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Access (the modern paradox): a student clinic law hub re-scripting the border between institutional infrastructure and the public realm, in Braamfontein, Johannesburg

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THEORY ESSAY

1.01

Access (the modern paradox):

Borders are conceived as personal, geographical, as well cultural ones. They have the ability to define our idea of freedom (in society), or they can be obstacles to freedom.

My thesis will explore the themes of 'borderness', 'access' and transgression through an enquiry of program, site, precedent, design and technology. Borders and access ultimately come down to difference. How we conceive difference, how we view difference and how we judge difference.

Introduction:

1.02

"**Raum**, **Rum**, means a place cleared or free for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek **peras**. A boundary is not that at which something stops but [. . .] the boundary is that from which something **begins its presencing** [. . .] Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds [. . .] **Accordingly, spaces receive their being from locations, not from 'space'**."[1] - **Martin Heidegger**, Poetry, Language, Thought (1971)

Border. Boundary. Edge. Perimeter. Line. Brink. Confine. Periphery. Limit. Fringe. Verge. Ornament.

The lists of dictionary definitions surrounding the word 'border' either imply an edge or a division. Phonetically the word **border** can be broken into two syllables 'bor' and 'der' – echoing an image of two sides set apart from one another yet raging against eachother. The word itself has roots in the French word 'bordure' – meaning "seam, edge of a shield, border," as well as the Germanic

word for 'board'- referring to the sides of an object[2]. Yet, the first time the word border was used to describe a geopolitical border – probably the most universally accepted or easily identified uses of the word – dates back to the 1530's specifying the region between Scotland and England that was originally referred to as the "march." [3] March, a word formed in the 13th Century from the French expression **marche** – "a boundary or frontier[4]", referred to a piece of land that existed on the border of a country – what is considered a geo-political border nowadays. As one of the multitudes of synonyms for a border, **boundary** becomes one of the most identifiable – it signifies both an edge and a division – and it has an implication of space[5], yet also talks of a future possibility (by looking at the connotations of "frontier"). Yet contradiction is created by forcing boundary and frontier into the same space. One implies that you have hit the ceiling, come to the end or hit a wall, while the other describes a future of possibilities, of settlers reaching the great plateau, or a precipice. How can a space or place control this complexity or have such a vast contradictory nature?

Although the word border originally was a way of referring to something that was decorative or physical object – as in the side of something i.e. the port or starboard side of a ship – its implications and connotations changed once it took on the qualities of the **march.** This intervention saw 'border' move from object to (physical) space, with that the complexities of the newly created word were transferred into actual, physical place – a border space. Can Martin Heidegger's creation of space be applied to create a new equitable place by transgressing a border or borderness? There becomes a paradox between space and place as borders become tangled up in either being subjective or objective (or dwell in a murky situation of both).

From Border to 'Borderness'

As explained above, the creation and application of the word **border** is implicit in understanding what both the word means and what its implications could be. As when looking at the phrase 'geo-political border' – once the march – the implication is that it is a border separating two political jurisdictions that has been mapped out on a terrain that might not have spatial implications but has implications for people who move within that space (i.e. require visas to cross a border). The simplest was of understanding what I mean by **borderness** is by understanding the implications of the word, and then what it means in application[6]. The word **border** in essence is a hybrid of **bordure**, **board** and **march**, therefore **borderness** - a hybrid of **border**. As **border** did with **march**; borderness takes on border's qualities but manifests them into a metaphysical state. It becomes intangible. The physical border is now an ephemeral border.

Border (Space) vs 'Borderness' (Place): Can borders be transformed from a boundary space to an equitable place... a place of access?

"A boundary is not that at which something stops but . . . the boundary is that from which something **begins its presencing** . . . Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds . . . "[7]

Martin Heidegger, the German theorist celebrated by philosophers and architects alike, wrote in 1971's **Poetry Language Thought** on boundaries and their implications to space, and the possibilities they create. In a chapter, based on his 1951 lecture series, entitled: **Building Dwelling Thinking**, he wrote of the nature of a

boundary, yet more importantly its ability to be a frontier. This reading – of a border possibly being a frontier - allows for a more functional approach to understanding a borders ability to be a 'creator' rather than a harsh 'separator' - the image society and media are so happy for borders to inhabit. Yet by no means is this an argument for creating a city, or society, full of boundaries and hoping that it will succeed.

Boundaries, or borders, when made actionable become spaces for opportunity – a crossroad of interaction and exchange. By nature borders are the separator of two elements but are also the space where the two elements come into being - and can be a prospect to explore new conditions that allow for new proto-urban interactions to take place. What happens if the two elements which are being separated were bridged, allowing them to interact? In "Quant" an essay by Richard Sennett, sociologist and lecturer at London School of Economics, wrote of the border being a limit in an ecological reading of the word but create a world of activity where two borders become interactive. Why can't this be the case for architecture?

"In natural ecologies, borders are the zones in a habitat where organisms become more inter-active, due to the meeting of different species or physical conditions. The boundary is a limit; a territory beyond a particular species does stray. So these are two different kinds of edge. For instance, in the border-edge where the shoreline of a lake meets solid land there is an active zone of exchange; here is where organisms find and feed off other organisms. The same is true of temperature layers within a lake: where layer meets layer defines the zone of the most intense biological activity. Whereas the boundary is a guarded territory, as established by prides of lions or packs of wolves."[8]

By connecting or bridging two, or more, borders this allows an eco-logical system to flourish, could it do the same for society? For too long borders have been treated as boundaries, guarded territories "established by prides of lions or packs of wolves,"[9] by bridging the separated elements, the bridge creates a new space, a modern space for exchange and access. Does Architecture become the bridge? A bridge by nature brings two bounded spaces together, it traverses the chasm (both physical and ephemeral) between what is bound and creates a new, ambiguous space - a new space ambiguous to where the border starts or finishes but also a place ready for (re)occupation.

