendency or trend to go with it. This was taxonomy back to

front' ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014). It would be fair to clear its architecture from any former associations and instead return to its internal reference, its Foucauldian similitude. Kathleen Stewart explains it rather clearly by saying that

[t]heir significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible. The question they beg is not what they might mean in an order of representations, or whether they are good or bad in an overarching scheme of things, but where they might go and what potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things are already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance. (2007, 3)

Releasing the need for a certain frame of reference paves the way towards a different understanding of the built environment. Every architectural encounter will then become an experience in which we can rely on our senses and, moreover, a sensation of sublimity that is precluded by any form of representation ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014).

the alchemist

'His sculpture became architecture. His architecture became sculpture, functional sculpture, sculpture with a social purpose. It was an extraordinary mutation' ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014). Meades' programme is split into two parts right in the middle of his discussion of the sublime, a fruitless attempt at the division of sublimity. Le Corbusier was on the threshold between both episodes: 'He had, so to speak, abandoned the prose of a technical manual in favour of the poetry of the sublime' ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014).

The Foucauldian concept of similitude and, correspondingly, Meades' definition of the sublime came together quite literally in the person of Le Corbusier. Drawing only from his own work and ad nauseam referring to it, the polymath described the purpose of construction as 'TO MAKE THINGS HOLD TOGETHER', whereas the goal of (his) architecture was 'TO MOVE US' (1986, 19, emphasis in original). He explains, 'Architectural emotion exists when the work rings within us in tune with a universe

whose laws we obey, recognize and respect. When certain harmonies have been attained, the work captures us. Architecture is a matter of “harmonies,” it is “a pure creation of the spirit” (19). Architecture, by Le Corbusier consequently capitalised, was meant ‘to establish emotional relationships by means of raw materials’ and is regarded as highly corporeal in the fact that it remains ‘a plastic thing. The spirit of order, a unity of intention. The sense of relationships; architecture deals with quantities. Passion can create drama out of inert stone’ (151). Throughout his work, the differentiation made by Le Corbusier between construction and architecture would further crystallise, not simply as a classification but as an ideological premise (Frampton 1985). In line with this, Le Corbusier defined the architect, himself, as follows:

The Architect, by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is a pure creation of his spirit; by forms and shapes he affects our senses to an acute degree, and provokes plastic emotions; by the relationships which he creates he wakes in us profound echoes, he gives us the measure or an order which we feel to be in accordance with that of our world, he determines the various movements of our heart and of our understanding; it is then that we experience the sense of beauty. (1986, 1)

Thereby, Le Corbusier embodied the tension between the artistic concept, on the one hand, and the process of creative destruction typical of modern architecture, on the other. The architect foresaw that the ability to let go of any frame of reference would ultimately enable an architecture in which form would no longer be determinative, an architecture in which form would be everything and nothing at the same time. And although the time was ripe for such a new paradigm, the people’s needs did not concern architecture at all. Instead, what people pursued was the promise of certainty uttered by the solid structures of social housing—precisely the purpose of construction, according to Le Corbusier.

Although never fully realised, Le Corbusier’s Cité Radieuse of which his ‘most significant contribution to social housing typology’ (Jenkins 1993, n.p.), the Unité d’Habitation, is an offspring, held the promise of a utopian city; it would not only provide residents with a hopeful outlook but it would also contribute to a better society. In accordance with Modernist ideals of progress and the annihilation of tradition, it would emerge from a *tabula rasa*; La Cité Radieuse was planned to be built

on the grounds of extinguished European cities. As an answer to the fading concept of the classic city, Le Corbusier's 'city of the future' was characterised by prefabricated and identical skyscrapers, arranged in a Cartesian grid and surrounded by parks. With an almost totalitarian sense of symmetry which reflected his 'commitment to discovering an underlying order in architecture equivalent to that found in nature' (Jenkins 1993, n.p.), the architect arrived at a true geometrical lay-out. Based on repetition and resulting in 'constructional systemization' (Jenkins 1993, n.p.) it was the manifestation of perfectionism to Le Corbusier. The notion of zoning, which was at the core of the plan, allowed him to divide the city into segregated areas for business, entertainment and residential purposes. An underground transport system would enable citizens to commute between the business district in the city centre and the surrounding housing districts. These housing districts contained prefabricated apartment buildings, known as 'Unités'. Each Unité could accommodate as many as 2,700 inhabitants and would function as a so-called 'vertical city', with shops and laundry facilities located on the ground floor and sports facilities and a kindergarten on the roof. Parks surrounding the buildings would provide their residents with both recreational facilities and a natural habitat. Initially, Le Corbusier's proposed principles provided an answer to the post-war housing shortage, which appeared from his pragmatism as he 'seized the reality of concrete and by an almost alchemical process of transformation, reinvented it as a rough and tectonically neutral plastic material' (Jenkins 1993, n.p.). Thus, the architect's ideologies exerted considerable influence on modern urban planning and the development of high-density housing typologies.

