Civic Space:
Questions of Society, History and Politics
to make a new Public Space

Marian Dinneen 0645699
School of Architecture
University of Limerick
Acknowledgements

This work was made possible by the encouragement and support of my family throughout my college career. For this I thank them sincerely.

My thanks also to the staff at SAUL particularly fifth year tutors Anna Ryan, Peter Carroll and Merritt Bucholz. I would like to thank Tom Moylan, Rosemarie Webb, Lytle Shaw, and Irene Schalbert for their critique and consideration but also their encouragement to read from sources far beyond the discipline of architecture.

Ciaran Treanor and Elaina Hickey must be credited for their help and support in the last desperate days of thesis charrette, as well as Anna Healy, Sinead Stack, Trish Geherty, Emer Egan and Eugene O'Callaghan.

And finally I would like to thank SAUL fifth year class of 2012, from whom I learned much more than I could ever properly credit.
Fig. 1: Drawing of the activity of the Tahrir Square protests in Egypt in March 2011. The square became the focal point for the world for one week when, in an act of great democratization, normal citizens gathered together and overthrew the brutal dictator.
The ambition of my thesis project is to design civic space, space for civic engagement. Taking inspiration from the various voices who have identified a democratic crisis and who are themselves more civilly engaged, I am designing for a society that has revolutionised itself to be more active in its own governance.

I propose an alternative local government whose public face is dissolved into the street into an aggregation of rooms rather than one institutional building.

The design is concerned with spaces that have the characteristics of the society inhabiting them, transparency, accessibility and inclusivity. These are spaces for citizenship, spaces to gather and discuss, spaces to argue and debate; but also to celebrate and take pride in shared identity.

I propose my design for Limerick City, whose governing structures are being re-evaluated as it is amalgamated with Limerick County. My vision extends further than the line between neighbours being razed, but this move has open up a conversation about what the new entity could be.

I propose a space that is common to all, for collective action. A space where public concerns are addressed, with a sense of permanence; an informal non-institutional space. I imagine large public spaces for gathering but also smaller space for organised and influential groups to meet and lobby.

Above all else, I am describing a space for active civic engagement.
Questions of Society, History and Politics
to make a new Public Space

My initial thesis intent was a vague altruistic idea of making a new public space for a new public. From reading the newspapers I feel that there is a need to address the new public, particularly here in Ireland. It seems to me that we are in the midst of an identity crisis. From the dust of the economic crash of late 2008, emerge a people who were not only financially bankrupt, but morally and politically bankrupt, with nothing to believe in or fight for. The more I read the more politicised I have become, and it has become apparent to me that a new society must emerge in the coming years. Implicit in the design process is imagining the future; I felt it would be remiss of me not to bring my political concerns to the table when doing just that.

“To see what is in from of one’s own eyes is a constant struggle”

George Orwell
We are where we are...

We have lived through a period of National economic success; in the decade from the late 1990’s to 2008, Ireland had a booming economy. As though in a dream; we were high on growth, stability, certainty, and the illusion of indefinite economic improvement. The dream is now over and we have woken up to a harsh reality of debt and austerity and above all else, uncertainty. There has been a sea change in how we live, but we have yet to see a change in the priorities and values to the fore in decision making. The financial difficulty here in Ireland is echoed throughout Europe and the USA. This is the condition described in Tony Judt’s writing from 2010, Ill Fares the Land.

For the last thirty years we have made a virtue out of the pursuit of material self interest. When asking ourselves whether we support a proposal or initiative, we have not asked, is it good or bad? Instead we inquire: Is it efficient? Is it productive? Would it benefit gross domestic product? Will it contribute to growth? This propensity to avoid moral considerations, to restrict ourselves to issues of profit and loss—economic questions in the narrowest sense—is not an instinctive human condition.

Judt is not alone in his critique of the economic and political condition of the recent past. In Empire, their book from 2000, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri cast a very critical eye on the global system that we find ourselves in to this day. They describe a post-modern economy, which operates without any territorial boundary, without any moral restraint. The historical reference of an empire is a territory governed by one body but incorporating several cultures or ethnic groups. The Empire described by Hardt and Negri abuses time and history, manipulating them to its own end;

Empire exhausts historical time and suspends history, and summons the past and future within its own ethical order, in other words; Empire presents its order as permanent, eternal, and necessary.

This suspension of history explains why it is difficult to imagine a society free from the pressures of the ‘empire’, the problem is a discursive one; we simply do not know how to talk about these things any more. As I have previously stated, we are too concerned with the dialogue of profit and loss that we have failed to engage in proper critical thinking.

There is a democratic crisis. This crisis is tied into the economic system that is in play but the challenge is
more to do with governance than economics. The economic situation has highlighted democracies struggle to enforce the rule of law, to enforce laws (here I am particularly thinking of financial regulation). There is public disaffection in democracy. Democracy is not just about being elected, it is about sitting under the rule of law and seeing that such laws are abided by. This is where democracy is seen to have failed (thinking here of the overthrow of democracies in both Greece and Italy in favour of Technocracies because of democracies failure to abide by their own laws.)

The discourse is absent and the people are alienated. I would like to think that this state of affairs is changing, that the crisis is being addressed. This is borne out in the Occupy Movement, a global protest movement which is primarily directed against economic and social inequality. People are claiming their democratic right to protest and highlighting the undemocratic response to the financial crisis. In Irish politics it is heartening to hear our newly elected president, Michael D Higgins, acknowledge the change that must happen in our society. In his inauguration speech he encouraged us to close the chapter on that which has failed, that which was not the best version of ourselves as a people, and open a new chapter based on a different version of our Irishness (this will

1. Tony Judt, Ill Fears the Land (London. Allen Lane, 2010) p9
3. Hardt and Negri take their language most notably from social theorist Max Weber who responded to the events of his time; the second half of the nineteenth century. Weber recognised his was a time of change in the forms of empire. Empire was creating transitions, the response to which was dominated by the technocratic thinking. Weber proposed a commitment to rationality as the key building block of the future. This is today's empire that Hardt and Negeri describe in their writing. They proclaim that we have arrived at widespread acceptance by policy makers that markets are rational. This, on occasion, leads, in the extreme, to the suggestion that it is people who are irrational, the markets rational. (Michael D Higgins 'Of Public Intellectuals, Universities and the Democratic Crisis' 21 February 2012, London School of Economics)
require a transition in our political thinking, in our view of the public world, in our institutions, and, most difficult of all, in our consciousness. With so many voices calling for change the future will have to belong to a different system. I do not know the economics of such a system but I am sure that there is a way to live in a more moral society where decisions are made based on critical social thinking rather than purely fiscal determination.

