arq (2017), **21.3**, 255–264. © Cambridge University Press 2018

This article employs Jacques Rancière's ideas of the 'sensible' and 'aesthetic revolution' to refashion the concept of the 'everyday' for a new departure in design thinking.

Reconstructing the 'everyday' for a political aesthetic in design

Jianfei Zhu

Henri Lefebvre is today one of the most prominent figures who has promoted the idea of the everyday in social theory. Despite his important contribution, however, Lefebvre does not represent all voices or exhaust all possibilities of working or reworking the notion for analysis and action. In this regard, Jacques Rancière is working on interactions of politics and aesthetics, and on a new 'aesthetic regime of art'. This regime, which has emerged since the early nineteenth century and is still with us, and where a new horizontal visibility on the anonymous and the everyday is constructed, provides important and alternative perspectives from which a reconstruction may be attempted. This article provides a sketch of some initial ideas that may lead to such a reconstruction.[1] In it, Lefebvre's ideas are summarised and connected back to a history of studies on the everyday. A longer history of a perspective on the anonymous and the ordinary, back into the nineteenth century, as studied by Rancière, is also identified. Rancière's theory concerning politics and aesthetics, and the new perspective of the 'aesthetic regime', are introduced. Following that, a few key observations are made on Walter Benjamin, Marxist cultural critique, modern architecture, and situations of the non-Western world as in China. Synthesising these, the article concludes with a proposal, for a new political architecture of the everyday: that is, a political aesthetic for design in architecture, with a horizontal visibility on the everyday.

Henri Lefebvre: the everyday as a category for social critique

Lefebvre has developed the everyday, or the quotidian – everyday life in its totality in the past and present – as an important category to further Marxist critique of capitalism in a new era from the 1940s onwards.[2] While Marx had worked on alienation in capitalism with a series of key categories such as class, labour, production, economic basis, and historical materialism in the nineteenth century, Lefebvre aimed to continue the critique of alienation in a new twentieth-century era, especially after the Second World War. In this era, new modes and conditions, such as leisure, consumption, advertising, media, mass culture, urban space, and the increasing domination of systems and rationalisation, were becoming important. For Lefebvre, the everyday was now a new category that we should elevate and employ to further the critique that Marx had started.[3]

The everyday, according to Lefebvre, reveals contradictions.[4] It appears non-philosophical, yet remains an object of philosophical reflection. It is repetitive, yet also transitory and mutating; monotonous, yet punctuated with breaks of festivals and unexpected arrivals of surprises; controlled and limited by social systems of power, yet has potentials and is open to the unknown, the unexpected and apparently the borderless, limitless and infinite; the everyday may be inhuman in modern societies yet it constantly reveals what is human in us.

According to Lefebvre, everyday life went through changes, both during and after industrialisation.[5] While everyday life was saturated with 'forms', 'functions', and 'structures' framed in elaborate styles with rich meanings and values in the past, in the modern word, after industrialisation, the style of richness is replaced by rationalised systems where forms, functions, and structures are named, studied, and controlled in scientific, technological, commercial, and bureaucratic frameworks. The systems impose passivity on the population in mass culture, in private life and in workplace (on the population in general and especially on certain groups such as women, youth, and racial minorities).[6] However, everyday life, itself a totality with open potentials, cannot not be fully controlled or dominated by the systems; in this totality, there are moments (festivals, creative actions, personal times, imaginative practices, lateral or accidental associations, unexpected links and results) that lead to open-ended possibilities – a deep and vast reserve of unknown potency in life that can and should be explored for progressive and liberating transformations.[7] In summary, Lefebvre's 'everyday life', as a category in social theory, has three aspects: it is methodological,

doi: 10.1017/S1359135517000458

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press

critical, and projective. It can be employed for analysis on social conditions of the population; it is used for a humanistic critique of modernity and industrial capitalism; and it also projects a perspective in which openings and potentials can be found and employed for transformations into a better society.