'As the man, so the drama, so the architecture. We must not assert with too much conviction that the masses give rise to their man. A *man* is an exceptional phenomenon occurring at long intervals, perhaps by chance, perhaps in accordance with the pulsation of a cosmography not yet understood' (Le Corbusier 1986, 165, emphasis in original). Le Corbusier's image of man was visionary. Yet incomprehension befell him, which took place in accordance with one of Lawson's later observations: 'In the twentieth century architecture adopted a number of characteristics which, when combined together, seemed to lose touch with people' (2001, 97). Modern architecture, and in particular Brutalism, faced the danger of no longer being *in touch*, resulting in an insurmountable distance between architecture and man. Within the architectural theory concerning the corporeality of the built environment, Juhani

Pallasmaa, too, considers architecture 'an extension of nature into the man-made realm, providing the ground for perception and the horizon of experiencing and understanding the world' (2007, 41). 'It is not an isolated and self-sufficient artifact', explains Pallasmaa, 'it directs our attention and existential experience to wider horizons' (41). However, as they do not capture the *Zeitgeist* of modern architecture, these reflections seem only meaningful in retrospect. When Pallasmaa states that architecture, in general, 'gives a conceptual and material structure to societal institutions, as well as to the conditions of daily life' (41), he speaks mostly of the architect's intentions and not so much of the existing discrepancy between these intentions, on the one hand, and the reception and understanding of his projects, on the other. Again, Meades puts the finger on the sore spot, asking, 'Why should buildings be friendly? Why should landscapes? Do we really want to be chums with geological formations? Do we crave matey waterfalls?' ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014)—questions that remain unanswered. He continues his contemplation, 'The proposition that buildings should be on a human scale, that is, slight and not too alarming, is ridiculous. The Monumental must contain something unapproachable that promotes both wonder and awe' ('Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry' 2014). Meades' thoughts show obvious similarities with Pallasmaa's considerations of the tactile experiences of architecture. The author claims that a 'distinct sense of distance, resistance and tension has to be maintained in relation to programme, function and comfort' (2007, 62). In his view, the underlying intentions of a piece of architecture should never become totally transparent, for it is exactly this 'impenetrable secret and mystery' that ignites our imagination and emotions (62).

The pressing question from anxious people in search of consolation remained unanswered; no lasting bond could be established between the architect and those he was supposed to serve. Moreover, Le Corbusier was despised by the people who had placed high hopes on the magnificent forms that would rescue them from their miserable existence, simply because it was not the right magnificence the architect provided them with.

déjà vu

It's there. It's there and it awaits me, watching me with its many brightly coloured eyes. The eye-like sun screening is in fact one of the new elements, next to the mass-produced apartments and the independent supporting skeleton, added by the architect. In his monograph on Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, David Jenkins explains that '[t]he brises-soleil also bring with them a new muscularity which characterizes Le Corbusier's post-war work. They are the heavy, passive and low-technology counterpart of the mechanical environmental control systems implicit in the notion of the machine à habiter' (1993, n.p.). Frampton, on the other hand, observes that 'the Unité revealed its cellular structure through the use of sun-baffle balconies and canopies projecting from the main body of the building' (1985, 226). To me, coming from the Boulevard Le Corbusier alongside its back entrance, it keeps hiding behind the vegetation. Despite its size, it doesn't stand out from the low-rise buildings of this part of Marseilles—oversized yet nimble and alert. It is only past the roundabout and via the Rue Théodore Brosseaud when I learn that it's quite impressive really, its concrete mass filling up the space between the trees in the same colour as their trunks. This 'patina of wear' (Pallasmaa 2007, 31) bears silent witness to the passing of time conveyed by the construction material. The dreary day only adds to the massiveness—a sagging spine on many heavy legs.

