

moil and multiplied in the mirror game of artistic contemplation, bold and personal ideas that will certainly help to broaden the aesthetic horizons of our Collection.

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Duchamp used to say that each work of art has its own energy, an energy that emanates from an idea, materialises and is never lost.

Duchamp thought about this energy and posed himself various questions about its peculiarities and extension. Which is, then, the energy in a work? How long will it stay active?

These questions can obviously be related to the world of architecture in our search for those domains where the boundaries between our different languages seem to disappear. To what extent can we join our research on a creative process that is usually immediate? How can our respective fields be recipients of hour mutual flow of innovative energy?

To mark this special issue on the work of a frontier artist like Mónica Alonso, I would like these questions to be the introduction to a brief reflection on the connections and influences between the worlds of art and architecture, as well as the new boundaries that exist at the turn of the century between the world of plastic artists and that of architects.

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At the turn of last century, each and every movement present in the so called historical avant-garde pointed out for the first time the need to deal with the integration of the different plastic activities as a prior step in their development. This attitude brought out important results for the progress of culture, such as the fertile intellectual relationship between Mondrian and Mies van der Rohe that led to an unprecedented way of conceiving and perceiving space directly linked to movement and time.

It's not difficult after all to discover the role played in the most cultivated views of architectonic space and its attributes - vacuum, limit, light, transparency, tension...- by names that range from Picasso, Mondrian, Klee, Cage... to heterogeneous creators like Matta Clark, atelier van Lieshout, Tiravanija, Zittel...

Now, after a long incomprehensible divorce, the will of collaboration between art and architecture, which has been present throughout the history of culture, seems to have been renewed, and offers the new and attractive fruits of an innovative joint activity.

Throughout the last two decades, a growing number of architects, who tried to poetically embrace with their work the diver-

se senses that characterise a total experience of built space, proposed to force the strict technocratic limits to enjoy the fantastic achievements of many plastic artists that felt free from the limiting exigencies of programmes or budgets.

And no doubt this was the result of previous experiences, like a, now distant, minimalism by which people like Tony Smith, Sol LeWitt or Donald Judd - at some stage directly linked to the world of architectonic space and experts on a series of mechanisms and project languages foreign to the plastic world- set as the main objective of their creative work the activation of space as directly related to the role that derives from its magnetic gestaltic force and its material authenticity; an objective directly linked to modern thinking, which would later regain its architectonic prominence through its reflection in the plastic world, with works like the early Tadao Ando.

It was also the result of a conceptualism through which creators coming from different movements, such as Kosuth, Acconci, Graham, Walter de María... displaced the "artistic object" to the field of the ideas, suggesting the relinquishing of the creative result as materialisation. The aim was to focus their attention on the message itself and the process that leads to its definition, thus reminding us that the creating activity should never be aimed at the definition of just another formal repertoire but to a process of analysis and self-criticism.

As in the case of architecture, the dialectics between walking around, watching and experimenting is in their opinion what supports the proposed experience from a precise notion of the real location. Let's take as an example Dan Graham, considered by Wini Mass as a referent for some interventions like the VPRO. In the definitions of any of his pavilions, designed in collaboration with various architects, it's vital to make us feel our movements as related to our own environment and the people using the same space, seeing them or losing sight of them as we walk on. In his glassed paraments - transparent, reflecting, semireflecting- the visitor can also choose from different perceptive alternatives, thus turning their experience into a real architecture lesson.

And finally, it was also the result of a Povera - Kounellis, Fabro, Anselmo...- which, from its location in a no-man's-land between the worlds of the concept and the object, enjoyed the richness of shades and textures, and the energetic power of the most rejected materials and their environment, treating them with scarce resources and conclusions which, from a total detachment from any usual iconographic convention or symbolic language, invite the observer to participate in an unsteady and intuitive creative process. A Povera that makes creators as sensitive as Peter Zumthor declare themselves intellectually indebted to their attitude towards the components of their work and their poetic sensitive perception.

Different ideas. Different influences. Different architectures.
Different energies.

