Architecture of the Ineffable:

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Einar Bjarki Malmquist 2000

This is a study of the work of John Hejduk - his poetry, architecture and philosophical reflection. The aim of the study is to open up a discourse on some of Hejduk's projects, in which he speculated about philosophical themes such as identity, time and geometry, questioning the possibilities and limits of architecture. A discussion of these projects is particularly relevant for our contemporary world, regarding our questions of the limits of language and geometry, ideas and evidences for architecture in a society of generalized communication.

Une étude sur le travail de John Hejduk – sa poésie, son architecture et ses réflexions philosophiques. Le but c'est l'ouverture d'un discours sur quelques projets importants de Hejduk, dont il aborde le thèmes d'identité, le temps et la géométrie. A travers ces réflexions, Hejduk touche les problèmes fundamentales de l'architecture, les possibilités pour une architecture contemporaine et les limites d'une pratique avoué a la *poiesis* architectural.

I am indebted to all those who have offered me inspiration during my research and writing. I have received many insights from various scholars, colleagues and friends.

Deserving special acknowledgement is the catalyst, John Hejduk, whom I met only once, and who, sadly, died before this thesis was fully written (I will always wonder what he would have thought of it).

My greatest debt is to Dr. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, whose encouragement and profound guidance have given me wondrous challenges. His careful listening and recommendations have been invaluable.

Much gratitude also goes to my creative colleagues and teachers on the History and Theory program for their inspiring work and discussions, especially to Marc Neveu, Paul Kreamer and Michel Mousette.

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Special thanks are due to my family. My appreciation for their inspiring and genuine support, especially for my father, Einar Fridrik Malmquist - my favorite storyteller and a maker of spectacular machinery - and for my mother, Svandis Stefansdottir - a surveyor of mapped and unmapped universe. Thanks to my brother, Thorarinn, for discussions of curious things over coffee and to my sister Gully, for imaginatively discussing my ideas and giving me valuable suggestions about the layout.

Finally, I owe huge thanks to my beloved Liv, my second half in the midst of it all, for her life-giving joy, who said: "you have to think like those who went first to the north pole", as she kept on dancing.

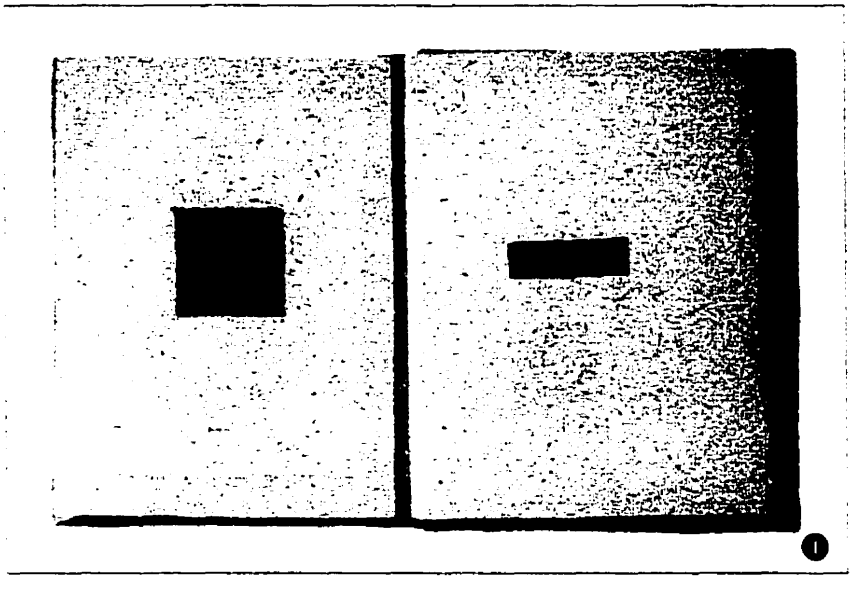
John Hejduk is known as a catalyst for built and imaginary architecture. He has undoubtly been one of the most distinguished architects of the twentieth century. In this thesis, written at a dawn of a new century, I would like to discuss some of his most important projects and reflections on architecture. These can be described as an attempt to open up unknown possibilities for architectural creation: a pivotal involvement in adjusting the foundations for architectural thinking. The structure of this thesis is born from the assumption that to reflect on the work of John Hejduk, someone who says that he is "breathing all the voices of the past", is no task for scientific analysis. Hence, this thesis has, as a project, been undertaken without the use of such conventional objectifying methods.

In the following pages, various texts and drawings appear side by side. This is an assembly of fragments from Hejduk's texts and drawings, together with my text. The assemblage is proposed as an opening for a playful interaction between words, thoughts and meanings. The intention is to invite the reader to participate in a project in which a few of Hejduk's works are spoken about as I receive and perceive them.[1] Furthermore, the intention is to convey through a discourse on Hejduk's works, an opening to a discourse on architectural thought in general.

The introduction of this thesis is in two parts. The first part describes the way Hejduk's works are approached - the full scope and the intentions of the thesis. The second compares the work of John Hejduk to a few general assumptions about the process of architectural creation. The main part of the thesis is divided into six sections. In section one, I will briefly point out the major characteristics of Hejduk's searching approach, with reference to his description of architectural creation as a gift and social act. These descriptions inform our way of understanding Hejduk's work in a social context. In the following sections, parts two to six, Hejduk's work, will be submitted to various discussions, which play on ideas of human beings having various dimensions. The initial inspiration for this use of the word "dimension" is Hejduk's articulation of different qualitative characteristics of human beings. In section two, I take the discussion of dimensionality into the realm of Hejduk's ideas of objectification and identity,

1 From the outset, it should be born in mind that, in my experience of Hejduk's work, I am crossing a threshold of an experience that does not allow itself to be completely described within the categories of logos or proclamation. My aim is to speculate about possible ways of looking at things. Interesting in this connection is Paul Ricoeur's elaboration on ideas of text as a work and a project. See, for example, his *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, (Forth Worth: Christian University Press, c1976).

with special reference to the story of Zenobia, a recurring character in Hejduk's work. In section three, I elaborate further on this story in comparison with Hejduk's Collapse of Time, a project whose intention is to discuss ideas of Time in architecture. Ideas of temporality are developed further in sections four and five. In these, I focus on the particular intention of Hejduk's Collapse of Time, to engage in the mysteries of human relationships. In this regard, I attempt to show a correlation between some ideas of the artist Piet Mondrian and Hejduk's thoughts on the potential of architecture to reconcile contrary opposition. Further, in section five, I highlight Hejduk's particular concern with the human ability to fix the moving and move the fixed, issues of life and death. In the sixth and last section, I conclude the discussion about the strenght and potential of Hejduk's poetic projects.



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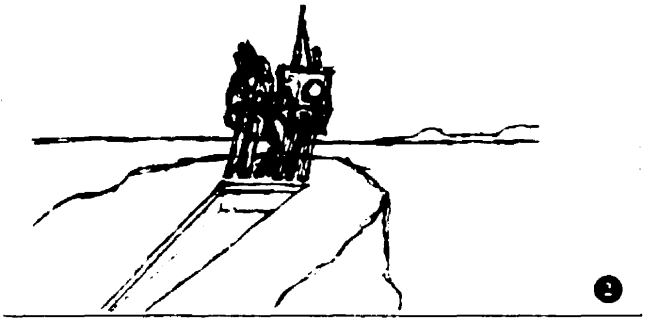
It is always a joy to see a work of an architect who through unexpected transformations turns architectural thinking towards new significations. John Hejduk's work is an example of this, challenging us to move our explorations of architecture beyond the known horizon of common architectural practice. Along with his challenging work, Hejduk's pointed questions, brought to the foreground of the architectural discussion around him, have been one of his chief contributions.[2]

"What is ment by architectural gestation?... What edge can architecture been brought to ?" [3]



Indeed, one of Hejduk's main interests has been to connect the questions of architecture to ideas of the limits of human life and the limits of a living culture. Few other architects have articulated so explicitly such questions concerning the limits and edges of architecture.

Hejduk's aim has been to create a spirit of thought, where the architect's task is to create works that are connected to what for him are deeper levels of life. He has described the intentions of an architect in terms of life-provoking questions, in such a way, that the architects works are thought- provoking, sense-provoking, and ultimately life- provoking.[4]

In our practice as architects, we are, most often, faced with evidences of a fixed world, whether it is in terms of a world mapped into x,y,z, or a definition of a building program in a given size presented in a given scale: the city measured. We often seem to need a belief in ultimate evidences to base our projects on. The moving world - the human world we all know - seems to need a fixed idea of measurability - so that we can draw buildings and build

2 John Hejduk's contribution to architectural thought has been discussed in various writings. Hejduk was particularly important for the work of his students at the School of Architecture of The Cooper Union in New York. See for example Joan Ockman, "Architecture as Passion Play", in *Casabella*, n°649, 1997, pp. 150. She points out a connection between Hejduk's pedagogy and the significant work of talented designers like Daniel Libeskind and Liz Diller. See also Ulrich Franzen, Alberto Perez-Gomez, Kim Shkapich, eds., *Education of an Architect, a Point of View*, (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999).

