

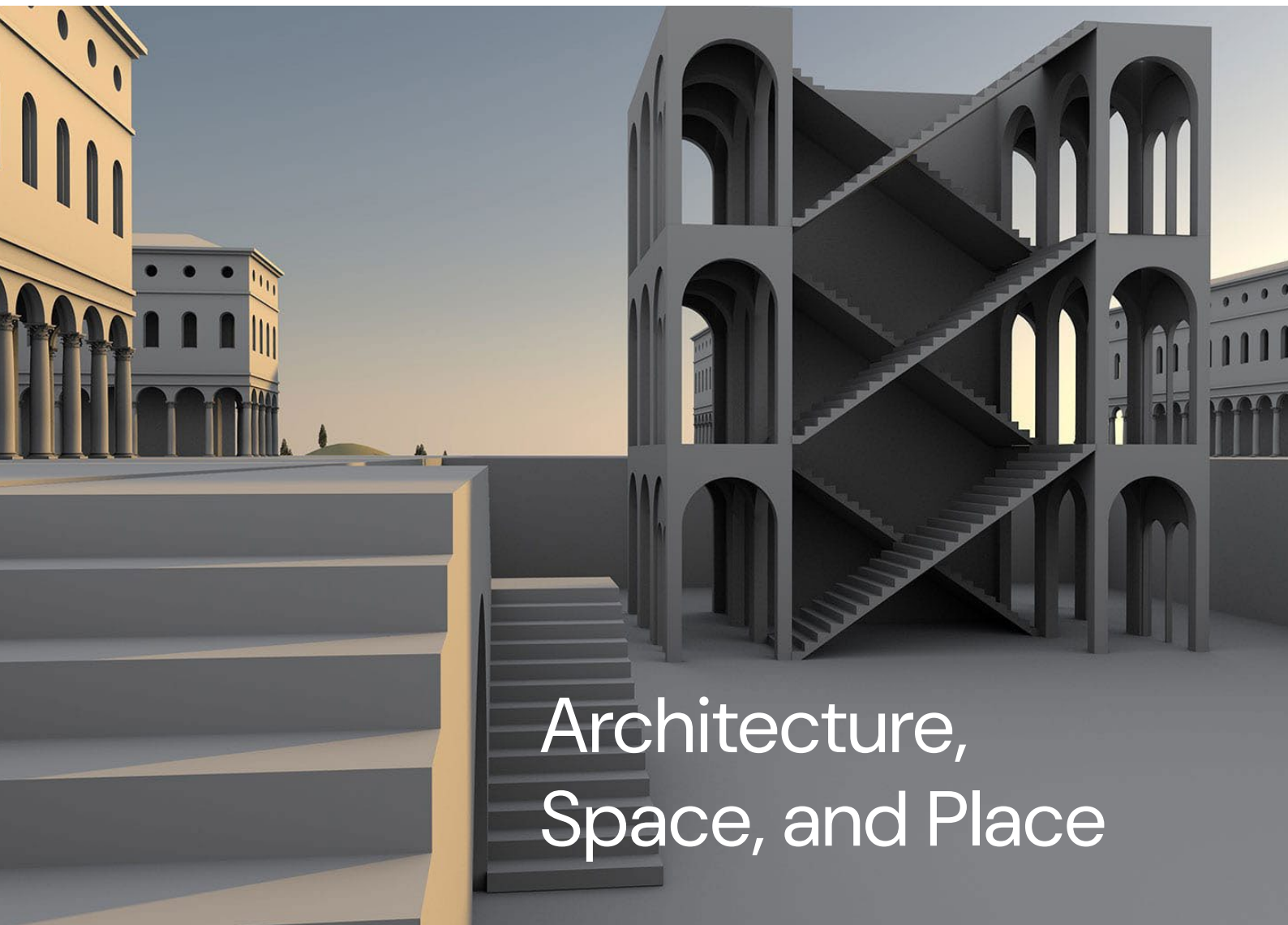
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Architecture,
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Rendering of Leonardo da Vinci's 'Water City'. The image was part of the exhibition 'Ideal Spaces' that was shown at Venice Biennale di Architettura 2016. Contributing artists to this image (in alphabetical order): Ulrich Gehmann, Daniel Hepperle, Edwyn Hickey, Michael Johansson, Andreas Siess.



Editorial

Urban Eidos: A New Open Access Journal by the Ideal Spaces Foundation

With this first issue of Urban Eidos the Ideal Spaces Foundation is proud to announce the launch of its latest initiative, an academic journal aimed to explore new paths in the landscape of scholarly communication. This hybrid of an academic journal and platform, accessible at <https://urban-eidos.com/>, marks a significant departure from many 'traditional' academic publishing models by offering open access to all its content, ensuring that every contribution is freely available to scholars, practitioners, and the public worldwide while committing to remove financial barriers to knowledge dissemination: Hence, unlike many academic platforms, Urban Eidos does not impose submission or publication fees on its contributors, thereby democratizing access to publishing opportunities for researchers, artists and creators across the globe.

We aim not merely to innovate in terms of format, but also to reconsider the form of scientific communication. Therefore, we strive to question the conventional boundaries of academic journals. While Urban Eidos encompasses the rigor of scholarly texts, it is not confined to texts as are conventional journals, but follows an inclusive approach instead, by equally integrating the domain of art. It is a new form of journal, comprising the realms of science, arts, and architecture, to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue that is often missing in today's segmented academic environment. We hope that this fusion not only broadens the scope of discourse but also enriches the intellectual landscape with diverse perspectives and innovative ideas by incorporating a domain of art that extends beyond textual analysis. This inclusive approach not only celebrates the multifaceted nature of knowledge, but also invites a broader audience to engage with the journal's content. Each contribution within Urban Eidos is assigned a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), ensuring its inclusion in academic libraries worldwide and enhancing its visibility and impact within the scholarly community.

In line with the scope of the Ideal Spaces Foundation (<https://www.idealspaces.org/working-group-2/>), Urban Eidos encompasses a broad examination about architecture, space, and community in a wider sense, with the expressions of their relationships in art, science, and the built space. Space is more than what we see, and architecture is more than built physical space. When we look at the relations between space and architecture, every intentionally planned order can be conceived as architecture; e.g. the architecture of an institution, as such invisible (but active), and expressed in its visible, symbolic form as an organigram.

Taking the original notion of a symbol as representing something else it stands for, architecture is inherently symbolic, necessitating both scientific and artistic ways of interpretation, interaction and interpretation. This is particularly pertinent as architectural forms and spaces embody specific ideologies and presuppositions about human nature—what architectural styles suit which types of individuals—regardless of whether these notions are explicitly stated or operate implicitly as unacknowledged certainties. Architecture and space, therefore, resonate with the human condition or 'conditio humana', where underlying assumptions about this condition shape architectural creation, and in turn, the resulting structures impact human experiences, behaviors, perceptions, and overall worldview, both consciously and subconsciously. Consequently, architecture significantly influences individuals' quality of life and inherently possesses sociological and political dimensions.

As regards both these dimensions, cultural heritage is relevant, as well as the nexus between community, space, and place. Communities need individual, recognizable places to unfold and to prosper, not just space to exist in. Looking at the basic human condition to be a zoon politikon, an animal living in the community of the polis,



the relations between concepts of the city, free citizenship, and democracy are of particular importance.

Join us in this exciting journey as we explore the intersections of science, arts, and architecture through the open and inclusive platform of Urban Eidos. We welcome every scholar, practitioner, and artist to contribute to this discourse—be it as a reader, reviewer, or author.

U. Gehmann & A. Siess

Spotlight: Inside this issue

Our first edition *Architecture, Space, and Place* is about highlighting some perspectives on space, architecture, and community.

Referring to the assumptions about a human condition outlined in the foregoing, for the human being as a cultural animal (McLuhan), living in the city might be an essential trait, but at the same time, there was a feeling of unease that arose early in the history of urban civilization. If urbanity is the epitome for culture, what about nature? In the face of climate crisis, ecological threats, and expanding urban agglomerations, this question gained actuality again. To bring nature back into the city is not confined to recent 'green city'-approaches but has a long history, epitomized in the ideal of the garden, the *altera natura* as the Roman writer Cicero called it. A garden/park, together with its mythological connotations, is an artificial nature, a kind of 2.0-naturality adapted to culture. **Flight from the City – Love for the Garden** by Steffen Krämer deals with these aspects.

The attempts to create an artificial nature are not confined to gardens. From the idea of the Polis onwards, the intention (and hope) was that a 'good' city can be created, a *città felice* as the Italian Renaissance coined it, based on the assumption that building on the city is building on society. In addition, the real *altera natura* of humans is not the garden but the city. It became second nature that spread out on a global scale, reflected by the fact that the major part of today's world population lives in cities.

What to do to keep the city human? What about community, and the need for places? Community lives by inclusion, and places where this is possible. **Ideal Space and Inclusion** by Ulrich Gehmann will look at essential aspects related to these questions.

The latest paper, entitled **Making Skopéin—an autoethnographic report about the interplay between space and media art** delves into the interplay between space and art(work). Through an autoethnographic lens, the paper presents the conception and creation phases of the media art installation 'Skopéin', providing insights into the aesthetic genesis of an artistic collaboration. Furthermore, it focuses on the role of space as a medium within exhibitions. The authors Andreas Siess and Michael Johansson argue that such space is not merely a 'container' for art, but an integral component of installation art. Consequently, they suggest that the traditional dichotomy between art and viewer should be expanded to a triadic configuration comprising space, artwork, and individuals, all of which interact with one another.

Flight from the city – Love for the garden

The search for the ideal landscape from
antiquity to our days

Steffen Krämer

METADATA

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In an often quoted passage from his famous *Epigrams* the Roman poet Martial described in the first century A.D. the urban surroundings of his flat on the third floor of a narrow labyrinth of streets and houses in Rome.¹ He dreamed of a nearby little square named *At the pear tree* as his own. Thus he would have a garden around the house to breathe freely and to have his peace. „Rus in urbe“ – „country in the city“ – was Martial's well-known motto of his wish-dream. Juvenal, his poet-colleague, argued similarly in his *Satires*, contrasting the sickening sleeplessness of the noisy capital with the peaceful life in a provincial house with a small garden, which could even serve as a well-kept vegetable garden.²

Both authors thus formulated an antagonism lasting from antiquity to our days, concerning primarily the connection between criticism of and flight from the cities and the longing for the countryside. This aspect should be taken into account when the phenomenon of artificial landscape is considered. Behind the idea of an ideal landscape, especially behind the conception of gardens and parks, there is amazingly often a reserved, sometimes critical, sometimes even negative attitude towards cities and their different urban structure.

The now described way through cultural history from the antiquity to our present time is to document this antagonism. The chosen examples are taken from different spheres and reach from architecture and urban planning to painting and literature. Many of these have not yet been discussed under this point of view, which often makes the explanation difficult, all the more so as this article can hardly provide a comprehensively scientific argumentation. Therefore the given examples are but side-lights, illuminating only a certain aspect in the cultures and epochs referred to.

The idea that planned landscapes should stand out in relief against urban structures was not an invention of the Roman antiquity. Egyptian pharaohs already had laid out spacious parks in their residential cities, for instance Amenophis IV, who called himself Echnaton in honour of his God Aton, and his wife Nofretete. In their newly built heliopolis Amarna luxurious gardens – as a symbol of the extraordinary luxury of their royal lifestyle – were integrated in the newly built complex of their royal residences.³ Thomas Mann, in his tetralogy *Joseph and His Brothers*, vividly described Potiphars garden in the old-Egyptian Thebes being surrounded by a ring-wall „closing off all

1 Martial, *Epigrams*, Book 12, Chapter 57/21.

2 Juvenal, *Satires*, Satire 3.

3 For the old-Egyptian gardens see Toby Musgrave, *Paradise Gardens. Spiritual Inspiration and Earthly Expression*, London 2015, 17-27; Karin Dzionara, *Der Garten im alten Ägypten*, in: Hans Sarkowicz (Ed.), *Die Geschichte der Gärten und Parks*, Frankfurt/M./Leipzig 1998, 27-39.

eyes and granting solitude”.⁴ „Paradisiac“ was a part of the palm garden because different sorts of fruit grew there side by side.⁵ It is not surprising that Thomas Mann used the term „paradise“ as it was already used in ancient times for wonderful gardens.

In the 4th century B.C. the Greek poet Xenophon called in his book *Oikonomikos* the Persian gardens „paradeisoi“, thereby referring to the old Persian word „pairi-dae’za“, which means fenced-in or surrounded by walls.⁶ Thus the demarcation from the surrounding area was from the beginning of garden-culture a significant characteristic and played an important role as distinction from the surrounding urban site.

Nowhere the contrast between city and garden is more evident than in ancient Rome. On the one hand there was the highly concentrated urban centre with its huge overpopulation, on the other the villeggiature with its extended parks situated mostly in the urban periphery and constituting since the late Republic the status symbol of Roman celebrities like Lucull, Sallust or Maecenas.⁷ The Roman poet Lucrez described in his multi-volume book *De rerum natura* the feeling of life at such exclusive places in the city as „sedes quietae“. „Nothing is sweeter than to live in cheerful and calm districts, secured in the heights by the teaching of wise men, and to look down on the other people wandering to and fro and searching unsteadily their way of life“.⁸ Horaz described it more accurately in one of his *Odes* where he let his eyes wander over the city from a high observation tower in the gardens of Maecenas, thereby marvelling at the happy, sticky, rich and noisy Rome.⁹ The tradition of large-scale parks from the late Republic was continued during the Roman imperial period, and with the imperial palaces of Tiberius and Domitian, the Palatine, one of the seven hills of Rome, was the privileged place of fashionable gardens.¹⁰ From an elevated as well as protected position, one could now view the urban environment with its partly chaotic activities on the Forum Romanum to the north and the Circus Maximus to the south.

