

The Lie that Tells a Truth

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

University of Washington

2020

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Architecture

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Abstract

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Chair of Supervisory Committee:

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The thesis begins by establishing a historical context for discourse surrounding Truth in architecture; highlighting, specifically, a reliance on vision. Vision, through its insistence on objectivity, creates the expectation that there is a Truth out there that can be known. The critique of Truth-by-way-of-vision is then performed through a methodology of the mythological trickster who operates through inversion and negation. The result is a design project that re-envisioned a century old church in the Capitol Hill neighborhood as a theater.

CONTENTS.

CHOROS	2
SETTING	4
OPTICS and OBJECTIVITY	7
The TRICKSTER-ARCHITECT	8
ANAMORPHOSIS and <i>TROMPE L'OIEL.</i>	16
TRANSPARENCY and REFLECTION.	23
WANDERING and LABYRINTHS	27
BEYOND VISUAL PERCEPTION	31
TRUTH in RE-USE and ADDITION	32
REFERENCES	34
FEATURE PRESENTATION	36

ARCHITECT.

A priest. Designer of the new theater, but in name only. Boasts an ego inflated by self-assurance derived from an obedience to an ideal of order. In the resulting blindness they fail to notice the true design of the theater.

ARTIST.

An architecture graduate student fascinated by appearance.

AUTHOR.

An architecture graduate student fascinated by trickster mythology. Thinks himself clever for writing a trickster tale in place of a dissertation. Writes in third person.

CHOROS.

The acting troupe, but also a surrogate for the audience, but actually just Maenads.

DIRECTOR.

A trickster. Head of the performance troupe.

HISTORIAN.

The myth-maker. A priest.

MESSENGER.

Multiple characters lacking the significance that affords a discreet identity.

PLAYWRIGHT.

Actually the narrator, a surrogate for the author.

WHICH.

The true designers of the new theater.

CHOROS.

PLAYWRIGHT:

I met the DIRECTOR after a performance in Santa Fe. My friends and family believed the trip to be for a story. In truth I had been wallowing in a kind of nostalgic regret related to the city and felt compelled to throw myself back at its source. I wasted my first night alone in the hotel room, maybe that's what got me to go out the following night. I found his show during an art walk. The venue was nothing special. It seemed accustomed to groups like this just looking for a gig as they pass through. The show was something else entirely, though. An original production, 3 acts composed of an all female cast numbering 12 or so.

After the show I had completely forgotten what brought me to New Mexico, the heavy dread was simply released. I stayed for an informal mixer hosted by the venue since this group was the last on. I had been hoping to speak with members of the cast but they kept an insular group to themselves or were simply absent altogether. Most of the audience remained, presumably as moved as I was. For most, it was their first time seeing the group, but there was also a savvy minority that seemed to know a bit more. They were at least able to allude to more. No matter my question, answers always drew the conversation back to the enigmatic writer/director of the troupe. Something of a dramaturgical prodigy.

Half an hour after the show everyone was well into their cups and the crowd had only barely thinned. The mood of the whole thing was back on the rise. The actors, rather stand-offish only moments ago, seemed to be stoking the whole thing, dancing and singing and drinking among the crowd and on the furniture. It almost seemed like an

unscripted encore was beginning, but I was too focused on learning more about the mind behind it all I followed a few others out.

It was dry and chilly, but not uncomfortable. I recognized some folks from earlier and borrowed a cigarette looking for an excuse to join them. They were trading apocryphal tales of past shows they'd seen or at least heard about. It sounded like the group was pretty active in the South and along the East Coast, I couldn't imagine what brought them this far out of the way. One among them, whom I couldn't recognize from earlier, sat coolly back taking in these tales as if he had already heard something along their lines. He expressed disbelief at some of what he heard, not that the stories were unrealistic but as if he remembered it differently.

I would later find this mesmerizing figure was the troupe's Director. The ramping mood of the party inside infiltrated our loose circle and drew the others away. I felt the draw too, a sort of manic creative energy was welling up in me as if due only to proximity, but when it was only the two of us he disclosed his identity. He told me he liked to hide in plain sight at gigs like this, audiences are more honest with their criticisms when they don't know they're critiquing the director.

We talked for a long time about truth, long enough for the party to die out again. Something in that conversation absolved me of the weight that brought me to Santa Fe, but I also found that I couldn't be satisfied going home after that night. I decided to travel with them for the rest of this tour. The DIRECTOR told me they were on a pilgrimage to Seattle, then somewhere else, but he didn't know yet. This document is a record of the things I learned in my time with the troupe.

SETTING.

That indignation which we profess to feel at deceit absolute, is indeed only at deceit malicious. We resent calumny, hypocrisy and treachery, because they harm us, not because they are untrue. Take the detraction and the mischief from the un truth, and we are little offended by it; turn it into praise, and we may be pleased with it. And yet it is not calumny nor treachery that do the largest sum of mischief in the world; they are continually crushed, and are felt only in being conquered. But it is the glistening and softly spoken lie; the amiable fallacy; the patriotic lie of this historian, the provident lie of the politician, the zealous lie of the partizan, the merciful lie of the friend, and the careless lie of each man to himself; that cast the black mystery over humanity...

John Ruskin

PLAYWRIGHT:

On the road to the Pacific Northwest the DIRECTOR shared with me that set design bestowed him with an appreciation of architecture and that theater afforded him with a lens through which he sought truth and deceit in the built environment. He told me the Truth has been priority for architects and critics, too. In 1849 John Ruskin famously compiled, in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, a polemic against an architecture struggling to find itself amid the dizzying progress of the approaching Industrial Revolution. In the Lamp of Truth, Ruskin calls for a zero-tolerance position against falsity of any kind...

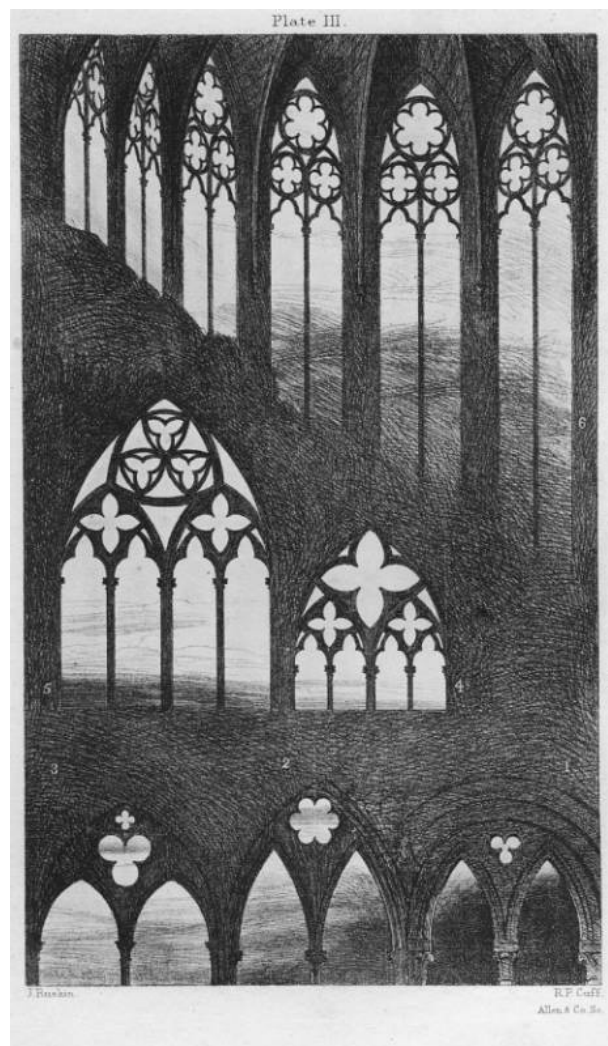
Truth for Ruskin was a correspondence of structural and material realities with our expectations of them. Architectural dishonesty is categorized under three heads: “1) The suggestion of a mode of structure or support, other than the true one; as in the pendants of late Gothic roofs. 2) The painting of surfaces to represent some other material than that of which they actually consist (as in the marbling of wood), or the deceptive representation of sculptural ornament upon them. 3) The use of cast or machine-made ornaments of any kind.” (Ruskin, 35).

The incipient tenets of Modernism would dash much of what Ruskin loved in architecture. Ironically, by ridding the architecture of its preoccupation with ornament, the aesthetics of the new style could be said to better embody a certain Truth, here emphasizing austerity rather than correspondance.

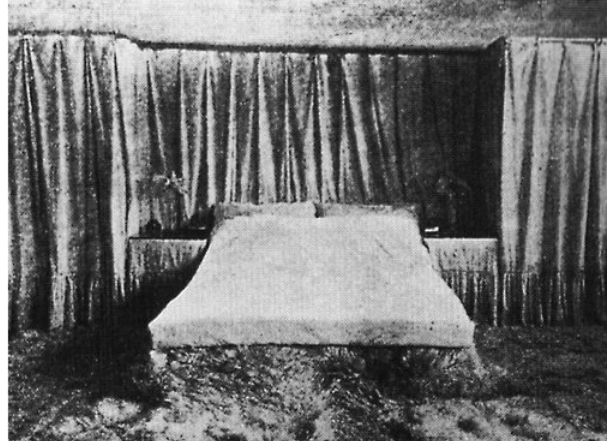
In the Principle of Cladding, Adolf Loos negotiates the quandaries that arise from applying a cladding material to structure of another kind. According to Loos’ view, architecture has always been defined primarily by its cladding. And though some may approach design first with wall sections, for “the artist, the architect” design begins with the delineation of space and the quality endowed by the immediate materials that contain it. Form emerges naturally out of the fundamental truths of a material’s composition and behavior. In this way, though the architect envisions a space enclosed by “carpet”, structure must be applied to support

it. According to the principle of cladding this arrangement is not imitation because we do not suppose the surface to be the structure. It is here that Loos offers his Law of Cladding: “we must work in such a way that a confusion of the material clad with its cladding is impossible” (Loos, 67).

“Nowadays one nails the structure to the facade with aplomb and hangs the ‘keystone’ under the main molding with artistic authority” (Loos, 67). How do we contend with radical paradigm shifts like that of the introduction of the steel frame so that the role of masonry (and our expectations



of its behavior) changed from load-bearing in the Monadnock Building to cladding in the Wainwright? Our contemporary built environment utilizes cementitious panel stamped with a wood grain imprint to supply a more durable alternative to the real thing. Understood as a cladding alone this method does not infringe upon Loos' stipulations for honesty. As similar as this method might be to board-formed concrete, it still makes a very different claim and fails Ruskin's criteria on both the account of its "painted" surface as well as the quality, or at least kind, of effort it necessitated. The flowing, carbon-fiber forms of parametric design also have a tenuous relationship to structural clarity. Some such structures epitomize the structural honesty Ruskin demands by illustrating the precise path gravitational forces take to the ground. But there is a divide between the hyper-thin form active shells of Candela and the inhabitable sculptural forms of Zaha Hadid and Patrik Schumacher where cladding hides the enormously complex space frame of the roof beneath a smoothed veneer.



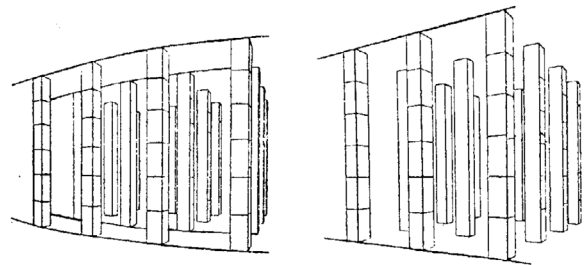
OPTICS and OBJECTIVITY.

The language of the preceding theories is based solely on our scopic interaction with the world because vision has been privileged in matters of “knowledge, truth, and reality,” which are based on an ocularcentric paradigm throughout western history (Levin, 2).

If vision is not an accurate and complete account of the world it is not an objective one either. In *The Interests of Desire*, Vikramaditya Prakash invokes feminist aesthetic theory that broadly criticizes aesthetic portrayals of women, but also an aesthetic pleasure which is itself based in “looking at”. The aesthetic configuration of an audience looking-at art is an allegory for the psycho-social construction of a dominant, male subject looking-at woman who is made object. Here, the direction of this gaze relies on ego-ideals of masculinity and femininity. Desire is the engine of this gaze. Predicated on lack-of, desire implies its antithesis of anxiety. For Prakash, “aesthetic activity...is a sublimation of the very interests of desire that power the erotic gaze” (Prakash, 91). Since this configuration would favor the desires of men, feminine experience is that of alienation from desire, of a “richer and more open-ended representation of reality”, one that demands not “either-or”, but enables “both/and”.

