





Rome, Italy

photograph taken August 2017

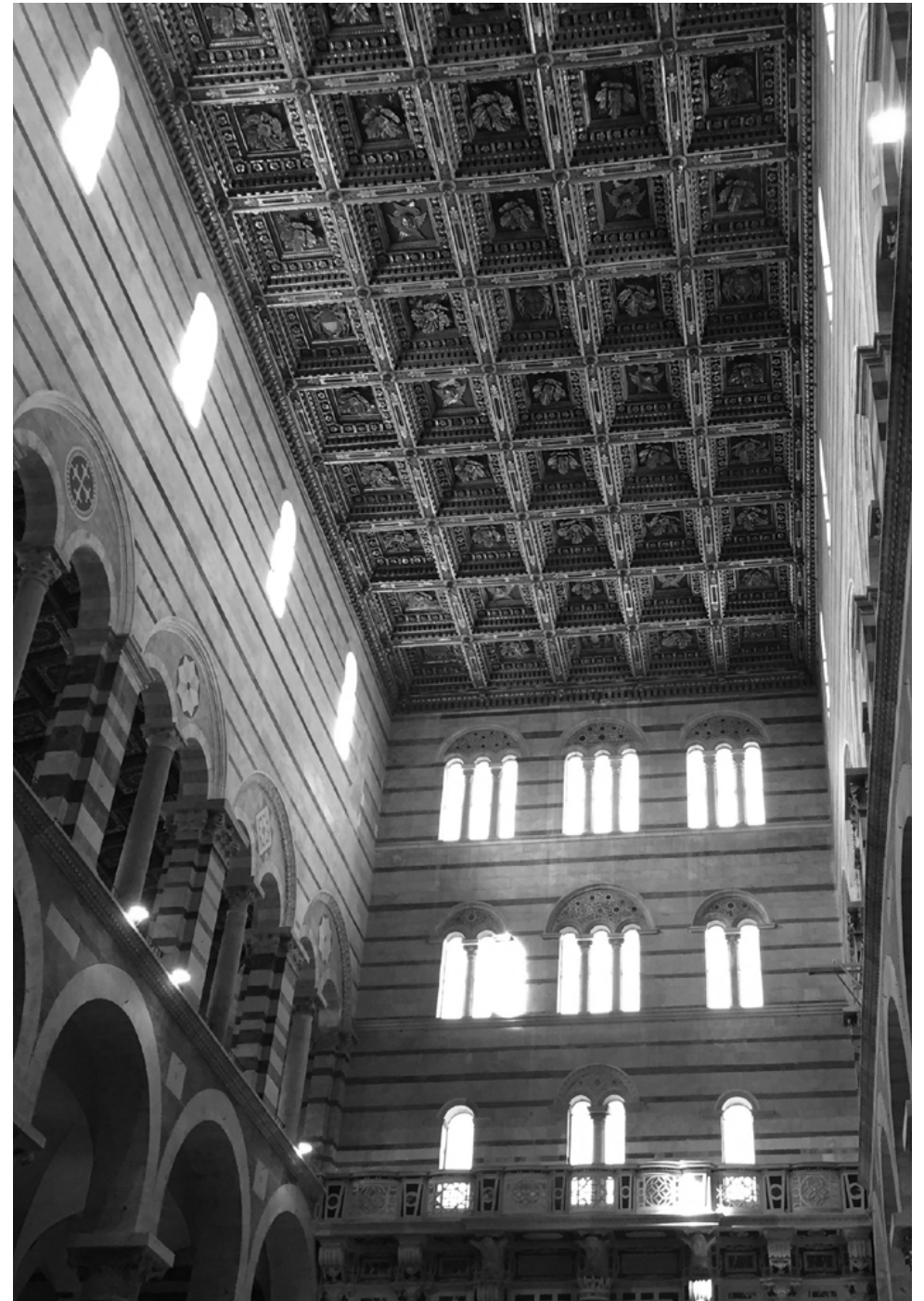
Tonic sets a challenge. We offer contributors a base to stimulate their thoughts and start a discussion on a particular theme. For each issue, a letter, an image, a quote or a box is delivered. Here, the responses are pieced together.

