

Visual Literacy and Critical Vision were the words we heard while preparing this newsletter. You will indeed find here a tribute to the reputedly main sense of built space: sight. We thank the contributors of the third Scene Dialogue and the author of arCAADia for having given us their think force. Thanks also to those who proposed to widen the scope to the realm of other senses crucial for our built environment. We will eventually follow this path with smell, taste, touch and hearing. If you feel motivated, your proposal is welcome.

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## The CSA Quotation Guide, continued

« Today [1966] it can confidently be said of many texts (among which those of Le Corbusier and his school are the best known) that they are specific, tend towards sociological positivism and raise more problems than they solve. The motive behind them rejects what, in our Western culture, was, and still is, called <depth>, the study of man, the city or society in general. This tendency is not peculiar to sociologists, or experts in architecture and town planning. It is to be found in many other fields, including literature and the social sciences. The rejection of traditional philosophical speculation, without its being used to find new ways of arriving at the many dimensions of the <human phenomenon>, leads to a superficiality that is accepted, deliberate, advertised as such and identified with the predominance of technical and scientific problems. » ▶

### Impressum

The INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR CULTURAL STUDIES IN ARCHITECTURE IACSA is an association according to Swiss law, founded in 2008. It consists of the ADVISORY BOARD, the WORKING BOARD, and the NETWORK EDITOR.

IACSA membership is open for everyone interested and willing to contribute to build the network. IACSA's registered office's address is at Hammerstrasse 14, 4058 Basel, Switzerland. The IACSA Newsletter is published every two months in electronic form.

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Henri Lefebvre, Préface à *L'Habitat pavillonnaire*, édité par Henri Raymond, Marie-Geneviève Raymond, Nicole Haumont, M. Coornaert. Paris, Editions du CRU, 1966, p. 3-13. Translation taken from Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas, Elonore Kofman (eds), *Henri Lefebvre, Key Writings*, p. 121. Continuum, London/New York 2003. ◀

## Scene dialogues No 3

◀Cultural Studies in Architecture› methodology is based on dialogues. In Newsletters 1(5) 2009 and 2(1) 2010 we started the «scene dialogues», based on photographs by Jürgen Krusche. The author of the photographs comments either on the comments by the dialogue partner or identifies, as in this issue, his perspective of the place. We thank the contributors to this dialogue for having taken their time. Their task called for the nowadays rather unusual sustained contemplation of a picture, of working at its resonance as if it were a sounding piece. If you want to become a dialogue partner you are welcome to announce this to the network editor. The new photograph is reproduced on page 4.

### Fastfood in Tōkyō

Commentary by the author of the picture for scene dialogues No 2 Jürgen Krusche



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The second photograph of Scene Dialogues is a rare view from Tokyo, from a city where everything is dense and lively, and where many activities happen in the street; but where you rarely happen to see someone eating in public. It does not occur in Tokyo that you quickly buy a sandwich or a hotdog and consume it on the sidewalk or in public transport. I have no knowledge of a formal ban of eating in public, but factually nobody does it. This is one of the many unwritten laws which should be obeyed – and which everybody actually obeys. The exception which can be seen on this photograph only proves the rule. One senses almost how uncomfortable the eating man feels. He is well



hidden behind the drink vending machines, in a remote side street, hoping that nobody would detect him.

All this does not signify that there exists no fast-food in Tokyo. McDonalds, Burger King, Turks, Indians, Chinese noodle soups, *udon*<sup>1</sup>, *sushi*, or the traditional *onigiri*, all this is available as fast food as well. But one never eats it en route, but indoors, at home, in the office; or in an eatery which can be extremely small or defined and symbolised by nothing but curtains, so-called *noren* (see picture above). Only on a bench in a park you would allow yourself to eat from your *bento*-Box—and even this only at the occasion of particular celebrations. Whereas

in the Underground trains eating is taboo, another exception is the Shinkansen, the high speed train, where also telephone calls are allowed. But here as elsewhere: everybody abides by it. Only very rarely you hear a portable ring or someone shoots one's mouth off the most with the latest banalities.

Another peculiarity of Japanese cities, especially of Tokyo can be seen: The drink vending machines which offer according to the season cooled or hot drinks. The choice is immense and constantly changing: every month several new drinks are put on the market, mostly fitness drinks, new green teas or coffees. Despite this offer and the big number of dispensers one never observes anybody sip from his aluminium can. Drinks, like eating, are consumed invisibly and discretely.