"What is art?" - Swiss architect Jacques Herzog asks - "What is architecture?... I am very interested myself in learning what architecture is, in finding out the possibilities of contemporary architecture. In the way these disciplines can contribute to each individual's everyday life. Looking at architecture from this perspective, art becomes very important, as for the last decades it has developed strategies more interesting than those achieved in the field of architecture, and has attracted more creative figures..."

Therefore, in most of their projects Herzog & de Meuron - perceptive connoisseurs of each and every contribution to the world of contemporary plastic arts, and great admirers of the works of Joseph Beuys (for whom they worked as assistants in his installation *Feuerstätte* in Basilea (1977) - collaborated with various plastic artists in search of joint strategies for urban and housing interventions. Artists such as Gerhard Richter or R my Zaugg, from whom they claim to have learnt -both from their theory and their practise- so many things directly reflected in their projects.

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From this perspective, it is interesting to comment on experiences such as the now published -and named by their own author- *Therapeutic Spaces*.

From a world conceptually indebted to the ideas of Vito Aconcci, with whom she has worked in the last years, M nica Alonso explores the field of architecture through *ConfortWorld*, a company of her own invention with a personal, poetic and ironic approach voluntarily alien to any functional rigor.

Between a real world and an imaginary universe- in an original approach to built space- her first aim -"to raise human life to a level of well-being unimaginable so far"- leads to an intellectual process in which she makes use of domestic space as field of research, and the model as analytic and communicative language. The combination of some basic concepts such as wall, door, window or colour allows her to seek special psychological results in a basic space used in the oneiric phase of our vital activity. The rooms that in any case will turn out to be our "land of dreams".

"While architecture seeks to find the function and enjoyment of space- she says- I'd rather try to deform it by making it beautiful"

She tries therefore to dominate a world of feelings and sensations that can't be measured through the rigorous field of architecture, introducing as key element in its definition the polarity reason-feeling that will be, in this case, that invisible and searched for no-man's-land between architecture and plastic art.

This is an environment where colour will also be regarded as a key element in the definition of space: green will be associated with oneiric sensations, orange with warmth, pink with happiness, red with passion, yellow with fantasy, fiction, dream...

Let's examine, then, two of the first designs for building *Happiness Spaces: Therapeutic Bedrooms and Capsules*.

In the first design she tries to devise new idyllic solutions for the most private and personal spaces in the house, the rooms where we spend most time, and where the vital process that takes us from wakefulness to sleep, from reality to unreality takes place.

By means of a personal composition of architectonic elements, colours and materials, she seeks the channelling of possible flows of energy in the defined space to achieve the longed for approximation to "pleasure and equilibrium...the refreshing qualities of sleep in a totally individual process will be used to achieve a life of equilibrium and harmony".

In the second design - *Therapeutic Capsules*- healing spaces recommended for any type of illness related to, in her own words, feeling, she creates spaces in which new secondary areas for hygiene and therapy have been added to the mentioned bedroom.

The aim of these receptacles is to install the user before various possible rehabilitating images; that is, to make them enter those images as it happens with virtual reality.

With this aim in mind, the window - placed in an interior corridor only the centre staff have access to- is replaced by a screen, used in the healing process for the vision of a pre-established sequence of images, and the container, in which colour is always used with a concrete meaning, becomes a totally closed room, thus contributing to the isolation of the user.

In view of such definitions, it's easily guessed that the author doesn't mean to materialise designs that could later be built offering a concrete practical result.

Her works - a disruption of academic conformities- are meant to remain in the world of theoretical and sensitive reflection without seeking a particular use.

These are thoughts, designs, and imaginative spaces without a real materialisation. Fictions that can be experienced only in the world of her abstract diagrammatic models.

"Materialising mental spaces - she says- is extremely difficult as the materials they are made of don't really exist... This is therefore the moment to demand an insistence on building emotion versus reason, a polarity that can be made clear by the difference between architectonic models and those I have defined"

These are - as in the case of many other artists- poetic proposals with no intention of competing with architecture, but which could be used as enriching energy on which to base our theoretical reflections.