But no fashionable complex in Rome had such large dimensions as the famous *Domus aurea* of emperor Nero in the midst of Rome.¹¹ „Rus in urbe“ was from now on the definitive standard for a large-scale architectural project, comprising from eighty to one hundred hectares and thereby covering a large part of the inner city. With its extensive parks, hang terraces and its artificial lake, the *Domus aurea* was literally a huge ideal landscape in the centre of Rome. The fact that Nero, as employer, had recognized the utmost contrast between his urban villas and park grounds and the urban conditions with their highly condensed architectural texture, is proved by the emperor’s dictum handed down by the Roman author Sueton: „At last I am starting to live like a human being“.¹² In the existing urban form of Rome, the emperor was not able to realize his lifestyle, marked by splendour and luxury; and so it is significant that the free areal for his large-scaled architectural and landscape project was obtained by a city devastation of hitherto unknown proportion. Whether Nero was personally responsible for the terrible conflagration of Rome, completely or partially destroying great parts of the city – as some ancient authors claim – can historically

4 Thomas Mann, *Joseph und seine Brüder*, Vol. 2, *Joseph in Ägypten*, Frankfurt/M. 1975, 583, 620, 634f., 639f., 642f., 661. For the quote see 642.

5 Mann, *Joseph in Ägypten* (see note 4), 661.

6 Xenophon, *Oikonomikos oder vom Haus-Wesen*, translated by Barthold Henrich Brockes, Hamburg 1734, Chapter 4, § 13, 39. For his derivation from the old-Persian see Peter Cornelius Mayer-Tasch, *Der Garten Eden*, in: Sarkowicz, *Geschichte* (see note 3), 13-26, here 14; Sandy Alami Hassani, *Der islamische Garten. Eine Entwicklung über mehrere Kontinente*, Hamburg 2014, 2.

7 For the mentioned gardens and villas of the late Republic in Rome see Bernard Andreae, „Am Birnbaum“. *Gärten und Parks im antiken Rom*, in: *den Vesuvstädten und in Ostia*, Mainz 1996, 67-89.

8 Lukrez, *Über die Natur der Dinge*, Book 2, Preface, 10. For the notion „sedes quietae“ see Andreae, *Am Birnbaum* (see note 7), 76.

9 Horaz, *Odes and Epodes*, Book 3, Ode 29, Chapter 10.

10 For the imperial palaces on the Roman Palatine see Adolf Hoffmann, Ulrike Wulf, *Die Kaiserpaläste auf dem Palatin in Rom. Das Zentrum der römischen Welt und seine Bauten*, Mainz 2006.

11 For Nero’s *Domus aurea* see Filippo Coarelli, *Rom. Ein archäologischer Führer*, Freiburg 1975, 198-204; Harald Mielsch, *Die römische Villa. Architektur und Lebensform*, München 1987, 64-68.

12 Sueton, *The Twelve Caesars*, Nero, Chapter 31.

not be proven.¹³ In any case, the destruction of the inner city of Rome now enabled him to create his ideal landscape. „Rus in urbe“ now no longer expresses the contrast as guiding idea, but a rigid form of destruction.

On a smaller scale there existed in town-houses since the late Republic a hardly surveyable variety of gardens in the form of plantations of the pillars-surrounded patio – the so-called *peristyle*.¹⁴ Even today such closed gardens can be seen in Pompeii, for example the peristyle in the so-called *House of Menander* (Fig.1), whose pillars are surrounded by low walls, thereby enclosing the garden even within the house. It was destined not only to be entered but first of all to be visually noticed from a distance.



Fig. 1 Pompeii, House of Menander, peristyle

These rather small-scale planted areas within the houses, were not only meant to imitate the large villa gardens and parks.¹⁵ A small ideal landscape within the own living quarters was to create a contrast to the city-life on streets and public squares. The house garden surrounded by pillars was therefore a form of privatization of the Roman way of life.

However, this retreat into private life was symbolized by yet another form of artificial nature in Roman villas or dwelling-houses. In Pompeii as well as in Rome antique frescoes have survived covering the entire walls of a room with a splendid landscape of flowers, fruits and animals.¹⁶ A famous example from the early imperial time is the excavated garden room in the villa of Livia near Primaporta in the northern part

¹³ For this assertion see Tacitus, Annals, Book XV, Chapter 38-42, and Pliny the Elder, Natural History, Book 17, Chapter 5.

¹⁴ For the gardens of the Roman town-houses see Christian Meier, Der römische Garten, in: Sarkowicz, Geschichte (see note 3), 93-107.

¹⁵ Paul Zanker, Pompeji. Stadtbild und Wohngeschmack, Mainz 1995, 174-181, has already referred to this idea.

¹⁶ For this Roman wall-paintings see Andreae, Am Birnbaum (see note 7), 64-66; Zanker, Pompeji (see note 15), 190-210. These antique frescoes are an early example for the tradition of garden-paintings, decorating especially the private interiors of the 19th and 20th c.; see Sabine Schulze (Ed.), Gärten. Ordnung, Inspiration, Glück, exhibit. cat., Ostfildern 2006.

of Rome, today being a part of the Roman National Museum (Fig. 2). This form of wall-painting was supposed to give a heightened sense of living to the inhabitants by suggesting with landscape-paintings an imaginary world, being much more pleasant than urban reality outside the house. You even no longer needed to go to the peristyle of your home or villa. Now a garden painted on the walls was sufficient to create the perfect illusion of an ideal landscape.



Fig. 2 Wall-painting from Livia's garden room near Prima Porta, Rome, Roman National Museum

The demarcation from the outer world is also a main feature of the Islamic garden.¹⁷ In several fairy tales of the *Arabian Nights* – whose oldest Arabic version dates around 1450 – gardens are the scene of the action.¹⁸ A magnificent park of the Caliph in Baghdad, known as *pleasure garden*, is described in the tale of the 213th night. „There was a fence along the path, and at the end of the path there was a garden gate, but it was locked.“ As charming as this garden is portrayed in the fairy tale, as isolated is it from the urban environment, although Baghdad reveals itself as „Paradise“ for the two protagonists in the fairy tale, „adorned for its people, showing its wonders openly at all times“.¹⁹

What was meant for Baghdad was also characteristic of the Ottoman capital. Around the middle of the 16th century the German painter and graphic artist Melchior Lorck gave us with his views of the town a vivid picture of Constantinople, the later Istanbul (Fig. 3). They clearly show that the metropolis on the Bosphorus, like many other

¹⁷ See Hassani, Garten (see note 6), 4; Rainer W. Kuhnke, Byzanz und die Islamischen Gärten, in: Sarkowicz, Geschichte (see note 3), 108-123, here 114f.

¹⁸ For the mentioned fairy tales of the *Arabian Nights* see Tausendundeine Nacht, translated by Claudia Ott, München 2004, 188f., 317, 389f., 509, 522-533.

¹⁹ For the two quotes see Tausendundeine Nacht (see note 18), 522f.

Islamic cities, was interspersed with partially large-scale parks, generally enclosed by high walls.



Fig. 3 Melchior Lorck, view of Constantinople, mid 16th century

Many historic sources prove that this refined garden culture was already established about 100 years after the Islamic wave of conquest of the 8th century.²⁰ Only fragments of these early Islamic gardens survived. In order to have an idea of their original form we have to look at gardens from later periods or at modern reconstructions. In the medieval Medina – the old city of Marrakech –

with its labyrinth-like alleys and bazaars a garden was reconstructed in the middle of the 19th century. The origin of this garden goes back to the second half of the 16th century. This garden was opened to the public but in 2016. Both the structure as a whole as the details of this *Jardin secret* (Fig.4) point to the tradition of Islamic gardens since their beginning. The general conception of rectangular axes dividing the planted areas in four equally large segments, goes back to the preislamic gardens of Persia and is called *tschārbāgh* – four-part-garden.²¹



Fig. 4 Marrakech, Le Jardin secret

Scientific studies often point out the formal likeness between Islamic gardens and the religious conception of Paradise, as described in the Quran (Koran).²² Surah 47 speaks of four paradisiacal rivers the faithful will encounter when God has gran-

²⁰ For the early history of the Islamic gardens see Thomas Leisten, *Der Garten im Vorderen Orient. Das vorislamische Erbe islamischer Gartenanlagen*, in: *Die Gärten des Islam*, exhibit. cat., ed. by Hermann Forkl a.o., Stuttgart 1993, 56–59.

²¹ For the history and structure of the *tschārbāgh* – also written *charbagh* or *tschahār bāgh* – see Annemarie Schimmel, *Kleine Paradiese. Blumen und Gärten im Islam*, Freiburg 2001, 10f., 20; Kuhnke, *Byzanz* (see note 17), 117.

²² See Thomas Leisten, *Die Gärten des Islam. Das islamische Paradies als Idealbild des Gartens*, in: *Gärten des Islam* (see note 20), 47–55; Kuhnke, *Byzanz* (see note 17), 113–116; Schimmel, *Paradiese* (see note 21), 16–27; Hassani, *Garten* (see note 6), 5–7.

ted them entry. „The Paradise promised to the Godfearing is constituted as follows: brooks with water that is not stagnant, others with milk (still) tasting (fresh), others with wine tasting lovely and still others with clarified honey.“²³ The axes, the division into four sections and the water flowing in channels or collected in basins, all these were symbols, making the Islamic garden an image of Paradise, as it were a *paradise on earth*. Based on symmetry and harmony it had a religious implication and therefore already pointed to the life to come. It is not surprising that the closed Islamic garden always stood in contrast to the profane worldliness of the surrounding city. Even today this contrast can be felt in Marrakech coming from the loud and sometimes chaotic souks of the Medina and encountering the peace and clearness of the *Jardin secret* (Fig. 4).

These transitions also existed in European Middle Ages, when planted inner courts or closed gardens of a cloister contrasted with the surrounding urban context. Since the Carolingian period there is not only an abundance of monastic examples in European cities but there are also ideal images of such gardens, preserved in literature – Walahfrid Strabo's *hortulus*²⁴ – or in form of an ideal design – the plan of Saint Gall²⁵.

The *Romance of the Rose*, written in the 13th century, is considered the most successful work of medieval French literature. The anonymous author, writing in the first person, reveals already in the first chapter the reason for his springtime wanderings leading him at first to the surrounding countryside. „It drives me from the town in the open air.“²⁶ In the second chapter he describes the destination of his wanderings. „Not far away I saw a large grove enclosed by a wall.“²⁷ This lovely enclosed garden is the subject of the third chapter. Its owner is the fun or the pleasure (*déduit*). „For this grove is his property and the plants he has settled there have been brought from Saracen land.“²⁸ Shortly afterwards the comparison with the paradisiac garden follows: „This place appeared to me perfect, even heavenly and for all I know there is no heavenly garden giving greater fun than this grove.“²⁹ As usually the subject of the *Romance of the Rose* is *paradise on earth* in form of a closed garden the narrator can only reach by fleeing from the city. The plants from „Saracen land“ are another exotic ingredient referring to the well-known tradition of Arabian and Islamic gardens. After

23 Der Koran [Quran], translated by Rudi Paret, Stuttgart a.o. 1979, Surah 47/15, 358. For other Surahs with the theme of the paradise garden or generally gardens see Surahs 13, 55, 56.

24 Walahfrid Strabo, *De cultura hortorum. Über den Gartenbau*, ed. by Otto Schönberger, Stuttgart 2015. For Strabo's didactic poem – dated approx. 840 A.D. and shortly called *hortulus* – see Michaela Kalusok, *Gartenkunst*, Köln 2003, 41f.; Herbert Heckmann, *Walahfrid Strabos Hortulus – der ideale Klostergarten*, in: Sarkowicz, *Geschichte* (see note 3), 124–135.

25 For the the plan of Saint Gall – dated approx. 820–30 A.D. – see Bruno Reudenbach (Ed.), *Karolingische und Ottonische Kunst, Geschichte der bildenden Kunst in Deutschland*, Vol. 1, München a.o. 2009, 408, with specification of subsequent literature.

26 Heinrich Fähmann, *Das Gedicht von der Rose*, Berlin 1839, 7.

27 Fähmann, *Gedicht* (see note 26), 9.

28 Fähmann, *Gedicht* (see note 26), 28.

29 Fähmann, *Gedicht* (see note 26), 30.

all the lovely grove of the *Romance of the Rose* corresponds to the medieval *hortus conclusus* (Fig. 5), however desecrated by the love of Venus and Amor.³⁰



Fig. 5 Upperrhine master, *Small paradisiac Garden*, approx.1410, Frankfurt/M, Städel Museum

In *Decamerone*, a novel of Giovanni di Boccaccio from the middle of the 14th century, the connection between flight from the city and love for the countryside is fully dramatized. The historic reason for the flight of a group of young men and women from Florence is the plague of 1348. In the „devastating situation of our city“ they decide to flee to their country estates, in order to escape from death. „There one can hear the singing of the birds, there one can see the green of the hills and the plains, there one can see the abundant cornfields waving like the sea, there one can see thousands of different trees and the open sky which – even if angry – it never betrays its everlasting beauty: all this is much more beautiful than the empty walls of our city.“³¹ The destination of their dramatic trip was a lordly villa on a remote hill, „with meadows all around and with marvellous gardens.“³² Now the merry life of the „happy company“ newly begins, at first in the garden „to bind wreathes with different foliage and to sing love-songs“.³³ Joy of life and delight – this is the essential meaning of *Decamerone's* text – can be regained in times of the plague only by fleeing from the city to a far-off garden.



