

HOTEL MARGARITA

THE ISSUE ON GROUND AND PUBLIC IN HOSPITALITY





Diplomarbeit

HOTEL MARGARITA
The Issue on Ground and Public in Hospitality

ausgeführt zum Zwecke der Erlangung des
akademischen Grades einer Diplom-Ingenieurin

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Abstract

DE

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Auswirkungen und Relevanz von Gastfreundschaft in Architektur und Stadträumen in Bezug auf Fragen nach Verhältnis, Grund, Öffentlichkeit und Raum. Ein Erdgeschosslokal in Wien Margareten, das als geteilter Arbeitsraum genutzt wird, dient hierfür als Fallbeispiel im Maßstab 1:1. In den letzten drei Jahren wurde dieser Raum fortlaufend in Selbstbauweise renoviert und entwickelt sich nun zu einem neuen Ort für architektonische Experimente und sozialen Austausch in einer Nachbarschaft, die weitgehend von einem anonymen Stadtparterre geprägt ist.

Eine Forschungsreise nach Japan, sowie die aktuelle Ausstellung *Make Do With Now: Neue Wege in der japanischen Architektur* dienen neben verschiedenen Auffassungen von Gastfreundschaft und deren räumliche Übersetzung als kontinuierliche Inspirations- und Referenzquelle für dieses Vorhaben. Die Integration von Kulturveranstaltungen in einem kollektiven Arbeitsraum und ein alternativer Umgang mit Baumaterial wird als direkte und kritische Antwort auf aktuelle Entwicklungen der architektonischen Praxis und Raumverteilung betrachtet.

Das fortlaufende Projekt *Hotel Margarita* versteht Gastfreundschaft als Instrument zur Förderung von Austausch und Vertrauen in unserer fragilen Gesellschaft und erforscht Strategien für eine gemeinschaftsorientierte Raumproduktion. Eine Reihe von physischen Transformationen hinterfragt die Grenzen zwischen öffentlichem und privatem Raum. Interventionen wie kollektive Küchen, Konzerte und Ausstellungen sollen die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Gäst*innen und Gastgeber*innen auf der Grundlage von Gegenseitigkeit fördern.

Dieses „Hotel“ ist kein touristisches Konzept im herkömmlichen Sinne, sondern bietet vielmehr eine gastfreundliche Umgebung für kreative Auseinandersetzungen und Begegnungen jenseits institutioneller Einschränkungen. So entsteht ein Speicher für Erinnerungen, Erfahrungen, Wissen und Fähigkeiten - nicht nur an unserem Arbeitsort, sondern auch in Form von Publikationen im Stil eines Magazins, die als erweiterbarer Raum für den Austausch dienen.

EN

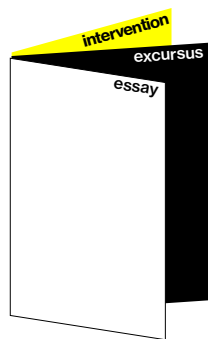
This work explores the impact and relevance of hospitality in architecture and urban spaces regarding issues on relation, ground, public and space. A shared ground-floor studio space in Vienna's district Margareten serves as a 1:1 scale case study. This space has been gradually renovated through self-construction over the past three years and is now evolving into a new place for architectural experiments and social exchange within a neighborhood characterized mainly by anonymous storefronts.

A research trip to Japan and the current exhibition *Make Do With Now: New Directions in Japanese Architecture* serve, alongside various notions of hospitality and their spatial translations, as a continuous source of inspiration and reference for this project. The integration of cultural events in a collective workspace and the alternative approach to building materials are thus a direct and critical response to current developments in architectural practice and spatial distribution.

The ongoing project *Hotel Margarita* understands hospitality as a tool to cultivate exchange and trust in our fragile society and explores strategies for a community-oriented spatial production. A series of physical transformations challenge the boundaries between public and private sphere. Interventions like collective kitchens, concerts and exhibitions are intended to encourage collaborations based on reciprocity between guest and host.

This “hotel” is not a conventional touristic concept but rather reveals a hospitable environment for creative discussions and encounters, free from institutional restrictions. This creates a repository of memories, experiences, knowledge and skills - not only at our workplace but also in the form of magazine-style publications that serve as an expandable space for exchange.

Book Concept








The present diploma thesis is the result of a collaborative research work and series of interventions by Maria Covrig and Daniel Koller. This book has been conceived following the open-ended narrative of a magazine: a series of issues that is meant to be continued.

As in a chain of events, the issues build up on each other but can still be read separately. In an abstract understanding, *Hotel Margarita* becomes the repository of each guest's visit.

Each issue of the magazine *Hotel Margarita* consists of two parts:

a research part, beginning with an **essay** on the specific issue, followed by a reflective **excursus** and a photo essay capturing impressions that triggered our thoughts during the research trip in Japan, and

a **record** of either the context (000) or one of the **interventions** in the studio space (001-004), providing a detailed description of the making process and the performance linked to it.

000	001	002	003	004
The introduction issue	The relation issue	The ground issue	The public issue	The space issue
				

*This book is a collection of three of five issues of *Hotel Margarita*

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THE INTRODUCTION

ISSUE

HOTEL MARGARITA

HOSTING ENCOUNTERS IN A COLLECTIVE STUDIO SPACE

spare
space



16 Editorial

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- Space and Hospitality

essay

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The Introduction Issue

How can we use hospitality as a tool to support social interaction and translate it into the architectural space? How will we address the concepts of privacy, public space, and comfort in the years to come? How can we use the potential of existing built and unbuilt matter to create a sense of togetherness?

The main role of architects today is to design buildings. What's often forgotten is that each building has a huge impact on the lives and behavior of individuals, in positive or negative ways. The complex nature of hospitality is inherently linked to the spaces we inhabit and eventually share with others. In the last century architecture was too often designed to fulfill the purposes of investors and corporations rather than providing solutions for the user's actual needs. This resulted in a phenomenon, that the sociologist Bruce Allsopp describes as a "professional imperialism".¹ But Instead of falling into resignation and producing characterless architecture for sake of the industry, current practices seek new strategies of performing as architects in today's society and maybe become part of the emerging movement that makes a little step forward in restoring the professions harmed reputation.

During a research trip in Japan, we learned about the current movement of young local architects, which received international attention through the ongoing exhibition *Make Do With Now: New Directions in Japanese Architecture*, first displayed at S AM Basel in 2022. The attitude and practice of this generation is directly influenced by a history of constant destruction and reconstruction due to natural and man-made disasters and emerges out of scarcity of commissions that allow experimental freedom. Now, this movement demands a direct confrontation with social, economic, and environmental issues and challenges how we can provide a valuable and sustainable contribution to the future of architectural production through minimal use of resources, activating existing spaces and social structures.² For us, it underlined the fact that the culture of hospitality and the importance of social encounters are essential to enable a respectful togetherness, even under the enormous pressure of dense population and a performance-driven capitalist society. With this in mind and in the attempt to become practically active, we aim to share the space available to us with colleagues, peers, people we know, or don't know yet.

We turned our collective studio and workspace in Vienna's 5th district Margareten into the site of an experimental case-study, which hosts the ongoing project *Hotel Margarita*. This project understands hosting as a tool to cultivate exchange and trust, and explores strategies for a community-oriented architectural production. Here, "hotel" as a notion is not a commercial touristic program but claims its concept of origin as a typology of social and cultural exchange – a place where strangers come together and share their histories and ideas, a cultural hotspot in urban context as it was often encountered in the past.

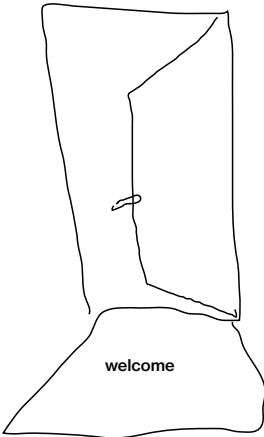
Hotel Margarita hosts a series of physical interventions that explore and transform the given space of the studio. Each intervention becomes the chance of a happening where guests are welcome to observe, experience or participate in the created setting. As an architectural concept, this project renegotiates the conventional notions of living, working and hospitality. Through several interventions in the studio space, we expand its program beyond its common use as a simple workplace to a hospitable environment for creative exchange with a broader public. We see it as crucial in

our age to share our resources and to offer colleagues, friends and people we don't know yet a stage, platform or opportunity for artistic expression in their personal way and therefore make a small step towards the local community and network.

In the first Issue of this magazine, we want to give a closer look into our context and the development of the studio space and build the framework of our research with current issues of Baukultur and hospitality. A conversation with Yuma Shinohara, curator of the exhibition *Make Do With Now*, offers insights into recent alternatives of practice that react to current challenges of the architecture profession. Additionally, we highlight several artistic and architectural positions, which we encountered during our research, and provide the content-related foundation for the following issues of *Hotel Margarita*.

Hosting Living

Space and Hospitality



Hospis, hostis, civitas

Reflective thought: We are all strangers, foreigners, visitors around here and elsewhere. Every encounter embodies the duality in our relations. These do not apply solely to links between humans, they can as well be referred to space and material. Today we exist only within territorial frames, property systems and conditions of private and public. We refer to places with notions like “here, there, home, abroad, mine, ours, yours”; for humans we use words like “friend, local, foreigner, stranger, etc.” A stranger is not a stranger in general, it is rather a matter of perception of ethical and moral perception.

The world as a supposedly “hospitable environment” divides between the two opposite conditions of the host and the guest. At the same time, it is possible to shift these relations: the unknown becomes familiar, the outside becomes the inside.¹ Hospitality is directly bound to the spaces we inhabit, temporary or permanent, as it is bound to the way we, as living beings, perceive or identify with certain places. Hospitality is an inherent part of everyday life.

There are many sides of space related to hospitality. It could be considered that it is connected to the very first moments of human settlements, when land has been claimed as belonging or, better said, when the feeling of physically belonging to a place emerged, probably from the first building activities that were not just for temporary structures. With the end of nomadic ways of living and the formation of territorial borders, the sense of belonging to a place also enhanced the perception of the “other place” and the “stranger”, opposite to

the status of the local, who has “the condition of the free man, born and integrated within a society and enjoying full rights that belong to him by birth.”²

In his Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society, French linguist Emile Benveniste discusses the correspondence of the notion “city” and “community” to the institutional expression of the Latin “civitas”, what means “the whole body of citizen”. He highlights the strong bond established between the city and its citizens. By analyzing the semantic exchange of Indo-European dialects, he also states a divergent meaning of the word “teuta”, derived from “tew” for “to be powerful”, which was the Old Prussian term for “nation”, while the Old Slavic word “tuždi”, borrowed from the Germans, signified “stranger”.³

This contradiction becomes interesting when looking at the stem of the word “hospitality”, which stems from the Latin “hospes” or “hospis”, denoting the “host” and the “guest” at the same time. Furthermore, “hospis” is formed from the “pets”, for having power, and the word “hostis”, originally meaning “stranger”, later becoming “enemy” or “hostile stranger”. Considering this, the duality in the meanings of hospitality must be linked to the formation of nations on a clearly defined piece of land, while the classical understanding of stranger must have been influenced by the “exclusive relations of civitas to civitas.”⁴ Our bare experience of reality shows that it can be easily inverted into a means of control and exclusion.

1 Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p.26
2 Benveniste, 2016, p.295
3 ibid., p.297

Nevertheless, hospitality is an inherent part of our everyday life. We are all strangers and locals at the same time and there is great potential in creating tools for togetherness, if used for a just purpose.

The meaning of “hospis” proves itself to be quite complex. Its binary seems to be grounded on the perception that all humans are somehow in a relation of inevitable reciprocity. The Old Greek concept “xenia” implies a political and moral pact consisting in an obligatory exchange of gifts between humans, a way to form their descendants into a community.⁵ Through these parallels, hospitality can be understood as a network of relations that link to aspects of space, politics, morality, and poetics. Hospitality is always an act of exchange, of sharing time and resources. It might feel more natural to imagine the act of hosting as something rather immaterial, because it relies on social interaction. But it is also deeply rooted in the physical nature of inhabited space. Through the lens of property relations, space is perceived as a commodity – an economic value that can be acquired, owned, divided, distributed or shared.

In a series of lectures, Derrida discusses the complex nature of conditional hospitality regarding the relation to space and nation. By its mere definition, the host as possessor of a home or land it empowered to offer hospitality to the guest. This is a form of sovereignty of “choosing, electing, filtering, selecting their invitees, visitors, or guests, those to whom they decide to grant asylum, the right of visiting or hospitality.”⁶ It feels overwhelming to think of conviviality from the general perspective of hospitality, as it might sound too casual in the context of geopolitical history and actuality.

But especially in a time of constant movement of people, knowledge, information and culture it seems relevant to address the various issues of hospitality.

In the context of this work, we try to reflect on alternative interpretations of the act of hosting, by exploring artistic visions of precedent and contemporary practices. Is it possible to renegotiate the hierarchies imposed by the current structures of spatial ownership? Can we generate a point where hostility becomes friendship, where the fear of the unknown turns into curiosity, where the outside blends with the inside? Whether as individuals or as society, we still have and always had the at least moral capability and in some cases the will to contribute to a more just and enjoyable community.

4 Benveniste, 2016, p.61
5 ibid., p.67-69
6 Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000, p.55

Curatorial hospitality in architecture

There is always a spatial framework where somebody welcomes guests. Hosts and guests do not only interact with each other but also with the space and objects, which are subjected to an act of curation: things carefully placed in space to stage a moment – Relations in hospitality are “specific aesthetic, social and economic constellations.”⁷ From the perspective of artistic practice, this reflection on hospitality should be framed within the curatorial discourse. Considering the institutional and authorial construct of producing and presenting works, hosting surely becomes a question of curatorial ethics.⁸ The cultural conditions of hospitality inherently shape the relations between artist, artwork, display and public.

In economic and cultural terms, hosting is a form of affective investment. In an essay on curatorial hospitality, curator Dieter Roelstraete discusses the art’s relationship and duty to the social fabric amidst the current “inhospitable mess” of social fabric:

“Is it really art’s role (or the art world’s) to care, heal, nourish, and shelter – to host? And is it, in turn, the curator or the institution’s role to host these artistic positions, so enmeshed in the corrupting language of civic duty? Should arts relationship to the social fabric be such an affirmative one, that is, one of reform and support? If the social fabric is as broken and battered as it so often appears to be today, the answer to that last question should probably be yes.”⁹

Despite the multitude of curatorial practices in architecture, there are seemingly only fragments of the discourse on displaying and

experiencing architecture so far. Meanwhile, the gaps within this framework encourage unconventional approaches and experimentation with new narratives and tools. Such “creative voids” trigger alternative ways for showcasing or experiencing architecture, and, in general, building practice. Curating increasingly emerges as a design process, as a practice of shaping new statements, aesthetics and positions, expanding beyond institutional limitations. Works like Gordon Matta-Clark’s *Fake Estates* (1974) already paved the way for understanding our built and unbuilt environment as creative curatorial playground. Amidst systematic ignorance toward economically unattractive leftover spaces in the city of New York, Matta-Clark gradually recorded and purchased some of these small, oddly shaped plots scattered throughout the city.¹⁰

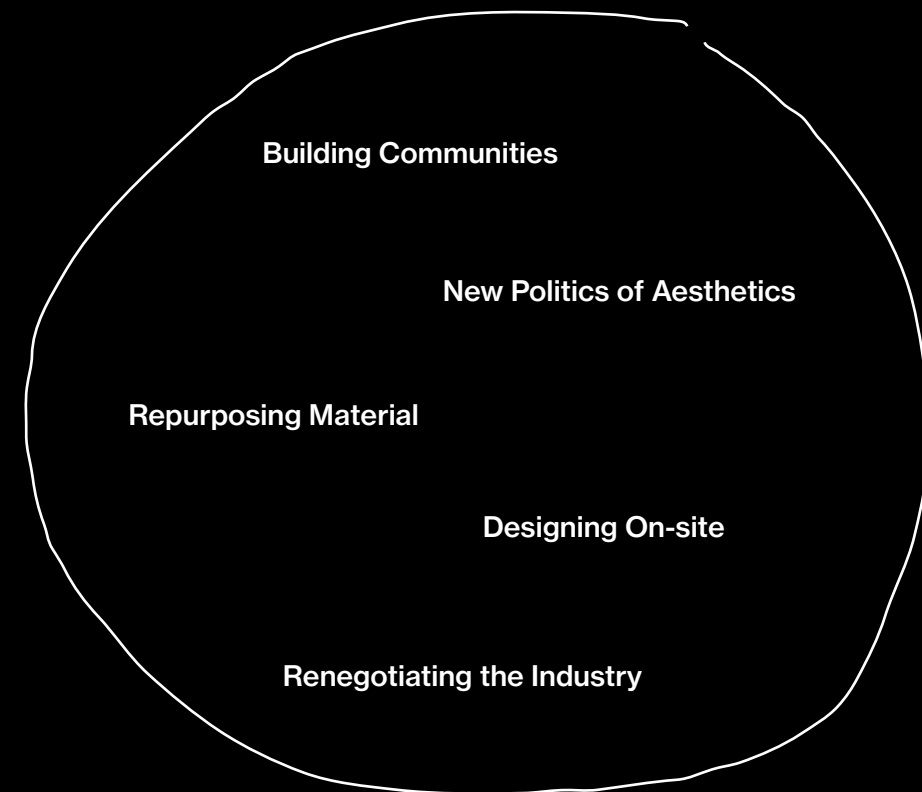
Hosting is a form of social practice in the field of architecture. A generation of emerging architects, who consciously decide to take building and buildings in their own hands, contributes to forming an alternative curatorial practice. Taking care of buildings or places on longer term can definitely be seen as a way of curating – the etymological root of ‘curating’ is the Latin “curare”, which means ‘to care for’.¹¹ Through the lens of architecture practice, hosting must be recognized as a material act, as bodies and things are inherently linked to space and time.¹²

7 Fraser, 2016, p.38
8 Roelstraete, 2016, p.30
9 ibid., p.33
10 Kastner et al., 2005, p.4
11 curare
12 Roelstraete, 2016, p.30





Learning from New Directions in Japanese Architecture



Five tools, five buildings

'Make Do With Now - New Directions in Japanese Architecture' is an exhibition curated by Yuma Shinohara in 2022 at S AM Basel, that offers a new perspective on current directions in Japanese architecture. It highlights a young, previously little-known generation of architects.

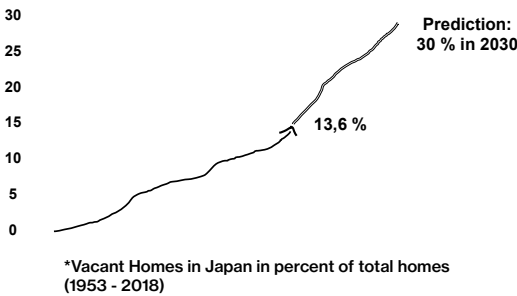
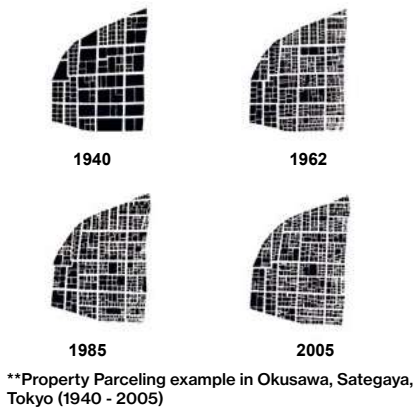
Their work is shaped, among other influences, by the experiences of the 2011 earthquake, the Fukushima nuclear disaster and their social and financial consequences, that eventually led to the emergence of a new attitude

towards architecture practice. The exhibition explores their methods of practically engaging with current social, economic, and ecological challenges.

This new attitude composed a set of tools for alternative architecture practices. For this work, five of these tools have been selected and compared to five projects that were displayed on the exhibition. In certain aspects, they address issues of hospitality, and they form the theoretical base for the research approach of this project.

Current issues in Japan

It is well known that Japan is indeed a country of extremes: both in its urban landscapes and in the raw power of nature. A brief look at its history reveals a constant cycle of destruction and reconstruction. Now, this generation demands a direct confrontation with social, economic, and environmental issues and challenges currently afflicting the country, including:



A rapid population decline, with an aging society becoming the norm;

Ongoing reconstruction efforts following the Great Earthquake of 2011;

The spread of vacant houses across the nation, which accounted for 13.6% in 2018 and are projected to reach around 30% by 2030*;

Extremely high land prices, particularly in Tokyo, where steep inheritance taxes have led to bizarre building structures;**

Rural depopulation, accompanied by the loss of village structures and community cohesion;

A systematized building culture influenced by neoliberal urban development, combined with a stagnating economy and the overarching global climate crisis;

A stagnant economy, and, of course, the global climate crisis;

These challenges disproportionately affect the younger generations, placing a significant burden on their shoulders as they navigate a path forward in an increasingly complex and demanding environment.





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The approved original version of this thesis is available in print at TU Wien Bibliothek.

■ Building Communities: From Office to the City*

Many younger architecture firms choose workspaces that are open to the surrounding city, serving as event venues or co-working spaces that simultaneously revitalize the neighborhood. Instead of designing merely fictional concepts, they actively model and personally adopt new lifestyles, hereby gaining a new sense of agency and redefining their role within society.

Architects now are often perceived as service providers within the existing processes

of urban planning. This new generation, however, seek practice methods that actively interact with the surrounding neighborhood. A new model of social engagement is emerging, and they are gradually transforming the city through individual buildings. Opportunities for experimentation within the scope of traditional commissions are often lacking, so they start by shaping the places where they live and work.

■ Studio and House 03

Arakawa, Tokyo built 2018 by Studio Gross

The formerly vacant timber-frame building now serves as a gallery, office and home for the architects. Through the self-directed renovation, the 14m² commercial unit facing the street functions as a threshold between public and private and becomes an interface between the lives of the architects and the neighborhood. It works as a public living room where the architects themselves host events for the local community.¹

*Through their social engagement they reimagine architectural practice and its role within society.



Building before renovation



Building after renovation

■ New Politics of Aesthetic: Radically Unfinished*

Instead of being humbled into resignation, they strive to transform the difficulties and constraints of a situation into an opportunity. This approach has led to the articulation of new design parameters, that define the base of a new form of aesthetic. It is an approach that isn't afraid to embrace the imperfect reality of our built world and leave things rough around the edges. *They rather understand incomplete objects as a change to let them grow and unfold – things that are able to adapt to the constant changes of our society.

■ Holes in the House

Nishioi, Tokyo
built 2017
by Fuminori
Nousaku & Mio
Tsuneyama

The architects transform their own house into a never-ending construction site in which they live, work and experiment with ideas on first hand. The standardized post-war architecture serves here, as a living organism that easily adapts to the changing needs of its inhabitants. it triggers natural instincts of shaping ones one living environment which may has been lost in a generation of constant technological growth and architectural comfort.¹



■ Repurposing Material: "What a waste"*

Older phenomena that were marginalized in the name of neoliberal development are being reevaluated and reclaimed. These include collective housing, traditional craftsmanship, self-sufficient material economies as found in rural villages, and informal social structures at the neighborhood level.

*The reuse of materials is also inherently a traditional Japanese attitude, known as „Mottainai“ (what a waste).¹ In particular, the devastating consequences of the 2011 earthquake have made them acutely aware of the

fragility and contradictions of prevailing systems. This has sparked an interest in the network flows of a city: buildings are no longer seen as standalone objects but as part of a large, interconnected system of social, material, and capital cycles that exist both within and beyond them. Architecture thus becomes a matter of engaging with precisely these flows.

