



Issue 6 - March 2009

T-Square

The Architectural Magazine Department of Architecture - Kuwait University

Third Skin *Exploration of Houses*

T-Square Magazine - Issue 6

THIRD SKIN, EXPLORATION OF HOUSES

153 PARAGRAPHS



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T-Square
MAGAZINE

Issue 6
M a r c h
2009

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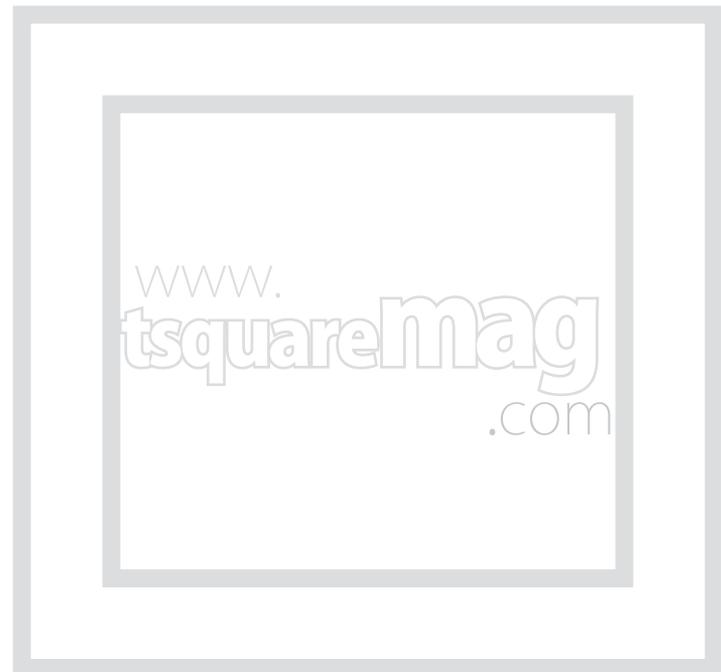
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E D I T o r i a l

Everyone should have the basic human right to seek refuge, to feel secure. The fact of the matter is, however, that the statistics of displaced citizens are increasing worldwide; hence, the basic right of feeling secure in a shelter is becoming a far-fetched dream for many. The concept of shelter is wide-ranging. We can speak of stateless citizens, whose number reached a total of 3 million in 2007⁽¹⁾, in which to them, shelter is simply belonging to a certain state. We can also mention internally displaced persons whose number reached a shocking 13.7 million⁽¹⁾ at the end of 2007.

As architects we design, we plan, but most importantly we explore. Whether we speak of Architects Without Borders whose sole purpose is to reconstruct regions suffering from natural disasters, or architects such as Peter Eisenman whose intellectualized work is formed on the basis of an analytical approach—we are in a constant state of exploration.

With our writings we aid people in exploring—that is a belief I hold close to heart. TSquare in many ways has offered me refuge, a sense of security, and most importantly, a place to explore what others had to say. Being my last editorial in a long five-year process of founding and growing with TSquare, this is a place to thank all who have helped and contributed to TSquare in the past five years.

Let knowledge always be your safe haven, it is the only form of security that is yours to keep.

6.0



Ruba AlSaleh

(1) - <http://www.unhcr.org>



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Intro Page

Skin- how many do we have? What protects us the most?

As designers we explore different forms of skin, we design them differently in accordance to various design precedents and methodologies. This issue tackles the different forms of skin which shelter us; from homes, houses, clothes, and our own skin, we are in exploratory mode.

skin [skin]

noun

The building skin is the essential expression of most Architecture, whether wrapped tightly around the structural form, or inflated to produce a bubble container, or deeply modeled as it contrives to provide an envelope for complex interior organisation.

Micheal Wigginton

home [hōm]

noun

the place where one lives permanently, esp. as a member of a family or household





Photograph by Dawood Al Bader ©



Photograph by Mariam Kathem ©

→ “ALL GOOD ARCHITECTURE LEAKS” ...I don't think so!

Imagine that you are a home owner lying wide awake at night hearing rain gush along your drains, in between your roofline, and consequently into your house's wall spaces; where it stains the paint, rots the plaster, and soaks the structural wood. What is more, is that your house was designed by a well known architect and had been awarded a prize. Then imagine someone coming up to you and saying "it's ok... all good architecture leaks". It would only be natural if you were mad at that person and had a very poignant discussion with him/her. After all, architecture is not just about designs and concepts; it is also about everyday life and functionality; as a user you should not be required to pick one or the other.

It is unfortunate for us all that phrases like "all good architecture leaks" have become strongly associated with great architecture; furthermore, much of that architecture is virtually unlivable, too. Occasionally, architects are so full of themselves that they

forget that the structure needs to be in the end livable. They also forget, that when Form Follows Function, function should comprise keeping the user dry. This requirement should not be an obstacle to good architecture. Time and again, architects choose to overlook it, and whine that contractors cannot construct to their demands. In Peter Eisenman's House VI, the architect put out to exemplify, in wood and glass, his personal theory of house construction that totally detonates the common idea of house. This was his intention, and it included abandoning the idea of "function" in any conventional sense. It is no surprise then that even for a lenient and understanding client, the result would be difficult to live in.

Architects notably fall short of tracking the success or failure of their work when it is done.



Once their striking, yet, vacant buildings get acknowledged by the likes of Architectural Record, their job is done. To the egocentric architect, his designs are always wholesome, their failings nonexistent, and the owner's changes are architectural sabotage. As a result, continuous faults in designs remain the result of the architect's vision as well as his pride. Noting that being artistic and inventive in architecture can be risky, Frank Lloyd Wright once said, *"If the roof doesn't leak, the architect hasn't been creative enough."* In a simplified way, these witty words of wisdom express a familiar yet inviolable trend. The judgment regarding what forms good or poor architecture is in part linked to the common spirit of the time. However, as time passes, the buildings expose their true lasting ability and persona.

I have heard that every home Frank Lloyd Wright ever built leaked, obviously causing livid clients. When the owner of his Falling Waters design complained about the roof leak, Wright said: *"That's how you can tell it's a roof."* Yet ironically for that design, Wright was honored by the American Institute of Architects. Phrases like *"all prize-awarded buildings*

have multiple defects" and *"we will have to live with that when we are dealing with great architecture"* are evidence that many architects are not interested in technical quality. In an interview, Gehry said construction problems were unavoidable in the design of complex buildings. *"These things are complicated,"* he said, *"The chances of it getting done ever without something colliding or some misstep are small."* But isn't that what you are paid millions to prevent? You are the experts, supposedly.

Many homes fall in the same unlivable category, like the Nordic house and the Johnson house; all by far-out architects who relentlessly try to make something original, untried, and innovative. The story goes that Johnson called Wright during a Thanksgiving dinner to complain that water was dripping down on their food and Wright answered, *"move the table"*. Furthermore, the Nordic House designed by Alvar Aalto boasted many great qualities. Nevertheless, the owner of the building has been struggling with several roof leaks for over 30 years. *"As colleagues humorously put it – it has to leak to make the architect famous,"* says the project manager. Another example is

a 320-apartment family development in upstate New York, which was designed by Edward Durrell Stone. Initially for a flat site, it was ultimately built on a slope, so that following winters, the temperature and pressure caused the buildings to start sliding downhill, right off their concrete slabs.

By and large great works of architecture become distinctive landmarks, all of which is a superb benefit, but inside the space is frequently impractical and unlivable.

Unable to be occupied and inhabited, many famous houses are deserted to form museums and such. Driven by their ego, architects are so fond of their designs that they lose their grasp of reality. But, can we really blame them? The roof never leaked on the plans after all.

HOMeward BOUNDARIES:

the limitations of space

One of my favorite quotes is by Victor Hugo, and sums up what I have long attempted to do in a single sentence goes like this: "A house is built of bricks and stones, of sills and posts and piers, but a home is built of loving deeds that stand a thousand years."

So here I am, contradicting what you have read earlier discussing purely the physical architecture to discuss the emotional-wellbeing found, or looked for, in architecture today.

A house, by definition, is merely a physical shelter, or structure held up in protection of its inhabitants; a shelter from the rainstorm, hurricane, or simply the scorching heat. Home, on the other hand, is a mental, emotional, and physical refuge; a haven. It conducts the needs of a house in addition to being a psychological refuge. It is a guaranteed get-away from the storms of life; a place where feelings are free to roam, but are safe, too, just like you are; a place that fulfills the needs of mental and physical comfort. As Winston Churchill said, "We shape our buildings, thereafter, they shape us." We, as human beings, tend to either adapt to our environment, or make our environment adapt to us. Churchill could not have said it better; apparently, there is a psychology behind the architecture: how our architecture shapes us, day by day, as individuals, and as a society. Naturally, we recognize most buildings' functions by first glance. Social theorist, Robert Gifford, has found that the architectural design of a building evokes a series of feelings in the viewer. The person coming in constant contact with a building may experience

"mental fatigue" due to spending extended periods of time in a distracting environment. Such "distracting" environments may be due to designs that do not gracefully merge together. Interestingly enough, it is possible that the environment and temperature or the distribution of noise may cause physical stress. Too large a scale may overwhelm the observer causing him/her to feel rather vulnerable, while too small a scale may cause discomfort for an individual as well as a group. Research has also found that simple patterns, such as designing rooms where natural light is allowed to enter from more than one side, and creating more than one entrance or exit, can have a great impact on the environment of the place, making it more positive. It causes the occupants of the home, neighborhood, or even town, to feel safe and nurtured. Thus, on a bigger scale, the architect holds the responsibility affecting the mood of the individual; hence, affecting society. This brings us to how architecture may differentiate a house from a home. It may be so that such small details may cause feelings of tension, uneasiness, or even anxiety, while others may cause ease and relaxation. Unfortunately, we seem to have developed a distorted vision of home, as a result of what societies have been trying to sell us: a preconceived notion of home. "Home" is no longer relative, it is a "definition". It is not necessarily adapted to the clients' needs, but rather left as a form of ostentation. It is no longer necessarily a haven full of "Loving deeds" Hugo mentions, as long as it fulfills the physical requirements and standards society has set, it is a home. Although I am a believer that design highly influences our behavior, and therefore, plays a big role in possibly drawing that fine line between house and home, I am also a believer that, while we may, if not should, set a standard, we should not depend on "cloning" it and basing our "homes" on skin-deep factors.





Photograph by Marzouq Al Mutairi ©



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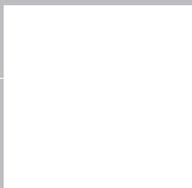
A HOME.. Far Away from HOME

I tore open my puffy eyes to the sound of soft weeping right next to my ears. My room was still very cold and dark; and the headache I was suffering from prevented any chance of a long deep sleep. I realized that my mom was still quietly crying with her head against my pillow. Even though it has been fairly over one week she still manages to soak the pillows with her warm tears. My dad was everything to us. He was definitely the spirit of our little family and stripping him away, so suddenly and tragically, was absolutely heartbreaking.

The next day was our first step to the path of recovery. I like to call it "decision day" because I decided that on that day, I would stop crying and my mom decided that it was best for both of us to go back home. Since everything here held vivid memories of what we both lost, going back to my mom's homeland and starting over is very reasonable. "It's going to be a fresh start for us both. You will be able to see where I grew up, my old house in the middle of the quiet neighborhood, and the simple trouble-free life everyone is blessed with" mom claimed. "It's been a long time since I last visited, but I doubt anything has changed. It's always been the same."