A look to a historical precedent for the space and society I imagine

I previously quoted Tony Judt’s assertion that the neoliberal profit orientated view of society is not indicative of the human condition. In the imagined future of my thesis proposal I would like to return to values closer to ‘the human condition’. Is there a part of our psyche that wants to engage in civic life? Is there a part of our nature that needs to be part of something bigger than one’s self?

To shed light on these questions I look to the writing of Hannah Arendt in The Human Condition. Arendt explores these questions, and in doing so explains a spatial precedent for how we can collect and engage in civic life. Arendt clarifies ‘public’ as “the world in itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it.” (see sketch) This gives us a feel for the vast nature of public space, it defies simple definition. What is defined here is what public is not. In conventional terms we could say that public space is streets, parks and squares. This limits our potential to engage with ‘the world’ and the vast possibilities we have to inhabit it together.

She explains the importance of public space, elaborating on how it is used by society not merely in the immediate time frame (writing in 1958) but into the future. When Arendt describes a space held in common she is not merely referring to the people around us now, but the greater idea of society, all those past and all those into the future. As she writes, it is what we have in common not only with those who live with us, but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after. Here Arendt is making particular reference to the ancient Greeks. Space for the public (political assembly) was vitally important to Greek society. The site of that assembly is the Pynx; a hill in the centre of the city (see sketch). This was where citizens of the various demes would assemble and listen as laws were discussed in the forum. The discussion took place between Demagogues,
representatives of the various demes. This was a hugely important aspect of life in Ancient Greece. The polis was not Athens, it was the Athenians.

The polis, properly speaking is not the city state in its physical location it is the organisation of people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. The importance of the Pyx is not to be understated. This was the platform for speech and action ‘word and deed’. The Greeks saw a permanence in these things; they had a power to transcend time. This space was the most important in the city; for the polis was for the Greeks … their guarantee against the futility of individual life, the space protected against this futility and reserved for relative performance.

Looking to the relatively recent past I would like to contrast Arendt’s profound description of Greek life – and the ‘futility of individual life,’ it proposes – with a statement from Margaret Thatcher from the 1980s: There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first.

6. In further writing I look back on our Irishness and pick out various tropes that have been used to describe Ireland and its people, some being more successful than others in how they have been digested by the public. Micheal D Higgins inauguration speech accessed November 14 http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/1111/higgins_speech.html

7. Judith explains the genesis of the political thinking of the past 30 years was borne out of the Chicago School of economic thinking, where the terms ‘free market’, ‘open society’, and ‘creative destructive economy were coined. The grandfathers of the movement were five men of Austrian extraction; Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Joseph Schumpeter, Karl Popper, and Peter Drucker. All five saw the downfall of their native country in the interwar years as it fell from a liberal society with state owned services and collectivized economy, to fascism under the Nazis. As a result they strongly believed that; if the state was held at a safe distance from economists, then extremists of right and left alike would be kept at bay. This economic thinking was reactionary and not born out of the centuries we have lived together as society.


9. Ibid., p55


12. Ibid


15. Ibid., 207


17. In terms of public space, these protests are interesting in the public-ness of the spaces occupied. In Wall St, New York, protesters inhabited Zuccotti Park, a publicly accessible park, but owned by a private company, Brookfield Office Properties. The municipalities do not own the park and therefore could remove the protesters (despite wanting to). The owners equally could not remove the protesters – for months – because, as I mentioned previously, it is agreed that the park be publicly accessible 24 hours a day. The park was finally cleared on the grounds that the protesters were preventing the larger public from freely accessing the park. The questionable logic has uprooted the protesters and highlights the political wrangling that is implicit in public space as space for appearances (to use Arendt’s terminology). The public issue is not one of ownership, not boundary, not necessarily ideology (as there are mixed ideological views on the part of the protesters), the issue is power. As Arendt and Sennett describe, space for assembly gives power to the crowd. Those who hold the power at the moment do not wish to see it relinquished and so the assembly is broken up. Zuccotti Park wikipedia, accessed October 30, 2011 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zuccotti_Park

These two contradictory statements show the rupture that Judt alluded to. On the one hand we have centuries of collective organisation where we negotiated with one another and engaged with society and had a civic responsibility greater than ourselves. On the other hand this self serving and small idea of our potential as a society. The past thirty years of economic high jinks are directly linked to the sort of social policy described by Thatcher. I would like to see an end to such thinking and a return to the bigger responsibilities outlined by Arendt.

In so doing, I look further into the historical precedent laid down in *The Human Condition*. As public space is space that we inhabit together, there are inevitably issues about regulation and importantly power. Where there is a density of people there is power; as Arendt writes;

> The only indispensable material factor in the generation of power is the living together of people. Only where men live so close together that the possibilities of action are always present can power remain with them.

Space is needed for people to claim that power; space for society to collect together to protest, to revolt, or even to celebrate (see Fig. 5). Arendt goes on to describe this space as, “the public realm and space for appearance.”

Another important assembly from the ancients is the Res Publica (the Roman era). In his 1986 writings on the state of public engagement, *The Fall of Public Man*, Richard Sennett writes;

> A res publica stands in general for those bonds of association and mutual commitment which exist between people who are not joined together by ties of family or intimate association; it is the bond of a crowd, of a “people”, of a polity, rather than the bonds of family or friends. As in Roman times, participation in the res publica today is most often a matter of going along, and the forums for this public life, like the city, are in a state of decay.16

It is no coincidence that Sennett’s dismay at public engagement is concurrent with Margaret Thatcher’s description of society. I like to think that era of civic irresponsibility is behind us. I would like to assert we are currently in the midst of a reinvigoration of sorts in public engagement. The Occupy Protests show an appetite to engage with an issue (global financial inequality) and collect together and demand a change in the way things are done.17

If the future is to be different, then the integrity of public space - as space for assembly - is vital.
Fig. 8: Study of the Occupation of 'Occupy Wall St, Zuccotti Park, NY.'
The language of making a new public space

Looking to see a changed and revitalised inhabitation of public space calls for a changed description and physical change to the spaces we have today. Again I look to the ancients, to Greece; the home of public political engagement, to bring some of that sensibility to the making of space. What considerations were brought to bear in the making of their cities? What have we possibly forgotten from those times?

Integral to the Greek city was the idea of kosmos, which was an ancient belief and ordering system. The kosmos was order (as opposed to chaos) and civility (as opposed to barbarism). It inspired the ordering of men into democracy and the ordering of thoughts into philosophy. In Socrates’ Ancestor Indra Kagis McEwen draws connections between the ordered kosmos and the ordering of Greek craft, particularly architecture. McEwen recognises that a well established discourse draws parallels between the columns of the Greek temple and the people collected around it, but she offers a different reading of the form of the building. McEwan draws on the importance of craft to the ancients “Craft, technē ... ‘making things visible’ allows for the discovery of kosmos by making it visible.”