1.06

"The [place] is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a [place], and does so because of the bridge. Thus the bridge does not come first to a [place] to stand in it; rather a [place] comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge."[10]

A modern bridge, a place Access:

Access, in terms of society's development and the city, speaks more to social justice – a moral boraer – rather than physical ones. Borders in society have been treated as boundaries. Rather than creating new, exciting conditions where people co-habit; spaces, places and people alike have been bound apart with borders protected by wolves. Access in the 21st Century relies on complex forms of equality and polity, as at a surface level could be seen as completely removing all social, economic and physical borders and hoping society will exist happily, together. The simple solution to equality, in most people's eyes, is to create an egalitarian

state – where all people are equal in political, social, or economic life.[1] In Spheres of Justice – A Defence of Pluralism and Equality (1983) – Micheal Walzer recognises that equality as a word, or dictum, inhabits the murky middle ground between understanding and definitive meaning.

Walzer expresses that "Equality literally understood is an ideal ripe for betrayal."[11] This implies that equality taken at face value, what he calls 'simplistic equality,' is easier to dominate as it becomes suitable for forms of monopoly. Simplistic Equality is closer Hegel's imagined Utopia – what I see as closer to an egalitarian definition, than simplistic equality – where "all Man is equal and shall equally rise up at once" - not very different from modernity's early praxis. Walzer, alternatively, recognises that as a modern society, either capitalist or communist, we wouldn't be able to deal with equality at its most literal sense, "we may dream of a society where power is shared, and everyone has exactly the same share. But we know that equality of that sort won't survive the first meeting of the new members." This implies that humans by nature will always organise, as we as beings are not equal in talent, knowledge or vices for that matter. Walzer further emphasizes the pluralism of character by looking at society at a realistic level:

"Living in a capitalist state, we may dream of a society where everyone has the same amount of money. But we know that money equally distributed at twelve noon of a Sunday will have been unequally redistributed before the week is out. Some people will save it, and others will invest it, and still others will spend it (and they will do so in different ways). . . Living in a feudal state we may dream of a society where all members are equally honoured and respected. But though we can give everyone the same title, we know that we cannot refuse to recognise – the many different sorts and degrees of skill, strength, wisdom, courage, kindness, energy, and grace that distinguish one individual from another. [12]

It becomes apparent that goods and talent[13] – the part of us that differs from person to person – are aspects to understanding equality. In Walzer's Speres of Justice money plays the role of a medium but can be a good at the same time. With the above statement we start to see errors in thinking when it comes to simplistic – egalitarian – equality. The only way that this sort of 'conformist' society could exist is through complete domination. Walzer recognises this through egalitarian, Frank Parkin writing:

". . . seems to require a political system in which the state is able continually to hold in check those social and occupational groups which, by virtue of their skills or education or personal attributes, might otherwise . . . stake claims to a disproportionate share of society's rewards. The most effective way of holding such groups in check is by denying them the right to organize politically."[14]

Therefore this egalitarian equality is not spread fairly, as it implies that it will be, and actually looks at eliminating differences. Walzer goes on further to declare that it is not "eliminating all differences but a particular set of differences"[15] and that these differences exist in a specific time and a specific place (in history). Hence this egalitarian equality has a political agenda, is actionable, and used as promise to rid society of the ills of that time (most likely for one party's gain). This means that a society will be susceptible domination or subordination. What Walzer is setting out to do is fashion an argument around 'Distributed Justice', as well describe a society where no social good can serves or can serve as a means of domination.[16] Yet realistically we all know this can't be true, if money is considered as a good one can quite quickly see that having money can become a dominating factor. Would it be worth considering a society where money wasn't the most dominant good? Governance plays a major part in structuring distributed justice. It takes on the role of a good – albeit a social good – as well as the role

of a facilitator – yet is as we all know is open to tyranny and abuse of office. Could Architecture take on this role? Could it step back and become the silence, which people need to converse, but not become mute?

A key aspect to polity – and the polity of space – is membership. Two key questions surround membership; one being: Who is a member and what does it mean to be a member? From taking the view that governance is a social good, then the same is true for community and membership. Community then, like all other goods, is distributable and relies on the intake of people for growth (be it through acceptance of new members or procreation within the community)[17].

There are obviously positives and negatives with associations to particular communities, which creates complex problems and conflict which isn't unusual. At a geo-political level this means citizens – nationals – are able to access the benefits, like public healthcare or political security, of the state or country they were born into. If above displays in a simple fashion what is means to be a member, we can only assume that the opposite deals with what it means to be a non-member. Although, cracks start to appear in this argument because not all nationals have access to benefits such as healthcare, access to justice and so forth. If continuing with the analogy of a citizen within a state, a non-member would be a foreign national residing in a country other than that of their own – and have no access to public benefits, etc. One can start to see that there is paradox within membership and easily creates a chasm of non-members. Does this mean only members have access? This raises more questions than answers. Walzer recognises the risks of non-membership; in calling men and women without membership 'stateless' (borderless), they are able to trade and purchases freely within the market, yet alarmingly are cut off from any benefits of society. What becomes alarming is that when society's membership is centred on money (most

societies) discrepancies within membership become cruel. At the most basic level this means that for non-members; ". . . they are cut off from the communal provision of security and welfare. Even those aspects of security and welfare that are, like public health, collectively distributed are not guaranteed to non-members."[18]