I have never been to my mom's native country. Since the day I was born all I knew were the skyscrapers of Manhattan, the high-rise buildings of Chicago, the grand museums of DC, the busy streets in between, and the dark subway stations underneath. It is a fast-moving world but I kind of got used to it and I wonder what my new home is going to be like. Is it more like a peaceful countryside? Or a deserted ghost town occupied by traditional elderly people? Am I going to be able to make new friends? Or are Arabs all intimidating and weirdly conservative? Although I am half Arab and a Muslim, I did not have any trouble blending in with rest of the Western world especially with my fair skin and blue eyes. Unfortunately, I did not get the chance to meet any Arabs over here, so my mom is the only linkage I have to my roots. For this reason, she strongly believes that it is time for me to discover my other half and connect to my forgotten culture.

After spending hours on the plane, we finally approached the coastline. Suddenly, I heard some buzzing and sensed the excitement of the passengers. They all started looking outside the windows, flashing their cameras and smiling. I looked over my mom's



[Placing]

S p a c e s

What makes a house a house? Is it the refuge it provides? Is it the privacy it offers? Or is it something more sentimental? What makes a shelter a house; ultimately, what makes a house a home? Can a home be designed and what factors influence this design?

One might ask: what is the distinction between the two? A home is defined in the Chambers 21st Century Dictionary as the "place where one lives". This means that a home is not confined within the limiting physical entities of wall, floor, and roof. It is much more reflective to the state of the self who dwells around and within it. A home is anywhere one lives. It may be a mobile home, or a motor home, or an igloo. For some, home can be an abandoned warehouse. For others, it is a park bench. In this sense, a homeless person is not truly homeless, but merely houseless.

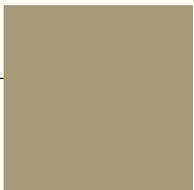
House however, is defined in the Chambers 21st Century Dictionary as a "building within which one lives". It is a space rather than a place, merely an address. A house needs boundaries to be a house. It is said that a house in which nobody lives is nobody's home. If this is true then a home does not obligate its presence on the existence of a house. As previously mentioned, people make their homes in places other than houses like caves, cliff dwellings, huts, and tents.

Many people think of home in terms of where they grew up, as a time rather than a space, while remember their houses as rooms and quarters.

"A home is not a mere transient shelter: its essence lies in the personalities of the people who live in it."

H. L. Mencken

If a home is not necessarily a house, then does this mean that a home has to be designed differently than a house? The answer is evidently, yes. The typical process through which a house normally gets designed in Kuwait can only be described as being "indifferent". The designer of the house does not take into account the individual set of circumstances which make up a family. True, the designer does skim through the "condition" and does consider solutions to it, but these are more often than not shallow and lack any purpose other than to function. For example, if a family is comprised of five members; two parents and three children, the house would certainly require different accommodations than a family which includes all the extended family members such as grandfathers, grandmothers, aunts and uncles. But the situation is deeper still, every individual requires study, to present a house which does not only function, does not only provide a space to stay, but also provide a place to live. Many, if not all people as aforementioned, think of a home in terms of where they grew up, as a time rather than a location. So if a house is designed with this in mind, of what consequence will it have on the architecture and the occupants?





Photograph by Jawad Al Shakhs ©



Photograph by Jassim Al Alawani ©



Photograph by Marzouq Al Mutairi ©

→ Seeking Security

Why do we seek security? Is it because we are afraid of facing our own fears? Or, is it because we hesitate to explore the unknown that may lead us to facing our fears?

Looking at life, one may realize that humans by nature seek security. It starts when we are still in our mother's womb. We consider the womb our home, and as soon as we leave it we start crying because, just then, is when we start to breathe; that is, when we start to intake the unknowns of life into our souls. As we grow, the feeling for security increases along with means to satisfy such a need. What we may consider as secure, another may consider as vulnerable. Life in general is relative, but the basic definition of security may somehow have one very general definition, a definition that may be applied to everything. Anything secure is something that would make us feel safe. Security may vary from emotions, we may feel secure sharing, and spaces,

we may feel secure occupying. In this article I will focus more on the aspect of space as a secure area.

The womb, the mother's hug, the father's grip, the blanket, the crib, the bedroom walls, the playing room, the living room, and the walls of the home are all spaces we grow up in, feeling secure- our growth in stages.

The concept of protection occupies our minds wherever we go; thus, as we grow we learn to seek it.

One of the main ways we seek protection and security is by protecting ourselves from the outside world, or from the anonymous. When we were children we were taught not to talk to strangers, or take anything from them because their intentions were unspecified, therefore non-tolerable. Such a feeling may be

twisted to also mean that we want to protect ourselves from the external atmosphere that may carry many harmful unknowns. Therefore one of the most common ways we approach the solution to such a problem is by putting ourselves behind closed doors. The idea of being inside closed doors may mean security, but the idea of closed doors may be interpreted differently. You find doors everywhere, but the space with no door now a day would be considered the exception. In architecture for example, the existence of doors is in fact essential.

Openings in design give the impression of exposure within the closed space, yet as soon as the people occupying the space leave it, or retire, the openings all get closed. This leads us to realizing the importance of secured shelters or homes for people. People may

24.0



Alia Al Azzeh





not want to feel secure at all times, but there are times when we may just need to find this place that staying in would mean protection against our fears. As we grow, this place tends to mean our home. The place we grow up in, the place we find all our beloved ones in. Such a feeling on its own may introduce to us a different feeling of security altogether. But humans tend to think of life in general, yet, did we ever think of introducing a deeper detail of what protection or security may truly be? Do we tend to, as humans, look at things in the bigger picture and try to understand their existence in such a way? Should we not analyze

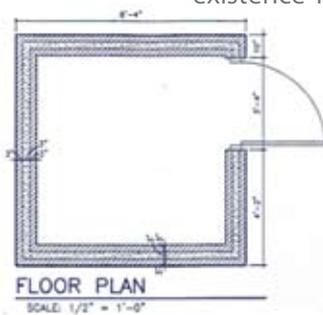
ourselves before analyzing the world around us?

The term secure is very effective in all senses. Security comes in levels, starting from being emotionally secure all the way to being physically secure. Being physically secure also

comes in levels. Humans consist of many physical layers that play the role of protection, yet we are so used to them being there that we may not know their existence until we sense their loss. If we take into consideration the creation of mankind, we may realize that to protect the human being, God introduced the skin. The skin itself is made up of many layers, each layer plays its' own role to help protect the internal organs from the outside world or environment that may harm it. After the skin, given to us by God, we tend to seek another kind of

protection that may act as the skin, such as clothes. The concept of clothes, as a protection to our skin, is constant, yet the application differs from season to the other. After clothes we may realize the need for being unreachable; therefore, we look for a roof surrounded by four walls and a door, and call it our home. So if people consider the skin as the first skin, and the clothes as the second skin, may we then name our homes as the third skin?

Controversy around what security may mean is found, and will always be found, but each one of us should try to find his or her own definition of what security is, or what they want to feel secure towards. Emotions play a major role in our lives, but emotions come along with other needs in life that may easily affect it. Comfort leads to security, adaptation is one of the reasons we may feel comfortable in a space; therefore, along with security we also demand adaptation, but the gift humans have and animals lack, is their ability to adapt within a place and relate it to the secure meaning of a home.



A Caveman's History

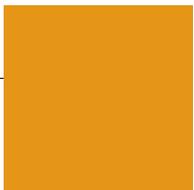
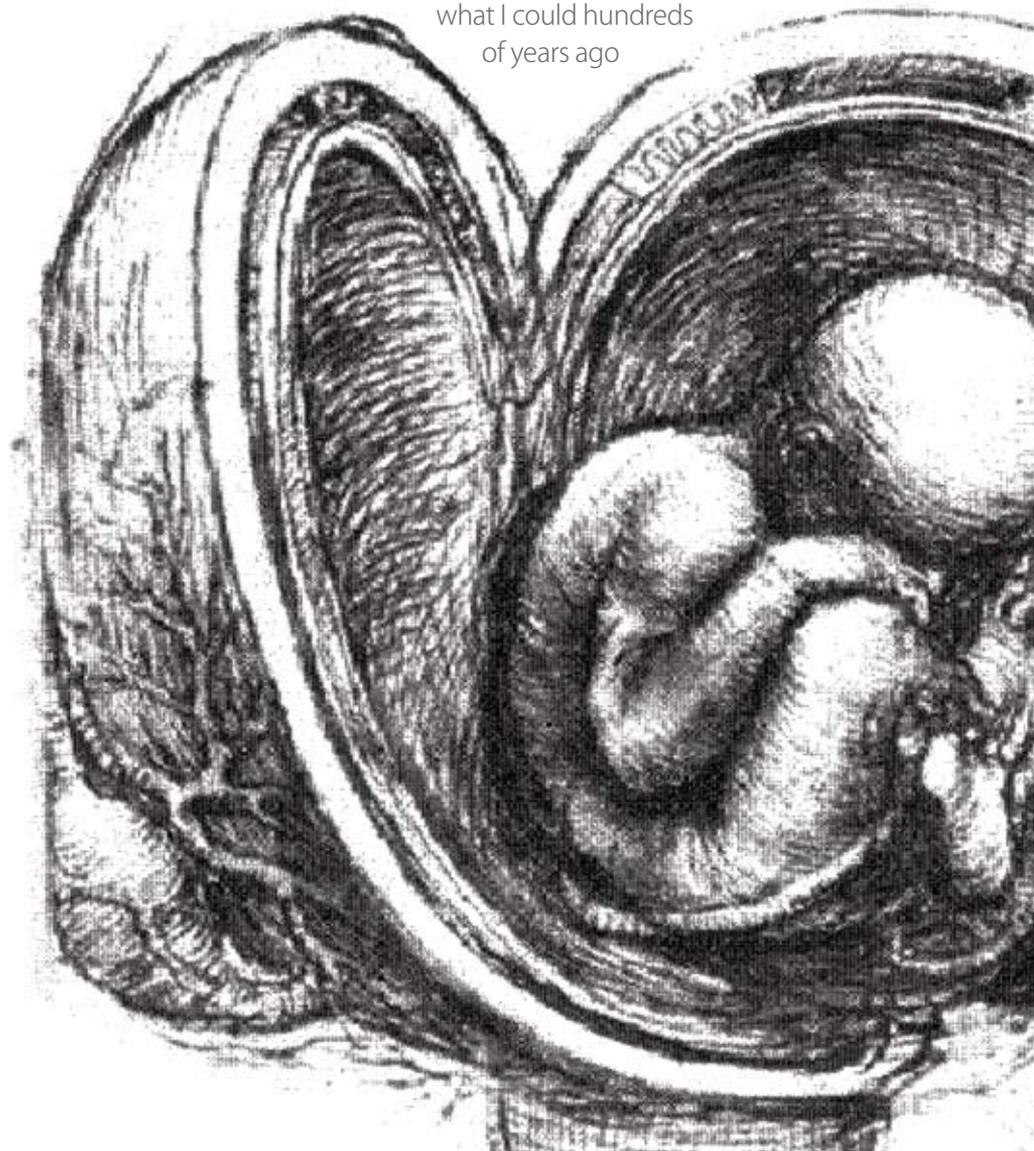
It happened when I was lost, very lost. All I wanted was to survive from the pouring rain that would drown me and from the sounds of animals that kept getting closer and closer. I had my fire but it did not do me any good that day- oh how I longed to get back to my mother's womb; warm and safe, but I cannot go back, I don't even remember how it looked. At the first sun streak I was wandering about and staring at those peaceful animals, and at this bird in particular making a place to sit in. Suddenly, my mind started to scan this picture, it tried to absorb every detail in this weird image, I found myself imitating them according to my scale. Day by day, I reached a form that fit me well; a form that we now call *shelter*.