Other studies on aspects of the everyday

Although Lefebvre used the everyday as a category, he is not alone in observing everyday conditions to reflect upon and critique society. One could argue that, in any modern sense, Walter Benjamin should be regarded as one of the earliest to deliver a close reading of the everyday.[8] His 'Arcades Project' of the 1930s, borrowing from Charles Baudelaire, observed everyday Paris – men, women, objects, shops, mirrors, laneways, streets, arcades, commodities, human relations, and historical events – in order to decipher the metropolis, capitalism, and modernity. In the 1960s, Roland Barthes adopted a similar – though much less political – observation on the culture of the everyday, including fashion, advertising, café culture, photography, scripts and texts, places and objects (especially in France and Japan), for a study of culture as language or as semiotic systems.[9] In Michel Foucault's writings (1960s and 1970s), especially on 'heterotopia', an observation is cast upon daily or mundane 'spaces' such as boarding schools, honeymoon trains, elderly peoples' houses, clinics, barracks, graveyards, zoos, museums, libraries, holiday villages, as well as 'colonies, ships and brothels' – a study from which we gain a lot on everyday spaces as deep, layered, complex, and self-contradictory.[10] In Michel de Certeau's writings of the 1980s, an observation is made upon the 'practice of the everyday' in which the anonymous, the silent majority, already caught in a network of disciplinary control, use tactics and ruses for a 'second production' and a network of 'anti-disciplines' – a vast resistance and reappropriation with unknown potentials within the top-down systems or disciplinary networks.[11]

In other words, although Lefebvre has promoted the concept of the everyday as a singular category in social theory, he is by no means the only one who has closely observed the everyday or commonplace for a serious reading or analysis. In fact, Lefebvre is part of a European critical tradition in social theory that has observed the workings of the everyday since the early twentieth century, which, in another observation, is part of an even longer development. According to Rancière, the critical, social, and historical studies on the ordinary and the everyday originated from a perspective initiated in the early nineteenth century.[12] It was a new observation upon the anonymous and the ordinary that emerged in literature and then in fine art, in the realist novels and the realist paintings that depicted the minute details of ordinary people in their daily life, for deciphering a larger social change or a general human condition. This led to a revolution in art and in aesthetic and sensorial outlook. It brought about a flattening of the hierarchy of subject matters to be presented in art and of the artistic genres and types, as well as a blurring of the divisions between means of expression and between art and the world.[13] For Rancière, this horizontal view and observation also migrated to scholarly endeavours such as new historical research that shifted its focus from wars and major events to daily and material life and a slower socioeconomic transformation. It also migrated, according to Rancière, to sociology and, more importantly, to the Marxist cultural critique, including the work of Benjamin, upon daily life, urban culture, and commodification as traces of the workings of the capital.[14]

In this reading, Lefebvre is connected back to Benjamin, and further back to a longer and larger historical transformation concerning a new perspective – a horizontal visibility – that emerged in the nineteenth century. Rancière appears to be more comprehensive in coverage and more innovative in conception and methodology. For this reason, we need to study Rancière further.

Rancière: the distribution of the sensible and aesthetic revolution

Rancière argues that politics and aesthetics are intrinsically interrelated, in a 'distribution of the sensible'.[15] For him, any social community, with its divisions and hierarchies, is organised on *a priori* perception of space and time, of the visible and the audible, of the acceptable and the unacceptable, of what is 'naturally' right or not. In other words, any political system involves a perceptive basis – in its sensorial and subjective aspects – and therefore an implicit and explicit aesthetic articulation. In other words, based on a Kantian *a priori*, a distribution of the sensible (also as the partition of the sensible or *le partage du sensible* in French) determines a division of parts and a certain sharing of parts, in a sensible and a material and social reality, at a given time and place. In other words, a distribution of the sensible has political and aesthetic dimensions intrinsically. This is different from the notions of 'aestheticisation of politics' or 'politicised art', as Benjamin raised in the 1930s, where politics and aesthetics are considered as separate entities that may act on each other.[16]

Within a political study, Rancière refers to any existing distribution of a social community that assigns everyone in the population a title and a position, and provides the community with a hierarchy and a structure of divisions (inside and outside, high and low), as 'police' or 'police order'.[17] Any attempt to challenge this order, with an aim to open up and equalise any distribution of this order via the process of a human subject in action, claiming to disagree and manifesting the disagreement, is called 'politics'. With a universal axiom on equality (that we are all equal), politics is enacted by human subjects as an external 'supplementary' part to the police count of the parts; as an 'uncounted', they aim to 'identify the count of the uncounted with the whole of the community'. Politics, which aims for equality, is only

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press



1

1 The Gleaners, by Jean-Francois Millet, 1857.

2 Bull's Head, by Pablo Picasso, 1942.



2

a transitory and provisional accident in the history of domination; politics, in other words, is to be renewed and reconstructed in a new time and place.