When considering the socio-economic and racial boundaries in South Africa issues of membership become disturbing. Walzer's argument around membership is distinguished by governance and power of office. At an institutional level this means an institution like the University of the Witwatrsrand per se should only hold power within the realm of students, lecturers, staff and the like, yet a University is part of a much larger scheme, or if you are a lawyer you deal in the law, that is where you hold office and cannot use said office as influence in another field. This creates a complex paradox for the public, or more specifically people who are not lawyers or educated in the law, as they submit themselves to not being able to hold office, or in this case defend themselves in litigation. Yet, in the case of the law (and many other professions), only the two echelons of society can actually afford to take part in or make use of legal help – the wealthy or extremely poor. Can the bridge connect members and non-members? If it society bases its membership on socio-economic "goods" surely the bridge must offer a hedonistic exchange where both parties benefit? A modern exchange?

Modern us, modern place:

"Modernity is what gives the present the specific quality that makes it different from the past and points the way toward the future. Modernity is also described as being a break with tradition, and as typifying everything that rejects the inheritance of the past."[19] - **Hilde Heynen**, Architecture and Modernity (1999)

Modern. Modernity. New. Current. Contemporary. Transient. Stylish. Promise.

What is modern? Are we modern? Have 'We' ever been modern? Modernity has had a profound effect on Architectural discourse as well as societies recourse for shrugging ties with the old. By understanding Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht's etymological breakdown of the word demonstrated in 1972's "**Modern, Modernität, Moderne**" modernity, or more specifically 'modern' can be broken in to three distinct meanings. Firstly the current, secondly the new and finally the momentary or 'transient' as Hilde Heynen wrote in, her critique on modernity, **Architecture and Modernity** (1999).

"In the first and oldest sense it means present, or current, implying as its opposite the notion of earlier, of what is past . . . A second meaning of the word is the new, as opposed to the old. Here the term modern is used to describe a present time that is experienced as a period, and which possesses certain specific features that distinguish it from previous periods . . . During the course of the nineteenth century yet a third level of meaning became important. The notion of modern then acquired the connotation of what is momentary, of the transient, with its opposite notion no longer being a clearly defined past but rather an indeterminate eternity."[20]

All three of the above modernity's prescribed by Gumbrecht deal with time as

some sort of level. The first is uncomplicated to understand, the current, the now, the completely contemporary. Writer and philosopher Marshall Berman wrote in 1982's "**All that is Solid Melts into Air**"; "There is a mode of vital experience-experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils-that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience 'modernity.'"[21] We all share a space and exist within this time, whether or not one believe time is linear or abstract. The 'new' ascribes its self from being different from what has happened before. This modern becomes perceptible rather than completely quantifiable, as it is still subjective, as; Man now writes and sends emails in an autonomous fashion in a digital space rather than transcribing a letter by quill; Man no longer lives in caves and now relies on anthropogenic structures to inhabit, and so on. Yet the 'transient', or ephemeral, modern also could be understood and quantifiable - although it is transitory in nature - in terms of social change; countries moved from Russia moved from Monarchy, to Communist state to Capitalist Mecca (or what some would consider an Oligarchy); South Africa moved from being under rule of the Empire, to a strict Apartheid regime under the Nationalist and then transitioned in to a democracy promoting transparency and access under the African National Congress in 1994. Moral values changed, or evolved with each modern movement, each were modern compared to the last, yet we are left with their antiquity of each period before. As new frontiers were explored old borders stood in place. The Architecture we have inherited, or the built environment constructed by generations preceding us, are remnants of the attitudes society had towards habitation, dwelling and one another – although built for another Time these antiquities exists within ours.

It is impossible to not speak of the Enlightenment Period, modernization and modernity's clash with tradition when considering modernity. The Enlightenment Period is considered as the period where, according to Heynen, ". . . the idea of moder-

nity became bound up with the notion of critical reason."[22] The notion of critical reason implies that everything is open to investigation in a hope to tease out the truth behind the said subject to understand it (but in turn limit it so that it could be understood in its own 'space'). German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas wrote in "**Die Moderne, ein unvollendetes Projekt**" (1980):

"The project of modernity formulated in the eighteenth century by the philosophers of the Enlightenment consisted in their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic. At the same time, this project intended to release the objective potentials of each of these domains from their esoteric forms. The Enlightenment philosophers wanted to utilize this accumulation of specialized culture for the enrichment of everyday life—that is to say, for the rational organization of everyday social life."[23]

Modernization on the other hand can be linked with global industrialisation in the in the 19th Century (during the Industrial Revolution). Modern technologies and policies replaced existing traditional structures, architecture and the built environment offered new living conditions as well as social change. Yet the promise of modernity became paradoxical, progress occurred but it was not for all. Socio-economic change manifested itself in new technologies and new markets created by urbanization and population explosions, yet the growth - and more in particularly wealth – wasn't spread evenly through the newly urbanised populations and with that new constructs of class were established. Modernism (and modernity) became a social driving force within the 20th Century - a promise for Man (all men and women) to elevate themselves to a new level of being. Architecture became tied up in the modernization of societies (explored in the site chapter); it was used as a solution to housing new urban populations and economic process, and trying to create a modern society. Modernity was a tag that Architecture adopted all too quickly.

