2. The dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move.

E' possibile riconoscere con facilità il modo in cui l'architettura riesce a modificare e plasmare i comportamenti: aprendo spazi dove agire e promuovere le interazioni. E' altresì evidente come l'architettura riesca a controllare e operare come uno strumento di potere. In altre parole, ci siamo reso conto che costruire equivale a governare, o meglio, a organizzare, dirigere e controllare. Un esempio paradigmatico è il Panopticon, un dispositivo di controllo. Come tipologia di carcere che consente un campo visivo a 360°, permette al sovrintendente di osservare l'intera comunità carceraria. Il Panopticon mira a un effetto psicologico: sentirsi di essere osservato giorno e notte. Questo può essere traslato nell'idea di una società nella sua totalità, attraverso le sue istituzioni, osserva e controllo i suoi membri. E' sorprendente, come già fece notare Foucault, che le carceri assomigliano a fabbriche, scuole, caserme e ospedali.1 L'architettura ha cambiato di modo e più controllare come field, a means to discipline the members of society in all its spheres.

We can easily recognize the way in which architecture can modify and shape behaviors: by opening spaces for actions and fostering interactions. It seems obvious as well, how architecture can control and operate as an instrument of power. In other words, we have become aware that to build is to govern, that is to say, to organize, direct and control. A paradigmatic example is the Panopticon, a space for control. As a penitentiary typology that allows for a 360-degree field of vision, it allows the guard to see the entirety of the inmate population. The Panopticon aims for a psychological effect: to feel you are being watched day and night. This can be translated into the idea of a society that in its totality, through its institutions, observes and controls its members. It is surprising, as already Foucault pointed out, that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks and hospitals.1 Architecture has become more and more as controlling as a field, a means to discipline the members of society in all its spheres.

From this perspective architecture can be thought of as the design of spaces that “teach” us something, i.e: behaviors, activities, interactions, feelings, sensations. It is as simple as saying that built spaces affect humans and the way in which they relate to each other and to their environment. This should not seem strange insofar as traditionally the architectural object is conceived and designed with a purpose and to fulfill a function.1 But what does it mean, then, to talk about spaces that learn? It means, first of all, to change the epistemological perspective of the architectural analysis, that is to say, to rethink the relationship between the architect and the built space – the subject – and the built space – the object. – We tend to think, from a customary perspective, that the use of a space depends on its form, and that, in turn, its form follows a function. Needless to say that traditionally the architectural shape has been conceived as a solid figure meant to last forever. The question that arises from this analysis of the architectural process is how modifiable are architecture and function and, when considered as independent variables. And if one of these variables changes, do the other two remain the same? How seriously should we take Vitruvius’ firmata principle?2 How firm and static is the architectural object? Throughout this text, we would like to think how the built space couldn’t be thought of as a fixed, unchangeable object that stems from the architect’s will. As a matter of fact, we would like to propose a reading of the architectural object from its vibrant, unstable and contingent materiality. This comprehension of architecture’s materiality arises precisely in direct opposition to the principle of firmata.

2. The Idea that forms follows function is fundamental in the modernist architectural discourse appears in all its expression in the work of Louis Sullivan: “form ever follows function, and this is the law. Where function does not change form does not change. The granite rocks, the ever-brooding hills, remain for ages; the lightning, the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, that form is the heart of the soul.” Sullivan 1896: 110. Sullivan, Louis 1896. The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered [1896]. In: Public Papers. Hrsg. von Twombly, Robert. Chicago, 103-113.
3. Come è noto, nel trattato scientifico De Architectura Vitruvio identifica tre principi guida per l’architettura: firmata, venuta e utilità, vale a dire fornisce una solidità, bellezza e utilità. Sebbene il testo sia stato scritto tra il 27 e il 23 a.C., la validità di questa definizione viene oggi oggetto di dibattito nel discorso architettonico.
The epistemological shift we propose is that of observing architecture organizing itself into new structures and forms.1

To put it in the words of Manuel De Landa, this idea of materiality consists in ‘comprehending that every system complex, either composed of molecules interagents, organic beings or economic agents, is in the end generating spontaneously order and of organizing itself in new structures and forms.’