The resemblance to something somewhat human is not purely coincidental; the Modulor of Le Corbusier, the twentieth-century inheritor of Da Vinci's Vitruvian man, is present in almost all his later buildings. As a constant reminder of the architect's interpretation of the golden section the Modulor is repeatedly and indelibly impressed in the concrete wall of the entrance hall, directing attention to the naturally harmonious relationship between body and building. Vincent Scully touchingly depicts this relationship:

Although the individual apartment units are expressed, [...] all user scale elements, such as doors and windows, which normally make us read buildings not as sculptural creatures but as hollow containers of human activity, are suppressed, so that the building, like a Greek temple with its peripheral colonnade has only sculptural scale. It thus stands upon its muscular legs as an image of human uprightness and dignifies all its individual units within a single embodiment of the monumental human force

which makes them possible. The high space of each apartment looks out towards the mountains or the sea, and it is in relation to the mountains and the sea that the building as a whole should be seen. This is the larger Hellenic environment it creates. So perceived it is a Humanist building, as we emphatically associate ourselves with it, in the contrasting landscape as a standing body analogous to our own. (Jenkins 1993, n.p.)

As Scully associates the human body with the building, Jenkins does exactly the opposite, ascribing body-like qualities to the building, identifying it as 'a sensuous bone-like cross section hinting at an anthropomorphism' (1993, n.p.). Frampton, too, acknowledges the existence of the relationship between body and building as it was expressed 'at ground level in the carefully profiled columns supporting the underbelly of the building. These *pilotis*, precisely proportioned in accordance with Le Corbusier's *Modulor* suggested the invention of a new "Classical" order' (1985, 226-227, emphasis in original). But what impression does the actual building make, how does it impress me, right here, right now? What atmosphere does it exude? *Does it breathe?*

'In great architectural spaces, there is a constant, deep breathing of shadow and light; shadow inhales and illumination exhales light', explains Pallasmaa (2007, 47). Following this breathing, I indeed see a play of light and shadow. Shadow and light, in turn, follow the building's breaths, audible, tangible, resulting in a breathing that can be seen. The building exudes serenity, utter silence.

'The most essential auditory experience created by architecture is tranquillity. Architecture presents the drama of construction silenced into matter, space and light. Ultimately, architecture is the art of petrified silence', finds Pallasmaa (51). Touching its concrete skin relates past, present and future; they come together in the silent self. It is a respectful, or, in the words of Pallasmaa, 'remembering' silence (52), a silence that allows you to become aware of yourself, of history, of eternity; it is ultimate silence. In line with this, Pallasmaa asserts that '[a] powerful architectural experience silences all external noise; it focuses our attention on our very existence, and as with all art, it makes us aware of our fundamental solitude' (52). It represents a seeking self, a self that has not yet found, a self still meaningless and unbounded.

A certain understanding of the concepts of place and space is essential in the process of self definition through an encounter with the built environment. Their architectural

relevance, as well as their interrelation, is etymologically examined by Martin Heidegger and contemplated by Frampton.

In his essay of 1954, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking,' Martin Heidegger provides us with a critical vantage point from which to behold this phenomenon of universal placelessness. Against the Latin or, rather, the antique *abstract* concept of space as a more or less endless continuum of evenly subdivided spatial components or integers—what he terms *spatium* and *extensio*—Heidegger opposes the German word for space (or, rather, place), which is the term *Raum*. Heidegger argues that the phenomenological essence of such a space/place depends upon the *concrete*, clearly defined nature of its boundary, for, as he puts it, 'A boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.' Apart from confirming that Western abstract reason has its origins in the antique culture of the Mediterranean, Heidegger shows that etymologically the German gerund *building* is closely linked with the archaic forms of *being*, *cultivating* and *dwelling*, and goes on to state that the condition of 'dwelling' and hence ultimately of 'being' can only take place in a domain that is clearly bounded. (1983b, 24, emphasis in original)