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Shinohara, 2022, p.23

ibid., p.26

Ienari, 2022, p.197

■ Chidori Bunka Kitakagaya, Osaka built 2014-2019 by dot architects

A vacant ensemble of buildings, some of which have been adapted over time through self-build, forms a unique urban building block. This specific context forms the basis for a concept that views the individual buildings as an interconnected whole.² By preserving all building phases as much as possible but creating radical cuts and voids, the structure is generously opened up to create a new “alley way” to the existing street.

An intermediate zone in which different cultural and gastronomic uses come together and complement each other. The architects are still involved in further developments and occasionally even take shifts at the bar along the members of Chidori Bunka to welcome guests and support the social network of neighborhood.³



■ Designing on-site: Back to the construction site*

Earlier generations of architects in Japan built adventurous single-family homes designed to last around 25 years. Now, we speak of a „renovation generation“. As the name of the exhibition suggests, they aim to make do creatively with what is available: with limited resources, found materials, and existing spaces – from cheap catalog houses to traditional Japanese timber architecture.¹

They seek to exploit overlooked gaps in the system or adopt new roles within existing processes, thereby creating a new architectural practice that radically departs from the traditional image of architectural authorship,

sometimes even involving hands-on practice and reclaiming craftsmanship:

„They shift the act of design from the conceptual space of the drafting board to the performative space of the construction site“, working with professional craftsmen, volunteers and even the clients themselves directly on-site and developing ad-hoc solutions in dialogue with them. The strict hierarchy of author, client, and user gets dissolved and new models of respectful relationships arise.²

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Shinohara, 2022, p.24
ibid, p.26

■ Dig in the Doma

Kyoto built 2019 by Lunch! Architects

The “doma” traditionally an earthen floor which separates the entrance, kitchen and working area from the raised living room in vernacular Japanese architecture, gets a contemporary reinterpretation. Leaving voids in the conceptual planning phase, knowing that on site everything turns out differently than expected the architects, directly engage in the construction process.

Thus, a traditional timber house is transformed with enormous love and dedication to detail. By sharing daily meals and hosting numerous events and rituals on site, clients and volunteers were directly involved in giving the construction site a new and more important meaning as a collective creation with both social and architectural encounters.



Renegotiating the industry: From gaps in the system to new practices*

Efforts are being made to change, or even completely erase, the traditional top-down relationship between architectural production as objects and clients as subjects. Instead of focusing solely on the creation of new buildings, their emphasis is on designing entire user-oriented systems. In this way they renegotiate the real estate industry with new tools to deal with the existing building stock.

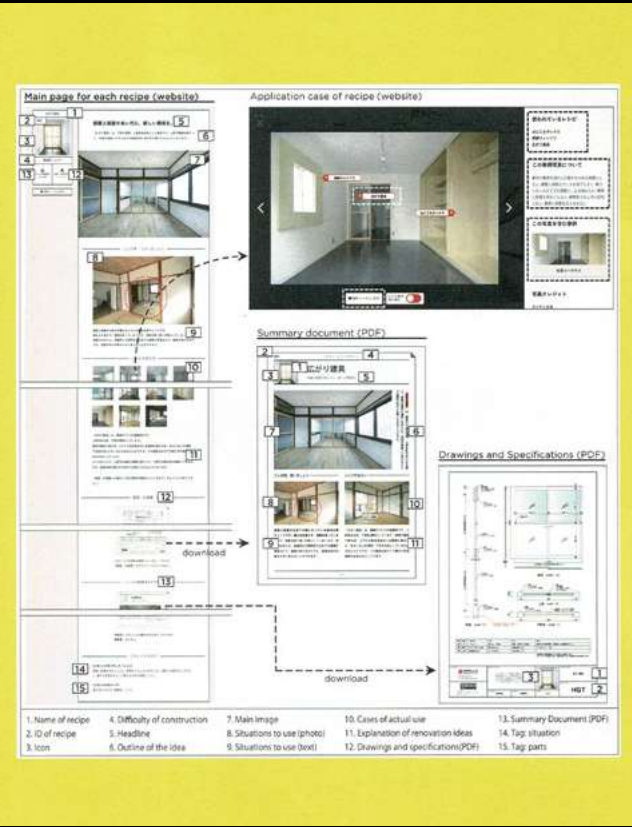
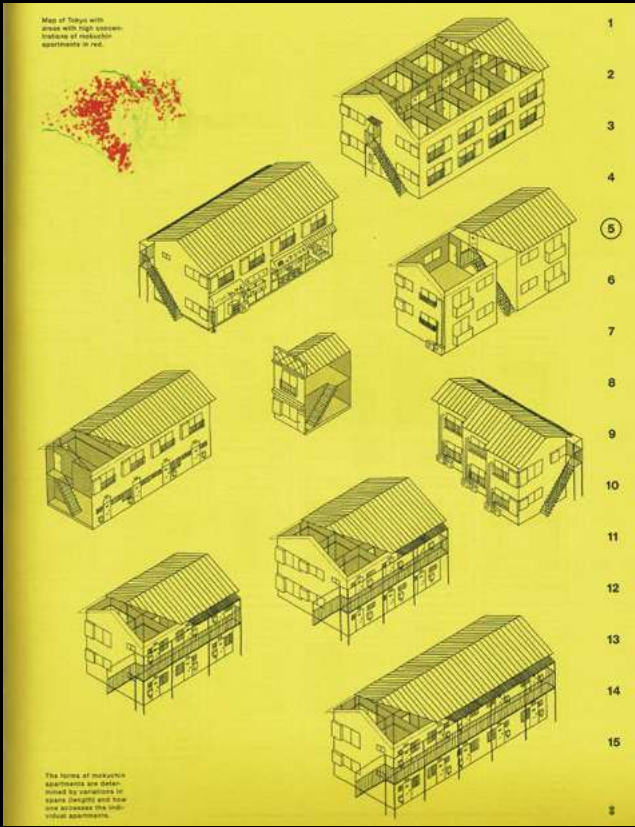
**„Architects are no longer merely designers, but also activists, entrepreneurs, and developers in one, creating their own projects rather than waiting for commissions to come to them.“*

Moku-Chin Recipe

various locations
2009-ongoing
by CHAR

CHAR stands for Commons for Habitats and Architecture. With a strong social commitment and innovative systematic solutions, studio CHAR challenges architectural praxis as one-dimensional service industry. With Moku-Chin recipe they designed a open source platform in which users can find simple renovation ideas to transform and revitalize the highly standardized and often badly aged post-war building stock of “moku-chin” homes by themselves.

An example of planning method where the architect consciously puts aside his personal signature and dominant hierarchy and seeks an honest improvement of the built environment and its inhabitants.



Conversation with Yuma Shinohara

Challenging the Architecture Practice

Yuma Shinohara is the curator of the exhibition "Make Do With Now". After studying at Columbia University in New York and holding various positions - including at the Storefront for Arts and Architecture in New York, the CCA Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal and the Akademie der Künste in Berlin - he has been working as a curator at the S AM Swiss

Architecture Museum in Basel since 2021. He developed the exhibition through direct engagement and close collaboration with the architects whose projects and practices were displayed. We had the chance to meet Yuma during his visit in Vienna and invite him to our studio for a talk.

*this interview was held in German and later translated to English to keep the work consistent



Daniel Koller, Yuma Shinohara and Maria Covrig (l. to r.)

at Studio Margarita

02:16:23

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There is still a very strong system of master schools and, accordingly, so-called “family trees” that can be drawn from people who have studied under certain professors. Each generation tries to reinterpret this heritage.

Daniel: The exhibition *Make Do With Now* has accompanied the work for our diploma since our research stay in Japan and meanwhile became a theoretical focus of our project. While we were in Japan, we only became aware of this movement by chance during a visit at Studio Gross. Besides this, we received relatively little information about the exhibition, while searching for current architectural “icons”.

It seemed as if *White Minimalism* still dominates the common discourse about Japanese architecture. Is there already a comparable exhibition in Japan itself?

Yuma: There were a few others, but I think it’s a bit difficult to put together an exhibition like this in Japan - the understanding of this generation is much more nuanced. I think this is really an exhibition that only an outsider like me could have done. In Japan, you often get lost very quickly in political issues, such as: who do you take, who do you not take, who can be associated with which movement.

There is still a very strong system of master schools and, accordingly, so-called “family trees” that can be drawn from people who have studied under certain professors. Each generation tries to reinterpret this heritage. I could claim that this group thinking is slightly fading, and as a complete outsider, I really had the freedom to create an overview and exhibit this position, which would have not necessarily been put together in the same way in Japan.

D: You previously mentioned the exhibition titled *En*, which focused on the community aspect. I had the chance to visit Taketa, a small village in Kyushu, where, at the end of my stay, the host of my accommodation told me that *En* means something like a circle. She said that in her village, it's extremely important for people to stick together, much like a circle: everyone belongs together, and everyone helps each other. I found that very beautiful. In rural areas of Japan, this principle of cooperation still seems to be very strong, even though they suffer under the consequences of the rural exodus. But the very few people that remain there seem to be more united.

Do you think the social engagement of this new generation also carries a kind of critique towards older generations of architects, who perhaps distanced themselves from the needs of society?



Studio and House 03, Studio Gross

Y: Yes, definitely! If you visited Studio Gross, then you must have seen how much they operate not just as architects, but more as common people in the neighborhood. They form a social network, and for many architects, it's incredibly important to know the people in the neighborhood where they work or plan their projects. The informal aspect, everything that happens during their personal free time, like connecting with the neighborhood, is just as crucial to their work as the time spent drawing and designing.

I think this is a form of critique, maybe also a bit of self-critique, on the architectural profession. They acknowledge the fact that one has to reconnect and solidarize more with the community. But, of course, they don't do this purely altruistically. They also recognize that this broad social network is ultimately where their commissions come from. For them, it's naturally in their interest to maintain these networks. As a young office in Japan, it's almost impossible to participate in large public competitions nowadays. Getting direct commissions from people you don't know is nearly non-existent. So, where do your commissions come from? Ultimately, it's from people you know. It depends a lot on networking.

I think this is also a critique, or maybe a bit of self-critique, of the architectural profession: the idea that one has to try to reconnect and solidarize more with the neighborhood.

People had to organize themselves and create solutions for the missing infrastructure. He often says that this experience taught him that it's possible for ordinary citizens to build new systems themselves, ones that might even work better than those that existed before.

Maria: It is impressive that these architects are willing to take on a significant amount of social responsibility, even in a field we know to be strongly driven by competition. I feel that this is not so common in Europe, where everything is maybe more focused on the individual, on standing out from the crowd, striving for personal achievements.

During our short stay in Japan, we experienced an attitude shaped by discipline, care and respect for others. Could it be a matter of a different ethical culture?

Y: I think Japan certainly has a culture of individualism as well – it's a very capitalist-oriented country, perhaps even more so than Europe. At the same time, there's also a tradition of village communities working together, which Europe also had in the past. For this generation, I believe it's particularly important to try to revive and strengthen that sense of community. I think the social calling stems, at least in part, from a situation of having no real alternative – they've realized that collaboration is necessary to make something happen. I'm not sure it can be entirely attributed to



Destruction extent in Onagawa after the earthquake in 2011

cultural factors; it's perhaps more a response to social and economic changes that have sparked the interest among younger architects in working differently. On the other hand, it's also very much shaped by personal biographies, I think. For example, Ienari-san, one of the founders of dot architects, who was born in 1974 or 1976, I believe, often talks about his experiences growing up in Kobe. Kobe experienced a major earthquake in 1995 and he frequently mentions how this event was a pivotal moment for him. Similar to how 2011 was a turning point for many people in eastern Japan, the Kobe earthquake revealed how the infrastructure people relied on could suddenly fail. In such situations, people had to organize themselves and create solutions for the missing infrastructure. He often says that this experience taught him that it's possible for ordinary citizens to build new systems themselves, ones that might even work better than those that existed before. I'd say for many young people born in the late 80s or early 90s, the disasters of 2011 served as a similar wake-up call.

D: I think this should really be self-evident. In the exhibition publication you wrote about how frugality and collaboration, especially in rural areas, have always been considered „common sense,“ and this perspective picks up on that – not because it’s driven by a moral ideal, but rather as a return to or retreat into a long-proven system. Maybe it’s one of the reasons that influence this new aesthetic of roughness and reduction. This has now reached the design industry and is, to some extent, becoming mainstream and commercialized.

It seems that, for some, it’s no longer really about genuine reduction; Did it essentially turn into a trend?



Senju Motomachi Souko, Ishimura+Neichi, Tokyo, ongoing conversion since 2019

You can also work with high-quality materials, but if you use them poorly, they’ll look bad anyway. I think it’s not necessarily about the material itself but rather about how you use it.

Y: Yes, absolutely. I think this exists in Japan just as much as in Europe. There are offices that were very radical in the beginning and worked with a strong commitment to shaping new building economies, but now take on many commercial projects, such as large chain store interiors. Yet, they still adopt this aesthetic of the unfinished. That’s definitely something happening in Japan too. Gradually, this led not necessarily to a broad acceptance of it as a style, but at least to a certain coolness factor for the „construction site“ aesthetic, that became extremely commercial.. You can draw a similar parallel to the topic of sustainability. In Japan, sustainability in architectural discourse might not yet be as omnipresent as it is in certain parts of Europe. But even so, there are some offices that market themselves as sustainable architects or try to enhance their buildings using the appropriate vocabulary. In my selection, I really tried to showcase positions that approach these themes from a place of genuine conviction or strong principles.

D: This might be a bold thesis on my part, but there is something I find particularly interesting regarding this new “aesthetics politics”: the commercialization of a raw, unfinished look can suddenly turn “poverty” into something designed to be sold.

I sometimes wonder if people who actually have to live under difficult, precarious conditions and long for a “beautiful” home might see this as somewhat ironic or provocative. What do you think about that?

Y: That’s a very delicate and interesting topic. In Switzerland, this “poverty aesthetic” is also a major subject of debate, for example, when a very chic new residential project is clad in polycarbonate. On the one hand, I can understand this argument, and it’s easy to

make fun of it. But what I find a bit problematic about this critique is the implication that architects shouldn’t work with these inexpensive materials just because they evoke the aesthetics of poverty. Why shouldn’t they? Does that mean we’re saying this aesthetic is undesirable?

There are, after all, some design possibilities emerging precisely from working with industrialized, standardized products. You can also work with high-quality materials, but if you use them poorly, they’ll look bad anyway. I think it’s not necessarily about the material itself but rather about how you use it.

M: I feel like the aesthetic shown in the exhibition isn’t necessarily trying to imitate “poverty,” but rather emerges from spontaneous and unexpected circumstances – from materials that are already available, houses that already exist. If all of that is already there, why not use it and make the most of it?

And I think that’s the beautiful aspect of

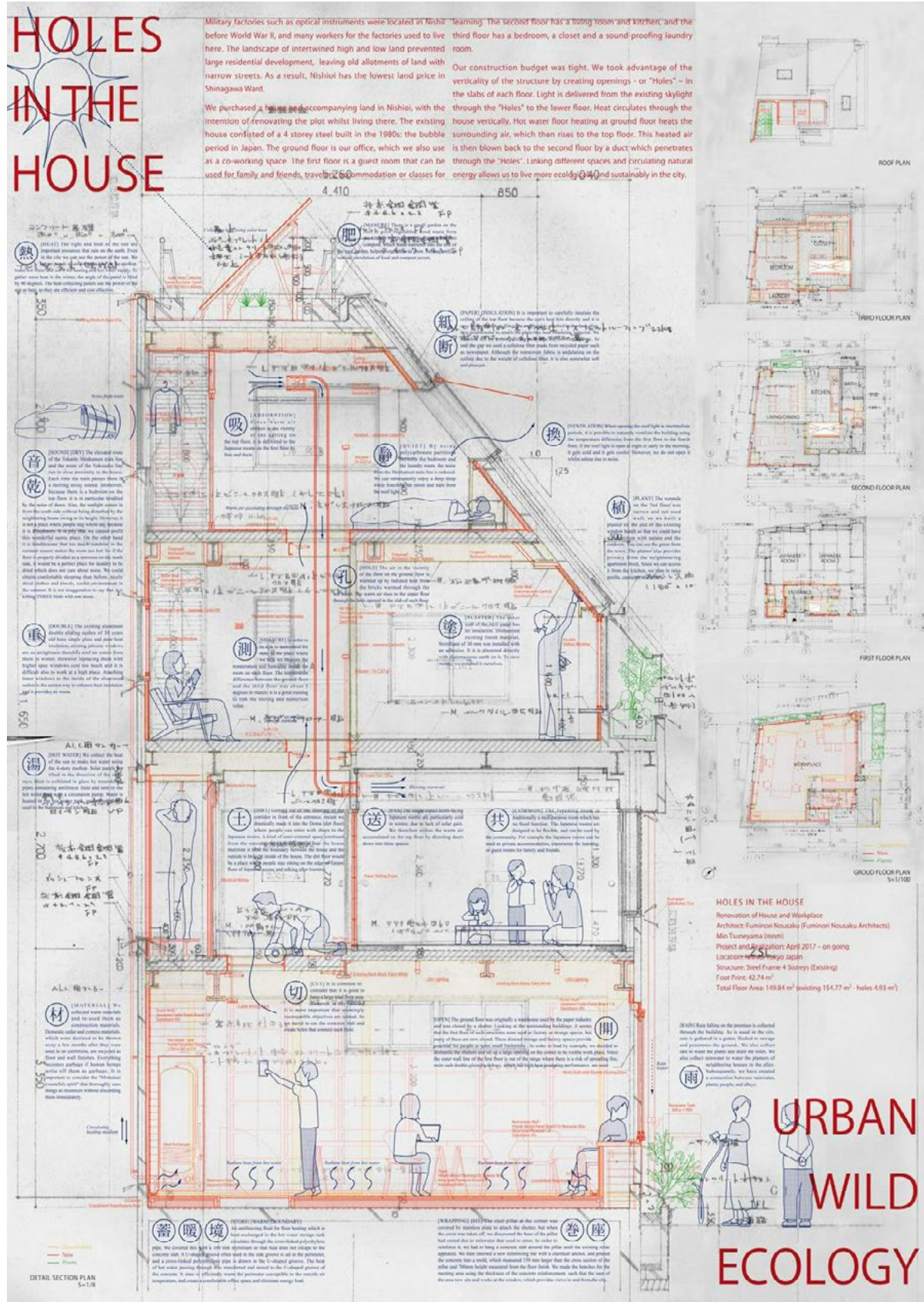
“make do” – it’s not about lacking something. There’s an incredible surplus of things laying around, and that’s partly due to how the world has developed over the last century. I wonder whether such movements and, I could claim, freedom in practice can only emerge in wealthier regions or countries.

Y: I think this movement is clearly a “post-growth” development. In growing economies there’s naturally a lot of self-building, community engagement, and other approaches that at first glance might seem similar to movements in Japan. But I think, the examples of *Make Do With Now* differs from this mainly in the fact that they actually approach the question: “How do we deal with the fact that we’ve grown so much, reached our limit, and now have to shrink?” That’s a decisive factor in how architects approach their tasks. And, of course, it’s also a somewhat privileged situation – or at least a response to it.



they can continue to be used again and again for different purposes,

Film still from “dot architects” by Studio GROSS



She felt a deep desire for wilderness—the kind of wildness that humans inherently possess and the need to shape one’s own environment. Over time, she felt that this had been lost after so many years within the system.

Mio Tsuneyama speaks very clearly about this in the film we made for the exhibition. She explains that Japan is still a very comfortable country: trains run on time, you can eat for 300 yen, the cost of living is relatively low, and yet the quality of life is remarkably high. That makes it easy to simply accept the system as it is. But when you take a broader perspective, it becomes clear that Japan faces enormous challenges. It’s evident that the country simply can’t continue as it has until now. The reality is that Japan is becoming poorer and has fewer opportunities. Young Japanese people, for example, can barely afford to travel abroad. Over decades, the capitalist system has developed to the point where everything can function seamlessly, so that there are few moments or opportunities to recognize the inherent contradictions of the system. The 2011 earthquake, however, was exactly such a moment.

This generation architects grew up in this “comfortable” system. Mio, for example, became much more critical after 2011, she say. She also understood that she has to make a choice: on one hand, she could simply continue living as she always had, but on the other hand, she felt a deep desire for wilderness - the kind of wildness that humans inherently possess and the need to shape one’s own environment. Over time, she felt that this had been lost after so many years within the system. She had to decide: “Do I continue to accept things as they are, or do I take my fate into my own hands?” Her project “Holes in the House” is an attempt to reclaim this “human wilderness.” I think it’s a reaction to this very comfortable way of life.



Holes in the House, Tokyo, Nousaku & Tsuneyama 2017

M: It’s quite clear that we’re accustomed to very high standards of comfort, and the project of Mio shows a strong renunciation of exactly those habits: When you’re eventually living on a construction site, you realize how spoiled we’ve become.

Certain standards are indeed heavily influenced by regulations, which leave little freedom of choice. How much do you think architecture dares to “hack” the system or work around it?



Tower Theater, stage design by dot architects, Kyoto Experiment, 2017

Y: I think there's already a fairly strong movement that critically analyzes these standards and simultaneously takes advantage of legal loopholes to do certain things – or, conversely, allows themselves to be guided by these standards to make an ironic statement.

M: Does the system in Japan offer any kind of financial support to emerging practitioners, or do people have to start from scratch?

Y: They mostly start from scratch. The government is very reserved, mainly

supporting the arts, but there's rather nothing for architecture. There are no public institutions that specifically focus on the support of architecture practice and the larger cultural institutions that deal exclusively with architecture are funded by corporate companies. That's why many people must do a lot more on their own. Alternatively, they engage in other artistic practices and try to secure some funding that way.

D: Perhaps just a quick note on this topic. Now that we are slowly getting into action ourselves and actively working with this space, we've been reflecting on how young architecture collectives can sustainably work on projects if their financial resources aren't enough.

Are there other strategies for these offices, besides academic teaching, that you might have come across? It's a very experimental approach, where I believe money isn't the main focus.

Y: It's certainly not the main focus. There is, of course, a lot of self-exploitation, where a lot of time is invested that remains unpaid. But somehow, they all manage to get by. For me, this is still a big question mark. Of course, teaching is very important, and many of the younger offices are now established enough to get teaching positions. It's not extremely comfortable, but at least it secures a foundation to work with, and the rest is covered with these smaller projects. There are also some offices that think more systematically, like in Yutaro Muraji's book *Moku-Chin Recipe* from Char. There is a scene that tries to think practice more in a "start-up" style. There are attempts to generate some income by offering services beyond the classic planning methods, and to develop new business models. For example, dot architects earn some extra money through collaborations with artists. They actually have

more projects in the art sector than in the traditional architecture field. For example, in stage design, or even commissions for large-scale art installation, where the artists have a concept, but not really the required skills to plan and build it. The art world is certainly not the greatest source of money, but at least you can diversify your projects and clients, and at the same time build up a network.

D: Kengo Sato, as mentioned in the publication, referenced in the concept for his restaurant the project FOOD from 1974, an artist-run restaurant hosted by the artists Carol Goodden, Tina Girouard and Gordon Matta-Clark, which is considered a cornerstone of 'Relational Aesthetics', an art movement from the 1990s based on, or inspired by, human relations and their social context.

Do you see a connection between „Relational Aesthetics" and this current movement in Japan, especially the social engagement on site and the act of hosting?

