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PAPER

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DDR STATEMENT

Architecting as Design Driven Research (DDr) in our interpretation appeals to the intra-relationality of thinking, feeling and acting, to multiple levels of literacy and polyglot. DDr in our work entails the study of (interior-) architecture as an unruly practice of sense-making by actualising yet-to-become worlds. A profound interest in inhabitation as an erring and messy relational environment is our point of departure. Questionings that deal with becomings, wickedness, cultivating, matter that starts mattering, monstrous entanglements, mythical thinking and interiority drive our research undertakings. As these topics encompass a diverse range of practices, theories and (hi-)stories, this research group takes a post-disciplinary approach to resist the pressure of single and stable knowledge of change to foreground transformative and engaging knowledging by change. We use a speculative-projective approach. We design projects that bring general matters to a concrete and situated level by making them material and embodied (e.g. our series of 26 artefacts, of which we present the first). From that we again extract and abstract insights and ideas. We aspire to address full-on the wickedness of problems we are dealing with and maybe out to deal with. In this light, we consider the development of a wicked method-apparatus a serious and urgent task and centralize artistic and design research in what –in a post-disciplinary context– have become necessarily hybrid forms of knowledge production.

ABSTRACT

In this paper we introduce a first artefact of a recently initiated research line founded through twenty-six artefacts. These artefacts will assemble, as vehicles of inquiry, matter(s) for re-figuring architecture as a practice of making worlds. Seemingly paradoxical, the research undertaking of this re-figuring quest does not venture from what usually are considered the primordial elements of architecture. Conversely, we take the architectural element toilet as our seat of discovery, of learning and ultimately of re-figuration. The toilet we recognize as a locus ideal as it is the ultimate spatial setting of exchange between body and world, the body being the most bare and basal site and scale for exploring the making of and caring for worlds. It is a locus where matters of matter spontaneously and abundantly congregate with matters of concern. We end by projecting the emerging design briefs surrounding two more artefacts of our research line in-the-making.

The language of this paper is distinctly polyglot, expressing the multi-literacy proper to the various types of design thinking active in our research endeavors. There is a discursive voice, grappling and toying with concepts to draw a frame of thought. Interweaving with it there are other voices, some coinciding with the making of an artefact, a first artefact in a series of twenty-six that together will substantiate a vector in our research. These latter voices speak as or through work(s) and practice(s) situated on the level of direct embodied immersion in a messy territory—that of a contraction of toilet and architecture; of toilet and world(-making). A thick territory we enter through a speculative and projective research approach, exploring how concepts of waste, dirt, bodies, architecture, architecting, and earth can and must be re-figured. Hence we intend to induce a movement away from the banal as well as the destructive habitual spatializations and logics these concepts now have been chained to.

The movements and inflections of the voices of work(s) and practice(s) are to be heard as a way of instantiating within the space of this paper the concrete design acts that start probing this territory. The multiplicity of voices start a re-figuring of architecture. The voices of artefacts, of drawings, of words and the many other voices and languages present in this paper or more generally in our research undertakings, these require an agility of switching between different registers of literacy needed to grasp the insights generated by the designerly inquiry we set out for through J for Jewel.

SETTING UP A PRACTICE OF RE-FIGURING ARCHITECTURE

The notion of *care*, of *matters of care* and *ethics of care*, is situated at the heart of the undertakings of our research group Architecture & Wicked Matters, as well as our academic design office The Wicked Home [1]. In these, we understand and inquire matter as lively, vital and *vibrant*, recognizing the agency of the myriad of the other-and-more-than-human entangled in the processes and ecologies of making world(s) [2]. Thus we investigate the twin pair matter, in which aspects of matter/materiality are seen as inextricably bound to socio-spatial matters of concern. We follow currents away from an anthropocentrist conception to join a shared challenge of thinking world(s) through post-human perspectives. We consider architecting herein as a design driven research activity appealing to the intra-relationality of thinking, feeling and acting; to multiple levels of literacy and polyglot. Architecting thus conceived entails the study and deployment of architecture as a practice of sense-making, this by substantiating and actualising unruly because yet-to-become worlds. A profound interest in inhabitation as an erring and messy relational socio-spatial activity is our recurrent point of departure. Questionings that deal with becoming-s, wickedness, cultivating, matter that starts mattering, multiplicity of entanglements, mythical thinking and interiority are recurrent motors of our research undertakings. As these topics encompass a diverse range of practices, theories and (hi-)stories, we take a post-disciplinary approach to resist the pressure of single and stable knowledge *of* change to foreground transformative and engaging knowledge-ing *by* change.