For a study on art in the European tradition, Rancière claims that there are three distributions or regimes: an ethical regime of image, a representational regime of art, and an aesthetic regime of art.[18] In the first, images are used for ethical and social purpose, and are not used for a mimetic end, following the advice of Plato. In the second, breaking away from the previous tradition, pictorial work obtains its own position as a mimetic or representational art. It has a hierarchical division between different subject matters, between genres of art, and between high art and low, or non-art. The third regime, the aesthetic regime of art, breaks away from the second tradition; and the key characteristics is the awakening of an aesthetic sense and the discovery of the beautiful in everything, everywhere: the hierarchy and the division of the previous regime are now being broken down, and a 'horizontal' visibility is established, to cast on the anonymous and the common, or the everyday. Rancière says that the three regimes are there in all times and can overlap in one work, yet they do dominate in a certain historical moment. If the first and the second were predominant in the Classical age and the Renaissance, respectively, then the third regime, an aesthetic regime, came into being as a dominant practice in the early nineteenth century, as clearly manifested in the realistic novel (Balzac, Hugo, and Dickens) and then in the realist oil painting (Millet, Courbet, and Repin) *[1]*. As a regime, it was mutating thereafter and is still with us today.

For our current study on the everyday for a political project in design in architecture, Rancière's aesthetic regime of art is especially important. In an overall historical mutation, the rise of the aesthetic regime of art correlated with a parallel social transformation towards the ideas of openness and equality. The political struggles for democracy and openness had a mutually interactive relationship with the cultural and aesthetic efforts to observe a new world of the beautiful found everywhere: that is, in the ordinary and the anonymous that were previously regarded as unworthy or uninteresting

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for art or artistic presentation. So, the main breakthrough is a flattening of the hierarchy and a blurring of the division, so that an expansive and a horizontal perspective is now formed on anyone and anything, breaking down the vertical order in art, culture, and the social structure of earlier times.

Two issues need to be noted and briefly studied. Firstly, the regime centres on a 'visibility' or a 'gaze': one that is now conferred to the ordinary and the commonplace, in a flat or horizontal observation spreading to infinity, and that is manifest in many fields from art to scholarship.[19] It occurred in the realistic novel and oil painting of the nineteenth century. It also occurred in modern paintings and artworks of the twentieth century where, although self-awareness of forms and mediums was more prominent, the concern was still 'realist' in that the artwork was still a thing, a form and an expression of a social, material reality.[20] Picasso's *Bull's Head* (1942), for example, is still an assemblage of forms of things of daily life – parts of a bicycle *[2]*. The modern in art therefore is not about abstraction against realism and representation: modern art of the early twentieth century was still part of the overall aesthetic realism initiated in the previous century (compare Figures 1 and 2) *[1, 2]*. The same can be said for architecture – an issue discussed below. In spreading the observation, the horizontal visibility also migrated to other fields such as the Annales School in historiography, and in the Marxist critique of society and culture, where, in both cases, an intense gaze or visibility was conferred upon the things of daily life in a social setting from which analysis or critique may be developed.