3 John Hejduk, *Architecture in Love*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1995), p. 15.

4 John Hejduk, *Berlin Night*, (Rotterdam: NAi Uitgevers/Netherlands Architecture Institute, c1993), p. 18.

drawings. And, working in such a way, we are also, more often than not, faced with an idea of a measurable body compared to a measurable function. This way of working is for most architects unquestionable. And this is where our interest in John Hejduk's work starts. We find him asking major questions, which challenge even the most "basic" assumptions about life, death, love and time. From the outset, John Hejduk recognized the temporal character of anything human, and the human character of anything architectural.[5]

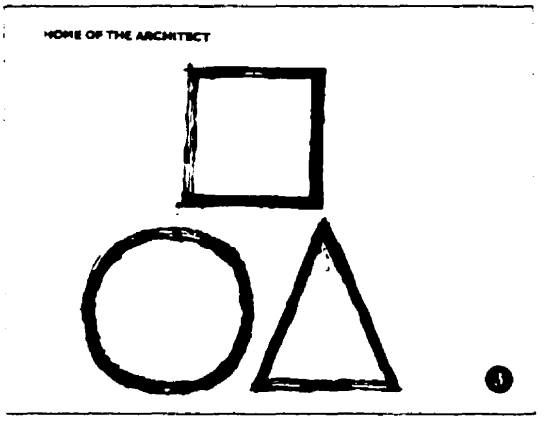
With the mathematization of nature (and cities) there follows for a calculating architect, an absolute dependency on this nature, a physical thing existing in itself. The mathematization of nature becomes an absolute, and perceived qualities are, more often than not, looked upon as inaccessible and "subjective"- of a secondary value. The disclosure of the world and the identification of persons happens through measurements and calculations: sitting here facing a wall, a wall is a wall, a measurable thing in three dimensions - x,y,z. The calculating architects find themselves facing an absolute and "true being": thought as an X: the rule and the 0 point of a construction of various perceptual processes. What is true is what is true X: a measurable thing.

For the ancient, on the other hand, the idea of a wall, was a miraculous one. A wall was never just a neutral object. Like objects in general, the wall had a latent meaning: the meaning of the boundaries of life. When looking at the work of Hejduk - a modern architect - dealing with walls and the boundaries of life, we move away from the established certainty of x,y,z to an encounter which is different, resembling, now and then, an echo of the world view of the ancient people, which we also are, aren't we?

[5] This is a particularly important issue concerning the use and misuse of technology in modern society. This has been discussed differently by different authors. See for example Alberto Perez-Gomez "Renovation of the Body" in *Lotus* no 13 (1986). Opposed to reduction of true theory to the status of applied science a reduction which was supposed by the concepts of a technological world. Perez-Gomez proposes that "Hejduk has made visible in Architecture the revival of the human body as the authentic place-holder and the metaphor of tradition, as a maker or craftsman and a poetic inhabitant." This opposes the idea that theory and practice relate to each other through a mechanistic diagram. Thinking in architecture must, Perez-Gomez demands, be understood as meditation in action. For a slightly different issue see Lily Chi "The Problem with the Architect as a Writer: Time and Narrative in the Work of Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk." in Alberto Perez-Gomez and Louise Pelletier, eds. *Architecture, Ethics and Technology* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). In this essay Lily Chi explores the complexity between narration and architectural making. She claims that Hejduk's narrative approach is opposed to the concepts of technological world while still dealing with preconditions for architectural making today. that Hejduk's approach, to ideas of "program" and "function", opens up for a possibility of turning ideas of the technological project, toward ideas of poetic constructions. Chi argues though, with a special referance to Hejduk's Masques and in a comparison with the philosophy of Hanna Arendt, that there is a limit imposed to this work to create "a public space."

It is the original, pre-reflective human experience which is evoked by Hejduk's voice, within his text, when he says, that there is a more important feature to air, than the fact that it keeps us alive.

"It is because when I breath the air in I breath all the sounds from all the voices since the beginning of time. All the voices that have placed thought into the air, that is, all the thoughts escaping from the soul through the voice into the air which I breath in. Sounds that I cannot hear - silent sounds filling the air."



Every breath serves Hejduk in creating his work. There is something serced for, always developing, evolving. Hejduk's acts and thoughts coincide with this world, where, as he says, "our hearts are with the architectural histories of the past when our eyes comprehend the architectural realities of the present."[7] Hejduk's emphasis makes the air that keeps us alive carry the peculiar quality of inspiration, where he is breathing the sound of all the voices from the past, intertwined with cultures ancient and new, launching a work of invention strictly connected to historical tradition. This approach could be characterized by what Edmund Husserl called "poetic invention of history."[8] With such invention historical tradition enters the work through motivation and as a "spiritual sediment". This is what I see as happening in Hejduk's work as well. A ready-made cultural product: walls, geometry, stories as well as sounds of voices in

7. John Hejduk, "Architects Statement," in *Berlin Night*, p. 18.

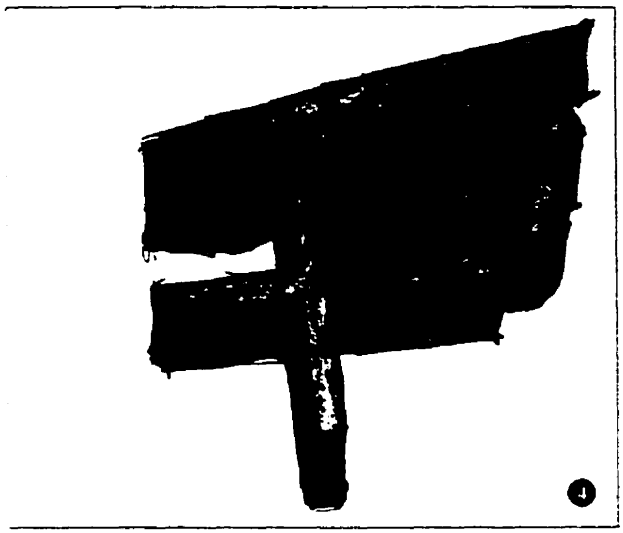
8. John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), p. 15.

9. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 380-385. Husserl uses the idea of "poetic invention of history" to articulate his position as philosopher, unconcerned about the scientific historical study. He makes no claim of an unconditioned truth binding for all men. For Husserl, the scientific truth about the absolute is not possible, and therefore it is impossible to establish a world-view truth which is totally valid for each human being. The "poetic invention of history" serves for Husserl himself to understand himself and his own aim, as well as his aim in relationship with others. For a similar discussions, but more heroic, close to my discussion of Hejduk's work, see Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the uses and disadvantages of history for life," in his *Untimely Meditations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 59-123. Nietzsche poses the question "Is life to dominate knowledge and science, or is knowledge to dominate life?" and demands that man should above all learn to live, and should employ history only in service of life. See, pp. 116-120.

the air, receive a transformation through inventive creation in his hands, where contact with the past turns the work into a project of transhistorical articulation and invention, partly taken over, partly created.

In Hejduk's creation, the eyes are not left alone, observing, nor is the geometrical imagination only a mind game. The creation is an overall bodily act, directing the search and transforming it into work. It is Hejduk's breathing body which encounters the past and present, finding a matter for creation.

"The human body, its auxiliary senses and the capability of cerebral workings cause architecture to be involved in the movement of time and dynamics of space."



This idea of creation as a bodily correspondence through air makes a single person's search a part of something bigger, revealing the work's social dimension. Hejduk talks about a "geometric cry"[10] and about geometries as "bloodfelt-geometries."[11] This characterization informs my understanding of Hejduk's work.[12]

It is the human body, with all its senses and its capacity to create work, that makes the architectural search enter the social realm.

10 John Hejduk, Mask of Medusa, p. 71

11 John Hejduk, Soundings (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), p. 230.

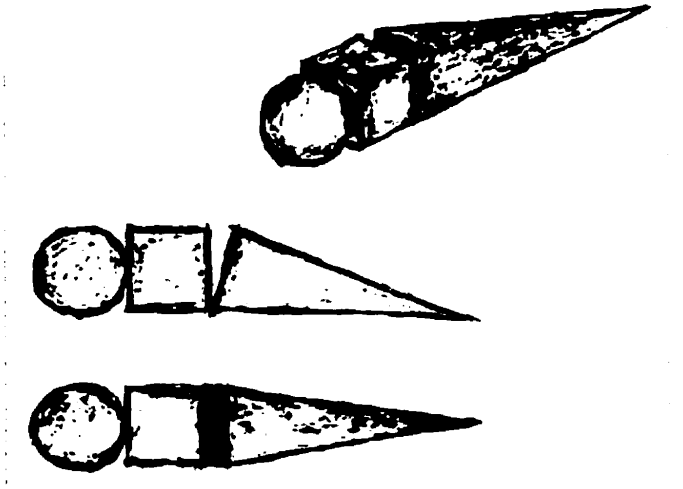
11 John Hejduk, as cited in a presentation of the exhibition, "Other Soundings: Selected Works by John Hejduk, 1954-1997," in Casabella, n.649, 1997. Hejduk says: "The Architect thrills at the coldness of steel and the coolness of sustained thought. His heart-thought pumps sensations of bloodfelt geometries; his spheres balance on single point; his elongated pyramids slices the skies; and his cubes mark the earth."