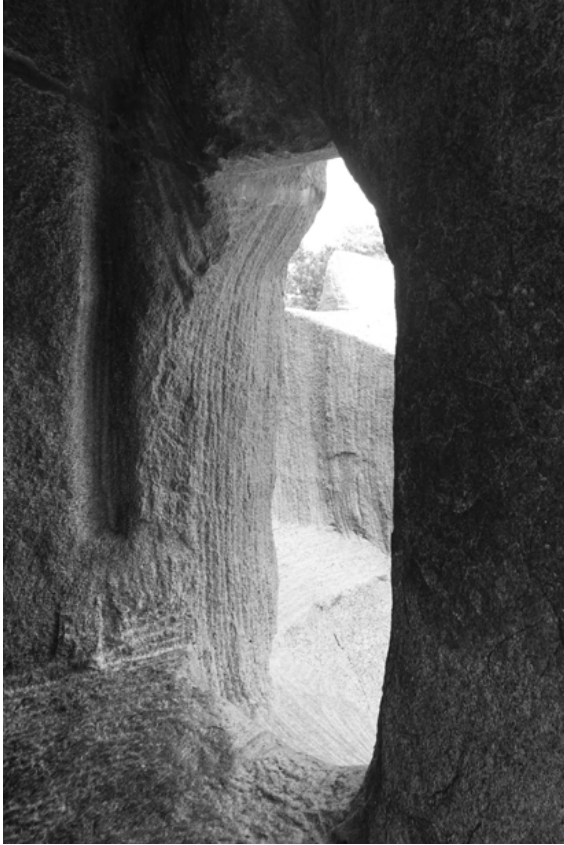
For this issue, some movies were watched and many windows opened.

WE SEE AS WE
TRULY BEHAVE:
FROM EVERY
CORNER COMES
A DISTINCTIVE
OFFERING.

JOHN ASHBERRY | *Two Scenes in Some Trees*, 1956

on the right, Pisa Cathedral | photograph taken September 2017





Mahabalipuram, India

photography taken December 2017



London

OUR GEOMETRY

Laura Gaiger | November 2017



photograph by Laura Gaiger

My earliest memory - back before everything, when an afternoon playing on my own stretched on forever - is of looking through a window. A very large one.

Too big to see all of it at once, as I remember it.

A french window, the kind that opens up so that you can step out into the garden.

*Aren't you our geometry,
window, very simple shape
circumscribing our enormous
life painlessly?*

(...)

*Window, how you add the sense
Of our rites to everything.
Someone who is simply standing
waits or meditates inside your frame*

Rainer Maria Rilke, excerpt from *Les Fenêtres*

-

I'm sure you already know that a window is a metaphor for a thousand things:
illusion,
image-making,
various divisions: between mankind and nature, private and public, conscious
and subconscious. Longing.
Cowardice...

That master of the domestic interior, Henri Matisse - his first venture into abstraction? *French Window at Collioure*, 1914. A dark rectangle for a dark time.

The earliest windows were rude holes in the wall or the roof of a dwelling. To let smoke out, to let air and daylight in, to stay connected to the weather outside. Later they were covered with paper, hide, thin sheets of marble, and glass. Somewhere along the way they became the above metaphors, too, and every use of a metaphor further embeds it into our collective consciousness, until a window can scarcely be just a window, like a rose can't just be a rose.

They are the site of yearning, the beginning of an adventure, the voyeur's watchtower, the escape route, the place of covert operations, of moments of realisation. A building punctured with windows is a collage of worlds. If the eyes are the windows to the soul, perhaps the windows are the blinking eyes of the house, the village, and the city. A book, a painting, a poem, a song - a window onto a world. A window into the past. A window of opportunity. A weather window. A threshold, a point of departure.

This vital importance might be true of every little bit of the house. Every corner brims with psychoanalytic potential. The oneiric house - the house of dreams - is full of dark corners, small doors, deep windows, narrow staircases, strange cupboards, secret rooms. Places pieced together from childhood memories, books, fairy stories, dens. It's the house you imagine when you read a novel and the protagonist speaks of the place they grew up. The one they can never really return to. Close your eyes and you find yourself in your oneiric house. In this house each brick, beam and floorboard is alive, symbolic, sentimental.

-
The child sat in the middle of the carpet and looked out of the french window, and she saw a rabbit. Far away in the grass, jumping across the garden.

She sat and looked, and the rabbit sat and looked back.