The existential relevance of the Unité appears from the way it was built. Rough timber formwork was used for the casting of the basic concrete superstructure of the building, 'a deliberate revelation of built process which Le Corbusier was to justify on grounds which were almost existential' (Frampton 1985, 226). This existentiality is embedded in the authenticity of any architectural experience 'grounded in the tectonic language of building and the comprehensibility of the act of construction to the senses' (Pallasmaa 2007, 64). The redeeming experience stemming from the interaction with an architectural form is also recognised by Frampton stating, 'it is clear that the liberative importance of the tactile resides in the fact that it can only be decoded in terms of *experience* itself: it cannot be reduced to mere information, to representation or to the simple evocation of a simulacrum substituting for absent presences' (1983b, 28, emphasis in original). The ultimate paradox seems to be an architectural koan: we need an architectural form to find ourselves but becoming ourselves lies in transcending this form.

As an answer to the existing binary opposition between interior and exterior, or the definition of what architecture is and what it no longer is, Jill Stoner proposes an architecture in a minor mode that 'will necessarily render its interiors contingent, diminished, and fragile. In this state, interior space can no longer oppose exterior; it emerges onto the threshold of *becoming* exterior. Thus exteriority is a state that remains elusive, that can never be fully realized' (2012, 43, emphasis in original). Contrary to buildings defined by their appearance, this minor architecture 'must first become not visible' (62). Stoner explains that the object therefore 'must be withdrawn from its visibility' (63) which 'may happen through the agency of imagination, which, ironically, has no need of the image. The imagination sets the image free; to look with imagination is to forget an object and its meaning, to forget its commodity function, and to become lost in a sightless space where invention, propelled by lines of force, becomes possible' (62). Breaking out of any possible frame of reference, 'undirecting' the gaze and, eventually, letting go of form opens up a field of possibilities—a 'pass[ing] *through* without going *to*' (68, emphasis in original). Stoner calls this a transitory place; it is the transformation 'from a space that already *is* [...] to one in a state of *becoming*' (29, emphasis in original). Becoming, or transition, is essentially affective. Beyond the normative, the in- or excluding, it is the most sensitive state of non-being: between the no longer and the not yet—a vulnerability. It is a '*becoming space* rather than *being form*' (68, emphasis in original), which takes place beyond the limits of architecture, beyond what it is and what it is *no longer*. It is a contextual liberation, an archetypal becoming lost. She expresses it as follows:

As other senses take over, they blur into one another; they vibrate with intensities and intersect without design, without awareness. This stuttering and meandering of the senses is precisely the condition that reveals human relations. For our purposes, it destroys not only an object's image but also its material limits, its past associations, and its present context—its frozen meaning. (62)

refrain

Materiality doesn't lie; it holds the promise of affect. Yet at the same time affect only exists in the experience, right here, right now. The circular movement around Le

Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, with its conceptual phase as a starting point, becomes smaller, more intense. It moves towards its materiality, becomes a new starting point. Another circular movement, yet another starting point. Transition, the loss of self. Ultimately, the point beyond which architecture is *no longer*.

CONCLUSION

‘And it was soon the object of *bien-pensant* loathing’, continues Jonathan Meades his contemplation in ‘Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry’ (2014). It resembles the unsettling starting point for both the literature review and the application of theories of affect to three different manifestations of Brutalist architecture, in search of an understanding of this architecture from within.

Meades’ meditation is an abridged version of the overarching tendency that has appeared in my research, an opposition by Bryan Lawson described as

the tension that seems to exist between the approach to contemporary architectural design and the needs of society. The modern view of architects is often very iconoclastic—that is to say, the unconventional interpretation of building typology is encouraged and valued. However, this can lead to the dismissal of modern architecture by a public who resent having the legibility of settings removed from them. (2001, 28)

But how can this be reconciled with, for example, my own experience? For I not only believe in concrete’s ability to comfort but I also physically experience the consolation of its overwhelming structures. Technically, of course, there is nothing to be found apart from what this concrete architecture genuinely is. There is no imposed or added beauty, consolation or whatever it is we are looking for to ascribe to its structures; it simply cannot be found on the outside. It might not even be found on the inside. And that’s precisely how it affects us. *It is affect at its deepest*. The paradoxical answer to the quest for an understanding of this particular architecture from within lies within the architecture; the ability to affect is already embedded in its structure. It is, so to speak, poured in concrete’s DNA.