12 I am here reading Hejduk's ideas differently than does Wim Van den Bergh, in "Voiceless Silence, Silent Speech," *Berlin Night*, (Rotterdam: NAi Uitgevers, Netherlands Architecture Institute, 1993), pp. 5-15. Related to Hejduk's ideas of "breathing," Van den Bergh suggests, with a reference to the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, that poetic work adds to the common assumption of reality as three dimensional a fourth dimension which is Time and fifth which is Spirit or Breath. Furthermore Van den Bergh reads Hejduk's Masques as a sign, building on semiological definitions, claiming that architecture exist only in the mind. As opposed to these conceptions I would like to emphasize the importance of unity of hand and thought which makes Hejduk's creation a bodily act. I call the creation of work "a gift" and a performative act, in a social context to articulate this idea (see my discussion later in this section). This to make sure that my idea of Hejduk's work is not reduced to as "sign" in semiological terms. Furthermore, my contention is that one has to bracket the notion of reality as three dimensional (as it is in the terminology of descriptive geometry) to be able to account for the various aspects of human condition involved in the architectural creation. This is somewhat at odds with Hejduk's own conceptions, as I will discuss later.

It is this breathing body which is the vessel of creation and the source of transformation, from where we look and touch upon the world.

In Hejduk's publication of Three Projects[13], the realization of the work is described as it happens through transformation and embodiment where mind and hand are one.[14] For Hejduk, in his studies and searching drawings, "the evolution of form depends on the intellect, not as a tool, but as a passionate living element."[15]

"The projects were begun not knowing ... but knowing that the basic orders needed to be searched for."[16]



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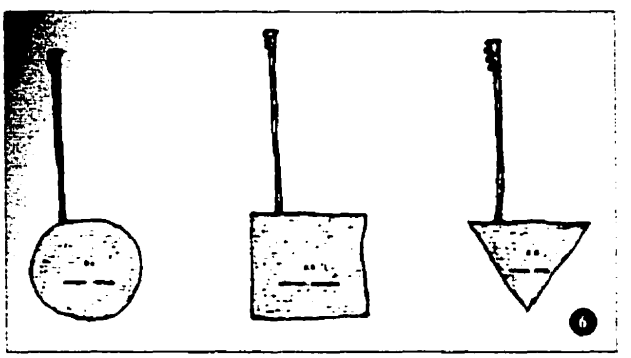
The work he creates is poetic, not aimed at technique in itself, but towards expanding a vocabulary for architecture.[17] This is one of Hejduk's recurring claims. Hejduk's geometries are "bloodfelt geometries" and socially relevant. As opposed to the categories of idealistic and realistic thinking, his work seems to fluctuate between other criteria, within his own poetic approach and with some empathy with the thinking of earlier times. Like the mingling of his thoughts with the past, "silent sounds" in the air, the unity of hand and thought in Hejduk's geometrical creation mingles with earlier geometrical thinking.

Hejduk sees a relationship between the ideas and work of architects and painters. Like Hejduk's geometries, the work of the painter crosses the cultural tradition on paths beyond historical analyses, through recreation and creation, and comes into existence as a "bloodfelt" project. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, building on Husserl's thesis, uses the word "Stiftung"[18]

13 John Hejduk, *Three Projects*, New York, Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture, 1969, p 4
14 Ibid, pp 2-4
15 Ibid, p 4
16 Ibid, p 4
17 Ibid, p 4
18 German.

- establishment or foundation - to describe the accomplishment of the painter. Stiftung designates the singularity of each present which passes and its unlimited fecundity, a fecundity which inherits all the products of culture which continue to have value after their appearance.[19] Stiftung can also mean a gift, and the word Stifter, one who gives.[20] Husserl's concept receives this direction, where the idea of Stiftung connects to an idea of the human ability to give such "meaning-structures" as geometry, a new life.[21] This is as also what Merleau-Ponty recognizes as happening to a painter. Without being able to say what comes from him and what comes from things, what the new work adds to old ones, what he has taken from others and what is his own, the work of the painter "gives to the past not a survival...but a new life, which is the noble form of memory."[22] The idea of a gift is also central to Hejduk's conception of architecture. He recalls how as a young boy he created a "piece of art" which he handed over to his mother as a gift, to point out the importance of creation of architecture as a social act.[23] If we accept his point of view, we will recognize that handing over an architectural creation as a gift is a gesture made for the sake of others, trying to touch upon the life of others. This gesture exemplifies an important potential for architectural creation: a potential for sharing individual experiences and creating a work which contributes to the moving social life.



19 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 59.

20 It is also curious in this connection to notice that in Norwegian (also pertaining to the Germanic branch of languages), the verb "stifte" is used to designate an establishment of human relationship, such as establishing a friendship or a family.

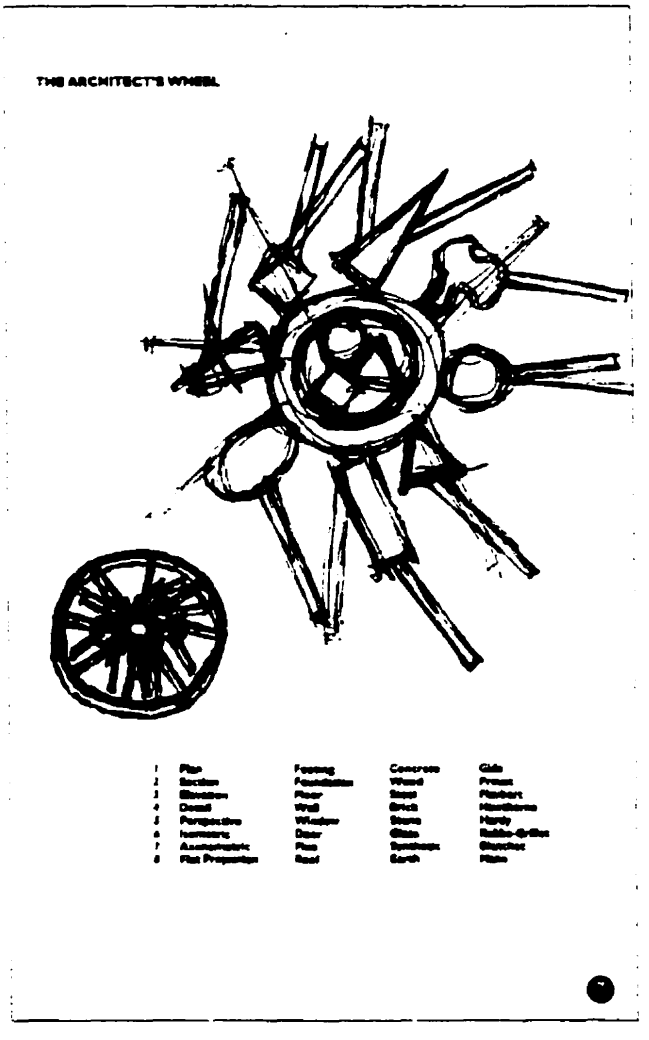
21 Edmund Husserl, "Origins of Geometry," in his *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transitional Phenomenology*, pp. 372-378.

22 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 59.

23 See: John Hejduk, "On Education," in Goldhorn, Bart, ed., *Schools of Architecture* (Rotterdam, New York: NAi Publishers, 1996).

Compared with a preestablished truth of measure, John Hejduk's work is forbidden fruit. We find stories, materials and geometrical themes appearing side by side. His project "The Architect's Wheel"[24] is an example of his interest in these different aspects. If we look at Hejduk's drawing of the wheel, we find beneath it a text. We see four columns with words. The lines of the columns are numbered from one to eight. In the first column we read: plan, section, detail, perspective, isometric, axonometric and flat projection: various types of drawings used in modern architecture. The words of the second column list

"Dancing in a house is forbidden fruit"



elements of buildings, such as foundation, wall and roof. The third column lists materials: concrete, wood, stone, glass, and so on. These three first columns include themes common to most architects, while in the fourth column Hejduk adds a list of some of his favorite authors of modern literature: Gide, Proust, Flaubert, Hawthorne, Hardy, Robbe-Grillet, Blanchot and Mann. If we look at these drawings together with the text, the wheel might be interpreted as disclosing different elements needed for Hejduk as a creative architect. From this point of view, we face a curious assembly. There is something wholesome about it: a coexistence. The systems of literature and geometry; the characters of fiction, the geometrical themes and instruments of the architect, materials and elements of buildings: all this is reconciled within Hejduk's wheel. This project calls for thought. Engagement in the wheel has no beginning or end. Where do we start?

24 John Hejduk, *Soundings*, p 30

25 From John Hejduk, "Sentences and the House and Other Sentences", *Fewer Wings Golden Horns Stone Veils*, (New York, Monacelli Press, 1997), pp 214-219

We may begin with Hawthorne's story of Zenobia[26] - a recurring character in Hejduk's work.[27] As we wander into it, we are already there. We arrive in the middle of a story.

We see a boat floating on the river. Two men on the boat are taking an object - a dead body - out of the river into the boat. We are watching the story's scene of horror - the horror of Zenobia's death. For the two men in the boat the body

"Death's dimension is one." [28]

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is a dead thing. A woman desirable intellectually and bodily has, now, for these two men been reduced to just that: a dead thing. The dynamics of Zenobia's moving character through the story, a story of desire, power, science, spirit, love and wonder, is evaporating. Zenobia's variations and human dimensions, are lost.

During the story, one of the men on the boat has spent a long time trying to understand Zenobia's character, hoping to grasp her identity and solve her mystery. Until her death, he has always been fascinated and surprised by her changing appearance, which has challenged his desires for a fixed understanding. But the analytic reflections and theoretical world views could not categorize Zenobia. However, when she appears for them as a dead corpse floating in front of the boat, her identity can be established.