The rabbit bounded off and the child stayed still. She thought about what she had seen, in the unformed thoughts of a baby. A real rabbit, right there, and impossibly far away. Moving so abruptly. And the trees bordering the garden, monumentally, threateningly tall, had many muddied colours, complicated, imprecise edges. They were real. There was the house, strange but safe, and the child inside the house, and through the window there was the rest of the world.



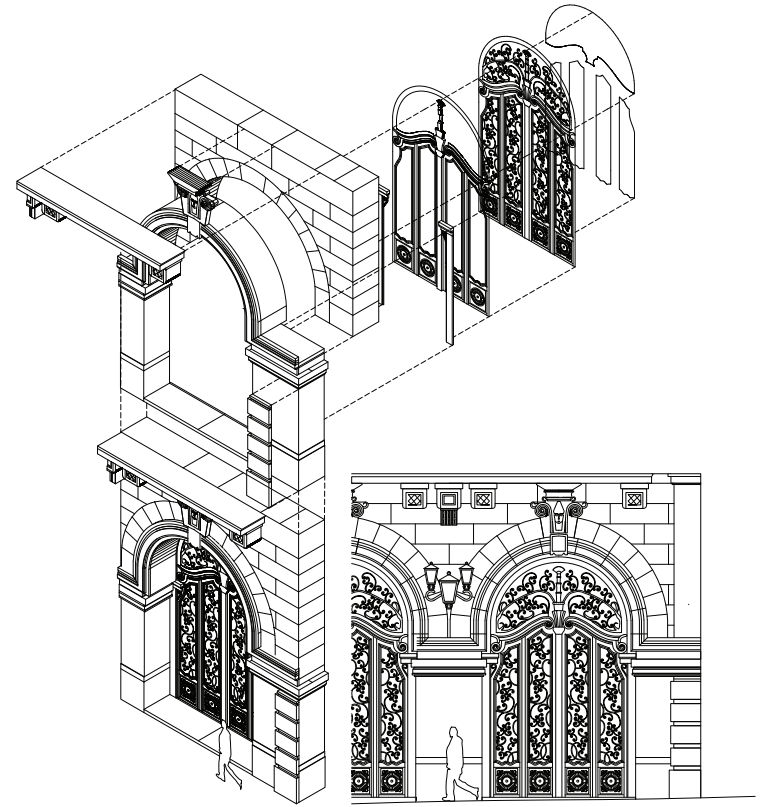
photograph taken August 2017

Palazzo Pitti, Florence



Pantheon, Rome

photograph taken August 2017



drawing by Justina Jakubkaite

Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte Calle de Alcalá

We observe elements by eye, through a lens, combining this with the haptic, tactile, the whole phenomenological setting of encounters. The way we look, and what we see appears unique, pure and feels very real. Although, it can be manipulated and our gaze directed, we may still look at things slant, find personal angles and shift our viewpoint.

Writing this I catch an image at a close window. A wink and thoughts are instantly flipped. How often do windows offer a chance to escape, to look at things differently, refresh vision, reflect, daydream, or readjust some mental state?

A window can punctuate time and can remind there are alternative realities. It is an entrance for light, air, sound and nature. Within buildings without windows there is sensory deprivation. Standing before buildings with few windows or shielded windows or high, looking down windows, can stir an oppressive, alienating feeling. Certain city buildings with massed ranks of plain windows look more like panels or cladding, they can be closer to functional solar panels or shutters ... you can see nothing behind them. Some styles when very fitting in original design styles can appear incongruous when replicated by the hundreds losing elegance and texture.

We face a building, it looks back at us. Sometimes its windows show our approach; catch our reaction, reveal our response as we meet. Windows are the eyes of a building. The way they look is important. The direction they stare is predominant. A twinkle of a smile in the eye or stern scrutiny? We consider their vision, their manner of looking.

*IN MY HEAD THERE
ARE SEVERAL
WINDOWS, THAT I DO
KNOW, BUT PERHAPS
IT IS ALWAYS THE
SAME ONE, OPEN
VARIOUSLY ON THE
PARADING UNIVERSE.*

Windows remind us the inner world need not be closed. They offer glimpses of other places, hint at possibilities, invite comparison and reflection. They invite eyes and mind to wander.

Windows are an interface where inside meets outside. A boundary between what is contained and what is free. A gap between what is structured and sealed within. A recognition of bigger relationships with outside of the place, within meets environmental elements, invites light that can shift sightlines, welcomes a natural rhythm, softens shadows, brings sparkle polish to some angles for a gentle rearrangement of interior geometry. Windows bring some of the outside in, look to the world beyond, reveal a little of what happens within to those outside.