The epistemological shift we propose is that of observing the learning process of architecture to show this process’ emancipatory nature. It is precisely through this analysis that we are able to understand the contingency of architecture in itself; the resistance that forces every time we tend to categorize it and control it. The way in which a space can unfold itself is not necessarily predeterminded and not always predictable. To put it in terms of De Landa, this idea of materiality allows us to understand that any complex system, whether composed of interacting molecules, organic creatures or economic agents, is capable of spontaneously generating order and actively organizing itself into new structures and forms.2

Il cambio epistemologico che proponiamo è quello di osservare il processo di aggiornamento dell’architettura per mostrare la natura emancipatoria di questo processo. E’ precisamente attraverso questa incomprensione che possiamo comprendere che l’architettura possa creare possibilità di emancipazione in contesti repressivi o scenari in cui minoranze e gruppi sottorepresentati abbiano trovato un rifugio sicuro. In altre parole, come gli altri, nella forma più tradizionale del capitalismo, possiamo trovare un luogo in cui affermarsi all’interno di una società in cui, in molti casi, gli spazi sono stati costruiti proprio per escludere.

A good example of this process is the nightclub Teatro in Bogota, Colombia. Originally built as the Metro Rivera cinema theater, it was located in one of the trendiest areas of Bogota during the early 60s, in the traditional neighborhood of Chapinero. The theater operated as such until the late 80s, hosting the crowded premieres ofblockbusters like Jaws (1975) or E.T. (1982). By then, the urban depressed area of Chapinero, abandoned by the rich people and now swarmed by thousands of people from all over the world every weekend, became a kind of a ‘metaphorical mirror of a society that fights and seeks more and more for the beauty of the city’.


What would happen if instead of thinking architecture as a grounded, object we think it as a “subject” that can be influenced and affected by the surrounding? This becomes clear when the gay black characters express their dreams and aspirations of what the dragging queen can be and how they transform themselves in the balls and dances carried out in the House of LaBejia, tachichingues such as “City vs. Country Side”, “Executive reality”, “Couture night” or “Urban Girl”. These classifications draw clear imaginations created by a society of commodity that are formalized in great commercial spaces, hosting now massive, multitudinous religious meetings.

Simultaneously to this process, Chapinero became the harbor for the gay underground neighborhood in Bogotá. The ‘pink night’ at the Metro Theater became an evangelical church hosting now massive, multitudinous religious meetings.

The etymology of ‘nylon’ suggests that in economic and social elites are irrefutable facts. This becomes clear when the gay black characters express their dreams and aspirations of what the dragging queen can be and how they transform themselves in the balls and dances carried out in the House of LaBejia, tachichingues such as “City vs. Country Side”, “Executive reality”, “Couture night” or “Urban Girl”. These classifications draw clear imaginations created by a society of commodity that are formalized in great commercial spaces, hosting now massive, multitudinous religious meetings.

The documentary illustrates the consequences that these imaginaries have over the use of the body. The struggle of underrepresented minorities staged in spaces of segregation in terms of race, class or gender is clearly shown in the performances of the drag queens are guided to achieve aspirational desires and how these desires have repercussions on the use of space.

In the film, the problem of segregation is explored explicitly. The categories used for the segregation in terms of race, class and gender within Drag Queen culture have clear spatial repercussions in how space is modified and can be used and embraced. The documentary shows how the skills of representation of “reality” in the performances of the drag queens are guided to achieve aspirational desires and how these desires have repercussions on the use of space.

In the film, the problem of segregation is explored explicitly. The categories used for the segregation in terms of race, class and gender within Drag Queen culture have clear spatial repercussions in how space is modified and can be used and embraced. The documentary shows how the skills of representation of “reality” in the performances of the drag queens are guided to achieve aspirational desires and how these desires have repercussions on the use of space.


And it is precisely right here where space becomes crucial, and architecture’s static character is diluted by aspirational desires: the deliberate imitations of the drag queens are transformed into space. The static, elitist, heteronormative, racist and hegemonic conception that is given to space is deconstructed when it is used as an ever-changing scenario to perform. Space itself is in drag. It is perhaps this tactic that allows building dynamic spaces through theatricalizing mainstream behaviors and identities. A performance driven by the categories that guide the limitless interpretations that we can have about us and the world we inhabit. House of LaBejia is a place born from the desire to express and use the body beyond the limits and boundaries that privileges and stable identities dictate. The House adapts to these contingent and fluid identities.

Then again, what does it mean to talk about spaces that learn? Perhaps it can mean to talk about the moment when architecture loses its sheer character of object and becomes a “subject”. This means, when the materiality of the architectural object becomes vibrant and changeable in unpredictable ways. It is when a place acquires the capacity to change and be modified along with people’s desires and aspirations. When the relation between function and form changes and form can be defined beyond function. Yes, Spaces can learn to become something else than themselves. They can go beyond or even perhaps against their original function.

A space can learn to be a place where, in turn, we can learn to be someone else. RuPaul says: “we’re all born naked and the rest is drag.”