Y: Yes, absolutely, I think so. To what extent they really take *Relational Aesthetics* as a model for their activities, I'm not entirely sure. But it is definitely the case that conviviality is



construction site, Lunch! Architects

a very important part of their working method. I'm thinking, for example, of Lunch! Architects, who regularly organized lunches at the construction site together with the workers, as well as other stakeholders who were involved and contributed. Collective moments, like a kind of groundbreaking ritual, were also practically part of the project. For them, these moments are crucial because they build a foundation of trust. Since they do so much together with the craftsmen, it's important for them to have a relationship on equal footing. This way, the workers understand what the architects have in mind, and vice versa. Things like cooking or dancing together become tools for creating this shared understanding.



collective lunch with all actors on the construction site, Lunch! Architects

Common meals shared by the client, architect, and constructors were important occasions for discussing design and construction details.

For them, these moments are crucial because they build a foundation of trust. Since they do so much together with the craftsmen, it's important for them to have a relationship on equal footing.

M: I think there is also the question to what extent the traditional concept of the architecture office can be reimagined. We've been reflecting a lot on the aspect of hospitality in architecture practice, in a sense that you could work differently than isolated in an office, but rather expand your activity outward – not just in terms of visibility, like having a glass facade where people can see you and say „Ah, they're working at their desks,“ but by truly opening the doors and engage with people. Take Dot Architects in „Chidori Bunka,“ for example – they just serve a few drinks, and then conversations emerge. Of course, you can never know what will come of it and there is still significant competition in the existing building. Maybe it doesn't have to be weighed against that, it's simply something different. But it is a question of economical survival.

Do you think projects like „Moku-Chin Recipe“ by CHAR, that actually challenge the conventional construction industry through alternative business models, can actually bring a change on long term? Or would it need many more of these initiatives to make any difference in practice?

Y: CHAR's model has been quite successful, I've heard. There are really smart people involved. They analyze the legislative system of architecture and look for gaps they can eventually fill. What's interesting about this model is that they also address the question: "How can we scale this up?" Of course, as an individual architect or architecture office, there is a limit to what you can do. You can't renovate 200 houses at once. But what they do with these ideas is that they delegate the implementation to other actors, even to people they don't know, because they spread these "recipes" online on their website.

You can really see a shift in the understanding of the role of the profession: away from the idea of architects working on individual projects, which is basically just the hardware they slightly modify, towards engaging with the actual software. The hardware is handled by others, and they offer expertise and a system that can be implemented in a decentralized manner. And suddenly, you have a situation where you invest a certain amount of time developing an idea, but someone else takes over the work for implementation. If you spread it wide enough, maybe it reaches 100 people who implement it, and suddenly you've launched hundreds of projects or movements with a week's work.

This is their model for rethinking the possibilities of architecture firms. In this way, you can change the city much more than by transforming just individual buildings. There's also an interesting book by Keller Easterling on this topic, called "Extrastatecraft". Keller Easterling is an American architectural theorist, and she writes about what could be called "junk spaces": vast areas, giant cities, entire neighborhoods that are basically mass-produced. It's a bit like a catalogue of homes, especially in the context of places like China,

If you spread it wide enough, maybe it reaches 100 people who actually implement it, and suddenly you've launched hundreds of projects or movements with a week's work. This is their model for rethinking the possibilities of architecture offices.

South America, or Africa. She's essentially describing the mass building activity in urban context, where architects play little to no real role anymore.

These are standardized homes that construction companies just roll out. The spread of these spaces and cities leads to the question of how an architect can deal with this. She uses wording from computer science as an analogy for building systems. Every system has its rules, and therefore also backdoors or gaps where one can make an impact. She compares the role of architects to that of hackers, or people who might introduce a virus into the system, which then spreads automatically, following the logic of the system. It's like a glitch, to work with these large systems in such a way that you can use the system's own logic for your own purposes. I think this is the direction someone like Yutaro Muraji is trying to pursue. just need to offer a few suggestions, and people will start rearranging things themselves.



conversion of a house by CHAR



Moku-Chin Recipe website by CHAR

D: So how did you actually start working with architecture as a curator?

Y: During my studies in comparative literature, I always had a great interest in architecture, or maybe cities first, and then the built environment in general. I tried to take courses in art history, architectural history, and architectural theory. In my thesis, I mainly focused on texts by architects. At that time, I also did an internship at an architecture gallery, and after my studies, I moved to Berlin, and my first job was at Ruby Press. That's how I gradually got more involved in architecture.

D: I think it's always a good thing to get a view of things from outside the field. It has always been essential to support exchange across different disciplines, cultures, ideologies, and so on. It's interesting that throughout history, especially Vienna and Japan, have often been in artistic and creative exchange. For example, the history of the Wiener Werkstätte, the Secession - these movements were to a great extent inspired by Japanese craftsmanship. When it comes to recent or current architectural and cultural influence, Japan, for example, adopted over the last century in a very short period a huge number of western patterns. There's a kind of "blending". Exchange works like a learning process, but if done inadequately it can turn into cultural appropriation.

In our current engagement with Japanese architecture, we often asked ourselves: "Where does the learning stop, and where does appropriation begin?"

Y: Yes, that's actually a big question, of cultural appropriation. I'm sure there are people who can express it more thoughtfully

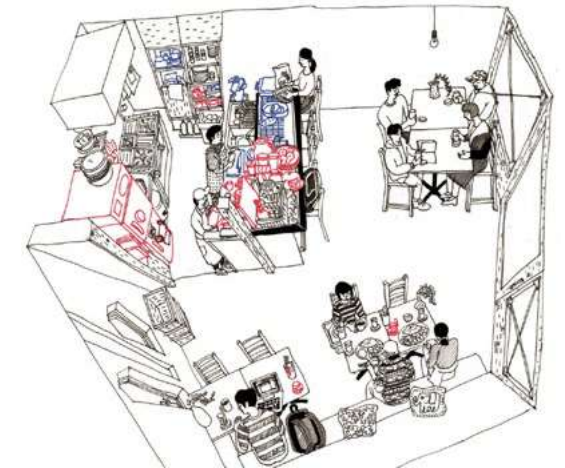
than I can, but think it's very different from case to case, and I don't think you can make a blanket statement about it because it also has a lot to do with power dynamics. It's also about the authorial question – how much you recognize that what you're doing comes from another context, etc. Even when we talk about globalization as a new phenomenon – it's actually something that has been happening for centuries, right? Of course, people meet, and ideas about materials and aesthetics also move around, and that's always been the case, right?

M: We've often seen in history that when different cultures meet, it can be very productive. I find this particularly true for Vienna. "Wiener Werkstätten" and "Art Nouveau", for example, were deeply influenced by a fascination with Japanese art that was very present at the beginning of the 20th century and is still strongly discussed today. During yesterday's lecture you talked about the construction details of the exhibition display at SAM Basel, where materials from a former exhibition have been repurposed to an object that referenced the traditional Japanese folding screens. How something new, something creative could emerge from that. I think that's a beautiful aspect of cultures that meet - of how something unexpected can emerge from blending different tools and ideas.

Y: I think this is a great aspect of "Make Do With Now" – it's about craftsmanship and love for detail, about designing individual objects and furniture, not just houses.

D: The Arts and Crafts Movement is about 100 years old now, and it's interesting that it's becoming important again. I think this has come about due to the extreme industrialization and

This is a great aspect of Make Do With Now: it's about craftsmanship and love for detail, also about designing individual objects and furniture, not just houses.



Chidori Bunka, dot architects

systematization in the construction industry, so now all building components look the same. Now, there's a movement trying to bring back the value of uniqueness and craft, while also valuing the already existing fabric, regardless of its appearance.

M: I feel this links to the notion of 'junk space' you mentioned before. Sometimes we just need to confront things we might at first not like.

Y: Definitely. It's also strongly linked to the field of building within existing structures, of designing with what's already there, because of course, everything that exists is often very individual, right? Even catalog houses have their own different histories. That's what makes it exciting, right? Now, when we can

really say that the future of the discipline is strongly tied to the transformation of the existing, we are rediscovering how to deal with the idea of buildings as unique pieces. The approach must be tailored differently for each building, and we need to pay much more attention to the details. Every building has its own "quirks" when you take it apart, and that's definitely a big task for disciplines in the future. I believe it's also a skill set that will become much more important in the future.

D: We're really excited about what this will bring. Thank you again for taking the time! This exhibition has inspired us in many ways - it's nice how this conversation completes the circle of our research.

Y: Yes, great, I feel honored. Thank you!



Site and Context

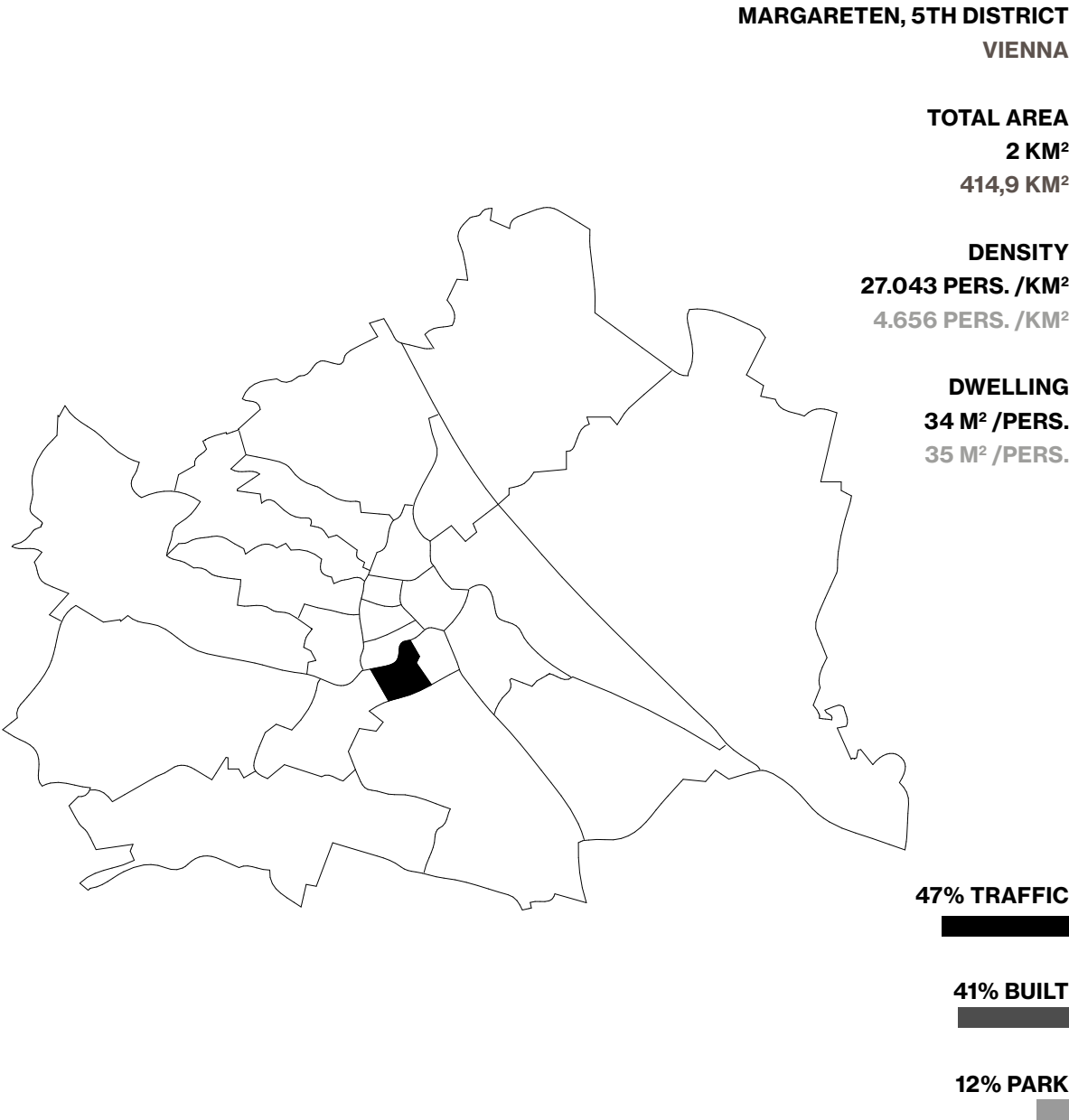
The site for the ongoing project Hotel Margarita is the collective space Studio Margarita, shared by students and practitioners in the field of architecture in a formerly vacant shop on the ground-floor of Margaretenstraße 160. The studio space becomes the testing ground for this experimental case study, without interrupting the usual work activity of the studio members.



Studio Margarita, outside view



Studio Margarita, inside view



Wien V. Reulmannhof

506

Margareten in Zahlen, 2023
Toshima Ward, n.d.
Bezirksgeschichte Margareten, n.d.
Ibid.

The site of Hotel Margarita is a shared studio on the ground-floor of Margaretenstraße 160, in Margareten, the 5. district of Vienna.

Sankt-Johann-Gasse

Bräuhäusgasse

Margaretenstraße

Studio Margarita

Margaretenstraße

Margareten Gürtel

50M

260M

N
|

160



Margaretenstraße

< >

Bräuhausgasse





address: Sankt-Johann-Gasse 1-5 / Margaretenstraße 160
year: 1970
architect: Dipl. Ing. Johann Ausch
owner: Verein der Freunde des Wohnungseigentums (VFW)
type: cooperative housing (private), 75 apartments, 7 shops
ground area: 2.004 m²
built area: 1.982,35 m²





former building on Bräuhausgasse 78, current Margaretenstr. 160, around 1901:
historical typology of the 'Streckhof' with narrow courtyard as threshold between public and private



current building on Margaretenstr. 160: location of Studio Margarita, a narrow shop with a large storefront as threshold between public and private





AUSWECHSLUNGSPLAN

WOHNHAUSANLAGE

WIEN 5., ST. JOHANNG. 1-5

EZ. 102 KAT. GEM. MARGARETEN

ST. NR. 529, 530/2, 531/3, 531/5



ERDGESCHOSS

MASSTAB 1:100

ABÄNDERUNG VON GESCHÄFTSLOKALEN

Hiermit bezieht sich
der Bescheid vom 4.5.1977
Zl. M. Abt. 36 - St. Johanng. 1-5
10/77

M. Abt. 20
Plan- und Schriftverkehr
St. 102 Bezirk
Archivstück



Für den Abteilungsleiter
Dipl. Ing. Kämpf
Oberstadtbaurat

GRUNDEIGENTÜMER:

VEREIN DER FREUNDE DES
WOHNUNGSEIGENTUMS

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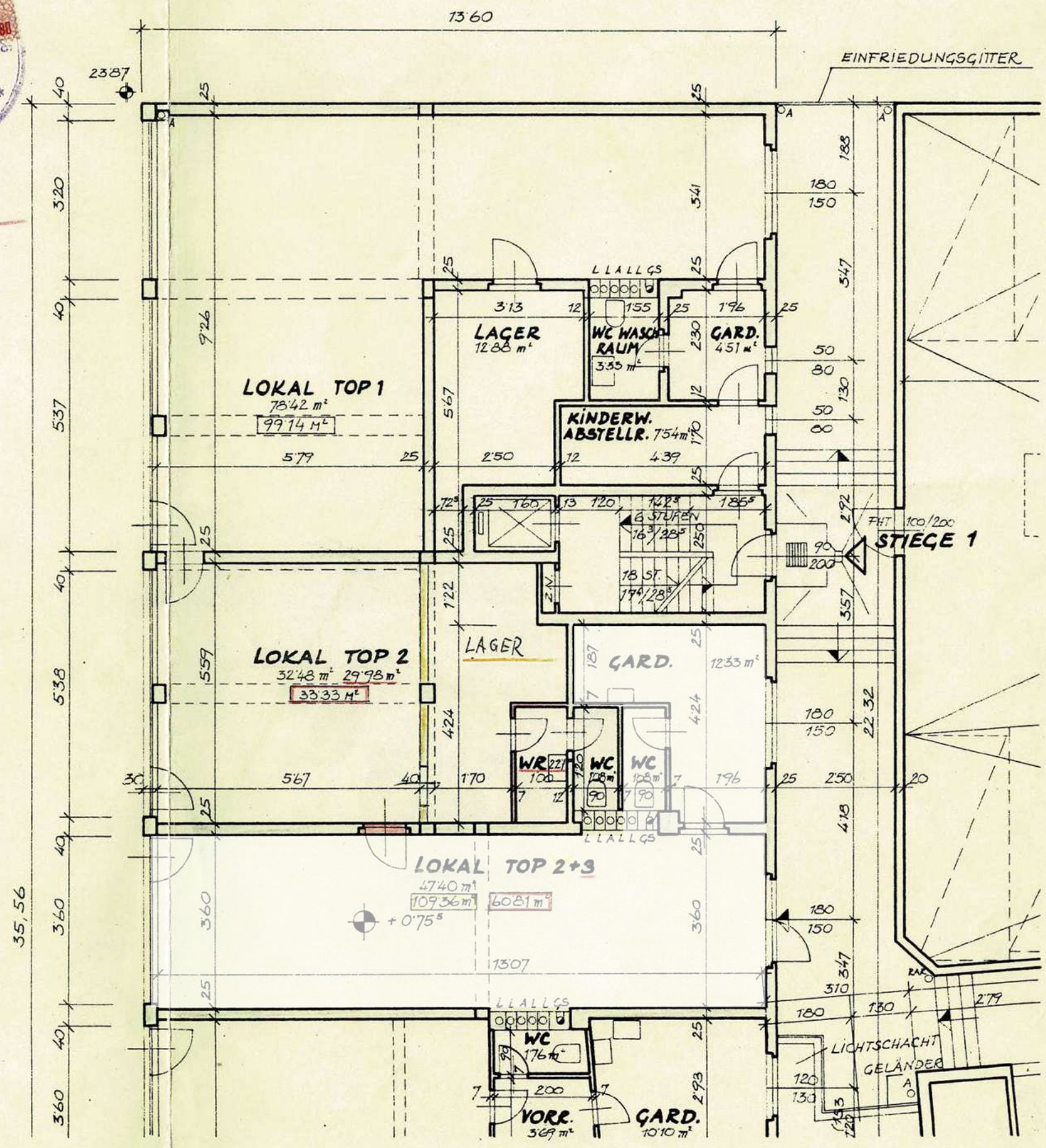
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H. K. MISCHKE
BAUGESellschaft

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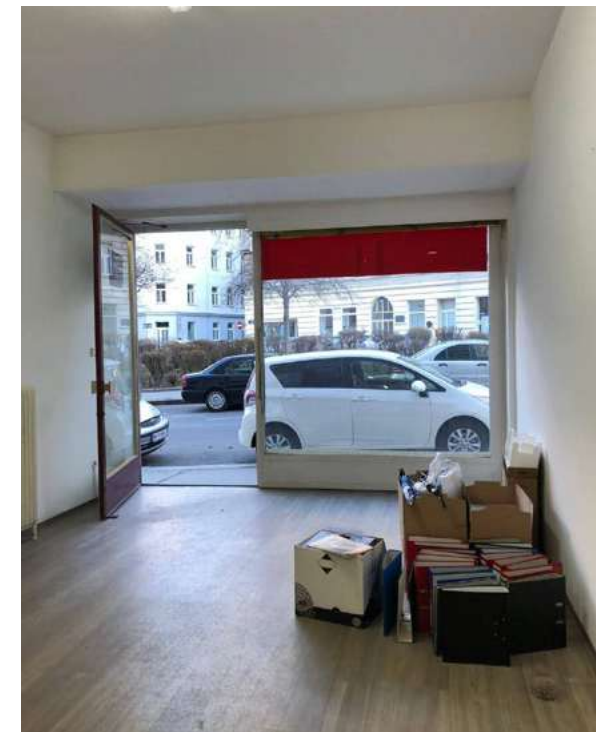




first visit of the vacant shop on Margaretenstr. April 2021

For an unknown period starting in the 70s, the space on the ground-floor of Margaretenstraße 160 was used as a tailor shop, with workshop in the back and gallery in the front. With a total surface of 60m², the shop has the optimal spatial organization for a small-scale typology of retail workshops. The tube-like space has outdoor access at both ends, directly connecting it to the backyard and the street.

At the time we took over the space in spring 2021 from the previous tenant, the office of a small trucking company, it was completely sealed off from public view despite the big window gallery at street level. Like most of the ground-floor shops on this particular street, it had a completely anonymous appearance to passersby.





studio entrance from the street side

We moved in and decided to uncover the space. Over the past three years, we gradually renovated the space in self-construction with limited resources. We started with a few simple gestures like scraping the opaque film of the

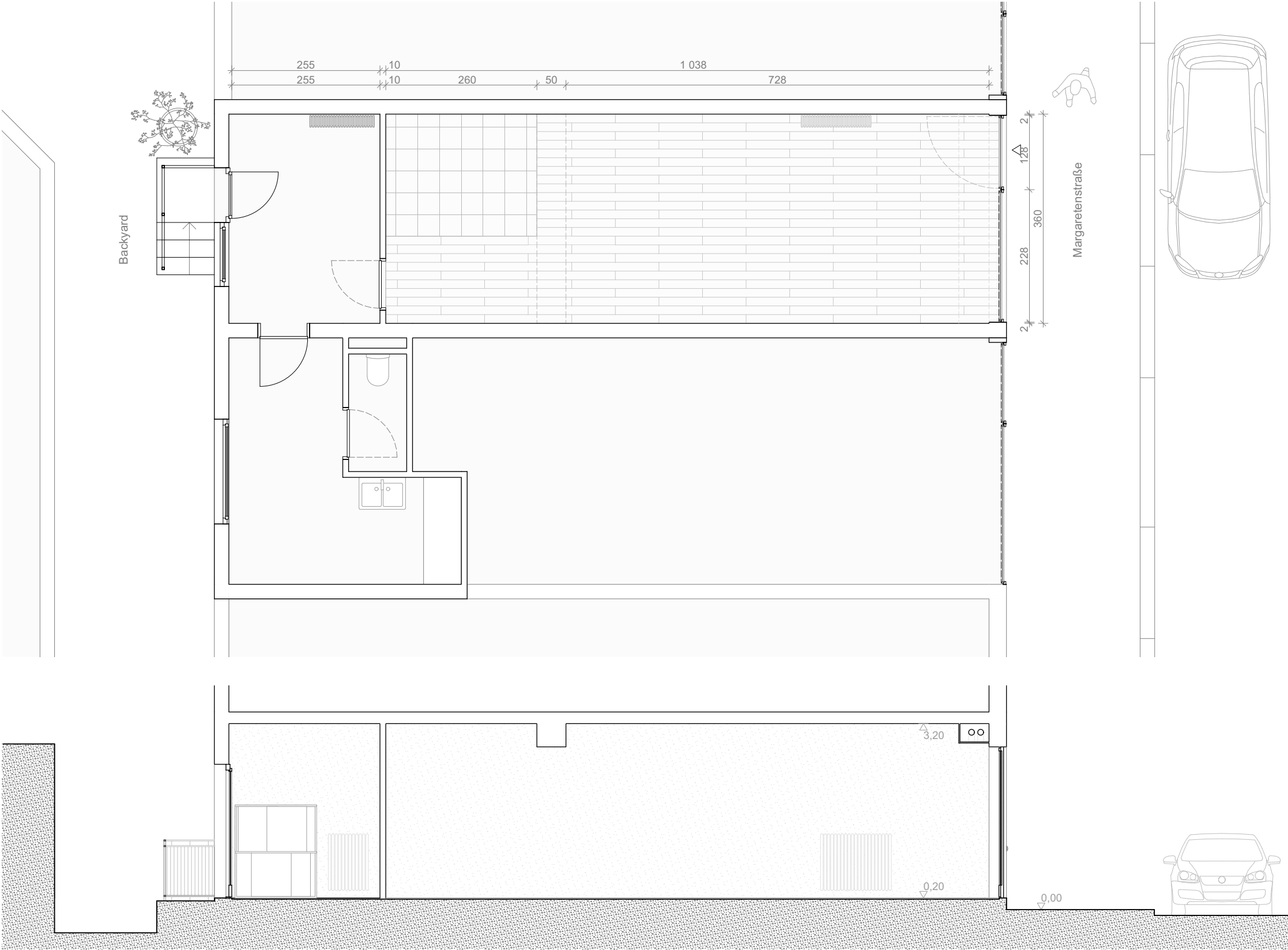
window in order to let in the light and open up the view. The studio space is still gradually transforming as our budget, time and competence allow.



access to the backyard of the studio space

Mostly occupied by a large one-story garage building covering around 600m² of the ground, the backyard is a narrow alley along the inner facade, providing access to the secondary stairways. The studio has access to the shaded

northwestern side of the yard, with decent conditions for outdoor work activities during hot summer days. Its infrastructure consists of a water point, a drain and a waste room;



Space in Progress

The studio is intended to be perceived not only as a workplace, but also as a platform for people to meet, connect and exchange. What began as a student studio now functions as an indefinite space, able to adapt to various purposes as well as host moments of everyday life.