The position and scale of windows cause us to reflect on allusion and illusion, connecting and framing. I think it was Duchamp who emphasized, *Art is what we choose to frame*. Many works of art feature windows and reveal a particular fascination with the figure looking out and beyond. Tischbein's image of his friend Goethe leaning out of a window, seen from behind bears comparison with Salvador Dali's *Figure at the Window*. Andrew Wyeth's *Up in the Studio* presents an intriguing seated figure gazing out of a window in the bare corner of a drab room. Yet another personal favourite is *St. Jerome in his Study*, by Antonella da Messina, where the saint is depicted studying a text surrounded by open books. Deep as he is in solitude and learning, various kinds of windows provide glimpses of the wider world to contrast with his enclosure and myopic attention to texts. Outside the windows birds fly freely and we consider thoughts taking flight. Do we see all there is to see or only all our mind is prepared to comprehend?

I begin most days looking out of a second-floor tenement window. I see a couple of well-established trees, the rear of a row of shops, a service alley, the obscured high street, a little of the city's roof-scape, and a block of flats in the distance. The picture is framed by a row of succulents on the windowsill and some hanging dried astrantia, poppies, rose-flowers, herbs, and the odd red chilli on a taut piece of hessian string. In the morning I deliberately refrain from turning any lights on in the room as I pass by towards the kitchen. This framed image is never the same, each day is different. Even in the darkest of earliest Scottish winter mornings something appears illuminated; often other people's windows scatter and spatter across my impressionist canvas. This window is quite new to me having only shared this view for a few months. There are no curtains and the image depicted is a shared view of the world each day. No window is the same, no one else's window is like ours; every detail, angle, and perspective will be different.

A shift of viewpoint can result in a very different outlook. This can happen at an unconscious level. Of an evening I often curl up on the sofa, positioned just in front of the narrow bay looking inwards rather than out. But, I know the window is still there, and feel its presence. The tapping of raindrops, twinkled starlight against the glass, a reconfiguration of lattice shadows and the chill of the wind can each remind me of what I have turned my back on. The window celebrates the greater world we live in, the piece of society we are part of, and the ever changing, developing, place we have adopted to call our home. We are not alone, windows confirm, there is more to see, our view is partial, our position to a large degree determining the range of our experience and our sensory engagement with the world.



SALVADOR DALÍ | *Figura en una finestra*

RATHER THAN WORDS COMES THE THOUGHT OF HIGH WINDOWS:
THE SUN-COMPREHENDING GLASS,
AND BEYOND IT, THE DEEP BLUE AIR, THAT SHOWS
NOTHING, AND IS NOWHERE, AND IS ENDLESS.

photograph sourced from museoreinasciofia.es/en/collection

PHILIP LARKIN | *High Windows*



MICHAEL SOWA | Pig in Soup, 1996

Why windows? Window is most important, most key, element in architecture, where many different types of behaviours together. And window is synthesizing all these different types of behavior such as natural behavior, light, wind and sun and heat, humidity and peoples behavior.

Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, Momoyo Kajjima, Atelier Bow-Wow,
Tokyo Widowscape, 2014

Take time to notice the window itself and not what is before or beyond the window.

Observe how the window is a filter for the traces of many behaviours, both environmental and organic.

Look at the images and observe the traces of these behaviours.

Allow your imagination to travel beyond the moment of the image and become more aware of and interpret the world you inhabit.

Smile.

The sun awakens the senses (aided by the coffee).
While the low angle of the rays betray the season and the global location of the
window at 55° 57' 12"N, 3° 11' 18"W (Edinburgh).



photographic essay by Neil Mochrie

At the Start of the Day

Thirteen metres above the street there is a remnant of an earlier season perhaps, judging by the damage, or maybe the builder is keeping away, noting the sub-zero values on the thermometer?



Someone Has Been Busy Already

The residue catches the light.

Did the rain carry airborne sand from the Sahara, pollution from diesel vehicles
or is it just a dirty window reminding the occupants of their responsibilities?



After the Rain

The Devil makes work for idol hands and active imaginations.
Are those eyes among the fingerprints and smears?



After the Fingers

The stimulation and cleansing of the water on the skin.

The humidity of the air and the temperature difference between inside and outside is apparent.