Bringing this to bear, she draws together the rhythm of streets; dance; oars; ribs of boats; woven fabric and the columns around the temple, all are crafted to form an expression of the ordered world and praise for divinity.

For McEwen the crafting of textiles, the interweaving of warp and woof at right angles, inspires the order of the gridded streets and the distinctive exterior columns of the Greek temples. She goes on to claim that the expression of ancient Greek urbanism is an expression of the loom, “making visible the loom, or looms, that wove the city.” Although speaking figuratively, she goes on to cite Vitruvius who explains how the first builders “wove their walls” around the post and beam frame.

The connection between textiles and architecture is not only a fascination of Indra McEwen. It is thoroughly described in the 1860 treatise Style in the technical and tectonic acts or practical aesthetics by Gottfried Semper, where this relationship is explored in great detail. Semper defines the essence of architecture as its covering layer rather than its material structure. This definition involves a fundamental transformation of the account of the origin of architecture. Rather than looking at the figurative connections between the Greeks crafting fabric and crafting walls, Semper goes further back in history to man’s first primitive built environments. Semper declares that the “beginning of
building coincides with the beginning of textiles.\textsuperscript{22} In early civilization, woven textiles were used to enclose the interior space. These were hung from a frame that fulfilled the structural and practical needs of sheltering. Where tradition discourse would claim that the structural scaffold was the architecture, Semper argues that it is the fabric that divides the space and so makes the architecture.

Under Semper’s argument, the story of architecture is no longer one of naked structures gradually dressed with ornament, “Rather, it was with all the simplicity of its basic forms highly decorated ... from the start.”\textsuperscript{23}According to him, the textiles were later conceived as stylistic, first applied to the floor design of a building, and then their motifs were transformed to dress the building’s physical structure\textsuperscript{24}. The scaffolds used to support the draperies that would enclose and divide the space had nothing to do with the initial spatial concept of the building.

For Semper, the idea of the wall evolved through a sequence of spatial enclosures; primitive screen or woven-matt, then metal sheathing, and eventually carpets whose colourful images were applied to the surface of masonry building to evoke a sentiment of monumentality. Hanging carpets remained the true walls, the visible boundaries of space. The often solid walls behind were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space; they were needed for security, for supporting a load, for their permanence and so on\textsuperscript{25}.

We should take lessons from these readings of early architecture. McEwen and Semper describe architecture in different terms to the traditional discourse. Through elaborating on this different sensibility about space making we can make new architecture that meets the needs of the new publically engaged society that I envision for the future.
Science fiction and the imagining of new worlds

In his writings on Entropy and new monuments, Robert Smithson writes; ‘Memories have a way of trapping one’s notion of the future and packing it in a brittle series of mental prisons.’ He further discusses the process of looking back as a means to help see forward as, ‘a double perspective of past and future that follows a projection that vanished into a non-existent present.’

I pull out these lines to highlight my reticence at the prospect of challenging time and imagining a new future. How do I make a proposal for this world that is in such flux and uncertainty? As Smithson rightly points out, there is a chasm between past and future, we can never accurately predict the future, but we must design it. Setting my design in the context of a political future that has not happened yet is murky water. To help clarify the process of imagining a new and different future I look to works of science fiction, and science fiction theory, where predicting new futures is a matter of course.

Science fiction by its nature is making a comment on the time in which it is written more so than the time it is written about. This is what I aim to do with my project. Taking the guides laid down by science fiction theory, particularly that of Tom Moylan in his writing on Scraps of Untainted Sky, there are a number of ways to ensure a convincing future vision.

The aesthetic goal of science fiction, as opposed to realistic fiction, consists in creating a remote, estranged and yet intelligible alternative world.

The aesthetic in question is linked to the Gestalt and a sort of thinking that is beyond the merely conscious and the cognitive.

Science fiction is often fantasy (although not exclusively); its unfamiliar context disassociates the reader and allows for the breakdown of what we see as constants, the laws of physics, biology and other sciences. Although SF can do that, the higher power it has is how it manages to capture something of our natural awe at the fact that the universe exists at all. There is a power in this science fiction, and this power - harnessing this awe - is the aspect of SF I want to bring to my project. These are cognitive matters; interpretational ideas. Linking this to ‘architectural’ thinking, and the power that architecture can equally have in making people aware of the wonder of the world, I consider Italo Calvino’s writing in Invisible Cities, and Kevin Lynch in The Image of the City. These works are concerned with spaces – their perception – their sense – the memory of them – the image of them, and story of them we carry around with us.
Taking Lynch's insights\(^{32}\), 'urban alienation is directly proportional to the mental unmappability of local cityscapes', Fredrick Jameson – American literature critic - suggests that a 'mental map' of city space can be drawn and layered with that mental map of the social and global contexts we all carry around in our heads in various forms. Since the incapacity to map is as crippling to collective political experience as it is to any displaced individual, it follows that an aesthetic of conscious and unconscious representations can accordingly be traced, analysed, interpreted - made use of\(^{6}\). Jameson asserts that science fiction can be the form of this unmappable aesthetic. The inevitable example of this unmappability is Los Angeles, which is marked by its lack of a downtown monument, lack of mental icon. Jameson relates the 'quintessential postmodern place, Los Angeles', to Foucault's 'carrieral city' of cells ranks, and enclosures\(^{35}\). Indeed Los Angeles is the quintessential science fiction city, visualised in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, and as such engrained on the psyche. Mike Davis discusses this vision of LA in his essay *Beyond Blade Runner*, and as such Sennett's description of Rome, I feel that this description by Davis is connected to the political/economic policies of the time. Decisions based on small personal fear, as opposed to greater social responsibility to make conditions better for all classes, resulting in the ghettoisation of large cities like LA.

Mike Davis Beyond Blade runner: urban control : the ecology of fear (Westfield, N.J. : Open Media, 1992)

37. Rem Koolhaas. *'Junkspace'* October, Vol. 100, Obsolescence. (Spring, 2002), pp. 176

38. The worlds constructed in science fiction must be properly 'irrealistic', delivering an alternative world that is a totalising break from the empirical world. For all that the 'irrealism' it will have be realistic enough to be knowable, to be consistent and believable. Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the untainted sky : science fiction, utopia, dystopia* (Boulder, Colo : Westview, 2000) p 52


40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.
the essay. Reading the description of the dytopic black hole that is Junkspace I am compelled to yell ‘stop’. In my alternate imagined future, where political and social ethos is changed, I see an end to the space described by Koolhaas.