The notion of *care* being pivotal in our practices, when thinking about contributing to this conference we sensed a resonance with its underlying blueprint, the blueprint of *CA(2)RE*. The cipher two we interpret here twofold. First, in our explorations we venture from a close alliance between art and architecture. Second, pursuing a squared interpretation of the notion of care: *CA²RE* or care leveled up *to the second*. This leveling up in our understanding entails the development and deployment of *re-partitioning* practices of architecture; practices of *re-figuring* the logics we create by too often left unquestioned [3]. Our contribution does not retroactively look into work already produced. Conversely, we have taken it as a challenge to substantiate a new series of *re-figuring artefacts* close to one specific architectural element—the toilet, a series we conceive of as vehicles for propelling a new line of inquiry within our research undertakings. That said, the idea of working with this architectural element is not new to our research group, and has slumbered and fermented in our minds and some of our projects up to this point [4].

In the space of this conference, a first investigative artefact is unfolded: J for Jewel. It serves as a particular conversation piece and vehicle of inquiry within the space of this conference as well as within our research line, where it invokes other artefacts to come into being. We show this artefact in its fragility and uncertainty of being developed. Hence, we present it *within* its—*snow-crystal—morphogenesis* of emerging from entanglements with and speculations within a web of matters and/of concern(s); of a multiplicity of connecting and colliding thoughts, concerns, inspirations, ideas, and intermediate propositions [5]. We present it as a *bird-in-flight* [6]. This kind of gaining substance we also see underlying the overall research line to come as well as the other artefacts this line will be propelled and assembled by. It is to be noted then that not only the research line to come is *assembled* in nature, but also this first artefact itself. Introducing another aspect of fragility to J for Jewel, our point of departure ventures from the bare and basal body as a site and scale for exploring the making of world(s). This choice is not coincidental, as we consider the idea of a re-figuring of architecture to necessarily depart from the bare and basal. This is, as has been suggested, the bare and basal of the notion of inhabitation, of the site that is the body, and of the toilet as the specific architectural element we deliberately choose to graft our research on.

A RESEARCH LINE ASSEMBLING TWENTY-SIX ARTEFACTS

Within the newly founded research line which aims at substantiating or rendering present more-than-human perspectives in the field of architecture, our ground zero takes at its center the toilet. As pointed out in the AMO publication Elements of Architecture, no architectural treatise declares the toilet as the primordial element of architecture. Hence no such treatise considers the toilet to be at the center for re-thinking or re-figuring (through) architecture, not to mention for re-figuring the—making of—world(s). However, as the same publication stipulates, the toilet as an architectural element also of literal regenerative habits may be regarded to be the ultimate element for such re-thinking and aesthetical-political re-figuring activity [7].

We understand this characterization of being the ultimate here in the aforementioned sense that the toilet and how it is made to matter can productively congregate scales

and concerns. These are small scales (e.g. the body), grand scales and matters of concern (e.g. an ecological collapse), as well as infra-small scales (e.g. the microbiome), which involve also actively the agency of the other-and-more-than-human. The toilet as an element and matter of matters is the ultimate spatial setting of an exchange between body and architecture, between body and earth, her soil we massively stir and colonize by it, the night soil we bother her with. It is a place of an ambiguous reading: from the closed water closet to conceptualizations of the toilet as a sublime shadow landscape [8]; from a private retreat to a public convenience; from an infinitely primal to an excessively technical apparatus fundamental even in colonizing deep space; between the mundane and a universe with its own proper gods and spirits; from a locus of comfort to a stage of societal conflict.

It is a germinal space also, and we introduced this as pivotal, for the revalorization of *care* and *taking care* as or supported by *material practices* [9]. The toilet seat, and the series of artefacts we intend to substantiate, may then be learning seats assisting in such re-thinking, re-figuring and re-partitioning activity in their own particular way. As Thomas More has suggested, any projection of future needs a good idea about sanitation [10]. Reformulated as a challenge, any projection of future needs an intriguing explorative series of toilets.

Challenged by Peter Greenaway's short film *Inside Rooms, 26 bathrooms, London & Oxfordshire*, we will in the research line develop over time a series of twenty-six architectural artefacts thinking from the toilet [11]. In Greenaway's montage, there is a bathroom for each character of the alphabet. Similarly, there will be one toilet or related architectural artefact for each character of our alphabet (research line). For this conference as said we start up that series with the J for Jewel. This artefact takes as its challenge the intimacy of a human body as a private setting for the design of a series of sanitary jewels. As a first artefact it sets in motion next artefacts, with different complexity and scope, roving in between critical and problem-solving approaches. Accompanying the artefact, there is the gradual formation of a design brief, as said for next artefacts in the series but eventually also for assembling an overall design brief to be raised as a challenge to architecture as a practice of re- and configuring the relation between (human and non-human) bodies to the earth.