Architecture, as a concretization of established society, is complicit in this configuration. In (Western) architecture the male-aesthetic paradigm favors order and all its qualities and iterations. In no place is this

paradigm more prevalent than in the optics of “renaissance space”, where the projection of the world itself relies on an individual eye at which it converges. Prakash offers one interpretation as to what the elements of a de-centered, feminine architecture might resemble in the Modern tenets of Le Corbusier’s *Towards a New Architecture*. Le Corbusier insists upon “visual dynamism” which depends on space and volume but most importantly the movement through them to disrupt the visual stability of a unified architecture. But while this makes strides towards countering the hegemony of the gaze, the emphasis on movement does nothing to mitigate a base reliance on vision and does not go quite far enough.



The TRICKSTER-ARCHITECT.

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which, after they have been in use for a long time, strike a people as firmly established, canonical, and binding; truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour, coins which, having lost their stamp, are now regarded as metal and no longer as coins.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The technique of reconfiguring and reorganizing elements certainly introduces a fictitious dimension into the territory of 'truth' normally expected of the architect. Yet too much truth may not only be unexciting, but will surely fail to stretch the imagination beyond cliché and the tried and tested. The classic maneuvering of the given towards a more seductive form is on the one hand thought to be false, but culture would move very little without it. There is a very valid argument for an artistic interpretation of architecture to stretch the medium out of its comfort zone, and be all the more persuasive if it is not built.

(Nigel Coates, 135)

The logic of order and convergence, that is, logos-centrism, or logocentrism, is challenged by another path, the random and divergent trail taken by that profane metaplayer, the trickster.

(Hynes, 216)

DIRECTOR:

As I entertain the idea of a new theater I have become increasingly interested in the figure of the architect. Can you imagine why?

PLAYWRIGHT:

They create buildings which act as sets for our daily lives.

DIRECTOR:

You're half-right, and I'll return to that in a moment, but in all fairness they don't really create the buildings do they?

PLAYWRIGHT:

Well no, to be precise the builders put the building together, but they rely on the expertise of the architect to make sure the building stands.

DIRECTOR:

Is that the architect's expertise? I think you are talking about the engineer.

PLAYWRIGHT:

OK, sure, but the architect has a social expertise that informs how spaces are defined and sequenced.

DIRECTOR:

Still, I can't help but imagine that role might be better suited to a sociologist or geographer or even the community itself.

PLAYWRIGHT:

Well, they are still designers, they have an expertise in material and composition that necessitates them.

DIRECTOR:

So does a sculptor.

PLAYWRIGHT:

So what does an architect do?

DIRECTOR:

The architect is defined by all of these disciplines while being none of them. Architects enjoyed only a short time of any occupational definition. Not long after clawing their way out of one of manifold arts or the designation of a gentlemanly hobby were they eclipsed now by their own duties. Structure and social engineering crystallised into discrete disciplines leaving architects bereft and scrambling for relevance.

I am interested in architecture because the profession itself forces architects to become like the trickster, wandering between disciplines and, in doing so, stringing them together without ever belonging to any one.

Again, you were half right.

For Joseph Rykwert, artifice is the medium of architects. It saturates their work so as to even inflate the way they present aspects of their competence and purview. But while many architects would refuse to say it is so, their duty “is to give physical form to a social establishment, to provide the screens which the passers-by outside and the user-participant within recognize as the demarcation lines of a social situation” (Rykwert, 58). As with Loos, we return to a primary preoccupation with cladding for it is the surface of this invisible social barrier that architects deal in. They transform it into “a carrier of intentions”, a mask for an actor. As Rykwert puts it: “the screens which the designer constructs (and they may be anything from paper slides to huge stone or concrete walls) are the stage on which the action occurs” (ibid.).

For Rykwert, architects are ordering agents. These social barriers and passages exist, but the architect makes them expressive and, in doing so, identifies some against others (and in doing so isolates distinct forms). Artifice, in this way, presents a constructed reality, but contingent on its application artifice can instead be the lie that tells a truth.

Consider the universal, mythological figure of the trickster, who imparts their lesson indirectly. Both the intellectual trickery of the Greek Titan Prometheus and the ostensibly low-brow body humor of tricksters like Wakjakaga “reveal a hidden truth, and truth might be a cruel joke. But by laughing about the cruelty (the absurdity) of natural

and divine laws, man has truly reflected on them, and the reflection frees, as Gadamer put it, because it makes us free from that which, if not seen through, would oppress us” (Koepping 213).

Tricksters are the foil for the Priest (the Shaman as M. L. Ricketts puts it). The latter being an ordering agent who represents humility before and submission unto the *Spirit*. They reinscribe the original concepts and strictures established by deities who are unable to leave the confines of that legendary framing device that is the mythic age. But what does it mean for the trickster that, unlike the gods, they are still present with us even today?

Truly, the trickster is the picture of humanism, they look to no “power” outside of themselves, “but sets out to subdue the world by his wits and his wit” (Ricketts, 88). The trickster is anathema to the spirits who have little or nothing to do with the lives of humans and so it is through trickery that they have apprehended such divine gifts for us as original fire.

The role which Rykwert ascribes to architects places an enormous amount of responsibility in their hands. All too often, this power is squandered in blind obedience to paradigms and tyrants, *Spirits*. The trickster-architect is compelled to seize this power, aloof to humanity.

Nietzsche, seems to broach Rickett’s dualism of Trickster and Shaman in...The drive to create new metaphors is not put solely to the task of constructing Nietzsche’s

hollow truth. He describes this drive as spilling over generally into myth and art. In a turn that seems to perfectly describe the trickster without ever naming them, Nietzsche describes this drive as “setting up new translations, metaphors, metonymies; it constantly manifests the desire to shape the given world of the waking human being in ways which are just as multiform, irregular, inconsequential, incoherent, charming, and ever new, as things are in the world of dream” (Nietzsche, 151).

All the same, the methodology of the trickster is still rule-governed, but pushed to the brink of paradox. The “hidden truth” that the trickster reveals, according to Koepping, emerges from close observance of the rules we use in words and in actions. Inversion and negation are only possible by acknowledging the rules that define them. Michael Seidel notes, then, that the “satirist... ‘suffers the contamination of his own subject’” (qtd. in Koepping, 192). Prometheus inverts truth and expectation in his sacrificial proposal to Zeus he places the good within the bad (meat within stomach) and the bad within the good (bones within fat). Again, surface and cladding are the site for the trickster.

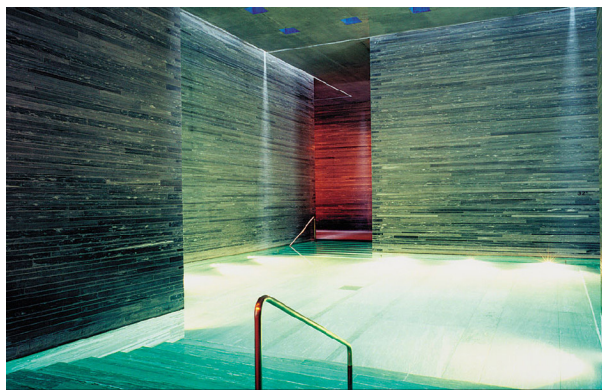
One way that we might begin to understand the task of communicating a hidden truth is through the mind of painters and poets of cinquecento Italy. These artists found themselves compelled to capture the essential beauty and perfection of the heavenly and mythic realm. The Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico claims they

were truly able to conceive of the perfection of these scenes in their minds, but were limited to exacting their image by the human tools and experiences at hand. Vico shares the story of the painter Zeuxis who, tasked with capturing the legendary beauty of Helen of Troy, assembled the image with the features he judged best of twelve discrete models. In this way, “the woman on Zeuxis’s oval canvas has less physical reality than the woman in front of him, whose toes he could extend his foot to touch, but that as a portrait of Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, she is more truthful than any of the models” (Bull, 27). Each of these maidens becomes a shadow of Helen, pointing in some way to her ideal but without ever quite capturing it. Poetry and painting inhabit a space somehow more real than physical reality but still shy of the divine. They are composed of artifice but insinuate metaphysical truths that reveal our mortal, physical experience to be a pale comparison.

Taken to its logical conclusion, Vico’s account of truth leaves no room for mortals to ever obtain supreme truth, but only approximate it. An account is also shared of the painter Guido Reni who, upon delivery of his Saint Michael, laments his lack of first-hand experience of the subject. Rather, he was forced to rely on the truths available to him on the plane of the material. Any worthy quality of the painting indicates the fitness of the artist’s mind for the assembly of suitable references than the adjacency of those references in their own right. “Deprived of divine truth, humans have to make truth out

of the falsehoods they invent for themselves. Such truth is necessarily false, insofar as it is not divine... But there is some sense in which it is true nevertheless” (Bull, 39).

In “Stop Making Sense” Jim Nicholls recognizes the way in which trickery pervades architecture. Peter Zumthor’s Thermal Baths at Vals imparts a spatial reality similarly to the way a punchline is delivered in a joke. The effort relies on the visitor’s expectation of a certain tectonic or spatial quality: in this case that walls meet the ceiling to produce a space. This expectation is subverted by the shafts of light that peek through at precisely these connections which the viewer will find to be totally unconnected. What emerges is a conceptual incongruity. In hiding the methods of this cantilevered ceiling Zumthor deceives the visitor into believing in its suspension. The truth of the matter is that the incongruity has expanded their understanding of space to include the qualities of another true reality.



Robin Evans writes in *Mies van der Rohe’s Paradoxical Symmetries* that Mies’ Barcelona Pavilion used particular formal and material assemblies to “distract”, as it were, from the violent, political context it emerged

out of. Evans expresses that this was largely executed through a strategic asymmetry meant to undermine the architectural convention so associated with the hierarchy and national aggrandizement of empire. Asymmetry, while unorthodox for monumental work, still fit well within the vocabulary of Modernism. The symmetry that classicism relied upon was vestigial in the face of “standardization” which would become the linchpin of the new unified aesthetic. This unity, then, is the Trojan Horse through which Mies would sneak his new truth.

According to Evans “Mies was not just interested in the truth of construction, he was interested in expressing the truth of construction” (Evans, 58). The Barcelona Pavilion would not appear to be the best example of this attitude, however. While the podium-wall-roof assembly appears cohesive, the columns can still be said to seem as if in tension so that walls are clamped tightly in a roof-podium vice. Still, the structure’s “relation to truth is less significant than its coherence as fiction” (Evans, 59). It takes on a new kind of rationality, but not the kind that we are looking to find within it. Mies operates with appearances. By concealing the actual path taken by gravitational loads, Mies creates a conceptual rather than literal structure. The construction of the pavilion lies to express a truth:

“The very word apparent still languishes in the shadow of Plato’s disdain. We tend to assume that

appearance lies some distance from the truth. But the grid of the pavilion suggests that there might be circumstances in which appearance is the final arbiter. If what we seek is appearance, then appearance must be the measure of truth, at least temporarily. That is what happens when things are made to be looked at. Appearance is never the whole truth, but it is true to itself, and it is made more evidently so by the visual arts, especially when they play tricks with sight. Plato was wrong. These tricks do not deceive us; they sharpen our perceptions. Our perceptions of appearance are remarkably stable, so much so as to be virtually moribund.” (Evans, 60).

These maneuvers actually stem from a far-reaching tradition that harkens back to the methods of the Greeks. Artifice is employed in the entasis of their columns and a bowing of stair profiles to convey a higher truth: that of an ostensibly geometric and consistent temple form (Panofsky, 34).



COMPOSUIT ZEVS IUNONEM E QVINQVE PVELLIS



PARRHASIVS VELO, VOLVCRIS CEV FALLITVR VVA

Is. Iac. De Sandart fecit.

ANAMORPHOSIS and *TROMPE L'OIEL*.

EXT. A RUINED FORUM - DAY

The sounds of hastily moved furniture and whispered direction subside as does the orchestral arrangement played in attempt to mask it. Light returns once more to the stage to reveal a classical Grecian scene. ZEUXIS and PARRHASIOS take their respective places on either side of a symmetrical set. Each carries with him a brush and palette, trappings that show them to be both painters. They stand before ruined stone walls, possibly the remains of temples supported by newer timber scaffolding. The purpose of these structures is not immediately clear as they are obscured by draping, purple curtains. The audience whispers loudly among themselves pointing seldom at PARRHASIOS on the left and more often to ZEUXIS on the right.