However, in most cases, when such proposals leave the art gallery foreboding a possible interference with the territory of architecture in its utopian revision of inhabited space in terms of plastic needs, many architects can find it inconvenient, annoying, irritating...

They pretend not only to change their concepts of space, but also to criticise them by intervening in them.

It seems then as if the "real owners of space" felt jealous of some intruders who pretend to invade their sphere of influence by contradicting their architectonic truths, trying to bring back - always with more or less sharp justifications- their former "embellishing" function.

Considering this situation, we should understand the natural irritation of those plastic creators who try to investigate aspects of reality such as space and materials and find no interest for their work in the world of architecture.

How could we adopt a positive attitude towards heterogeneous activities taking place in a common space?

As Ben van Berkel reminds us, when he claims to have a working method similar to John Cage's, the question is not to seek new forms in the world of plastic arts but new ways and systems of investigation.

These plastic experiences don't try to provide a handbook that tells us if the colour to be chosen at a certain moment is pink or red. The architecture field should absorb their positive energy, their sensibility, and their suggestions about worlds that are beyond our immediate reality and face, form parallel investigations, our activity as designers of the future.

With all the logical indecision raised by this reunion at the beginning of a new era, it seems that we architects and plastic artists are trying again to melt the possible energy that emanates from our plural ideas and re-establish the spontaneity of creative associations -that had disappear for a long time- aimed at recovering an obviously necessary integration of the arts.

As long as creative proposals like Mónica Alonso are approached with a rigorous attitude, they can only lead us to the conviction that the boundaries between the worlds of the known as plastic arts, design, architecture, poetry and even philosophy will vanish the moment we face a new vision of art based on the definition or intervention of space as the scene for life in a new society.

Pedro de Llano.

To scale

Mónica Alonso

Models are one of the key elements in the work of an architect. Firstly, works made to scale are a laboratory where design, shape and arrangement of space can be tested, and at the same time they represent the first step in the communication process between the author of the project and those taking part in it. As I see it, maybe this is the most important aspect to take into consideration when we approach the work of Galician artist Mónica Alonso. Three-dimensional models allow us to see the arrangement of space at a glance, thus providing the observer with clear legible information. However, a model is not a finished product but a first trial of the author's wish and, like every trial, is prior to the final execution of the project. Alonso has decided to leave us there. Our common sense makes us think that, this being the work of an artist and not an architect, this decision is justified. If that is the answer, it would cause more serious problems and this time of a theoretical rather than practical nature, as it would take us back to the old issue of establishing the difference between art and non-art depending on the function of the object. If the original intention was to create an object with a specific purpose, then this is ruled out as "art". The objects belonging to that category are characterised by the absence of a particular aim and they also provide speculations completely different from those of architects and engineers. But the difference between the work of Mónica Alonso and the models we could find in an architecture studio doesn't lay in its expression of the frustration of not being able to make a life size replica, but in the expressed wish of seeking in those models to scale the perfect channel to communicate with the potential "customers", the public the models are aimed at.

In the mid-50s, especially in England and the USA the term "contemporary" began to be applied to those houses that had been built according to the principles and precepts of the new architecture. To be more precise, the term didn't refer to the building elements but to the interior design of space. The term contemporary meant a way of arranging and decorating an interior in which nothing either in the formal structure or the ornament was related to a past time. The new house, which also corresponds to a new social and political order, shouldn't start from any space preconception made explicit in its facade, printed in the house module from the outside. It should be an arrangement of space specifically conceived for its future inhabitants. This is the only regulating principle the architect should bear in mind. Far from seeking a symbolic architecture, the new house is specially made for the little community that will live in it. While Alberti and Palladio praised the Greco-Roman style for the advantages it offered to the spectator, Frank Lloyd Wright claimed to have destroyed the classical idea of container-house, the box, thus distancing himself completely from an architecture conceived for contemplation and in favour of an architecture conceived for life. As F.R.S. Yorke explains in *The*