For the first time at the turn of the 20th Century, globally, Architectural praxis looked at the definition of what space was and what it's qualities were – be it "[the] power of interacting volumes. . . hollowed-out interior space . . . interaction between inner and outer space... transparency."[24] With all the new versions, or definitions of what space is, or could be, architecture lost focus on who Architecture was for but solely focussed on what Architecture was. Space became a commodity. Prior to this, the production of space – looking at the space produced by Architects – was more involved in the matter bounding it and the style that the matter took was directly linked to the regime that was paying for it[25].

"Formerly, artistic ensembles – monuments, towns, furnishings – had been created by a variety of artists according to subjective criteria: the taste of princes, the intelligence of rich patrons or the genius of the artists themselves. Architects had thus built palaces to house specific objects associated with an aristocratic mode of life, and, alongside them, squares for the people and monuments for social institutions." [26]

Architecture of the bridge:

Architecture in this case becomes part of the bridge. It may be that it is part of structure that holds the bridge together but because of its nature – being a physical commodity – it encloses the bridge. It holds within its borders, the programme, the context and site of the modern bridge. Yet because something is new or modern doesn't mean it is perfect. By default it is open to paradox. Architecture cannot become the sole transgressor of a border. Access, or the desire for access and transparency, has to be provided by the institution the architecture buys in to and offered by the site context, and should be the good being exchanged within the space provided.

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5 There is no denying that boundaries can be physical, psychological, spiritual, ecological, etc. The list is never ending and can relate to the depths of the human condition or just be simply a box on a spreadsheet that separates two different categories.

6 To simply create a new word by adding a suffix to it and hope that it creates a more meaningful version of it seems too **simple**. I don't think that this is the case with 'borderness,' by understanding the power of the suffix "-ness" it distils what the word means, as well as the state of borderness is.

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VISUAL ANALYSIS:



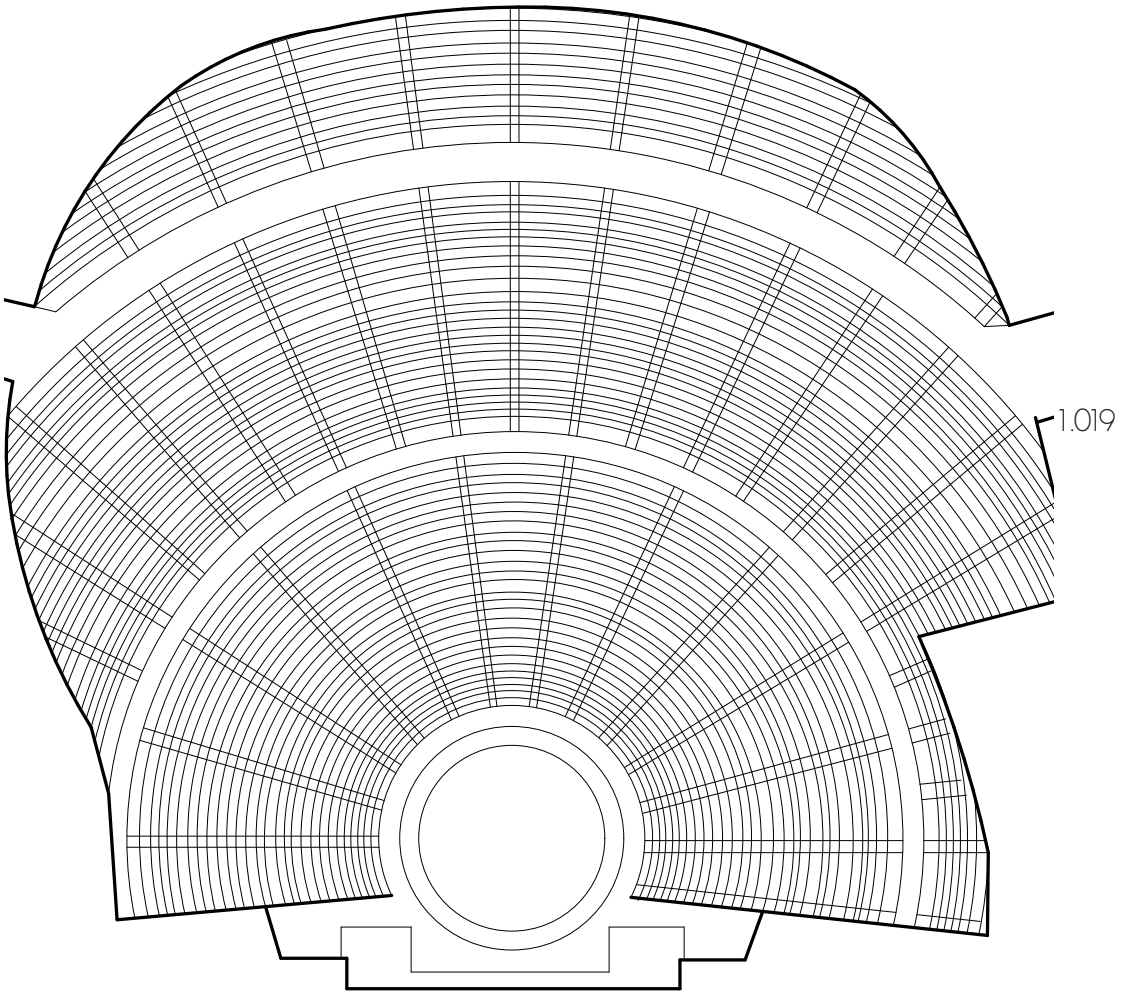
001. Peeping in on spectacle and discussion

Visual Analysis:

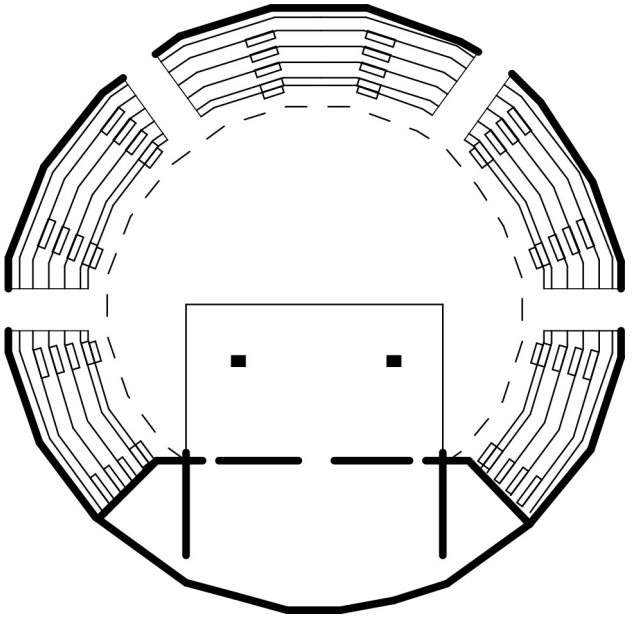
Spectacle and discussion has traditionally been reserved for an audience. Architecture has helped removing discussion, theatre and display off of the street and in to buildings (far from the public's eye). Architecture has been used to create borders, to keep the public away, and satisfy the needs – both moral and physical - of those who commission it. The audience within the building is forced in to a submissive role. They no longer are involved in the discussion they become the Forth Wall. The role of the audience is complex enough but is contorted even further when thinking about who can afford a ticket to the show. In the 21st Century Socio-economic borders have been tested due to the rise of social media and digital interaction. Now, with the access to a phone – Africa and in particular South Africa is the largest user of mobile data in the world – people can join in on the conversation about sport, politics, art and the law without having to subscribe to socio-economic standings (and with that their shortfalls). We are moving out of the age of trying to understand "Who has

a voice?" and are moving in to age of trying to mediate between all the voices. Can architecture intervene in a time where 1:1 interaction now happens in a digital space far removed from a physical space?

The audience has to be removed from the fetters of Architecture (an architectural form) and returned to a place where anyone can join in n the conversation. Once removing place from Architecture it becomes evident that art, discussion, fashion, justice, design, theory has been disseminated from a central point and accepted by the viewer but it is actually the viewer who allows the art, discussion, etc. to exist. Why not turn human exchange in to the spectacle?



Teatro Greco



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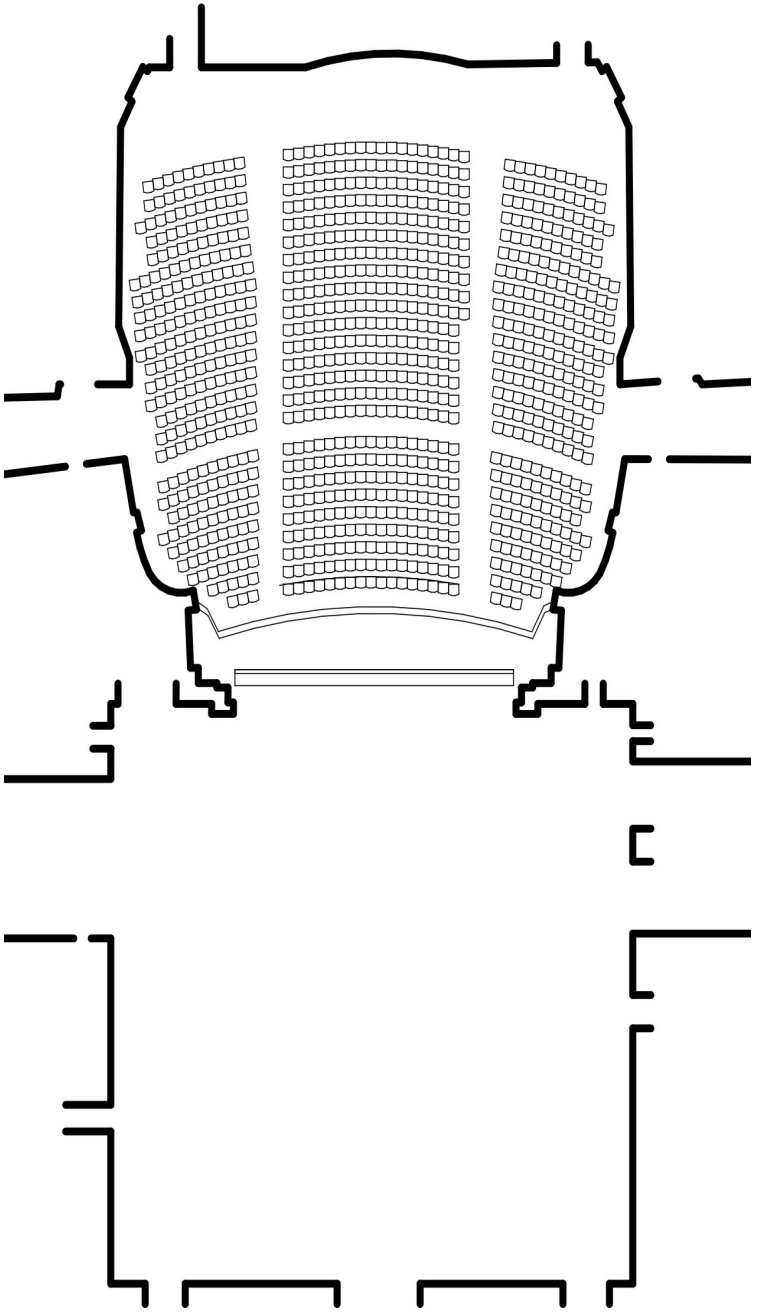
Globe Theater, 1599 - The Chamberlin's Men