The aim of this work is to explore the leeway within a seemingly constrained space by reintroducing craft and hands-on practice into the process of architectural design. Starting as amateurs, we try to catch up on the intertwined links between architecture, handcraft and building industry: what is available; how much time do things require; where to get access to resources, information and knowledge; etc. Like many who feel like imposters in their field at the beginning, this exploration is a practical study of personal and vocational skills and doubts. At the same time it seeks for potentials in the amount of creative freedom of incomplete knowledge – like a room that grows from void and useful tools that emerge through errors.







space during first renovation actions, spring 2021

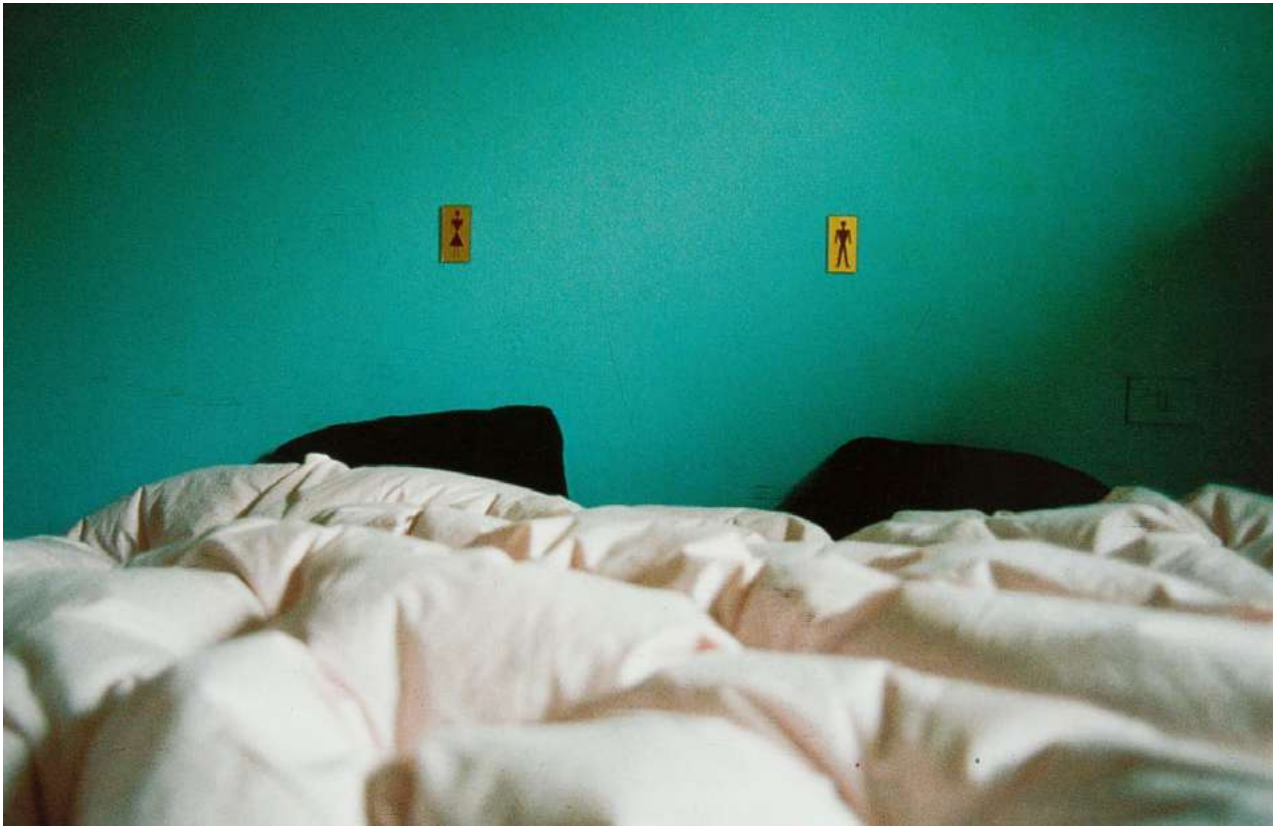
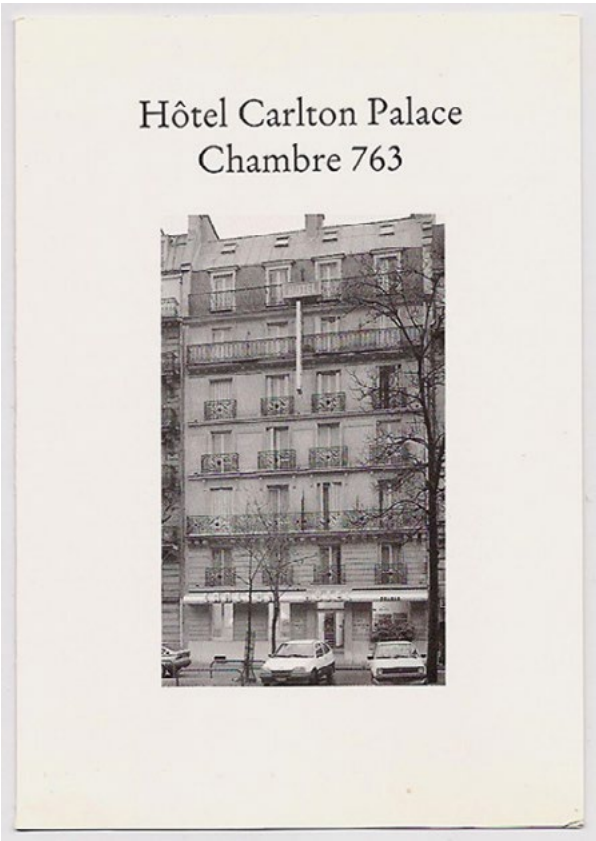


studio space in use, autumn 2024

Another Notion of the Hotel

In the context of this project, ‘hotel’ as a notion does not link to the commercial nature of a touristic program, but rather addresses its concept of origin as a typology of shelter, yet expanded beyond the primordial human needs: a social and cultural shelter - a place where strangers meet and things happen; a place that hosts dinners, concerts or parties, where locals escape their everyday life to be a temporary tourist in their own city.

The bold program of a hotel is no less than the reproduction of common forms of living, by offering the usual facilities that are as well found in domestic space. Besides serving the primordial needs for sleep, food and care, hotels also meet the social desires for interaction and leisure. As a temporary form of living, the hotel will always be a rather strange place, where one will never really belong to. It’s a refuge from everyday life, a home away from home.



The hotel as a semi-public space

As often encountered in the past, hotels had the potential to be a cultural hotspot in urban context: from the grandeur and international popularity of the Grand Hotels of the 19th century¹ to artists establishing creative environments in hotel buildings², like the unannounced exhibition *Chambre 763* in *Hotel Carlton Palace* in Paris curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, where artists were gradually invited to contribute with works in the “unexceptional domestic space” of his 12 square meters hotel room.³

As the curator continued living in the room during the course of the exhibition, this setup challenged the boundaries of intimacy. In contrast to the genuine institutional framework of art curation and display, the gesture of inviting artists in the very private sphere and opening it to the broad public confronts the conventional, neutral setting of the museum. It is particularly

intriguing that the hotel room itself is nothing more than a conventional and neutral setting as well in the context of the hotel building. Yet, it gains a completely new meaning merely with a twist in its purpose: instead of hosting one guest at a time, it creates an unusual moment in a peculiar setting that welcomes a large group of more or less “curious strangers”. Regarding hospitality, the blending of the intimate home with the idea of an intended public gallery raises the question of conditioning and accessibility, of course. How much intimacy is appropriate to be displayed and how much public “intrusion” can be tolerated?

1 Augustin, 2017
2 Room Service. On the Hotel in the Arts and Artists in the Hotel, 2014
3 Obrist, 2014



This is Sponge as guests at BIO 50 } hotel, nanotourism, 2014

Today, the conventional, generic hotel is conceived as an anonymous place, where people just arrive, spend the night and then leave. Hotel buildings lost their ‘grandeur’ from past centuries, as most of them have turned into anonymous places that serve for capital profit in the tourism industry. Still, the urgency to react to the social and economic downsides of mass tourism led to the emergence of visions for alternative notions of hospitality and attempts to develop a “nanotouristic” approach for locally oriented, bottom-up concepts.⁴ Considering the question of spatial distribution, these initiatives often emerge from artistic positions and go beyond the framework of existing hotel buildings.

During the 24th Biennial of Design in Ljubljana in 2014, the museum space temporarily hosted the experimental project *BIO50}*

hotel by Alessandro Fonte and Silvia Susanna, as a part of the research theme *nanotourism*.⁵ The project offered an alternative accommodation option for the artists, who were invited to spend the nights in the museum during the exhibition period, for which they did not pay with monetary currency, but with cultural value: knowledge exchange, active participation and designing their own accommodation, thus challenging the generic hotel room setup.⁶ In contrast to *Chambre 763*, the *BIO50}* hotel introduced in a reversed order the hotel into the museum space.

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Nanotourism, 2014
ibid.
BIO 50 hotel, 2014

"We should consider buildings more as instruments, open to different tasks at different times"

Herman Hertzberger, 2020



BIO 50 } hotel, nanotourism at the 24th Biennial of Design in Ljubljana in 2014

Hotel Margarita

The theoretical background of *Hotel Margarita* rather focuses on the hospitable nature of such spaces and on their potential to become a place for active participation and enjoyment, without limiting to the typology of hotel buildings as mere accommodation. As an architecture concept, the project *Hotel Margarita* does not try to restore an existing notion of the hotel – It rather renegotiates the spatial relations in hospitality and seeks for chances to generate an enjoyable moment.

In a series of physical and social interventions, *Hotel Margarita* emerges at the intersection of architectural practice and hospitality. While hosting the hotel, the studio space

continues to serve as a workplace for all the members of the collective. The unconventional overlay of unused or underused spaces is trying to react to the question of how we deal with space available to us, amidst current urban developments, where affordable space is becoming increasingly scarce.

This project aims to work through the seemingly rigid physical framework of the studio and to explore how the rearrangement of space can influence how we approach material and immaterial things. Here, the ‘hotel’ becomes both a manifesto and a tool to reflect on how we can create an enjoyable environment and cultivate trust in our fragile society.



HOTEL MARGARITA

HOSTING ENCOUNTERS IN A COLLECTIVE STUDIO SPACE

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The Ground Issue

There are various meanings that can be attributed to the notion of *ground*. It can be understood as landscape, while it can also be the soil below or the solid base of a structure that stands on it. On a symbolic level, it can be the lowest part or downward limit of anything, but as well the fundamental principle of a study or the foundation of an ideology. Ground can be a physical surface with reference to a possessor. And it can be a simple floor.¹

All these meanings seem to be deeply intertwined in the context of built environment. The physical ground we stand on is a compound record of past cultures and human activities, of layers that formed the base of current societies and ecologies. Today, ground as workable land is a repository of capital, and it is an inherent part of building economy. While building activity increased the comfort in various aspects of everyday life, there are still many issues off stage, like unfair labor conditions and unequal wealth distribution and the unreasonable exploitation of ground.

Maybe one of the dilemmas of the post-growth era we primarily have to face is the question “to build, or not to build?”. We must admit that it’s not just a matter of industry and politics - architects and their supposed task of building are part of the system, like every other discipline caught in the vicious circle of capital production. The contradiction of architecture as a profession with social calling, but only under the conditions of politics and market dynamics, triggers the inner conflict of practitioners.² It is a big challenge to balance the financial maintenance of the self with the ethical values of the common good. But even though the general perception of architecture is instinctively linked to built matter, architecture practice can and should do more than just contribute with the service of building. Works of architecture at the intersection with art showcase that the construction site can become a stage of performance and artistic expression, where uncertainty and disruption are translated into a moment of creativity and a sense of hospitality.

This intervention deals with architecture as something temporary and forever unfinished. It turns the studio space into an experimental small-scale worksite. We see this practice as a way of physically engaging in construction work on our own and approaching the reality of building activity: matters of availability, accessibility, effort, cost and time. We see the removal of the existing floor as a first step towards a new method of understanding the building as a process. It’s less about the final result, but about the ongoing process of learning and doing.

In this issue we take a closer look into the politics and processes behind the construction site and their relation to the practice of the architect. An excursus explores the complex approach to material of the Japanese movement *Mono-Ha*, which challenged the traditional notions of materiality, perception and temporality with radical practices, and revealed new meanings in the very existence of things - where the ordinary could become the extraordinary.

The intervention in the studio space becomes an opportunity to start a critical discussion on how we handle the mere things surrounding us and deal with our available space. Layers of questionable materials have been removed and subsequently displayed as an object with inverted meaning: The vinyl tiles grow as a column, they lose their property as cover for the supporting ground, and now support solely themselves. The construction site becomes a meeting point for conversations, debates and common rituals.

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ground, Oxford English Dictionary
Ngo, 2024

Ground for Practice

Politics of Construction





Corporation, construction and craft

The increasingly systematic and rigid hierarchies in the building industry have gradually distanced a large group of architects from the physical experience on the construction site. It is the result of structural changes in the profession under a capitalist building industry and its logic of value creation, pressured by the constant demand for efficient performance, that turned the process of designing and building into a fragmented process.

This statement consciously refrains from idealizing the historical iconography of the “one-man-show” craftsman architect, because it acknowledges the numerous improvements in terms of labor conditions, as well as the democratization efforts within the building sector - yet, this industry is still caught in a vicious circle of social and ecological exploitation.¹ It rather refers to a subversion in creative practice amidst a material culture dominated by the mentality of “growth and construction”.² The uncontrolled growth of consumer society of the last decades resulted in a rather indifferent attitude towards the materials and things that surround us. The current standardization

of architectural methods and technologies, like the ongoing systematization in resource management, might achieve the efficiency goals required by building corporations, but at the same time it undermines the sensitive engagement with the material world.³ Professional doubts regarding authorial responsibilities along with an undermined artistic depth in the process of design challenge how architects respond to the given social and technological environment. While confronting the increasing pressures of societal challenges, the profession is facing once again the dilemma of agency. This links to the question of how to restore the stigma of “the architect vs. the society” that was imprinted in the image of architects over the last century.⁴ Instead of distorting the self-image of architects, this sense of contempt triggered a shift in the ideological agenda of architecture.

1 Yamaguchi, 2022, p.203
 2 Schafemann et al., 2024, p.26-27
 3 Sennett, 2008, p.29
 4 Ichikawa, 2022, p.34-35

Many practitioners seek to regain their place within society, not above it. And in some cases, this means moving and performing directly on the construction site, as well as sticking around as soon as the building process is over. It turns into a tool to rethink the traditional concept of the isolated architecture office. Like in the case of dot Architects, who gradually restored a vacant building in Osaka, Japan after moving their office in the neighborhood of the site. The culture and community space “Chidori Bunka” was finally opened in 2017, after 3 years of patient on-site design and of getting closer to the local community and businesses. After the completion, the architects remained involved in the operation of the space and pursued to personally run the bar every other night after finishing work in their office.⁵ Taking the responsibility of a building over a longer period of time and carefully curating its materials, elements, as well as its social environment, becomes an act of care. In this context, it could be discussed if the performative engagement on site can be perceived as a relevant method of

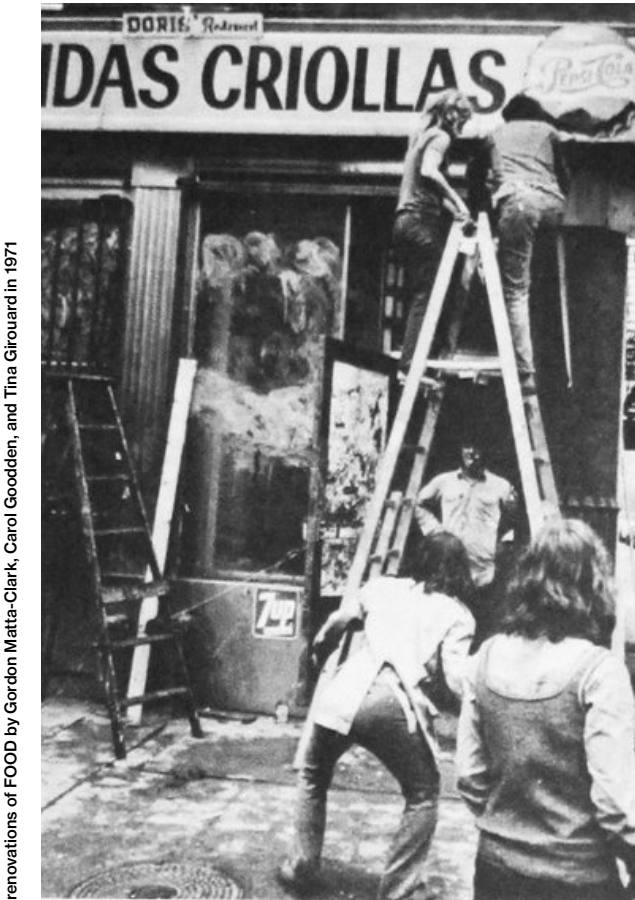


dot architects at bar, Chidori Bunka, Osaka, 2017

curating and displaying architecture practice to a broader public. For many, the physical engagement in construction and active participation in the community is a way of building a foundation of trust in the relation with the clients, workers, and other people affected by the building activity.



dot architects, Chidori Bunka, Osaka, 2022



The construction site as a stage

The worksite is a loud and dirty place where things must be finished on time, but it is also a site of creative performance. To be clear, this argument by no means aims to romanticize the construction site, nor does it trivialize immense amounts of labor, as well as the physical and mental load that it implies. Construction has since been a business of labor exhaustion and land exploitation, from architecture built by forced labor under totalitarian regimes to the rapid, uncontrolled growth of cities since industrialization that required an appropriate reaction of the building industry. Construction sites have repeatedly been glorified as achievements of technical innovation and masterworks of building companies.⁶ They are also often being instrumentalized as a marketing tool in the real estate industry, hosting panels filled with glamorous architecture advertising covering the disturbing “backstage” work. This controversial character is one of the reasons why the modern activity of building, especially in urban context, has been explored in various artistic positions since the 60s.

It might indeed seem quite intuitive to associate Gordon Matta-Clark’s building *cuttings* with artistic practices that deal with disruption in built space. But his interest in the neglected matter of a city goes beyond the destructive nature of his works. His initiatives of improvised environments or social experiments indicate his critical attitude towards the troubled politics of the inhabited urban realm.⁷

One of these actions was the opening of the collaboratively run restaurant *FOOD* in September 1971 in SoHo, New York, that became a sign for communitarian spirit of the young generation of artists that were active at that time in the neighborhood. *FOOD* hosted not only a place for preparing and consuming food, but also performances, exhibitions, shelter and jobs for artists.⁸ Through this initiative together with Tina Girouard, Carol Goodden, and other artist friends, the group collectively restored the former restaurant. SoHo, at that time, was a neighborhood “with a depressed character (...), its light manufacturing lofts, sweatshops, and rag factories deserted by their

previous tenants”.⁹ It had a strict urban zoning law due to its former industrial activity, which prohibited any kind of permanent residence and was planned to undergo significant urban restructuring, which was the reason why most of its buildings were completely abandoned.¹⁰ This phenomenon led to the emergence of the first alternative art spaces, that illegally settled in the unused, derelict spaces. The artistic engagement of artists with the actual construction of a new environment and their visible presence in the city took the form of political resistance against the destruction of the existing neighborhood.

6 Schulz, 2019
7 Richard, 2019
8 Lee, 2000, p.68
9 ibid., p.68
10 Terroni, 2011

renovations of FOOD by Gordon Matta-Clark, Carol Goodden, and Tina Girouard in 1971

Conversation with things

Paradigm shifts in architecture never happen isolated: They depend on the development of the global economy. Construction systems are influenced by production and distribution processes, which, in turn, depend on access and cost. But it would be too simple to reduce the concerns of a practice solely to material and capital flows. It is always a matter of the moral stance and cultural attitude of a time. There is a fissure in the modern world that emerges under the tension between competition on one side and community on the other. So, we are caught within the vicious circle of the capitalist system, which demands both competitive and compliant characters, at least for the sake of financial self-preservation, while at the same time being pressured by the desire to stand up for the sake of change for a more just society.¹¹

To reach a more sensitive understanding of how we currently live and how we want to live together in the future, we should to have a closer look at the things that are already surrounding us, to actually understand their

meaning, how they work and how they can be used.¹² This indeed sounds like common sense. But in practice it is quite easy to forget that trying to create something requires the understanding of the most basic tools, like hammers, knives and rulers, even though they seem so obvious:

“To create tools are necessary. (...) Tools for life are inherently simple. Let us pick up these tools in our hands, one more time.”¹³

In *Craftsmanship*, Richard Sennett addresses the basic impulse of the human condition to simply do good work for its own sake. He states that craftsmanship does not simply imply the necessary skill to do good work, but also the desire to actively engage with the material and social world.¹⁴ It is particularly relevant for the practice of an architect to not divide practical labor and theoretical reflection: the one who produces and crafts is capable of discussing and judging. This statement calls up Yamaguchi’s

invitations to “Conversations with Things”: “Things are not passive materials to be molded into man-made forms. To make and design is to converse with things.”¹⁵ In an essay contribution for the exhibition publication of *Make Do With Now*, he questions economical patterns and organization models of architecture practices. He imagines an alternative practice without hierarchical control, as he highlights the value of shared knowledge, collaborative work and the interplay between physical and mental processes. So how do we start these conversations? How can we cope with the paradoxes of modern ego? Architectural historian Koji Ichikawa coins the notion of “a generation that questions the conditions”.¹⁶ He highlights the shared vision of a young generation, who thinks of architecture as part of a network of human and non-human things that form our world, not as an isolated physical system. This stance has repeatedly influenced architectural and artistic positions throughout history, always claiming a way out of the superficial material world and

seeking a deeper understanding of the relation between the material and immaterial. As Ichikawa points out, a practice that treats the built environment at a more human scale can encourage a shift in the way society views and values architecture.¹⁷ The current attempt of practitioners to rethink the traditional concept of the architect and renegotiate the conditions of building industry closely relates to how we organize our life, work and relations. To design means to understand the most basic units of life.