CHOROS:

Now, as this painter's duel comes to a close it is time that we determine which among you is the true master painter. ZEUXIS, as it was you who challenged PARRHASIOS to this competition we ask that you reveal your mural first!

ZEUXIS bows with a sly smile and confidently draws the purple curtain. The painter reveals his work to be a simple bowl of fruit, but even from the audience the effect is striking. It is as if he had suddenly conjured a new set piece to that exact position on stage. Even the highlights on the fruits seemed to be reflecting the spotlight directed at it. The audiences both on and off stage let out a gasp, followed by an extensive, contemplative silence as they try to see through the illusion. In this time a bird flies out of the darkness of the house, alights next to the painting and pecks at a pomegranate seed. When its attempt is thwarted by a wall rather than the expected fruit the bird flies off.

CHOROS:

Indeed, how could anyone accuse a simple bird of bias? Truly a wonderful display, ZEUXIS, but this competition is not yet over. PARRHASIOS, we ask that you unveil your mural!

ZEUXIS:

(Confidently leading the crowd to the left side of the stage)
Please PARHASSIOS, allow us to see your masterpiece!

The painter PARRHASIOS bows cordially, but with an expression contorted by insecurity.

PARRHASIOS:

I ... do not think I can bring myself to do it.

ZEUXIS:

What do you mean you cannot do it? We toiled all day
and all night to present these murals! A crowd has come to
see our work! Now please, if you will not draw back your
curtain then I will!

PARHASSIOS, meek and unmoving, does not respond. After a moment, ZEUXIS reaches out to draw the curtain, but balks as his fingers fold against the mural, a painting of the purple curtain. The audience gasps again.

ZEUXIS:

(Reaching out now to PARHASSIOS and raising his hand
in the air) Truly, PARHASSIOS is the greater painter, for
though ZEUXIS tricks the birds PARHASSIOS has tricked
ZEUXIS!

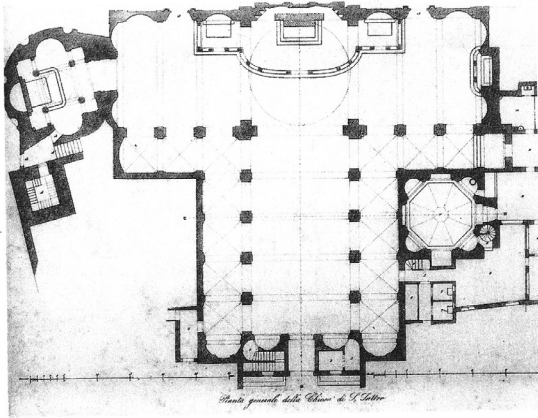
PLAYWRIGHT:

The stage lights dim as the scene is changed. In the audience, the DIRECTOR leans over to me and begins speaking over the orchestral arrangement. He tells me that John Ruskin claimed imagination to be “the voluntary summoning of the conceptions of things absent or impossible... It is a noble faculty so long as it confesses its own ideality; when it ceases to confess this, it is insanity”. Ruskin also says that painting is the “communicated dream...a statement of certain facts, in the clearest possible way” (Ruskin, 33). In this way deceit in painting can only be achieved by misrepresenting its referent, but architecture, in doing so, only betrays itself. Still, vision is the fulcrum along which truth and deceit are being weighed. We have already admitted that vision alone is certainly not sufficient in delivering truth, but if we allow the trickster’s inversions to reveal a higher truth to us perhaps it is to be through this visual medium.

“Anamorphosis...plays havoc with elements and principles; instead of reducing forms to their visible limits, it projects them outside themselves and distorts them so that when viewed from a certain point they return to normal. The system was established as a technical curiosity, but it embraces a poetry of abstraction, an effective mechanism for producing optical illusion and philosophy of false reality.”

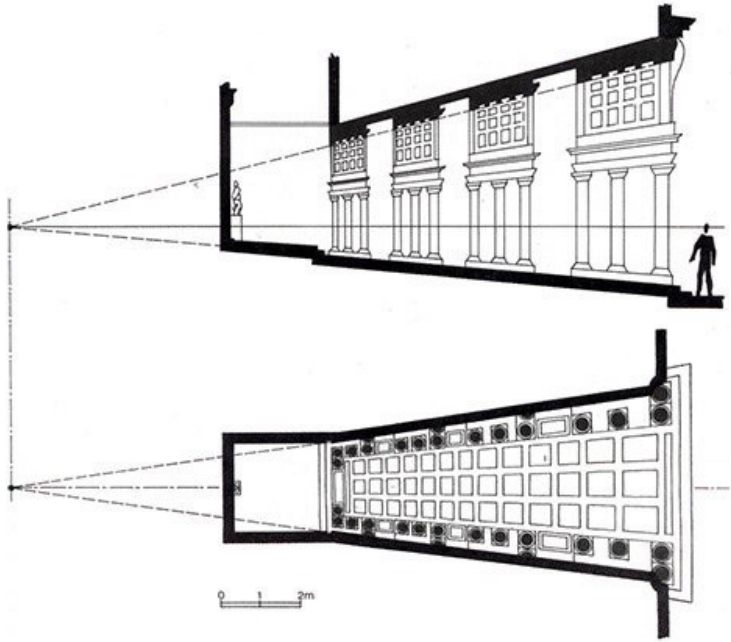
Jurgis Baltrušaitis

In order to function properly, the technique requires that a viewer engages with the presentation at a specific angle. Libeskind’s design for the memorial of the September 11th attacks centers on two large fountains, the void remains of the tower foundations. Water drains from the perimeter of the fountain into a dark hole in the center, the bottom of which is carefully obscured from any perspective that could be had at the perimeter, creating a sense of desire and of



It is in these instances, art historian Baltrušaitis states, that perspective “ceases to be a science of reality and becomes an instrument for producing hallucinations” (Baltrušaitis, 2). Precedents for this technique are numerous and largely Italian: Borromini’s Palazzo Spada; Bramante’s Santa Maria Presso San Satiro; Bernini’s Scala Regia; Palladio and Scamozzi’s Teatro Olimpico; the Potemkin Stairs; even Disneyland utilizes this technique. When employed in built work it was usually to the ends of exaggerating the grandeur or sublimity of a space or, as in the Borromini example, to create the illusion that there is more space than the site permits. In this way, architecture is treated as a painting, its projective plane privileged over the actual spatial arrangement.





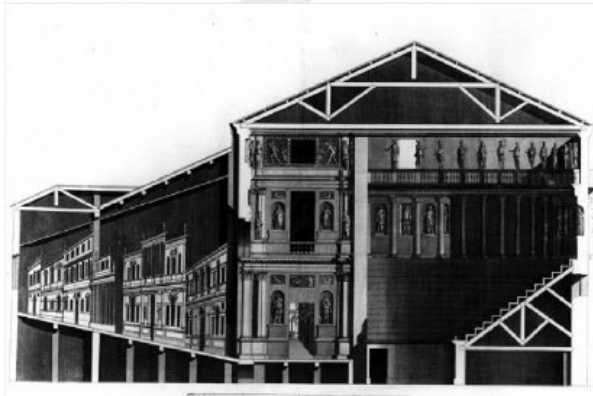
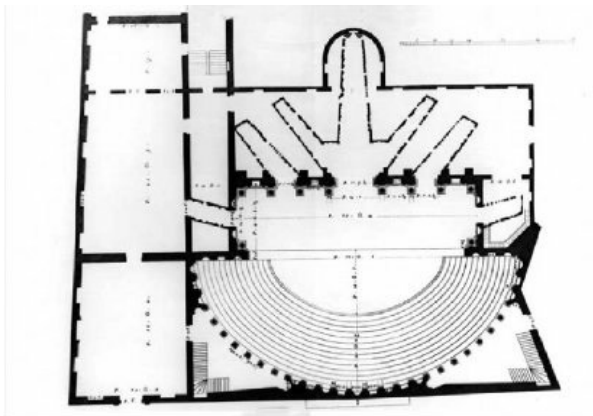
unease. Boullée's conceptual cenotaph to Isaac Newton offers a colossal model of the night sky or celestial spheres depending on the time of day. Due to the layout of the circulation, this incredible view is made available through a single aperture below, ensuring that an able

visitor experiences the prescribed effect.

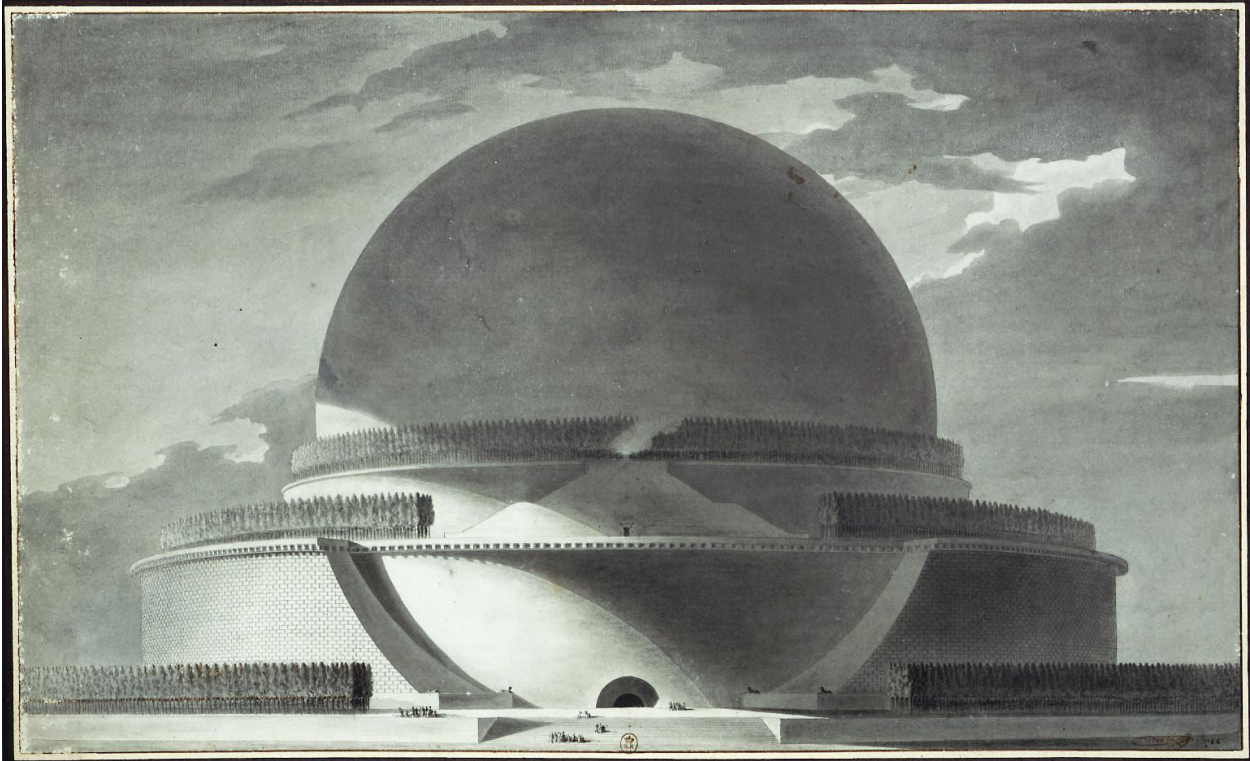
Film, it could be said, has an increased capacity to ensure a forced visual experience by nature of the camera. Room 237, a documentary about possible meanings hidden in the horror film *The Shining*, details the