It was an accomplishment that I was very proud of. I could protect myself by imitating animals all around me. I introduced this shelter to the world and everyone, with no exception, took the idea with arms wide open; they loved it. Since my basic instinct of survival is to be safe, it was granted- staying alive was all I needed. Years went by, and I have successfully provided a shelter not just for myself, but also for the family that tagged along with me. We adjusted very well to it, and it served us well.

Still as a human I was not satisfied; after all, we are never satisfied. I got bored of this shelter- I wanted to do more from the preliminary concept of shelter that

I created. Humans spent hundreds of years making

the same thing with minimal change, but then again it was still just a shelter, and so I wanted to replace it with something more efficient. I realized that my needs grew bigger as I grew wiser by absorbing more pieces of information. I started to realize myself as a human, and began to be aware of the things around me. I knew that a drastic change had to be done for this so called shelter that did not even deserve the title anymore. I needed the space that gets larger along with my needs and increased abilities. I did what I could hundreds of years ago



when I first started observing those animals. But this time I was smarter, I observed us humans. What did we want or need most out of our daily lives? I started to analyze our function around the space; where we slept, where we ate, where we bathed, and where we walked. Ideally, I wanted to combine all these functions in a place that could be my one and only resort, to unify them in a form that serves each and every unit of a human all alone. The task was hard, but the outcome would serve us all better; **especially because ultimately we needed a place that organizes our ongoing complexity of our endless evolving minds.**

The creation of units that would contain even smaller units that served individuals more comfortably was my new aim. I remember those couple of hundred years long and hard, but they paid off well, and finally after all of this time, we reached the space where all our needs could be met in by the creation of *a house*.

Congratulations, congratulations! That is all I could remember hearing in those days- I did it! I made this house where you and your family of individuals can live comfortably. It was a masterpiece that shook the world. Finally our creation came to life. After years of the creation of the concept of house the feeling of satisfaction started to fade away slowly. I did not know why. I kept thinking of the emptiness that was inside of me. Could it be the house? What more can I make out of it? What more is there to be done? As much as I tried to push those feelings away, it came back even stronger. I was driven to madness. I could not sleep- what was it? I asked myself over and over.

Is there more to this house? I traveled the world searching for an answer, but to my surprise, I saw my accomplishment of making a house different from place to place. Obscure and unfamiliar materials were used to make the doors or the windows. New additions

where attached to the house. The various shapes and the heights were changed drastically. The structure itself was twisted and manipulated intelligently everywhere I went. Could this be happening? My creation is being changed so much. What happened to the unity I accomplished throughout the house that I made hundreds of years ago? How could all of those people from different places change it the way they wanted? Was it even possible? I went back with a shock on my face trying to see that "house" through the world's eye.

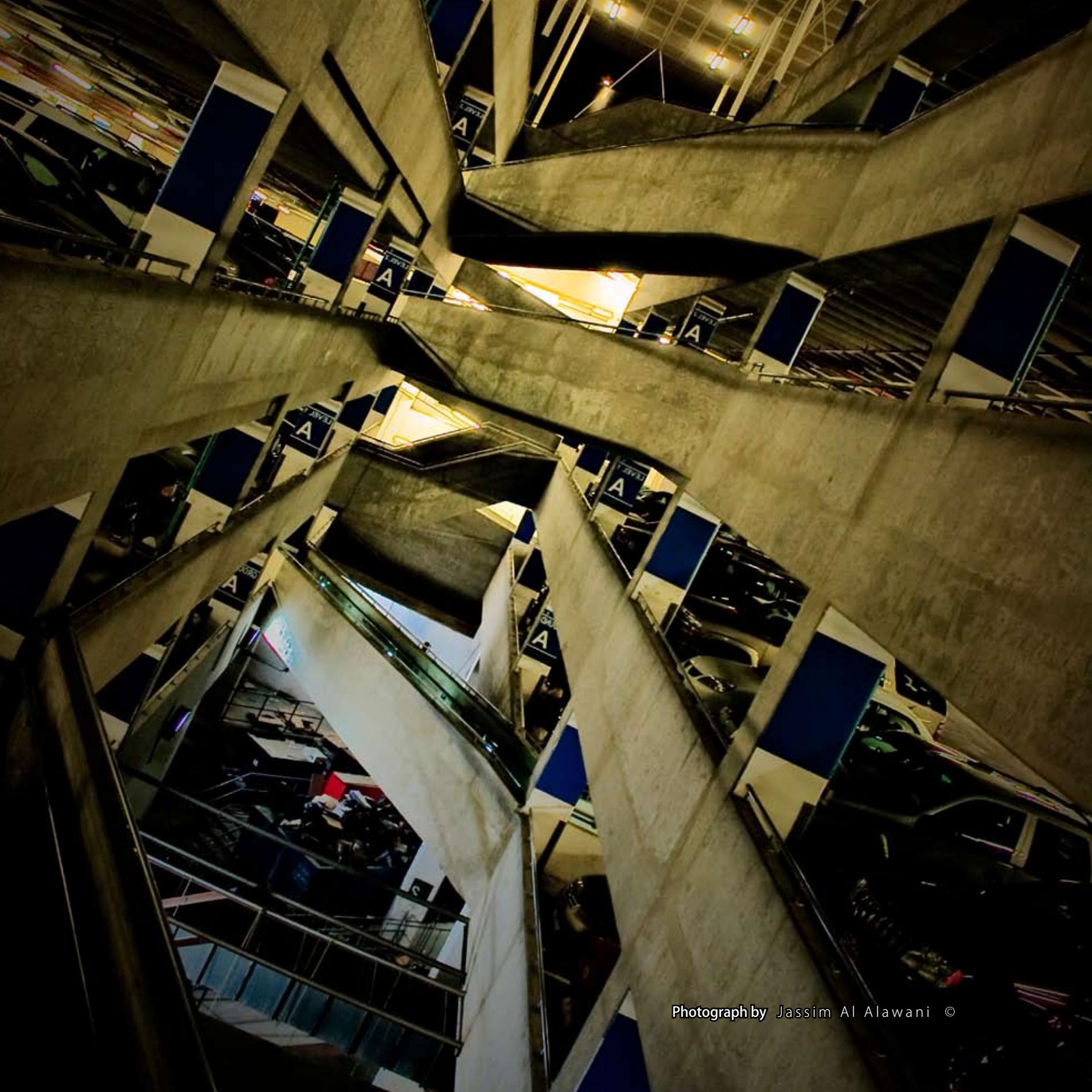
In the speed of light it hit me. It is true that I created shelter and from it I moved into the house.

It is true that all men owe it to me, but the world and men are submitted to change. In the end we are all different, the earth and the people around us makes us different from each other, we all see the world in different eyes and that reflects how we do everything. It reflects our house making, our house's outcome gets changed as well, our change does not only make it unique, it simply makes it ours. It owns our sense in specific representations that make it feel like home.





Photography Yousef Al Saleem ©



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Design Basics
By Farida Mahgoob

Schroder House

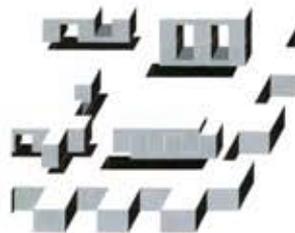


Source: (art fundamentals theory and practice tenth edition by Ocirk,Stinson,Wigg,Bone and Cayton)



Left: Gerrit Chair,
Right: mondrian's painting

Design Basics
By Dalal Al Lougani



Defining Art

Countless attempts have been made by artists and philosophers to define art. All of their definitions have been challenged; however, they hold the essence of what art could be. Augustus Burke defined it as “eloquence” and Mather “a unified manifold that is pleasure giving”. From my experience in the two initial design courses, understanding art, architectural abstract drawings, and what makes them different from one another created somewhat a confusion to me. Seeking for an answer was a sort of quest, since the definition of art is vague. What is that really thin line that forms the separation between art and architectural drawings? How can they be differentiated? After thorough research, I concluded that,

[one cannot define art per se, for art speaks for itself, since it depends on one’s interpretations.]

Numerous artists and philosophers stated that there is no such boundary between art and architectural drawings since they tend to complete one another. Furthermore, they share the same principles of creation; that is, they follow form, contain subject, and carry content. Others oppose such a notion as they see both art and architectural drawings as two different ideas that can be distinguished. However, it is from my research and findings that I interpreted that art is a creative process of placing and

arranging a number of elements with the attempt of visualizing feelings. In addition, art in general is inspired by emotions, which in turn serves as a stimulator of thoughts and feelings to both creator and receiver. On the other hand, abstract architectural drawings are drawings that simplify a concept, in other words, each element in the drawings is placed in a very rational and rigorous way in order for that piece of drawing to communicate with the receiver. As opposed to artists, architects are very specific towards what they illustrate and why they are doing so; there is structure in the drawings that shows very well and is portrayed clearly. Briefly said, art in its unrevealed structure can provoke more feelings than the obvious architectural drawings.

Nevertheless, architectural drawings are not completed without the understanding of art. Art was and still is an inspiration for many architectural pieces and vice versa. For example, Piet Mondrian’s painting (composition with red, blue, yellow, black, and gray) influenced several architects such as Gerrit Rietveld and Truus Schroder in their design the “Rietveld-Schroder House”, as well as Gerrit Rietveld and G. van de Groenekan “Red/Blue Chair”.

Here are some of the students’ work from the Department of Architecture in Kuwait University. They indicate how art serves as an inspiration to architectural models and how architectural models serve art the same right.

Awrad Tifooni

Pecha Kucha Night™

K U W A I T C I T Y

What can happen in 6 minutes and 40 seconds? What can you say in 20 seconds? These questions are not rhetorical! What if you were given the opportunity to present your work using only 20 images and or video clips, and then the host constrained your talk to 20 seconds per image! GO...

This is what Royal College of Art graduates Mark Dytham and Astrid Klein suggested and, in turn, trademarked into Pecha Kucha Night. A worldwide phenomenon Pecha Kucha Night (PKN) was conceived in 2003 as a place for designers to meet, network, and show their work in public. PKN is a not-for profit event, conceived, inspired, and performed solely to strengthen creative talent, whether it be famous or famous-to-be artists.

Describing the patented system that each presenter follows, Klein and Dytham write in their website

[www.pecha-kucha.org]

As we all know, give a mike to a designer (especially an architect) and you will be trapped for hours. The key to Pecha Kucha is its patented system for avoiding this fate. Each presenter is allowed 20 images, each shown for 20 seconds each – giving 6 minutes and 40 seconds of fame before the next presenter is up. This keeps presentations concise, the interest level up, and gives more people the chance to show.