“We can achieve a more humane material life, if only we better understand the making of things.”¹⁸

11	Sennett, 2008, p.37
12	dot architects, 2023, p.7
13	ibid., p.5
14	Sennett 2008, p.6-7
15	Yamaguchi 2022, p.204
16	Ichikawa 2022, p.33
17	ibid., p.36
18	Sennett, 2008, p.8

From professional disruption
to creative observation

While our contemporary society emerged in a modern world based on abundance and thus a feeling of safety, the reality of potential shortages - weather due to climate change, economic instability, or social unrest - affects community dynamics. It is a matter of societal (mis)trust, as well as of uncertainty in an unpredictable world, both of which challenge the maintenance of a sensitive and inclusive community. At the same time, a certain amount of uncertainty can turn into a moment of creativity - disruptive times require spontaneity and improvisation. Unexpected events can radically change the way things go and failure can become solution.

Activity gaps in practice often result in professional doubts and a feeling of numbness, but the implicit chance in precarious situations might be part of the order of things simply taking their course. This seems to be a repetitive chain of events that influences the practice-theory cycle. Architects often make use of the disruptive lack of commissions and turn to theoretical writing or academic research, probably mostly for financial survival besides ideologic reasons.¹⁹ But this reflective intermission has often led to the emergence of new visions and ideas.

Beatriz Colomina links the effects of this “creative observation” to the didactic attempts of the modernist architects to propagate the image of the ‘New’. The modern manifesto was produced not through building activity, but through the power of communication media.²⁰ In times when traditional commissions lack opportunities for experimentation, architects seek alternatives for an unconstrained ground of practice. Exploration through writing and

drawing fulfills this exact freedom. Regularly published magazines, like the avant-garde journal *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung*, published from 1923 to 1926 by Hans Richter in Berlin, that hosted the contribution of many renowned architects, like Mies van der Rohe, El Lissitzky or Man Ray. Colomina exposes the ‘ghosts’ of modern architects behind their internationally acknowledged architecture:

“Le Corbusier didn’t exist before his magazine ‘L’esprit Nouveau’, published between 1920 and 1925, and the books that came out of its polemical pages (Vers une architecture, Urbanisme, L’art décoratif d’aujourd’hui, La peinture moderne, and Almanach d’architecture moderne). In fact, the very name Le Corbusier was a pseudonym used for writing about architecture in L’esprit nouveau. (...) It could be argued that Le Corbusier was an effect of a set of manifestos.”²¹

Or like in the case of Mies van der Rohe, whose first commissions were rather traditional buildings, that did not at all correspond to his later vision.²² His first visions of modern buildings were part of writings and drawings, that were never built but served as tools for new paradigms in architecture. New meanings were produced through medial experimentation: debates, magazines, film, lectures, exhibitions; Until they finally declared a new architectural order.

Colomina considers that media produced manifestos. This is a pattern that has repeated throughout history, particularly due to its boundless communication. Various media have

been established as creative platforms that host and support the theoretical and artistic reflections of practitioners. A later significant example is the magazine *Avalanche*, founded and edited by Liza Béar and Willoughby Sharp, which documented the emerging new-media art practice of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s in SoHo, New York. They actively participated in the everyday life of the artists working around 112 Greene Street and Food, documenting their exhibitions, performances, and lives in the journal through various media, including photographs, interviews, and writings.²³ *Avalanche* included an interview with Gordon Matta-Clark on his exhibition *The Anarchitecture Show* at 112 Greene Street in 1974:

“Our thinking about Anarchitecture was more elusive than doing pieces that would demonstrate an alternative attitude to buildings, or, rather to the attitudes that determine containerization of useable space. Those attitudes are very deep-set. Architecture is environment too. When you’re living in a city the whole fabric is architectural in some sense. We were thinking more about metaphoric voids, gaps, left-over spaces, places that were not developed.”²⁴

Considering historical developments in architecture, paradigm shifts seem quite natural. But they still require active engagement with the order of the world and a willingness to rethink or even give up traditional patterns. As today’s young generation currently tries to reappropriate practical engagement with architecture, they might at first feel like impostors in their

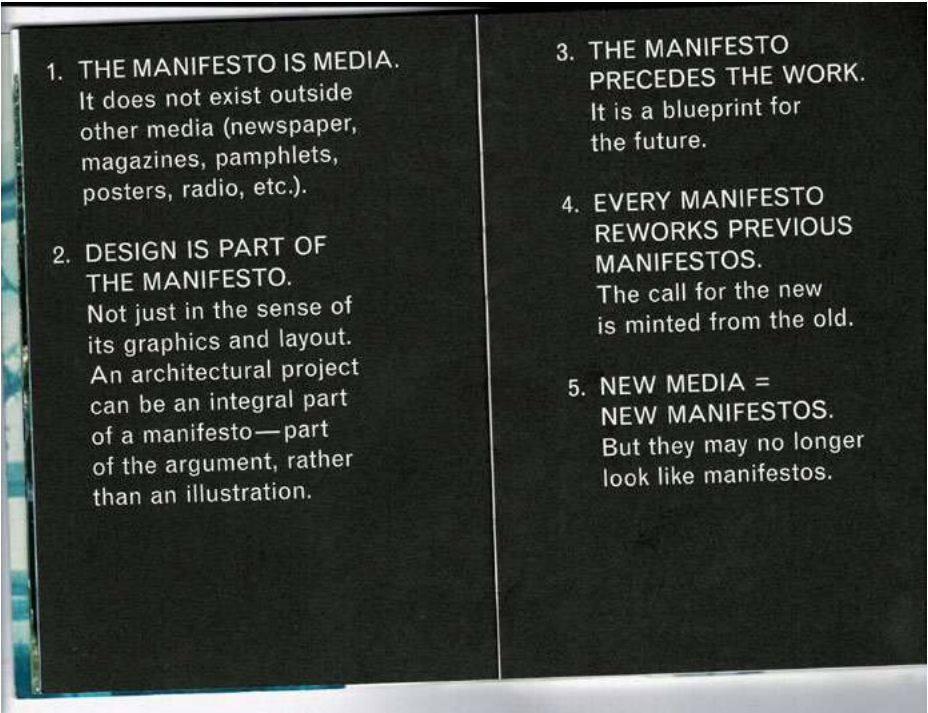


Le Corbusier, covers of L'esprit nouveau, nos. 1-4, 1920-25

own profession. Those who seek to acquire these specific skills and knowledge from experienced practitioners will rarely find them in the office of today’s classic architecture corporation. Current practices that physically explore the act of building tend to emerge from collective collaborations that go beyond architecture discipline.²⁵ This becomes a process of learning how to use incomplete tools, how to make do with limited resources and skills, and how to transform artistic reflection into creative production. It requires a balance between the skill of operating a range of contemporary technologies and the sensitive engagement with things.

19 Nuijsink 2022, p.294
20 Colomina, 2014, p.1-9
21 ibid., p.3
22 ibid., p.17
23 Müller et al., 2000, p.33
24 ibid., p.40-41
25 Momoyo, 2022, p.45

Excerpts from Manifesto Architecture: The Ghost of Mies, Beatriz Colomina, 2014



Anarchitecture Announcement (both sides)
1974
4 1/2 x 4 inches
Avalanche Archives
Courtesy of Gilbert and Lila Silverman, Detroit
Photographed at Food



Exerpts from the publication on the exhibition FOOD at White Columns, New York 1999, curated by Catherine Morris

Built Matter



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The approved original version of this thesis is available in print at TU Wien Bibliothek.







Construction Landscapes and Mono-ha



Phase-Mother Earth, Nobuo Sekine, 1968 (installing)



Soft Concrete, Kishio Suga, 1970/2012

Approximation

While turning the studio into a worksite by removing the old vinyl flooring, we never intended to perceive it as an artistic practice, nor did we want to romanticize the hard, harmful and often exploitive labor which construction workers endure every workday. Nevertheless, during the two weeks of exhausting work, scrubbing old glue and wearing tight breathing masks, we developed an odd, humbling relation to the worksite through the mere physical engagement with materiality. It doesn't matter how cheap, unpleasant or smelly a material is - when you work with this kind of intensity, you build up a strong relationship to the simplest things, as a form of reciprocal appreciation and respect. There is some kind of beauty in the experience of simply shifting material in space and time, like a moment of encounter.

In regard to the art movement *Mono-ha* which emerged in the late 1960s in Japan, we began reflecting on this exact moment - one that is generated through artistic engagement with raw, untreated materials and the simple

act of rearranging spatial and material relations. This movement is not easy to define in just a few words and raises many contradictions in definition. In terms of architecture, this approach shifts the perspective on the conditions and transformation of raw materials along their integration into a constrained framework. These are aspects that inherently make the construction site to a material place in itself.

Acknowledged artists associated with *Mono-ha* challenged conventional notions of materiality, perception, and artistic intervention by allowing materials to exist in their raw state and exploring the relationships between objects, space, subject and time. Artists engaged in distinct ways with widely available natural and industrial materials, similar to parallel developments in Europe, such as *Arte Povera*, or *Minimalism* in America. In their temporary nature, the artworks were often displayed directly on-site or on the ground, responding to their inherent context.¹



Matter and Mind, Noriaki Hareguchi, 1977 (installing)

The question of production and authorship

Both *Mono-ha* and similar art movements, led by the avant-garde spirit of the age, questioned certain institutional frameworks and power relations. The reality of both the art market and the building industry has at some point very much depended on institutional authority and their protagonists, and in many cases still does. The delegation between execution and planning exists in the art world just as much as in architecture, partially resulting in the invisibility of the involved workers, which is particularly noticeable on the construction site. In building industry the actual workers and craftsmen on site, who physically shape the built matter, aren't really part of the narrative in architectural history. Yet their expertise and skills were crucial for the quality and expression of the resulting structure. The process behind the construction site is usually not considered worth to be published. It is rather perceived as a dirty, undesirable moment and a temporary intruder in the built landscape.

In regard to *Mono-ha*, the relation to material and building seems to be a little more complex. The question of the actual "craftsman" is often not entirely clear here either - usually several people were involved, as in the well-known work by Nobuo Sekine "*Phase-Mother Earth*" (1968). The question of reproduction arises here as well. Can such a work, which is so dependent on time and place, be exhibited a second time? What artistic meaning can be attributed to the practical execution, especially if the artist is no longer alive? In particular, since the temporary character of these works was an essential part of the artistic idea, often only vague memories and documents in the form of photos are available.² This gives the works a rather abstract or even mystical character. Considering this, the reproduction of an object so bound to time and space would rather seem obsolete, if not even impossible.



Floor Hole, Gordon Matta-Clark, 1972 (installing)

The paradox of making *Non-art*

Mono-ha is often connected to the notion of *Non-art*, whose foundation can be seen as an further development of *Anti-art* movements, that emerged during the post-war period in Japan in the 1950s. Protagonists rejected art as an individual artistic expression, away from formal gestures as an object or “beauty” in a common sense towards a new definition of art, related to the very existence of objects or landscapes of everyday, up to the complete refusal of the willful act of creating.³ One aspect in this case is the denial of the chronological sequences of a traditional artwork: starting with an empty paper and resulting in a definite, finished statement of expression. It can thus be “found” in the principle of Duchamp’s ready-made, or it can be “destroyed” or “removed” in a reversed act of creation, or “transformed” in an new relation to the context, and so on.⁴

The disregard of the raw, “incomplete” material of an unfinished building in the context of the construction site, temporarily dismisses the material from its authentic value, and forces it to take certain shape to subsequently regain a distorted meaning after the completion of the building. Addressing material rather in a phenomenological than an ontological way opens new possibilities regarding the perception of waste streams and material aesthetics.

In the complex understanding of *Mono-ha*, the object as form and tactile material is rather secondary. Here, it shapes space to “structures through which things revealed their existence”.⁵ It is the rejection of a finished product: perhaps the artist doesn’t have an definite image or concept in mind, but reaches liberation through the simple act of intuitive doing, thus revealing the “essential state of things”.⁶ In this intense engagement with matter, the act of shaping or reshaping the material turns into a performative act, that seems to be as relevant as the transformation of the material.⁷ The intervention on material states in space and time is somewhat related to the alteration of basic building materials, both in production and in demolition. As in Gordon Matta-Clark’s building *Cuttings*, the act of adding, the fundamental operation in architecture production, is shifted to subtracting in a sculptural sense.⁸

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Yoshitake, 2013, p. 208
Osborne, 2022, p. 196-198
Yoshitake, 2013, p. 209
ibid., p. 204
Tomii, 2013, p. 218
Richard, 2018



Nobuo Sekine - “Phase-Mother Earth” (1968)

The work *Phase-Mother Earth* by Nobuo Sekine in 1968 is often referred to as the cornerstone of *Mono-ha* work. The artist extracted soil in the form of a cylinder and placed it in the exact same geometric shape next to its hollow space. After the exhibition, the material was poured back into its original “cast”.⁹ In this aspect of circularity, some parallels to the basic principles of Zen teaching can be seen: “emptiness is form – form is emptiness” is considered a basic principle of the Japanese concept of space, summarized by the term “Ma”.¹⁰ (see Issue 004) The negative space between things, that is between matter, is therefore just as important, if not even more, than the object itself. The interplay and de-hierarchization of existence and empty space is given just as much attention here as the basic principle of life as a circular process.¹¹ Thus, what was actually hidden is made visible: regarding the material properties, as well as the hole left behind. However, it is not merely about the resulting form or the ground, but rather about the temporal shift of material in space and thus, its new weighting.

This subtractive operation is certainly nothing new in architectural history. There are well-known examples in vernacular architecture that adapted their methods to environmental conditions: building strategies in natural landscapes confronted the given material of the ground as extractive mass, as we can see



Underground village in Tungkwun, China

in archaic structures of Chinese underground settlements, where people lived in sunken pit holes carved into the ground.¹² Sekine’s work appears almost as an archetypical form of architecture. Through genuine delocalization, the most omnipresent and elementary material, earth, is suddenly perceived here as a monument of space. An alienation and displacement that, through the immediate reference to the origin, the negative cylinder, again conveys the feeling of an inseparable relationship between “guest” and “home”. The positive cylinder is here, also in terms of temporality, briefly a “guest” in a new context, a stranger in space.

9 Yoshitake, 2013 p.202
10 Fehrer, 2005 p.17
11 Matsumoto, 2020
12 Rudofsky, 1965, p. 25-27

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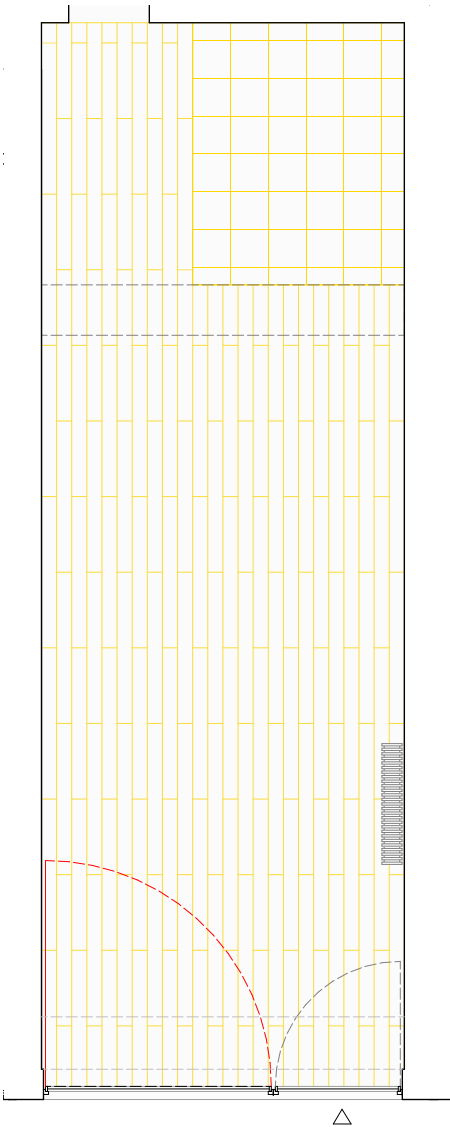
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Floor Opening

Worksite

type: conversion & floor exhibition
materials: concrete, polyvinyl chlorid, soap, kaliwaterglass, beeswax
guests: ca. 20 visitors and some passersby

The project intervention of this issue is a worksite for deconstruction, as no built matter was added to the space, but was rather subtracted in the reverse order of how it was assembled. The job was more or less self-committed by the motivation to remove the old, deteriorated PVC-flooring. Besides, we strived to open the storefront portal, which was stuck due to the thick flooring layer. In this process of renovation, the workload took unexpected dimensions, that confronted us with the issues of costs, skills, accessibility and the controversial material culture of the last century.



conversion plan 1:75 - removal of the vinyl flooring tiles



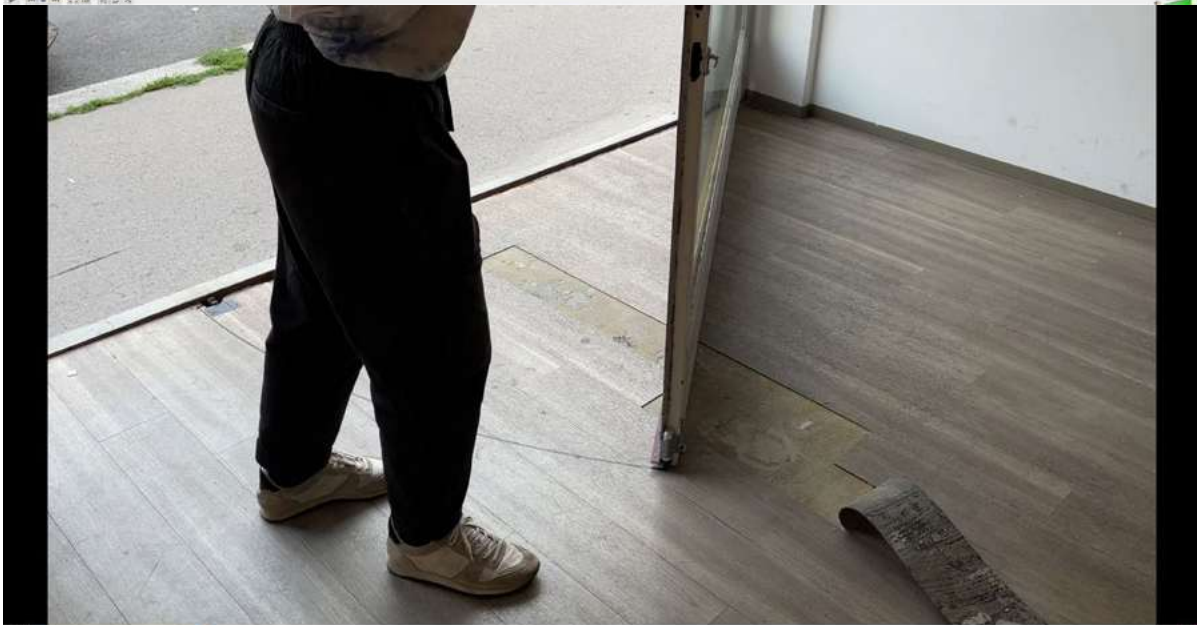
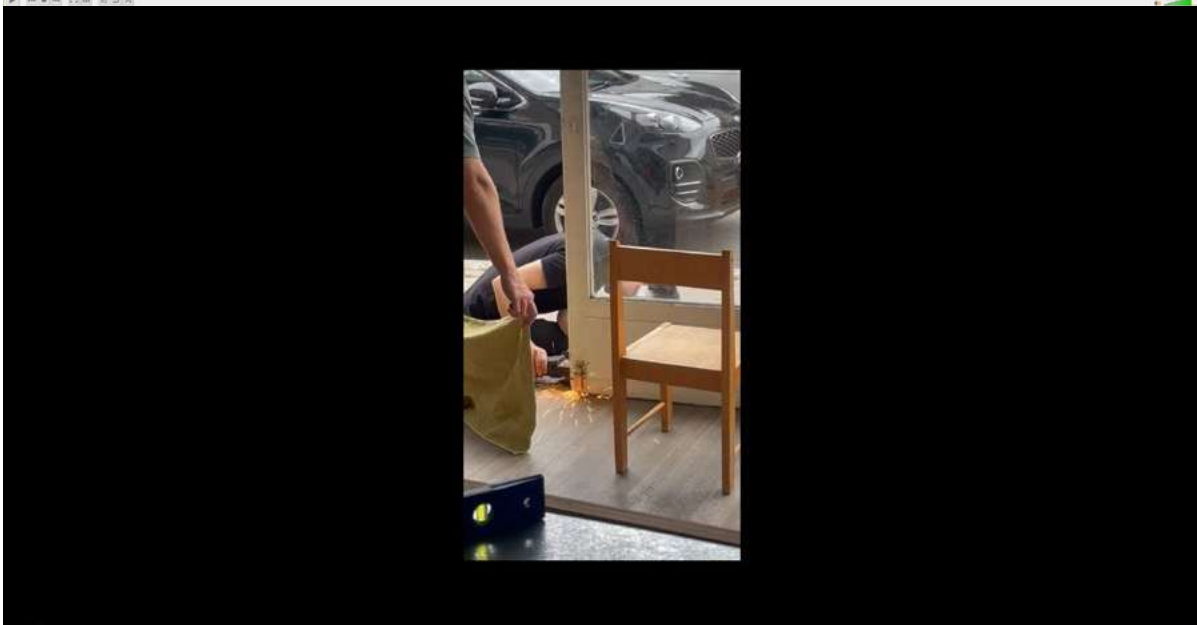
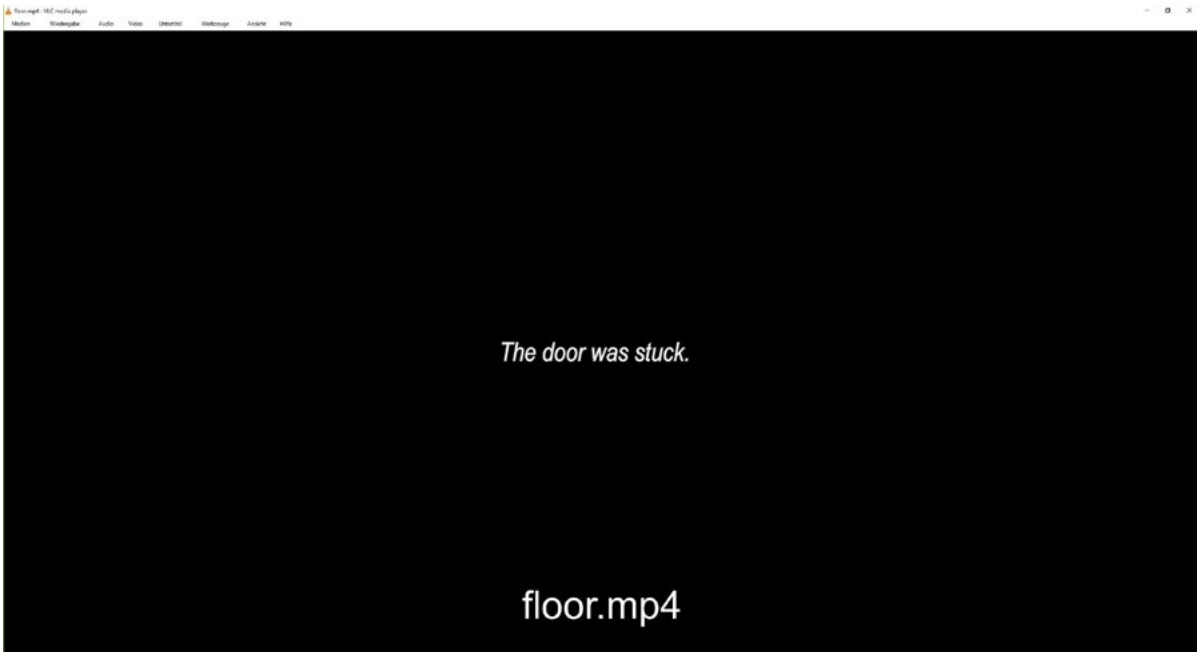
before conversion 03.04. 2021



after conversion 06.09. 2024

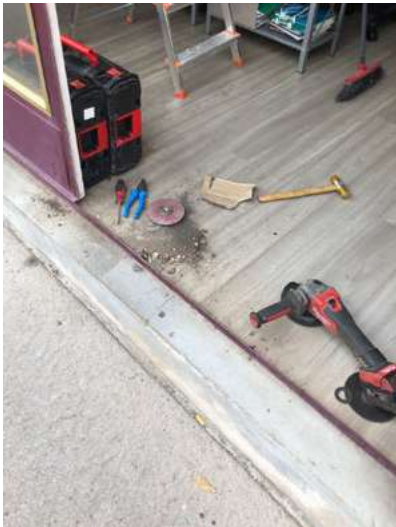






(Un)making of a Floor

The dimension of the workload for the 36m² floor of the studio space is definitely incomparable to large-scale building projects but the question of materiality, costs, availability, and accessibility applies to every scale. This work was a first step to becoming physically active in the transformation of the studio, which then led to further interventions that opened up the space to the public. More as a side effect, the unforeseen hurdles of a supposedly insignificant construction site created the base of a broader discourse on the symptoms of the current building industry. Over a period of 15 days the construction site became a place for simple, repeated rituals, for discussions and debates, along with the intense physical work.



intervention on the stuck door: 07/2024 cutting the stuck bolt open

Asbetos examination

Asbestos is a mineral fiber that was often contained in building materials during the last century and is generally known as a harmful substance in buildings. Its use in the building industry was legal up until 1993 and is therefore still present in many buildings built before that time and found in elements like floor coverings or cement.¹ Therefore, it represents a problem during renovation or conversion projects. When processed, by drilling or sanding, asbestos represents a high carcinogenic risk. Due to

the fact that the building of the studio site on Margaretenstraße was build in 1970, we had to consider the probability of asbestos contamination. An examination undertaken at the laboratory of the Federal Monuments Office in Vienna excluded the presence of asbestos in the old flooring and cement. What we received in return for paying quite a lot for this service, were microscopic x-ray analyses of our studio’s floor.