The purpose of this thesis was not so much to argue how or why concrete has been misunderstood as it was to consider these misinterpretations a starting point for the discussion of the visceral forces beneath. My research question revolved around everyday experiences with concrete; I investigated how the disquietude of Brutalism turned these experiences into affective architectural encounters. The architecture’s

ability to affect was the main focus of my discussion of the case studies, and for this purpose I indicated the composition of their affective qualities. In my analyses of the essay, the documentary and the building different manifestations of affect have been discussed, notwithstanding the existence of the notions of beauty, language and form. A critical consideration of these concepts not only leads to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon but also to the demonstration of affect in these three manifestations of Brutalist architecture.

At first glance, one man's critique does not seem to affect an entire architectural discourse. Yet the work of Reyner Banham is among the most important sources of and of great influence on the history of Brutalism for his discussion of both its architecture and the art movement in which it is rooted. The cultural implications of Banham's classification of Brutalism into either the stylistic label or the rather restrictive banner should therefore not be underestimated; it has contributed significantly to the general misunderstanding of the movement. My close reading of Banham's 'The New Brutalism' and, indirectly, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* shows the movement's ultimate resistance to the classification into one of the previously mentioned categories. In Brutalism, this resistance is not only caused by concrete's material slipperiness but also by the affective practice that characterises the movement. The Brutalist 'as found' aspect, lying at the heart of its activities and explaining its sensibility, legitimises the simultaneous occurrence of ethic and aesthetic. And because they both appear within the Brutalist context, their re-evaluation contributed to the determination of their value for that same context. Ultimately, the effects of a reconsideration of the terms 'ethic' and 'aesthetic' are demonstrated in their affective significance and, moreover, in the opportunities for the movement to transcend any such classification.

An awkward beauty hides in the affective encounter with the Barbican. Emerging from ineloquence and escaping into anonymity, we find ourselves confronted with one of the most honest manifestations of the movement. From my film analysis of Joe Gilbert's *BARBICAN / Urban Poetry* appears that an architectural experience, although fleeting and seemingly insignificant, can be literally affective. Affect arises in a single word, resonating in the unspoken hope, a voice, someone. Where she and I coincide, affect touches me deeply. The honesty of this manifestation is expressed in a certain ineloquence in both word and image, precisely where the two *do not touch*: in between

Eigentlichkeit and *Verfremdung*. The viewer seeks authenticity but finds almost forgotten memories at a place where the (visual) narrative is interrupted. By clinging to what remains of these memories a story about the self is created in which new possibilities arise and resonance lingers. The loss of self, especially in such a non-place, offers the ultimate staging; it's the place where *this will be* and *this has been* come together melancholically but truthfully.

Materiality holds the promise of affect: experience is the counterpart of a reasoned representation of reality. Herein lies the danger of the desire for a frame of reference—our unrelenting efforts to capture reality in word and image. My visual analysis of Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation shows that precisely because of this need for reference the connection between the architect and his audience was lost. Where a pressing question arose for the consolation offered by social housing, the answer came in the form of sober architectonic sublimity. Breaking out of any possible frame of reference, 'undirecting' the gaze and letting go of form will open up a field of possibilities eventually. According to Le Corbusier, the architect is like no other capable of waking in us a profound echo that enables the experience of beauty; La Cité Radieuse is conceptual, the Unité achieved proof thereof. The relationship between body and building is reflected in his Humanist piece of architecture on a sculptural scale, allowing us to transcend its form through the sensory experience of its materiality. We attain a state of dwelling, being and, ultimately, becoming; where architecture is no longer materially limited, it is architecture *no longer*.

Ever since the onset of Brutalism, population dynamics and changing patterns of use have caused the transformation of urban cityscapes, leaving a trace of spaces with enormous amounts of embodied energy. Much attention has been focused recently on the fate of these Brutalist structures as expectations regarding their form and function are increasingly challenging. As a result, they have become part of an ongoing debate on both Brutalism's heritage and future.