Pecha Kucha (which is Japanese for the sound of conversation) has tapped into a demand for a forum in which creative work can be easily and informally shown, without having to rent a gallery or chat up a magazine editor. This is a demand that seems to be global – as Pecha Kucha Night, without any pushing, has spread virally to over 100 cities across the world.

Pecha Kucha Nights, at the moment, function in 159 cities worldwide, including the regional cities of Dubai, Beirut, and Doha. Through dedicated persistence and a lot of hard work, PKN will now be hosted in Kuwait. PKN will be performed 4 times a year; the first event will be launched in the beginning of March. More information will be forthcoming.

The goals and objectives are simple: to highlight and showcase creative talent. It is not only an outlet for creative release, but it is also a venue where one's work is exposed to a much larger audience. Students and lesser known artists could use this opportunity to introduce





their work, point of view, and method of practice. This enables future collaboration with others of similar interest – the idea is to know who’s who and who’s doing what.

A successful event would include 810- presenters of various fields. The audience and presenters include artists, architects, cooks, entrepreneurs, flâneurs, dandies, sport jocks, scientists, mathematicians, engineers, fashion designers, photographers, animators, dreamers, historians, fabricators, and more. At the end of each PKN, presenters and attendees are encouraged to exchange ideas, whereby a critical discourse would be established and disseminated.

Why Pecha Kucha and not simply a local creation similar in nature, the answer is very simple: creativity goes beyond the borders of Kuwait. Being a part of this dynamic structure would be an attempt to blur political, cultural, and social boundaries that are rigidly established in many parts of this region or, perhaps, highlight these idiosyncratic differences.

I look forward to increased creativity in Kuwait!!!

For all those interested in organizing sponsoring, and/or presenting please follow this link:

[www.pecha-kucha.org/cities/kuwait-city]



Photograph by Abbas Al Mousawi ©



Photograph by Ruba AlSaleh ©

The Seeing Touch

[Exploring the Equivocal Layers of Skin]

...The hands are the sculptor's eyes. [...] The skin reads the texture, weight and temperature of matter. The surface of an old object, polished to perfection by the tool of the craftsman and the assiduous hands of its users, seduces the stroking of the hand. It is pleasurable to press a door handle shining from the hands of the thousands that have entered the door before us; the clean shimmer of ageless wear has turned into an image of welcome and hospitality. The doorhandle is the handshake of the building. The tactile sense connects us with time and tradition: through impressions of touch we shake the hands of countless generations. A pebble polished by waves is pleasurable to the hand, not only because of its shape, but because it expresses the slow process of its formation; a perfect pebble on the palm materialises duration; it is time turned into shape.

(Pallasmaa, 1996)

[Apparently, as early foetuses, our skin surrounds us both inside and out. It envelops our exterior (as it does now), but also stretches in through our mouth, and continues and snakes all the way through our innards to eventually exit out the through the back end, forming a continuous, torus or doughnut like, (Möbius) loop throughout.]

Our skin defines and encases us. It is the biggest organ of the human body, sensing not only pleasure and pain, but also heat and cold as well as being the medium through which we sense motion (our kinaesthetic sense) and helps

us become aware of our body's position (proprioceptive awareness). It is flexible (it can stretch and respond dynamically to our movements), adaptable (see how your skin differs between the soles of your feet, your elbows, armpits, stomach, eyelids and the inside of your mouth) and it is constantly aware (we're always 'touching' something, be it our clothes, or feeling an air draft or sensing our ambient temperature), we cannot, unlike our eyes, ears, nose or even tongue, 'shut out' or 'not touch' something.

Our skin also defines us on a social and cultural level. It provides us with an ethnicity. It's condition can also inform someone both about someone's age, gender, origin and even status. In fact, our skin, even though we seldom acknowledge its role in how we realize our built environment(s), is of fundamental and formative importance in architecture. This applies not only to its cutaneous (skin based) and directly sensory properties, the materials and textures we use in their realization, but also a skin's metaphorical, or in this case anthropomorphic, qualities.





We can talk, as the theme of this issue of T-Square is titled, of a Third Skin, which can be used to describe the third layer removed from our own skin (our skin - our clothes - the walls of a building). At a micro scale it could be used to describe the three main layers of skin (starting from inside-out: the hypodermis, dermis, and epidermis), or, on a macro scale, even to how we occupy an urban setting (man - street - city). We also refer to the exterior layer of a building, particularly a high-rise, as a Building Skin. Parallel organ based references include the heart of a house ("is the kitchen"), for example, which is used to infer to the spiritual hub of a home.

We also hear of windows acting as the eyes of a building, or the garden functioning as its lungs. We even talk about a building having good bones (as in its core design and structure being sound). We can also, as Gaston Bachelard expressed it, apply a more emotive perspective to such considerations. Here a house becomes a reflective container of various affective psychological characteristics, a compartmentalized vessel in which to contain or hide our dreams (in the attic) and fears (in the basement) of a metaphorical house. These notions permeate all levels and scales of architecture related conception, from the idea of a door-handle, as in the Pallasmaa quote above, being the handshake of a building, to how a, usually ostentatious building can become a distracting pimple ('plop' architecture) on the fabric of a beautiful landscape. Thus, when referring to a building skin, the analogy needs to also be extended to touch, the innate verb to a skin's noun.

How will such a skin touch and respond the tectonic bones of a structure? How will such a skin breathe and provide its occupants with a comfortable environment? How can a building's skin (defined as a singularity) be made to dynamically adapt to various seasons and climates?

Such metaphors can be continued ad infinitum if one wishes, the significance in this instance is to (re)establish (a) skin's intrinsic link with tactility, for only through acknowledging the sense of touch, in all its different layers (sensory configurations) and imaginative formats (metaphors) is the human scale, dimension and perceptual abilities as well as more visceral qualities, allowed to flourish, factors which are vital in conceiving our built environment. This approach, which can be considered a form of extended empathy, an almost 'synaesthetic'⁽¹⁾ endowment, allows the usual notion of skin (that which 'feels' - a passive condition) extend it simultaneously into the realm of skin (that which does the 'feeling' - a probing action) - empowering it with the original and integral receptive abilities it has before classifications are applied.

If we can make a building skin even fractionally as supple yet resilient, as sensitive and protective, and as stimulating, inspiring and attentive as our own skin, a rendition where demarcating only three layers of skin isn't enough, it would indeed be an occasion, and design, worth celebrating...



1 - A conditions where various senses overlap - as in a person, for example, 'tasting' a colour or 'seeing' a sound.

A H O m e

Home as we all know, is the place where we sleep, gather, eat, and do our daily activities. It is a shelter that protects us; it is the dwelling that lets us reside between the earth and the sky. It is not necessary for any home to be a closed space as we know it, but it might only be a roof or a shade which we can sit under. A tent is a home for the nomads, just as a bird's nest is its home, the kangaroo's pouch is houses its baby, and our mother's womb is our first home before we come into this world. So each one of these homes offers its own experience, either created by God or as humans we create it to fit our needs, hence, giving us a feel of comfort and safety. Home is not like a house; any building that houses anything is a house but a home is a place full of meaning.

When a soul dwells in a place, they both become one entity; therefore, they interact with one another- each one affecting the other.

Our home reflects our personality, it reflects who we are and gives us a hint of our way of living. When we design

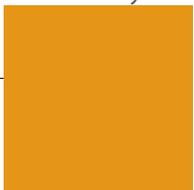
our home we give it our feelings, it is not a rigid structure without meaning, but it is full of feelings, experiences, and houses different stories. If we see a tent we directly relate it to the nomads, and we may know their life style and their context, a hut is related to the farmers or people who live in the village, and our houses in urban areas are more like the modern style in terms of forms as well as materials. Thus, the house is not only a reflection of our personalities, but it also gives a suggestion about the region we live in.

A home is a journey, a story we read by experiencing it, from the very beginning of designing our homes we have to imagine this experience, imagine what is going to happen in each corner. I have to imagine myself within this enclosure. Imagining the home separated from the inhabitants is not right, because the whole image should be in a person's mind. It should be a place that inhabits our memories in each corner, a place that will be a story that we will read in the future by remembering every memory that happened there.

People nowadays in poor countries build their homes alone like they did in the past, without referring to any

professional help, so their home was created by themselves- reflecting their personality. However, the problem with our homes nowadays is that they are usually designed completely by the architect and sometimes the client puts his intentions which usually conflict with the architect's style, and the conflict in their ideas brings about a meaningless space. So I think what should happen is, for the architect to design a home, he or she should first sit with the client several times to understand the architect's personality, style, needs, then the home can be designed to reflect the client's personality along with his touches, architectural elements, and features that combine both the architect and client.

I personally think that a home should truly be a home with all the deep meanings incorporated in the name. It should not be a building that only "houses" us, but it should create a dialectic between "it" and us, the place and our spirits. This relationship will give this place a meaning and make it a "home" rather than a "house".





Photograph by Saud Al Mutawa ©

KEEP IT Compact

It is like a competition: Who owns the biggest? Who has the fanciest? Here, we are competing with society. Each family tries their best to get the largest land and build the most extravagant house, leading the rest of us to no more, or little land. Now, any newly-weds would have to go to what I personally call “suburbia”, the long lost lands in Kuwait to get a somewhat decent piece of land. And the lands in “the city” are just too expensive for any millionaire to buy. Yet, we keep on looking for bigger lands, even though they are taking us to “suburbia”.