Fig. 6 Hieronymus Bosch, *Garden of Earthly Delights*, end of 15th or beginning of 16th century, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado

The most extraordinary contrast of city and garden in European late medieval art can be found in the pictures of Hieronymus Bosch. The largest subsisting painting is the so called *Garden of Earthly Delights*, a huge triptychon from the end of the 15th or the

³⁰ For the Christian interpretation of the Romance of the Rose see Karl August Ott, *Der Rosenroman*, Darmstadt 1980, 124-127.

³¹ Giovanni di Boccaccio, *Das Dekameron*, translated by Albert Wesselski, Vol. 1, Frankfurt/M. 1989, 13, 23.

³² Giovanni di Boccaccio, *Dekameron* (see note 31), 27.

³³ Giovanni di Boccaccio, *Dekameron* (see note 31), 29f.

beginning of the 16th century, showing on the left panel the history of creation from Genesis, on the right panel the representation of hell (Fig. 6). What the painter wanted to display on the middle panel is even today controversially discussed by experts.³⁴ The paradise-like landscape typical for Bosch does not correspond with nature as it is, but rather with a strangely animated rural panorama, where a multitude of diverse animal species form a unity with God and the first pair of human beings. Hans Belting speaks in this context of an „imaginary“ or „idealized nature“.³⁵ The negative image is the obscure world of hell with its countless demonic hybrid beings punishing the humans for their sins with innumerable sorts of pains.



Fig. 7 Hieronymus Bosch, *Garden of Earthly Delights*, right-hand panel, upper part

This bizarre pandemonium reaches its climax by the ghostly scenery of burning cities, well known to the people of the Middle Ages, who were constantly confronted by war and devastation (Fig. 7). The two side panels oppose the harmonic ideal of a paradisiac garden to the tragic reality of urban catastrophes.

Less dramatic but equally pronounced is the antagonism between idyllic rural life and urban crises still in the late 18th century. Louis-Sébastien Mercier described in the eleventh volume of his *Tableau de Paris* the French capital as an „amphitheatre of latrines“ – „amphithéâtre de latrines“ – „spreading around the worst stench“.³⁶ The horrible pollution of the public quarters was also perceived with disgust by other contemporaries of Mercier and was answered by the urban population with the creation of gardens.³⁷ „The landscape is embellished by the parks of the nobility, and the outskirts of the cities by the gardens of the citizens.“ With this concise expression the famous horticultural theorist Christian C. L. Hirschfeld characterized the situation in the 5th volume of his *Theory of Horticulture*.³⁸ The fact that another reason of his appeal for the creation of private gardens in the city was the terrible stench is proved by the following sentence: „The destination of flower-gardens is to delight the eye with the diversity and beauty of colours combined with the amusement of the sense of smell.“³⁹

Only a few years later a special form of the ideal landscape was established, correlating with the technical innovations of early industrialization and influencing the appearance of the cities. In the 19th century the serial production of iron and glass made it possible to develop large-scaled greenhouses, put up not only in the parks of European country estates but also in the immediate surrounding of urban housing

34 The iconography of the middle panel is not subject of the article, see therefor especially Hans Belting, *Hieronymus Bosch. Garten der Lüste*, München a.o. 2002; Nils Büttner, *Hieronymus Bosch*, München 2012, 99-106; Stefan Fischer, *Jheronimus Bosch*, Köln 2016, 101-120.

35 Belting, *Hieronymus Bosch* (see note 34), 54.

36 Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, Tome XI, Amsterdam 1788, 54.

37 In his *Essai sur la propreté de Paris*, Paris 1797, 18, Pierre Chauvet has described the French capital as the „centre of stench“ – „centre de la puanteur“. For the pollution of the public space in Paris in the 18th c. see also Alain Corbin, *Pesthauch und Blütenduft. Eine Geschichte des Geruchs*, Berlin 1984, 40-52.

38 Christian C. L. Hirschfeld, *Theorie der Gartenkunst*, Vol. 5, Leipzig 1785, 48.

39 Hirschfeld, *Theorie* (see note 38), 60.

areas.⁴⁰ These delicately transparent iron-glass-constructions were used as winter gardens, palmeries or hot-houses for tender or exotic plants. They often had an artificial mikroclimate, clearly marking off the guarded interior from the outside world. Already in 1845 Alexander von Humboldt described the peculiar atmosphere of a palm house in the first volume of his book *Kosmos*: „You have the impression to be in a tropical climate and to look from the top of a hill at a small bushy palm thicket.

Of course, the view of the dark blue sky is lacking, as well as the impression of a greater intensity of light. However, here the imagination is even more active, the illusion even greater than with the most perfect painting.⁴¹

The effect of these *artificial paradises* was all the more intensive the more they were differentiated from the surrounding area.⁴² In the city they were like a dream world providing the owner or the visitor with a proper refuge for strolling around or living out his imaginations. Thus the exotic interiors of the private green-houses were offering a certain freedom from the social demands of the 19th century.



Fig. 8 Munich, royal palace, winter garden of Ludwig II, historic photo

A famous example is the winter garden king Ludwig II had built after 1867 on the roofs of his residency in Munich, extending over the northern roofs to the Hofgarten (Fig. 8).⁴³ As it was directly accessible from his study, the king often withdrew to this artificial landscape fitted out with a Moorish kiosk, an Indian royal tent and a panoramic view of the Himalayan mountains. Sometimes artists were invited to the winter garden for „private audiences“, making perfect the suggestion of the king’s theatrical counter world over the roofs of Munich.

Furnishing the private rooms with exotic plants and flowers was the reduced version of these artificial landscapes. In his novel *Against Nature: A Rebour*, published in 1884 Joris-Karl Huysman had his excentric leading person, the French nobleman Jean Floressas Des Esseintes equipped his extraordinary private house with a „wonderful collection of tropical plants“.⁴⁴ This floral presentation was meant not so much as an imitation of nature but rather as an illusion surpassing nature by a perfectly arranged artificial form. „These plants are highly disturbing he said; then he stepped back and overlooked the whole arrangement: he had reached his goal; not a single flower seemed to be real; material, paper, porcellan and metal were lent to nature from man, in order to give nature a chance to create its monsters.“⁴⁵ Once this highly artificial flowery composition was finished Des Esseintes lost his interest. The plants wilted

40 For the close connection of housing area and greenhouse see Corbin, Pesthauch (see note 37), 250f.

41 Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos. Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart/Tübingen 1845, 97.

42 For the term of the *artificial paradise* see Stefan Koppelkamm, *Künstliche Paradiese. Gewächshäuser und Wintergärten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1988, 47–50.

43 For the winter garden of Ludwig II in the royal palace of Munich see Michael Petzet, *Gebaute Träume. Die Schlösser Ludwigs II. von Bayern*, München 1995, 38f; Jean Louis Schlim, *Ludwig II. Traum und Technik*, München 2010, 34–53.

44 Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Gegen den Strich*, Zürich 1981, 177–194, here 177.

45 Huysmans, *Gegen den Strich* (see note 44), 184.

and were removed from his rooms. His own decadency had dulled his sensibility for their exotic forms and colours.

At the end of the 19th century the situation of life in European cities grew more and more precarious, especially for the poorer classes. Around the middle of the century numerous engaged descriptions had been published denouncing the social misery and the desolate housing conditions of the inner cities with its utmost density of population.⁴⁶ From now on the ideal landscape was no longer seen as a contrast to the complex form of the city, but as its fundamental alternative. Just before the turn of the century the English social reformer Ebenezer Howard provided with his concept of the *Gartenstadt* a serious urban vision, promising a way out of the deep dilemma the European large towns and industrial cities were in. His book *Tomorrow. A Peaceful Way to real Reform*, first published in 1898 and newly edited four years later under the more concise title *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* contains his all-comprising reformatory theory and was provided with diagrams.⁴⁷ The garden city is an early form of the satellite city, built for a limited number of inhabitants. Once the maximum was reached, another city was to be built – thus slowly forming a concentric ring around the basic city and reducing the pressure. Howard fundamentally propagated a small-town principle based on the strict reduction of urban housing, guaranteeing large green zones in the centre and extensive ones in the periphery. The chaotic growth of the large cities was opposed by the garden city with its regulated nature in the form of private gardens and public parks. Every inhabitant now had his own small-sized ideal landscape which he could plant according to his own wishes. The longing for rural tranquility, already described in antiquity by Roman writers as Martial or Juvenal, was coming true by the garden city.

The equalization of the ideal landscape and the urban structure was established in modern town planning after World War I. In connection with his urban utopia, the so-called *Ville Radieuse* being planned since 1930, Le Corbusier used the term „green city“ – „ville verte“.⁴⁸ How innovative this urban idea was he expressed in a letter dated March 1930: „I was the first to declare that the modern city has to be a huge park,

46 For this urban theme see Steffen Krämer, Entartung und Urbanität. Krankheits- und Verfallsmetaphorik als Grossstadtkritik im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, in: Forum Stadt, Year 39, 3/2012, 225–254, here 233–236, with specification of subsequent literature.

47 Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*, London 1902; see also Ebenezer Howard, *Gartenstädte von morgen. Das Buch und seine Geschichte*, ed. by Julius Posener, Frankfurt/M./Berlin 1968.

48 Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeanneret, *Œuvre complète, 1934–1938*, Zürich 1986, 33.

a green city.⁴⁹ In 1935 the architect reduced his vision to the linguistic formula: „The green city = La Ville Radieuse“.⁵⁰



Fig. 9 Le Corbusier, *La Ville Radieuse*, 1930, sketch

Plans and sketches for *La Ville Radieuse* document that the fundamental idea behind the utopian city was a reduced density of houses in favour of extensive parks (Fig. 9). Point high-rise buildings and linear rows of houses were loosely distributed on a green setting where the line of the tall trees was extended by the high-rise buildings. The inhabitants of the *Ville Radieuse* were to find a park-like surrounding, totally different from the urban chaos of the existing cities.

Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse* was of decisive importance for the famous *Charta of Athens* passed as official resolution by the delegates of the 4th CIAM-congress in 1933 because it constituted the leading principle of the concept listed in the 95 paragraphs of the document.⁵¹ This is not really surprising as the resolution as a whole was set up under the aegis of Le Corbusier. Paragraph 35 is defining the urban structure of the new city as follows: „The fabric of the city [meant is the historic city, author's note] has definitely to change its texture; the heaps of stone will turn into green cities.“⁵² The contents of the *Charta of Athens* were to become the most important theoretical basis for urban planning after World War II. Le Corbusier's vision of „the green city“ was internationally consolidated after 1945.

However, as the countless residential and satellite settlements from post-war time until the early seventies show the equalization of city and park had fatal consequences. The sometimes huge settlements were obviously lacking urban qualities and the green areas as well as the sometimes extensive building complexes were usually totally indifferent and irrelevant. It almost seems that by trying to equate the city with the park their particular values were levelled, while they are increased by their opposition.

In the last decades this antagonism can again be noted, manifesting itself in all sorts of worldwide variations. The longing for the private garden as formulated already by ancient Roman authors – be it within the own premises or at least in their direct vicinity – was to become a leading motif of the so called *New Urbanism*, developed in the USA since the end of the eighties.⁵³ The marking off from the outside world, a main characteristic of the Islamic garden, is also to be noticed in the present Arabi-

49 Le Corbusier in a letter to M. J. Ghinsbourg, Moscow, March 1930, quoted after Thilo Hilpert, *Die Funktionelle Stadt. Le Corbusiers Stadtvision – Bedingungen, Motive, Hintergründe*, Braunschweig 1978, 163.

50 Le Corbusier, *La Ville Radieuse*, 1935, quoted after Hilpert, *Stadt* (see note 49), 163.

51 For the *Charta of Athens* see Thilo Hilpert (Ed.), *Le Corbusiers »Charta von Athen«*. Texte und Dokumente. Kritische Neuausgabe, Braunschweig 1988.

52 Hilpert, *Le Corbusier* (see note 51), 138.

53 Peter Katz, *The New Urbanism. Toward an Architecture of Community*, Portland/Oregon 1994.

an world. As in former times it is still a sign of wealth and a privilege to reside in the luxurious gardens of private villas, exclusive hotels or Gated Communities (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 Kairo, highway-advertisement for a Gated Community on the northern outskirts of the town

Artificial paradises with their ideal landscapes are created all over the world. They are often cut off from the outer city. Only by this frontier their illusionistic energy is secured. However, as a refuge for strolling about or for living in imaginations they are no longer unique, as the dream worlds of glassed-in gardens can be perfectly used for consumption. New shopping malls are therefore equipped with elaborately arranged green zones under transparent roofs and cupolas, where visitors can linger in cafés and restaurants (Fig. 11). Therefore these protected artificial gardens are an important part of a skillful selling strategy, because resting under exotic trees or palms intensifies the individual sense of life and consequently the delight in consumption. However they cannot compete with the splendid and exotic greenhouses or winter gardens of the 19th century, being but a reduced form, a somehow simplified plagiarism of them.



Fig. 11 Abu Dhabi, Yas Mall, green zone in glass-covered lounge area

„Rus in urbe“ – „country in the city“ – was not only a wish-dream in antique times but continued to be so in different forms and intensities throughout the epochs of our cultural history. As a rule it was an antagonism uniting criticism of the city with longing for the countryside. Only with modern town planning grew the intension to eliminate this marked contrast; the results were however dubious considering the constructed monotony of the numerous satellite towns and park settlements of the fifties and sixties.

Nowadays spacious parks are again created in cities urgently needing green areas because of their extreme architectural density. In 2005, in central Kairo, the Al-Az-

har-Park with a surface of thirty hectares was opened to the public. The fenced-in park is situated immediately beside the Darb al-Ahmar quarter, one of the poorest quarters of Kairo without refuse disposal and sanitary installations. Although the entry fee is extremely low, the inhabitants of the neighbouring poor district can hardly afford a visit of the park.