On November 2, 2016, the very moment I write this conclusion, Jon Stone's article 'Government Declares War on Brutalist Architecture' is published online in *The Independent* emphasising the poignant actuality of the previous debate. Fortunately, the article puts Government Minister John Hayes' horrifying call for beauty in transport in some perspective, but Stone's discussion still requires a serious afterthought. With

his 'Journey to Beauty', a speech delivered two days earlier, Hayes enters a plea of 'a renaissance' of the built environment which he dismisses as 'aesthetically worthless, simply because it is ugly' (2016). Hayes' speech contains some blunt criticism on both (Brutalist) transport architecture and its architects, 'the culprits', and the minister promises 'the people' of whom he assumes they crave harmony that he will do everything in his power to replace the structures of this 'blind orthodoxy of ugliness' (2016) with something, indeed, beautiful. And although any such considerations fall outside the scope of my research, they add to the conclusion that architectural applications of concrete are likely to be always sensitive to criticism. A genuine understanding of the interrelation between ourselves and the world that surrounds us, on the other hand, might prevent us from hastily tearing down what we thought would generate in us a strong feeling of repugnance. Developing an empathy for affect, perhaps by means of a different language, allows the phenomenon to escape our eagerness of taming it and welcomes it into our experience. We may even be able to further explore it in the near future, either personally or theoretically.

Of course, my discussion of the different Brutalist manifestations has revealed only little of its tremendous architecture. Yet I hoped to gain and share insight into Brutalism's ability to affect by carefully observing and indicating how these affects are built. Quite similar to my experience as described in the preface, in the words of Roger Scruton,

Consolation is something we, human beings, seek. It isn't simply physical comfort; it's a sense of being fully at home in the world. We're, as it were, sundered from our nature and from the world in which we live, in a state of what used to be called *Entfremdung*, alienation, in a sense of wandering; that we're, as it were, detached of what we really are. And these experiences of homecoming are incredibly important to us. [...] The problem with the modern world, in my view, is that people no longer dwell on the earth. They move nomadically around it in search of something, they know not what, and never finding it. Moving from person to person, place to place. [...] Only if we learn how to dwell can we build. And that's the secret of real architecture. ('Van de schoonheid en de troost: Voor Sophie' 2000)

An architecture that manages to accommodate these raw experiences of the sublime may constitute in us a yearning for *Heimkehr*, or 'the deeply felt desire to return to the place where you're finally home' (Scruton 2000, 15, my translation), and any such architecture can be considered an architecture of affect.

SAMENVATTING

Door alledaagse ervaringen met de gebouwde omgeving, en in het bijzonder met de betonarchitectuur van het Brutalisme, worden we op vaak indringende wijze geconfronteerd met de wereld om ons heen en, uiteindelijk, met onszelf. Deze ervaringen raken ons meer dan we beseffen; het zijn affectieve ontmoetingen. Hierin gaat affect vooraf aan onze emoties en reacties, en wordt ons lichaam een scala aan sensaties gewaar.

De architectuur van het Brutalisme uit de tweede helft van de twintigste eeuw wordt over het algemeen geassocieerd met de ruwe en agressieve materialiteit van beton. Voor mij is Brutalisme echter een metafoor waarin beton het lichaam tart. Deze uiteenlopende interpretaties liggen ten grondslag aan een onderzoek waarin ik op zoek ging naar manieren waarop de verontrusting van het Brutalisme de alledaagse ervaring met beton verandert in een affectieve architectonische ontmoeting. Ik beargumenteer dat met name Brutalisme ons in staat stelt architectuur ten volle te ervaren, vanwege het vermogen om werkelijk te raken.

De oorspronkelijke verbinding tussen architectuur en het lichaam is grotendeels verloren gegaan. Het belang van lichamelijk contact en de zintuiglijke ervaring wordt steeds minder onderkend. Toch is dit essentieel in het ervaren en begrijpen van onszelf en de wereld die ons omringt. Het is bovendien een eerlijke confrontatie; ze legt bloot wat eens verborgen was en toont wat (her)ontdekt wil worden. Ze doet een ontvankelijkheid in ons ontwaken voor de altijd aanwezige, maar in de vergetelheid geraakte impact van de gebouwde omgeving, die we gewaarworden in affectieve ontmoetingen met architectuur. In een poging de tegenstelling tussen perceptie en sensatie te verklaren en aan te tonen dat het niet alleen om een visuele afkeer gaat, maar om een viscerale kracht die diep in ons geworteld is, breng ik lichaam en gebouw opnieuw met elkaar in verbinding. Theorieën van affect zijn essentieel gebleken in dit proces en hebben een interpretatie van deze architectuur van binnenuit mogelijk gemaakt.