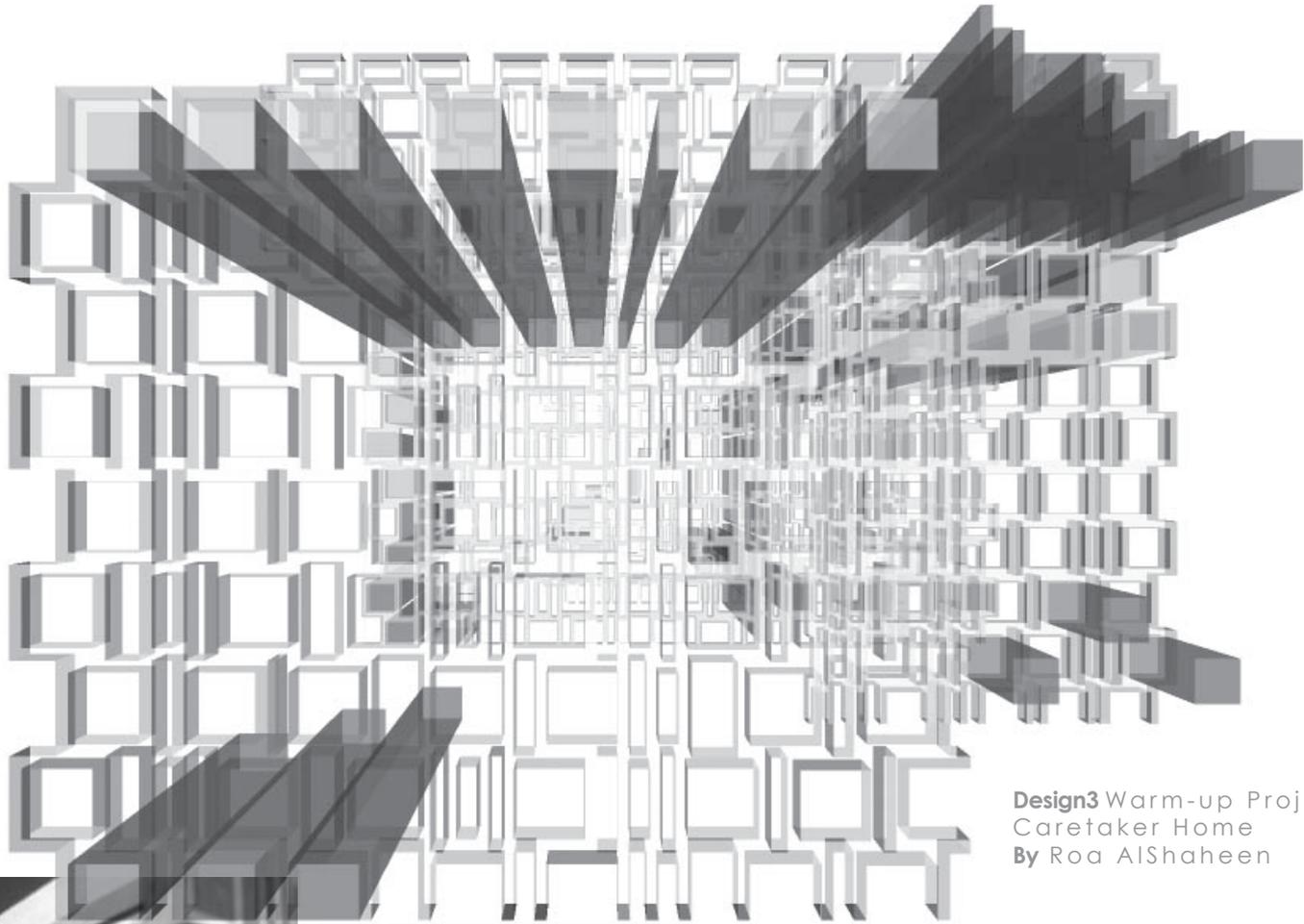
[I looked over a phenomenon recently, and was shocked, because I did not realize that such a thing was possible; tall thin houses. How are people living in them?! Is it possible? Is it comfortable?]

I am used to the big hallways and wide living rooms, and yet those houses still look appealing to me. One thing is, they are in “the city” and the other is that they are so interestingly compact; they seem to have no more or less space used, just the right amount of space usage. Very beautifully built to accommodate a family, having vertical circulation instead of horizontal, and miraculously they do have gardens and porches somehow. I read somewhere about a set of buildings in Singapore that are built to accommodate “a single professional man and his mother”. They are a flat of two rooms, built on top of each other, with central vertical circulation that also acts as a light supplier or sky light. Thin gardens are on the side and front of the building and each flat has a balcony. As I mentioned before, very beautifully compact. Maybe it is even cozier than the large houses we are used to.

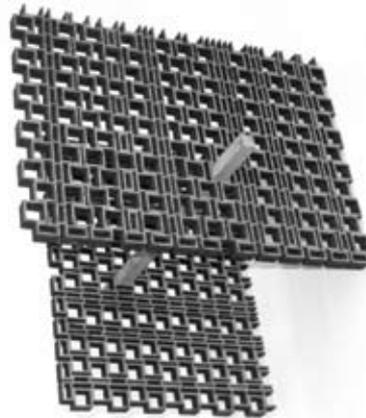
When we think long and thin, we immediately go to Europe, London maybe. Yet those houses are everywhere; Singapore, as mentioned previously, Holland, America, Boston in particular, and even Egypt. My mother recently went to Egypt and told me of a building she saw that was “as wide as one room” and she was really wondering about how the people inside got to the top floors. They get to have a façade of about 4 meters wide and the depth depends on the room and the circulation space. Also, building them next to each other gives such a character to the road they are in. It seems as if they are holding each other up. Don’t get me wrong, I am very satisfied with where I am living, yet it is an interesting aspect to look at in the future. Maybe that is how we are all going to end up living; in small thin houses, because there is no land, or because land is just too expensive.



Compactness.. Functionality..
Order within chaos..
Interplay between private and public



Design3 Warm-up Project,
Caretaker Home
By Roa AlShaheen





Photograph by Abdullah Al Qattan ©



Photograph by Yousef Al Saleem ©

AN EPIDEMIC OF TRANSITIONAL HOMES

At any given day, you may notice the growing trend in terms- indicating change of structure or form while looking at news outlets; certain keywords popup: awaiting 'evacuation', reopens supply 'route', job 'seekers', unleashed 'destruction'. These same words are evocative of the housing situation in the world, and although we may live in stability, much of the world does not. Volatile changes in economy and politics have resulted in an epidemic of transitional homes, which remains a debatable subject in many circles regarding their implementation. The following article discusses some of these approaches as well as the homogenizing nature of these designs.

Number of refugees and internally displaced persons in 2007¹:
25,100,000 people

33% of the 3,000,000,000 city dwellers around the world live in slums²: 900,000,000 people

[These frightening statistics only represent a fragment of the upsurge in displaced people, or those living in poor surroundings, throughout our increasingly urbanized world.]

As a result, the current situations bring up pressing issues of defining settlements and homes. The fact of the matter is that due to the rapidly growing populations, these terms are forced to respond to the displacement and transitional effects in its meaning. In many crisis areas, the call for emergency temporary housing has reached a massive proportion, and while Non-Profit Organizations comprise the greater percentage of manufacturers and designers, an increase of social-responsible architectural firms can be seen in the

market. While some adopt a 'pro-bono' division in their firms, others like Architecture for Humanity commit all their efforts, and utilize all their resources, in socially conscious design. Of these designs, economy has always been a leading factor in the production process. The shelter would be an accumulation of an optimized program and materiality in regards to the differing climates. The tunnel-shaped lightweight emergency tent is fast becoming the staple of UN sponsored designs, with its easy assembly, longer shelf life, and its ease in mass production. While emerging architects play around with geometric shapes intended for maximum volume and easy assembly.

However, the drawback occurs when viewing the long-term potential of these designs, and questions are brought up in regards to the concern: Can these housing units act as homes for their inhabitants over an extended period of time? Shouldn't the architects approach the task of designing a shelter with overcoming 'standardization' and infusing 'the sense of place'? Especially when dealing with people that have been stripped of this entitlement?

The average duration of major refugee situations has increased from 9 years (1993) to 17 years (2003)³

The task of designing an emergency housing unit is pretty daunting, not to mention critical; several factors come into play which includes, but is not limited to: economy, materiality, topography of the region, temperature, and the client. More often than not, the client is usually categorized as a factor rather than a separate entity. It is not, nor should be part of a program, for this leads to the eventual standardization of the final design of the shelter with the essence of home being replaced by an ordinary plot of land.

To borrow the words of Kenneth Frampton, a contemporary architectural historian, shelters, especially of the longer-term nature should design with the idea "not as something given and relatively immutable but rather as something which has, at least today, to be self-consciously cultivated." By implementing contextual forces along with modern technology, displaced people might finally have the chance of settling into their new environment seamlessly and contently.

44.0



Dana Al Hasan

1 - UNHCR 2007 Global trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons

2 - UN-Habitat

3 - UNHCR 2004: "Protracted Refugee Situations"



Photograph by Rashid Al Foudari ©

Automation in Architecture

Technology is becoming a bigger and more essential part of architecture with each passing day.

The use of technology and computers nowadays is seen throughout the design process; from the early design phases to the construction documents phase. Since technology is becoming more and more advanced, a new trend is emerging in home design: which is the use of automation in architecture.

The concept of "smart" homes is already appearing in some places. However, because of the costs that are associated with this sort of technology, this trend has not become widespread yet. Automation of smart homes is defined as: "a field specializing in the specific automation requirements of homes and in the application of automation techniques for the comfort and security of its occupants."

Fundamentally, the proposition behind automation in architecture, is that most appliances and elements of the home would be controlled by a central computer. Lights would be turned on the moment you walk into a room, and would be turned off the moment you leave. Controlling of window shades and blinds to manage the amount of natural light let through into the building; depending on the amount of light available outside. Also, the opening and closing of windows and openings for natural ventilation would be automated depending on the surrounding environment as well.

HVAC solutions including temperature and humidity control would be automated depending on the microclimate. Control and integration of security systems would allow for automatic detection of possible intrusion, as well as detection of fire, gas leaks, and water leaks. Other technologies include bathroom and kitchen automation, as well as home theater systems. All these systems would be integrated and linked to

a central computer that would control everything according to the preferences of the occupants, and in a manner which is responsive to the environment.

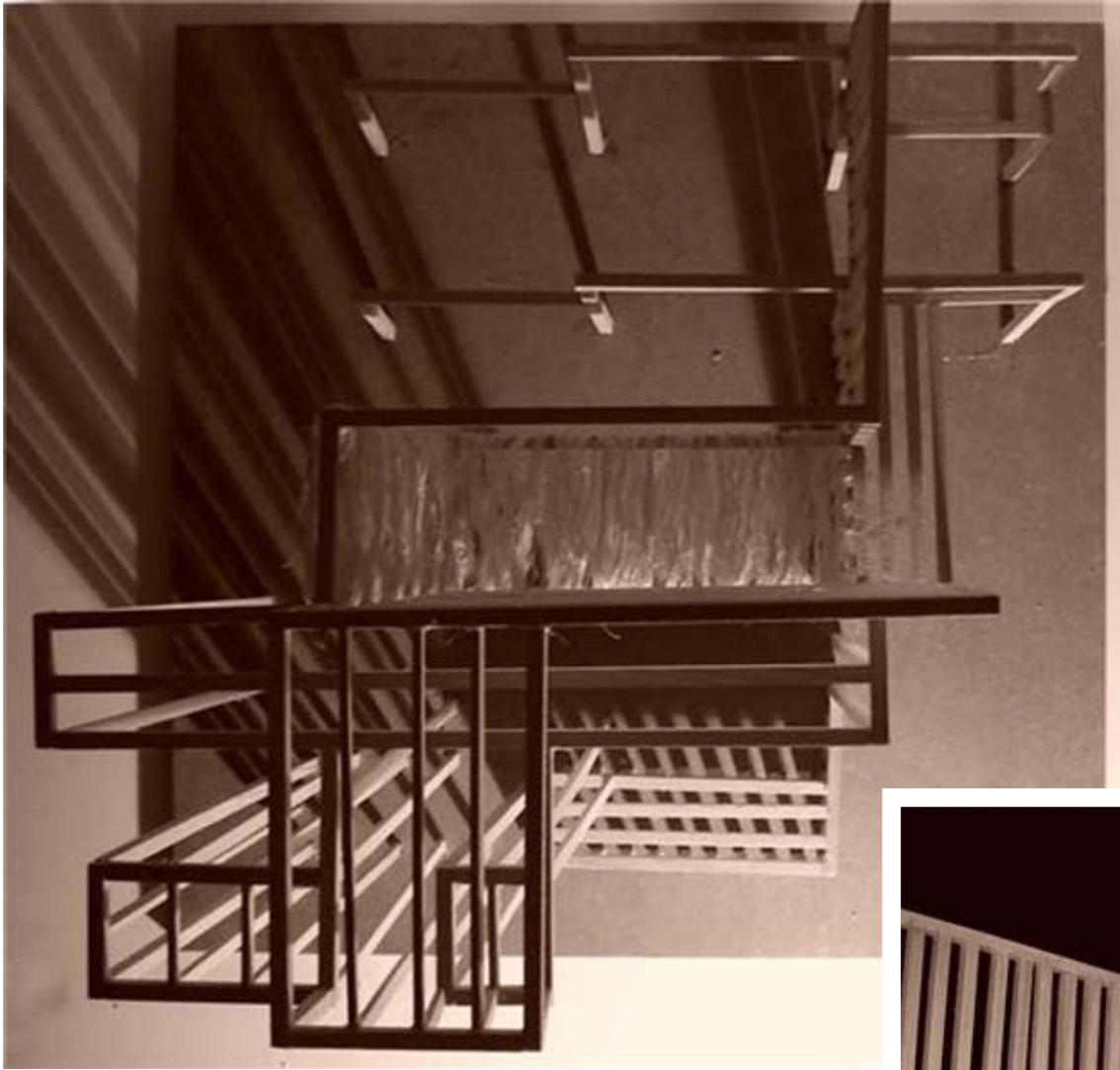
This is done in a way so that everything would be linked for maximum efficiency. For example, ceiling fans, window blinds, and the thermostat would work simultaneously to help conserve energy. This responsiveness to the environment and to global concerns is another factor that ensures that this is the trend for the future; since sustainability and efficient use of resources has already been established as the way of the present and the future.