Notice the absence of the action or the protagonist in the moment of the image but also the traces that the observer might interpret to create memories or stories based upon the information captured by the glass of the window.



After the Shower

For the past year, a vast site in the centre of Edinburgh between Leith Street and York Place has been surrounded by protective hoardings adorned with large renderings of a new St James shopping centre (or 'St James Quarter', as it is to be known), replacing the widely disliked earlier mall and offices, which dated from the early-1970s. The renderings show a very large mixed use development, clad in panels of sandstone and with what appear to be exposed steel I-beams as a repeated leitmotif, visually tying all the elements together. In other words, what will be built appears fairly typical of contemporary commercial developments intended for slightly sensitive historic contexts in that it combines the 'tasteful' characteristics of Miesian modernism with traditional facings, typical of the wider surrounding urban fabric. The renderings – like so many others of their genre – appear hyper-real in their accuracy and in the delightful leisure activities they depict. In them, couples stroll in the slanting sunlight and the temperature is obviously balmy as many people appear to be drinking tea and eating carrot cake at the cafés' outdoor tables.

Currently rising above the construction hoardings with their uplifting images of retail therapy is the first section of the new development – a mightily robust reinforced concrete structure containing loading bays and heavy goods lifts to supply the development's 'anchor' branch of John Lewis. Creating the panels of reinforcement rods and building the form-work to cast the concrete for this structure has taken many weeks. Then, almost overnight, its exterior was clad in insulated panels faced in aluminium alloy, interspersed with window openings, between which are narrower channels in the same material, offset from where the cast concrete floors occur. These offsets are very important for what follows.



photograph taken November 2017

studio window, Glasgow

This week, construction has reached the stage when the final façade finishes are being attached and, as I passed by this morning, out of the window openings were leaning construction workers with yet more aloft on cherry-pickers, carrying out the cladding task. My eye was drawn to one builder in particular, who was holding in his arm a short strip of grey facing panel, shaped like a hollow, squared-off capital letter 'H'. A few other similar strips had already been fitted in the narrow channels surrounding the window openings. Believe it or not, these are the I-beams!

Due to present-day energy conservation regulations, it would be illegal to design a building in which the structural I-beams actually were structural – as at Crown Hall in Chicago or the Neue National Gallerie in Berlin, for example – because such beams would cause unacceptable cold-bridges between the exterior and the interior. But because generations of architects have been trained instinctively to think primarily of neo-Miesian façade composition solutions, the cladding industry has responded by producing systems with elements that mimic I-beams in short, light, easy-to-handle sections. Such items will form a significant part of the detailing of the exteriors of the buildings in the new St James Quarter. In the renderings, they look unremarkable, but in reality, the junctions between them are very obvious. What should logically appear as elements spanning unbroken between verticals are actually composed of numerous little pieces, more like the coping stones of a masonry wall than anything intended to be read as load-bearing.

The fact that the locations of what purport to be structural elements in the façades are not actually the locations where structural loads are transferred is another matter. In the St James Quarter, the pseudo I-beams are purely decorative; one might see this aesthetic as the neo-Miesianistic (though even Mies used curtain walling at the vertices of his skyscrapers to give an appearance of order, hiding the true structure beneath).

In the St James Quarter, as in many another contemporary commercial development, the differences between image and reality are manifested both in the renderings and in the buildings themselves. But if I-beams in building façades are no longer allowed to be structural, why bother including them at all in façade compositions? Why not instead revive the rococo, or some other much more interesting, non-architectonic and wilfully superficial design forms, appropriate for finishes that are only millimetres thick in any case.



CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH | Glasgow School of Art

photograph taken 2014

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Hugues' flat, Paris

Just to clarify:

You're not asking me to decipher the images, video, quote & how they could be related in any way? (That game show on BBC, Only connect).

You're not asking me to give my opinions on the nature of windows in relation to humans to students of architecture?

You're not necessarily asking me for a musicians opinion on the content, or on anything else for that matter?

You're asking me as a person who's job it is to put together notes in order to hopefully create meaning how this content makes me respond?

If the last question is correct I understand fully.

response from Binker, addressed to Tonic, October 2017

photograph taken December 2017



lost his mind

The following is half invention & discovery. One is a dishonest creation; the other is an observation. It's just as important to distort reality for creativities sake as it is to spot truth for learnings sake.

1.

