RANDOM STUDIO
LIVING LAB SERIES

ISSUE 1

THE ENTRANCE

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BREAK THE MANTRA OF OPTIMISED SPACES!

In prehistoric times our spaces were dynamic. We were unable to close the entrances to our caves, causing outside temperatures to define the amount of personal space we had. In the winter, we had to stay close to each other next to the fire in order to stay warm. In the summer when temperature rose, the space grew.

Since then, we have gained an incredible amount of control over our spaces. We invented doors, windows, heating and lighting systems. Now plants are welcomed back inside. We turned our spaces into seamless, frictionless, comfortable and safe spaces. But there could be some unforeseen side effects of this optimisation mantra.

We went from a central fireplace that would trigger communal oral storytelling, to watching synchronous live TV together (the whole community was involved), to async streaming TV (the whole household was involved), to separate screens (only ones self is involved), towards AI generated video specially tailored for an individual's profile where even the makers are not involved any longer.

Our longing for convenience may result in losing touch with one another, the seasons and our planet.

The leading design paradigm – that is mainly about "optimising" our lives – should be reconsidered.[1] We need to start focusing on designing living spaces that stimulate human connection and interaction. Can our smart homes stimulate household interaction in stead of only focus on convenience? Can retail environments be a place where our values are challenged or sharpened? A meeting place? With this zine we want to explore how we could stimulate dance, play, discovery and discourse.

We are not entirely certain what the limits of living spaces are, but it's that uncertainty that makes it work for us. Our zine may lack objectivity, expertise, theoretical justification, and historical accuracy but it's filled with our own ideas, questions and personal perspectives. It's the voice of Random Studio eager to find a position in this living space. In this first edition, we put a spotlight on "The Entrance."

[1] Inspired by Designing Friction, Luna Maurer & Roel Wouters

A Dolmen Barrow in Portugal, Wikimedia Commons

Heat Map, Russell Westbrook

THE ENTRANCE AS A SPECIES

"I feel intimidated to enter here for the first time and am thinking about how I will be perceived. But as I approach I feel welcomed and comforted; it seems like I'm being held by the hand that takes me through to the other side."

Snowballing Doorway,
Alex Schweder

When we think about an entrance, it is easy for our minds to take us to the traditional door that you walk past. However, if we look at them as a species, it can help us imagine an entrance not just as a hole in the wall but as a companion that watches over you till you reach the safely of your destination. Each entrance can have its own personality and presence that heightens emotions, or can stimulate different senses.

A maze wants to spend time with you as long as possible and doesn't want to let you leave. An opera house welcomes you with its large arches and grand ornaments, whilst a manhole keeps you safe from the dark underbelly of the streets and allows you a small peek into the world below.

As a living space, the entrance becomes a reliable friend which can help us speculate a world where companionship is key. Could a door walk alongside us, offereing a quick escape if necessary? Could doorknobs be sentient, letting you in by judging your grip? Could you tickle the walls till they laugh, giving it a taste of you as you make your way through its mouth?

—Samriddhi Ghattak

Eye,
Jessica Kürschner

Sentient Doorknobs,
18th c. Indian
Cosmological Drawing

The "Wilderness" Maze,
J. Rocque

Manholes,
Sara Drobik

Vogel Rok,
Efteling

Gringotts Vault Door,
Harry Potter series

Kabuki curtain drop, Teatro
Sociale di Rovigo, 'Otello'

Kabuki drops are a grand gesture seeking your excitement. A moving, flowing entrance that reveals an anticipated secret behind.

THE ENTRANCE AS A FILTER

"You have to be a good person to come to heaven, a wealthy person to enter your own bank vault, and a cool person to enter Berghain."
Bank Vault,
Peter Dazeley

Salto App at Random
Amsterdam entrance

Hostile Architecture,
Wolfgang Hauptfleisch

Walls with holes are everywhere. Even termites exclude us with their tiny entrances from their world and entering anyway would only lead to the complete destruction of it – but every exclusion comes along with inclusion. Being included in the warmth of a family that shares the same values or lifestyle and protects each other can be worth all the struggle. But how can the filtering be fair? Who gets to decide on the filtering variables?

Entering means fitting the requirements and accepting the conditions of what lies behind. Criteria are often coded, fluid, or impossible to meet. We get obsessed with the mystery of what happens after death, what lies behind a black hole or what happens inside an exclusive night club. Some of us form rituals or whole religions to make sense of it. Some start with the numbers, they theorise or strategise.