Fig. 12 Alexandria, Montazah Park

Similarly the Montazah-Park in Alexandria, originally being a lordly estate was opened to the public (Fig. 12). This park however is strictly guarded like a Gated Community prohibiting access to the poorer population, because the expensive luxury hotels are situated there. The outskirts are built over with closely set tower-like apartment-houses, already dilapidated, a view characteristic for the generally desolate view of modern Alexandria. Nowhere else the contrast between large park areas and dense urban structure could be more evident.

With these current Egyptian examples ends a line of traditions, beginning with the ancient Pharaonic gardens and continuing thousands of years. Thomas Mann has named their form „paradisiac“ and the conception of *paradise on earth* has obviously been the fundamental principle of many parks and gardens described in this paper.⁵⁴ Alternatively all these enclosed gardens can be seen as a remote reflex of the *paradise lost* John Milton described in his homonymous book of 1667.⁵⁵ For Michel Foucault however the garden was the oldest example of the heterotopia.⁵⁶ „The totally different spaces“ – as he calls the heterotopias – are often „isolated from their surroundings“ or „totally marked off from the external world“.⁵⁷ These two fundamental qualities of a garden – otherness and demarcation – are only completely evident if its ideal landscape is completely set off from the urban structure of the city. Accor-

⁵⁴ Mann, Joseph in Ägypten (see note 4), 661.

⁵⁵ John Milton, *Paradise lost*, Book 4, Verses 179–212.

⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, *Die Heterotopien. Der utopische Körper*, Berlin 2017, 10f., 14f.

⁵⁷ Foucault, *Heterotopien* (see note 56), 11, 18.

dingly, this by now well known antagonism is equally present in Foucault's „pleasant fields of utopia“.⁵⁸

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Fig. 5: Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, Verzeichnis der Gemälde, Frankfurt/M. 1987, Fig. 27

Fig. 6: Hans Belting, Hieronymus Bosch. Garten der Lüste, München a.o. 2002, 10-12

Fig. 7: Wilhelm Fraenger, Hieronymus Bosch, Dresden/Basel 1991, Fig. 11.

Fig. 9: Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Die Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert. Visionen, Entwürfe, Gebautes, Vol. 1, Berlin 2010, 398.

58 Foucault, Heterotopien (see note 56), 9.

Inclusion and the Ideal Space

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Inclusion is essentially about building communities. If design is to be considered a tool for creating inclusion, architecture is a specific form of design. The aim is to design a space for the community in question, a space as a place for the members of that community. A real *anthropological place* (Marc Augé), a space of belonging, identity, and history. Such a space is an *ideal space* both in the sense of perfection, and of imagination.

To design new 'ideal' spaces for 'new' communities comes close to the sphere of utopia. The aim of every "good" utopia or eutopia is to enable communities to develop human qualities that can be considered positive. Design enables the creation of a physical environment in which these qualities may develop. The aim of inclusion by design is for eutopia, the *eu-topos* or good place, to become a realized space, a place to live, and to prosper.

Which types of architecture will suit which (conceived) types of human beings? This is the pivotal question underlying design. Traditionally, an eutopia is planned top-down, as a prefixed spatial and social matrix that is not meant to change. This traditional approach can be compared with a new bottom-up approach that enables future inhabitants to build their own environment, and thereby form a community.

Intro

If inclusion is about building communities, and if architecture – as a specific mode of design – aims to design spaces as places for communities, we are speaking about specific forms of architecture, together with their underlying assumptions. It is an architecture that aims to build an ideal space, 'ideal' in the sense of an imagined, utopian form of perfection, as a concrete *place* for communities, a place of inclusion.

This type of architecture has two dimensions to it: first and foremost, it is immaterial, the *social* architecture of a planned, 'perfect' social organization – the ultimate aim of achieving inclusion by design.

This aim is to be achieved by the second dimension of architecture, the material architecture of the built space. This type of architecture has two functions: on the one hand, it represents the social architecture behind it, as its symbolic expression. On the other hand, it is designed to influence human beings in a certain way, namely to become fully-included members of the respective utopian community. The ideal city was the epitome of this architecture of "inclusion by design." Its design was based on the central assumption that the cities' material *gestalt* does not only reflect the

functionality of a society and the behaviours of its citizens, but is also able to influence these behaviours.¹

It was searched for the 'ideal' architecture, in both social and physical terms, for an 'ideal' community, an architectural design that would enable the perfect or 'ideal' level of inclusion. We need to reconsider the pivotal question addressed above, 'which architectures for which human beings?' if we are to understand the assumptions underlying this type of architecture. The assumptions concern the inner nature of the human being, the *conditio humana*.² The utopian construction, both as social organization and physical architecture, focuses on assumed positive traits of that condition, which are to be fostered through the design of the respective utopia.

Many of these assumptions refer back to what is summarized under the term of *cultural memory*,³ a body of inherited ideas and concepts. These are part of a *Weltbild*, a world view made up of imaginations, or *ideas* in the literal sense – inner images.⁴ These imaginations help people make sense of the world around them, 'constructed by how people reason, interpret and know.'⁵ As Ernst Cassirer states, a *Weltbild* is equivalent to a cosmos of conceptions and imaginations.⁶ The notion of a *cosmos* implies some sort of order, that these conceptions and the 'imaginations', the inner images or ideas upon which these conceptions are based are not just a random conglomerate but form a system, an order.

Of course, these orders vary in time and are culture-specific, depending on the society in question. But independent of its variations, an order is essential for the creation of imagery about a *conditio humana*, the (assumed) general human condition and therefore, for the architectural design of 'good places' for 'good' communities. The community in question should embody a cosmos of its own, reflected and enhanced by concomitant, material architecture. When a 'good' place is designed, this order of assumptions becomes essential. Whilst architecture is informed by these assumptions, the assumptions are not normally made explicit, but embody an *unthought known*, the order of tacit knowledge on a semi- or subconscious level:⁷ We know without explicitly knowing that we know.

These assumptions determine which architectures, both social and material, are 'good' for a general human condition, or are best suited to improve it. Take for instance the modernist utopias of Le Corbusier and others, or the utopian green city-movements of today. The assumptions about a general *conditio humana* vary, as well as the intended goals of the respective architecture (which type of human condition is to be assisted/to be achieved); however, the underlying aim of these diverse attempts remains the same: to design an inclusive place for an 'ideal' community.

Utopian Design, Intervention, and History

Utopian designs that are developed to create inclusive places for communities have to be considered as part of the wider context of history; because by their very intention, they go against history. Because of this, the relation of utopian design towards history becomes ambivalent, even contradictory.

On the one hand, utopian design is an intervention: it tries to break free from history, in an attempt to deviate from the path it has followed thus far, which seems insufficient, if not dangerous – for the positive human condition, for nature, for the climate. The idea that we are endangered as a species and that the natural systems we are inevitably embedded within are going to collapse is a firm component in our unthought known, and has become an intrinsic part of our recent *Weltbild*. To avert the risk of

1 Eaton (2001): 11

2 Plessner (2003)

3 Assmann (1997): 52

4 To *idea* as an *eidos* or inner image: Eaton (2001): 11; Gemoll (1965): 252 (*eidos*), 383 (*idea*)

5 Naugle (2002): xix

6 Cassirer (1973): 19

7 Bollas (1987): 287f.

destruction, we need intervention: the 'world as it is' has to be changed, and we cannot remain in the status quo; this means the end of history as it was.

This is the core mission of utopia: utopia is not just a dream, literally an *ou-topos*, a nowhere-place, but to be realized, as a *concrete* utopia.⁸ Interventionist design, expressed as an architecture for communities, has to become reality, and not just to stay merely 'utopian'. It is about the *real utopia*, which is to be introduced into the stream of past and present as an intervention, as 'a place that really exists, that was transferred from the imagination into tangible, concrete reality.'⁹

There is an additional aspect to consider: an ideal state is an *end* state. The history to come, once the ideal state of utopia has been realized, will be a history of the ever same – free from upheaval, the unforeseen, and sudden turns towards deterioration. That is, strictly speaking: in utopia, there is no history at all. Paradise is free of surprises. An ideal design is static.

On the other hand, utopian interventions have their own history, in the way that they have designed real utopias again and again over time. The attempt to break with history inevitably generates a history of its own.

Moreover, many key images of utopia are anchored in cultural memory, that is, in history; this type of memory amounts to more than just tradition. It is inherited, and this is a crucial component of the sources of imagery that any utopian interventionist design relies on. In contrast to tradition, *heritage* implies an active element. One actively owns heritage, as it influences our mindsets and therefore our actions; for instance, those of utopian design. One can either refuse or accept what is inherited, or transform it into something new. Regardless of which option is chosen, it is not only an individual that owns heritage, but heritage also owns the individual¹⁰ – very often, as an unthought known that is rooted in myths.¹¹

Inclusions by Design

A myth is fundamentally an explanation of the world 'as it is', based on the genesis of the world in question. 'Like all origin stories, these narratives explain why we are on the Earth and how the world came to be. These stories tell us many things at the very foundation of our culture' (Greenblatt).¹² The myth of paradise is a crucial part of heritage in our Western culture.

Paradise in its Judaeo-Christian forms has to be accepted as the deepest archaeological layer of Western utopia, active in the unconscious of large segments of the population [...] testimony to the enduring power of religious belief to keep alive the strange longing for a state of man that once has been and will be again.¹³

According to the myth, if paradise was an original state of optimal inclusion, or the ideal space of Eden designed by God, which humans attempted to regain through utopian efforts and without godly assistance from the Enlightenment era onwards,¹⁴ paradise inevitably became an issue of the future. In the words of the poet John Milton, paradise is lost and can only be regained. The mythic conception of a paradise lost is deeply anchored in our Western Judaeo-Christian heritage, together with the belief that the human being is not a natural part of a natural world but is fact separated from it, forever distinct. Compared to the West, no other culture has made such a rigid distinction between nature and culture.¹⁵

On top of this, history gains direction, and meaning: from the first paradise, an artifact designed by God, to a second paradise at the end of all days, the Heavenly City

8 Mannheim (1929): 172. It is an irony of history that this was written shortly before the advent of the concrete utopia of a Third Reich.

9 Feuerstein (2008): 7

10 Willer et al. (2013): 8

11 Gehmann (2003)

12 Greenblatt (2017): 28

13 Manuel and Manuel (1997): 33

14 Vidler (2011): 170-173

15 Descola (2013): 107

designed by God. Between these two paradises, and after the first paradise had been abandoned, the history of civilization took shape.

It was a basic Western image of history, also supported by modern anthropology,¹⁶ and informing the longing for utopia.

The new cosmos was no longer Eden but became the city, and this new expression of culture departed from nature – in both mythological and real terms. The new cosmos promised a *civilized* life, a new *conditio humana* of life in civilization: as a *citizen*.¹⁷ The city became man's second nature, from its early beginnings to the asphalt jungles and growing urban agglomerations of today. The human being as the cultural animal (McLuhan) became a *zoon politikon* (Aristotle), an animal living in the city.¹⁸

The city, human histories' first inclusion by design on larger scale, proved to be an ambivalent achievement, and this must have been sensed right from the start of a civilized, urban way of life.¹⁹ It is reflected in the myth. Gilgamesh, the Sumerian founder of the first city, had a friend Enkidu, who was half-animal, a being still part of nature; but Enkidu died, and with him the connection to a natural world was lost.²⁰ Biblical Kain, the cursed one, was the founder of the first city, and his descendant Tubalkain, just like Prometheus, was able to transform naturally given materials into unnatural things, namely artifacts. According to Leroi-Gourhan, the myth of Prometheus reflects both a victory over the gods and an enchainment. The technician might be the master of civilization, but others rule, and the technician helps them to ensure that the artificial world triumphs over nature, for the next 50 centuries. This, he says, is the basis of all modern societies, from Sumer onwards.²¹ The Sumerian city was, according to Lewis Mumford, the first mega-machine in history. It consisted of people rather than mechanical parts, a machine of social organization that was, in principle, maintained until the present day.²²

The symbolic expression of this city-machine was a cosmic circle, an ideal form of inclusion by design. On a Mesopotamian bas-relief, the circle is divided by four equal lines into quadrants, containing symbolic expressions of human activities.²³ There were four, just like the rivers from the first paradise that had been left. In fact, it was a new cosmos.²⁴ The difference between the real city and the myth was minimal (Vercelloni), '[...] and the symbol of the city was at the same time the instrument for portraying the real city.'

Today, the majority of the world's population lives in urban agglomerations,²⁵ the second, and final nature in a so-called *anthropocene*, the era of man, the newest state in the history of the human being. The city has become an uncanny place²⁶ for large parts of its population, a literal utopia of another kind: an *ou-topos* for an existence that is truly human, in a positive sense, a non-place where humans cannot, or at least should not exist. The former cosmos turned into an urban jungle – marking the beginning of new utopias.

Searching for the Ideal Space of Inclusion

Paradise is lost. It can only be regained. Since the Renaissance, and with increasing erosion of a unified Christian *Weltbild*, it was felt that human beings needed to create their own paradises, rather than waiting for an unearthly Heavenly City to come at

¹⁶ Gowdy (2004): 258-260

¹⁷ The word 'civilization' recurs to the Latin *civitas*, denoting the formal as well as actual community of citizens: Summers (2003): 203

¹⁸ Baumeister (2005); Aureli (2011): 3-5, to the *zoon politikon*.

¹⁹ Leroi-Gourhan (1984): 226

²⁰ Schrott (2004)

²¹ Leroi-Gourhan (1984): 226, also to Kain, Tubalkain, and Prometheus; to Prometheus also: Gehmann (2004)

²² Mumford (1980): 219-221, 349

²³ Vercelloni (1994): 1

²⁴ Madanipour (2007): 11; Summers (2003): 203; Vercelloni (1994): 1

²⁵ BMZ (2023): 18138

²⁶ Vidler (1992)

the end of all days. After the *Illhas fantasticas* of the Renaissance discoverers and the last paradisiacal territories populated by the “natural primitives” of their Western explorers and ethnologists²⁷ had vanished, and modern Western technology combined with economic growth endangers the planet. The hope to find a ‘natural’ utopia already existing, a one not to be *designed*, has become obsolete.