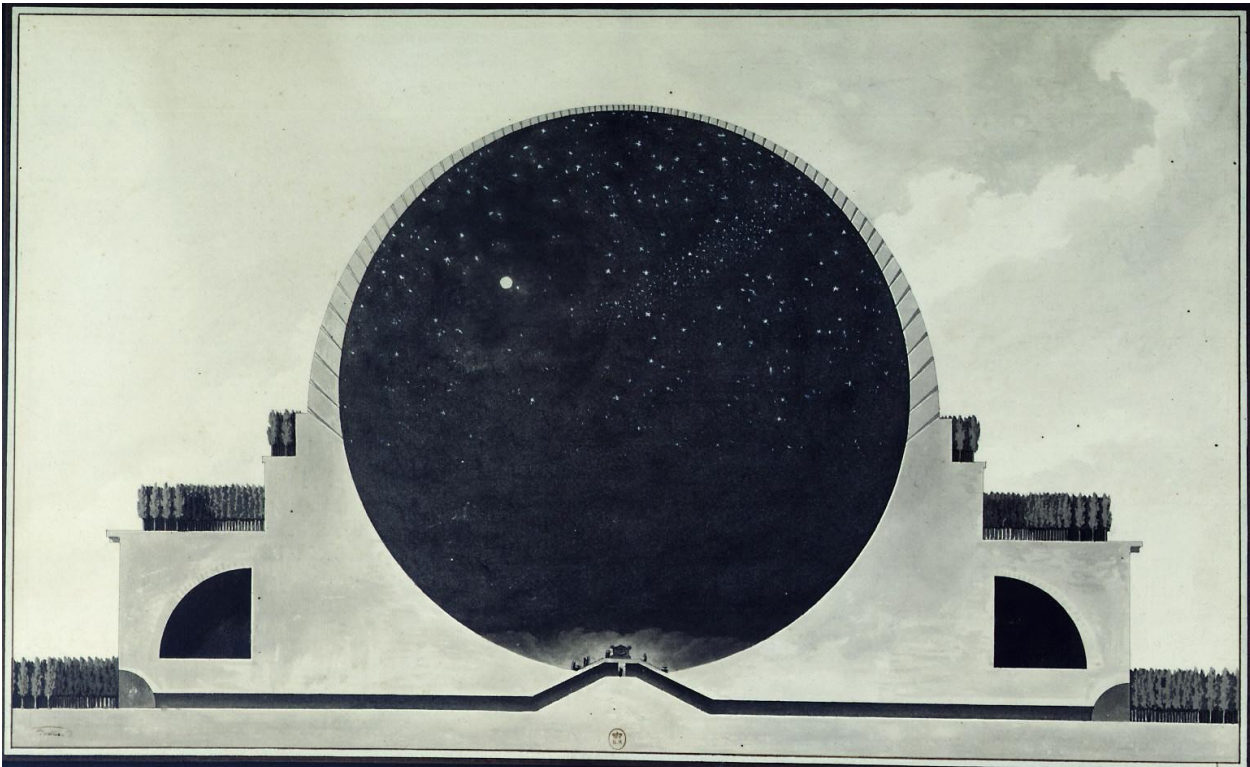
ways in which a nuanced set design was used to provoke latent feelings of anxiety and the uncanny in a viewer. In an early scene where Jack Torrance meets Stuart Ullman to discuss the caretaker position the camera follows Jack through the lobby and into the manager's office. The shot features a corridor that extends beyond the office and on to a corner that insinuates corridors that wrap around behind it. Our minds register this subliminally. Our unconscious map is then subverted by a sunlit window in Ullman's office dappled with foliage, insinuating an exterior where an interior hallway should have been. Most viewers will not consciously recognize this disjointed juxtaposition, but the underlying feelings of anxiety color the way they will go on to regard the conversation and film as a whole.



As with set design, stagecraft effectively creates space with its own meanings and associations transported into a new location. In traditional productions the immersive impact is compounded by the perspective forced by the proscenium arch as it relates to prescribed and stationary seating. The audience is not privy to the total artifice of the stagecraft or the coordination occurring backstage because the arrangement only allows them to view what is selectively presented.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

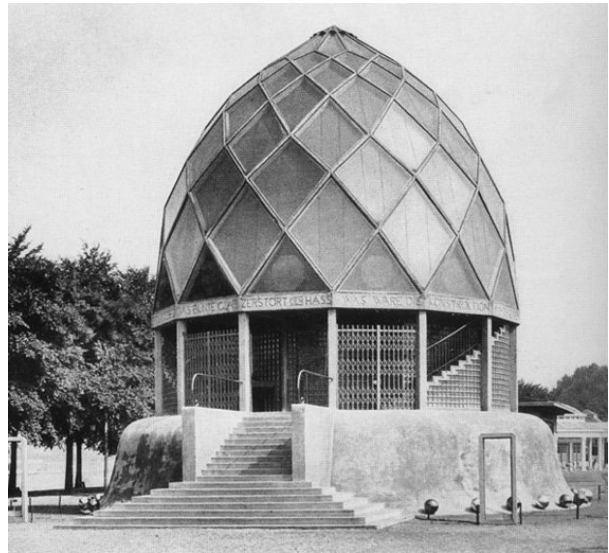


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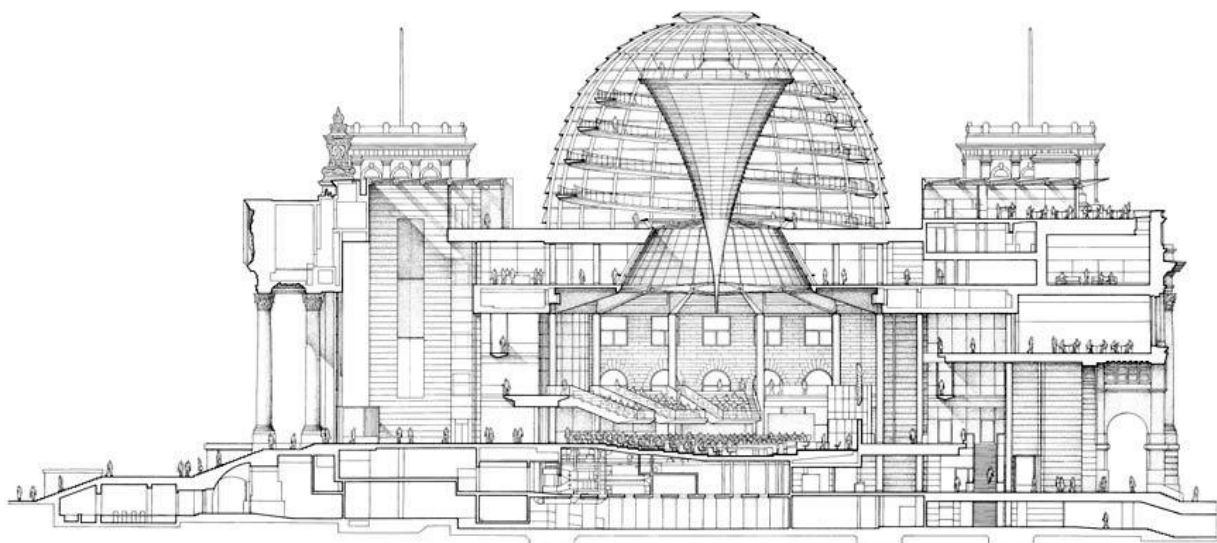
TRANSPARENCY and REFLECTION.

What has been described to this point are effects on the picture plane. This abstract surface is the device created by the frame on a painting, the edges of the monitor, and the proscenium arch. It is the vital medium through which we interface with the visual spectacle of the world and the site of much of the trickery involved in anamorphic works. It is of utmost significance, then, that Albrecht Durer imagine and describe the picture plane as a window.

Glass as a building material has had idealistic proponents in the likes of Bruno Taut and Paul Scheerbart, but theirs was a celebration of the dazzling color and crystalline quality of the material. Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House approaches this discourse in its emphasis on the transparent



quality of the floor-to-ceiling panes of glass, but only to the end of dissolving barriers between the house and its natural context. It was Norman Foster who best accentuated not just the transparent, but also the reflective capacity of glass to express the Truth in



the Reichstag Dome addition. The glazed dome symbolically insinuates the ideal of a transparent government. Visitors can visit this dome which nests above a legislative chamber. A blooming array of mirrors enables natural lighting and vision down into the chamber from above, placing lawmakers in a sort of inverted panopticon. Here, transparent and reflective glass seeks to eliminate the possibility of any sleight of hand on the part of lawmakers by revealing and broadcasting their actions to the citizenry to which they are beholden.

Truly, transparency has been lionized for its ability to reveal that which would otherwise remain hidden. It is a tool of democracy and surveillance. As a surface it serves to augment the objectifying quality of our vision by expanding its range through spatial divisions. Rykwert's passers-by and user-participants are now made to recognize each other across social establishment.

The inverse of transparency, reflectivity, holds historical moral implications as well. The ability of a mirror to depict the world as it is has elevated the item to be among the accoutrement of allegorical figures of Truth as well as Prudence, for whom the mirror insinuates a form of self-knowledge. A properly situated mirror can literally expand our horizon of spatial understanding, convex mirrors even bend the path of light to reveal figures and space around corners.

As a subject in art history, mirrors play an important role in establishing the illusion of a space featured in a work of art. Jan Van



Eyck effectively signs the Arnolfini Portrait with a self-portrait in miniature, captured in the convex mirror behind the subjects. In *Las Meninas*, Diego Velazquez strategically places a mirror within his composition in order to pay homage to his royal patrons in a portrait of their daughter, the princess. The consequential legacy of this decision has been to momentarily place the viewing public in the position of the Spanish monarch. In both of these works, reality is momentarily befuddled. If we are to suspend disbelief to treat the picture plane as a “window” into the scene, then we are momentarily removed from our place of viewing and shunted violently into the space depicted by way of the disconnect between our physical understanding of the behavior of light and the unfamiliar space presented by the mirror.

Is this not our experience of the built



environment? Even the most transparent glass retains some modicum of reflectivity. When we approach the window wall of an urban storefront we see the interior and we see ourselves. Just as Velazquez makes the viewer momentarily the King or Queen of Spain, these facades show us existing within the space before us while we know ourselves to be outside. This somewhat disorienting effect was comically lampooned in the Jacques Tati's *Playtime*. At one instance while chasing M. Giffard throughout the glass office complex, M. Hulot races out of the lobby having seen Giffard walking away quickly through the window. It is shown that Hulot is only chasing Giffard's reflection as the real Giffard was actually walking the opposite direction within the office.



Mirrors are, however, especially saturated with anamorphic potential. Recall the Italian examples of forced perspectives. I am sure many of us have experienced the subtler and all the more devious disorientation of believing (for however long) a space to be twice its size due only to a well-placed mirror wall. This disorientation is brought to a head in the folly of the mirror maze.

Contemporary artists have delivered anamorphic reflection from out of painting and injected it into sculptural and spatial works. The curvature of a convex mirror, typically a site of distortion, can also be used to undo some external and equivalent distortion as is seen in the sculptural works of Jonty Hurwitz. Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Mirrors* absolutely destroys the enclosure of the rooms

in which they are installed. The face of each wall is outfitted with a mirror so that each surface, being parallel, reflects a reflection ad infinitum. These installations have the effect of obliterating the ego of their beholder by stranding them in a way that is both like and unlike the labyrinth. Considering the discussion of the simultaneous quality of glass that is at hand, I contend that part of this egoic devastation is the paradoxical recognition of an identifiable space that existed outside these installations being superimposed by the expanded room presented to one's vision.



WANDERINGS and LABYRINTHS.

In *Living Sideways* Franchot Ballinger rejects the Western scholastic expectation that American Indian trickster figures are defined first by their interstitiality. Understanding the indigenous trickster relies, instead, on regarding them first as inveterate wanderers.

“The dominant culture’s customary use of ‘ambiguity’ refers to something with two or more meanings, which, we generally believe, must be resolved or ‘mediated’. When we non-American Indians write and talk of tricksters’ ambiguity, it might be well to remember - paradoxical though it seems - the term’s English etymology: ambigere, from the Latin, to wander about. Tricksters wander beyond conventional order and among the many poles of the real world. In their norm-defying travels, they swallow all - classifications and cracks - in their extravagant appetite for life. Wherever tricksters wander, there is a mosaic of values and truths to experience...”
(Ballinger, 30).

In this way, tricksters do not simply negotiate Western dualisms, but reveal manifold perspectives, “an openness to life’s multiplicity and paradoxes largely missing from modern Euro-American moral tradition” (ibid.).

It should also be noted that the

authority of most anamorphic effects breaks down in the face of a mobile audience. In Plato’s Allegory of the Cave a hypothetical, to-be philosopher comes to understand the nature of the illusions they were subjected to and eventually finds the light of truth by moving out of their stationary imprisonment. The ideal observer of forced perspective anamorphosis is also a prisoner to it. Moving out of the privileged position, foreshortening effects scale disproportionately until the illusory image is unrecognizable and may lead to disorientation. The act of orbiting a work in order to understand it marks the fundamental difference between regarding three dimensional, “in-the-round” sculpture and the picture plane of two dimensional art. The departure from a fixed location looking-at a point to immersion in or around the work has its dramatic analog in the deep set of the proscenium and Greek amphitheatre against the circus and black box theatre.