If you inferred from this that in Tokyo people sit in numberless street cafés of restaurants allaying their hunger and thirst, you are wrong. Sitting outdoors and eat is unfamiliar to the Japanese. The few opportuni-

ties for consuming a coffee in the sun is restricted to the Starbuck's chain store or fashionable Italian cafés along the *Omotesando*. That's where Europeans and Americans can be met. Japanese people in the metropolises prefer to retire into a café or an *issakaya*, without any view to the outside. The window tables, if there are any, are mostly unoccupied. Thus the eating man in *Takadanobaba* is a very rare view in many respects.

1 *udon*: thick wheat noodles, usually served with a soup

*sushi*: count in Japan as an affordable and healthy form of fast-food

*onigiri*: traditional filled rice lumps, wrapped in algae, sold at every kiosk

*bento-Box*: a traditional picnic box with varied treats

*Omotesando*: the most expensive street in Tokyo with flagship stores signed by celebrity architects

*issakaya*: traditional small taverns with affordable eating and drinking

*Takadanobaba*: neighbourhood in the Northern part of Shinjuku ward, served by the busy Shinjuku line

## Globalized Gaze by Sabine von Fischer<sup>2</sup>

(photograph next page)

The various activities of women and men in the street imply an urban environment. The ground floors of the depicted buildings hold commercial activities, and the bicycles, motorcycles and cars suggest that the working day has begun. Yet, all the people in the photograph wear casual Western clothing: A man with a collection of plastic bags full of vegetables (for sale?), two women involved in a conversation while promenading, a woman in a red shirt walking away from the camera at a more hurried pace, a man in a grey business suit leaving one of the shops, and a man in a blue workers' overall speaks to a man in a white T-shirt. The men stand close to each other, the

women in conversation touch: It is a populated scene with people in close contact, in a distance to each other, as do the buildings, the bicycles and the cars.

The Chinese characters on the facades and signs direct to a Chinese culture. Bright red appears on letters, signs, shirts, pillows, buckets. Never having been to China, I recall the Chinatowns I have been to: Were there indicators of the foreign culture the scene was surrounded by? The few Roman letters at the top right of the scene, the Western clothes, the cars are not foreign in China. Globalization has blurred the edges of culture. And, first of all, my gaze that is globalized, renders the scene familiar by the Chinatowns in many metropolises of the globe.

2 Sabine von Fischer is an architect, writer, and researcher at ETH Zurich, currently working on a PhD on sound and space.



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### Through the behind's foreground by Bernhard Gilli<sup>3</sup>

Two nice old little ladies. They are in conversation—or are they just going to say goodbye? The left one must have said something which is answered now by the right one quite in detail. They are walking very upright and seem to be quite balanced with the circumstances. Between them exists a pretty private space.

They are watched: an old man has occupied his place on the fringe of this space. A good place to clean some vegetables, sheltered from back and by the overhanging front as well as from above. The open door draws a demarcation line towards the outside (his space) and the bicycles on the sidewalk build a barrier along it, which guides passerbys to draw aside in advance. His couch on the sidewalk is low, so he sits lower than everyone else, who is crossing the street's space: he is not at their eye level. He has occupied his own, parallel space, which makes him having people stepping over his gaze. If you would want to break in this space, you would have to bow, in order to «knock».

The ladies are passing this space—very close to the man but pretty far from his space. He however looks right into their space—sceptical as it seems to me. But if there'd be a second guy sitting like him on the opposite side of the street on a lowered couch too—the old man would have to share his space with this one.

All of that is taking place in one street's space. It plays in front of the scenery of a glossy and bent front of a house. It is dominant, appears modern and yet seems to be as alien as the old facades on the opposite side are suggesting. The street heads along this bent front in a slight curve into some kind of «behind». I am standing right on that point where this «behind» just becomes visible in its entirety. It is still far away but already available. ▶

<sup>3</sup> Bernhard Gilli is an architect in education, at the Technical University of Graz, Austria. He is investigating the industrial waterfront of Linz Danube, <http://schwemmland.wordpress.com>

Here the scale breaks. In the «behind's» foreground a little house tells of a city of small proportions—old town. Behind this a stately façade testifies of industrial renewal, and behind all this—or is it above it?—

**Walking Gaze**  
by Michaela Haibl<sup>4</sup>

The seams of the kerbstones mirror in the water of the gutter. I cannot see it flow. If the collaborators of the research project «Psychopathology of Aesthetic Experience»<sup>5</sup> had not assessed how my gaze wandered over the image by an eye-tracking camera, they would know immediately that it is not that, what I have perceived at first sight. Comparing the wandering of the eyes of more onlookers of both sexes, they would be able to tell me how, inferred from the quantitative survey of the paths of eye movements, images are evolving. And I would consider this approach as being highly disputable, at least as much problematic as...