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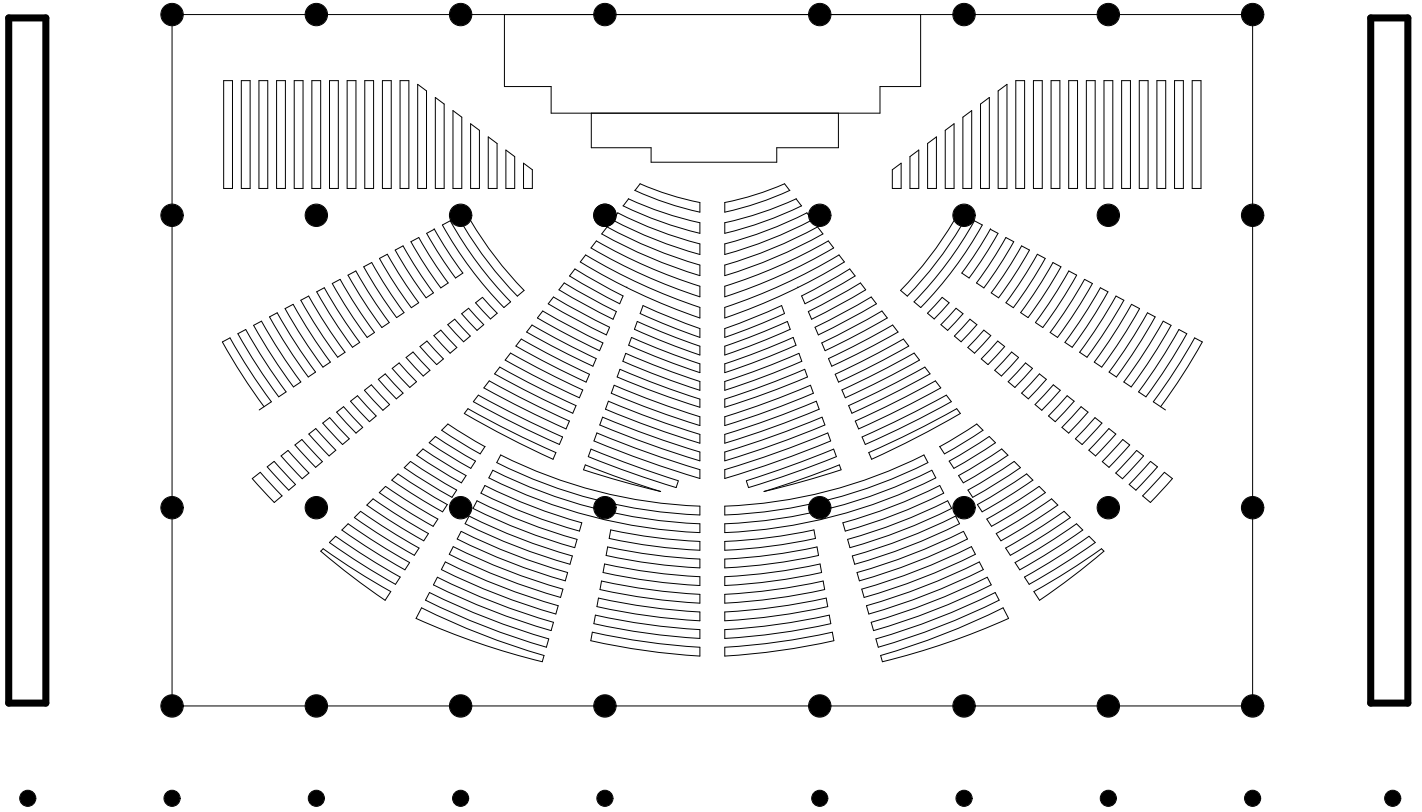
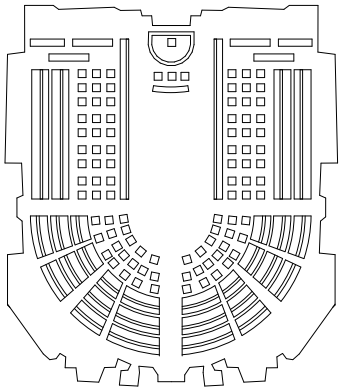
Royal Theatre, 1674 - Christopher Wren