We have approached the edge of life and death, identity and objects. For Hejduk, this reduction of human life is a "Big Horror". To objectify Zenobia as a dead fixed "thing" is tragic and unforgivable. To see a man or a woman does not mean that we already know them. To see Zenobia is different from seeing a material thing. A thing can be categorized and we can leave them as such, as things of a certain kind. And it seems they never look back - or do they? A man, a human being, however, is an individual "self", and each man is a different one.

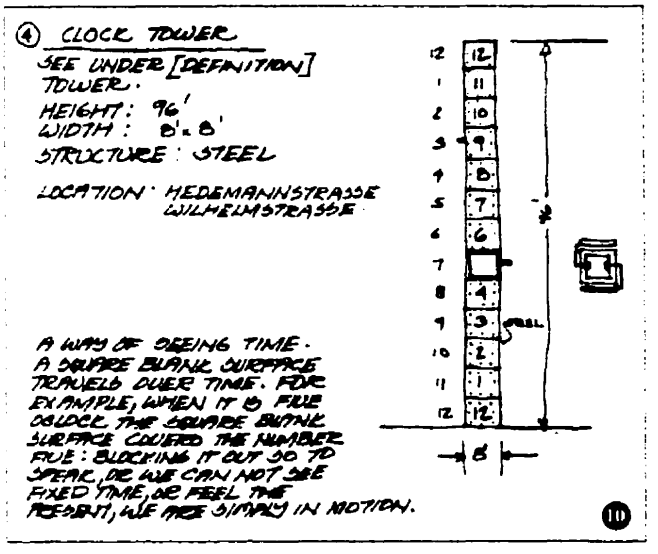
26 From Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp 229-237

27 See for example, his *Soundings*, pp 216-233 and *The Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions*, (London: Architectural Association, 1987), pp 33-34

28 From John Hejduk, "Sentences and the House and Other Sentences", *Pewter Wings Golden Horns Stone Veils*, pp 214-219

Hejduk's questions regarding the edges and limits of architecture move me to ponder the relationship between these questions and his concern with the differences between human beings. They also raise another question: what is involved in Hejduk's effort, this challenge to architecture, where the importance of life and human differences appear in the foreground? Bringing these questions undoubtedly falls short of answering this once and for all.

"The house doorknob inverts time" [29]

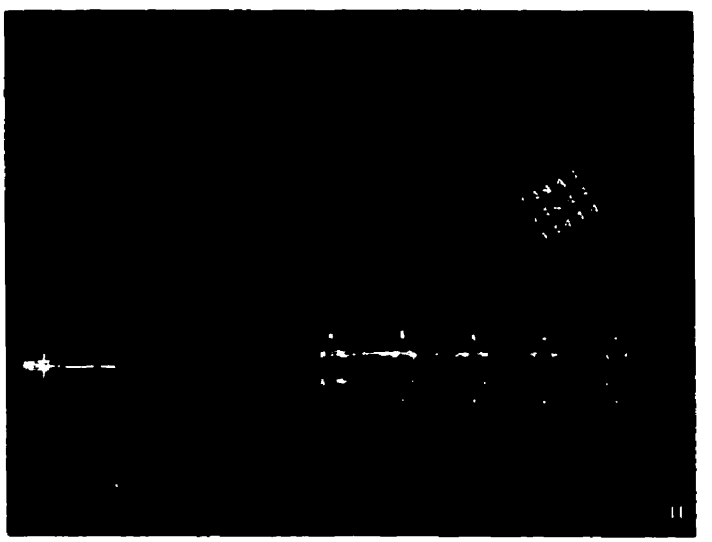


Instead I move to a passage by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who says: "science has given up living in things." Hejduk's effort is opposed to such a scientific view of things. While science tends to measure things - even the human body - to speculate on its structure and how it works, through calculations and in terms of facts and proof, Hejduk's contemplations on things and architecture gives us a different point of view. He takes interest in the relationship between things and human beings, in issues of life and its counterpart, death. He demonstrates this when he contemplates the phenomena of still-life paintings. Hejduk tells a story of a bodily trauma, which starts a train of thought about the relationship between painting and architecture. I will return later to his discussion. Let me just say, at this point, that the theme of his discussion is time, the fixity of time, life's death, where still-life painting has for Hejduk the power of showing a human being, still alive, while facing death. Before dwelling on issues of still-life painting, I would like to discuss a little further his concern with the temporality of human beings and its importance for architecture.

29 John Hejduk, "Sentences and Other Sentences," *Pewter Wings Golden Horns Stone Veils*, pp. 214-219

Hejduk's attention is directed towards both literary characters and real people and is followed by an intense reflection on aspects of temporality. It is the possibility of bringing the temporality of human beings into play that interests him. The conventional concept of time, according to Hejduk, lacks the notion that there is a difference between people. Zenobia's story is an important example and the main focus of his interest in this respect.[30] Hejduk's opinion is that Zenobia encapsulates a mode of time different from that found in categories of objective thinking. The tragedy of Zenobia's story correlates with the tragedy

"Death is nothing compared to life"



of architectural endeavors in general: a tragedy of one-sided thought, which lacks a mode of thinking that allows room for the variety and differences among people. Hejduk, dealing with this lack, plays on the differences between male and female. He characterizes Zenobia's "time" as "pliable time" and thus contrary to what he characterizes as the "rigid time" of the male, claiming that architecture should reconstitute the "pliable time" of the female, instead of turning "subject into object."[32] Human life, for Hejduk, should not be fixed in terms of mere objects, even when facing death and the temporality of humans, like Zenobia's temporality, is what architecture lacks.

The story of Zenobia and the horror of her objectification, is discussed by Hejduk in the project entitled "The Collapse of Time."[33]

The project is made up of three elements: a clock-tower, a structure named "Security" and a booth. All three structures are on wheels and movable. Two of these have been built: the clock-structure in Bedford Square in London, by the Architectural Association, School of Architecture, in 1986, and Security in Christiania Square in Oslo, by The Oslo School of Architecture, in 1989. Both

30 See John Hejduk, *Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions*, pp. 72-73

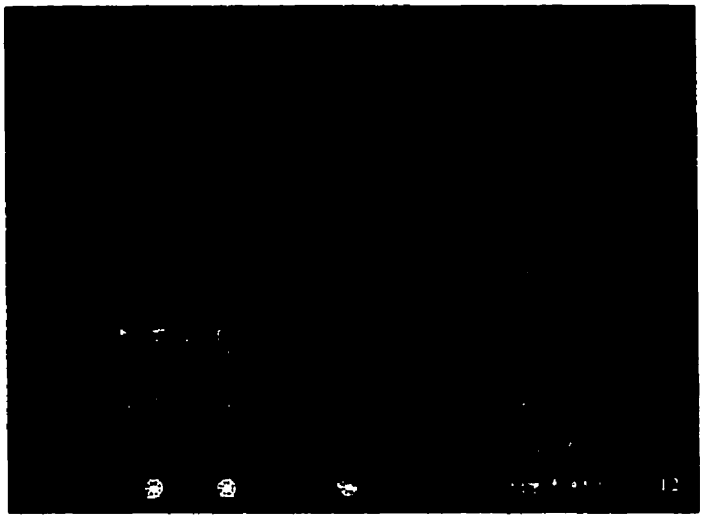
31 John Hejduk, "Sentences and Other Sentences," *Pewter Wings Golden Horns Stone Veils*, pp. 214-219

32 See John Hejduk, *Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions*, pp. 72-73

33 Ibid

structures were monumental constructions of wood, standing on train wheels. Striking as these structures were, terrifying or beautiful, they both caught the attention of the citizens, creating discussions beyond the closed circles of their builders.

"I look at architecture as an intense form of inquiry and research. This research is pursued as a commitment to society. It is about the social contract."



The building of Security in Cristiania Square became a provocative monument of memory. It reminded people of the stories of its surroundings, of war and suffering. However, the experience of it also carried hope, demonstrated by the architecture's ability to elicit recognition in the social setting: or as Astri Than described it: "building Security gave us all an experience in the deliberate intervention of the public space."[35] The public square in London evoked a similar effect with the building of the clock-tower. It created a resistance, by introducing ideas beyond conventional ideas of a time in the city, against a totalitarian view of time. Hedjuk has created other projects with a similar clock structure, where the intention is the same, that is, to discuss ideas of "time." In the project entitled "The Berlin Masque,"[36] Hejduk's intention is to point out the opacity of the present, by creating a clock-tower where a square with a blank surface blocks out the number five at five o'clock, the number six at six o'clock and so on for every hour of the day. This opacity of the present, where the fixed measure of the present is blocked out, is also the theme for the clock-tower in Collapse of Time. There though, the tower has thirteen numbers, where the number twelve is covered with a blank surface, a square. Instead of the square moving, like in the Berlin Masque, the tower itself moves. It descends from vertical position to a position of 45 degrees and finally to a

34 John Hejduk, cited in Howard Shubert, "Introduction to Other Soundings", in [illegible], n 12, 1997

35 Astri Than, "Architecture of the Mind," in John Hejduk, *Security*, (Oslo: Adventura Forlag, 1995), p. 19

36 See, "Berlin Masque" in *Mask of Medusa*, pp 141 and 409

horizontal position. This happening is a clue to a larger architectural program. Hejduk's story,[37] which belongs to Collapse of Time, unravels a specially choreographed constellation for the three structures, something which was missing when the clock-tower stood alone in London and Security stood alone in Oslo.