There are two fundamental forces which go into keeping you alive. When they run out you die. One of them is energy, the other is strength. Where do they come from? When you existed as a sperm cell you had some energy, but nowhere near enough to make it through an entire lifetime. This is why the male orgasm was invented. When the father passes the sperm cell to the mother what happens is the energy from that orgasm is transferred to the sperm cell. Pushed upon it by force. Then approximately nine months later the mother has to give birth. Now this takes tremendous strength & you would think that by now the human body would have evolved to make child birth easier, but it hasn't & this is the reason. The strength the mother uses to give birth is again transferred onto it the child. These two events usually give us enough energy & strength to make it through at least the first few years of our lives, at least up until our teens. It is at this point that they start to run out & we start to feel unsatisfied.

We search in other places not for answers as most people assume, but simply for energy & strength. For those with severely low levels of energy & strength the answer is to create. Why is this relatable? Because realising an initial idea for a creation is mentally one half of an orgasm. Completing a creation is in some way replicating child birth. These acts supply us with a short-term amount of energy & strength. But nowhere near as much as we need. So, what happens next? We realise that our energy & strength is again running low & we go through the process again. Another idea, another creation. This cycle goes on & on so many times that we end up calling ourselves artists. This word means: *people who regularly run low on energy & strength, so they seek to replenish it by recreating in miniature the very acts that gave them energy & strength in the first place.*

You then offer your work up to others & to an extent this is a benevolent act. This is because all art contains within it energy & strength. These things are apparent to others & rub off on them, giving them too the energy & strength they need to keep on living. A work of art which stands the test of time is seemingly an everlasting orgasm (an idea of great significance) crossed with everlasting labour (great craft). The better the idea, the greater the craft, the longer the work will survive.

2.

When a work is completed & offered up others will choose to either fit themselves into your work or not, for all art is essentially made to accommodate the human condition in some way. What does it mean to fit yourself into a work & why is it not the other way around? The work cannot change. We on the other hand change all the time. Our moods change (short-term), we mature (long-term) etc so it is us that are malleable & fit ourselves into un-changing works. The work is the same with or without you, but this is not true the other way around.

When a work is accommodating with someone's contemporary outlook or mood it is comforting. The work provides them with a temporary home or refuge. For example, when faced with great depression it becomes unbearable to see the world around you (mainly other humans) enjoying themselves & getting on with life as though nothing has happened & it is difficult to understand why the world is not sympathising with you. Even a squirrel in a park gathering food paying you no mind can seem unsympathetic. You then listen to say Chopin's *Prelude No. 15* & the piece provides a temporary refuge; the depressed part of yourself being reflected back at you. This equates to understanding. Likewise, when newly in love most of the pop songs from the 80's all of a sudden seem to 'make sense' to you, perhaps for the first time.

The artist had this very intention in mind all along & nine times out of nine it is usually one singular intention. The notion of multiple readings & interpretations is a popular misconception created by people outside of the art world. Works are created to be read or used in one or perhaps a very, very small number of specific ways. You can misuse the work if you choose, but in the process you'll weaken its ability to offer you any real energy or strength. People generally refer to this as 'missing the point'.

A work of art created by an individual from a seemingly disparate culture (let's say an early 19th Century romantic Polish composer) that thoroughly accommodates you proves that it contains within itself universal truths. Universal truths aren't written, they're discovered. This is why many artists claim to have been a 'vessel' for the creation of a great work, rather than the true creator. They often tie this in with god but they're actually talking about acknowledging a pre-existing truth contained within all humans. To genuinely spot even one of these truths is a high achievement. As a working artist I principally aim to discover universal truths. If I can't discover one, I'll tell you an original & hopefully amusing lie instead. It is essential for an artist to be an expert compulsive liar.



* Les Rencontres de La Photographie, Arles



MACHIYA

Kitty Byrne | November 2017



We cycle down the densely packed streets of Sanjo, weaving away from the busy roads and into a quiet back street close to the Kyoto museum. The city changes in an instant from high apartment blocks on noisy trunk roads, to two-storey small houses, restaurants and shops and one-way narrow streets. We are in the centre of the city grid, and yet it's so calm. We pull up outside an unassuming dark stained timber building, which blends surreptitiously into the background on this street. I don't think I would have noticed it if we had not been led here. A door slides open at the side, *Ohaiyogozaimasu* [Good Morning] and we are beckoned inside.