—Jessica Kürschner

Black Hole,
Event Horizon Telescope

Termite Cathedral,
Brian Voon Yee Yap

Sven the Berghain Bouncer,
Jessica Kürschner

The door with the inscription "Abandon All Hope Ye Who Enter" in The Boy and the Heron is a nod to Dante's Inferno's gate to hell. In both works opening the gate is followed by a journey that ties the aspect of death to the living.
Heavens Gate, Boy and the Heron

"The spawning entrance." The final fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 was like a volcano erupting after years of bubbling under the surface. Large amounts of people moving to the West and protests for freedom of travel and speech caused the final fall. Then, on November 9, an unlimited amount of new entrants appeared as if out of nothing.
Opening of Berlin Wall, Gerard Malie

"The fireplace as a entrance to the spiritual world"
Fire Ritual-Kulasai Dasara,
Roshani Shah

ENTRANCES AS A PORTAL

Metaphors,
Ettore Sottsass Jr.

Late Night Show host David Letterman once declared: "If it wasn't for the coffee, I'd have no identifiable personality whatsoever". Coffee, most of us would agree, makes us dynamic beings (once the body enjoys a sip and becomes deeply reliant on it). One cup or not determines our entrance to the day.

In architecture, portals are known as grand openings that are used to communicate significance to what is behind them, often surrounded by plenty of ornamentation. Web portals, movies and

Portal,
Marina Bonet

Morning Coffee,
Pinterest

PORTAL-Lithuania to Poland,
Benediktas Gylys

Walking Door,
Jessica Kürschner

TV shows have shifted our attention to the transformative possibilities of portals. An unknown world, a past time, or a different version of yourself seem readily accessible. Through the Portal Street installation, two cities in Lithuania and Poland are connected with the aim to bring people of different cultures together. Are portals a quick way to bridge two worlds?

–Jessica Kürschner

The Fall,
Alice in Wonderland

"Entrance to a fantasy"
Umbrella Fortress,
Samriddhi Ghattak

"When I was a child I would create a dome using multiple umbrellas and make a fortress which I could enter by crawling in through the small gaps inbetween. My parents could only enter if they were aligned with my fantasy."

Club Silencio, Morning
Mulholland Drive

Club Silencio, Night
Mulholland Drive

David Lynch often depicts the entrance of clubs as a passage from earthly life to the afterlife. In Mulholland Drive (2001), the entrance of Club Silencio, the place where Rita takes Betty at 2 o'clock in the morning, is the stage door of the Palace Theatre in Los Angeles. The intense blue light escaping from the inside through the door lures the two into space, giving the viewer a clue of the out-of-this-world experience which will follow.

A third of the people who have a Near Death Experience report passing through a corridor with bright light at the end. The entrance of a club is like a portal between two worlds, but it has an exit. After waiting in line outside, as you approach the usual narrowing space of a club corridor you can hear the deep thud of the inside and get a glimpse of the upcoming experience through the low thudding bass and lights leaking through the door. There is a tension between two opposites. The club entrance is a tempting space, but what makes it even more alluring is the possibility of escaping... if needed.

–Alex Tintea & Ruxandra Enache

THE FIRST IMPRESSION INSTALLATION REVIEW

Only a fraction of a second determines our first impression. We judge a human based on physical or psychological characteristics, which leads to significant social consequences. That has been seen as an evolutionary trait since Aristotle. But is an impression really only based on these features, and is this perception still accurate or even relevant? The project formed by a collaboration of Random Studio and Johannes Offerhaus speculates on the entrance as a living being resembling our characteristics and reveals these human attributes through the use of technology. The installation entails an entrance that has been modified with a ramp and curtain to highlight the mystery- and reveal -moment of a first encounter.

I see the silhouette of a person entering my room. I hear an intense discussion, two people arguing about a person's characteristics based on their looks. Very sassy! How dare they be so outspoken? But I can visualise the person in my mind. They must be right. Then, suddenly the curtain falls and the person is revealed. It's not what I thought... And where are the Judges?

An algorithm analyses characteristics of the person in the space and through a language program, a dialogue between two computer voices is generated. One voice remarks on impressions of physical characteristics like someone's height. The other comments on their culturally embedded beliefs on psychological characteristics, for example someone with a beard might be dangerous. Using AI to express these sorts of comments plays with the idea of voicing what usually stays hidden, what data the technology works with and ultimately brings to our attention how a piece of code can impact major life decisions.

Through this application, the installation triggers us to reflect: is having a first impression something only reserved for human beings?

–Jessica Kürschner

COLOPHON

EPISODE ONE—The Entrance

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REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

We like to see a Living Space as an organism, an oracle or a friend with a specific temper.
A being with specific values, that we as visitors can oppose or relate to, debate or embrace.

Living Spaces have a body, using all senses. They can be rational and emotional, they can listen, tickle, nudge, and manipulate. They can adapt, comfort and activate.

Living Spaces don't promise seamless experiences. They are not trying to impress. By providing friction they allow us to reflect and find position.

Living spaces must trigger human connection. This is what makes us feel seen, this is what makes us human.

Random
Studio