Paradise will only be regained in the future if humans design an ideal space of inclusion, a place for an ideal community where the human inner nature (the *conditio humana*) and the outer nature of a ‘natural’ world are reconciled. This mythic hope, and longing for inclusion by designing the ideal space, was evident in 18th century concepts of a “green” Paris,²⁸ Ebenezer Howard, modern garden cities, Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia*, to the 1970’s and recent approaches to a green city. With some good will, says Piet Mondrian, a pioneer of modern art and architecture, it must be possible to create an earthly paradise.²⁹

In mythological terms, the common factor inherent to all these movements is a return to nature – the outer, ‘biological’ nature that belongs to a ‘natural’ environment – aligned with the mythic promise that humankind will no longer be separated from the rest of the natural world, but once again reunited, and included within it.

One option is to retreat from urban civilization and consequently return to nature, from Rousseau to diverse eco-communes of the past and present, from Frank Lloyd Wright’s retreat from the city³⁰ to climate protesters of the modern day. Common to all these moves away from a techno-civilization is the assumption that if we want to survive as human beings, we cannot retain the conditions of a destructive civilization, with its potential to damage nature and humans alike.

This option is brought to its point in William Morris’ *News from Nowhere* in the fin de siècle, a high tide of Western industrialization,³¹ and again in Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* in the 1970s, almost a century later – which means that the problem remained. Both cases can be considered paradigmatic examples of the mindset of a “back to nature”-movement, as described here. In both cases, capitalism, the driving force behind the modern city as an uncanny place, collapsed, together with its city. Mumford’s megamachine ceased to exist. In both examples, the new ideal space is decentralized, meaning that it is designed by the people of its communities; there is no longer a grand design for whole cities, no capitalistic growth and destruction but self-sustainment and ecological balance. This is epitomized by the utopian design presented by Callenbach, who explicitly refers to mythological figures: Kain, founder of the city, represents the *homo faber*, ‘the man who works and tames nature to materially construct a new artificial universe’, whereas Abel is connected with the *homo ludens*, ‘the man who plays and constructs an ephemeral system of relations between nature and life.’³²

This concept can serve as a blueprint for a new design of cultural, economic, and social contexts. Small self-sufficient communities live in unity with nature, having overcome the old design of inclusion: of a megamachine driven by technology, exact science, and a capitalist free market, and the descendent of the machine: the post-modernist city as an assemblage of diverse ‘heterotopias of consumption and illusion.’³³

Self-sufficiency, unity with nature, and decentralization are the principles underlying the design of the new ideal space of inclusion. The myth behind, a variant of the paradise myth, is to return to the *aetas aurea*, the golden age of a retro-utopia. In relation to the paradise myth, the future lies in the past, in the very beginning; and

27 Fink-Eitel (1994)

28 Vidler (2011): 30

29 Piet Mondrian cited in Warncke (2012): 174

30 Wright (1950)

31 Morris (2017)

32 Callenbach cited in Claeys (2011): 207

33 Shane (2013): 306f.

that past must become the future again. Nature is reconciled with human culture, after the downfall of the machine and its city.

A return to nature never lost its appeal; today, it has even become a necessity, both reflected and epitomized in the concept (and neo-myth) of the *green* city. Aligned with the mythic hope to become more human again, not only in terms of a better relationship with an outer nature, the endangered natural environment, but also in terms of a human inner nature. This kind of hope is inherent to one basic type of utopia, the so-called anarchist utopia: that it is 'natural' for the human being, i.e., that it belongs to its basic *conditio humana* to lead a life free from oppression, hierarchies, and organizational constraints. If these conditions are achieved, paradise will have been regained.

Designing the Ideal Space for Inclusion

The alternative to pursuing a decentralized 'anarchist' utopia is to design an ideal end state, and to do this according to a master plan. It is the so-called architect utopia, the standard type of utopian design: planned top-down, with a clear and prefixed social and material architectural order.³⁴ It is not just about physical space, but about an entire *state* of existence. And this state has to be *designed*, in its entirety as both a material and social space, a space of optimal, and hence ultimate inclusion. The common assumption underlying those 'architect' utopias was that of social unity, the very aim of inclusion, which could be achieved through architectural unity, both in terms of social organization ('social' architecture) and built space ('material' architecture). The coherence between social and architectural unity, evident in the design of built spaces, might explain the predominant rigidity of architectural expression. In the first explicit utopia of modern times, Thomas Morus' *Utopia*, all 54 cities were identical.³⁵

The symbolic epitome of this utopian end state is the ideal city, the *city of reason* as the designed ultimate inclusion. 'The source of a supreme order may have changed through millennia, but searching for the certainty of a higher order has not.'³⁶ The layout of utopian ideal cities presented an ideal space for a new *zoon politikon*, one which was tailored to the ideal "utopian" society that was yet to be achieved. The traditional architectural forms and functions of these cities were structured in a strict hierarchy, quite often in geometrical closure (star-shaped,³⁷ gridded, otherwise closed), appearing like cosmic mandalas. Geometrical rigidity was applied to the premodern forms of these cities in particular, but was not confined to them, as modern architectures such as by Ludwig Hilberseimer, Le Corbusier's Paris, Brasilia, or Auroville reveal.

The common idea underlying such designs was that architectural closure should express a perfect form of social inclusion, an inclusion adopted to an assumed basic *conditio humana*, and to foster 'positive' traits of a generalized human 'inner nature'. Referring back to the initial question of *which types of architecture for which human beings*, the social architectures of such designs varied from strict hierarchies to democratic approaches; but they shared one key idea: *colonization*, in its literal terms. Without etymology, architecture cannot be understood, according to the architect Gottfried Semper.³⁸ The term *culture* stems from the Latin *colere*, denoting a process of cultivating, of domestication, creating a space, a *habitat* in which one can live as a 'cultivated' being, a place of inclusion.³⁹ Through the process of colonization, not only the outer nature is domesticated, but also the inner nature of the human being, of the ones inhabiting the new place.

Domesticating the outer, but first and foremost the inner nature was the final intention of the architect utopia. The utopian aim is not a return to nature, but to incorporate it into culture. Such as the *Bosco Verticale*-building in recent Milan, or the modernist

34 Seng and Saage (2012): 11, to both types of utopia

35 Feuerstein (2008): 46

36 Madanipour (2007): 9

37 Fortifications from the 16th to 18th centuries are not considered here, because they served clear military purposes.

38 Semper cited in Portoghesi (2000): 118

39 Fisch (1992): 683-687; Lefebvre (2007): 259, to the notion of *habitat*.

garden city-, and the recent green city-movements. The modernist design conception was to place the buildings in an 'immense garden' (Emile Zola), such as the designs of the socialist, car-free *Industrial City* of Tony Garnier at the beginning of the 20th century, or Le Corbusier's capitalist new Paris.⁴⁰

Paradise is pre-planned, and a fixed end state of the future. Once that state has been reached, history and the world as we know it will end, very much in line with the Christian heritage of a Heavenly City. In this instance, the relevant world, that of the artificial paradise, became an ideal artifact,⁴¹ a perfect design for those included. And God, the *elegans architectus* of the medieval times, who created the world based on mathematics and geometry,⁴² had been replaced by the master plans of social and physical architects. The inhabitants of those designs, the ones that were to become domesticated, were not asked. With regard to the fundamental relationship between culture and nature (both outer and inner), the statement of a modernist utopia's designer is programmatic: 'In the beginning, and out of chaos, geometry preceded biology as a phenomenon of the universe.'⁴³

Alternative Designs

Through nature, no matter how it is designed, utopia is an island. It is an island of an assumed, better order that is separated from the proverbial rest of the world, an ideal Inner opposed to a non-ideal Outer. That Inner is the place of inclusion, it has to be an *anthropological place*, a place 'of identity, of relations and of history.' It is the place people want, and 'a principle of meaning for the people who live in it.'⁴⁴

The problem is that utopia cannot build such a place because it is a place without history: the ideal end state, yet to be built, is *new*, by its very conception. It has not evolved through historical growth, but has been designed *anew*, also to end history as it was. The only anthropological issue that needs to be solved is how to involve future inhabitants in the process of its design, which, in contrast to archist utopias, allows individuals to make their *own* place, their own island of the better.

The new paradise is built by its own inhabitants, and therefore, may have the opportunity to evolve; it does not have to stay as the untouchable, ideal end state that defines archist utopias.

An example is architect Jateen Lad's *Sharanam* project in India, where even under the most adverse starting conditions (unemployment, lack of skilled workers, mafia, drugs) future inhabitants were trained on the job to build their own community center, on the site of a former garbage dump. This project was all about giving hope, and as Lad says, about collective social aspiration. Those who were part of the project *wanted* to see it succeed, and two criteria for an anthropological place (a feeling of identity and belonging) were fulfilled, simply by being included in the making of this better place.

Unlike in traditional archist utopias, where the ideal construction was a format that could be placed anywhere, like the Roman military camp, the *castrum*, or like the bulk of recent city architecture, *Sharanam* is anchored in the identity of the place in which it was built. It is '[...] identifiable with that landscape, that locale, the soil, the very matter of that area, its people and their culture.'⁴⁵

The word *Sharanam* means *refuge* or *sanctuary* - from a life in the recent urban 'non-identifiable landscapes of placelessness' (J. Lad),⁴⁶ an *ou-topos* of another kind, a non-place for a truly human existence. It is the postmodernist version of Mumford's city machine in a globalized neoliberal economic context; an architecture 'of non-identity and fluidity' (Lad), but essentially the same. This is ultimately not fit for hu-

40 Zola cited in Vidler (2011): 255; Lampugnani (2017): 200, Le Corbusier; Tony Garnier: exhibition 'Ideal Spaces' (2016), Official website Ideal Spaces Working Group, n. pag.

41 Gehmann (2022)

42 Alain de Lille cited in Mâle (1994): 21

43 Jellicoe (1961): 23

44 Augé (1995): 52

45 Lad cited in Gehmann et al. (2021): 201

46 Lad cited in Gehmann et al. (2021): 201

mans. The story of Kain and Tubalkain repeats itself, on a higher technological level (for example, the 'smart city'), and on a global scale.

We cannot always be in a state of flux, changing our identity. We need anchors and stability to sustain certain meaningful values as well as our identities. It is for this reason that Sharanam was purposefully designed and built as an idealized sanctuary against the ever-changing conditions around it. This, we hope, will help the underlying ethos of empowerment, dignity, and beauty to endure.⁴⁷

Once again, it is a utopian island; but one of different kind. Perhaps, it is possible for these attempts to multiply, setting new ways of inclusion by design for the future.

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47 Lad cited in Gehmann et al. (2021): 201

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Making Skopéin

An autoethnographic report about the interplay between space and media art

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Art installations that engage in a dialogical relationship with their surrounding environment, transcending the confines of an isolated existence, demand a nuanced articulation of the dynamic interplay among the artwork, the spatial context, and the observer. The following report endeavors to delineate and investigate the central elements of reception and the aesthetic of production pivotal to the media art installation ‘Skopéin’, exhibited at the Evangelische Stadtkirche Karlsruhe during the late summer of 2022, through the lens of ethnographic introspection (‘autoethnography’). Given that the authors of this discourse are concurrently the creators of the aforementioned installation, the following text serves as an exploratory analysis into the fabrication process of a media art installation, employing anthropological methods.

Introduction

Engaging with space, especially in sacred contexts such as a church, requires a profound understanding of its historical, cultural, and artistic dimensions. In this chapter, we elaborate how spaces can be viewed not just as physical locations but as ‘living artworks’ that provoke a multitude of practices while also providing room for personal interpretation and reflection. We delve into concepts of historicity, the status quo, scope, and discrepancies, and how staging these aspects can create a space that functions as an affordance for a self-reflective narrative experience.

The architectural atmosphere of a church exemplifies how space can function as an (unfinished) artwork: Sacred spaces are not merely venues for worship or religious practice but also profound attempts to translate ‘the metaphysical’—an immeasurable and inarticulable entity—into a form and format perceivable by the senses. This transformation should not be seen as an isomorphic translation but rather as a metaphorical affordance to every subject interacting with the space, to evoke the ineffable within themselves through a specific practice of reception.

These introductory thoughts lead us to the research subject to be discussed here: the protestant city church in Karlsruhe (‘Evangelische Stadtkirche Karlsruhe’, Germany), whose architecture and atmosphere were utilized for the media art installation ‘Skopéin’ by Michael Johansson (SWE) and Andreas Siess (GER). The church itself was constructed by Friedrich Weinbrenner from 1807 to 1816,¹ therefore it is embedded—in regard to its cultural as well as aesthetic properties—in the epoch of

1 Schumann 2005, p. 247.

German Romanticism, although its architectural design language can be considered neoclassical.²



Fig. 1: *The exterior of the church.*

Nonetheless, key ideas of this time period provide the context to revisit the transformation of the incommensurable, an aspect also aesthetically explored around 1800, where the uncanny and the sublime—two emotions of incommensurable nature—were examined from various perspectives.