Reading Hejduk's story, we arrive at a scene where the three structures are situated. A high wooden pole has been erected on the site. There is a woman reading a poem in the booth. A man sits on a wooden chair, suspended from the wooden pole, facing the clock-tower. He is facing the tower in a vertical position. Over twenty four hours the clock-tower descends. The chair is also lowered as the tower descends. While the clock-tower and the man are descending, the woman reads the same poem continually from inside the booth. When the clock-tower reaches the horizontal position, the woman stops reading the poem, the man takes his chair and attaches it to the booth, and leaves with the woman. Throughout the scene the Security structure stands in relation to the clock-tower, the booth and the pole. After the man and the woman leave, the people of the town start to move the mobile structures to the next destination. The structures are moved from place to place, ten places in all, ending at the Piazza San Marco in Venice.

Hejduk's project gives us no certain solution to the question of time. Does the end scene, where the man leaves with the woman, where the listening, looking and speaking are united, demonstrate the possibility of architecture to reconcile opposite aspects of the human condition?

[37] John Hejduk, *Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions*, pp. 69-80

Though Hejduk's story of his project Collapse of Time is, in fact, fiction, it is still relevant. It recalls the qualities of medieval architecture, where various architectural machinery contributed in performances and rituals in the city. More important, though, it is a rare example of architecture, where the attempt is to bring together the rhythm of the days in the city together with the temporally pulsing bodies of individual citizens.[38] The project demonstrates a potential, or a hope, that architecture can engage in a relationship between human beings and thus become truly a part of life.

" Architecture is supposedly static art, but in fact it always moves. " [39]

John Hejduk's statements on the relevance of human temporality for architecture cannot be sufficiently emphasized. His project Collapse of Time is, after all, a serious attempt to recover aspects of human temporality that we have lost, an effort that focuses on ideas of objective measure and temporality in modern architecture.

To objectify something, in modern architecture as in modern science, means to measure it. By means of methodological processes, by counting and other various schematic approaches, life functions and vital phenomena are, in fact, measured.

38 Our living body is a founding to our temporality, according to Edmund Husserl, a founding for all our responses to the surrounding world. See *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book*, (The Hague: Nijhoff, c1989), p 160-389. For Hejduk like Husserl, time is related to the human being itself, no soulless building blocks, but a living temporalizing body. For further reading on the subject, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge & K.Paul, c1962) and The Visible and the Invisible, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968). See also Alberto Perez-Gomez, "The Renovation of the Body", in *Lifiles* no 13, 1986. He explores the idea of the body as "flesh", as described by Merleau-Ponty, in comparison with Hejduk's Masques. The participants in the Hejduk's Masques, says Perez-Gomez, "are more like bodily skins than skins of buildings; they take on the quality of the flesh". Particular thanks to Perez-Gomez for having contributed much to my understanding of this subject, through his work and our discussions.

39 John Hejduk, cited, in Howard Shubert, "Introduction to Other Soundings", in *A+U*, n 12, 1997.

Building upon Galileo's world view and other new theories during the seventeenth century, modern science came to be conducted and characterized by a capacity to organize observed evidence into general laws. Such generalizations, strategies of observation and the selection of evidence in the form of measurable facts, has also informed the development of architectural thinking. With the invention of the early versions of descriptive geometry in the early seventeeth century, by

" The Architect is responsible to create a spirit of thought. It is essential that the Architect create works that are thought provoking, sense provoking, and ultimately life provoking, or more precisely, life giving, to what appears to be at first inanimate materials." [1]

15

the architect and engineer Girard Desargues, it became possible to predict and control the operations of a craftsman in architectural constructions. Creation no longer needed to be symbolic or mystical. Desargues' intention was to make the rules of constructions transparent, that is, to bypass the traditions of craftsmanship and aim at a rational control of practice. With Desargues' invention, architectural theory became for the first time a self-referential operating device. For the first time one could draw how to cut a stone, and then cut it without having to learn the skills of craftsmanship from a hand to hand experience. Desargues' wish was to use his experience with the design of military constructions to make architectural creation more rational and more easily controlled. Artists and craftsmen contemporary with Desargues rejected this reduction of theory to mere technical method. Surprisingly enough, seen from the standpoint of modern man, it took more than a hundred years for Desargues' intentions and inventions to be accepted. It was first through the work of Gaspard Monge on descriptive geometry, that Desargues' original intention, became commonly received as a departure towards the making of constructions. This development cristallized in the nineteenth century, becoming a fully accepted approach in the creation and construction of architecture. Desargues' reductive view of theory together with his rational approach, made it possible to create grounds for the

[1] John Hejduk, *Berlin Night*, p. 18

empirical thinking found in the common practice of modern architecture.[41] Such thinking is still - with ever more powerful computers and mathematical models - what characterizes the departure point of architectural creation today.

Park Attendent Female

" I will take you to the darkest places and you will never see so well "

16

John Hejduk's poetic creation is a critique of this general assumption. In Collapse of Time, Hejduk connects the project to the "pliable time" of the female, calling for a reconstitution of female time. When calling for this reconstitution, his notion of what is lacking, time is not known through an empirical observation. As such, it is not a statement of a specialist that can be interpreted in an empirical manner. But its meaning is of course not lost, even though we might not be sure how to express clearly what it has to offer. The creation and the story of Collapse of Time is, in itself, special, carrying a peculiar quality.

In the story of Collapse of Time, there is a mixture of times, male time, female time, but also a mixture of time that appears through the turning from day to night, together with a measure of a clock: of 24 hours. The story confronts us with different modes of temporality simultaneously. Time is like a patient about to collapse. To cure it, no aspects of it - that belong to it as a whole - can be eliminated. To reconstitute the variations of human temporality into architecture, pliable time - of the female - can not be separated from the counting time of science. Getting rid of the illness of objectification does not necessarily mean getting rid of objectification itself. Rather, the question of time brings about a mode of reconstitution that joins things that, categorically, are recognizable as opposites. Time takes on qualities of the living body, as described by Merleau-Ponty, where time is not an absolute series of events, tempo or even the tempo of conciousness - it arises from my relations to things as a system of equivalence.[43] It is a system that embraces everything but is graspable only for those who are there, as in the case of Collapse of Time, who are there as participants.

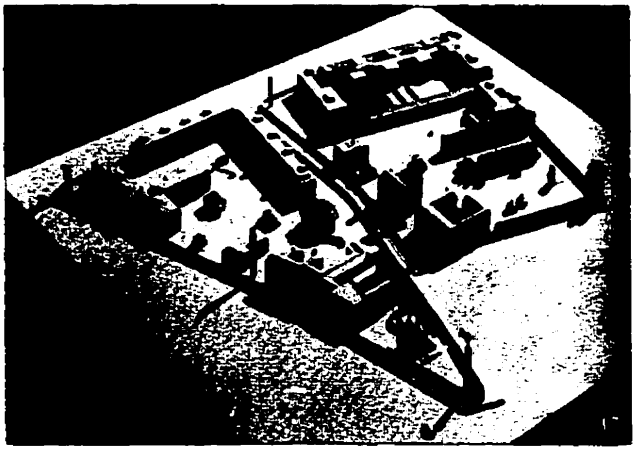
41 For extensive discussion of the importance of Desargues' work, see Alberto Perez-Gomez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1983), chapters two and three

42 John Hejduk, *Soundings*, p 152

43 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge & K Paul, c1962), pp 408-414

To grasp or possess time is out of the question here - as a term of the absolute. If time is to survive as carrying the potentialities of Hejduk's project, life has to become ideas and ideas to return to life in mode of a bodily participation. John Hejduk offers a discourse on temporality: a notion of time that includes an understanding of the finiteness of life with its joys and sorrows. When faced with living in the city community, every individual's life hinges upon what he says, and everybody is caught in the vortex according to their participation.

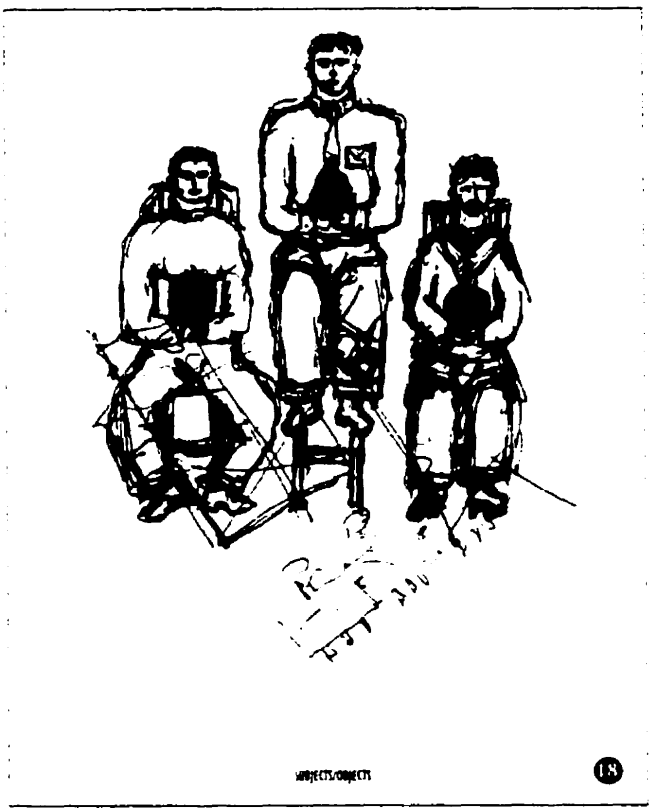
"Collapse of Time", like Hejduk's project "Architects wheel", gives us a rare notion of architecture involved in reconciling contrary aspects of human life: male and female; facts and fiction and so on. In these projects, architecture appears at the edge - an edge where people find themselves at crossing towards other people, in encounters and activities, where the pliable-time and rigid-time become united. The intention of this architecture is to become the touchstone which allows for a recognition of other people and oneself within the shared world. In the light of this, Hejduk's statement, "The Architect creates works that are life giving to what appears to be at first inanimate materials,"[44] addresses the deepest mysteries of human relationships, of friendship, faith, passions and desire. Through an event of bodily participation, the project establishes a curious playground, which carries a peculiarly double gift in its unity: an opening for the temporality of the male and the female - two lives - together.