The picture is a red-blue image, comes to my mind. Still the art historian inside myself watches, she has learnt to watch at images in traditional ways, to ask in the style of Panofsky for different layers of meaning and exploring the compositional features. I watch the photograph as if it was a painting by Titian and notice the colours. A subtle composition, I think: at the right edge is a shape with her back to me. With her I enter the picture. I can see her, because the window frame of my word processing programme in the left half of my laptop's screen does not wholly cover the simultaneously displayed digital photograph, but frees the view, allows me to watch the walking woman in her red jacket and the black trousers, with the lace of her white handbag over the left shoulder. I cannot see her feet, her right arm and the hand, since they are outside the picture's frame.

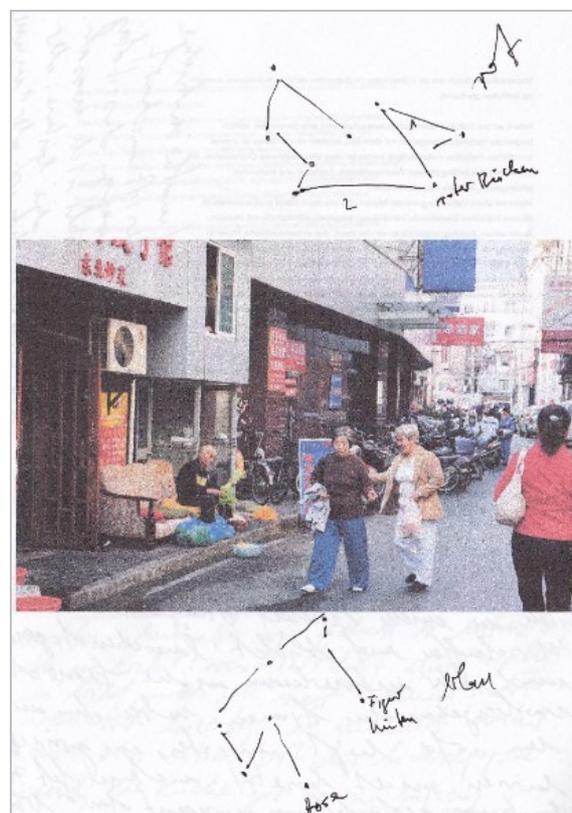
<sup>4</sup> Dr. Michaela Haibl MA is scholar of European ethnology, history of art, history and German language and literature studies. She is researcher and author, at present guest professor at Vienna University.

<sup>5</sup> Directed by Raphael Rosenberg, University of Vienna, and Christoph Klein, University of Wales.

a disembodied glassy façade announces a new time.

I don't know into witch of those times the lady in red is heading to. But she seems to have a destination...

I close the text window and watch again the picture, prospecting for red, because I remember the red plastic bucket at the lower left corner of the picture, a red thing on the sofa, a red sign to the top of the left hand. No, no red sign there, it is more behind, above there are red ideograms, fluorescent letters. I connect the reds with my gaze and try to do the same with the blues.



It turns out that it is not my gaze which wanders from colour to colour. The colours wander through the picture—I just follow them. And I conceive the image from the paths of the colours. I just establish where I enter the trail and observe my gaze which is at the same time my thinking while I wander through the picture. And I enjoy my thinking from multiplying and finding stories—for the moment. Instead, I draw two paths, one abo-

ve and another beneath the picture, which I have printed in the meantime, a path of blue and two paths of red.

Walking works. Movement. The image is movement, whether I follow the colours into the space of the image and of the street, or the people, who are my standpoint of viewing awareness. Along with the lady in red I walk, watching her back, into the picture. The blue lady (whose trousers place an inverted V into the lower middle of the picture), encounters me accompanied by a lady in white, and yet catapults me into the centre of the image. But first of all she is not alone: two ladies walk in the street, not towards me, but, if was standing where the photographer stood, they went closely past me. Walking with wide steps they are absorbed in a conversation enlivened by rich gesture. The rightward one puts her hand on the shoulder of the other; the scene is blurred. The women form an almost hermetic realm of communication, a space one wants to fill with imagined topics.

Anew, I walk into the image along with the lady in red, patrol a second time on the two paths of red. And I understand that the paths of red tell me something about the constitution of space and perception, about dynamisations induced by my gaze. Different forms of dynamisation appear: those immanent in the image (moving people), those felt from inert transport machinery (cars, bicycles, motorcycles).

An everyday scene without mystery—so I think for a second—all the while knowing that Ernest Gombrich would tell me that there is no image without mystery, even if they look as showing us everything as obvious.