Ed è proprio esattamente in questo momento che lo spazio diventa cruciale e il carattere statico dell’architettura viene diluito dai desideri aspirazionali: le deliberate imitazioni delle drag queen si trasformano in spazio. La concezione statica, elitaria, eteronormativa, razzista e egemonica dello spazio viene deconstruita quando quest’ultimo è utilizzato come uno scenario in continua evoluzione. Lo spazio stesso è travestimento. Forse è proprio questa tattica che consente di costruire spazi dinamici attraverso la teatralizzazione di comportamenti e identità convenzionali.

Quindi di nuovo, cosa significa parlare di spazi che imparano? Forse è proprio questa tattica che consente di costruire spazi dinamici attraverso la teatralizzazione di comportamenti e identità convenzionali. Una rappresentazione mossa dalle stesse categorie che guidano le illimitate interpretazioni che possiamo avere di noi stessi e del mondo in cui viviamo. La Casa di LaBejia è un luogo che nasce dal desiderio di esprimere e usare il proprio corpo oltre i limiti e i vincoli dettati dai privilegi e dalle identità stabili. La Casa si adatta a queste identità fluide e contingenti.

Then again, what does it mean to talk about spaces that learn? Perhaps it can mean to talk about the moment when architecture loses its sheer character of object and becomes a “subject”. This means, when the materiality of the architectural object becomes vibrant and changeable in unpredictable ways. It is when a place acquires the capacity to change and be modified along with people’s desires and aspirations. When the relation between function and form changes and form can be defined beyond function. Yes, Spaces can learn to become something else than themselves. They can go beyond or even perhaps against their original function.

A space can learn to be a place where, in turn, we can learn to be someone else. RuPaul says: “we’re all born naked and the rest is drag.”

Ed è proprio esattamente in questo momento che lo spazio diventa cruciale e il carattere statico dell’architettura viene diluito dai desideri aspirazionali: le deliberate imitazioni delle drag queen si trasformano in spazio. La concezione statica, elitaria, eteronormativa, razzista e egemonica dello spazio viene deconstruita quando quest’ultimo è utilizzato come uno scenario in continua evoluzione. Lo spazio stesso è travestimento. Forse è proprio questa tattica che consente di costruire spazi dinamici attraverso la teatralizzazione di comportamenti e identità convenzionali.

Una rappresentazione mossa dalle stesse categorie che guidano le illimitate interpretazioni che possiamo avere di noi stessi e del mondo in cui viviamo. La Casa di LaBejia è un luogo che nasce dal desiderio di esprimere e usare il proprio corpo oltre i limiti e i vincoli dettati dai privilegi e dalle identità stabili. La Casa si adatta a queste identità fluide e contingenti.

The Vitruvian Triangle

- FIRMITAS (firmness)
  - Structural integrity
  - Durability
  - Construction quality

- VENUSTAS (beauty)
  - Aesthetic beauty
  - Experiential enjoyment
  - Artistry

- UTILITAS (utility)
  - Functional adequacy
  - Usefulness
  - Satisfies programmatic requirements

The wall used to hang drawings learns to be a table.
The desk that was used to create models learns to be a model.
The model that was a representation of a building is used as a stage.
The stage that hosted a show is used as a collective workspace.
The place that was once a building to contain specific habits learns to appropriate unlimited events.
And the event learns to be architecture.

Then again, what does it mean to talk about spaces that learn? Perhaps it can mean to talk about the moment when architecture loses its sheer character of object and becomes a “subject”. This means, when the materiality of the architectural object becomes vibrant and changeable in unpredictable ways. It is when a place acquires the capacity to change and be modified along with people’s desires and aspirations. When the relation between function and form changes and form can be defined beyond function. Yes, Spaces can learn to become something else than themselves. They can go beyond or even perhaps against their original function.

A space can learn to be a place where, in turn, we can learn to be someone else. RuPaul says: “we’re all born naked and the rest is drag.”

Ed è proprio esattamente in questo momento che lo spazio diventa cruciale e il carattere statico dell’architettura viene diluito dai desideri aspirazionali: le deliberate imitazioni delle drag queen si trasformano in spazio. La concezione statica, elitaria, eteronormativa, razzista e egemonica dello spazio viene deconstruita quando quest’ultimo è utilizzato come uno scenario in continua evoluzione. Lo spazio stesso è travestimento. Forse è proprio questa tattica che consente di costruire spazi dinamici attraverso la teatralizzazione di comportamenti e identità convenzionali.

Una rappresentazione mossa dalle stesse categorie che guidano le illimitate interpretazioni che possiamo avere di noi stessi e del mondo in cui viviamo. La Casa di LaBejia è un luogo che nasce dal desiderio di esprimere e usare il proprio corpo oltre i limiti e i vincoli dettati dai privilegi e dalle identità stabili. La Casa si adatta a queste identità fluide e contingenti.