Given these premises, it is obvious that an art installation in a sacred space must create an ‘atmosphere’ that avoids providing final answers but rather fosters a place conducive to reflection and personal interpretation. Michel de Certeau’s distinction between place and space is particularly pertinent here, viewing space as a place that is acted upon, a transformation facilitated by narratives, stories, and mythologies.³ The choice of the term ‘atmosphere’ is deliberate, referencing both the “atmosphere of architecture”⁴ and the philosophy of the lived body according to Hermann Schmitz.⁵ However, it is important to emphasize that Schmitz perceives the atmosphere of the individual body as a sensory impression that is not tied to any specific sense(s).⁶ As we will demonstrate later, this concept of atmosphere does not align with the initial intentions of the church’s architect Weinbrenner, nor does it match the ambition pursued in the media art installation *Skopéin*.

METHOD

This paper endeavors to navigate the intricate conundrum inherent in the praxeological study of art. It posits that the genesis of artistic endeavors frequently shrouds itself in opacity, eluding comprehensive dissection through conventional methodologies such as observation and the like.⁷ The processes underpinning the creation of art remain enigmatic, often veiled in a realm beyond the reach of standard analytical tools. Even techniques employed by cultural anthropology, such as participant observation, encounter their limitations here, as they fail to penetrate the artist’s inner sanctum, instead lingering on the periphery of observable phenomena. In light of these challenges, we, the creators behind the installation *Skopéin* in Karlsruhe, propose to embark on an introspective journey. Our aim is to pioneer a form of ‘autoethnogra-

² Weinbrenner himself writes that he had the architecture of Greek temples in mind, when he designed the church’s facade. Original quote from *Bemerkungen des Baumeisters zur Kritik eines Miniatur-Mahlers über einige baukünstlerische Gegenstände*: “Bei den hiesigen Lutherischen [...] Kirchen habe ich zwar [...] die alten länglichten Tempel oder Basiliken [...] im Auge gehabt” (Weinbrenner 1817, p. 14).

³ Certeau 2015, pp. 343–344.

⁴ Böhme 2006.

⁵ Schmitz 2016.

⁶ See Schmitz (2016), p. 11 and Hahn 2008, p. 150.

⁷ This phenomenon is also part of the perceived ‘crisis of representation’ in ethnographic research that was examined since the late 1980ies (Clifford 1988).

phy⁸ that straddles the domains of diaristic reflection, camera-based ethnography, and self-scrutiny. This endeavor seeks to meticulously document the contemplations, operational steps, and underlying rationales that culminated in the creation of *Skopéin*. Through this self-reflective narrative, we aspire to illuminate the nebulous pathways of artistic creation, offering a unique vantage point that transcends the superficiality of traditional observational techniques. By delving into the introspective dimensions of artistic practice, this paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on the epistemology of art, challenging the boundaries of how artistic processes are understood and articulated within academic spheres.

Contours of the installation

Skopéin is part of a larger complex implemented by the artist collective *Ideal Spaces Working Group* within the church, centering around the concept of the 'Holy Jerusalem' as its core theme. To visitors, *Skopéin* appears as an immersive ceiling projection set 19 meters high, covering an area of approximately 4 x 4 meters. The projection is executed using a high-lumen cinema projector, inconspicuously placed on the church's first gallery. At first glance, *Skopéin* resembles a fractal, endlessly unfolding kaleidoscope, which, through animation, creates a strong upward pull. However, it is later explained why the metaphor of a kaleidoscope is aesthetically problematic and fails to fully capture the installation's ambition, concept, and scope.

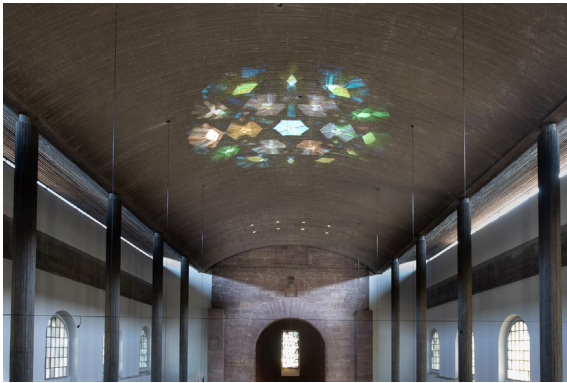


Fig. 2: *Skopéin* projected on the ceiling.

THEME AND CONCEPT

Building on the overarching theme of the 'Heavenly Jerusalem', our installation also explores the motif of the celestial city, interpreting the 'Heavenly Jerusalem' as an extension of the attempt to translate an immeasurable ideal into a subjectively conceivable image.

The architecture of the protestant church in Karlsruhe features several unique characteristics: as mentioned, its façade is neoclassical, inspired by the classical ideal of an ancient Greek temple. However, the building conceived by Weinbrenner was largely destroyed by a bomb during World War II and was rebuilt in the 1950s. While the exterior was reconstructed according to Weinbrenner's original design, the interior was redesigned under the direction of Horst Linde, who opted not to restore it to its

8 Weir and Clarke 2018, p. 127; Butz and Besino 2009.

original state but instead rebuilt the interior architecture and furniture in a (semi-) brutalist and post-modern style.⁹



Fig. 3: Stark contrast between the exterior and interior of the church.

This unusual combination of styles results in a stark contrast between Weinbrenner's Neoclassicism and Linde's Brutalism. This dualism is not only considered in the conceived installation but also seeks to mediate between these two contrasting styles. Given the intricate entanglement of two diametrically opposed styles, our intention is not merely to reflect this juxtaposition within our installation, but also to interpret the artwork as an 'interface'—or a mediator—between these contrasts. Specifically, this means that the installation assimilates the visual morphology of the interior space, while its aesthetic functional principle is grounded in ideals that were established around the year 1800. These are, consequently, notions that find resonance within the church's historical architecture—i.e. the façade's 'pattern language'¹⁰—of Weinbrenner.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ON-SITE PLANNING

Despite the considerable distance we had to travel, an on-site visit about two months before the opening of the exhibition proved to be crucial for any further planning endeavors. On the one hand this visit allowed us to assess the technical conditions (such as: measuring the interior using a laser rangefinder, assess the required equipment, local infrastructure, etc.) but also to get a firsthand sense of the space's atmosphere.

This visit also sparked the central idea behind our installation: the church's ceiling, with its slightly concave arch shape and plain, uniform design, seemed like a sealed, finite form. We aimed to break through this 'lid' by projecting onto the ceiling, effectively creating a 'window' upwards to reveal 'the beyond', quite literally pointing the way to heaven. This notion resonates with the aspirations harbored by Horst Linde, the architect responsible for the interior's refurbishment in the 1950ies. To illustrate, it has been documented that the design of the interior was meticulously conceived with the express purpose of facilitating the ingress of skylight from above ('letting the sky into the building').¹¹ Indeed, our installation plays and cites the motif of a 'celestial pathway', representing constant movement and unfolding that not only generates

⁹ Kappel 2004, p. 254.

¹⁰ Alexander 1977.

¹¹ Cf. Kappel 2004, p. 254.

the previously mentioned upward pull but also illustrates the individual's continuous effort needed to embark on this journey.

As mentioned earlier, it was important to us that the visual language of the installation complements the interior's aesthetics: *Skopéin* was not to be an alien element within the church space but rather to extend the metaphor and metaphoricity of the church's architecture. Speaking from a technical standpoint the homogeneous surface of the ceiling and its neutral gray color make it an excellent projection surface, with the concave shape adding a sense of dimensionality. In planning and conceptualizing *Skopéin*, we produced numerous photographs, sketches, on-site and off-site tests, and simulations, which led to *Skopéin's* final form through an extensive (design) process.¹²

AESTHETICS AND SEMIOTICS

As previously discussed, the church's interior adopts a unique aesthetic language, a hybrid of late Bauhaus/post-modern style and Brutalism, softened by colorful accents in numerous details. During our visit, the distinct color climates of the church's 1950s windows caught our attention, prompting us to incorporate this chromaticity into *Skopéin*.

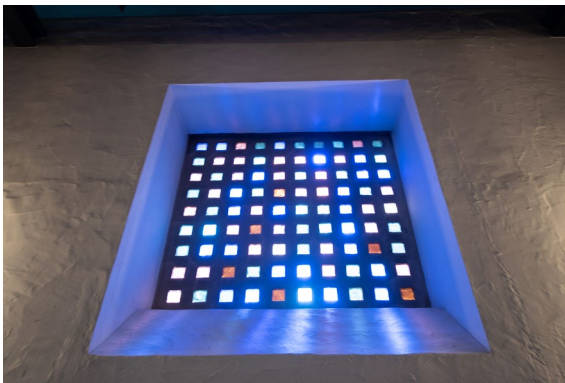


Fig. 4: The color scheme of the windows.

Moreover, the building's morphology draws on mid-20th-century cybernetic models, showcasing its mathematical construction without hiding it behind ornaments, but rather staging and externalizing it. The rough, untreated surfaces of the exposed concrete, where the grain of the formwork is still visible, the unadorned furniture reduced to pure functionality, and the clear, sharp lines of German post-war modernism create a stark contrast to the neoclassical exterior as well as a quirky atmosphere marked by contradictions and contrasts: the building 'unfolds' in a way that, despite the Brutalist interior, the architecture seemingly feels familiar and 'human'. However, these experiences can only be made by being physically present and 'feeling' the atmospheres, in the words of Hermann Schmitz.¹³

With *Skopéin*, we aimed to implement a similar visual language, so visitors would not perceive an alien object in 'their' church but rather interpret the installation as a 'catalyst' that enhances and augments the present atmosphere.

For this reason, we also wish to discuss *Skopéin* in the context of its semiotic characteristics: Given the overarching theme of the exhibition being 'the Heavenly Jerusalem', a place that cannot be visually represented but only described through metaphors, *Skopéin* plays with these properties of incommensurability. Hence, our installation is not meant to be decoded isomorphically but rather reinterpreted in each individual act of reception. As a consequence, the outcome is not a singular significance emanating from the artwork, but rather a multiplicity of interpretations that are augmented with each act of reception. This phenomenon (i.e. the plurality of

¹² We further elaborate on a more precise differentiation between iterative and parallel design processes in the sections below.

¹³ Schmitz (2016), p. 11.

meanings) is not perceived as a shortfall, but rather as an essential component of the artwork's functioning principle. This interpretation is neither new nor revolutionary but deliberately draws on the aesthetics of Romantic literature at the beginning of the 19th century. By combining the 1950s church interior's visual language with the functioning principle of Romantic poetics, we create an intertwining of two opposites, analogous to the dual characteristic of the church's architecture itself.

We consciously adopt the functioning principle of Romantic literature, even though the installation has a visual character. Since in the 1800s the imagination—the main domain where 'meaning' is constructed—was interpreted as a distinct visual phenomenon, we do not see this media discrepancy as a deficit to be resolved but deliberately play with the typically Romantic motif of the substitutability of media. In a Romantic interpretation, text is concretized into images, while images, in turn, possess qualities that can be construed as text (and as texture).

Therefore, as *Skopéin* features a 'readable' mediality, it must also be discussed in the context of a semiotic principle. As Juri Lotman noted, for the reception of a work's secondary encoding, a subject requires "ignorance (or rather: incomplete knowledge) of the secondary code used",¹⁴ which, as Umberto Eco outlined, consists of fragments of a preceding code.¹⁵ In the case of *Skopéin*, we interpret the design language ('morphology') of the church's interior as a preceding code in Eco's sense, leading to a type of ambivalence in the perceiving subject: This ambivalence between incomplete knowledge and the fundamental need for decryption leads visitors to assume significance, or to use Lotman's terminology, 'contentfulness'¹⁶ in all elements of expression. In *Skopéin*, this significance is particularly located in the indeterminacies, encouraging visitors not to ignore these voids but to understand them as affordances to resolve the uncertainty with their imagination.¹⁷ Thus, *Skopéin* strives not to be a finite installation nor a final answer but rather to offer an invitation to concretize the 'Heavenly Jerusalem' in the imaginary and therefore to continue writing the story/myth of the heavenly paradise. To achieve this balance between familiarity and alienation as well as between concreteness and indeterminateness *Skopéin* adopts the morphology (i.e. the aesthetic design language) of the church space as a familiar semiotic system to refer to the aforementioned unfamiliar 'beyond'.

EXCURSUS: THE AESTHETICS OF RECEPTION IN GERMAN ROMANTICISM

At this juncture, it is pertinent to revisit the profound interconnection between Romanticism and *Skopéin*: Around 1804, Jean Paul remarked that subjective imagination is not characterized by its (medial) form but rather by its potential to set a framework.¹⁸ Specifically, this implies that romantic poetry and aesthetics, while employing the 'appearance' of established—and therefore familiar—forms, interpret them as 'hieroglyphic script' pointing towards 'something else'.¹⁹ This 'other' is an incommensurable entity, that remains inarticulable since the 'thoughts' that emerge in the imagination of each perceiving subject possess no distinct mediality. Michel Foucault notably identifies Romanticism as a realm of imagination, distinguished by its potency from its predecessors.²⁰ The link between Romanticism and *Skopéin* is found both in the historical construction narrative of the church architecture—i.e. the exhibition space—and in our own processual engagement with Romantic ideals. As already outlined Romantic aesthetics particularly address a plurality of meanings²¹ to realize the ideal of an infinite artwork that always strives to an unattainable ideal that can never

14 Original quote: "Unkenntnis (genauer: die unvollständige Kenntnis) des dabei verwendeten sekundären Codes" (Lotman 1981, p. 129).