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Wien, 21.08.2024

Sachverständigengutachten 90/2024

Auftraggeber:

Maria Covrig

Betrifft: Bodenbelag, Asbestanalyse

Zur Analyse gelangten 2 Proben eines Bodenaufbaus der Liegenschaft Margaretenstraße 160/1, 1050 Wien mit dem Ziel einer Untersuchung auf künstliche Mineralfasern (KMF) bzw. Asbest. Die Proben wurden von der Auftraggeberin selbst entnommen und am 20.08.2024 zur Untersuchung eingereicht.

Die Untersuchungen erfolgten in Anlehnung an die VDI-Richtlinie 3866 („Bestimmung von Asbest in technischen Produkten“) mittels Rasterelektronenmikroskopie und energiedispersiver Röntgenmikroanalyse.

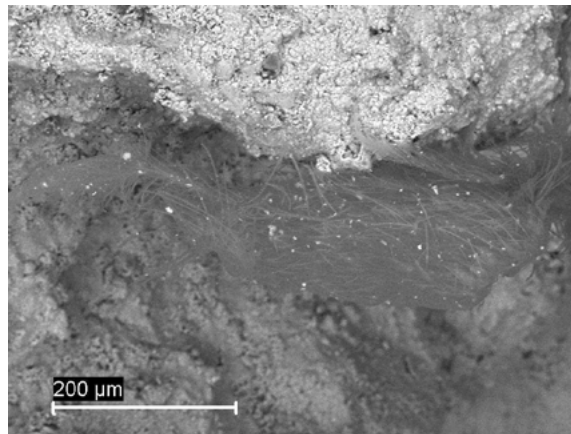
R. Linke

Dr. Robert Linke



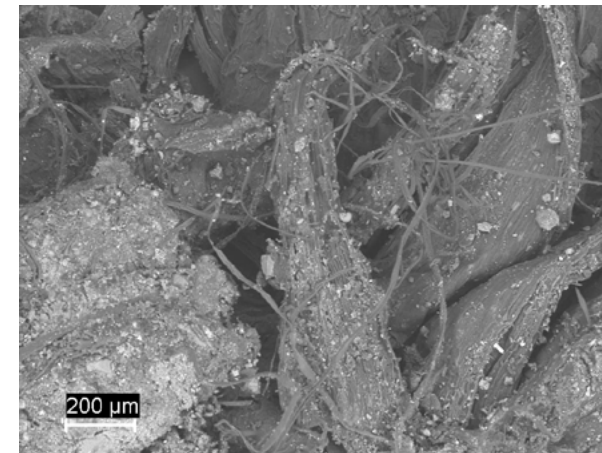
L184/24: Probe 1, Estrich Boden, Raum straßenseitig

Bei dieser Probe konnten vereinzelt Pflanzenfasern im Mörtel nachgewiesen werden, wobei es sich vermutlich um eine zufällige Verunreinigung handelt. Asbest oder künstliche Mineralfasern konnten jedenfalls nicht nachgewiesen werden bzw. sind mit Sicherheit auszuschließen.



Rasterelektronenmikroskopische Aufnahme einer frischen Bruchfläche der Probe mit eingebetteten Pflanzenfaserstrukturen.

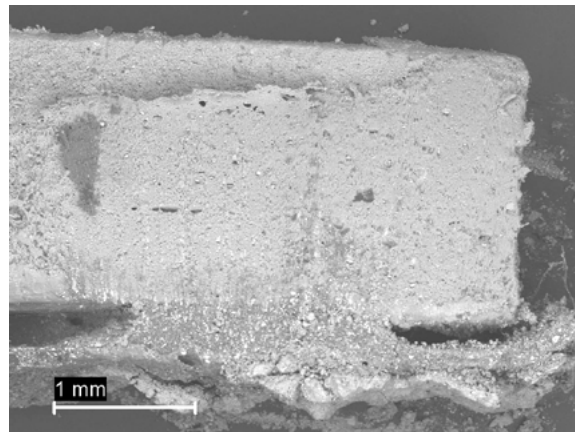
An der Unterseite des Bodenbelags konnten Pflanzenfasern als Trägermaterial nachgewiesen werden. Asbest oder künstliche Mineralfasern konnten jedoch auch in dieser Probe nicht nachgewiesen werden und sind mit Sicherheit auszuschließen.



Klebstoffrückstände an der Unterseite im Rasterelektronenmikroskop mit freiliegenden Pflanzenfasern.

L185/24: Probe 2, PVC-Belag Boden, Raum straßenseitig

Der aus PVC bestehende und zweilagig aufgebaute Bodenbelag enthält kein zugesetztes Fasermaterial.



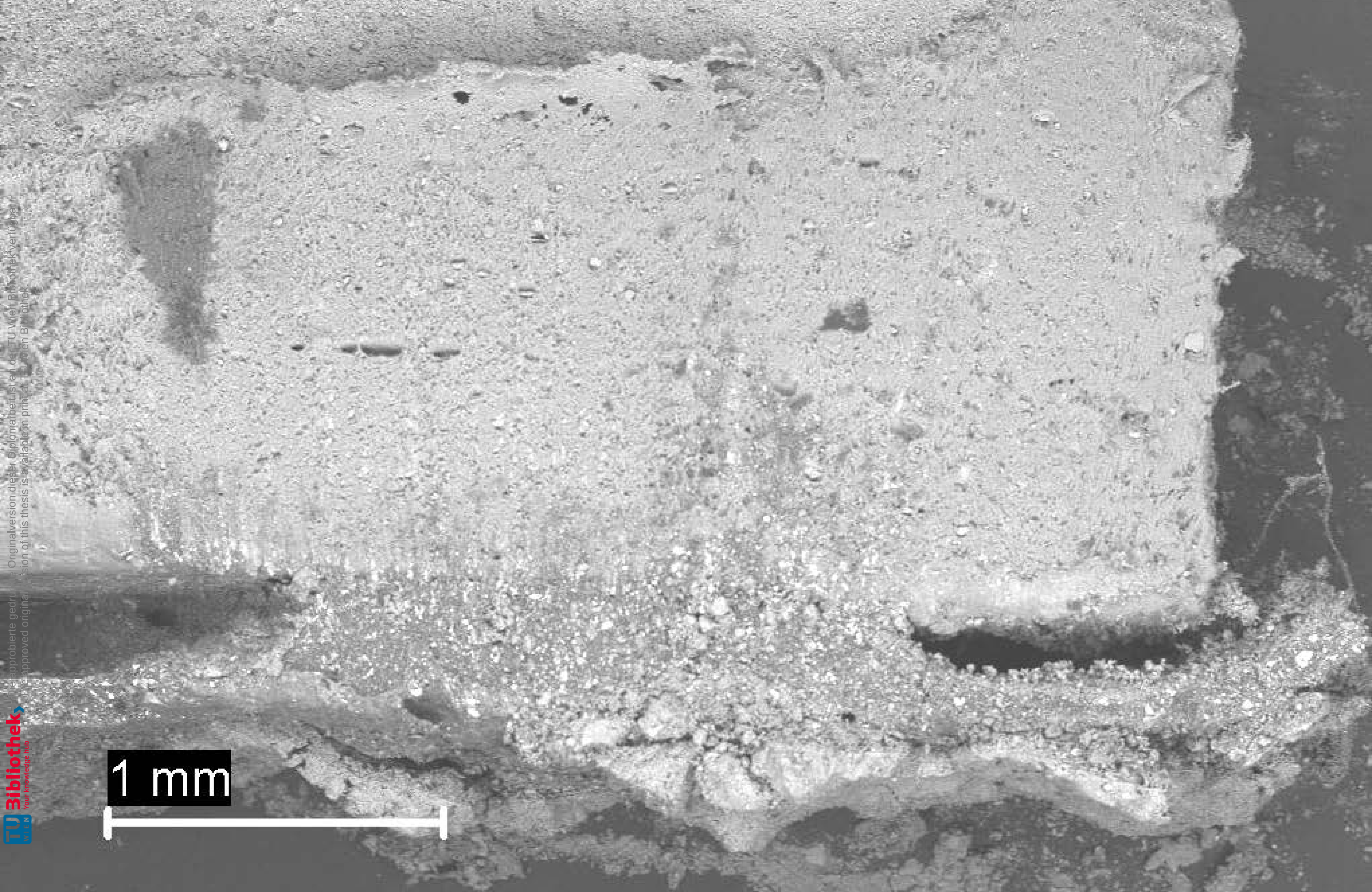
Querschnitt des Bodenbelags im Rasterelektronenmikroskop. An der Unterseite erkennt man noch anhaftende Reste des Klebers.

200 μm

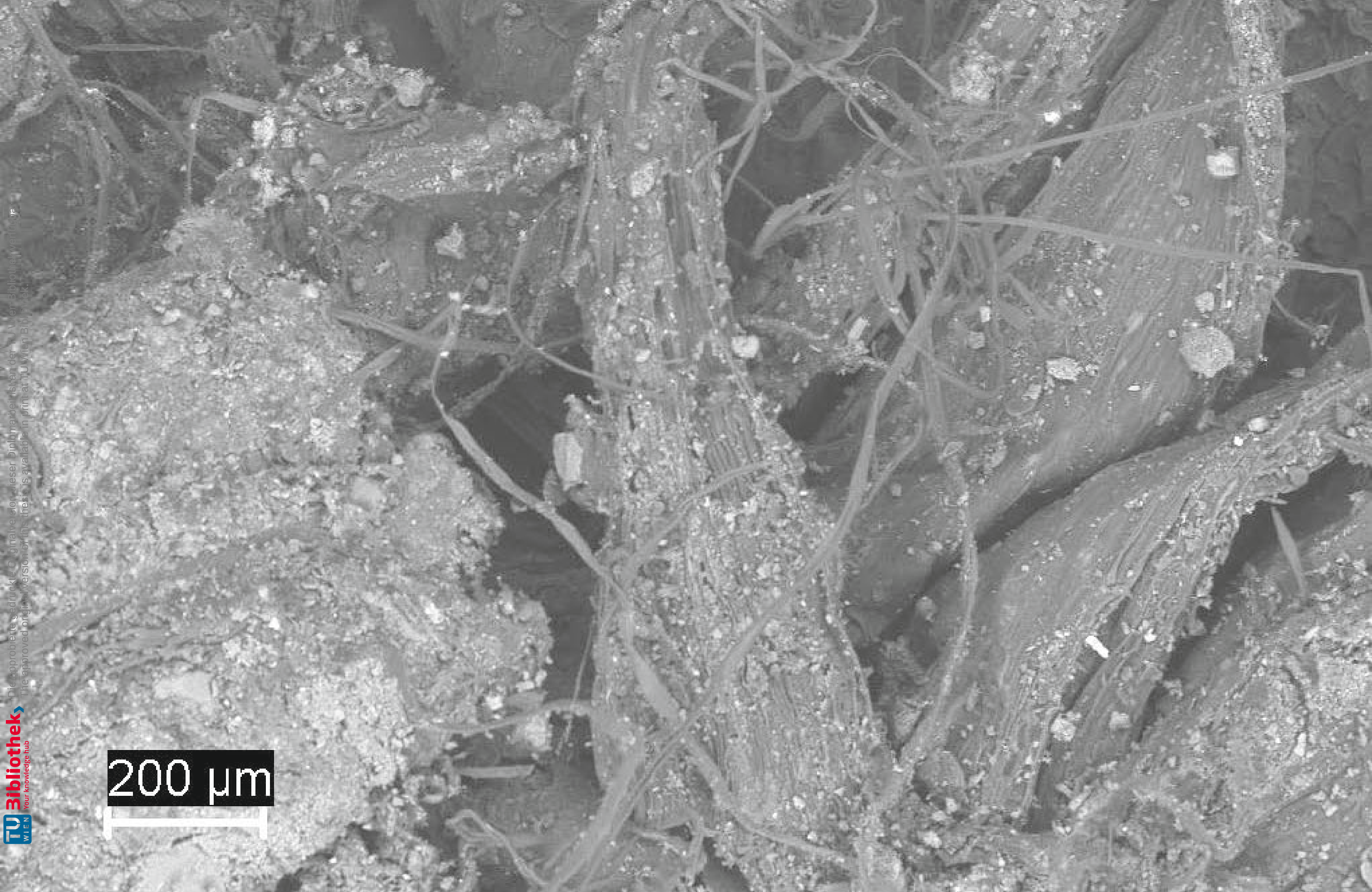




1 mm

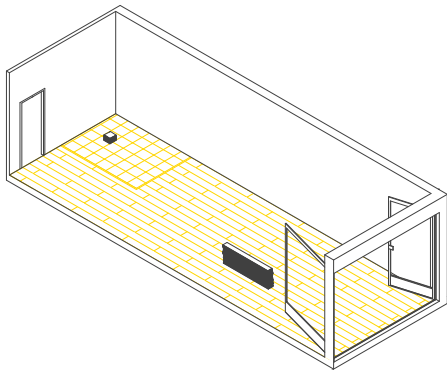


200 μm



	Object ID	Object Name	Type	Material	Dimension	Unit	Quantity
EXISTING	01-01	PVC-Tiles White	Floor	PVC	300*300*2	mm	42 pcs
	01-02	PVC-Tiles Wood	Floor	PVC	1200*12*3	mm	134 pcs
	01-03	Bitumen Glue	Building material	bitumen	38,16	m2	
	01-04	Cement-Based Glue	Building material	cement, additives	34,38	m2	
	01-05	Baseboard	Finishing	PVC	284*3	cm	-
	01-06	Lock Bolt	Locking system	steel	100	cm	1 pc
	01-07	Glass Portal	Double-Wing Door	glass, steel frame	250*130 / 230	cm	1pc, double-wing
	01-08	Wall Plaster	Finishing	plaster	852	cm2	
	01-9	Screed Floor	Floor	cement, sand, stones	38,16	m2	
NEW	02-01	Kaliwaterglass	Finishing	sodium-silicat	7	L	-
	02-02	Beeswax	Finishing	natural bee wax	100	g	-

Task	Notes
removal	probably original flooring 1970
removal	more recent and thicker, prevents the glassportal from opening
removal	probably original state
removal	for the more recent tile flooring
removal	removal of the glued baseboard, the wall plaster was torn off
conversion	the bolt was welded into the bolt hole, had to be cut open
repair	the front of the shop can be completely opened
repair	concerning just the base area
repair	original state
maintainance	densification method for polished concrete surface
maintainance	protective layer on the concrete surface



01-09 **Screed Floor**
supporting ground



01-02 **PVC-Tiles**
old flooring



02-01 **Kali Waterglass**
densification method



02-02 **Beeswax**
protective layer

After removing the old flooring and the hardened glue beneath, the vinyl tiles were stacked and set aside for eventual repurposing. The surface of the polished concrete was densified with kali waterglass, a water-soluble sodium silicate compound¹, commonly used for coating

treatment of mineral surfaces. Beeswax was additionally applied as a protective finish. The aim was to use only low-maintenance, ecologically safe materials, without the need of complex technologies.



01-01

PVC-Tiles White
42 pcs. à 0,30kg
total weight: 12,6kg



01-02

PVC-Tiles Wood
134 pcs. à 0,65kg
total weight: 87,1kg







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The approved original version of this thesis is available online at TU Wien Bibliothek.



Tools

Unexpected conditions of the material layers that had to be removed required specific tools and methods. While certain equipment had to be acquired from specialized shops, other tools were improvised with what was available in the studio's workshop.

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The approved original version of this thesis is available in print at TU Wien Bibliothek.











Dust and dirt















Boden(er)öffnung

After removing and stacking the tiles, they received a new order from horizontal to vertical layering - the vinyl tiles grow as a column, they lose their property of covering the supporting ground, they get a new meaning while covering and supporting solely themselves. Their shape and dimensions remained the same, but the space now felt completely different. Time is wound back, and the stack of tiles seems as if it would be ready to be reassembled at any time. Through the reversal of structures in a temporal and spatial sense, the old flooring can in fact be perceived as a transient guest on the supporting ground.

Studio Margarita

Boden(er)öffnung
05.09. 18:00





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Feedback



The goal of changing the surfaces of the studio brought unforeseen difficulties and confrontations. The probability of the presence of asbestos in many buildings built before the 90s required an execution detour up to the laboratory of the Federal Monuments Office in Vienna. After the examination excluded the presence of asbestos, we were able to proceed with the work. The size of the room presented a further challenge in terms of appropriate tools. Too big for small machines and too small for large machines, the worksite on the surface of 36m2 proved to be quite a struggle. Instead of 4 days as expected, the worksite took 2 weeks of intensive work with a high level of physical effort during a heat wave in summer. Not only

did this intervention increase the respect for those who regularly engage in hands-on design practice, but studying a wide range of materials and their application, from cleaning to finishing, also proved to be a valuable experience.

It was surprising how much of a resonance a construction site on the ground floor can have in the neighborhood, besides being annoying and loud. Several times, we were offered help by people who randomly passed by - some eventually looking for a paid job. Our neighbors went from being anonymous to familiar faces, greeted us and asked how work was going. In the end, the construction site was not only physical work, but turned into a place for meeting, discussing and exchanging.

ISSUE

HOTEL MARGARITA

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The Public Issue

Our studio space is located on the ground floor of Margaretenstraße 160 with direct access to street level. The wide storefront portal directly connects the studio to the street and exposes its inner life to the public view. These conditions determined us to reflect on and work with the specificities of the storefront - an architectural element which is particularly present and meaningful in the scenery of Vienna. This spatial aspect is a unique tool to expand the “private” space of the studio into the realm of the city. Or, vice versa, welcome the city inside. The door as architectural element seems to be the one of the most relevant components when it comes to hospitality, as it metaphorically initiates the welcoming of guests and expresses how we, as hosts, display ourselves to the outside world.

Thinking of a simple door, it could be considered a rather secondary, functional element compared to the scale of the city. Still, it is

the first to be encountered when approaching a building.¹ It is the initial moment of surprise when entering a room and encountering an other. The door is thus a significant architectural detail - it is a spatial connector, while also suggesting the division of space. Through the lens of territorial, political and societal issues, it becomes a symbolic tool with the ability to record and control access. Here, the door portrays not only the physical connection between inside and outside, but also the relations within our societies - how we protect, how we separate or connect, who we invite or let inside.²

Considering architectural “tools” that are related to hospitality, the door is like a handshake at the threshold between inside and outside. Here, “inside” and “outside” does not have to refer only to a spatial or thermic differentiation, but from the perspective of hosting they also signify the duality of these notions: host-guest, here-there, familiar-strange, etc.

The gestures of an element can influence the behavior of those who experience it.

As entrance into an unknown building, a closed door, for example, can be a sign to maintain a certain distance. But when expanded to a more complex element, like that of a typical storefront of ground-level shops, it becomes an invitation to the passerby. Storefront galleries host not only goods for retail, but also signs of culture, economy and politics. The physical screen between the inside and outside is a communicator of information, exposed to public gaze. An entrance can host (or prevent) encounters in many ways and its design has a significant impact on how it is experienced.

With this in mind, we opened the glass portal, which was locked by previous users, as a way of reaching out a gesture of hospitality to the street and an act of invitation. We use this moment to host a concert at the threshold of the storefront, with the two parking lots across

offering space for the audience. It was a small glitch in the system that we used to claim this small piece of street.

This issue gives an insight into the strategies of this intervention and explore systematic gaps in urban regulations. In this context we take a closer look into the topic of the “city as a host”. This reflection introduces a piece of thought on the imaginary of the storefront, inspired by filmmaker Agnès Varda’s visual conversations with shop owners on Rue Daguerre in Paris, captured her documentary *Daguerréotypes* from 1975, that features simple records of everyday life and profound reflections on unseen stories.