The research/work presented through the present artefact and artefacts to follow intend to showcase a specific architectural practice of curating and poesis with a speculative-projective approach towards reality and the design of world(s), reflecting as said the research perspective we deploy more generally in our research undertakings [12]. The research line with the series of twenty-six artefacts brings general matters to a concrete and situated level by making them material and embodied. From that we again will extract and abstract insights and ideas. As such we aspire to address full-on the wickedness of problems we (as inhabitants of worlds; as disciplines assisting in their making) are all affected by and maybe ought to deal with. In this light, we consider the development of a wicked method-apparatus a serious and urgent task and centralize artistic and—architectural—design research in what in a post-disciplinary context have become necessarily hybrid forms of knowledge production.

A GROUND ZERO: J FOR JEWEL

EXPANDING OUR GROUND ZERO TO THE SOILS OF THE SEMOIS AND BEYOND: T FOR THIGMOPHILIA & S FOR SOIL TIMES

[21] T for Thigmophilia.

In the master studios linked to our academic design office The Wicked Home, one of the students and co-author to this paper is developing a design brief that addresses toilet spaces in relation to the concept of *Thigmophilia*. The term Thigmophilia originates from the Greek *Thigmos* and *Philia*, respectively meaning the touch and to love. As a valuable counterpart to the dreaded fear of claustrophobia, our bodies' need for touch provides us with a secure feeling when enclosed, typically exemplified by the bed where, safely tucked under our duvet, our tactile bodies feel at ease [22].

In the toilet space, the smallest room inside our home, being at ease is not only a consequence of security but even a condition in order to *use* the object it inhabits. When withdrawing in this tiny space, the walls very close at touch-distance to our bodies, we paradoxically create the greatest feeling of rest while relieving ourselves, allowing us to keep the whole world at a distance by simply hanging the occupied sign. Within our shame-culture, this private room has a subordinate role towards the other functions in the house. It hides the object of the toilet between its four walls and is stigmatized by embarrassment because of the unspeakable (trans-)action that happens inside. As the challenge of one of the twenty-six artefacts, the design brief of Thigmophilia Toilet Spaces in the Private and Public Domain stipulates a re-thinking of the toilet space as an archetype, which has been standardized and blindly copied over the years. In its design process, the human body will be activated as an important instrument, as it is in J for Jewel. Drawing from the human scale, both the *hidden* character of the toilet space in the private home and the *dirty* character of the public convenience will be investigated through design experiments. The outcome of the design brief will be prototypes that *update* the very ordinary subject of the archetypical toilet space, which has now landed in a changed time where it does not provide access to all groups in our society anymore.

[23] S for Soil Times.

Spinning from J for Jewel's body-mind-soul covered in off-white materialities of soil, in scope come the soil times of a landscape as a site of more-than-human architecting. Seeking its way and carving in geological time through vast masses of Early-Devoon slate formations, the Semois valley is a meandering matter, extremely compacting its overall length as the bowels in a body. Mounting up the hydrographic net through stream and streamlet, a prairie on this and that side of the latter further demarcates the site of exploration. Being non-constructible in legal terms, the prairie allows only for an ultimately small, unfounded human interference, no larger than two square meters. Consisting of five legal entities, the prairie then can stage five times two square meters of fragmented interference, if necessary. Not needing anything but the toilet though to make the landscape a space of temporal sojourn, this architectural element is made pivotal for exploring relationships of *care* in between human and more-than-human. As sources meandering with the project serve Jane Bennet's *vibrant materiality* [24] and María Puig de la Bellacasa's inquiry into *the living web of care* threading through *more-than-human-world.* Herein, humans are considered *part of* soils, conceived as *living organisms consisting of a multispecies community of biota* [25]. To think and work in soil times at this point becomes a challenge raised to material practices such as architecture. Practices that de la Bellacasa has characterized as the necessary vehicles for unfolding practices of care.

NOTES

[1] Both our research group and academic design office are part of the larger research environment Material Narratives, KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, Campus Sint-Lucas, Ghent & Brussels.

[2] The notions of vibrant materiality and of ecologies understood as political ecologies of matter we borrow from Jane Bennet. Bennet, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

[3] Jacques Rancière has characterized aesthetics as a political re-figuring practice. Rancière, J. (2010). *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics.* London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

[4] We have in earlier projects proposed the architectural element that is the toilet as an ultimately fertile element for re-thinking architecture, by intertwining it in a variety of research proposals. One of these has been the Microbial Urbanism project proposal led by Prof. Rachel Armstrong (2020).