The idea of a revolutionised space, a different attitude to space than we have today brings to mind Henri Lefebvre’s, 1974 treatise; *The Production of Space*. An interesting assertion from Lefebvre is that ‘a revolution that does not produce a new space has not realised its full potential.’41 When a society revolutionises itself, a new spatial paradigm is created.42 There is a great deal of freedom in this idea. Through the imagined revolutionised society I envision for my thesis, the more socially conscious and engaged society, can enjoy a new spatial condition.43 I am free to design for that revolution, without the constraint of the dytopic Junkspace vision we see of the continuous present described by Koolhaas. Lefebvre’s words could be a description of the ambition of my project...

...seeking a way towards a different space of different mode of (social) life and of a new mode of production. This straddles the breach between science and utopia, reality and identity, conceived and lived. It aspires to surmount these oppositions by exploring the dialectic relationship between ‘possible’ and ‘impossible’ and this both objectivity and subjectivity.44

---


42. Ibid.

43. It is important not to confust the space of the revolution with the revolutionised space.

Site: Ireland, a duality for a rich identity.

...think of Seurat in the 1880s, keeping silent about politics, in spite of the anarchism of his friends, staking his claim to artistic precedence with all the pedantry of a later avant-garde; but producing the Grande-Jatte or the Chahut, images of joyless entertainment, cardboard pleasures, organised and frozen: pictures of fashion, and thus the places where public and private life intersect.

This was the problem in fact: to discover the point at which public and private intersect, and thus to be able to attack one by depicting the other. The artist had to begin, so it seemed, with an image of private life, since the forms of public existence were too chaotic or corrupt or windblown for depiction...So it ought to be possible for private imagery to take on a public force, to hurt or encourage as much as a speech from the rostrum.

TJ Clarke - The Absolute Bourgeois

In my introductory outline I quoted our newly elected President Michael D Higgins, who called for a new Irishness. Like President Higgins, I see a need to re-cast how we see ourselves. Through my thesis project I hope to bring a new space to the fore for that new Irishness, a space for citizenship, for active engagement in civil and social life, and an understanding of the possibilities of public cohesion.

Taking insights from science fiction; the power to think about all of the alternative possibilities of evolution and not merely be consumed by a sense of inevitability and status quo, I cast a critical eye over our idea of ‘Irishness’. I feel I must look back, to see where we are now; based on where we saw ourselves before. What do we think of when we think of our nation? What is the cognitive image we have of ourselves? What does this have to do with architecture? In my opinion it has everything to do with architecture, and everything to do with how I can go about making a piece of architecture for the public in Ireland. I aim to explore the image of Ireland we carry around with us, and how that image was constructed. Through understanding this image, or identity, I hope to make an architecture that is holistic and relevant to this society.

I believe that at the current point in time we are unsure of our identity. What way do we represent ourselves to ourselves? We no longer have a unifying sense of self. The boom time (described in a previous section of this essay) saw a discursive shift in terms of the aesthetic of Ireland (Fig. 10&11). That aesthetic no longer holds true. What preceded them? Writing in his Autobiographies, W.B. Yeats says

A young man in Ireland meets only crude, impersonal things that make him like others. One cannot discuss his ideas or his ideals for he has none. He has not the beginning of aesthetic culture.
Fig. 10 & 11: Image used to sell an apartment complex in Dublin in 2008, which worked, selling out the complex off the plans. This is the images of Irishness of the early twenty first century.

Fig. 12: Lady Lavery, as painted by Sir John Lavery and seen on the punt.

Fig 13: 'Woman Setting out Weft' from Craft Council of Ireland 2011 exhibition - Modern Languages.
Perhaps it is too easy to blame our “post-colonial” past but that is backed up by some of the foremost social theorists of the nineteenth century. In a letter to Karl Marx from the late 1840s Fredrich Engles observed that British policy had left the Irish feeling like strangers in their own land

When we claimed our own land what identity did we claim for it?

As Sighle Bhreatnach-Lynch writes, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a politicisation of the representation of Ireland. As the nation was going about forming itself - and claiming Ireland as an entity different from the United Kingdom - writers and artists were encouraged (and sometimes commissioned) by the Gaelic League to show Ireland as feminine and rural, someone to fight for, someone impoverished with a broken heart but who loved her sons. Implicit in the rural image was an idea of self-sustainability; the rural household grew its own food, made its own clothes. From the beginning of the state there was an idea that craft, particularly home craft, was an Irish attribute, that made its citizens distinctively Irish (and not reliant on external forces).

As both Fintan O’Toole and Luke Gibbons point out, the rural self image was a metropolitan myth constructed by urban-based politicians, intellectuals and

47. Ibid.


49. Last year journalist and academic Declan Kirby wrote in the Irish times that “we should reimagine the past, if only so that we can remember a future”, he called for a “return to the values of craftsmanship, community and creativity” that we were once known for When Ireland became a Free State (1922) there was an emphasis on asserting our individual language of design. In 1951 the national arts council was established and under its remit it “sought to generate awareness of design.” (John Turpin ‘The Irish Design Reform Movement of the 1960s’).

Two significant international craft expo were held in Ireland and through these ties were made with Scandinavia. In 1961 a report was published by a group of designers. This report lead to the establishment of industrial design studies in the National College of Art and Design and the Kilkenny Design Workshops. Ireland had to become a contender on an international market. A small community of crafts people worked together to make a real impact on the world of craft, particularly in furniture design and textiles.

2011 was declared Ireland’s year of craft. The National Crafts Council took it upson themselves to use the year to showcase what Irish craft has become in the twenty first Century. The works produced brought into question what defines craft (as opposed to technology or art). The discussion that immerged echoes the above comments from Declan Kirby in terms of creativity and community as well as a respect for the past. Richer than that is a sensibility of the dynamics of contemporary life where technology is integral to the making manipulation of things. My project aims to sit within this discourse, of creativity and community but with contemporary dynamics.

50. Fintan O Toole ‘Going west: the country versus the city in Irish writing’, The crane bag, vol 9:2, 111-116

nostalgic emigrants at the turn of the century. This myth would feed into the emergent culture of Irish nationalism and eventually be to the fore in the Free State. This pastoral myth of the land proved to have a very powerful grip not only on the Irish national self image, but also on what was termed the, ‘global discursive construction of Ireland as a pastoral site of origin.’

When we made our old currency (the punt) Lady Lavery was the watermark, the purveyor of honesty. Bearing in mind that Lady Lavery was a very well to do lady, what was she doing dressed like peasant? Clearly there is a link between this representation of Lady Laverty and the representation of Ireland; a beautiful lady with a broken heart. Ireland was reframed as female and distinctly rural and private.