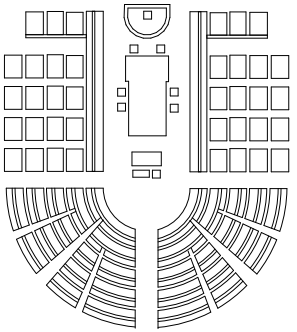


The Hall of Supreme Harmony, China 1913, Albin Stark





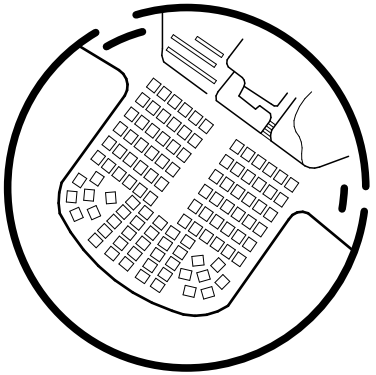
National Assembly South Africa, 1913



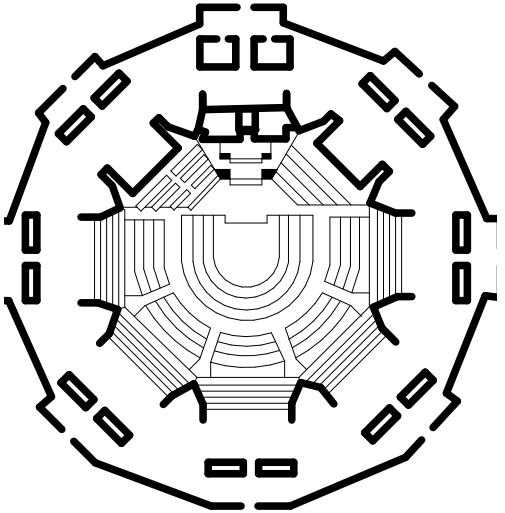
Parliament House Australia, 1927



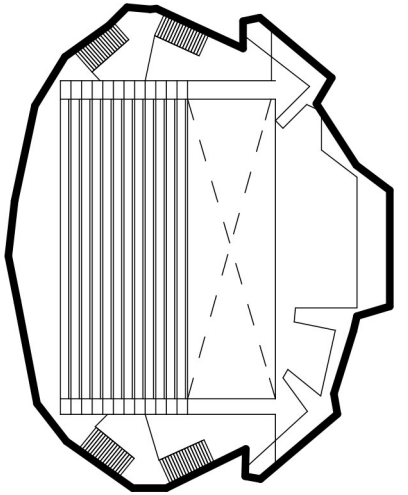




Chandigarh, 1960 - Le Corbusier



National Assembly, 1962 - Louis Kahn

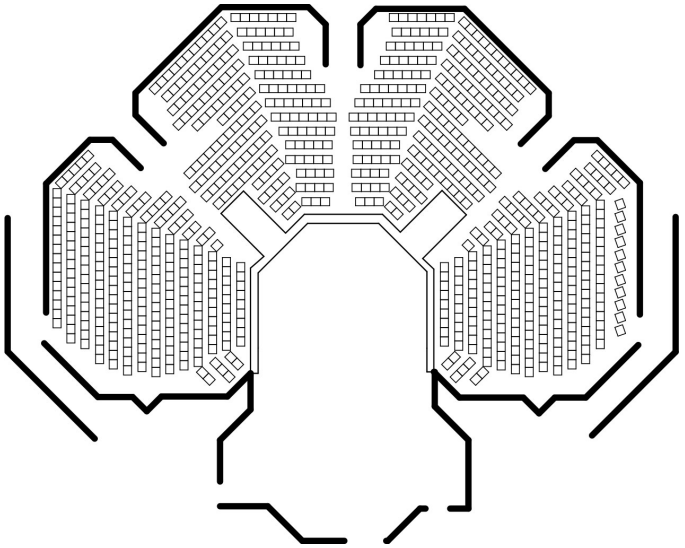


IBM Fair, 1964 - Charles Eames

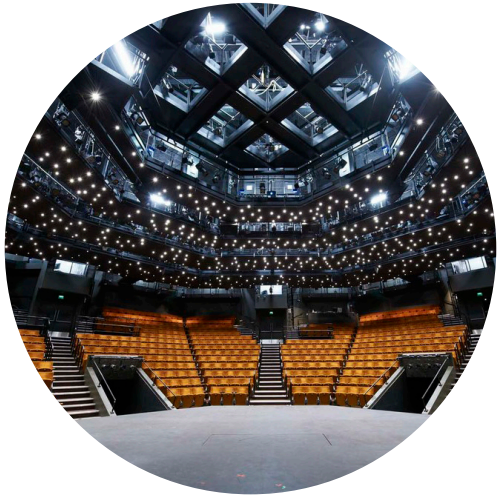


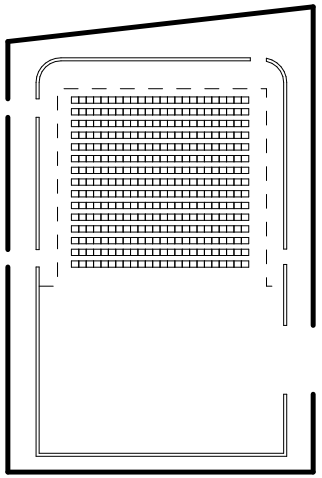


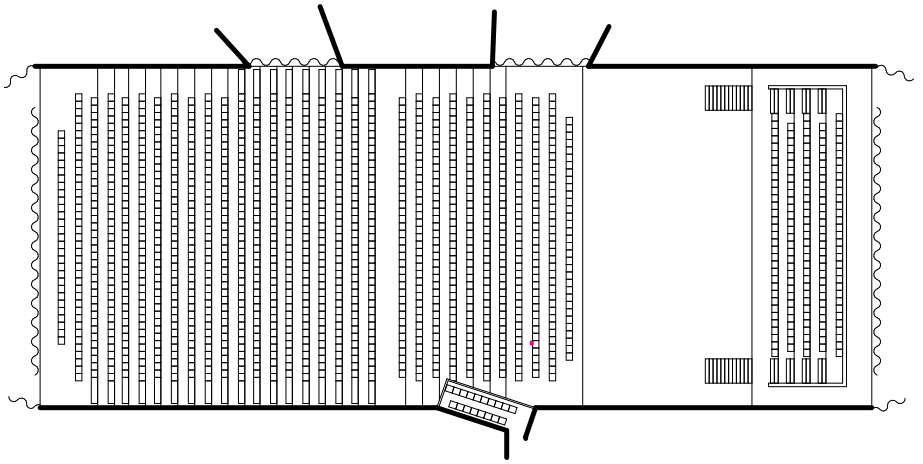




Crucible Theatre, 1971 - Renton Howard Wood associates





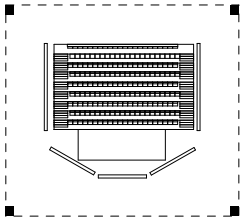


Oslo Opera house “Black Box” 2004 - Snohetta

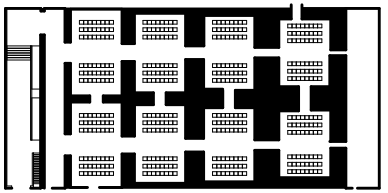
Casa De Musica, 2005 - OMA



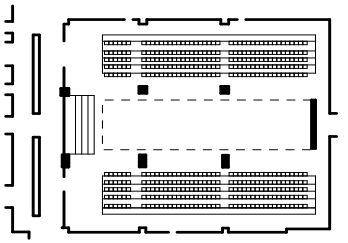




Cannes Film Festival, 2012 - Kanye West (by OMA)



Prada Mens Catwalk 2015 - AMO/OMA



New York Fashion Week 2015 - ADIDAS ("Yeezy Season 2")



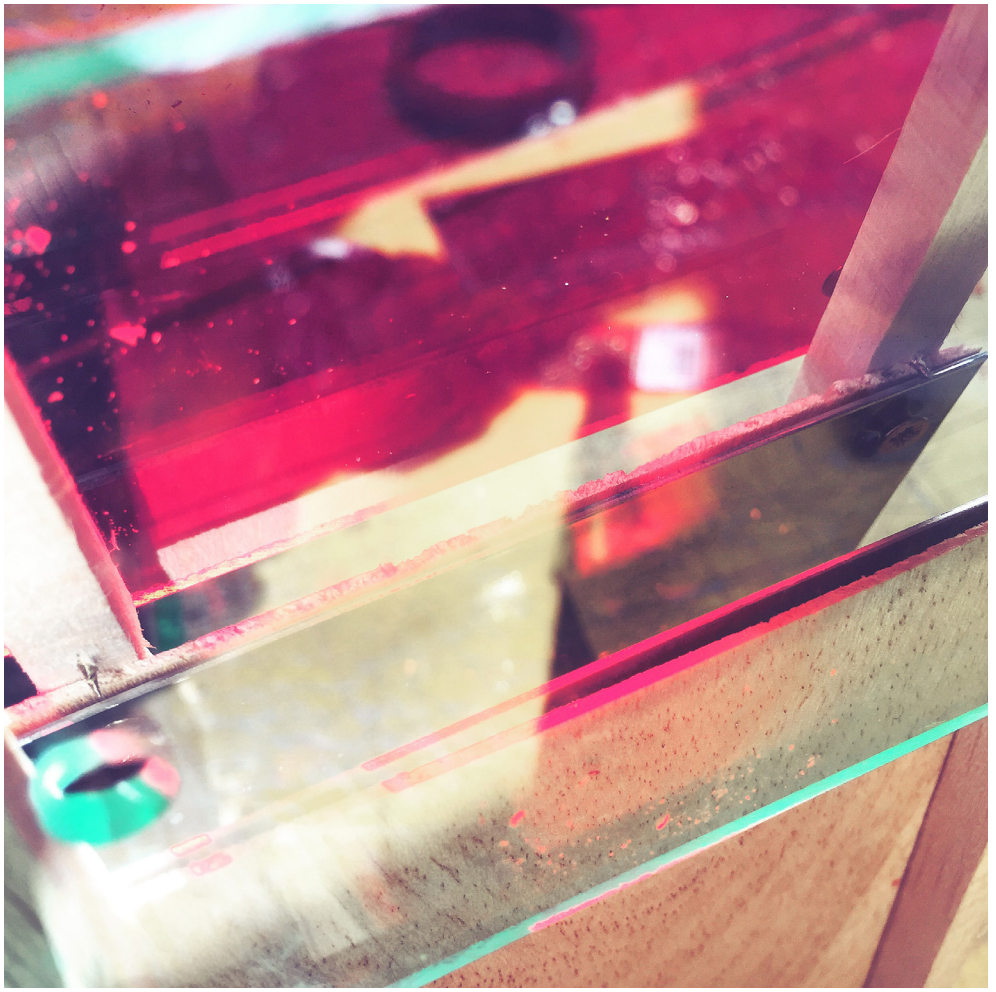




CHARETTE:

Charette: 5 Strangers

Originally they models were imagined as gateways, or openings, that could allow for a space of introspection. A space designed to become a no man's land, of reflection, within a migratory route. Yet, the reflectivity of the interior space created an overwhelming abyss that can only be seen from certain angles. The objects force the viewer to change their angle of view; either by crouching closer, moving from left to right, closing one eye or the other. The reflections create depth and volume, and can be read architecturally but are warped, punctured or aren't closed enough. The viewer furnishes the space and narrative. "What could it be?" "What can I make out on the other side?" "What volume is created if I move slightly to the left?" Yet, by stepping away it is just a model. The power of these models is the play between levels of interaction it forces onto the viewer. It manipulates them into a relationship, a confrontation of how much meaning we allow ourselves to give objects, or strangers for that matter. The models become less about reflection and more about toleration.



A play in reflection and creation.