And still, the picture has, for me, an irri-

tating capacity: there is someone in the image who does the same thing as I do—only with a shift in time, space and place: perceiving. Now the sofa becomes a riddle, this set-piece from an interior, of a certain intimacy, which is now exhibited outdoors. A man sits on it and cleans vegetables for the kitchen which I guess to be behind the large glass window right behind him. But he cleans vegetables only because he wants to watch, to hark, without seeming doing so. A participant observer, an everyday researcher. He sits on the yellow cushion, pottering about with a bunch of stalks with leaves, without looking at them, because he watches: in a concentrated manner, full of attention for the scene, the scenery of the two passing women. Beside him is a green cushion, a red cushion—if at all these are cushions. The two seats on the sofa are unoccupied, even if the two blue plastic bags with vegetables immediately in front of them, on the sidewalk, prevent anyone to sit down there. Very quickly—really very quickly—I let the two ladies sit down on these seats. But what should they now look at, what should the black clothed man then look at?

All is totally different. Scenic pathos of everyday life. Scenes, poses in the street as onstage. The bald-headed one observes—without being seen by the actors—and communicates what he sees to all those who are not in the story, beyond place and time of the play. And still he observes, but quickly his gaze goes inwards, at once words are formed which he will not pronounce.

I watch the red cushion that is possibly even not a cushion. And I walk into the grey of the gutter and now I know that the water must be coming from the red bucket at the picture's left edge, and...

Before — After

## Architectural visualisations and the amazing reshape of urban public space

By Tobias Scheidegger<sup>6</sup>

We know much about the use of visual means (media) throughout the recent history of architecture. One finds a lot of books dealing with the emergence of plans and their perspective representations in princely urbanism of Renaissance and Baroque as well as various works on the use of film and photography for the propagandisation of national socialist architecture of representation. Less attention, however, was so far directed towards the media for the communication of contemporary architecture. Today developments are mediated by computer generated renderings<sup>7</sup>, a visual format that shall be shortly outlined. I want to sketch the media theoretical aspect of this visual genre and then give evidence in what ways the interplay of visualisation and resulting architecture aims at participating in the creation of urban reality.

It proves that computer generated visualisations picture, as did their predecessors, always more than just informations about a planned building: they usually transport specific worldviews and concepts of mankind. The professional discussion about the use of rendering in architecture communications is meagre; in my interviews with image producers always the same reasoning for the legitimisation of this genre are put forward: renderings are considered as being less abstract than plans, therefore can be «read» by laymen and thus contribute to the demo-

cratisation of architecture communication by and on architecture. This professionals' point of view is contradicted with good cause. At first sight the manipulative potential of rendering is evident. «Suggestion instead of information» would be the formula. In the first place the varied aesthetic loading of visualisations—solemn light effects such as sunsets, shiny façades, etc.—induces an emotionalisation of the image contents. Such images prevent the onlooker from investing his reflexive capacities, addressing him specifically from his sensualist side. The elaborate finish, a more or less perfectionist photorealistic image, gives it the character of significant authority<sup>8</sup>. This property carries the issue of democratisation to the point of absurdity: professional photorealistic renderings make investors' dreams appear as anticipated, already built realities and act as self-fulfilling prophecies.

Various producers stress the fact, that with through such an operation the promoters of a real estate development gain an important strategic advantage: the discursive battlefield for potential enmity is withdrawn by the sheer self-evidence of the realistic image, arguments about sense and aim of the architectural intervention are relocated to the level of the purely aesthetic—a matter of bigger or smaller cubature, of more or less glossy materials. These parameters of this genre lead to the conclusion that it has to be identified as a tool for the control of visual image, aiming at exerting influence beyond the

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<sup>7</sup> Rendering = virtual computational representation in three dimensions of objects in development. For the terminological history of rendering» see Werner Oechslin, *Die verführerische Zeichnung*. In: *daidalos* 25 (1978).

<sup>8</sup> For the expression of «significant authority» see Ola Söderström, *Des images pour agir. Le visuel en urbanisme*. Lausanne 2000, 10.

individual building on the urban imaginary.