The Situationist *dérive*, a “psycho-geographical drifting”, is a strategic wandering born of intentionally disorienting oneself to an urban context in opposition to modernist fixedness (Schmidt di Friedberg, 162). This self-imposed variant of trickery urges the participant to discover new associations in their surroundings. Situationists, following the *flâneur*, removed themselves from the city, in this case Paris, in order to observe it. For them, the drifting was resistance against powers that would secure

new associations in place of those historically present. The procedure insisted upon a higher order of urban terrain, a “psychogeographic relief of cities, with constant currents, fixed points, and vortexes that make approaching certain zones very difficult” (McDonough, 78). It should also be noted that the *dérive* is still an analytical process with disorientation being only a necessary component rather than a product. Recall Koepping’s trickster, for whom negativity is still guided by its own set of rules.

Like the mythologem of the trickster, the image of the labyrinth, also defined by wandering, emerges from the murky depths of our cultural unconscious. Joseph Campbell describes the labyrinth as an inherited image, our general unease toward its abundant darkness is a function of our fear for the return to the oblivion that bookends our conscious lives in the womb and tomb. “In archaic art, the labyrinth - home of the child-consuming minotaur - was represented in the figure of the spiral. The spiral also appears spontaneously in certain stages of meditation, as well as to people going to sleep under ether” (Campbell, 65). The spiral pattern of the labyrinth is vital in sustaining its role as the veil that partitions our lives from what has come before and what will be. Campbell goes on to note “the labyrinth, maze, and spiral were associated in ancient Crete and Babylon with the internal organs of human anatomy as well as with the underworld, the one being the microcosm of

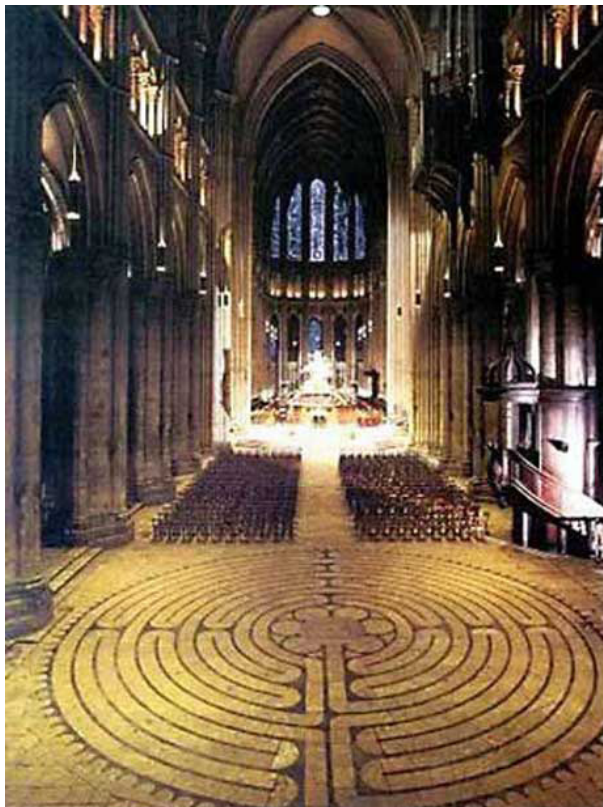


the other” (Campbell, 69). It is then necessary for our built environment, the mesocosm of this arrangement, to be in accord. Burial tombs take on the image of a labyrinth-body in order to facilitate a rebirth into the afterlife.

Standing as the enigmatic veil that parts the world of the living from the world of the dead it is important to note that the compounded, linear nature of the unicursal labyrinth, both extensive and disorienting, is not impossible to complete. Indeed, until the Mannerist labyrinth of the Renaissance with its false exits it was inevitable for any constantly moving subject. The labyrinth is a unifying figure, a graphic and spatial metaphor for the disorientation we experience in trying to understand the world. Umberto Eco states of the unicursal labyrinth: “when viewed from above it seems indescribably intricate and when going through it one is overcome by the fear of never getting out...

This labyrinth is the image of a cosmos that is difficult to live in, but on the whole ordered (it has been conceived by a mind)” (qtd. in Schmidt di Friedberg, 146). The “ordered” quality Eco notes refers to the composition of the labyrinth. Symmetrically reflected along a few or several axes, does the labyrinth not derive some disorientation from the qualities of a mirror?

Movement is implicit in the labyrinth (Schmidt di Friedberg, 151), thus these spaces have long been associated with dance. Dance relies on coordinated movements but is also marked by its ability to conjure disorientation. It is a synthesis of the Apollonian and Dionysian states. Dance privileges the body as a geographical subject. Dance’s entanglement with the labyrinth pervades religious belief, too.



“In the Middle Ages, it was customary during the Easter festivities to dance in labyrinths - invariably unicursal - built into the flooring of French cathedrals, perhaps as a sign of purification in accordance with the teachings of medieval scholasticism... Making one’s way through a labyrinth involves regular rhythmic movement, with a single entrance, a single exit, a centre to start back from and the need to return to the starting point.” (ibid.).

The religious significance of the labyrinth might link to the role of cave sanctuaries for our Paleolithic ancestors. Mircea Eliade observes that the cave-labyrinth “was both the theatre in which initiations took place and the place where the dead were buried” (qtd. in Schmidt di Friedberg, 152). Labyrinths laid in the floors of numerous European cathedrals “may be interpreted as a symbol of the difficulty of walking towards Christ” or “as a symbolic substitute for the pilgrimage to the Holy Land” (Schmidt di Friedberg, 155). The labyrinth eventually comes to befuddle the distinctions between the interior journey and the exterior journey. It turns the occupant inward in much the same way as Kusama’s mirrored rooms do, becoming a meditation tool that conflates the microcosm of the self with the universal macrocosm.

Malpas’ third definition of architectural truth, that of space that opens and is opened by new “relations and possibilities”, is highly

contingent on this kind of action “since it is essentially in and through action and potential action that space is itself first shaped and formed” (Malpas, 12). He points to the Gothic cathedral, in part defined by its sublime visual experience but which also offers a heightened sense of bodily orientation through its ritualistic procession and arrangement. Clearly, movement through space is key to regarding the built environment. Richard Shusterman notes how rapidly it becomes uncomfortable to continue standing still. In his exploration into the capacity of the soma as a critical lens for architecture describes our experience of space as necessarily mobile given the body’s preference for movement rather than stasis (Shusterman, 225). Think back to the visual dynamism Le Corbusier invokes to combat the stillness of the idealized, visual axis.



BEYOND VISUAL PERCEPTION.

Truth as openness is unlike truth as “correctness or authenticity” in that it promotes an active engagement reliant on the full suite of senses rather than the visual sense alone. Sites such as Malpas’ cathedral become known also by their acoustic qualities. These qualities depend, in part, on the materials that the space is composed of. The feel and smell of a space are also a consequence of its compositional materials so that every sense is entangled in the other and in the space.

How is space created by these senses? Is it done overtly, does it only color our visual interfacing with the world, does it operate solely through unconscious? Italo Calvino’s “A King Listens” shows how sound creates space. The story features a king who is confined by decorum to his throne and the space immediately surrounding it. The throne room becomes an architectural ear in the way sounds echo and funnel in from all over the palace complex.

It also shows how space is created out of the unknown. Out of fairness, this might only be a testament to the objective quality of the auditory sense. How can techniques of forced perspective be translated for our auditory construction of mental maps? Binaural recordings are one example of auditory anamorphosis. Sometimes these recordings are aided by video, but typically they require the subject close their eyes for full effect. The subtle variation in time and volume with which sounds reach two

recording devices spaced similarly to ears on a head produces the illusion of a source when heard through headphones. The effect is of a quality that it can produce distance, motion, and even the relative volume of a space.

TRUTH in RE-USE and ADDITION.

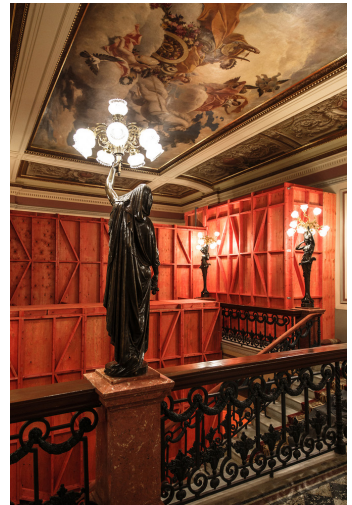
What is honest restoration and how do buildings find new life? Scarpa and Fehn can be looked to as paragons for the way their interventions float distinctly from their context, providing a counterpoint in time and material while at the same time impressing a sense of simultaneity on a visitor. The double regard for these projects is of a higher order of truth because it recognizes different subjectivities. Palimpsest, the superimposition of one epoch onto another expands our field of meaning through the medium of the familiar.

Carlo Scarpa's restoration of Castelvecchio exemplifies trickster-heroism in two ways. The first is in the way he selectively strips fabric to highlight the historical layers inherent to the site. In a restoration undertaken in the early 20th century, Antonio Avena, the director at the time, installed medieval windows salvaged from flooded Veronese homes to dress the courtyard-facing facade to create the illusion of a consistently 14th to 17th century palace for his museum. In addition to stripping away much of the false windows Scarpa also superimposed modern glazing over (or behind) the medieval windows to both expose the deceit of Avena's restoration while maintaining its own historicity as a layer of Castelvecchio. Scarpa's design of the "itinerary" or circulation through the museum also highlights repeated and unique interactions with the statue of Cangrande. The repetition of

the figure's appearance highlights the nuances in each sighting from the majesty of viewing it from directly below in perspectival space to the demonumentalization of seeing the small sculpture floating distantly from across the museum.

The proposed program requires more space than the site's built fabric provides, necessitating an addition. How can this simultaneity or superimposition or coexistence be carried into the language of an addition? The decision between a conjunctive addition and a disjunctive addition recalls, again, the responsibility an architect has pertaining to surfaces. Speaking to the truth of simultaneity, can an addition have conjunctive qualities that are also disjunctive qualities depending on the perspective? Scarpa's windows are either dominant or subservient to Avena's depending on the viewer's location inside or outside.

ARCHATTACKA's Plywood Theater, a theater/pavilion installed into the larger Bolshoi Drama Theater, uses materials composed in such a way as to create a space separate from the theater outside. Exposed studs facing out and a plywood veneer within give the impression of a space that turns its back on its site completely. The garish, orange paint draws attention nonetheless, and pavilion still admits the existing theater in when it is convenient, such as allowing the original theater's chandelier in to light an upper space.



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FEATURE PRESENTATION.

INT. PERFORMANCE HALL - ORTHOGRAPHIC AND PERSPECTIVE DRAWINGS PROVIDE A BACKDROP.

A proud figure clad in a black, turtle-necked sweater and thick-rimmed glasses with hair tightly pulled back takes the stage.

CHOROS:

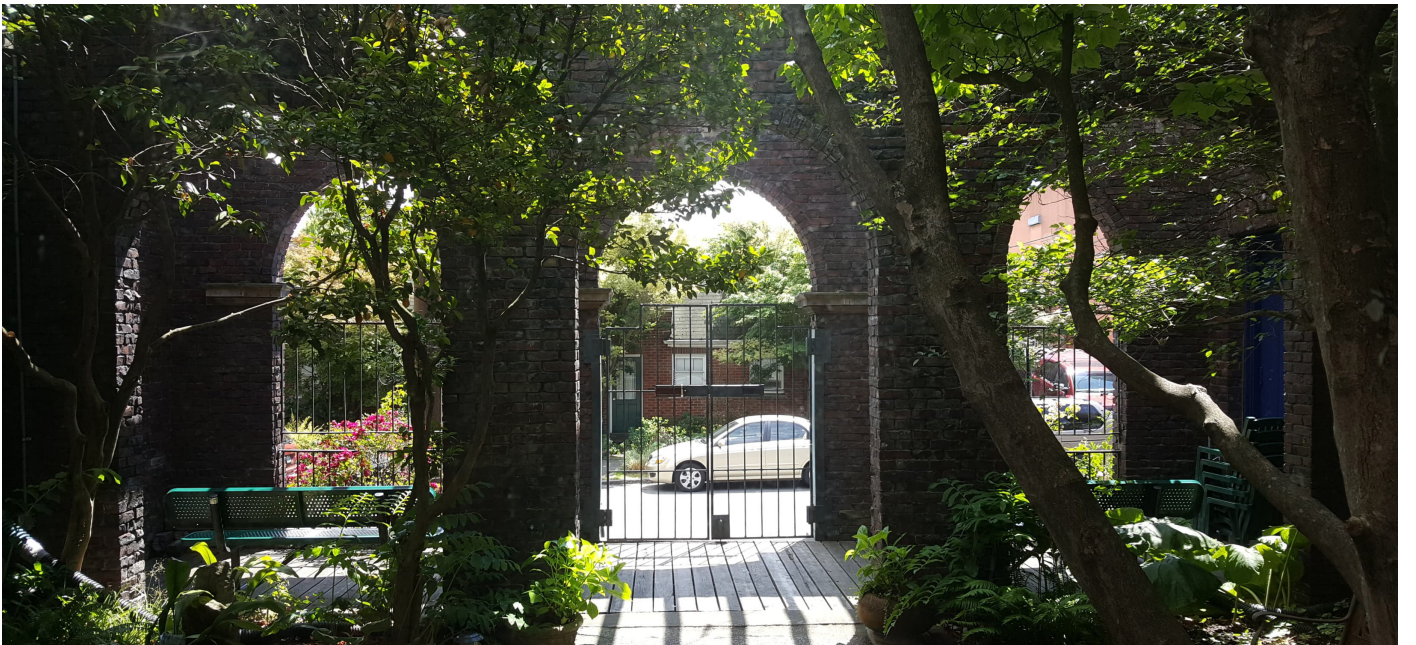
ACT I, behold Priest,
Steward of constant concept.
A Truth in a sense.