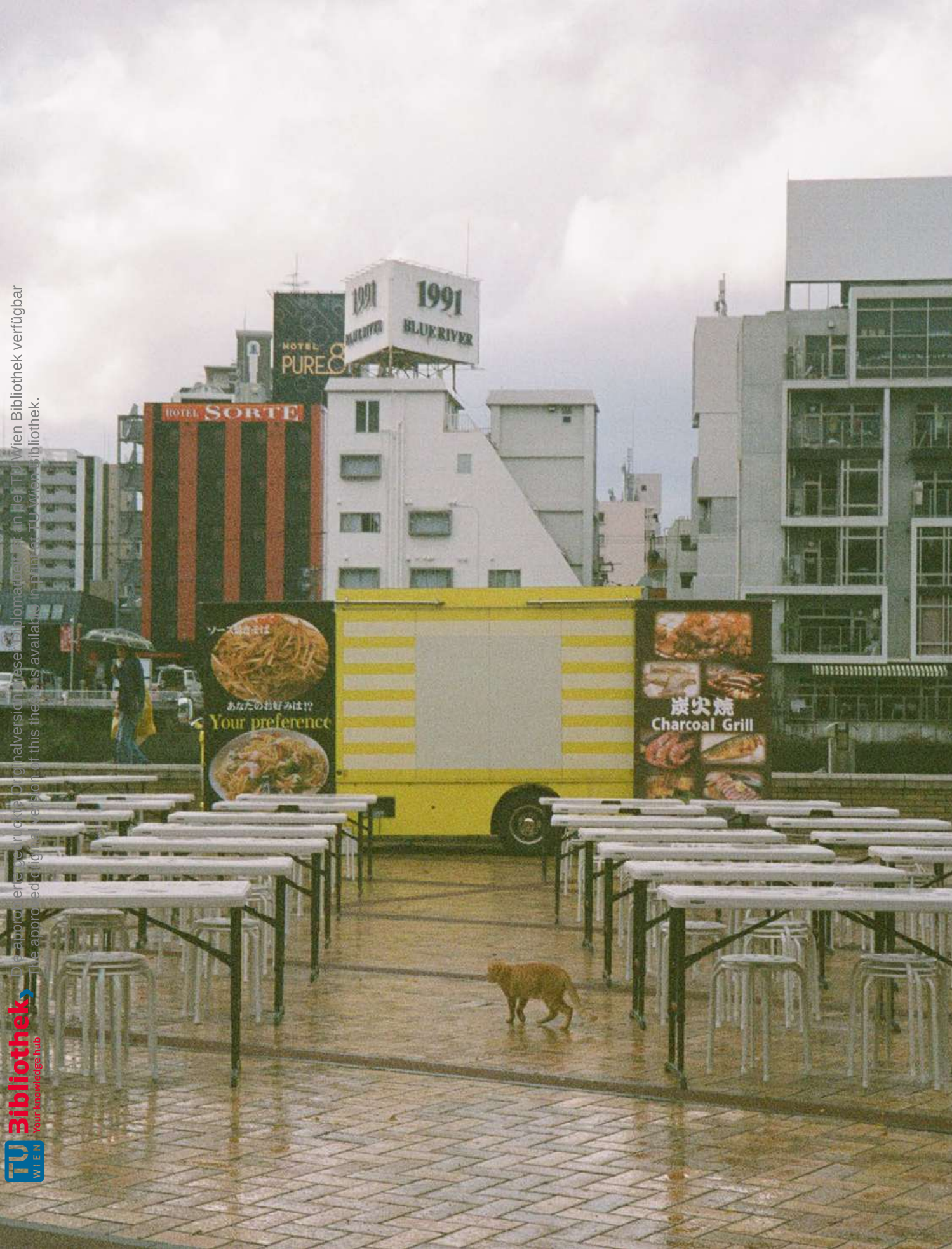
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Lo Ricco, 2020
Perec, 1974, p.37

The City as a Host or Hosting the City

How to Appropriate the Streets



Economy of hosting

The same way our living spaces are shaped by the intertwined net of culture, society and economy, so does our built environment influence the way we behave in society: how we care for each other and for our homes. It can be as well a feeling of social belonging: as part of a community or as inhabitant of a land or city. Hospitality is intrinsic to the places we inhabit. In this context, home goes beyond the notion of the private or domestic space. Besides its ethical value, hospitality is deeply connected to the economy of space. In its elementary understanding, hosting is a way of welcoming strangers in the personal habitat. In economic terms, the act of hosting developed to a construct that approaches space as commodity. If we consider Lefebvre’s understanding of urban reality as an ensemble of consumable signs and of meanings conceived as exchange value, then hospitality is just as much part of this system.¹

The mere categorization of ‘host’ and ‘guest’ signalizes no less than a division in territorial terms: the private property and the unavailable property. The duality in hospitality is inherently hierarchical. As Kakoliris refers to Derrida’s idea of ethics of hospitality, “there is no hospitality, in the classical sense of the term, without the sovereignty of the person who offers hospitality in his or her house.”² Concerning this hierarchical binary to the extent of the city, what am I as a citizen in “my” city? Host or guest? What are my rights in “my own city”? What authority defines who is welcome and under what conditions? How do we welcome the “other” in public realm? And is it possible



photograph by Herman Hertzberger, Paris 1970

to imagine hospitality beyond the economy of ownership politics?

Of course, these questions carry the dilemma of the right to host without any possession, since, in today’s society, the social act in hospitality would rather be perceived as exchange value. While it undoubtedly grounds on significant cultural and social meanings that were crucial for the development of functioning communities, hospitality has been gradually repurposed as a means of capital, contributing

to a thriving culture of consumption in nearly every unit of modern society, such as tourism, retail, real estate and digitalization. Yet the simple, uncommercialized act of hosting is still present in everyday life and an essential part of our social existence. We are all somehow strangers here, and considering the complex rhythms of how information, goods, culture and living beings cross space and borders these days, hospitality can definitely have a great influence on how we coexist on this planet.

The right to host

The Living Room at The Yellow House in Boden, Sweden, a project initiated by Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti (DAAR) in 2017, reflects on the right to host in the context of public sphere being hosted and curated by state authorities. The city is host to its citizens, as to non-citizens, while the hierarchies of hospitality are imposed by institutional structures.³ When imagining hospitality, thinking of the own ‘home’ might seem the most natural and immediate response. It is intriguing to shift this perspective from the inside the outside, from the private person to public domain, and to understand hosting beyond the sphere of the domestic – how you enter not a private home, but the city. In this sense, would you become the guest of your own city as soon as you leave your private space? The public sphere is as well a “hospitable environment” where one is eventually welcomed. You are invited to respect the ethics of hospitality required by the state. Is it the invitation to “make yourself at home” in public, yet conditional.

Hilal addresses the general misconception of a non-hierarchical ‘public space’ and proposes the notion ‘common’ instead of ‘public’ to refer to a space that serves a public realm beyond state control. DAAR’s work challenges the traditional notion of hospitality and the division of public and private, as it proposes the living-room as a site of public engagement that

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Lefebvre, 1996, 115
Kakoliris 2015 p.148
Hilal, 2019

The Living Room at the Yellow House in Boden, 2017



Repurposing the logic of a system

“represents the private citizen”⁴. It introduces the living room – ‘Al-Madhafah’, “a concept in Arab culture that refers to a room or a space dedicated to hospitality and the welcoming of guests”, as Hilal describes it– as a reconsideration of how spaces can be re-appropriated to serve communities and encourages a more inclusive, citizen-driven approach to the public. In this sense, self-run spaces in multicultural cities could become one of the many strategies to reconsider togetherness and common interest.

Our bare experience of reality shows that it can be easily inverted into a means of control and exclusion. Nevertheless, hospitality is an inherent part of our everyday life. We are all strangers and locals at the same time. And there is great potential in creating tools for togetherness, if used for a just purpose. As David Harvey comments on Lefebvre’s idea of The Right to The City, it is “a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization.”⁵

4
5

ibid., 2019
Harvey, 2012, p.4

Current city infrastructure is certainly a powerful device of state institutions, as its space is strongly shaped by administrative logistics and urban economy. But considering the fragility of a system that (at least seemingly) tries to make it good for everyone, there always seems to be a possibility to repurpose its own logic. Backdoors or gaps can be found in every set of rules. Like DAAR’s *Living Room* challenges the rigidity of hosting politics, one could make do with gaps in the system, in order to make an impact and even shape cities much more than by transforming its architecture.

City planning processes are increasingly confronting the conflict of interest between capital and community and are often directed at the disadvantage of the latter. In the wake of the systematic alienation of the social performance of cities, collective initiatives of urban practice could emerge as a way towards a more just urban practice. Beyond engaging in administrative dialogues, there is still potential in the challenge to uncover glitches in existing structures and take part in an act of discreet but effective resistance against top-down, hegemonic maneuvers of authorities. In this context,

searching for the backdoors of a system does not have to mean an overturn on the current order. It rather enables exploring the potential of adapting to it and reprocessing its logic, in the best case for the means of a more pleasant environment.

The city of Vienna has precise regulations for the possibility to actively perform as a citizen in the public sphere. State institutions administer and account for various public services of the city, while there are certain organizations that advocate for public initiatives for the support of improvements and benefits for the local community and enable public engagement in these processes. Like some other European cities, Vienna offers citizens several facilities for “hosting” public space for a limited time and under specific conditions - this can be a market stand, a grill place, a parklet area, a site for street music, permit for demonstrations, advertising signs, etc. The digital platform “Vienna Provides Space” (Wien gibt Raum) is a program that focuses on optimizing public space management, by simplifying administrative processes and providing and creating a digital platform for the legal and organizational framework accessible to the local population and business.⁶ (Wien gibt Raum) In a certain manner, this grants citizens the right to temporarily host an event or activity in their city.

As is stated on their website, the program “also provides the basis for ‘decluttering’ urban public space, i.e. removing illegal structures and objects, thus making more room for all user groups in the city and guaranteeing fair use of public space for everyone.”⁷ The notably well-organized Viennese services, like the MA48, department for waste management,

indeed have the logistic capacity to keep this promise, at least compared to other European cities. Control over illegal structures that harm the social well-being in urban environments is surely something that should be valued. At the same time, it should also be considered to what extent a thing really is illegal - a stranger in the environment. When does something belong or not belong? These ‘illegal structures and objects’ are which are often just waste items disposed of on the streets - like unwanted, uninvited guests – and are most likely to be removed shortly after their apparition. In many cases they indicate an act of indifference but can also be understood as a statement that goes beyond the logistics of waste management. They showcase a politics of waste, of surplus production and an abundance of belongings, and the journey of everyday objects escaping the domestic, into the unknown, strolling around like strangers without a home.

This is not the aim of aestheticizing a landscape of waste or decay, but it should be taken into account that historical milestones both in arts and architecture were often manifested through things or actions that went against the order, that were at the time strange or not accepted, but that gradually formed a dominant attitude, leading to the emergence of new artistic and architectural movements. From idea to object to space - what questioned or broke the norms was a response to doctrines and urgencies of a period.

6
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Wien gibt Raum, n.d.
ibid.

Buiding of the settlement 'Rosenhügel' in Vienna, around 1921



A critical point in the emergence process of Vienna’s acclaimed social housing program in the first half of the 20th century dates back to the Settler Movement (Siedlerbewegung), formed in the aftermath of the illegal ‘wild settlements’, mainly on grounds in Wienerwald, occupied after the end of World War I by groups of people injured during war and with scarce living conditions.⁸ Eventually, the municipality granted the permission for the development of the area, an act that encouraged the formation of self-aid organizations and support from the city of Vienna. Keys to a functioning settlement were the self-governance, the collective infrastructure and ownership of the houses and personal labor contributions. It should definitely be questioned to what extent is a structure illegal if it resists against the harm of ‘fair use of public space for everyone’ - informal structures, occupied ground, writings on walls, urban interventions are architectures of protest can be an evident or subtle manifestation of call for change.

In the context of the fruitful artistic activity that emerged in urban chaos of SoHo, New York in the early 1970s, many artists reacted to the economic pressures of urban developments admits ground speculations of the growing real

estate industry and the systematic ignorance towards peculiar and economically unattractive leftover spaces in the city. At that time, Gordon Matta-Clark gradually purchased and carefully recorded some of these incredibly small and oddly shaped lots scattered throughout the city of New York, a project known today as “Reality Properties: Fake Estates”.⁹ Many of these parcels have been subsequently reclaimed by the City of New York due to unpaid tax bills, while some remained unpossessed after the artists’ death. In an attempt to reconsider this significant work and recollect at least some of these ‘odd lots’, the editorial group of the ‘Cabinet’ magazine started an investigative initiative in 2002, that ultimately led to an exhibition in Queens Museum of Art in 2005 and temporary contributions and performances on the plots.

This documentary work was often considered contradictory and ambiguous, as the editors claim, in the spirit of Matta-Clarks “involvement with the ruptures in the city’s urban grid”.¹⁰ The question of the use-value relation in spatial organization is deeply interconnected with the hurdles of institutional bureaucracy. Retrospectively, Gordon Matta-Clark’s inventory of urban artifacts suggests the uncertainty in the unreasonable property distribution of the commodity ‘space’ and the urgency to reclaim the right and spirit for performing in urban realm. There are structures that regulate the city and then things happen that reregulate the structure. The thrill of cities lies in the blending of formal and informal matter. There is room for a certain degree of informality in every structure.

8

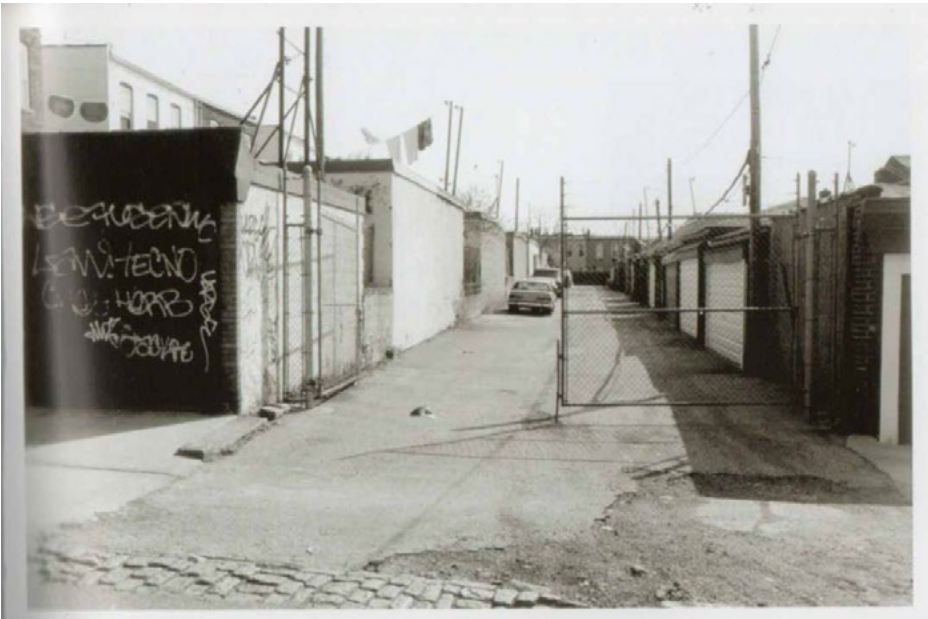
Siedlerbewegung, n.d.

9

Kastner et al., 2005, p.4

10

ibid., p.5



Woodward Avenue, Queens, NY, photo by Gordon Matta-Clark, 1974



The entrance as encounter

The image of a city as we experience it is shaped by its architectural elements, while the nearest scale nearest to the human body might be, in fact, the door – the physical threshold between inside and outside, the first to be encountered when entering a building. The door is a strategic tool for controlling how we connect or divide.¹¹ A profound analysis of the role of the door and its complex evolution has been displayed in Koolhaas’s “Elements of Architecture” series.¹² The catalogue explores it as a key element of spatial negotiation and cultural expression, evolving from a simple barrier to a complex interface that mediates mobility, privacy, security, and even technology: from historical fortress gates, equipped with traps, spikes, and other defense systems, from imposing portals carrying dragons and demons to scare enemies away, to high-tech airport security gateways. Modern architecture began to gradually unload the symbolic weight of the vigilant door, aiming for transparency, accessibility and flow. Doors are not simply utilitarian objects – they can shape behavior, control movement, and embody the socio-political and cultural values of their time. As a threshold, it spans from the geopolitical realm to the deeply personal scale of the body.

You may not consciously remember the feeling of passing through a door, but the situation you enter - or the expectation of it - is

always bound to a thought or emotion: the moment you step into an unknown place or when you eventually arrive home, when you go inside crowded space, or finally leave it; when you enter a quiet room; when you escape the cold in a heated place, pushing a heavy door open; the rush when passing the gates to the subway lines; when a door always remains open; or when it slams shut behind you. The door’s ability to frame these exact moments highlights its performative potential. Given this, one also has to think of the various cultures, rites and traditions linked to passing through doorways, either sacred or profane, or forms of greeting habits, like a handshake, a kiss or a bow.

Considering architectural “tools” that are related to hospitality, the door is like a handshake at the threshold between inside and outside. Here, “inside” and “outside” does not have to refer only to a spatial or thermic differentiation, but can also signify to the duality of these notions from the perspective of hosting: host-guest, here-there, familiar-strange, etc. Doors are part of the symbolic dimension of cities. The gestures of an architectural element can influence the behavior of those who observe or experience it.



11

Perec 1974 p.37

12

Koolhaas 2018 p.257

Ground Floor Portraits









A Thought on Agnès Varda's Conversations on Rue Daguerre



Daguerotypes, Agnès Varda, 1978 (film still)

Storefronts as threshold to the imaginary

Ever since consumer culture took over the urban landscape in the 19th century, the shop window emerged as a central architectural element of buildings and substantially shaped the face of the modern city. They were a clear symbol of wealth of a world with increasing access to resources, goods and information. These small shops on the ground floor of mostly residential buildings not only physically but also systematically became the foundation of our living environment. Spaces for trade and commerce on street-level have a long history in European cities. Like markets that temporarily occupy the space needed and perform for a limited period of time, they were often informal open structures, part of the constantly transforming material scenery of the city.

The mere system of storefront windows substantially altered this functional synergy by introducing a physical screen between the goods and the consumer. The display area at the threshold between street and shop creates a sort of spatial vacuum, that preserves and aestheticizes the things which are displayed.

Show-off, but at a safe distance, they seem to be disconnected from reality - inaccessible but desirable to the viewer.

New technologies like the production of large glass screens and special lightning enabled the staging of shop window all around the clock. Visual patterns pointed up through illuminated signs enhanced the exhibitionist character of the world behind the glass panel.¹ Often of anonymous design, depicting the inherently ordinary culture of everyday objects, their representative power has not been overseen. For renowned names of the consumer industry, it became an effective tool to claim space in public realm, favoring luxury over primary needs. Gallery windows turned into landmarks. Still, they managed to remain accessible and have often been a tool at hand for critical countermeasures, being reappropriated by artists or other groups in order to return this stage of consumption imaginary back to the mainstream, to common access.



Storefront of shoe shop by Ludwig Ritter, Vienna, around 1920



Agnès Varda and the faces of the city

The face of a city as experienced from the outside is broadly constructed through the outer surfaces of its structures: streets, sidewalks, facades, and, maybe closest to the scale of the human body, the entrance or windows of buildings. The city and its “faces” are become a narrative element in the film *Daguerréotypes* by Agnès Varda from 1975, a cross-genre documentary of a street in Paris, Rue Daguerre, where the filmmaker lives and works.

The street becomes the setting of a city portrait in the broadest sense of the word, capturing the ground-level shops and their owners as the main characters. Varda introduces the first movie scene with the performance of a magician. His act emphasizes the layer of the mystical in the film, that refers to the imaginaries and the intimate stories behind the gallery windows of family-run shops. She portrays simple records of everyday life, while narrating the unseen stories of the shop owner: They are hosting the places for the local trade activity on the Rue Daguerre, while themselves being rather guests in the city of Paris, as many of them had to leave their homes after the war. The storefronts, like picture frames, highlight people pursuing their daily work and thus maintaining the everyday pursuit of urban life, and become a tool of political and emotional reflection.²



Like the name of the street, the movie is a homage to Louis Daguerre, knowingly the inventors of the Daguerreotype, the first publicly available photographic method, and the establishment of portrait photography. Agnès Varda, a photograph herself, directly references Daguerre's oeuvre stylistically and applies it as a narrative strategy: through extremely long movie frames with the focus on the portraits of the shop owners, evokes the sense of the long exposure time, that was required in historical photography techniques. The rigid awkwardness in waiting for the next frame is visually experienced by the audience, evoking a feeling of strange discomfort—perhaps similar to the feeling each of us has felt at some point in an unfamiliar environment or when encountering a stranger.³ However, the still focus on a person for a longer time offers the chance to subtly build up an intimate relationship with the character, comparable to the so-called “pillow shots” of Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu, in which he freezes everyday objects in between scenes to evoke a sense of compassion in the viewer.⁴ (see Issue 004)

2

DeRoo, 2018, p.84

3

DeRoo, 2018, p.91

4

Bordwell, n.d., p.104-105

From strangers to hosts

Varda's movie highlights the economic and social relevance of these shops for the seamless operation of the urban environment and reflects a sense of hospitality in the emotional dimension of the city. Rather, we see a vibrant ecosystem that coexists with and alongside each other and shapes everyday life in a city. The characters of the movie, each of them with a unique story and purpose in the community, share their memories with Varda and thus with the viewer.

This film is not only a documentation and analysis of this urban symbiosis, but also an

activist fight for its preservation. At the time, in which the film was made, there was an enormous phase of urban development in Paris that was characterized by gentrification and commercialization of old districts, endangering the living space of the poorer middle class.⁵ This social class, which often had a migration background, found a new home and jobs in streets like Rue Daguerre. This is quite a paradox - once “strangers” in the city themselves, their windows now offer in turn a gesture of hospitality.

5

Bordwell, n.d., p.86



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28.09.'24

7PM

00:45:00

Storefront Show

In Between the Storefront and the Parking Lot

- type:

materials:

guests:

concert by *Comic Figure*

corrugated polyester, clamps, light tubes, warning tape, no-parking signs, chairs, sound equipment

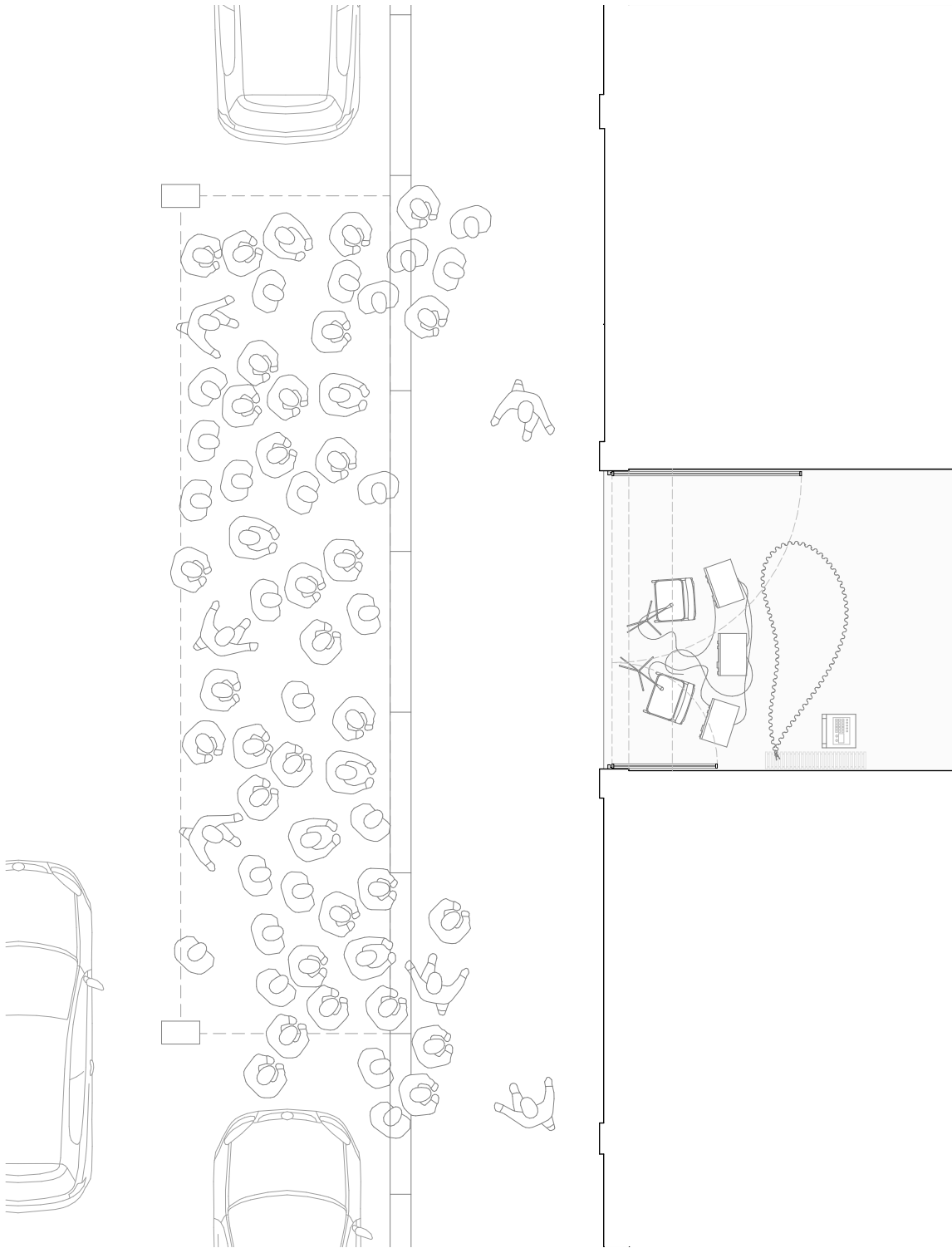
2 musicians, around 50 visitors

The spatial quality of the studio’s front door offers the possibility to expand the inside space into the realm of the city. Or, vice versa, welcome the street inside. The simple gesture of opening the storefront doors blurs out the physical threshold between inside and outside. The door is a significant element in space regarding hospitality, as it can express an invitation to the outside world.