A concrete case, introduced by three views given on page 9, shall exemplify my diagnosis. My visual reading departs from three visions of the Limmatplatz in Zurich. This square is situated in a former working-class neighbourhood which is transformed since the 1990s by a general gentrification. In 2007 the central tram stop which gives the square its function and character was rebuilt. Three pictures—a photograph of the ancient stop, the visualisation of the planned new stop, and a photograph of the newly built stop—give evidence of the implicit anticipative character of visualisation. The comparison «before-after», a visual structure well-known from advertisements for weight-reduction, not only informs about the planned measures and appearance of the tram stop, but makes a statement about the social implications of the new building. Some cues:

#### The ancient square. (top).

In the jargon of socio-technological urbanism this is a biotope of «A-people»: elderly, jobless, alcoholics. Small groups of different kinds squat the benches. They wait, consume, loiter, deal, gossip. The strategic location along the left corner allows for being visible and achieving overview and can be interpreted as an expression of autonomous use of space. The red grocery-bag of the nearby discounter contains drinks and marks temporary appropriation of space. On the bench on the right sit elderly retired people, probably former workers from Italy or Yugoslavia. They exude calm, the cliché of Mediterranean sociability. The walls behind them are tablet, on which tags and patina testify of many layers of appropriation.

#### The planned new square (middle)

The «new Limmatplatz» will be different: such is the promise of the information tablets which were erected all over the place by the town authorities around the time when the first photograph had been taken: a repressive Feng-Shui in concrete, a master-piece of panopticism. This intention was confirmed by the town's project leader in an interview with

a journalist, pointing out its advantages: the new tram stop would be «enjoyable for a stopover of several minutes, but not of several hours». It allowed view from all sides and had no backside like the old building.<sup>4</sup> The naked benches in the rendering are empty, instead of small groups energetic individuals can be seen. The white-collar worker, often with the cell phone on his ear and carrying a briefcase, has become the symbol in almost all visualisations. He, but not *she*—at least for the big majority of my image samples—is the promise of economic prosperity coming along with the new building. The former users have disappeared, a fresh, though cold wind blows through the openings of the transparent building.

#### The newly built square (bottom)

Still matrix-man in his white shirt does not own the square by himself. Not all of the former users have disappeared, but now ten surveillance cameras, positioned discreetly on the concrete ceiling, watch the goings-on in the tram stop. On a large screen a video installation by Harun Farocki can be seen. Media artist Farocki, who has created artworks critical towards surveillance, is allowed to embellish the repressive building. Whose involuntary irony? The benches are not altogether empty, but before it has certainly been more enjoyable to sit here. Dynamics, however, seem for the present still to prevail. One sits more at one's ease abutted to history than in the flow of impatient commuters. I note in my research booklet: «To do: study patina of glass, flat screens, illumination, emptiness, ageing of clean spaces. »

<sup>4</sup> See *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 20. Oktober 2004, 53.



## First LandscapeVideo Conference, Zurich May 13/14/15, 2010

During the two-day Symposium with three film evenings international members of various professions discuss the advantages and disadvantages of working with video in landscape architecture. How can one explore questions of space and the landscape-oriented gaze through video and through landscape architecture? What objectives can be achieved in an exchange between film directors, media scholars and landscape architects?



The symposium will focus on finding a contemporary visual system of reference for the design of our dynamic landscape.

The event will enable participants to exchange thoughts on the latest research on the visual culture of the landscape. Professionals from various disciplines will discuss the potential of video and in which areas it might be used to advantage in the future.

Lectures, short paper presentations, panel discussions and film programmes, 13./14./15. May 2010, (Conference 14.-15. May)

Registration: Registration fee for Students is 130 CHF. For Professionals the fee is 180 CHF (film programmes inclusive). The deadline for registration for the conference is April 20.

<http://www.girot.arch.ethz.ch/conference-registration/blicklandschaften-registration.htm>

Confirmed speakers:

*Dr. Elena Cogato-Lanza*, Lecturer for Architecture, Researcher, EPFL, Lausanne

*Dr. Robin Curtis*, film theorist, Faculty Member at the Freie Universität in Berlin

*Amos Gitai*, Filmmaker, Paris/Tel Aviv

*Christoph Hochhäusler*, Filmmaker, Berlin

*Volko Kamensky*, Filmmaker, Hamburg

*Laura Kurgan*, Director of Spatial Information Design Lab and the Visual Studies, Graduate School of Architecture, Columbia University

*Dr. Sebastien Marot*, Professor for Architectural Theory, Ecole de Marne la Vallée-Paris, France

*Dr. Volker Pantenburg*, film theorist, Berlin

*Barbara Pichler*, Director of the DIAGONALE, Graz

*Martin Rein-Cano*, Landscape Architect, Executive Director of Topotek1, Berlin

*Dr. Christian Schmid*, Professor for Sociology, ETH Zurich

*Marc Schwarz*, Architect and Filmmaker, Zurich

*Jörg Stollmann*, Guest Professor for Urbanism and Architecture, TU Berlin

*Charles Waldheim*, Chairman of the Department of Landscape Architecture, Harvard University.