Most of the technologies that have been mentioned already exist today; however, they are expensive enough to be out of reach for most people. Therefore, as time passes, these automation techniques will be made available to more and more people. Also, as these technologies progress, they will also undoubtedly become more sophisticated. For example, in future installations, rooms will be able to sense not only the presence of a person but know who that person is and perhaps set appropriate lighting, temperature and music/TV, taking into account day of week, time of day, and other factors in accordance with that person's preferences.

Other automated tasks may include setting the air conditioning to an energy saving setting when the house is unoccupied, and restoring the normal setting when an occupant is about to return. More sophisticated systems can maintain an inventory of products, recording their usage, and prepare a shopping list or even automatically order replacements. Some practical implementations of home automation are for example when an alarm detects a fire or smoke condition, then all lights in the house will blink to alert occupants. If the house is equipped with a home theater, a home automation system can shut down all audio and video components to alert the user to a possible fire or a burglar.

This trend is inline with the current evolution of architecture since it is designed to cope with the current environmental concerns. It would make maintaining a green and sustainable lifestyle easier for the average person; as well as integrating all components of a building into one system that manages things more efficiently. This means that automation of homes wont just be the architectural trend of the 21st century, but it would also be the lifestyle of the 21st century.





Design of a Doll House
By Farida Mahgoub



Experiencing Design

Practicality

For most people, if not everybody, getting a home is the first thing a person dreams of. So, once a person gets the lot he/she starts designing their home and their dream is brought into reality. It is not only about the design and getting a fancy home but at the same time, one needs to take into consideration the budget or the amount of money that will be spent for this project and tries to minimize it as much as possible. But, when one moves into his/her new home, they will be shocked after they realize the amount of details missed during the design process. This issue reminded me of a quote I once read which says: "you will sell your first home, rent your second, and live in your third" this is true especially to people who had to undergo this experience.

A home is like a sentence written by both the architect and the client; the client brings the words, the architect puts them in a sentence and links them together with carefully picked-out conjunctions.

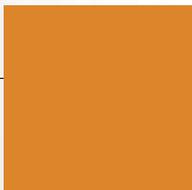
Once they sit together they will finally reach the end of their carefully written sentence. So if the client or the architect did not get this experience before, what will happen is, they will miss out on several details and important design decisions. Let us ask ourselves why does this happen? The answer will be, this is not a place for a temporary setting, yet it is a place where you will spend most of your time in. Hence, if you are not feeling comfortable, you will become extremely uninterested in the space you are designing.

Therefore, we have to avoid this problem because it is not a simple issue for those who spend most of their lives waiting for a home. So we have to get a professional architect a person that we are familiar with, as a designer and can trust him/her to get the job done.

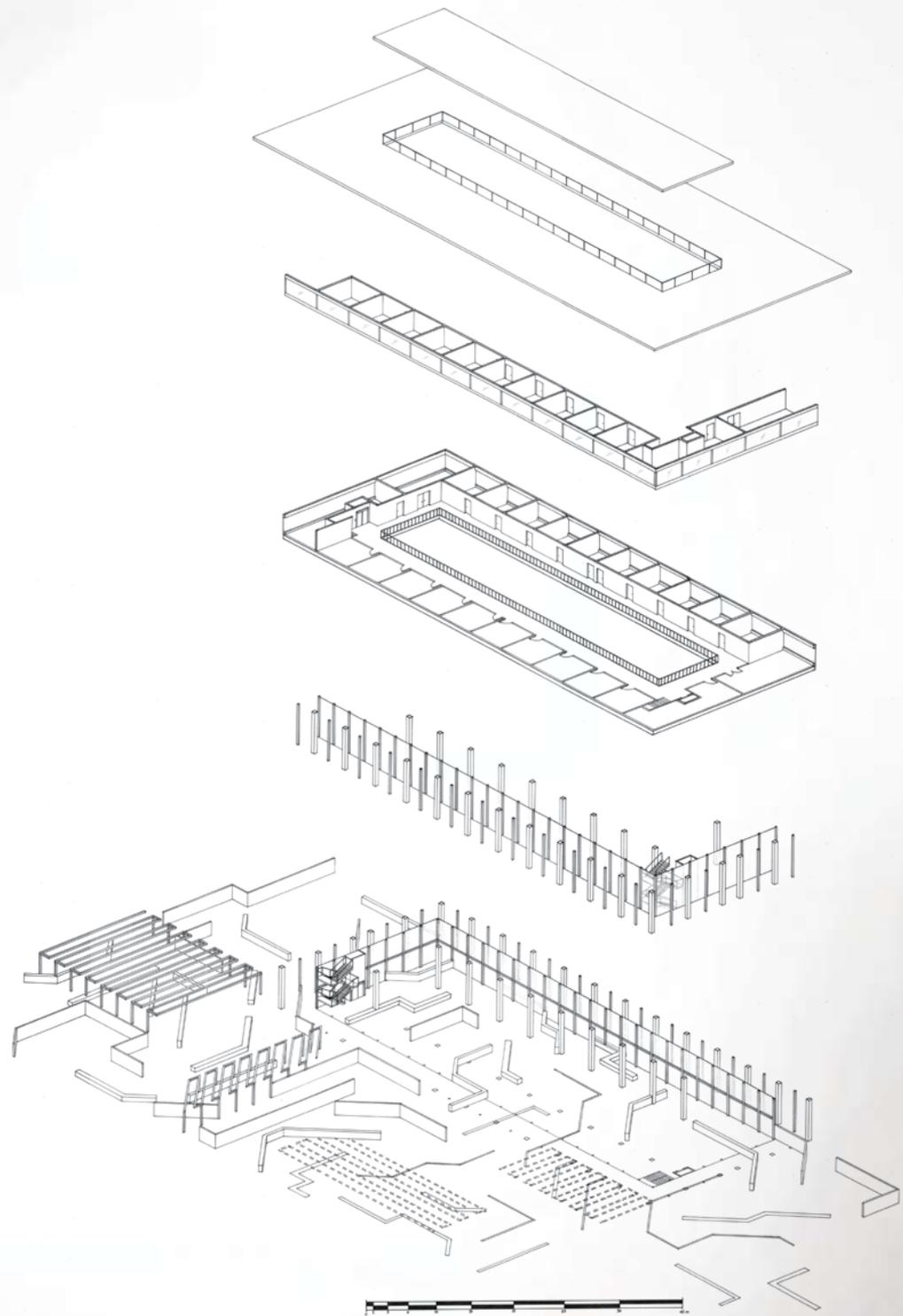
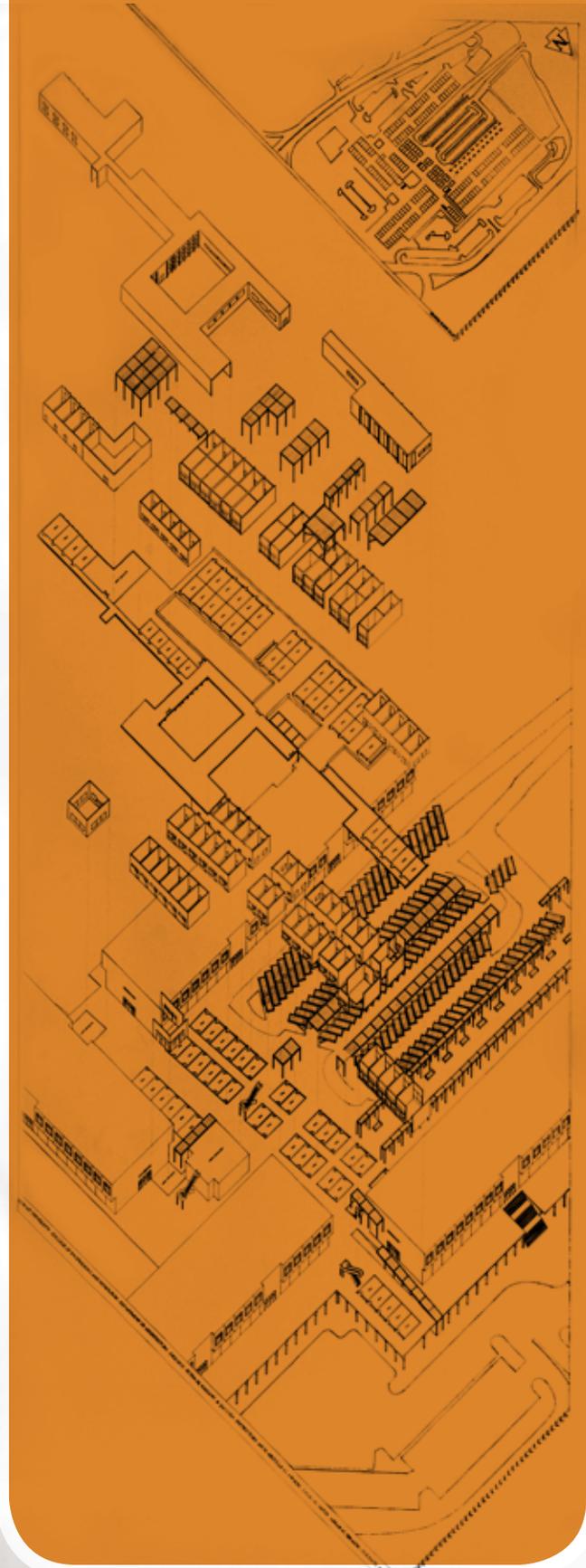
Moreover, the experience is a step where the person can have adequate knowledge about something. So in our case there are two persons: the client and the architect. Each of them completes the other, as the Arabic proverb goes, "one hand alone cannot clap". Therefore, everyone has to have an experience or the client has to depend on the architect on everything and gives the architect full approval, or the green light as one might say. In this case the architect feels free to do the work depending on the client's program for his house.