This is one of the few surviving *Machiya*¹ houses in Kyoto and one left open for those who know how to get there. We enter initially into the porch, a place to drop coats and bags and take off our shoes. Ahead of us the ceiling stretches to a double height space, accommodating the kitchen and hearth. From here we step up, off the cold stone floor and onto a timber platform. One more rickety sliding screen and we are in the first room.

There are four rooms on the ground floor, three sixes and an eight. These numbers refer to the tatami mats, which dictate the dimension of the space. When I first walked in and stepped onto the soft tatami I was enclosed in one small and squat room, dimly lit through a screened window to the street. We took a moment, then started to peel back the layers of the house, gently sliding the dividing *shoji*² panels to reveal room after room, until finally we slid our way onto the *engawa*³ space. From here we still had a few more shutters and screens to open before viewing the garden. It was a long sequential process of discovery. Each sliding door opens and leaves a frame of view, until eventually the whole house feels like it is open to the outside.

These scenes broken up by sliding semi-transparent walls allow the user to decide the openness of the space. Slide a door half way and you frame a slice of the greenery. Pull just the *shoji* screen closed and you shut off the view but still let in some light and sounds. The entire house is a series of sliding openings set between columns, designed for the hot and humid Japanese summer, and just about bearable in the winter.

The garden itself is carefully curated to represent a vast landscape, squeezed into a small walled inner city back court. Although there are small stones to step on, the garden is not a place to enter. It is there to provide the image of nature and the seasons into your own home framed by the floor, roof and *shoji* screens. The Japanese maple trees leaves will turn red in autumn, the azalea bushes turn pink in spring and the water in the stone troughs may freeze in the winter.

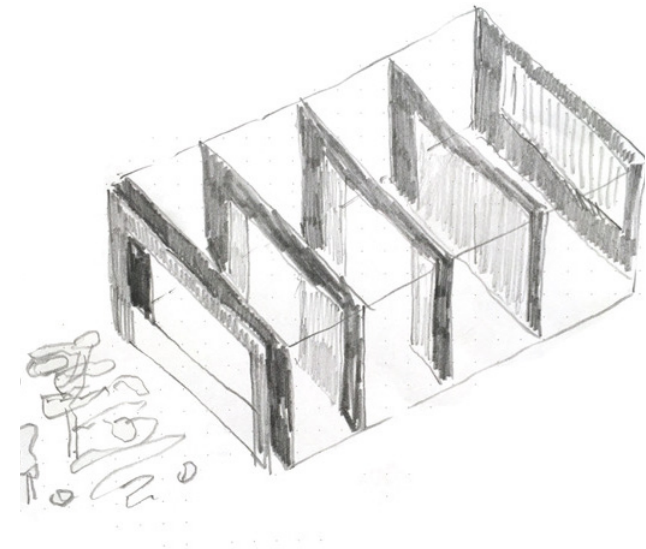
Each scene from the garden is allowed inside the house at the will of the occupant and the outside encroaches on the inside through the layers of transparency and sound. It strikes me that this process of selectively screening elements of the outside provides a more heightened experience. We were always searching for what was next in the sequence, this journey made the garden feel all the more dramatic providing snippets and clues before reaching the final image.

This house was just a humble merchants town house in Kyoto, but this experience of framing and layering scenes of the outside is apparent in many aspects of Japanese architecture. I see it now not just in the timber architecture of the past, but in the snippets of light entering the concrete forms of Tadao Ando, or the dramatic framing of the sky in Ryue Nishiawa's Teshima Art Museum. A window is not just a frame but a screen itself, choosing what the viewer should see. The choice of what to frame is important, and in Japan you rarely get to see it all at once.

1 *Machiya* - Traditional townhouses dating from the Edo period (1603–1867). Born out of the city's growing merchant class, they functioned as both residences and workspaces.

2 *Shoji* - Sliding outer partition doors and windows made of a latticework wooden frame and covered with a tough, translucent white paper.

3 *Engawa* - Edging strip of non-tatami-matted flooring, usually wood or bamboo. The *engawa* may run around the rooms, on the outside of the building, in which case they resemble a veranda space.