15 Eco 2002, p. 310.

16 Lotman 1981, p. 129.

17 Cf. Ryan 2016, p. 33; Iser 1994, p. 228.

18 Jean Paul 1804, p. 69.

19 Matt 1971, p. 22.

20 Foucault 2008, p. 121.

21 Antor 2016, p. 621.

be consummated (known as the 'approximation principle').²² Around 1800, this infinite strive could be achieved through two approaches: one where the artwork exists solely in the mind, in the imaginary, making the 'physical' (i.e. the present) artwork, merely the initial fragmentary and incomplete affordance that unfolds into a plurality of meanings with each individual act of reception. Alternatively, this unfolding could also be conceptualized towards a mechanistic aesthetic, a motif also explored in Romanticism. In this context, it is apt to argue with Leibniz, who posited that God, as the 'supreme engineer', inscribes laws of change into monads, constructing a sort of Cartesian 'world machine' that algorithmically executes the virtual laws of change like clockwork.²³ This machine thus creates a mathematically constructed infinity, which, however, can be traced back to a concrete formula, a 'calculus'.²⁴ Leibniz documented this thought around 1714, so the artists of Romanticism (around 1800) can be credited with questioning this mechanistic view of the world and human nature. We will briefly illustrate this idea using the concept of the human as machine: While a lot of artists of Romanticism assume a mechanical foundation in each individual as well,²⁵ they attribute a central quality to the subject that tames this inner machine: Prudence. The prudent individual separates its self from the (mechanical) inner realm²⁶ and thus can, in a meta- or introspective manner, observe its instinctual (i.e. its mechanical) self and intervene in, modify, alienate, and redirect its processes. Therefore, the sensible individual acts not as a remote controlled automaton but rather as a self-determined subject. Hence, for the *Skopéin* project, it is likewise essential to implement a mechanical foundation, which, akin to the Romantic ideal, does not function 'automatically' but relies on the intervention and interaction (i.e. the 'prudence') of an individual artist. Therefore we created this device acting as the aforementioned mechanical foundation and named it the '*Wandering Landscape Machine*'.

The aesthetics of production: Making Skopéin

ABOUT THE ARTWORK ITSELF

At its core, *Skopéin* is a film sequence created using 3D tools such as *Modo* and *Blender*, featuring an algorithmically generated and animated object placed within a special environment. A (virtual) camera captures this animation in a central perspective, resembling a progressive unfolding.

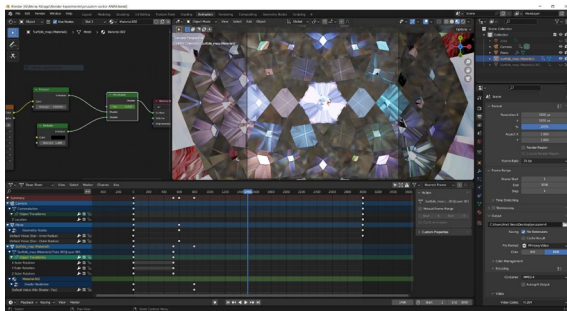


Fig. 5: Screenshot of the animation in Blender.

The surrounding environment, never visible in itself but reflected on the object's surface, presents a cascade of multiple reflections, creating a faceted and refracted aesthetic that invokes classic Romantic motifs of mirrors and crystals.²⁷ The created object features a physically impossible, perfectly reflective surface, making it appear

²² Novalis 1901, p. 527.

²³ Leibniz 1847, p. 50.

²⁴ Schleiermacher 1838, p. 14.

²⁵ Cf. La Mettrie 1875, p. 25.

²⁶ Hoffmann 1810, column 633.

²⁷ Cf. Novalis 1901, p. 33; Hoffmann 2006, p. 229.

largely transparent,²⁸ characterized by its disappearance and the modification/distortion of its environment, thereby highlighting the significance of this 'environment'.

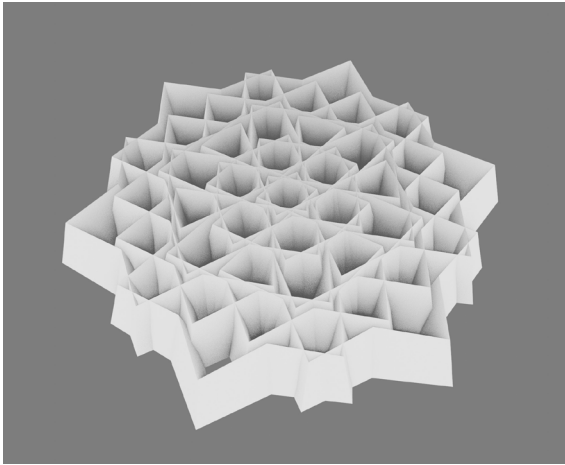


Fig. 6: Standstill image of the untextured object without its surrounding.

Ontologically, this environment consists of a 'cave', formed by a specifically designed polygon mesh (topology). The shape of this polygon mesh was not generated through generative methods, such as noise generators, but by the aforementioned *Landscape Wandering Machine*.

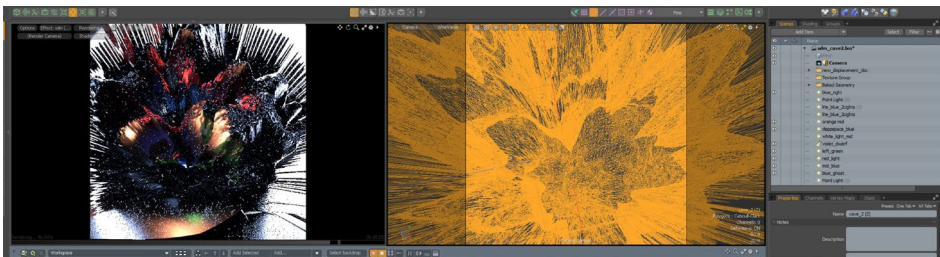


Fig. 7a: Polygon mesh ('topography') of the 'cave', generated with the Landscape Wandering machine (screenshot).

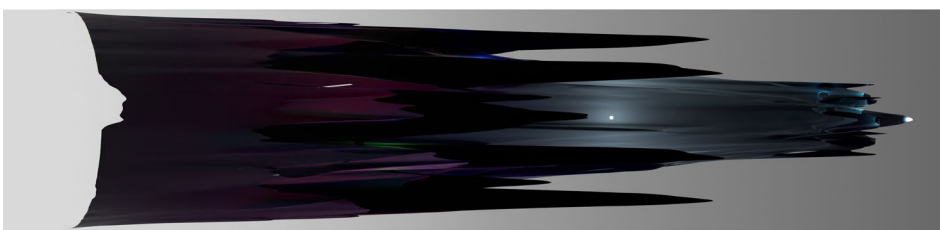


Fig. 7b: Cross-section of the cave.

The operational specifics and conceptual foundations of this 'machine', which serves as both an implicit machine providing a framework for creative processes affecting certain interaction paradigms and practices, and as a 'real' machine in the literal sense, have been elaborated in our paper "*New patterns of prototyping*"²⁹. In short, this machine attempts to translate the Romantic metaphor of imagination as a machine into an actual artifact. Its core comprises shadow images evoked by specific configurations, employing the metaphor of the shadow image by Romantic authors to conceptualize individual memory. Since these shadow images are meant to gain

²⁸ Bolter and Grusin 2002, p. 23.

²⁹ Johansson and Siess 2023.

plasticity, color, and vibrancy in the Romantic vision, they are to be *transformed*: in its aesthetics as well as in its mediacy. Medial transformations, e.g. the conversion of an image into text, are always accompanied by estrangements, disturbances, and incommensurabilities, which in modern perspective is considered a central flaw.³⁰ Conversely, the Romantics perceive these medial losses as a pivotal source of indeterminacies, which in turn play a prominent role in the functioning of Romantic aesthetics.

Thus, we constructed a machine that generates shadow images, intentionally using silhouettes of 'real' objects as shadow casters.



Fig. 8: *The physical Wandering Landscape Machine.*

We utilize the morphology—Jean Paul would say 'form'³¹—of 'real reality' to point to 'something else', semiotically separating the sign from its referent.³² Within our machine, silhouettes emerge, inherently devoid of chromaticity, vivacity, or dimensionality. Aligning with the romantic ideal, which posits that memories preserved within these shadow images necessitate a particular mode of reception and articulation to imbue them with color, depth, and vitality, it is imperative that these silhouettes from our machine also undergo transformation into a new medial form, one markedly more enriched than the initial silhouette itself. While the Romantics understood this plasticity (as well as the *concept* of 'the machine') metaphorically, we interpret this ideal literally, employing the *displacement* functionality of our 3D tools. This process displaces the vertices of a polygon mesh along the vertical axis, depending on the darkness of the corresponding pixel on the displacement map (i.e. our shadow image), creating a three-dimensional topography from a two-dimensional shadow image.

We placed variously colored light sources within this topography, distributing them according to our preference, deliberately breaking the mechanistic/algorithmic characteristic of our production process by contrasting the material's inherent nature with our own idiosyncrasy³³ and prudency. This process creates an 'interesting' en-

30 Shannon and Weaver 1964.

31 Jean Paul 1804, p. 69.

32 Cf. Montandon 1979; Kittler 1995; Kremer 2003, p. 198.

33 We refer here to the concept of 'Eigensinn' and 'Eigensinnigkeit' (i.e. wilfulness and idiosyncrasy) as outlined by Schiesser (2003, pp. 371–372). See also Schiesser 2008, p. 112.

vironment within the polygonal cave, oscillating between algorithmic and analog (human?) aesthetics.

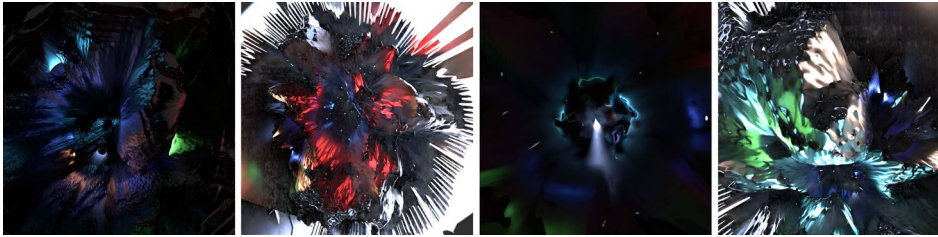


Fig. 9: Images from the inside of the cave with different placed light sources.

Within this created ‘cave’, we placed the generatively created object, which, in addition to unfolding, slowly moved along its longitudinal axis through the environment, reflecting different facets and details of its surrounding.

The ‘cave’ can thus be conceptualized as a ‘landscape’, representing a symbiotic connection between two opposing entities: culture on one hand and nature on the other.³⁴ The aspect of ‘nature’ is located in the entropy of the *Landscape Wandering Machine*, while the ‘cultural’ aspect resides in the manual intervention of the artists. This nature, created by a machine or a *Machina mundi*, echoes motifs found in the mechanistic worldview of Descartes or La Mettrie.³⁵ However, this adoption is not a claim of ownership but rather a ‘play’ with these popular ideas around 1800. We identify a ‘cultivated nature’ where, in Leibniz’s terms, laws of change have been inscribed, unfolding successively.³⁶ At first glance, *Skopéin*’s aesthetics, visual language and functionality may remind one of a kaleidoscope, a comparison we as artists reject. The reason for this rejection is echoed in a quote from a famous German Romanticist, who wrote about the kaleidoscope that “The smallest, most ordinary, miserable, trivial thoughts need only be thrown in, to be properly shaken and stirred, to form the strangest images.”³⁷ This is why so much attention was given to the creation of the environment in which the unfolding object was placed: to prevent the multiplication of arbitrary and ultimately inconsequential images, devoid of history and meaning. In the development of *Skopéin*, we intentionally intervened in the algorithmic process, a practice we refer to as ‘artistic intervention’, with the aim of disrupting the emergent symmetry and introducing an ‘organic’/‘humanist’ element. This deliberate incursion was executed through the use of digital masking techniques, which obfuscated segments of the algorithmically generated imagery. Concurrently, in a manner akin to a digital collage, other elements were integrated into the resultant voids. Therefore, although *Skopéin* presents an appearance of symmetry, a closer inspection reveals its asymmetrical nature. By embedding ‘disruptive elements’—a phenomenon that can be interpreted in alignment with Brecht’s concept of estrangement/alienation—within the otherwise perfect images, we engender points of friction where visually engaging phenomena can unfold.³⁸

Despite these interventions, *Skopéin* retains its overarching *Gestalt*—while individual elements are unique in their own right, collectively, they compose a form that trans-

34 Ruf and Siess 2023, pp. 254–255.

35 La Mettrie 1875, pp. 24–26.

36 Leibniz 1847, p. 50.

37 Original quote: “Sollte ein munterer Kopf von Mechanikus nicht leichtlich ein Kaleidoskop für preßhafte Dichter zu erfinden vermögen? Die kleinsten, ordinairsten, miserabelsten, läppischsten Gedanken dürften nur hineingeworfen werden, um sich, gehörig gerüttelt und geschüttelt, zu den sonderbarsten Bildern zu fügen.” (Hoffmann 1839, pp. 12–13) [Translation: Could not a lively-minded mechanic easily invent a kaleidoscope for beleaguered poets? The smallest, most commonplace, most miserable, most trivial thoughts need only be thrown in, to, when properly shaken and stirred, arrange themselves into the most peculiar images.]

38 We conceptualize *Skopéin* as an interface, a conduit of translation through which visitors are afforded a glimpse into an alternate reality—accessed via their imagination into their own realm of the imaginary—by engaging with a reflection of it through *Skopéin*. The imaginary, as highlighted not only by the Romantics around the 1800s (cf. Caduff 2003, p. 153) but also by contemporary research, resides within the incommensurable, eluding direct

cends the sum of its parts. In this regard, *Skopéin* serves as a metaphor for community, which, though superficially appearing as a homogeneous and unified whole, is in fact a composite of numerous individuals who disrupt this symmetry. This conceptual underpinning not only highlights the tension between uniformity and individuality but also reflects the dynamic interplay between algorithmic precision and human creativity.