The new 1937 Constitution made it clear that a woman’s place was in the home. Article 41, section 2 stated the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The image of the peasant woman in her rural habitat as painted by Keating, Lamb, and others provided a suitable iconography for this “domestically” enshrined woman.

J.M. Synge’s description of the rural Irish woman in The Playboy of the Western World from 1907 was seen to counter this representation. Synge describes his female lead, Pegeen Mike, as “a girl you’d see itching and scratching, and she with a stale stink of poteen on her from selling in the shop.” This combined with the perceived slight on the virtue of Irish womanhood in the line “… a drift of chosen females, standing in their shift …” provoked riots on opening night in the Abbey theatre Dublin, in 1907. The crowd accepted the inherent violence of Christy Mahon claiming to have killed his father, in fact he is the hero, but to slight the virtue of Irish womanhood was not acceptable.

What was being drawn and written or urban Ireland? Who would tell the story of the Irish Urbanite? It could be said that urban Ireland is part of a dissident heritage. At the time of the formation of state the urban was seen as British and bad. Many stories have been forgotten. Mary Makebelieve, the lead character in James Stephens early twentieth century novella The Charwoman’s Daughter, is an interesting character that lived in Dublin with her mother and really inhabited the city. Although Mary is a fiction and lived in the realm of make-believe she lived in a very real Dublin. She walked the streets, fed the ducks in the park, worried about her dresses and imagined how she would look to those she passed. She was everything I think of when I imagine urban life, public life. Her story is almost forgotten, her Dublin, indeed her Ireland, is not regarded and not rated nearly as highly as that painted by Paul Henry.
What we learn from Mary Makebelieve, is that there can be a duality in the identity and image of Ireland. In fact there needs to be a duality to form a rich and deeper understanding of this place. And how do we imagine this duality in Irish identity? What is its aesthetic?

Irelantais is a series of collage images by artist Sean Hillen that contrast the rural idyllic images of Ireland (particularly the 1960s postcards by John Hinde) with the issues of contemporary Ireland such as global warming and our evolving relationship with the catholic church, As Fintan O Toole writes in his introduction to a book about Hillen's work:

Behind the exuberance of these images, there is poise, wit and a real artistic engagement with what it is like to live at the end of the 20th century. Irelantais is, of course, contemporary, globalised Ireland, a society that became post-modern before it ever quite managed to be modern, a cultural space that has gone, in the blink of an eye, from being defiantly closed to being completely porous to whatever dream is floating out there in the media ether.29

Hillen's collages, as well as the literature discussed are freer from the economic system than architecture. Significantly more money is needed to make a building that to make a play or painting. This should not bind us to some status quo, architects too need to critique society and make work is informed by this critical thinking.

52. The Irish Free State was the official name for Ireland between 1922-1937 as negotiated under the 1922 Anglo-Irish treaty. In 1937 Ireland was declared a Republic.


54. The watermark determined the authenticity of the note


56. Bunracht Na Heireann 1937

57. Sighle Bhreathnach-Lynch Landscape, space and gender: their role in the construction of female identity in newly-independent Ireland 1997

58. J. M. Synge The Playboy of the Western World

59. Ibid.

60. James Stephens The Charwoman’s Daughter (MacMillen Company Dublin 1925) p33

61. contemporary to Bloom's Dublin described in Ulysses but much simpler and without the internal landscapes of Stephen, Molly, Bloom and others.


52. The Irish Free State was the official name for Ireland between 1922-1937 as negotiated under the 1922 Anglo-Irish treaty. In 1937 Ireland was declared a Republic.


54. The watermark determined the authenticity of the note


56. Bunracht Na Heireann1937

57. Sighle Bhreathnach-Lynch Landscape, space and gender: their role in the construction of female identity in newly-independent Ireland 1997

58. J. M. Synge The Playboy of the Western World

59. Ibid.

60. James Stephens The Charwoman’s Daughter (MacMillen Company Dublin 1925) p33

61. contemporary to Bloom's Dublin described in Ulysses but much simpler and without the internal landscapes of Stephen, Molly, Bloom and others.

Site: Limerick and the pure form of power.

I sympathise with those who would minimise, rather than those who would maximise economic entanglements among nations. Ideas, knowledge, science, hospitality, travel — these are things that of their nature should be international. But let goods be homespun wherever it is reasonable and conveniently possible, and above all let finance be primarily national.

John Maynard Keynes, On National Self-Sufficiency 1933

Knowing that we need a new society, knowing that we need a new vision for Ireland, I bring my thoughts to making architecture in a particular place in Ireland. The particular place I am concerned with is Limerick City.

In Limerick the first signs of political change have been muted in the amalgamation of two local authorities, Limerick City and Limerick County. This is a first step in what I hope is a massive change in how we organise our local politics. Although my vision for local authorities extends much farther than the erasing of one line between neighbours, the immanent political change has opened up a conversation about what the new entity could be.

Above all else I want to see a society where active political engagement at a local level (which in turn informs debate at a regional and national level) is to the core of the system of governance. This is the same as the vision outlined in the New Economics Foundation “Great Transition”, which describes how society can change to meet the problems of peak oil and climate change. Although the imminent doom of global warming is a vastly important concern, I am more interested in the social policy that is discussed throughout the document.

Key to the future society is the idea that the state should be seen as ‘us’ and not ‘them’ and as a domain where we come together to achieve those things that are best done collectively.63

Decisions are best taken at as local as scale as possible.64 Local government needs to do more (with less) for those it serves. This is only possible where citizens feel that they are able to participate fully in the process that makes and implements decisions. Making the right choice the easy choice for everyone requires systematic change to redistribute power and resources across the population.65 The architecture that houses local government has to change accordingly. Any notion of institution has to be subverted to allow for a more free engagement with the system by every member of society. This does not have to mean more expense
and less efficiency. By working in equal partnership with those they are supposed to serve, public services can dramatically increase their resource base, radically transform the way they operate, and achieve better results for the people they serve.

Every citizen needs to feel that their voice will be heard, this must be reflected in the architecture of the new institution. Deliberative forums can offer citizens the opportunity to become active participants in – co-producers of – government, rather than passive recipients.65

According to the social journalist Jurgen Habermas67, in a deliberative democracy, a heterogeneous collection of citizens with diverse opinions come together in the ‘public sphere’ to engage in a structured debate, to reach considered judgements about an issue of common good. Deliberative forums would provide opportunities for interested citizens to discuss local issues, from transport to housing, to healthcare and help steer local government.