44 See John Hejduk, *Berlin Night*, p. 18

Hejduk found in the work of the painter Piet Mondrian a source for inspiration. Mondrian, says Hejduk, "continually urged architects of his time to delve into the spatial ideas of his paintings."[45] Hejduk, delving into Mondrian's spatial ideas, interested himself in the endeavors of the Cubists' paintings as well.

"In my childhood, my first shock came in the form of coupling. It is was when an uncle pointed out, showed me what he called a male plug, and a female outlet and demonstrated an electric coupling. Not long after that I witnessed a brutal coupling of trains." [46]



For architects of the twenties, the Cubist canvas provided considerable food for thought. Hejduk recognized, especially in the work of Le Corbusier, the ability to deal with Cubist ideas of spatiality. The Carpenter Center at Harvard, by Le Corbusier, was for Hejduk, an example of "a prime rendition of the Cubist space, translated into architecture."[47] Though genuinely interested in Le Corbusier's work, Hejduk still kept Mondrian, as one of his primary sources of inspiration. He saw in his work something still unexplored, possibly adaptable - eventually - to a new way of looking at space and form.

Building on Mondrian's ideas, Hejduk discusses in his Diamond catalog an idea of tension in the oppositions of straight lines, verticals and horizontals.[48] Originally, for Mondrian, the idea of maximisation through oppositions, contributed - Mondrian assumed - to the coordination of internal and external experiences. Mondrian talked about the possibility of transforming the rhythm of life. It is a notion that refers to something both material and immaterial at the same time. It is a rhythm of man to be created - by himself - and appears first as a man evolves to his own state, described

45 John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, p. 48

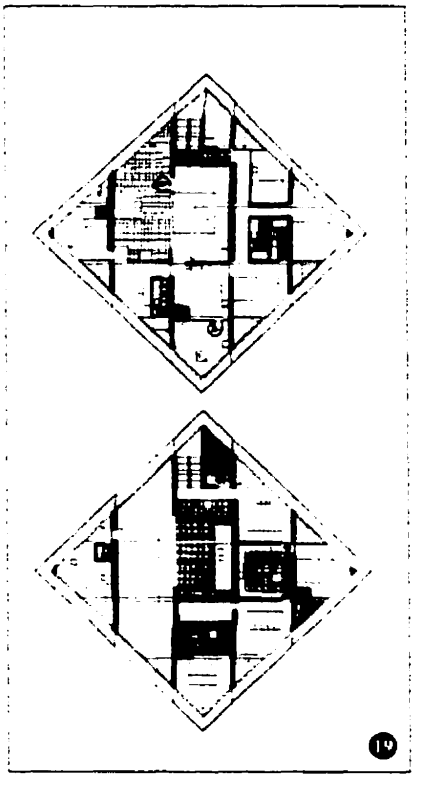
46 John Hejduk, *Architectures in Love*, p. 14

47 John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, p. 48

48 John Hejduk, *Three Projects*, (New York: Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture, 1969), p. 3

Mondrian. This, according to him, happens when there is a development of man's inner forces - the rhythm of his innermost self - are brought into equivalence with his physical rhythm. It is in line with this idea that he discusses his own paintings of vertical and horizontal lines, in terms of horizontal and vertical oppositions. In opposition to natural rythm, and natural forms, it is the possibility of these contrary straight lines to touch upon the real rythm of human beings, that fascinates Mondrian. Furthermore, he describes his own approach to painting as driven by the tendency to search for equivalent oppositions.

"I have always been empathetic with painting. I start with modern paintings - Mondrian - and work backwards. Modernism ends with Mondrian." [49]



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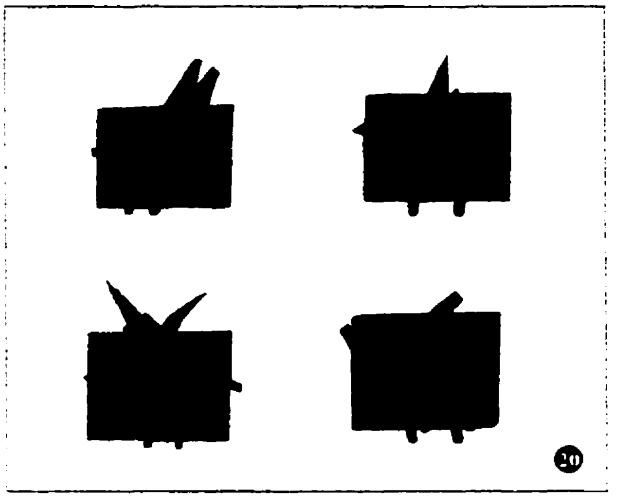
This concern haunts Hejduk as well. For him, however, it takes a surprising turn. In the Diamond project, he articulates his idea of the architect's plan as perpendicular to the observer's frontality. This makes the opposite positions between the architect and the imaginary observer equivalent, which, building on Mondrian's ideas, maximises the strength of the contrary oppositions. Hejduk's axes are no longer ordinary axes, not really comparable with the axis of x,y and z of conventional descriptive geometry. As we turn around, the line becomes a plane. The plane becomes imagined as a wall, a wall corresponding to the bodily movement. It's the moment of passage. The outline is also a membrane, Hejduk's says, and as the relationship between our present and future, the relationship between the architect and the observer, the moment of passage through the wall is a "moment of the hypotenuse"[50], of moving from one condition to another, through an edge between two elements. The concept of the "hypotenuse" is like a cut between the equivalence, as an opening and a movement, moving across two apparently fixed conditions. Hejduk's moment of the hypotenuse, when you become physically inside, is the moment of thought appearing, memory, seeing and moving.[51] It resembles the experience of reading a book; all of a sudden you are in it, on the inside, and it has become a part of you. But there is a difference, Hejduk remarks: there is something special about the physical encounter.

49 John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, p 36

50 Ibid., pp 48-50

51 Ibid., p 50

"Architecture is the only art where you are in a volumetric situation that is all-encompassing, there is a moment, physically and mentally, when you are in it."



Like the sun at noon, there is a going up and a going down, simultaneously; and, like the reflection on the sea, where the bright background of the sky turns into the dark background of the sea, Hejduk's work moves among illusions. Crossing the flat wall, the paradoxical oppositions of the plane and the body are kept open. For Hejduk, it is the plane that provides the spatial experience; as we cross through a wall, it is the crossing of the wall that makes the spatial experience possible.

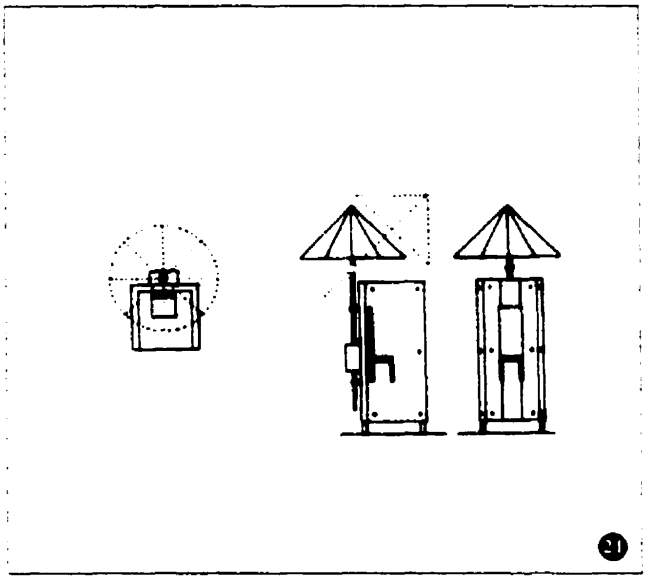
Despite obvious formal differences between Hejduk's early and later work, the geometrical shows a clear continuity; not only in terms of geometrical types, such as triangles, squares and circles, but also in terms of the above mentioned geometrical relationship between the architect and the observer. This can be seen, for example, in Hejduk's projects entitled "Berlin Masques" and "Victims."[53] In these, plan and elevation become Hejduk's chosen opposites; one belonging only to the architect, the plan, the second showing the facade, the frontality of the imagined observer. After the more direct play of transformation of geometrical figures in his early drawings, Hejduk's voice becomes more poetic in his later projects, moving into more eager play with language and imaginary character together with a geometric articulation. We see him articulating his work through the oppositions between "object" and "subject," between geometrical articulation and a narrative description. From his early work, where, within his projects, we usually read about anonymous, imaginary observers, Hejduk's concern for the observers develops a reference to a specific person. While the observers in Hejduk's early works were seldom described, his later projects developed ideas of memories, of the imaginary observer's events and things, developing their character and the stories of their lives.