ARCHITECT:

I'm so glad to see the way this project has taken off and to be here with Which to present it. I'll be honest, I was skeptical when these 5 new grads approached me about signing off on a re-use project. They spoke of a client intensely interested in honest architecture, a subject I staunchly stand by, myself. When it was clear they and their client were serious I had no choice but to use my influence and position to uplift these young designers, even being as busy with my own practice as I am.

The project engages busy Broadway with a curious amphitheater sunken into the western yard. The placement functionally creates a pocket park between Cal Anderson and Volunteer Park, creating community in a rapidly densifying neighborhood.

The western porch is transformed into a stage for performances by members of the theater and neighborhood amateurs alike. Directly behind the dark, clinker brick facade, Which has inserted a bar of conjunctive backstage programming which humbles and subdues itself before the existing fabric with a vertically laid brick veneer. This



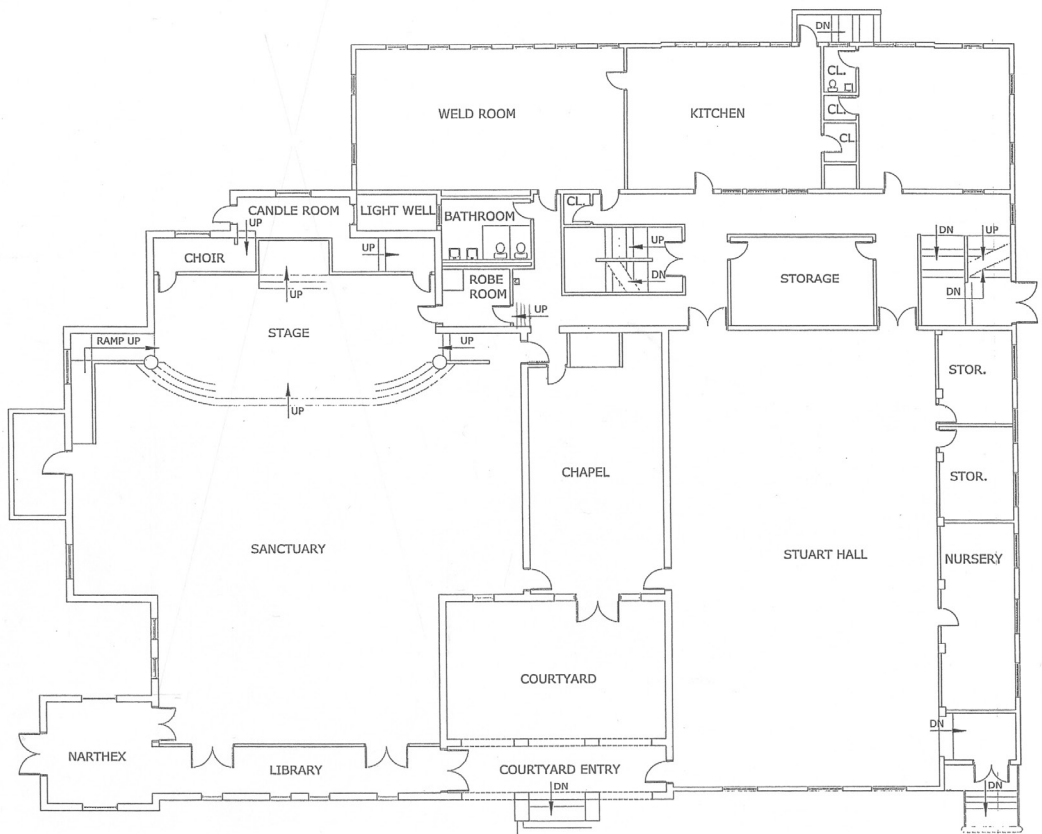
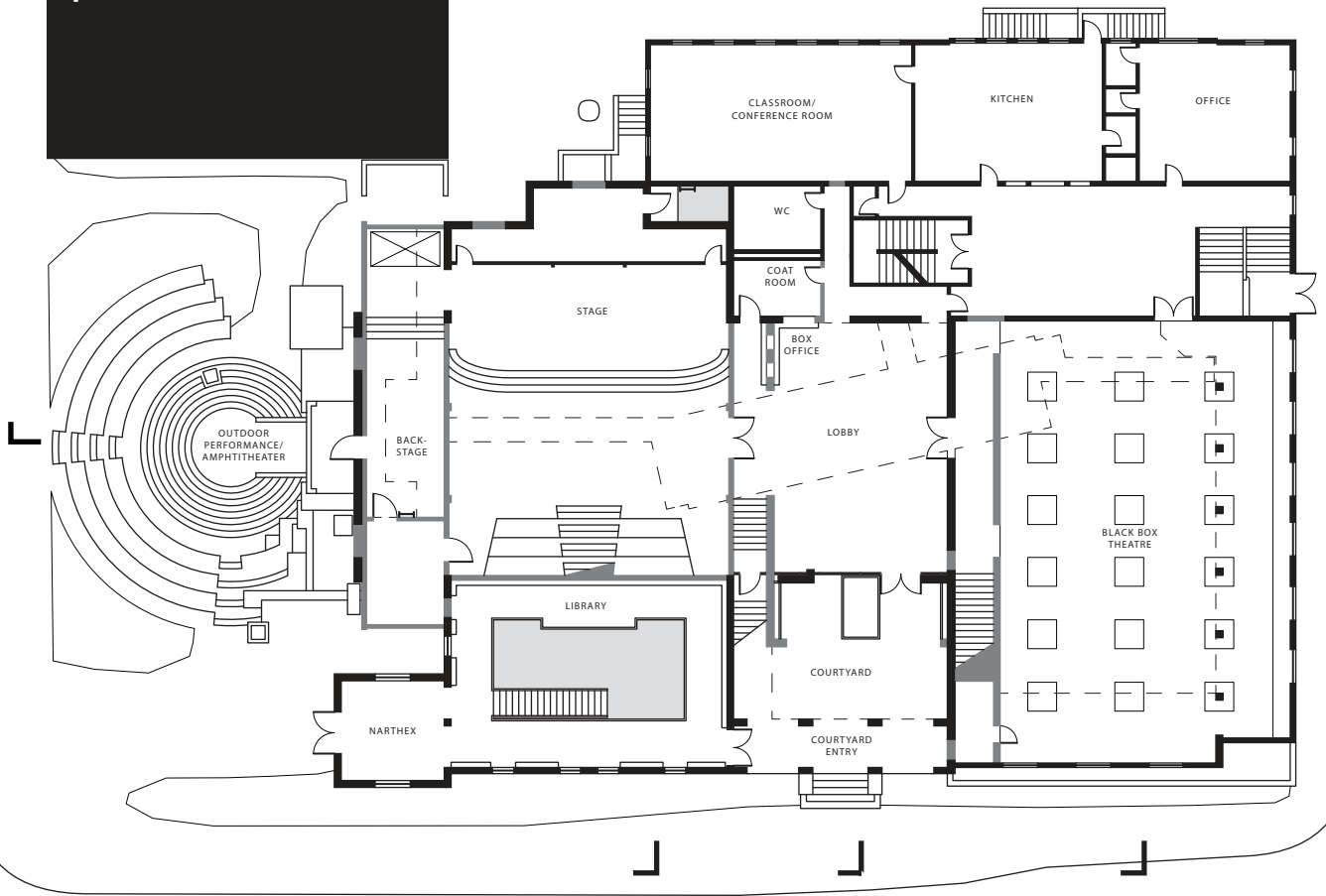
unusual departure in pattern was chosen so that even the lay-person might differentiate it from the older, structural masonry of the historic building.

The main entrance has been moved from the base of the belltower to the three-arched portico on the south central side. Here, theatre-goers process through an aged, but reinforced, brick threshold opening up into a calming courtyard still retaining much of its original, meditative character. Much of the original brick of the interstitial chapel space is stripped away, juxtaposed by the addition of a sleek, glass window wall. If the renovation seemed subdued where the project meets the street there can be no mistaking the new use here.

The glass wall of the lobby dissolves any barriers between nature and interior. It is a destination in its own right, providing a venue for contemplation and conversation outside of showtimes. This void space is defined by the existing brick of the halls to the east and west.

A light stair to the veranda supports itself against and behind a curious concrete wall that appears as if to protrude from the earth below. This wall is measured by arched forms embossed into the surface. A form similar to that of the amphitheatre addition in its vertical brick materiality looms above this space at an angle, interrupting the wood joists above as if it had been dropped through the roof. This form rests on a beam hung where the concrete wall is momentarily interrupted. Where the form meets the room's boundary it marks a door into one of the flanking theater spaces. Visitors can purchase tickets from a counter integrated into the continuation of the concrete wall.

It becomes clear that this form penetrates through and into the western hall where it becomes suspended, tension footpaths and fixtures for lighting. Which, having recognized elements of the new typology within the old,