FORMS AND FORMATS OF CO-WORKING: ITERATIVE VS. PARALLEL

As it has become evident, *Skopéin* emerged from the collaboration between two artists, each based in different countries/locations. This setup prompts an inquiry into the modalities of such a partnership, which, apart from a brief preliminary on-site visit (referenced in a previous chapter), unfolded entirely via digital means. Our experience has illuminated that the creation of such an art piece, intertwining multiple media techniques and formats and distinguished by its experimental nature, is optimally facilitated through a design methodology characterized by iterative and parallel processes. The iterative approach proved particularly efficacious due to the unique conception of the artwork: Unlike conventional design tasks where the final product is largely predetermined, *Skopéin* was defined only by the framework of the installation, with the actual final product—the installation itself—evolving from this process. A fundamental divergence lies in the fact that traditional design tasks typically separate conception from production, whereas our approach intertwined them through continuous iteration. In other words, we regarded the conceptual elements such as inspiration and ideation as so central to our artistic process that they were integrated into all creative activities, including production.

In addition to this iterative process, a second characteristic emerged in our approach, describable as 'parallel design'. The geographical separation necessitated working in isolation on various ideas, concepts, or implementations for the most part—a trait often observed among artists. To maintain the collaborative spirit, we instituted weekly online meetings where we would present, discuss, and interlace the previous week's work. A significant advantage was that all of *Skopéin's* means of production were available in digital format (such as 3D models, movies, renderings, sketches etc.), enabling us to exchange and evolve them bilaterally by challenging the machine and software logic and our limits and conventions, to produce something that is both unexpected and valuable, and in the end, will point out possible new directions.

Nonetheless, we did not wish to forsake the tactile experience of analog artistic experiments in *Skopéin*, as exemplified by the *Landscape Wandering Machine*. For this reason, we extensively utilized 3D printing technology, allowing us to create a physical version of this 'machine' that mirrors its 'digital twin'.

Both design methodologies demonstrated their specific strengths in our practice: While iterative design excels at sequentially refining an idea, parallel working is conducive to simultaneously exploring multiple concepts. Ultimately, both methods are instrumental in the creative process, yet they function optimally in tandem, balanced sensibly. Designers and artists, therefore, must cultivate an intuition for when to ex-

articulation or verbalization, it can only be grasped through its reflections. Thus, *Skopéin* should be regarded as a 'medium', and in the parlance of Marshall McLuhan, it is a 'cool medium' characterized by its referential nature (cf. McLuhan 1994, p. 22–23). Analogous to the shadow images in Plato's Cave, which present a sensory-deprived reflection of the world, *Skopéin* too was made out of shadow images and should be interpreted as a shadow image. Its reception is not predicated on isomorphic decryption but rather on a self-reflective introspection. This conceptual framework positions *Skopéin* not merely as a passive recipient of sensory impressions but as an active participant in the construction of meaning, inviting viewers to navigate the interstice between the tangible and the intangible, the seen and the unseen, thereby enriching the interpretive process through a personal engagement with the imaginary.

plore a field of ideas (parallel working) and when to exploit a specific idea (iterative working).³⁹

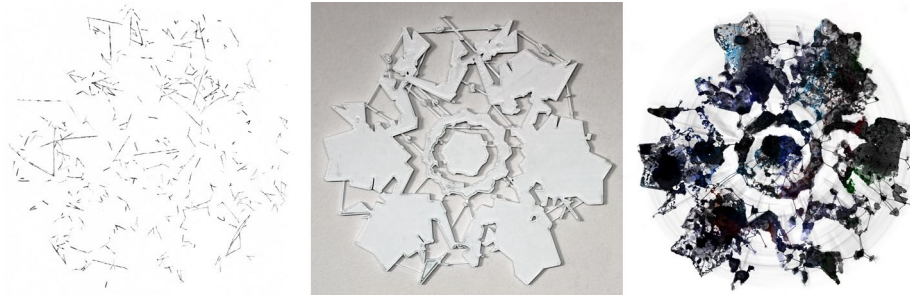


Fig. 10: Example of parallel work and further developments by exploring the possibilities of the *Landscape Wandering Machine: Experiments with the silhouettes, 3D printing and water color.*

The aesthetics of reception: Staging Skopéin

While, as previously mentioned, Leibniz described a scenario where God inscribes laws of change into monads that then unfold 'like a clockwork',⁴⁰ *Skopéin's* engagement with these motifs is complementary. Once again, it is essential to refer to the Romantic concept of a 'universal artwork' that forms exclusively within the individual reception process and remains situated in the imaginary. Consequently, recipients are endowed with a role of 'extended authorship',⁴¹ implying that an artwork, regardless of its medial form, is never complete but always requires interaction with its viewer. The subject thus transcends, in the words of Novalis, "not in actu but potentia",⁴² into the *creator* of their own reality. Recipients thus become 'extended artists' themselves—an aspect we particularly wish to highlight in *Skopéin*. The installation can only function if visitors see themselves in this role and interact with the artwork accordingly. In designing *Skopéin*, we developed a model for creative processes named the *Knowledge Horizon Model*.⁴³ The model became a cumulative way forward for recording and sharing our explorative and transformative processes, thereby illuminating our path in our endeavors.⁴⁴

In essence, we argue that creative processes invariably involve a 'leap into the unknown' to look 'beyond the horizon' of what has been done and experienced. This leap into the unknown is necessary not only for us as the initial artists of the installation but also for the 'extended artists' (i.e. the visitors of the exhibition/church).

Therefore, a specific staging is required that affects this 'leap into the unknown' through certain interaction paradigms. More precisely, the staging affects a particular practice of interaction with the installation, which in turn facilitates a specific mode of perception. In 'conventional' settings, different types of museum visitors were identified, exploring an exhibition space in distinct patterns.⁴⁵ However, since *Skopéin* was not shown in the context of a museum but functions within and with the church space, these concepts of museum visitors, who perceive the architecture of the museum as mere infrastructure, do not apply. Instead, architectural theory suggests that "the primary focus of spatial design lays not on a product, but on behavior. Not architecture [...] is at the center of architectural theory, but the human

³⁹ Johansson and Siess 2023.

⁴⁰ Leibniz 1847, p. 50.

⁴¹ Novalis 1901, p. 34.

⁴² Novalis 1901, p. 25. (Note: this quote was translated from German to English.)

⁴³ We described this idea in detail in our article "New patterns of prototyping: developing concepts with playful exploration and probing. A case study within arts and design." (Johansson and Siess 2023).

⁴⁴ cf. Boden 2003.

⁴⁵ Sookhanaphibarn and Thawonmas 2009; Kim and Lee 2016.

behavior that relates to architecture.⁴⁶ Every subject thus has a specific practice and preference in their interaction with architecture and thus with the installation *Skopéin*. Therefore, we find the *Audience Funnel* a more suitable concept for designing interaction practices with the installation. In a previous paper we discussed an extension of the *Audience Funnel* for staging media art exhibits which proved to be also beneficial for the *Skopéin* project.⁴⁷ In short the *Audience Funnel* differentiates between five different states of interaction, ranging from the non-involved visitor to voice-driven interaction.

In conceptualizing *Skopéin*, we placed great importance on not affecting the church's function as a space of tranquility and contemplation, as well as a site for Christian services. *Skopéin* was intended to be perceived as an 'extension' of the church. Since the projection took place 19 meters high on the church ceiling, it was well beyond the typical field of view⁴⁸ of a church visitor.

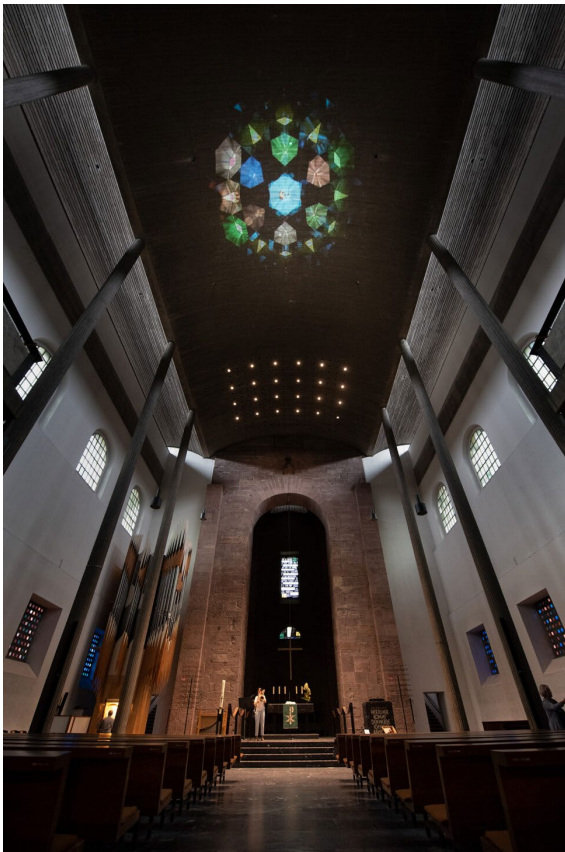


Fig. 11: *Skopéin* within the context of the church.

Having deliberately refrained from using sound to not disturb the church's atmosphere, consequently the installation lacked an omnidirectional mediality to draw visitors' attention. Therefore this conception of *Skopéin* was a calculated risk we took: between an attention-seeking, visually and audibly 'loud' installation that would need to be switched off for services and devotions, and a subtle and restrained installation, we opted for a concept that highlights its subtle characteristics, even at the risk that the installation—despite its large projection area of about 16 square meters—might not be noticed by every visitor. This led to the phenomenon that *Skopéin* could be 'discovered' by individual visitors, as if by chance. These spontaneous discoveries then led to visitors pointing upwards with deictic gestures, thus drawing other visitors' attention to the installation. Using the phraseology of the *Audience Funnel*,

46 Hahn 2008, p. 30. (Note: this quote was translated from German to English.)

47 Siess, Hepperle, Wölfel and Johansson 2019; Hepperle, Siess and Wölfel 2019

48 Kim and Lee 2016.

it can be noted that these interaction practices established an ‘organic’ conversion from formerly “uninvolved visitors” to “voyeurs”,⁴⁹ who in turn pointed other visitors to the exhibition.

By venturing into the comparatively high risk of implementing a rather unobtrusive installation within the space of a church, which, in the worst case, might have remained entirely unnoticed by visitors, we concurrently created the opportunity for individuals who typically do not engage with media art to encounter and interact with the installation. Once again it is important to acknowledge the profound influence that specific spaces—and particularly their *atmospheres*—exert on shaping and structuring the interaction practices⁵⁰ of visitors. Although Skopéin was conceptualized as an art exhibition, visitors primarily continued to perceive their experience as one of visiting a church, thereby allowing them to persist in their customary daily practices without the need to acclimate to the potentially unfamiliar atmosphere of a museum. Through this approach, we significantly lowered the barrier for potential target groups who might not typically resonate with the ambiance of a museum, thereby granting them access to a museum-like experience within a familiar setting.

This finding is particularly salient against the backdrop of the exhibition being showcased during the ‘Assembly of the World Council of Churches’, an event that draws thousands of visitors from across the globe and from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. However, a common thread among these visitors is their familiarity with attending church. For this reason, it is paramount from our perspective to not disrupt this familiar practice but rather, as previously mentioned, to enrich or augment the church visit with a media art installation.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that practices within the space cannot also be subtly modified, provided that the standard customary practice is not rendered impossible. Specifically, Skopéin took place outside the typical field of view of a human. Thus, engaging with the installation required a prolonged gaze towards the ceiling of the church, a posture that becomes uncomfortable over time. Consequently, we observed that many visitors chose to lie flat on the church pews to fully experience the projection. This practice markedly diverges from the typical interaction patterns within the church space, yet it does not interfere with the usual daily practices such as devotion, prayer, sitting, etc. Simultaneously, the act of lying down itself becomes a deictic gesture, leading other previously uninvolved visitors to direct their gaze upwards and thus engage with the installation.



Fig. 12: Visitors lying on the church pews, experiencing Skopéin.

Further work

The next steps in iterating, developing and experimenting with *Skopéin* involve its transposition into the realm of Virtual Reality (VR). Primarily, we plan recreating the church visitor’s experience within a VR environment, thereby translating *Skopéin* into a virtual architectural space. Preliminary experiments have underscored the pivotal role of structural elements, particularly the columns sustaining the roof of the urban church, in shaping perceptual experience. These columns, by directing the gaze upwards, craft central perspective vanishing lines, enhancing and substantiating the immersive ‘pull’ of the installation. Since *Skopéin*, is inherently a two-dimensional film,

⁴⁹ Siess, Hepperle, Wölfel and Johansson 2019, p. 63.

⁵⁰ Cf. Certeau 2015.

it derives its essence from spatial context, rendering it incongruent to confine it solely within a medium celebrated for its three-dimensionality. Hence, the importance of reconstructing this spatial context within the virtual domain.

Additionally, the church's dual galleries facilitate a layered depth arrangement, enriching the three-dimensional experience in VR. Observations revealed a preference among many visitors for positions within the church that incorporated the galleries into their peripheral vision, thereby introducing a fascinating depth leveling through differential parallax, a feature replicable and potentially enriching in VR that we want to investigate.⁵¹

This VR experiment serves as a conduit to further scrutinize the symbiosis and inter-connectedness between artwork and spatiality, a connection deemed quintessential for *Skopéin*. Given the ease of modifying spatial topographies in VR, it also facilitates an exploration into the spatial or infrastructural constraints that may be pivotal in the art-making and creative process for media art installations.

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51 Contrary to our deliberate omission of an audio layer in the Stadtkirche Karlsruhe to preserve the intrinsic character and dynamics of the space (i.e. its 'atmosphere'), the VR adaptation will be augmented with a bespoke audio track. For its creation, we revert to employing the *Wandering Landscape Machine*, similar to our approach for the visual elements of *Skopéin*. However, in this instance, the machine's shadow projections are not visually interpreted but converted into MIDI control signals to operate a hardware synthesizer.

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