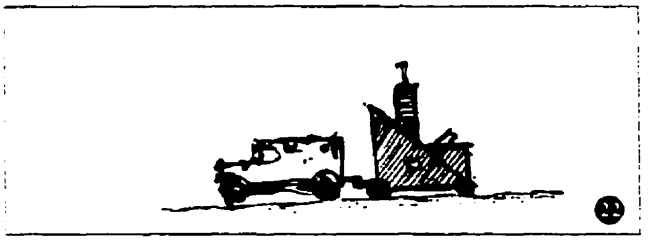
52 John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, p. 71.

53 See "Berlin Masque," in John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, pp. 138-152, and *Victims* (London: Architectural Association, 1986).

38 Crochet Lady - Crochet Chair

"She arrives at dawn and departs at sunset. She climbs the stairs to her enclosed suspended chair and crochets throughout the day. She usually finishes a piece before the snow falls. Each year she selects a tree which she covers with her shroud of crochet. She carefully drapes the branches of the tree and leaves her work to the elements. Her sadness makes the peacocks screech."





Hejduk uses the word "outlining"[55] to describe his drawings. This makes me think of his projects as already in touch with a character's life, where his life is outlined, but still hidden.

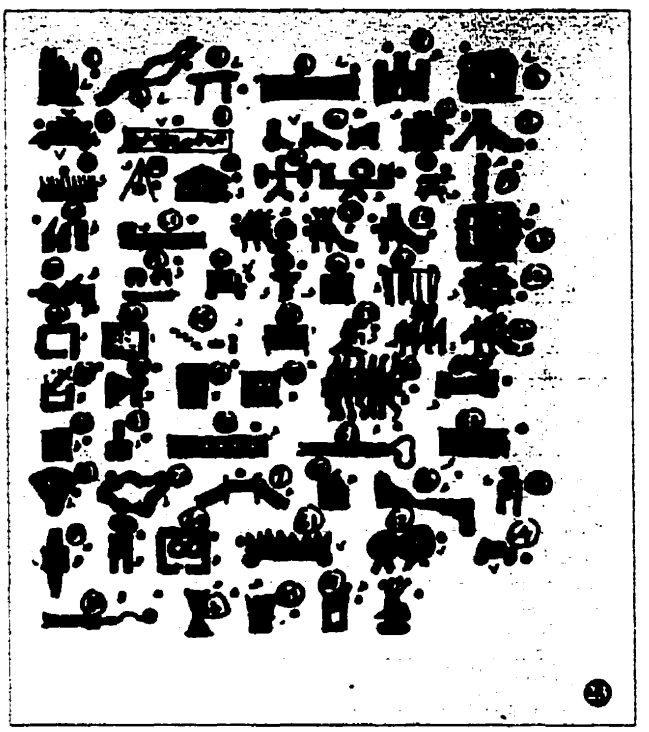
Looking at the drawings in Hejduk's project "Victims", we find many structures, which are intended to be built in Berlin. Each of these has a name and a number. There also belongs, to many of these structures, a description or stories: of Stampman, Shoe Repairman, Crochet Lady , Fireman, Paper Restorer and others. Looking at these, I am facing a representation of human life. Do we dare to follow Hejduk's dancing of thought? From one to the other, we can only look back and forth. The mixture of opposites leaves the the tools of architecture on uncertain ground. Objective thought is paralyzed, disturbed. Through a story - the subject - and a drawing of a structure -the object - I get some clues about a project belonging to a person. Imagining a person, I can only know the person's objects as I know my objects. Trying to get to know another person with a living body - structured like mine - and thus sympathizing with a human being - and life - like the one I'm actually living, full of different stories, I can only get the clues. With the help of the architect, the step is already taken, by outlining the character's life.

54 See John Hejduk, *Victims*, p. 54

55 See John Hejduk, "Thoughts of an Architect", in *Victims*, p. 10. There Hejduk writes: "That architectural tracings are apprtations, outlines, figments. They are not diagrams but ghosts."

As a memory of appearing and disappearing qualities, the geometrical figures are of the social world and appearing in it, as we constantly give it a new life, new characters to outline. It is never a natural phenomenon; it is always moving between the spheres of one life to another, and, as such, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes, "existing in the space of culture."[56] When we see a triangle, we see an idea by means of the space of culture. It arises from human hands, like Plato's geometrical figure appearing in gold, showing an appearance of a quality of life. The person is always another person, whose involvement in the world I might recognize through the person's appearing qualities, though never in final terms.

" ...architectural tracings are apparitions, outlines, figments ... They are not diagrams but ghosts."[57]



Like the hidden present of time in Hejduk's clock-towers, the life of the person remains never fully grasped. Despite the fixity of language and geometry, the person remains masked. I never become that person, never see these objects precisely as the person sees her objects; like a speaker and a listener, like a giver and a receiver we remain as two sides of a coin in a shared world.

Hejduk's approach: his search for order, through ideas of narration and geometry, challenges the modern tools of the architecture profession, giving descriptive geometry, plan, sections and elevations a rare personal and poetic turn.

In the world of the ancient Greeks, ideas of a search for order was a central theme. In early Greek philosophy, in the writings of Plato, the order of the world could become known only as life proceeded. Order appeared like in the work of a craftsman who molds in gold geometrical figures that appear, and then disappeared as the material changed shape. The geometrical thing was like

56 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, p. 184

57 John Hejduk, *Victims*, p. 10

something between the mortals and the divine and, like Socrates' Eros,[58] expressed a longing for beauty. It was through the longing of their bodies, of passion and pleasure, that the living mortals touched upon the order of the world, while never grasping it completely.

Despite this ungraspability, the appearance of order and its clarity - for a moment - could be useful for directing life towards beauty. To be able to meditate on these orders of the world was, for Plato, "as a heavenly sent ally," in reducing to order any disharmony within us.[59] Life was not to be postponed until the order was found. The appearance of Order, rather than being looked at, as something graspable once and for all, was connected to an an idea of appearing quality, which showed itself as life proceeded. The original divine world, in Plato's story, had at its base an idea of unchanging form - "uncreated and

"Ideas do act as that substance which holds a work together and makes it evolve."

indestructible" - while the moving world of mortal human beings had something that resembled it, but was "in constant motion."[61] The fixed, divine world was only graspable, within thought and as something beyond the world of mortals, while within this moving world, the forms that had come into existence, were perceptible through opinion and with the help of the bodily senses.

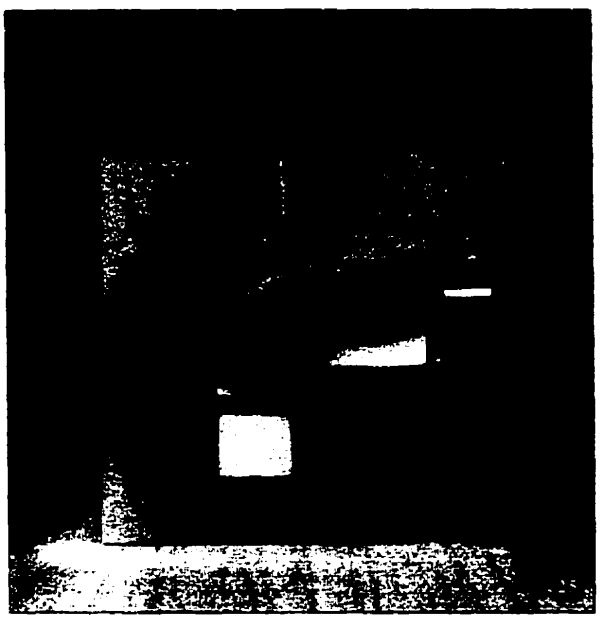
The bodily rhythms, speech and sight were among the gifts to mortal human beings that made thinking possible. Thinking happened through the mortal body. The story of a man modeling geometric figures in gold[62] was Plato's example to describe the appearance of what becomes and appears on both sides, in bodily thinking and in the world.

58. For Socrates' discussions of Eros, see: Plato, *Phaedrus* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, c1995)
59. Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 65
60. John Hejduk, *Three Projects*, p. 2.
61. Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, p. 71
62. Ibid., p.69

Ideas become real in touch with the body, appearing and disappearing, like pain. What is reccurring, Plato tells us, we should not call things, but qualities. If we want to speak of "this thing" or "that thing" we should only speak of it as that in which this process - of appearing qualities - takes place.[63]

Similarly, Hejduk's process is not limited to "this thing" or "that thing." Rather, Hejduk looks for his order in fusion with the sphere of life.

"Certainly in the case of the fruit - there is a rotting taking place."[64]



Hejduk's outlining drawings take hold of something, show something, give room for something: something we can call, in line with Plato's thought, a memory of appearing and disappearing qualities.
Like Plato, Hejduk sees that it is important to acknowledge our mortal condition in relation to ideas of movement and the fixity of movement.