ALL PILGRIMS CHRISTIAN CHURCH FIRST FLOOR



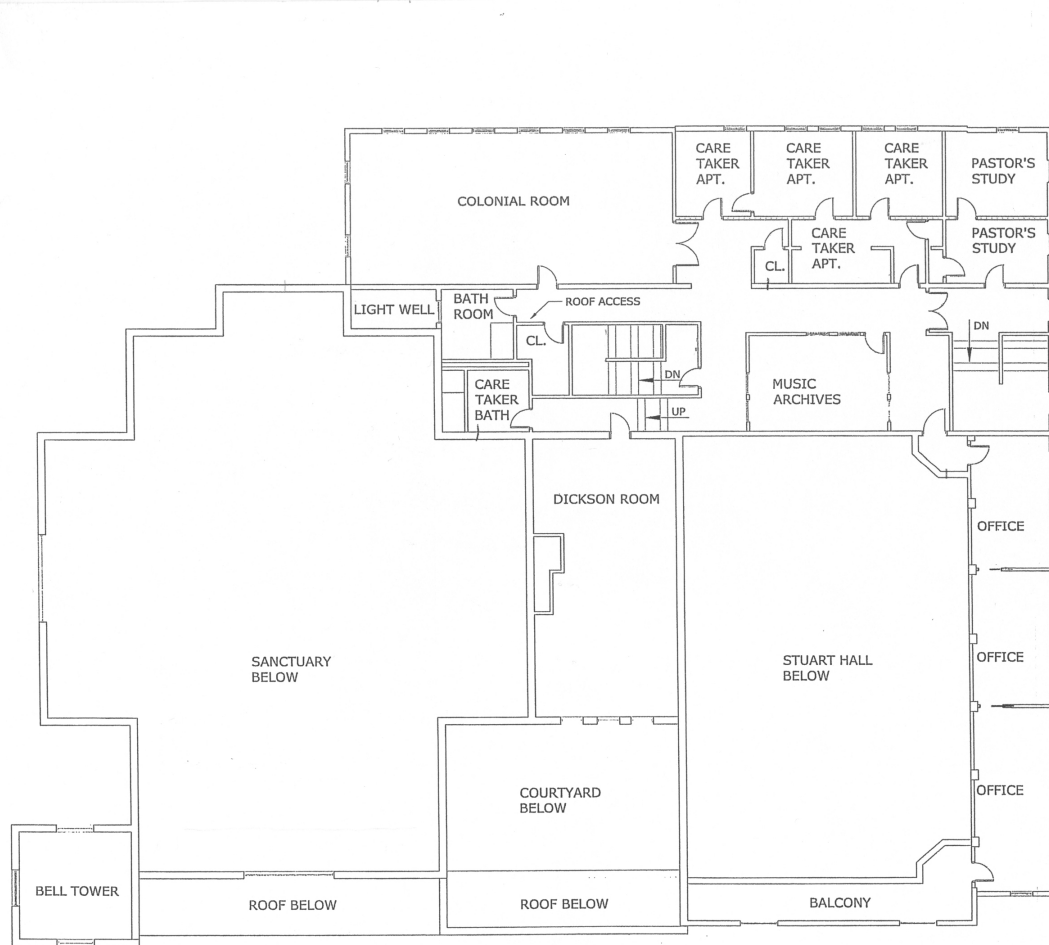
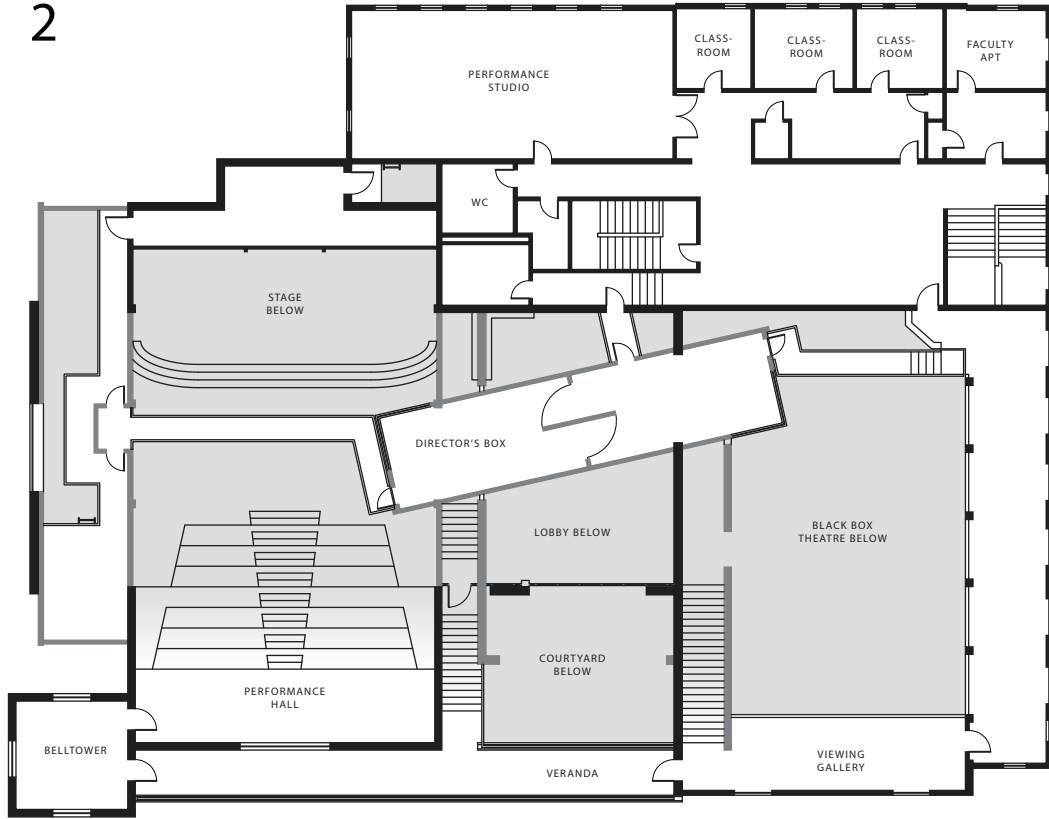


has converted what was originally the Pilgrim Church's sanctuary into a performance hall. In doing so, they emphasized the dominance of the proscenium arch by adding raked seating within the confines of ideal sight lines. The proscenium is framed even further with heavy, steel braces. In a spiritual context such as this, the inverted X's become St. Anthony's cross, a symbol of reverence for the theatre's predecessor. The space's original cruciform plan has been squeezed into a linear axis by the expansion of the lobby on the east and the backstage addition to the west to heighten this effect further. The theatrics of the arrangement are not reserved for the audience alone, however, as the slight angling of the stair that rises against the angles of the seating creates a perspectival illusion of deeper, receding space and aggrandizes the scale of the show for the actor as well.

The bar of service passes into the eastern hall too, alighting on yet another disjunctive concrete wall before terminating at the building's far edge. The open plan of this black box theater compliments the prescription of the western one, offering limitless programming flexibility.

The ceiling of this space, once resembling a classical vault, has been stripped away to reveal the trusses that make it up. Loos would approve of the exposure of the true mode of structure over that which is simulated by the cladding. The maneuver also increases the height of the space, provides additional armature for lighting equipment, and presents a darker backdrop for the theater's purposes.

The floor of this theatre plays host to a curious installation by Which. A slot-glass floor is punctuated by platforms extant wood flooring that aligns with the column grid below. LEDs installed directly under this translucent flooring implies lighting spilling up from an almost labyrinthine space below. This is one such space where Which defines truth by what it is not as, according to the drawings they've shared, the space below is mostly



unexcavated.

MESSENGER:

(peering through a nearby window) Hey, they're towing a black Mustang out there, does that belong to any of you?

ARCHITECT:

-Shit, I have to go, that's my car! Excuse me, so sorry!

The ARCHITECT hastily exits the stage. After a beat, members of the theater slink up to the stage unrolling what appears to be additional drawings. They proceed to selectively replace some of the information that the ARCHITECT presented only moments ago.

CHOROS:

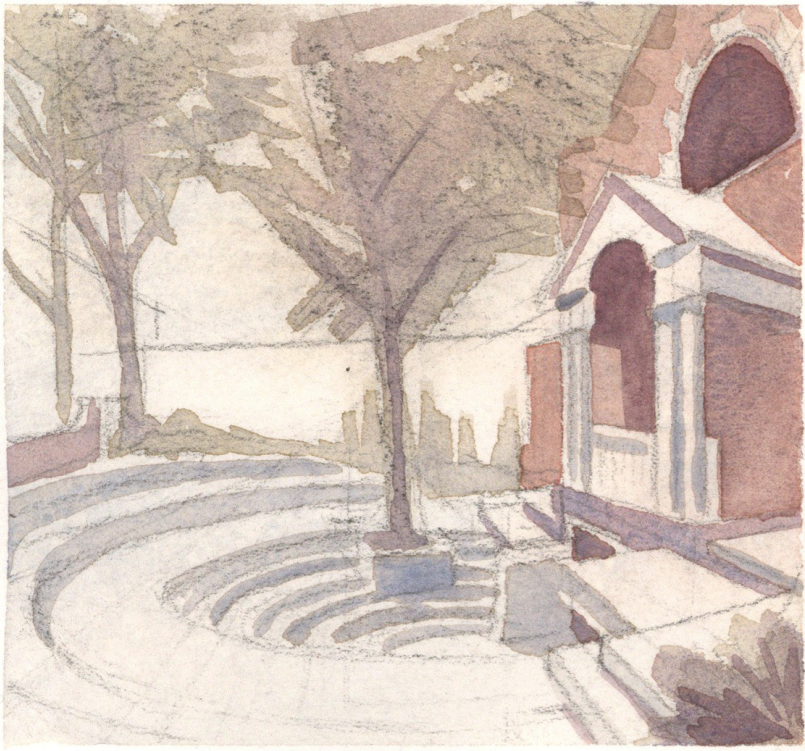
ACT II, the Trickster
Says Truth lies in order too.
...In order to what?

As the last member of the theater leaves the stage the DIRECTOR enters from the opposite side the ARCHITECT left from. He veers from his course only momentarily to not-so-subtly palm a bill into the hand of the MESSENGER before continuing to the center of the stage.

DIRECTOR:

Apologies for our guest's sudden departure. I suppose I will pick back up with my own presentation. I am the DIRECTOR of the new theater, the client that our guest spoke of.

Mythology is derided in this culture. All too often "myth" is treated as synonymous with a lie or fiction. Nonetheless, mythology has borne the thankless task of containing



within its stories humanity's most sacred truths. Myth, at once, renders a complete picture of the universe as it is and teaches us how to go on existing within it. Most importantly, though, it is a creative and individual pursuit.

I'm afraid our guest the ARCHITECT was too caught up in the design to note much of the site's context so allow me to share. In 1889 an accidental fire burned the entirety of Seattle's business district in only a day. In the wake of such catastrophe, citizens buried what remained of their city, a labyrinth of sorts, and rebuilt their city in brick over it. The Pilgrim Church, built in 1906, was one such building, raised on Capitol Hill, what was the periphery of the expanding settlement.

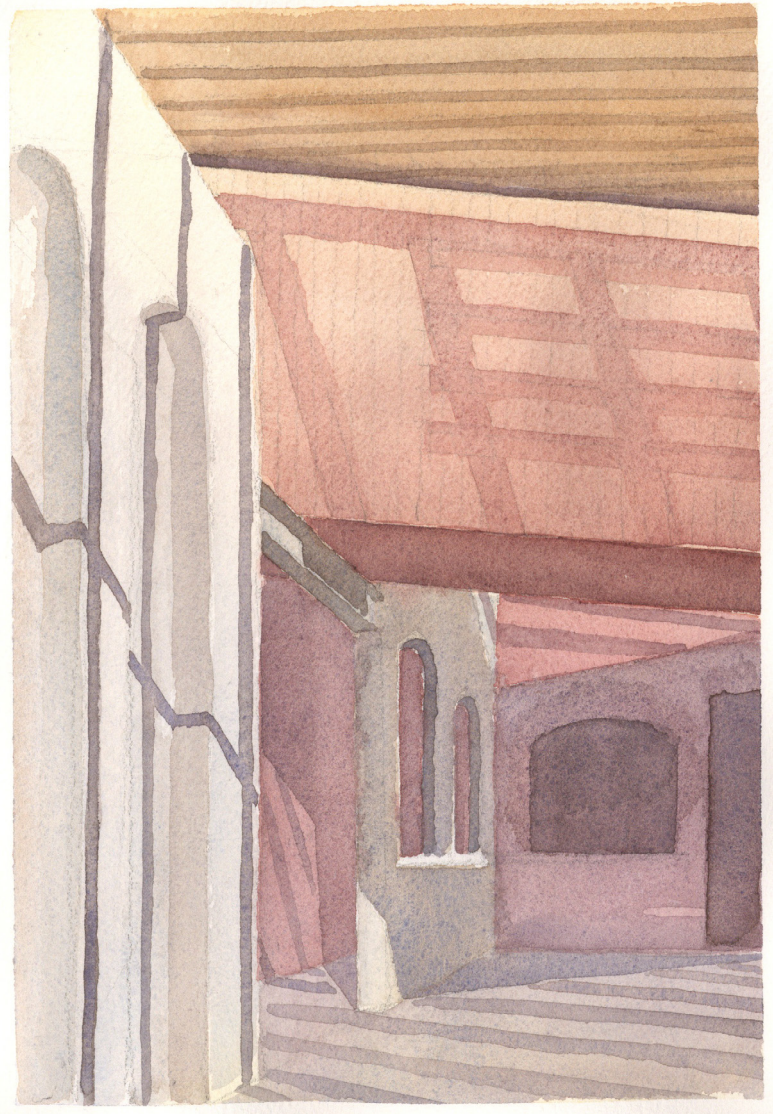
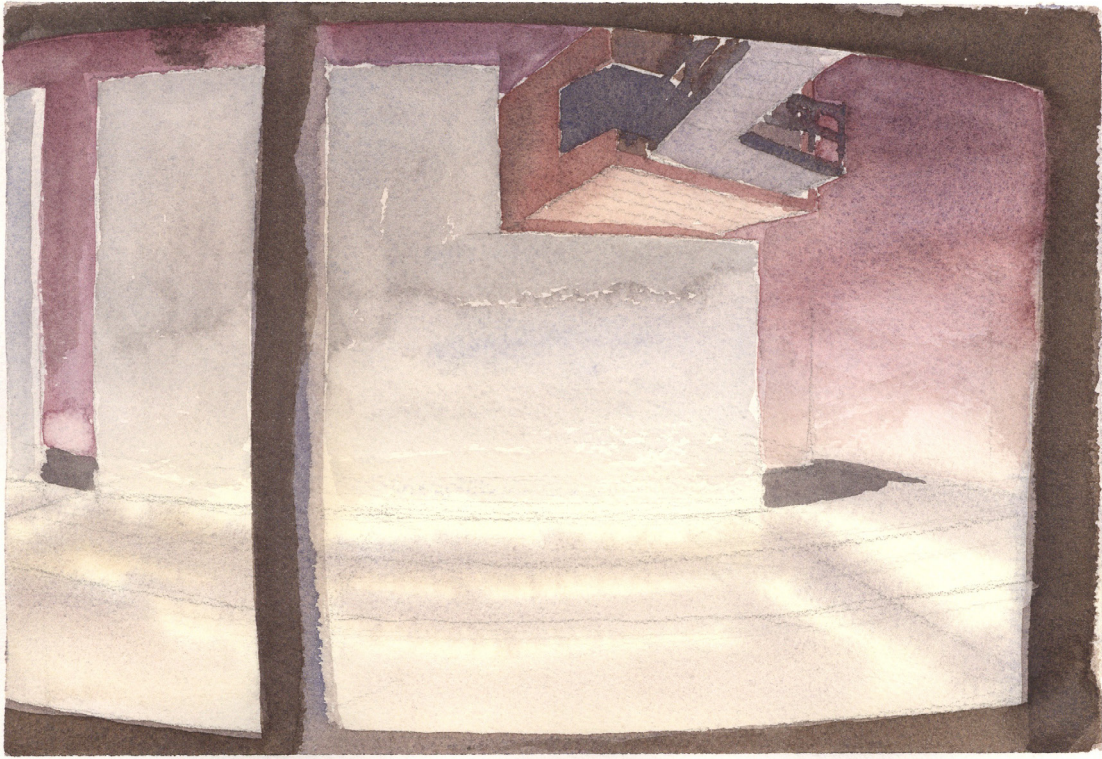
In 2001, only two years after the congregation's centennial celebration, the city was shaken by the Nisqually Earthquake. Those very same brick buildings, designed to withstand one disaster were made all the more vulnerable to another. Sadly, the Pilgrim Church was one such building. (A subtle smirk appears briefly on the DIRECTOR's face at the utterance of this line) When the westwerk's north tower fell into the sanctuary the expenses were deemed too great and the congregation was forced to abandon the site, merging with First Christian further south on Broadway.