As interesting as it is to imagine the architecture of this deliberative forum, the ambition of my project is to make the space of action. I imagine more than a utopian ideal of mass democracy, but also space for smaller groups, space for those organised and efficient; the space where politicians are lobbied and informed about issues; the space were citizens pay their taxes and engage with where that money goes.

Above all what matters is how much power people feel they have to shape the places where they live and to alter or conserve them to suit themselves and each other.


64. This is enshrined in the principle of the European Union with regard to political to political participation and decision


66. Ibid., 58

67. In his 1962 work Structural Transformations Jurgen Habermas discusses the public sphere, particularly how it shifts from being the centre of rational-critical debate, embedded within the constitution and within society, to being a debased version of its former self. Habermas believes this shift is dictated solely by structures of debate changing in form and function. The structures he refers to are social, economic and political. The division between public and private is a key structure that changes. Habermas does not talk of a physical space, his sphere ranges from institution to coffee house to media. My design project aims to make the public sphere physical.
Design Ambition

I cannot design a new society; I can however imagine that new society and design the sort of spaces they would need to serve the more civilly engaged and socially responsible citizens.

O Connell St (originally George’s street) was designed in 1769 as part of the Christopher Colles plan for New Town Perry (see maps on far right). It was built to be the main arterial route of the New Town, connecting the Old Town, new customs house and extending out trough the grid. At 72 feet it is the widest street in the grid, running along the line that had previously been the route south to Adare (as seen in the William Eyres map of 1752).

It was built to be elegant and extensive, for gossip, display promenade and fresh air. This was all made possible by the sewer system that underpins the city. The Georgian fabric sits on a series of basements and vaults, built up rather than dug down. Ground level was approximately 4m below the perceived ground level today.

Setting my project among these vaults, I propose to dissolve the public and often ceremonial forms of local government into the street.

Like a Greek agora this space is traversed daily, it is part of the bustle and business of everyday city life. The street becomes a gallery, a space to overlook the public activity.

The climate in Limerick does not inspire year round vibrant street use. Particularly the 1000-1200mm of rainfall every year is a deterrent for citizens to go into town to gather and engage civilly. With this in mind I propose to roof the street, not in full but at strategic points. This will help change peoples perception of the street, making it more of a room.

There are three strategic points of intervention along the street. These were informed by analysis of current functions, density of footfall and historical precedent.
Historical Maps

Fig. 16: William Eyres Map of Limerick City from 1752. Highlighted, and pulled out in detail below, is the ‘Road to Adhair’ which preceded O’Connell St, the typography indicated in the map implies that the road divided the low-lying flood land from the higher ground.

Fig. 17: Christopher Colles proposal for New Town Perry from 1769. O’Connell St is drawn to connect into the existing city, pass the Custom House and extend into the grid. Its importance is highlighted by the two circular breaks in the grid that straddle the street, at William St and Mallow St.
The question remains, why site my project in O'Connell Street.

This drawing was the genesis of the idea.

Fig. 18: Drawing of the connection from Limerick City Civic offices to Limerick County Civic Offices, as well as the many public buildings between them.
Fig. 19: Plot use Map

- Vacant
- Publicly Owned
- Commercial
- Cafe-Pubs and Restaurants
- Services
- Residential
- Church
- Car Park
- Educational
Fig. 20: Nolli style plan of Limerick’s O’Connell St. showing public buildings such as schools, theatres, churches, courthouses, museums as well as key buildings that I image my project spreading into.
As well as being the arterial route between the existing neighbouring authorities, O’Connell St is a focal point, an identifier, for the entire county and region.

Fig 21 & 22: The St Patricks day parade, which runs the length of O’Connell St is a day when communities show their wares as it were and bring a vibrancy to the city.

Fig 23: Map of parishes of Limerick City, these divisions inform worship in the city but also primary schools, secondary schools, Sports clubs and community services.

Fig 24: Map of the electoral divisions across the city

Fig 25: Sketch of the various neighbourhoods that make up the city, these are all linked into the city

These community structures breed a healthy competition within the city, that comes to the fore on celebration days such as St Patricks day or match day.

This competitiveness brings a richness to the city, it should not be seen as divisive. The entire city, infact the entire region, comes together to support the Munster Rugby Team on match day.

Fig 27 & 28 Match day O’Connell St, where the entire region gathers to celebrate the shared identity of Munster Rugby.

This is done on O’Connell St, because as the card Model (Fig. 26) shows there is a strong connection between the street and its hinterland. This is not a space just for the immediate neighbours.

This space exists in the consciousness of the entire region.
Fig. 29: Drawing of the typical footfall across and along O'Connell St.
Fig. 30: O’Connell St re-imagined with Raphael’s ‘The school of Athens’, showing the street as a room for discussion and debate; the sort of engaged democracy that the ancient Greeks were famous for.

Fig. 31: Sketch showing the vaulted structure of the street opened up with the existing street becoming a gallery to the activity below.

Fig. 32: Collage of a subterranean discursive forum. The crowd in the foreground are referenced from an image of Ireland’s first independent assembly of Dáil Éireann, from May 1921.

Fig. 33: Sketch imaging the view from under the vaulted street into the new discursive forum.
**Schedule of Areas**

**Civic Discursive Forum**

- Civic Ceremonial/ Reception space (including auxiliary administration office) 150
- Cafe 50
- Hard Surface Park/Breakout space 200

**Facilities to accommodate celebrations, protests and everything in between**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water Fountains</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showers</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Neighbourhood/Community Liaison Rooms**

- Meeting rooms 60
- 20
- 20
- Reception/Lobby 50
- Liaison Offices 15

---

Fig. 34: Notional section through O’Connell St.

Fig. 35: Accessibility Matrix, it is vital that the new public forum I design is accessible to all.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room Type</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toilets</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lift Pit</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Kitchen</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception / Exhibition</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discursive Forum</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Rooms</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By interest group I mean a group that is small but well organised, more effective than the ideal of mass democracy. (A group concerned with those functions that do not perform properly was private interests but are a social necessity. I am thinking in terms of public transport but the principle holds true for care services, education, policing etc.)
Project Drawings and Description

A new political entity must immerse in the coming years. The blueprint for this has not yet been drawn. Limerick city is the perfect testing ground, the perfect opportunity for this new governing entity. I propose a revitalization of Irish public space, public psyche and public governance.

The city must change to meet these new needs. There is potential within the existing fabric. Just as the new governance will require a close examination of society, the new architecture I propose has come out of close examination of the Georgian context of Limerick City.

The following images try to draw out that close examination of the city fabric; how the buildings were constructed, how the spaces are serviced and their hierarchy.