[5] The notion of snow-crystal morphogenesis has been proposed by Sanford Kwinter, foregrounding a conception of architectural becoming not merely as spatialized but as radically embedded in time, taking in all kinds of—sensitivity to—aleatory conditions. Kwinter, S. (2002). *Architectures of Time.* Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.

[6] Albena Yaneva advocates for architecture and architectural artefacts to be seen more as birds-in-flight, in which architecture is formed along the controversies it attracts to its processes of emergence. Yaneva, A. (2012). *Mapping Controversies in Architecture.* London: Routledge.

[7] Koolhaas, R. and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. (2018:1557-1559). *Elements of Architecture.* Cologne, Germany: Taschen GmbH.

[8] Junichiro Tanizaki has described the toilet as a phenomenally thick space, putting it in tension with Western approaches to that architectural element. Tanizaki, J. (1977). *In praise of Shadows.* New Haven, Connecticut: Leete's Island books.

[9] Maria Puig de la Bellacasa stresses that the affective and ethical dispositions involved in care, in *caring about* or *taking care of* need to be or can only exist if supported by material practices. De la Bellacasa, M. P. (2017). *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds.* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

[10] Thomas More cited in: Koolhaas, R. and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. (2018:1579). *Elements of Architecture.* Cologne, Germany: Taschen GmbH.

[11] Inside Rooms, *26 bathrooms*, London & Oxfordshire (1985), Peter Greenaway.

[12] From the Greek *poiesis,* referring to a making activity as well as an activity of making up.

[13] A white middle-aged woman covers her body-mind-soul with off-white DFB mud (30% chamotte of 1 mm) from Saint-Aubin, unearthed 26 hours walking and 147 steps upstream from her place of residence, masking the scent of her skin while becoming the site of her architecting.

[14] This is her story of descent: 'in heaven there are beings who do not eat; in this lower world of stomachs and fish there are mortals who eat [and excrete] constantly'. Hyde, L. (2017:27). *Trickster Makes this World: How Disruptive Imagination Creates Culture.* Edinburgh/New York: Canongate Books.

[15] I press my bum into the mud of existence. Eating and pooping become self-eating and self-excreting. Architecting *J for Jewel* is to invent a daily ritual of becoming-passageway.

[16] When *Raven becomes Voracious,* he sings Patti Smith's *Pissing in a River* (1976): 'My bowels are empty, excreting your soul. What more can I give you? Baby I don't know. What more can I give you to make this thing grow? Don't turn your back now, I'm talking to you'.

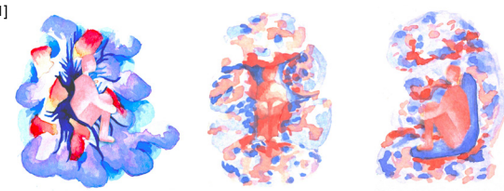
[17] This muddy porous body-mind-soul becomes compost by her necklace. Heeding Haraway's 'we are humus, not Homo, not Anthropos; we are compost.' Haraway, D. (2016:55). *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham, London: Duke University Press.

[18] A braid of her lover's hair connects four artefacts made of sediment from a time where human presence was non-existent. These chunks of clay allow reaching out to other soil times: from the Early Oligocene (33,6 – 28,4 million years ago) to the Late and Middle Devoon (360-400 million years ago).

[19] 'Matter, mater, mutter make me – make us, that collective gathered in the narrative bag of the Chtulucene.' Haraway, D. (2016:121). *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham, London: Duke University Press.

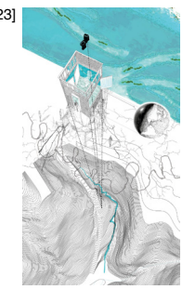
[20] 'I will piss in the urinal you pissed in. A young man's cursing existence. I will squat and rise. And piss. And tears. And urine. And rain. [...] I will butter my hair. I will unfasten the last. I will tremble like you when I glimpse the visible ink peeling at the edge of my cheek. I have danced at an edge of ignorance. I have wept impossible dreams. I have melted nothing. I have stood in the warped curve of a light that should have taken me away yet left me with humankind that I have never been. Everything here is a small offence. Is an attempt to peel the mud of a putrid skin. I'll be ok. Go away'. *Mummer Love with Patti Smith* & Souldwalk Collective (2019).

[21]



[22] Excerpted from the chapter Een Innig Genoegen: Dekkers, M. (2015) *De Thigmofiel. Het Verlangen naar Geborgenheid.* Amsterdam: Atlas Contact.

[23]



[24] Bennet, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

[25] De la Bellacasa, M. P. (2017). *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds.* Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

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