As a way of staging this threshold, we completely exposed the studio for one evening and hosted a concert at the edge of the storefront, where the local band *Comic Figure*, formed by Paul Buschnegg from and Tobias Hammermüller, was invited to perform. The show was therefore open to the broad public, so passersby could simply join the show. The audience occupied the two parking lots in front of the studio.

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1m



ground level plan 1:75 - storefront show with audience on two parking lots







Making of a Show

Through a formal request from the municipal traffic department MA46 to mark a no-parking zone in front of the studio for the duration of the show, we managed to book two parking spaces and use them as space for the audience. This ensured the unconstrained mobility of pedestrians and passing cars. A corrugated polyester sheet served as stage design. The blurry translucency of the material, in combination with illuminated tubes served as a soft source of light behind the musician and subtly separated the backstage area from the main event. The rather rough sound equipment was composed solely by guitar amplifiers, microphones and a mixing desk and generated a particular but authentic sound of the artists' gentle tones.

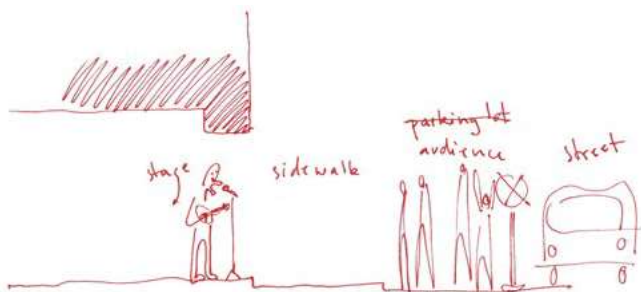
Two Parking Lots



The request for a permit to mark a no-parking zone in front of the studio was formally issued for loading activities, which we genuinely required for moving the technical equipment for the concert of *Comic Figure*. The permit remained valid until midnight, so we could claim the space for the concert's duration. As a result, the two parking lots offered enough space for the audience to enjoy the concert, without obstructing the regular passage on the sidewalk.

**A short-term no-parking zone for the exclusive purpose of relocations or similar loading activities must be requested the Department for Traffic Organization and Technical Traffic Matters (MA 46). The permit can be issued for a maximum of one week or 5 working days and exclusively for the period of the loading times (e.g. November 1 to 3 from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., not 00 a.m. to midnight). (Stadt Wien)*

**Eine kurzfristige Halteverbotszone zum ausschließlichen Zweck von Übersiedlungen und ähnlichen Ladetätigkeiten muss bei der Abteilung für Verkehrsorganisation und technische Verkehrsangelegenheiten (MA 46) beantragt werden. Die Bewilligung kann für maximal eine Woche beziehungsweise 5 Werktage und ausschließlich für den Zeitraum der Ladezeiten erteilt werden (z. B. 1. bis 3. November jeweils von 7 bis 18 Uhr, nicht 00 bis 24 Uhr).¹ (Stadt Wien)*



MAGISTRAT DER STADT WIEN

Magistratsabteilung 46

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Telefax +43/1/4000-99-Nebenstelle Telefax Ausland +43/1/4000-7266
E-Mail: post@ma46.wien.gv.at
www.verkehr-wien.at

MA 46 - VAS/1243746/2024/KOG/PRO

Wien, 18.09.2024

Kundmachung einer vorbereitenden
Verkehrsbeschränkung – Halteverbotszone
(gemäß § 44a StVO)

BESCHEID

Spruch

Gemäß § 44a, Absatz 3 Straßenverkehrsordnung 1960 (StVO) wird Herr Daniel Koller zur
Anbringung der Straßenverkehrszeichen nach der Verordnung des Magistrates der Stadt Wien
(MA 46 - VAS/1243746/2024) unter folgenden Bedingungen bestimmt:

Bewilligungszeitraum: am 28.9.2024 von 12 Uhr bis 23 Uhr und am 29.9.2024 von 8 Uhr bis 12 Uhr

1) Gültigkeit:

Das Halten und Parken ist verboten in Wien **05., Margaretenstraße 160**, auf eine Länge
von 10,00 m, am 28.9.2024 von 12:00 Uhr bis 23:00 Uhr und am 29.9.2024 von 8:00 Uhr
bis 12:00 Uhr, ausgenommen Fahrzeuge mit Wagenkarte.

2) Die Halteverbotszone ist in der anliegenden Fahrtrichtung am Anfang und Ende mit
Straßenverkehrszeichen in einfacher Ausführung gemäß § 52, lit. a, Ziffer 13b der StVO, im
Kleinformat (48 cm Durchmesser), darunter der Reihe nach die Zusatztafeln

a) Gültigkeit und Zusatz siehe Punkt 1
im Format 23 x 48 cm

b) „Anfang“ bzw. „Ende“, im Format 15 cm x 31 cm kundzumachen (diese Zusätze können
auch im Verkehrszeichen gem. §52 lit a Ziffer 13b StVO im unteren roten Rand
angebracht werden)

Auf der Rückseite einer Zusatztafel / Verkehrszeichen ist die Geschäftszahl der
Verordnung anzugeben.

3) Für die Ausführung der Straßenverkehrszeichen gilt die Straßenverkehrszeichenverordnung, für
deren Anbringung § 48 StVO.

4) Die Straßenverkehrszeichen sind mind. 24 Stunden vor dem jeweiligen Gültigkeitstermin im
Einvernehmen mit der zuständigen Polizeiinspektion aufzustellen.
Beiliegendes Formblatt ist gesondert für jeden Termin **genauestens** auszufüllen und nach
Bestätigung durch die örtliche Polizeibehörde an die MA 46 zu retournieren, um
erforderlichenfalls als Beweismittel verwendet werden zu können.



MA 48 – Straßenreinigung und Winterdienst

VERKEHRSZEICHENVERLEIH

M48-20240824



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Magistratsabteilung 48
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www.facebook.com/die48er

Bescheid: MA 46 - VIN/1243746/2024/KOG/PRO

GEGENSCHEIN 20240824

Lieferscheindatum: 26.09.2024

Wien, am 30.09.2024

Rückerstattet:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1 Stk. | Anfang |
| 1 Stk. | Ende |
| 2 Stk. | Fußplatte Bodenplatte |
| 2 Stk. | Formrohrsteher1900mm |
| 2 Stk. | § 52/13b Halten und Parken verboten |
| 2 Stk. | Gilt ab von bis |
| 2 Stk. | ausgenommen Fahrzeug mit offizieller
Wagenkarte |
| 10 Stk. | Klemmschellen |

entliehen bis

- | |
|------------|
| 30.09.2024 |
| 30.09.2024 |
| 30.09.2024 |
| 30.09.2024 |
| 30.09.2024 |
| 30.09.2024 |
| 30.09.2024 |
| 30.09.2024 |

Hinweis

Bei Verlust der verkehrszeichen wird zusätzlich zur
Leihgebühr der Anschaffungswert in Rechnung gestellt.

Übergeber/in:

Übernehmer/in:



WAGENKARTE

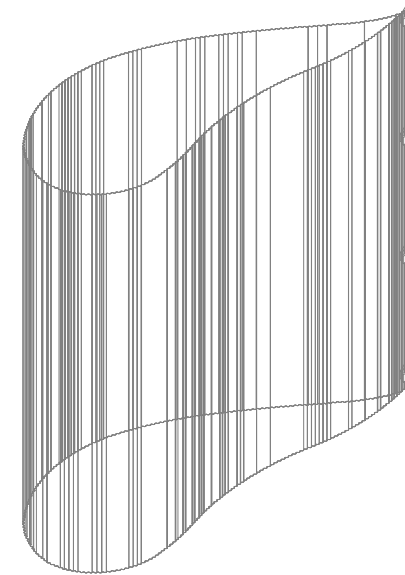
zu MA 46 - VAS/1243746/2024

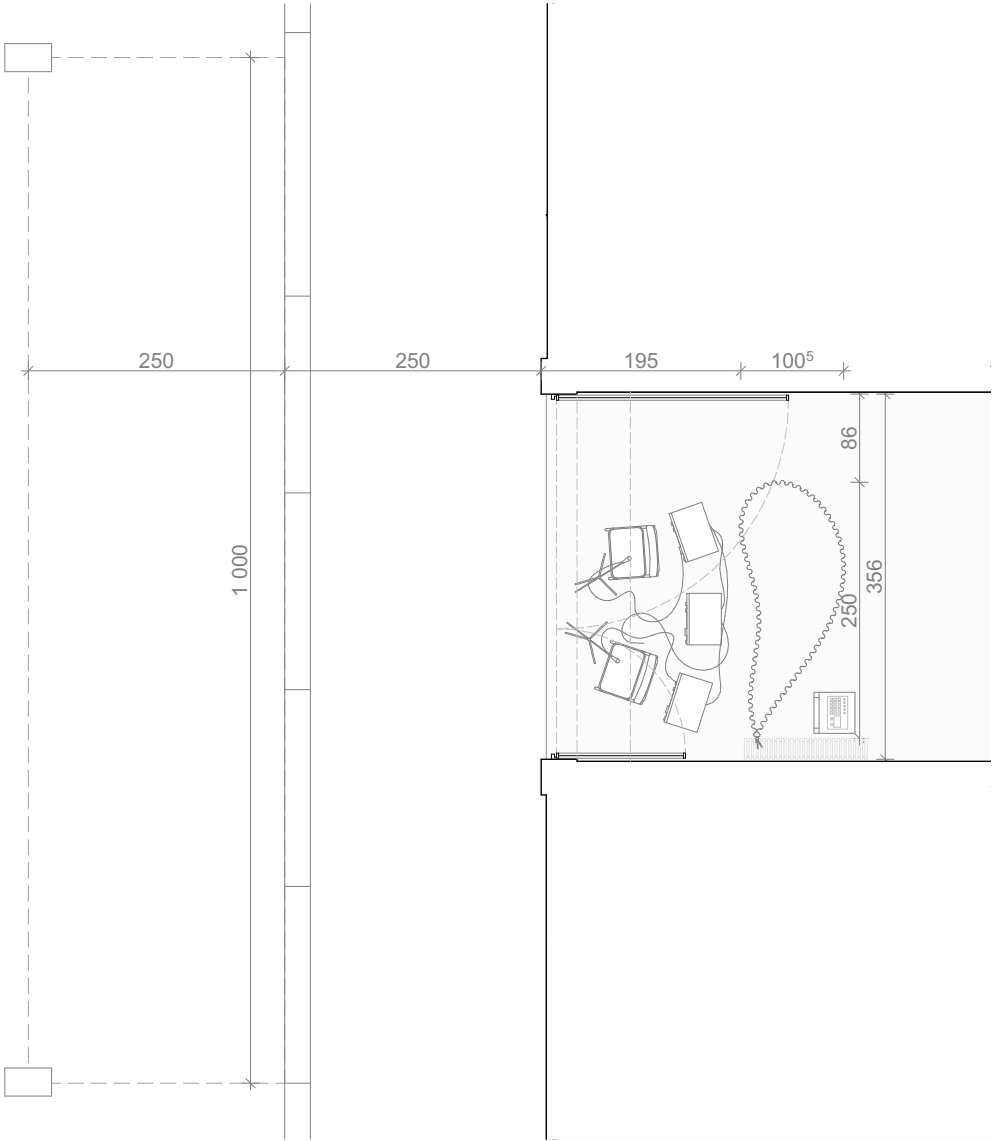
Gültig: am 28.9.2024 von 12 Uhr bis 23 Uhr und am 29.9.2024 von 8 Uhr bis 12 Uhr

im Bereich: 5., Margaretenstraße 160

216x148mm

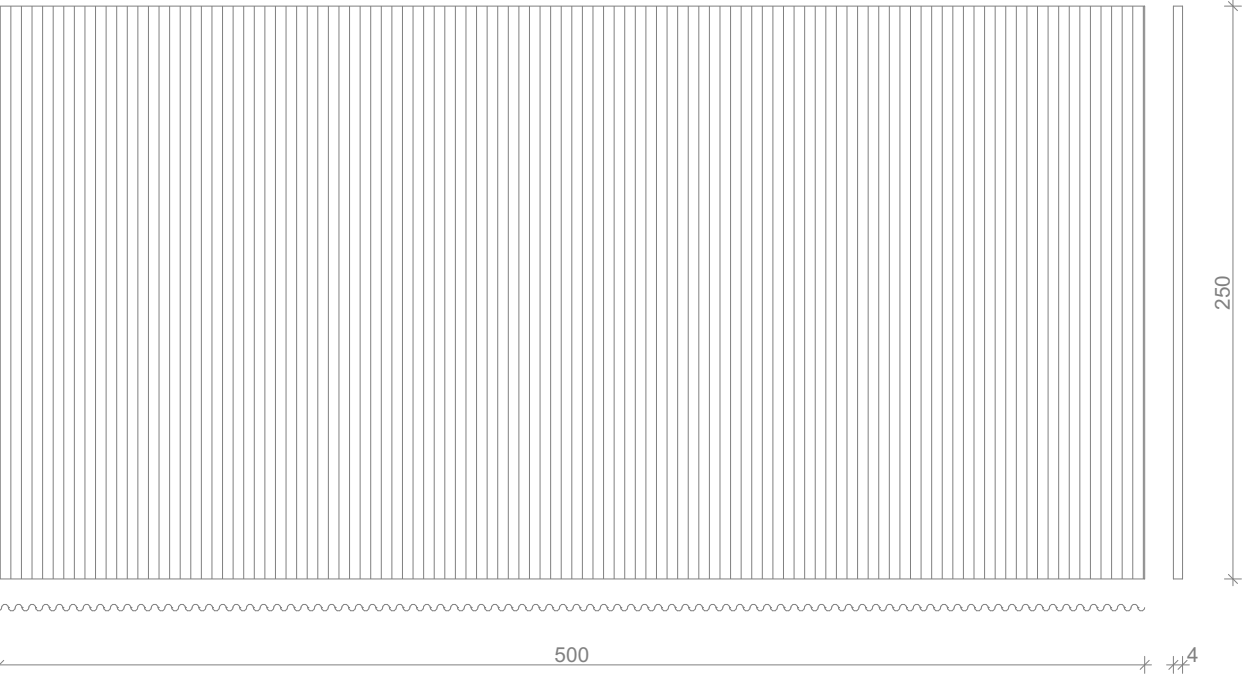
Stage





ground level plan 1:75 - installation for the storefront show with space for audience on two parking lots





drawing 1:33 - front view, cross section and longitudinal section





(almost) fits in a small car



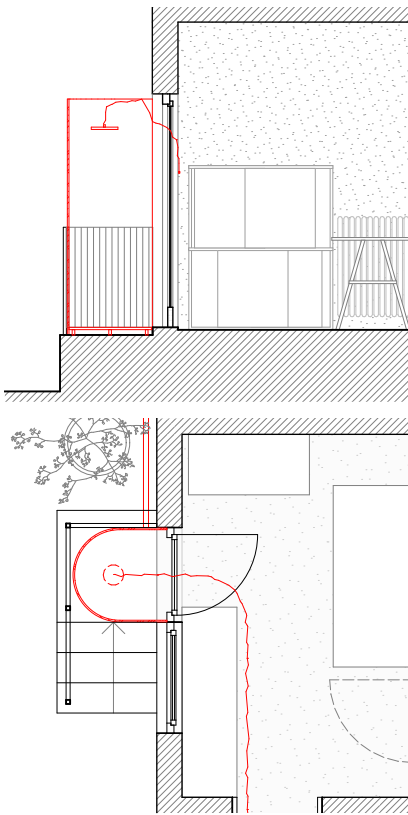
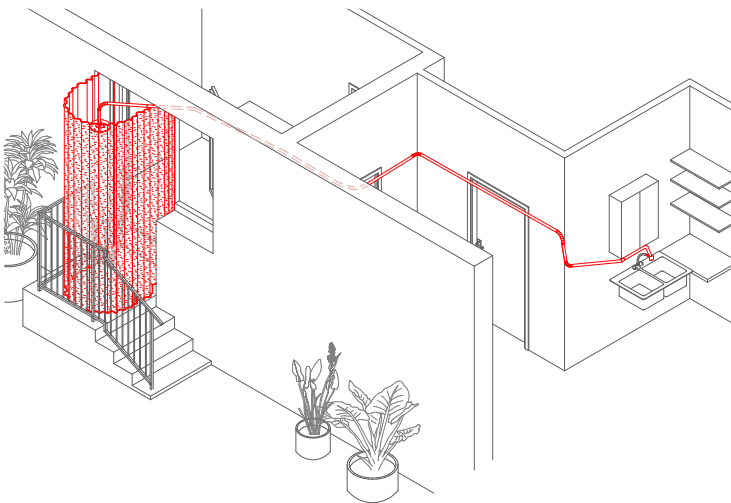
A piece of material

A large sheet of corrugated polyester was purchased at a bricolage store, initially intended for installing an outdoor summer shower in the backyard of the studio. As summer was coming to an end and hot weather was no longer expected, it seemed reasonable to postpone the project until the following year and, in the meantime, repurpose the sheet for other uses. Considering the material's properties, the sheet



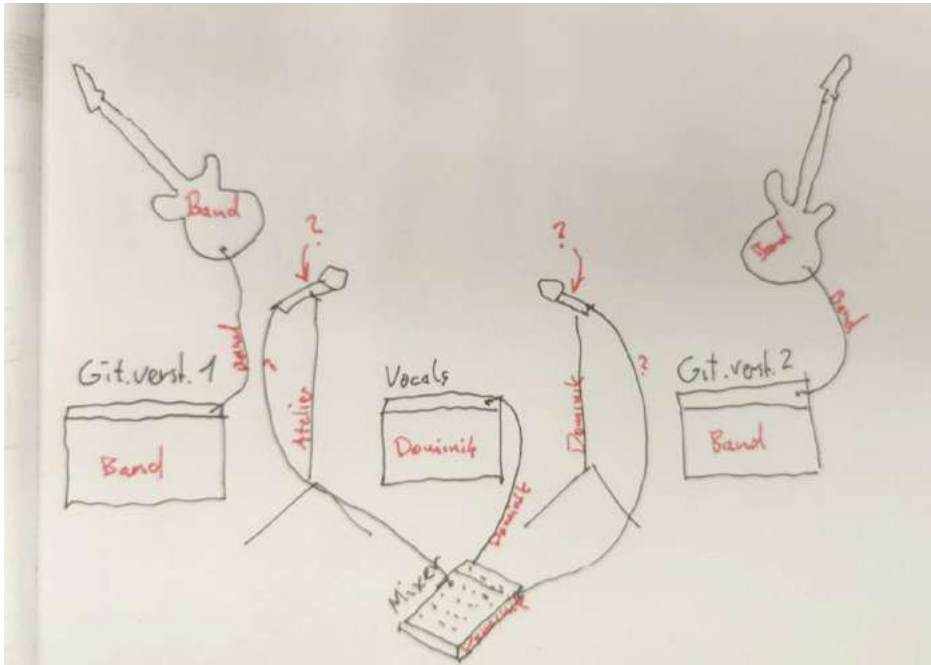
... and fits a person

could be easily transformed into an illuminant object. At first, it served as part of the setting for the *Comic Figure* show, shaped into an irregular column. Subsequently it has been repeatedly used as a lamp in the studio without requiring any modifications to its shape or dimensions. It will soon be repurposed for further interventions and, eventually, the outdoor shower.



1m

axonometry & floor plan and section 1:75 - initial intention for using the polyester sheet as screen for an outdoor shower in the backyard



sketch for sound system by Dominik Tschabrun, 2024

improvised concert infrastructure with equipment borrowed by friends and organized by the musicians



improvised lightning system consisting of the polyester column and an illuminating tube

WEISST DU?

ERDMAUS

SWEET SONG

DREAM SONG

CAMERON

~~KMITA~~

DIDNT MAKE IT

KMITA

LETS DO THIS

OBSTBAUMWALD

ÜBEN ÜBEN

Concert



concert announcement flyer, Studio Margarita















2



Feedback



After removing the floor covering, we were finally able to open the storefront portal and to create a seamless threshold to the public. During the organization of the concert, which was planned to happen partly in public space, we were pressured by a feeling of uncertainty: Will our neighbors be annoyed by the noise? Will they alarm the police? Will there be confrontations with the traffic? Will the amateur sound system work?

None of our doubts proved to be justified. We received only positive reactions from passers-by and the neighborhood. The removal of the physical barrier to our workspace and the occupation of the parking lots proved to be small and effective gestures, despite the high

bureaucratic burden – it was enough, for a moment, to collectively appropriate the street and create a moment of enjoyment.

The studio's lack of technical equipment turned into a moment of creativity, as we had to improvise a sound system, which, in the end, created a unique sound by playing the vocals through the guitar amps. One of the musicians described the tube-like space of the studio as a “big amplifier” oriented to the street. He was indeed rather referring to the acoustic properties created by the setting – but, on a social level, there is something quite poetic in understanding a physical space as a metaphorical amplifier.

Thank you

Tina Gregoric for your dedicated teaching and for being a true mentor.

Kathi Urbanek for your great support and advice.

Christoph Meier for the unforgettable conversations and your inspiring thoughts.

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Studio Margarita and all its members for always being there.

Comic Figure, Anna Miscèna and Mihály Sibinger for a wonderful collaboration.

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All friends and colleagues for your constant support and making Hotel Margarita possible.

My family for their trust and unconditional support.

And to all guests who visited Hotel Margarita.

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Tokyo, Japan, 2023, photo: Maria Covrig

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Dot architects at bar, Chidori Bunka, Osaka, in politics of living, 2023, photo: dot architects

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Dot architects, Chidori Bunka, Osaka, 2022, photo: Go Itami in Shinohara Y. “Make Do With Now: New Directions in Japanese Architecture” 2022

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