This building which lay in awkward ruin for some 17 years more would become our theater.

I always tell the Truth. This is not necessarily the truth of Ruskin, however. The truth of a simply correct or authentic assertion. These are linguistic understandings of truth.

No, ours is a truth of disclosure, one that reveals.

As a writer/director I don't know all that much about architecture, but isn't this what the Greeks did? They





sought to create a temple of perfect geometry, but a temple built to such precision could never be captured by our imperfect perceptions. To correct for this, they...lied. They warped their perfect temples so as to correct for these deformations. Thus, while the temple itself was inconsistent the idea of it was conveyed successfully.

Ruskin's truth of correspondance between the referent and referred misses the point. How can there be a singular Truth when there can be a simulteity of meaning?

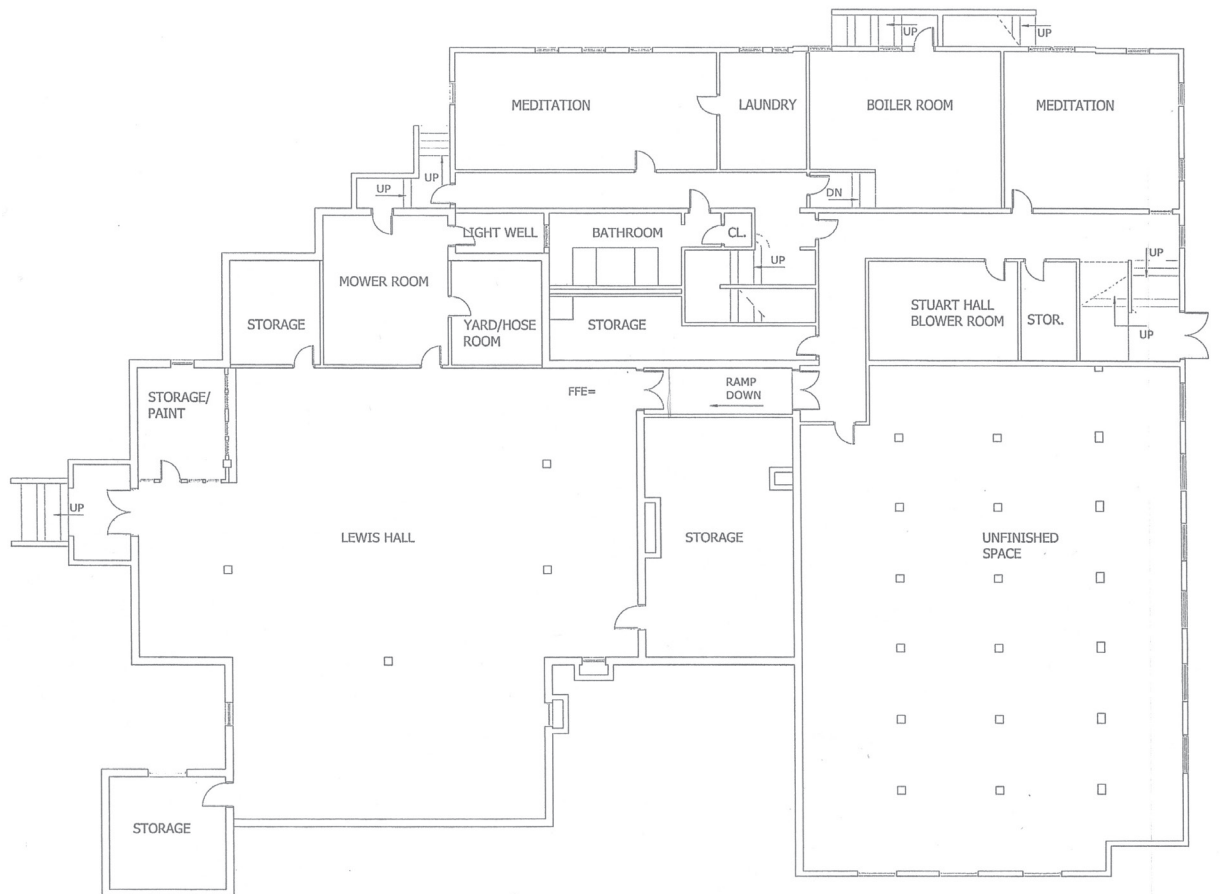
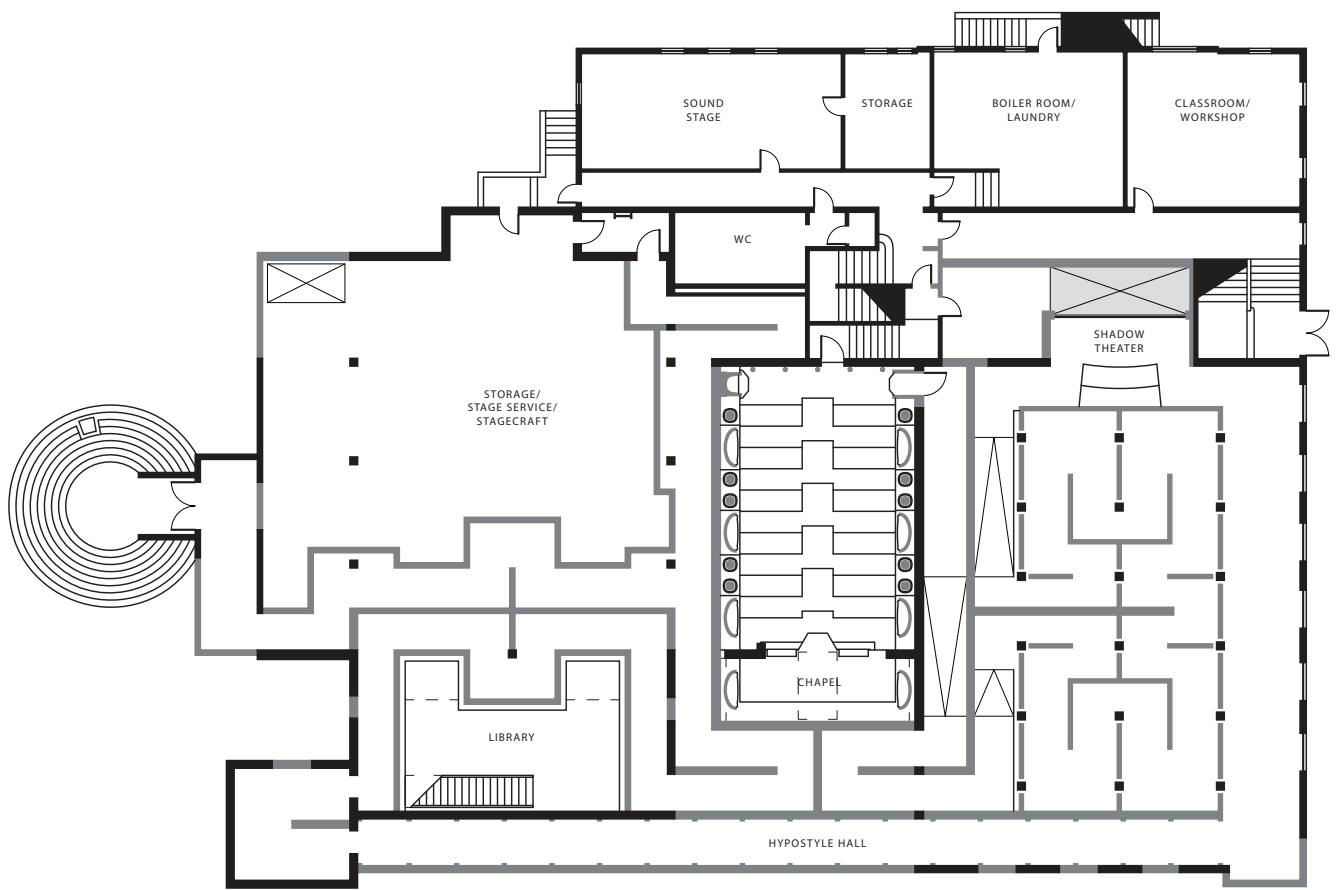
We did not include the ARCHITECT in this part of the discussion, and I hesitate to mention it to you now...

A labyrinth was installed beneath the existing church, supplanting the holy site replaced above. The disorienting sequence of corridors guides the initiate closely between and through program filled with visitors who are none the wiser. The installation is, itself, a threshold between the profane world outside and a sacred space within.

But it is also a sacred space in its own right. You can see the grand plan of the labyrinth unfolded before yourselves here, but the experience of it is something else entirely. In the midst of disorientation the initiate is turned inwards to come to better understand themselves and so become prepared for what is to come.

The labyrinth is entered through either the lightwell used by actors to navigate behind the scenes, but also through the amphitheater on special occasions. Initiates pass first behind bookcases and storage shelves that afford a vision into neighboring spaces that cannot easily be reciprocated. After turning at the base of the belltower they are spilled into a nearly 100 foot long corridor of parallel mirrors. These panels are offset by pilasters 6-foot on center so that the newly created space that recedes infinitely into both

B



ALL PILGRIMS CHRISTIAN CHURCH BASEMENT FLOOR



the north and south of the corridor becomes a hypostyle hall. Rounding two more corners puts the initiate into the shadow theater, a secret fourth theater of the complex. Here shadows are cast onto a screen from behind. It is only after progressing further through this tightly coiled segment of labyrinth that the initiate sees the luminous source of this feature. Well out of place, if the initiate even has a sense of direction still, but guided secretly by a sequence of mirrors below.

This allegory of Plato's allegorical cave terminates in the chapel space, a fifth and final theater where the true message is finally disclosed.

And with that, I believe I have covered everything. I suppose our guest will be needing a ride home so allow me to excuse myself and welcome the true AUTHOR of this project.

The DIRECTOR bows and leaves the stage after the ARCHITECT.

CHOROS:

ACT III, Architect
Three-ish years and some drawings.
...Is this mastery?