Nowadays, what happens is that most of the clients need quick drawings for their houses. So, they look for a non-professional architect who can provide that for them, and the result will be boxy buildings with the same interior divisions unless they change the façade to give it a new look. For that reason, the client cannot feel comfort inside the house. In order to avoid that, the client has to choose a professional architect who cares about every detail in the house especially because the architect knows that this house will represent his work and capabilities and so it may attract another client to him.

Finally, in this short article I wanted to explain to those who want to build a home (same here) the problems most people face, so these problems can be avoided. I advise them not to say "it's just a house"; rather, think deeply "it is a life"; where if you are not feeling comfortable in it you will not be able to live in it and therefore you will feel the need to sell it. So, choose the way you want your life to be by choosing a good architect with rich experience and knowledge.



>Designll
Hussa Al Hassawi



Designll
Shireefa Abdulsalam

A dramatic, low-key photograph of a person wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and white gloves. The person is holding a cracked, multi-colored mask (red, orange, yellow, and black) to their face. The mask has a human-like form with dark eye holes and a slightly open mouth. The lighting is focused on the mask and the person's hands, creating a stark contrast against a black background.

Photograph by Saud Al Mutawa ©



Photograph by Abdulaziz AlKandary ©

[S K I N S]

When first coming across this word, you may ask yourself, what is this third skin and what are these people talking about? Well, humble reader, this is why I am here; and not to get ahead of ourselves firstly, you may also presume that there is a first and second skin, as to what logic do we start with three. So let us talk about first skin, you may ask what is first skin? To let you think about it, first I will provide you with a hint, it is the largest organ you have, we shed some everyday, it heals by itself, if you have not already guessed, it is our all-natural skin.

Skin comes in different colors from the palest to the darkest, skin color can be an advantage to environmental habitats or as a fashion statement, as the media implies. Our skin is here and is there to stay to protect us from our environments, from scouring deserts to freezing arctic's, it is our self-defensive mechanism in many ways.

Knowing you, fellow reader, I am wagering that your eyes have drifted off this article and observing your own hands, saying that you think you may want to wash them again or are in dire need of a tan, or need to apply some moisturizer as you feel a sense of dryness. Well I will not take that much time from you.

The First skin covers our body entirely- covering all the bases. Our skin is also a source of beauty in many ways, we can train our body by exercising, getting into shape, eating healthy hence creating a piece of artwork, which we can display proudly. This has been done through the civilizations from statues to paintings, but the mediums are not limited to those alone, they can be expressed through words even.

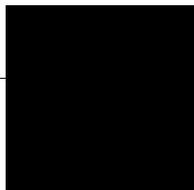
Some have gone to the extent of transforming their own bodies into artworks, by tattooing images on to their skin. We cannot argue that the body is not a piece of artwork. Our skin also covers one of the greatest artworks ever created- our face; the face, our social persona, the pride never seen by ones true self, but seen by the world.

The face that we never see truly unless through a medium, such as a mirror, has caused wars, created peace, made artists go mad trying to capture a moment to be forever recorded, drove writers to become passionate, it is a curse and a blessing, one we adore, and one we strive for. It is a source of envy and talk, from times before till times today, and times yet to come.

We dare not say that we speak of these matters, but each one does, we talk of others, be they famous or just our friends, or people we care for, or people we envy, we talk about their looks as a topic alone, we know not why, be it human nature, urges we cannot control, or simply part of our life.

Yet the skin is not everlasting, it is not immortal, it will soon fade away; the signs of this are the coming of wrinkles. People dread this moment, but why do we?

Wrinkles are a sign of wisdom; you should not dread this, you should embrace it. It is a passage of life, we all must endure it,



the price we pay for wisdom is with our beauty. I am one ready to embrace my first wrinkle, some are dreading the moment that they come, from the moment the sun rises, they rush to the mirror to in a state of panic to see any disfigurements. I am a firm believer that you have to sacrifice in order to get gain something more valuable, stating yet again that you cannot have beauty and wisdom, why such greed?

Now counting from one to two, comes the second skin, we can make a great deal about it. I am one does not make such a huge fuss about it, but we all do, the second skin, are the clothes we wear, from trendy to baggy, from Prada to Zara, from Off the rack to local shops, what is our color, and what makes us look fine and slim. Some of us take better care of our second skin, over our own skin, both men and women in this matter, some care for brand, not caring for looks, some value looks and brands, some neither brand and looks only at price. Some care not for materialistic objects, yet we are judged on appearances quite often, that is a harsh thing to do, yet it is human nature.

In my personal opinion, I feel that nowadays people are more concerned about second skin. If we judged on first skin, we will be labeled racists, I do not want to bring such an outdated ideology back, but I am not stating that the judging of the second skin is also appropriate. When you go out, you may look at peoples skin color, then at what they wear from shirts, pants, skirts, jeans, jackets, hats, and other accessories such as jewelry, bags, watches, phones, music players, cars- these are all considered second skin attachments; they are all materialistic possessions, they are here in our life time, but what use are they to us after our time is over?

Our Second skin, is supposed to provide extra warmth in cases, protection against harsh environments, and look as ethically pleasing; however, to judge one on what brand the person wears, that is a shallow point, you must look beyond the second and first skin, and look into the persons soul, see what they are like, not rush to conclusions hastily. You should take time to know someone before brushing them off as insufficient to be around you, you must be open to changes, change is a good stepping point to growing up as an adult.

And readers we are approaching the climax of the topic, the final stop, the third skin. What is the Third Skin? I have answered what the first and second are, if you are having the same thought as I am, third skin, is our shelter, our home, our place of solitude, a place we are comfortable around, a place we can be ourselves in many ways, there is not one exact definition for this, as it varies from person to another.

Our Third skin starts out at a hospital, the place we start our life at, we recall nothing of it, but that was the first place that provided decent shelter for us at birth. We shed that skin after a few days, and return home; that becomes one of our many third skins, our third skin, is not only one, it can be many skins, sometimes we shed them, meaning that we abandon them for others, or move to others. I can state that all the students of our department say that the department has become one of their many third skins. It is a place where we learn, we work, we sometimes sleep in class when the doctors and architects are not looking, we have learned to adapt to it. It is a place we have learnt to love and loath at the same time, third skin does not only incorporate the feeling of happiness it can be a mixture of feelings.

During our lifetime, we have seen many third skins, from schools, different houses, even different countries; it is a feeling in the end, a place you can come back to, ergo, a place we relate to. I can call the university my main third skin, as it takes a lead in my lifestyle now, I am university student, and when I graduate from university, I presume that the office will become my new skin, the one I dawn everyday, with time, we shed our skins, and adapt to new environments around us.

So, our Third and Second skin are phases of life, they come and go, they define whom we are put yet we define ourselves overall, we decide our outcomes, and we are not defined by our first skin. So as a matter of fact, skins play a role in life, but in the end we are the ones whom deep inside matter not see our skins, but our true selves and with anticipation others will look with eyes unclouded and see the true self past all the skins we use. With this we may prosper as a race, and become united, by self, not by religion, not by ethnicity, but as humans.



Photograph by Yousif Al Saleem ©

Beyond the static image of the house

When you first crawl then walk, an amazing discovery of a space is happening, a space that you relate to, a space that you feel attaches and belongs to you, a space that you are used to, how things are arranged all around with relation to your senses, ultimately, a space of memory; this space is the house.

Imagine an attractive book-cover with meaningless content- it definitely will break down your enthusiasm and is no more appreciated.

Imagine a house without a host.

How sad is that?!

Cover and Content; House and Host

It is a dilemma that is difficult to judge them individually. In the way they communicate they could either achieve a successful or ridiculous meaning.

So what is the meaning of the house??

Imagine a house without a sincere smile of children.

A child is the light of the house that glows up the life, in boundary of love. He or she gives us the pure hidden definition of "house" in an indirect way.

Wondering what is the house in a child's perspective?

"I love it, its my toys place, I have Barbie chair, I watch cartoon" Sheikha Four years old

"Playing with my sisters, my room color with mechanical wallpaper, bedtime story by my mother and father" Ahmed Eight years old

"My Freedom place, I could do whatever I like, help my mom in cooking sit with my family" Hussa 11 Years old

"My comfort place to stay, protect against weather, nice exterior color with beautiful windows" Mohammad 14 Years old

Interviewing sweet children is something marvelous. They show you the world in another form; with powerful imaginative statements; different definitions according to different ages, social status, and countries. Kids started to describe the house as a daily event, an activity with an enthusiastic scenario. Even the symbol of a house in a child's perception with a clear sky, pleased sunshine, beautiful extended landscape, and lovely flowers enhances their honest way of thinking and feeling of the house. Wow, how beautiful is the house!

Unfortunately, as we grow up this meaning starts to vanish, and begins to be, purely, an expression of a static image. The essence and spirit of the house begins to be demolished. It becomes a direct reflection of a person's self image. How people see and judge the house in an exterior form; how large and how luxurious it is? Not how it actually functions inside; therefore, the relation is quite messed up. Sorry to say, nowadays with the race of time, it is rare to have the chance of a gathering and an interaction between family members- everyone has their own way with a fully booked daily schedule. A house becomes just as an end, a daily point.

The question is do we still have the sensitive feeling and meaning of the house? What we urgently need is to revitalize the quintessence of the house and create a sense of balance between exterior look and interior feel, achieving "beauty within a beauty".

[We should always remember that a house is the seed that we arise from and the soil where we return to.]

Amwaj Al Dhahy

A S O U L

A home is stable; you depend on it to be there at the end of the day. It will never betray your trust or hurt you in anyway, yet it is taken for granted.

These characteristics coincide with people whether they were a friend, a spouse, or a parent. However, people who comprise of these characteristics are appreciated and are considered a 'special someone' in a person's life. It is not everyday when you will meet someone who you trust to be there for you if anything goes wrong or simply, just to be there. Now, billions of homes are just sitting there, we use them, they help keep us alive, we have fun in them, but are we really enjoying their presence? Are we grateful for their resilient existence, with the essential couple blows from a hammer here, and minor drilling there?

The core or essence of humans is their soul, where without it a person could no longer be called a person. The small things that make people who they are have diminished without a soul, so is their body still 'a person'? Would they be there for you as they did when they were alive? That soul is home. The place people feel most comfortable in and in turn would comfort you from, the place they get scared in the most while ridding you of your fears. That cherished, pivotal core is not there merely to keep people alive; it is to help them live. Shouldn't a home be that, 'a home', and step as far away as possible from just keeping everyone dry? Explain to me, if you will, why a regular thirty year old male would rather be spending most of his time with his friends, in the office, or in a gym than at his actual home? Could it possibly be the smell, feel, and experience in such spaces that keep him going back there everyday, a feeling of acceptance, belonging, and most importantly a place where he can be who he is-with no judgments, no alterations, just to be? Is that not what being 'true to yourself', or your soul, is all about?

A crying baby's mother is his home. A frustrated wife who just left her job will find her home with her husband. Shouldn't these healing souls be the defining spirit of which everything else will fall into space when creating your homes? I leave that question for each one of you to reflect on.