Deze scriptie bestaat uit twee delen. Het eerste deel is een theoretische verkenning van de wereld van beton en vormt de context voor de bespreking van het Brutalisme.

Achtereenvolgens onderzoek ik het gebruik van ruw beton in moderne architectuur, de kritieken op dit gebruik vanuit cultureel oogpunt en de gevoeligheid die onlosmakelijk is verbonden met het Brutalisme maar slechts zelden wordt opgemerkt. Het tweede deel opent met een overzicht van theorieën van affect, waarna ik drie casussen analyseer aan de hand van deze theorieën.

De eerste casus is een close-reading van Reyner Banham's essay 'The New Brutalism' (1955). De invloed van dit werk op het architectonisch discours moet niet worden onderschat. Het is een polemiek waarin de weerbarstigheid van het beton iedere categorisering lijkt te willen ontstijgen. Inzicht in de gevoeligheid van het Brutalisme is essentieel voor een herwaardering van de stroming en toont aan dat ware esthetiek niet hetzelfde is als schoonheid.

Een filmanalyse van de korte documentaire *BARBICAN / Urban Poetry* (2015) van Joe Gilbert vormt de tweede casus. Een eigenaardige gevoeligheid gaat schuil in deze moeizame ontmoeting met het Barbican Estate, en een verrassend eerlijke. Gilberts stedelijke poëzie is onwelsprekend, komt los van de taal en is affect ten diepste. Authenticiteit, zoals hier aangezet door de architecten Chamberlin, Powell en Bon en benadrukt door Gilbert, is niet per definitie poëtisch.

De derde casus is een visuele analyse van de Unité d'Habitation (1952) van Le Corbusier. Materialiteit belooft affect; ervaring is de tegenhanger van een doordachte representatie van de werkelijkheid. De sobere sublimiteit van Le Corbusiers architectuur biedt affect, en niet de troost van sociale woningbouw waar de massa op wachtte. Daar waar architectuur niet langer wordt beperkt door de materie is zij in staat elke vorm te ontstijgen.

Ieder op eigen wijze voorzien essay, documentaire en gebouw het Brutalisme van commentaar. Het loskomen van de concepten van schoonheid, taal en vorm blijkt uit de drie studies en loopt parallel aan de ideologie van de architectonische stroming. Tezamen vormen ze een multidimensionale verbeelding van het Brutalisme en bieden bovendien ruimte aan affect.

Dit werk wil bijdragen aan een beter begrip van de ideologie van een architectuur die voor velen moeilijk te doorgronden is en die vaak op weerstand stuit. Tegelijkertijd vormt het de aanzet tot een gevoelige(r) perceptie, waarin verwachting en realiteit

samenkomen. Affect heeft plaats in dit gevoelig leven—*is* dit gevoelig leven. Hoe de wereld het lichaam raakt is als een architectuur van affect.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, Sara. 2010. 'Happy Objects'. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, 29-51. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Alphen, Ernst van. 2008. 'Affective operations of art and literature'. *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 53/54: 20-30.
- Augé, Marc. 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso.
- Banham, Reyner. 1955. 'The New Brutalism'. *The Architectural Review* 118: 354-361.
- . 1966. *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag.
- BARBICAN | Urban Poetry*. 2015. Film. Joe Gilbert.
- Barthes, Roland. 1972. 'Myth Today'. In *Mythologies*, 109-137. London: Paladin.
- . 1993. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1985. 'A Small History of Photography'. In *One Way Street and Other Writings*, 240-257. London: Verso.
- Bennett, Jane. 2004. 'The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter'. *Political Theory* 32 (3): 347-372.
- Berlant, Lauren. 1998. 'Intimacy: A Special Issue'. *Critical Inquiry* 24 (2): 281-288.
- Bertelsen, Lone and Andrew Murphie. 2010. 'An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers: Félix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain'. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, 138-157. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Boekraad, Hugues. n.d. 'Visuele intelligentie en de professionele identiteit'.
- Briggs Ramsey, Sarah. 2015. 'Concrete's Many Fair-Faces: The Local Conditions of a Global Material'. *Room One Thousand*.
<http://www.roomonethousand.com/concretes-many-fair-faces-the-local-conditions-of-a-global-material>.
- 'Bunkers, Brutalism and Bloodymindedness: Concrete Poetry'. 2014. TV programme. BBC.