This examination in turn informs the design. By unearthing the vaults which the city is built on, an entirely different street-scape immerses. New opportunities for overlooking, overhearing and interacting are established.

By taking into account climatic concerns and providing shelter the street becomes a room for 100,000 people, but mass democracy does not (and should not) need to be massive...

The street is robust enough to include rooms at cross roads, big enough for 500 people. Moving into the buildings that line the street, that hold the street and service it with action and purpose, there is scope for rooms for 50-100 people. The former underground coal vaults are re-imagined to become meeting rooms for 10 people, or can house public conveniences that are vital for the servicing of the enriched public life I imagine.

I cannot design the new society, but I can design the spaces they will inhabit. The architecture must be accessible and engage all of society. Function dictates where people will go, but it is the space, the architecture, that dictates how they feel in that place. The architecture I propose here must always be inviting, must always strive to extend what is public and must embody the ideals of democracy.

Marian Dinneen, SAUL Y5 thesis
Fig. 36: Photo taken during my final presentation, 16 May 2012

Fig. 37: Map of Ireland, highlighting the amalgamating local authorities of Limerick City and County, and locating their respective civic offices.

Fig. 38: Birds eye view of the proposed new home for local governance, in O’Connell St.
Civic Space:
Dissolving the Public function of Local Government into the Street.

Pylon carries services. It is an extension of the street, whose utility includes drainage, telecommunication and electricity. Water from the roof is drained off through the pylons and so this becomes a point for water fountain. Power is carried too the roof to be used for lighting or projecting.

The plan of the Georgian town house is re-imagined, now that it has two front doors. This particular plot is a house for the community outreach of local government, bringing the vibrance of limericks various neighbourhoods into the city.

The hard surface basement floor grounds the building, its surface continues out into the 3m plot boundary to the front, and also into a light giving extension to the rear.
Civic Space: Dissolving the Public function of Local Government into the Street.

Pylon carries services. It is an extension of the street, whose utility includes drainage, telecommunication and electricity. Water from the roof is drained off through the pylons and so this becomes a point for water fountain. Power is carried too the roof to be used for lighting or projecting.

The plan of the Georgian town house is re-imagined, now that it has two front doors. This particular plot is a house for the community outreach of local government, bringing the vibrance of limericks various neighbourhoods into the city.

The hard surface basement floor grounds the building, its surface continues out into the 3m plot boundary to the front, and also into a light giving extension to the rear.

Fig. 38: Presentation board layout, as presented to examiners on May 16, 2012
The plan of the Georgian town house is reimagined, now that it has two front doors.

This particular plot is a house for the community outreach of local government, bringing the vibrance of limericks various neighbourhoods into the city.

The hard surface basement floor grounds the building, its surface continues out into the 3m plot boundary to the front, and also into a light giving extension to the rear.

Pylon carries services.

It is an extension of the street, whose utility includes drainage, telecommunication and electricity.

Water from the roof is drained off through the pylons and so this becomes a point for water fountain. Power is carried too the roof to be used for lighting or projecting.
Previous page, Fig. 38: 3D drawings looking closely at the construction of the Georgian street-scape including my proposal for its revitalisation.

This page, Fig. 39: Perspective view of the corner of O'Connell St and Cecil St, shown as a space for informal gathering, space to discuss and debate, inspired by the agoras of the ancients.

Next page, Fig. 40: Perspective view showing the inhabitation of the former coal storage vaults and the potential for green space on what was previously build ground.
Fig. 41-43: Rooms for specific interest group.¹

Fig. 41: Environmental Section looking at air movement through the building and along the street.

¹ By interest group I mean a group that is small but well organised, more effective than the ideal of mass democracy. (A group concerned with those functions that do not perform properly was private interests but are a social necessity. I am thinking in terms of public transport but the principle holds true for care services, education, policing etc)

Fig. 42: Floor plans
Note the circulation spatial layout engage with the street, both at street level and below street level, there is also an emphasis on transparency (all spaces are overlooked) and accessibility. Lessons are learned from the Georgian context of the city; pushing services to the party wall etc.

Fig. 43: Perspective taken outside this building, showing the street as a room for mass democracy, for celebration or consternation.
Previous page, Fig. 44: Hand drawn site plan showing the inhabitation of the street, including public rooms, those proped to house functions laid out in the design, but also churches, public houses (particularly the White House known for its Poetry) and other existing public rooms.

This page, Fig. 45: Photographs of models which were included in presentation.
Illustration Credits

1. Author’s Own
2. Author’s Own
3. Author’s Own
4. Model Author’s Own, image courtesy of Ian MacDonnell
5. Author’s Own
6. Author’s Own
7. Giovanni Mansueti, Miracle of the Relic of the Holy Cross in Campo San Lio 1494
8. Author’s Own
9. Author’s Own
10 & 11. Belmayne Housing Development advert by McCann Erickson on behalf of LM Developments, 2007
12. Sir John Lavery, Cathleen ni Houlihan, 1923
18. Author’s Own
19. Author’s Own
20. Author’s Own
21. Author’s Own
22. Author’s Own
23 & 24. Limerick Learning Hub at St Patricks Parade 2011
25. Author’s Own, Information sourced from Limerick Dioces.
26. Author’s Own
27. Author’s Own
28 & 29. SAUL IU ‘One City’ 2009
30. Author’s Own
31. Author’s Own
32. Author’s Own
33. Author’s Own
34. Author’s Own
35. Author’s Own
36. Image courtesy of Una Breathnach Hilfearmain, Author’s classmate.
37. Author’s Own
38. Author’s Own
39. Author’s Own
40. Author’s Own
41. Author’s Own
42. Author’s Own
43. Author’s Own
44. Author’s Own
45. Author’s Own
Bibliography


Antwood, Margaret “The Road to Utopia” in the Guardian 14 October 2011


Aragay, Mireia “Ireland, Nostalgia and Globalisation: Brian Friel’s Dancing at Lughnasa on Stage and Screen” International Journal of English Studies Volume 2 2002


Benson, Ciaran “The place of the Arts in Irish Education” The Arts Council 1979


Boulton, Marion. New material as New Media (New York: MIT Press 2003)

Byrne, Gerard The present tense through the ages : on the recent work by Gerard Byrne (London : Koenig, 2007)


Clarke, T.J. The Painting of Modern Life, Paris in the Art of Manet and his followers (London:Thames and Hudson, 1999)

Chesterston, G.K The Man who was Thursday: A Nightmare (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1937)


“Engendering the Human Geographies of Ireland” ed Cailtriona Ni Loiré and Denis Linehan


Garcia, M “Prologue for a history and theory of architextiles (History of architextiles in architectural design)” Architectural design November 2006 Issue 184 p12

Gschwandtner, Sabrina “A Brief History of String” Cabinet Issue 23 2006

Habermas, Jurgen The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Cambridge : Polity, 1989.)