A person is captured in a dramatic, low-key photograph. They are wearing a dark, flowing costume with large, feathered wings that appear to be in motion. The person's face is partially visible, wearing a headpiece or mask. The lighting is focused on the person, creating a strong contrast with the deep black background. The overall mood is mysterious and theatrical.

Photograph by Mariam Kathem ©

T H E H O U S E T H A T F R A U D B U I L T

Imagine if you will a world where: Mahatma Gandhi carried out hunger strikes, but ate gluttonously in secrecy, Mother Teresa kept the money collected for charity in her pocket, Bill Gates uses a MacBook, Barack Obama is a republican, and Pope Benedict worships Allah. The human race is composed, driven, and educated by influential titans with deceiving agendas; humorous, outrageous and dishonorable in reality.

Now picture “a carbon neutral event”; pro+ recycling, pro+ reuse, pro+ sustainability event. It uses a variety of artistic mediums; **uneconomical, environmentally damaging, and highly polluting,** to encourage (and please contemplate on the point “encourage”) the “green” agenda. Disappointing? To me, very. That is because I consider sustainability as not just one more fad or merely an aesthetical style; but more: it is an obligation to the human race to ensure our survival. Mistaken ideas that sustainability only promotes renewable energy use, high efficiency. etc, have hijacked the issue. Sustainability is a lifestyle- the healthiest one. And not just in terms of energy, clothes, and all one-dimensional material but also concerning social sustainability. It obligates mutual respect between architects, artist, engineers, business, men and people of all trades.

The exhibition to me was a patronizing event- walking through the exhibition, all I could think of was where is the “green”? Where is the love for The Earth in all this? There was a bit of grass on the ground and posters of a mobile telecommunication company's claimed recycling accomplishments all over the place, but none of which was of any significance to earth or mankind. After reading between the lines, and sticking my nose where it did not belong, it became apparent to me that it was a shameful attempt at a marketing campaign to promote not recycling and reuse for the love of The Earth but simply for financial benefit to the Metal Recycling Company that held it. The goal was to educate but all they did was entertain; misleading and deceptive are the only ideas I received from the recycling company.

The issue at hand in my opinion is the effort put on display by the students from the Department of Architecture at Kuwait University, our House. It is a shame that you let the businessmen take advantage of your designs and talents, all in the name of our house and environmental sustainability. By participating in this event, what have we shown? Have we really shown the world the beauty within the ugly? No, we have shown them ugly from her less ugly side. Sadly, all I saw was silly “entertainment” which may as well have been provided by clowns.



DesignV <
One Box Table Project
Jassim Al Alawani

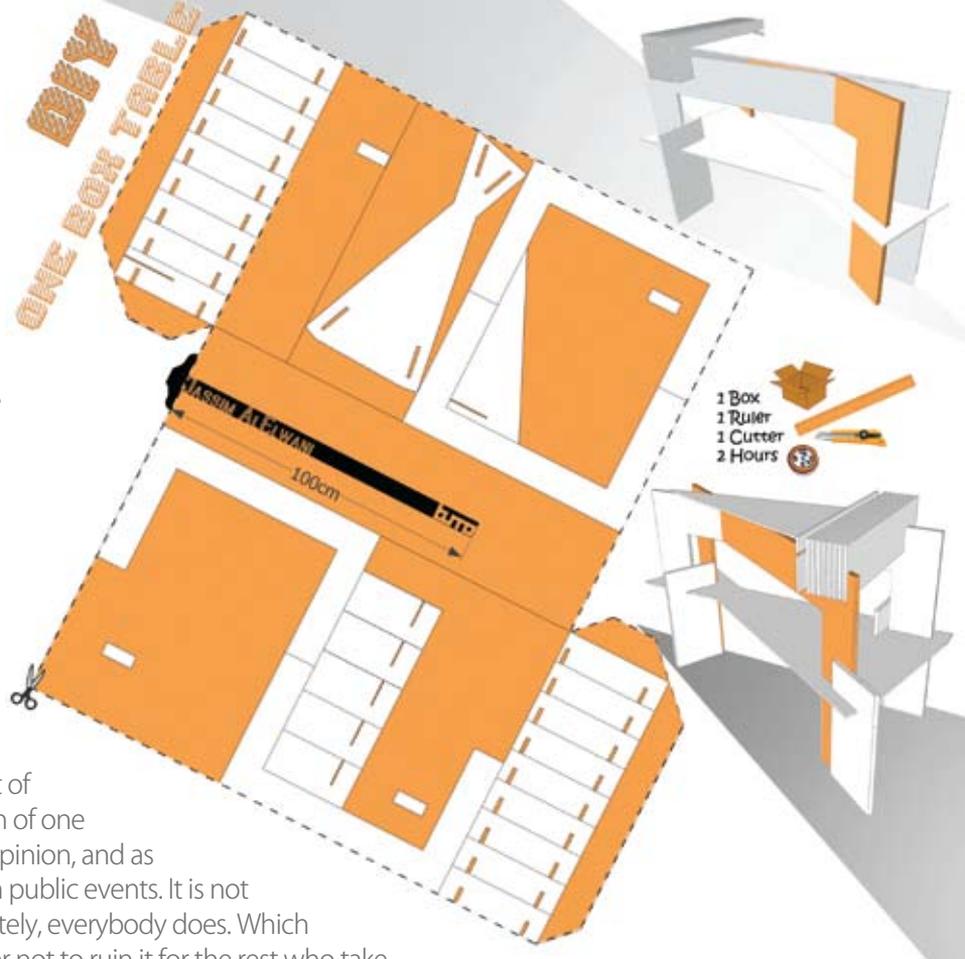
Do you really want the house to see you as a clown?

Do **WE** want the House to see us as clowns?

In this I am referring to houses in terms of our architectural house. I mean to say that I see our department of architecture as a house of architecture and we the students and professors are part of a family. Almost to say that an action of one student reflects the entire house's opinion, and as architects, we speak for the family in public events. It is not acceptable to generalize; unfortunately, everybody does. Which is why I am trying to say that in order not to ruin it for the rest who take these issues seriously maybe the minority of people participating in these events should not?

I find the participation of our students in the exhibition good; however, the exhibition itself was very cliché and in my opinion was totally uncalled for as it was false or a fraud. After attending I saw that much of the claimed sustainability was false, the committee in charge advertised the event as "a carbon neutral" event but it was obviously not and after some research I found that to balance the event's carbon footprint they planted trees somewhere in Asia? (Very carbon neutral?) It turned out at the end that the company was basically using the work of our students and the rest of the people who participated not to increase awareness for waste reduction and sustainability; rather, for promotion of their company, basically the whole thing was a publicity event.

I relate this with the world's perspective of architecture in Kuwait; this country already has a bad reputation with dealing with international architects like John Utzon and if events like these get bigger and develop momentum, things can only get worse.



The title is to say that our 'house' will be seen as a house built on fraud, since most of the designs presented were false imitations of re-use and I have seen too much of it in this department.



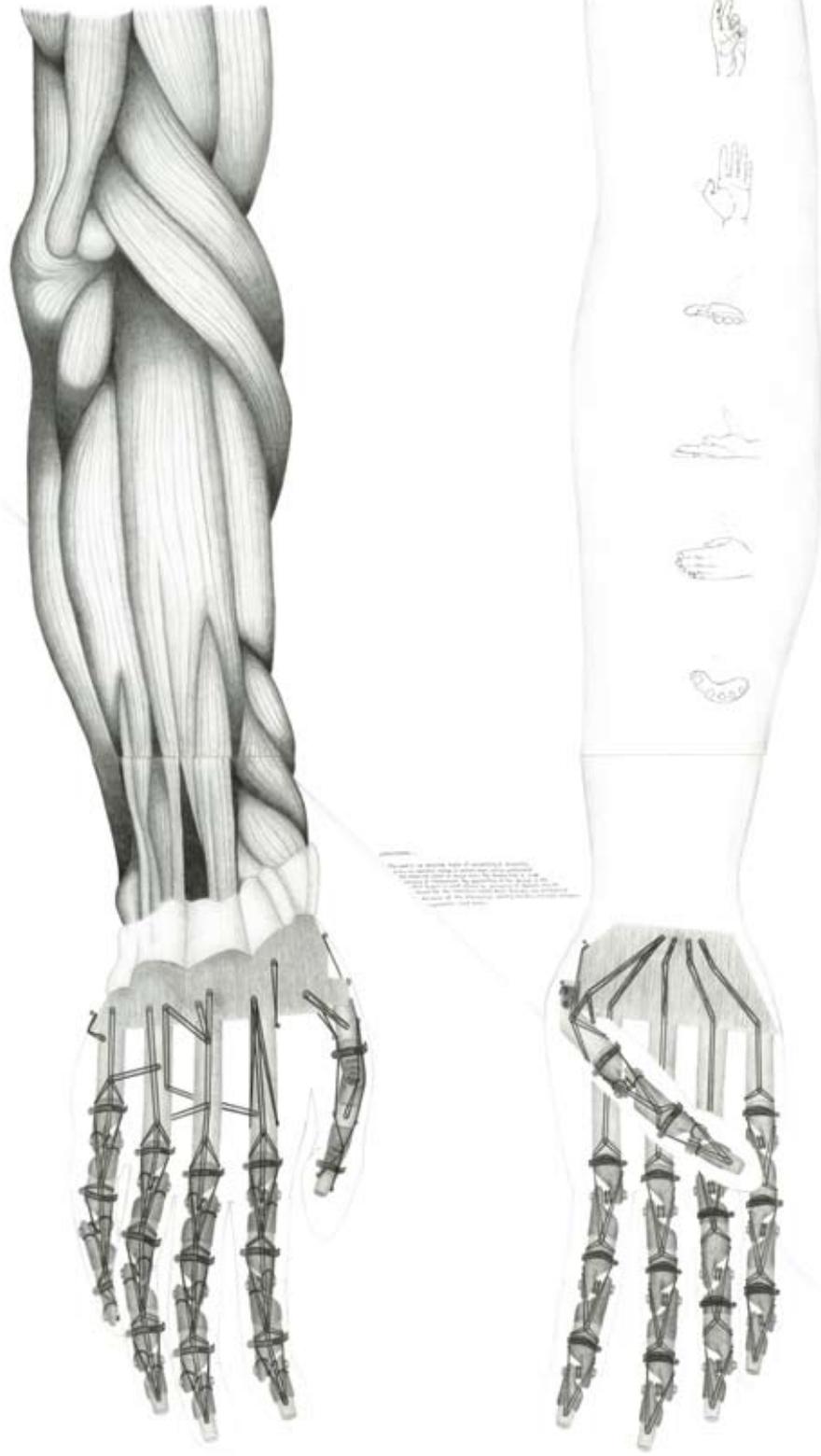
DesignIII
Music in Architecture, Kuwait City
 Alia Al Azzeh

DesignIII <
Bike + Pedestrian Trail in Salhiya,
Kuwait City
 Dana Al Hasan



Seamless Transition between the volume and the Surface- This can be done through levelled ramps, elevated gathering areas, and having the greatest width in the trails occur at the suspended bridge





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The Architectural Magazine Department of Architecture - Kuwait University

Issue 6 - March 2009