- Dant, Tim and Graeme Gilloch. 2002. 'Pictures of the Past: Benjamin and Barthes on Photography and History'. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 5 (1): 5-25.
- Eakin, Paul. 2008. *Living Autobiographically: How We Can Create Identity in Narrative*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Forty, Adrian. 2012. *Concrete and Culture: A Material History*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1983. *This Is Not a Pipe*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Frampton, Kenneth. 1983a. 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism'. *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal* 20: 147-162.
- . 1983b. 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance'. In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, 16-30. Washington: Bay Press.
- . 1985. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- . 2002. *Le Corbusier: Architect of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Abrams.
- Grindrod, John. 2013. *Concretopia: A Journey around the Rebuilding of Postwar Britain*. Brecon: Old Street Publishing.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. 2010. 'Affect's Future: Rediscovering the Virtual in the Actual'. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, 309-338. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Hawkins, Gay. 2002. 'Documentary Affect: Filming Rubbish'. *Australian Humanities Review*. <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-September-2002/hawkins.html>.
- Hayes, John. 2016. 'The Journey to Beauty'. *GOV.UK*. <http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-journey-to-beauty>.
- Heuvel, Dirk van den. 2002. 'As Found: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday. On the Work of Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson (1953-1956)'. *OASE* 59: 52-67.
- . 2008. 'Another Sensibility—The Discovery of Context'. *OASE* 76: 21-46.
- Highmore, Ben. 2010. 'Bitter after Taste: Affect, Food, and Social Aesthetics'. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, 118-137. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

- Jenkins, David. 1993. *Unité d'Habitation: Marseilles*. London: Phaidon Press.
- Kerényi, Zoltán. 2011. *Ablak a múltra / Window to the Past*.
<http://www.ablakamultra.hu>.
- Kitnick, Alex. 2011. 'The Brutalism of Life and Art'. *OCTOBER* 136: 63-86.
- Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process'. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, 64-91. Cambridge: University Press.
- Lawson, Bryan. 2001. *The Language of Space*. Oxford: Architectural Press.
- Le Corbusier. 1986. *Towards a New Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Lingis, Alphonso. 2011. 'Seduction'. *Aplinkkeliai*. <http://aplinkkeliai.lt/musu-tekstai/kulturos-ivykiu-kritika/alphonso-lingis-seduction>.
- Lynch, Kevin. 1960. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge & London: The MIT Press.
- Pallasmaa, Juhani. 2007. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rowe, Colin and Fred Koetter. 1978. *Collage City*. Cambridge & London: The MIT Press.
- Sacks, Oliver. 1985. *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Scalbert, Irénée. 2000. 'Architecture as a Way of Life: The New Brutalism 1953-1956'. *Daidalos* 75: 55-84.
- Scruton, Roger. 2000. 'Voor Sophie'. In *Het boek van de schoonheid en de troost*, 15-20. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact.
- . 2009. 'Beauty and Desecration'. *City Journal*. <http://www.city-journal.org/html/beauty-and-desecration-13172.html>.
- Seigworth, Gregory and Melissa Gregg. 2010. 'An Inventory of Shimmers'. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, 1-25. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

- Stone, Jon. 2016. 'Government Declares War on Brutalist Architecture'. *The Independent*. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/euston-arch-declares-war-on-brutalist-architecture-john-hayes-a7393846.html>.
- Stoner, Jill. 2012. *Toward a Minor Architecture*. Cambridge & London: The MIT Press.
- Sturken, Marita and Lisa Cartwright. 2009. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thrift, Nigel. 2010. 'Understanding the Material Practices of Glamour'. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, 289-308. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Ugrešić, Dubravka. 2000. 'De poëtica van het album'. In *Het boek van de schoonheid en de troost*, 286-303. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact.
- 'Van de schoonheid en de troost: De poëtica van het album'. 2000. TV programme. VPRO.
- 'Van de schoonheid en de troost: Lieve moeder'. 2000. TV programme. VPRO.
- 'Van de schoonheid en de troost: Voor Sophie'. 2000. TV programme. VPRO.
- Watkins, Megan. 2010. 'Desiring Recognition, Accumulating Affect'. In *The Affect Theory Reader*, 269-285. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Fonts: Calibri and Courier