ALVARO SIZA | Faup, Porto



St Chinian, France



ALVARO SIZA | Casa Alcino Cardoso

photograph taken 2011

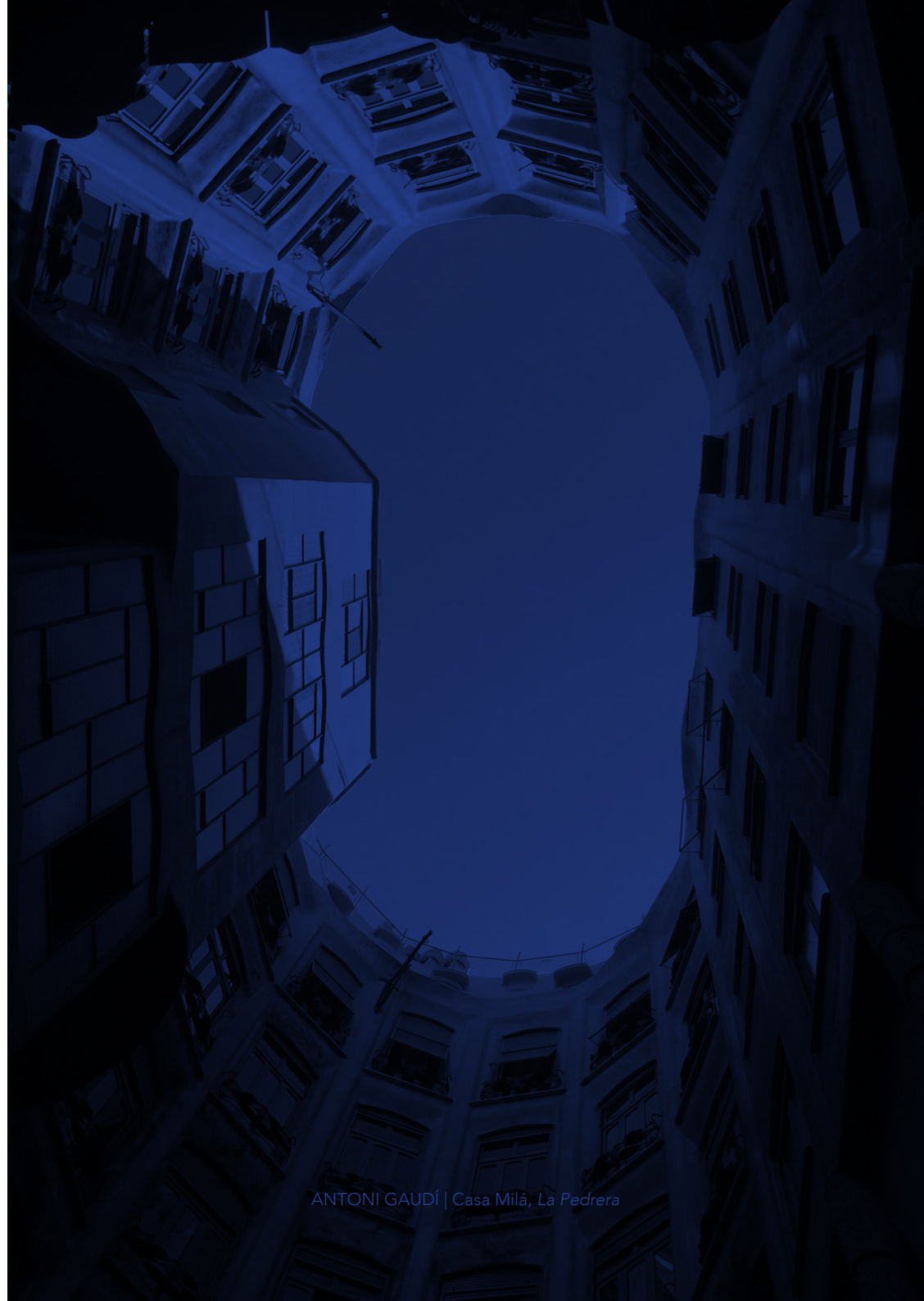
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ERNO GOLDFINGER | house on Willow Road



CARLO SCARPA | Canova Museum



ANTONI GAUDÍ | Casa Milá, *La Pedrera*

3

* Jerome Wren regularly contributes to Tonic with photography and visual content (in this issue: *Hugues' flat; Les Rencontres da La Photographie; Faup; St Chinian, house on Willow Road; Canova Museum; Casa Milá, La Pedrera*)

cover image composed by a series of stills from different Wes Anderson movies
inspired by <https://vimeo.com/191568026>

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JAN 18