It is the fascination with the phenomena of still-life paintings that catalyses his discussion: apples, pears, grapes. Hejduk is looking at words. In English: Still life; in Italian: Natura morte. The paradoxical opposition of life-death: "Still-life" and "Dead nature," have a strange potential, a potential that thrills Hejduk. Compared to Mondrian's ideas, we see that the terms "life" and "death" express equivalent contrary oppositions. It is in playing with these words that he wonders about the human ability to fix the moving and move the fixed. Hejduk imagines a painter painting bowls, fruits, table cloths and glasses on a canvas[65]. Hejduk's assumption is that a painter can, on the "life-absorbing" flat canvas, only grasp the singular - "the singular a moment of time."[66] But this is a peculiar singularity.

63 Plato, *Timaeus*, p.68
64 John Hejduk, *Architectures in Love*, p.12
65 Ibid., pp.11-12
66 Ibid., p.12

It is what Hejduk's calls a singular transformation.[67] He talks about three paintings by Braque as an example of his discussion. In Braque's Studio No.III (1949), Hejduk describes the bird on the canvas as the bird flying on the wallpaper of a room. The bird is caught in the wallpaper patterns. Hejduk then mentions another painting by Braque, where Hejduk describes a bird on the canvas as the same bird as mentioned above. He describes the bird as not knowing it's destiny, of being caught in the wallpaper wall, where it appears as flying through the room. Hejduk then takes a third painting by Braque, which was painted almost ten years later than the other two, entitled "The Dead Bird" (Studio No. II, 1957). In this painting, the bird lies dead, horizontally on his back - a natura morte, a still life. Braque's paintings are for Hejduk an example where "the painter attempts to capture death or at least a fleeting thought."[68]

He describes this as a process, as crossing towards the stillness of life. Such an approach to painting is not a point like a stroke but a stroke or a crossing which takes time. The bodily physicality is emphasized. Hejduk describes the

"Time, some time, no matter how infinitesimal, is necessary for the crossover."

idea of the crossing bird as "the movement of a released thought which disappears quickly, but forever remains in the void of memory..."[70] It is a bird of spirit that cuts through the membrane, cuts through the outlining condition. The painter and the bird are caught in a temporal condition in such a way that there is no escape. The fleeting thought is the painter's own thought, with which he entangles, in its appearing in the world. Contrary to this, Hejduk asks if it might be possible for architecture to turn things the other way around: start with a stilled life, Natura morte, transforming painting into architecture, "building it into a still-life".[71]

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67 It should be noted, that Hejduk uses often the terms two-dimensional and three-dimensional, as these are used in the objective thought of descriptive geometry, to describe the difference between painting and architecture. This appears to me as an assumption that the world is three-dimensional, which strikes me as a being problematic and in conflict with his particular concern for the human temporal condition. For my own use of the term "dimension", see Introduction part one. John Hejduk, *Architectures in Love*.

68 John Hejduk, *Architectures in Love*, p. 13

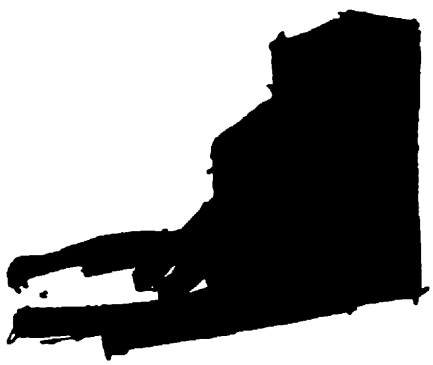
69 Ibid., p. 12

70 John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, p. 94

71 John Hejduk, *Architectures in Love*, p. 15

Hejduk's transformation of oppositions as an approach to architectural creation has by the above questioning moved far beyond the more formal aspect of Mondrian's paintings, encountering various contrary aspects of our cultural

"The question: Is it possible to have make do an architecture, an architecture in love?"



world. Hejduk's oppositions are like life and death, within and about each other. "I would like to make tender architecture," Hejduk said, "tender meaning strong."[73] Bringing oppositions together with a wish to make stronger architecture shows Hejduk's concern with an idea of unity, of opposites becoming a whole, to have geometry and narrative, life and death, in mutual interaction: to have an "architectural intercourse"[74] on every level: to have "architectures in love."

72 Ibid., p. 14
73 Ibid., p. 14
74 Ibid., p. 15

There is an unbridgeable difference between the world of the ancient Greeks - of early philosophy - and our modern era. Today though, as for the ancient Greeks, the questions of our limits, the questions of meaning and truth, ideas and evidence, are still with us...

Through Hejduk's work we recognize this, as we sweep across these huge questions, where the edges and limits of architecture vibrate. There are many pitfalls and no final answers. We face life caught in ideas and ideas caught in life. The order in the voice and the hands of the poet and the architect appears out of the mixture of his life; turning life into work.

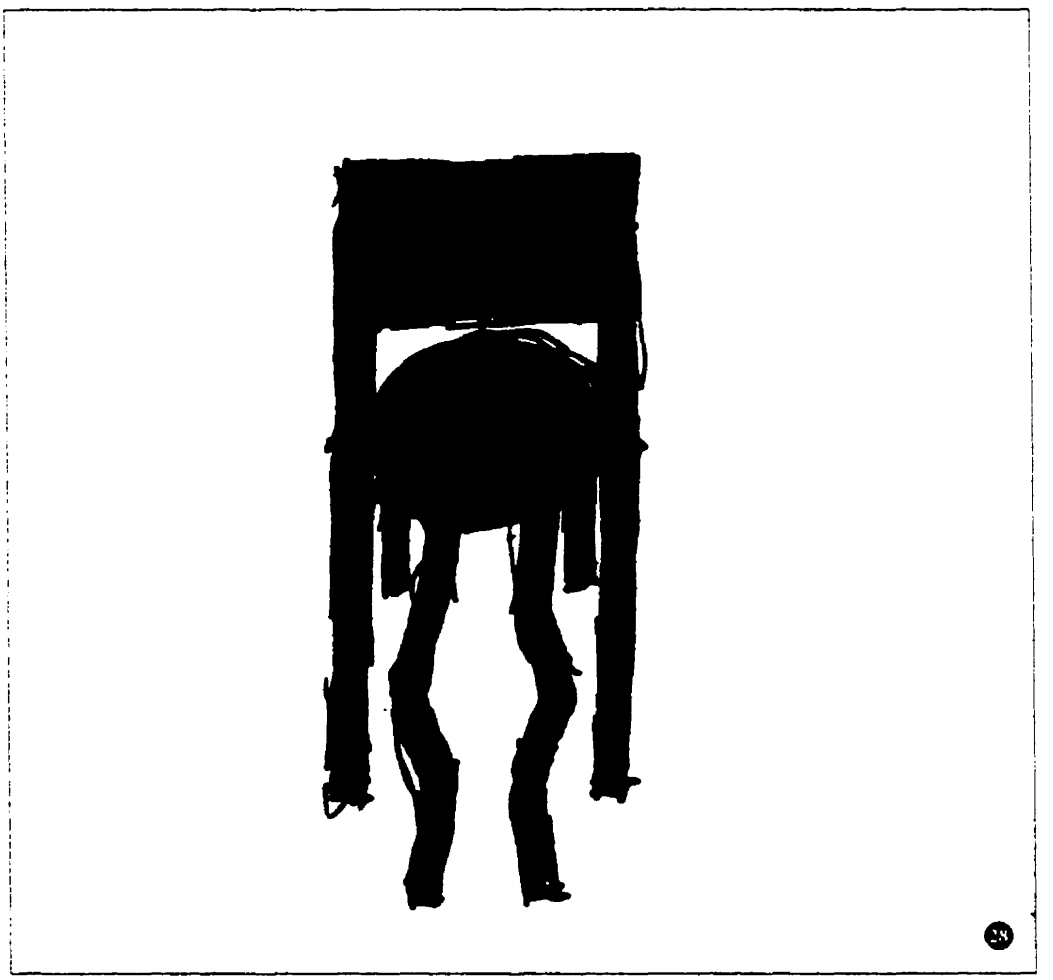
Rilke once compared the situation of the poet with a story about a boat.[75] He describes some oarsmen, and among them an old man crouched at the end of the boat. They were crossing against the stream. At the same time as they reached forward, they gave voice to a kind of counting, "but so exacting was their work, that their voices frequently failed them," and often they had to suffer a kind of gap before finding an untouched source of strength to put into play again. With his hands and feet in contact with the movement the old man suddenly sang; "at irregular intervals, and by no means always when the exhaustion among the rowers increased; on the contrary, his song occurred more than once when all the rowers were vigorous or even exuberant, but even this was the right thing; even then it was appropriate."[76] For Rilke, it seemed that it was purely the movement of the old oarsman's feeling when it met the open distance, that influenced his voice. From one moment to another, the boat overcame the oppositions, the forward thrust and the force of the river. Any surplus, any thing that was "not susceptible of being overcome," the old man, who was not only occupied with the immediacy, maintained "the contact with farthest distance, linking us with it until we felt its power of attraction." [77]

Hejduk's position, as a poet and architect, can be understood in Rilke's story of the old oarsman. For Hejduk, like Rilke's oarsman, the poetic task takes hold of the artist, makes him connect to the situation and allows him to sound, to make work that shakes people; it touches us, and brings the existence of life palpably near.

75 See. Rainer Maria Rilke. *Where Silence Reigns*. (New York. New Direction Publising. 1978). pp 64-66

76 Ibid., p 65

77 Ibid. p. 66



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