Hartoonian, G. “The Fabric of Fabrication”. Textile Volume 4 no. 3 (Fall 2006) p. 270-91

Harvey, David “The Right to the City” New Left Review Volume 53, September – October 2007

Hoad, Judith. This is Donegal tweed (Inver, Co. Donegal : Shoestring, 1987)


Jameson, Fredric. “Cognitive Memory” in Marxism
and the Interpretation of Culture Ed Cary Nelson (University of Illinois Press 1988) 347-360
Judt, Tony. Ill fares the land: a treatise on our present discontents (London : Allen Lane, 2010)
Kiberd, Declan “Artists take pride in what is well made. Our financial system needs to return to such values” “The Irish Times” 7 Aug 2010
Kiberd, Declan “Renaissance of past values key to better future” “The Irish Times” 21 Aug 2010
Koolhaas, Rem. ‘Junkspace’ Obsolescence Vol. 100. (Spring, 2002), pp. 175-19
Knitting, weaving, wrapping, pressing = Stricken, weben, einhüllen, prägen. - Basel : Birkhäuser, 2002
Leontidou, Lila “Spaces of Risk, Spaces of Citizenship and Limits of the ‘Urban’ in European cities” 2003
Mac Einri, Piaras “Some Recent Demographics Developments in Ireland” Department of Geography UCC
Marx, Karl “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”
Massey, Doreen B. For space (London : SAGE, 2005)
McDonagh, Martin. Plays. 1, The Leenane trilogy (London : Methuen Drama, 1999)
McDonagh, Martin. The Cripple of Inishmaan (London : Methuen Drama, 1997)
Meredith, Dianne “Landscape or Mindscape? Seamus Heany’s Bogs” University of California
Molesworth, Helen Ann Work Ethic in Work Ethic (Penn State University Press, 2003)
Pattern : ornament, structure, and behaviour edited by Andrea Gleiniger (Basel : Birkhäuser, 2009)
Robinson, Tim. Stones of Aran : pilgrimage (Mullingar : Lilliput, 1986)
Semper, Gottfried. Style : style in the technical and tectonic arts; or, practical aesthetics (Los Angeles : Getty Research Institute, 2004)
Stiglitz, Joseph E. “Of the 1%, by the 1%, for the 1%” Vanity Fair May 2011 accessed October 30 http://www.vanityfair.com/society/features/2011/05/top-one-


Stephens, James *The Charwoman’s Daughter* (Dublin: Macmillan Company 1925)


Tschumi, Bernard. *Questions of Space* (AA Press; London: ; 1990)

Turley, Joanne, “Knitting a Gendered Pursuit” in *The Culture of Knitting* (Berg, 2009)

Appendix: Textiles and Architecture

This section aims to elaborate on the ideas touched on in the essay about the relationship between textiles and architecture. Process work, sifting through ideas about that relationship are also included here.

It is important to get to the root of what it is I am referring to when I say textiles. The etymological root of these words tell a lot about their potential use in architecture.

“Lint or flax.” *Lint* is derived from the Latin *linea*, which originally meant a thread made from flax, *linum*. These threads were woven into cloth that we now call *linen* and that could be used to *line* garments by providing an extra layer of warmth. And if “line” began as a thread rather than a trace, so did “text” begin as a meshwork of interwoven threads rather than of inscribed traces. The verb “to weave,” in Latin, was *texere*, from which are derived our words “textile” and—by way of the French *tissu*—“tissue,” meaning a delicately woven fabric composed of a myriad of interlaced threads.a

---

All thesis students were asked to begin their studies by testing their thesis ideas in Shannon Town. I took this opportunity to look at public space as a weave of various factors which combine together to give that space its own particular quality. The space in question is the carpark of Shannon Town Centre also known as the 'Skycourt Shopping Centre'.

This study co-incided with my analysis of Zuccotti Park, site of Occupy Wall St. Like this space in Shannon, the Park in New York is privately owned but its use ignores the simple fact of ownership.
An interesting etymological relationship is also raised in Semper's 1860 Style. Semper draws on the tie between the German words for wall (Wand) and dress (Gewand) to establish the 'Principle of Dressing' as the 'true essence' of architecture.

The building is clothing, the purpose of clothing is partly protective, partly decorative. In his writing on White Walls and Designer Dresses, Mark Wigley examines this distinction under the light of the modernist movement, particularly the works of Le Corbusier. He reduces Adolf Loos' outrage against ornament as 'flight of fashion'.

by the twentieth century the traditional ways of dressing-up a building had become stale; every possible way had been disinterred and reinterted

He acknowledges that Loos can see the fashion for a thin layer of white stucco to be the direct descendent of the carpets and tapestries that Semper describes. Wigley goes on to argue that these white walls are every bit as ornamental as the elaborate patterned surfaces which preceded them.
There is a value to Sempers arguments on the division of space. As I have outlined in the essay, he believes that building originated with the use of woven fabrics to define social space, specifically, the space of domesticity.

But the textiles were not simply placed within space to define a certain interiority. They were not simply arranged on the landscape to divide off a small space that could be occupied by a particular family. Rather, they are the production of space itself, launching the very idea of occupation.

Weaving was used "as a means to make the 'home', the innerlife separated from the outer life, and as the formal creation of the idea of space".
I have already spoken about the link between textiles, or more generally craft, and a national identity. Knitting was also taken on as an identity for political movements. The 1960's saw resurgence in textile crafting, be it stitching, weaving or knitting, by feminist artists.

Feminism of the day did not happen in a vacuum, the 1960's were a time of great flux, not merely in gender relations but in all aspects of society. Art was turning on its head

"Replacing the skills of art with the activities of work, artists began to make art that eschewed artifice and illusion"

There was a change in the way that art was being produced and how art was perceived. On the ventgard were the likes of Donald Judd and Robert Smithson who constantly challenged any notion of genre in art.

A variety of modernist narratives insist that the main value of the work of art or any creative endeavour lies in its complete originality. This became a mute point when then very idea of art was challenged and subverted by the art scene. Textile art is particularly susceptible to this question as it is based on a repetitive module, a limited number of techniques. It is an art form based in craft.

The human hand fashions works form lifeless matter according to the same formal principles as nature does all human art production is therefore at heart nothing other than a contest with nature.

d. Molesworth, Helen Ann Work Ethic in Work Ethic Penn State University Press 2003

e. "Whip Your Hobby into Shape: Knitting, Feminism and Construction of Gender" Textile 7 no2 2009