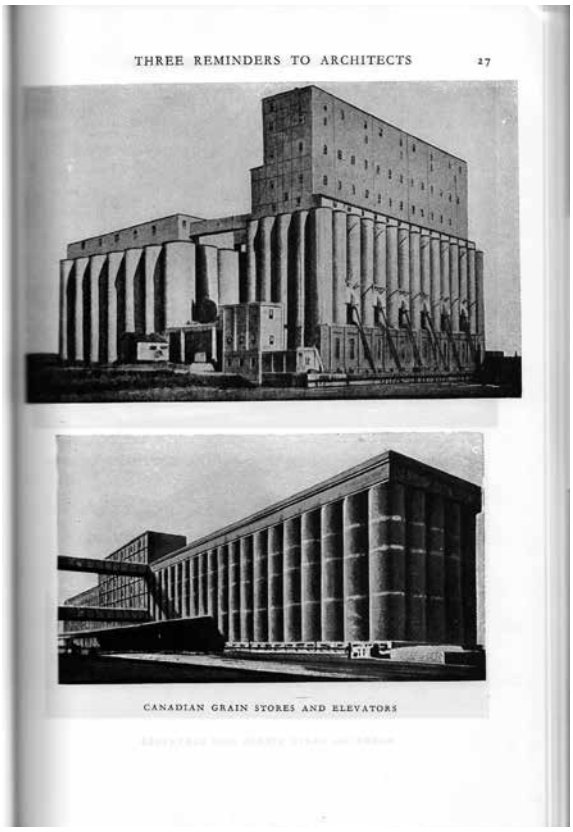
Secondly, in the aesthetic regime of art where, with an aesthetic sense awakened, and when the beautiful is found in anyone and in anything, and where hierarchy and division are being eroded in art and between art and life, the threat is that art will disappear.[21] The central contradiction of the aesthetic regime is that the moment art ceases to represent a noble narrative of the world and assumes its singularity as an aesthetic work expressing anything in life, it is about to disappear into life or the world, where everything is art. The task therefore is to retain a central condition between art and its disappearance into life. To do this in the aesthetic regime – that is to retain art as an aesthetic form of life without being life itself – is to retain autonomy *and* heteronomy in artworks, as found in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (from Millet to Picasso) *[1, 2]*.[22] Art in this sense is a 'form of life' or an 'autonomous form of life', which is both abstracted as art and yet referential to or dependent on qualities or conditions of life. Rancière describes these efforts or projects as reassertions of a 'heterogeneous sensible' for autonomy and heteronomy, form and life, to be retained together.[23] In this context, Rancière studied the efforts of design in architecture, and elevated concepts of 'type' and of 'symbol' in the practice of design as a heterogeneous synthesis where aesthetic form, instrumental function, industrial production, pragmatic function, social condition, and a spirit of time are integrated as a heterogeneous whole.[24] Whether it was William Morris or the apparent opposite Peter Behrens of *Werkbund*, the underlying principle of synthesis of art and life remained. But a reading on the Modern Movement, using Rancière's ideas and conceptions, should be further developed.

Discussion: Benjamin, Marxist critique, modern architecture, and China

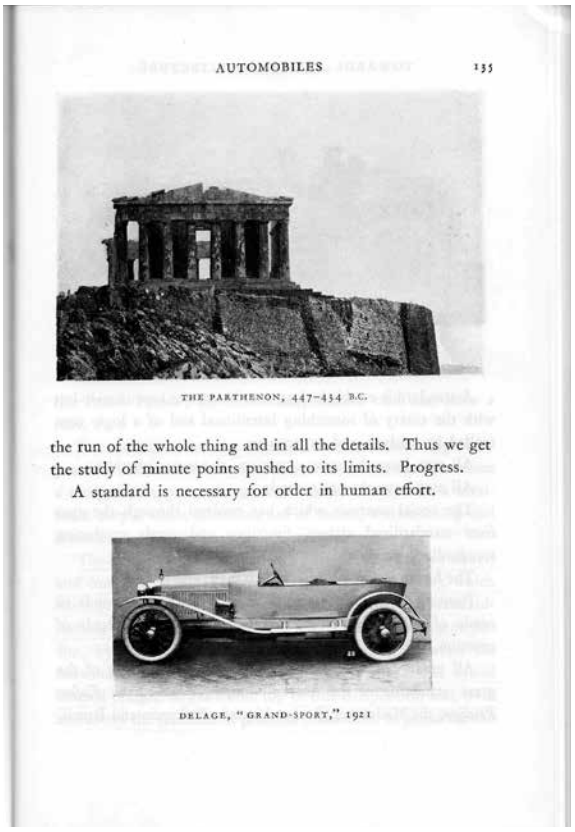
With Rancière's key ideas outlined above, we can now formulate some issues for discussion. The first concerns Walter Benjamin.[25] While Rancière acknowledges Benjamin's observation as part of the new aesthetic regime, or at least a migration of that into social theory, he is also critical of Benjamin's 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' (1935). According to Rancière, Benjamin's identification of a breakthrough of a new art form in photography and cinema, in which the masses came forward as a new subject, is misleading. In reality, according to Rancière, it was a new visibility conferred upon the anonymous in society, which happened earlier, in early nineteenth-century painting and fine art, which turned the masses into a new subject in art and conditioned the possibility for photography and cinema to be considered an art form. The aesthetic regime of art, conferring a new visibility on the ordinary in the social, since the nineteenth century, is a more basic transformation that Benjamin had failed to identify. Furthermore, Benjamin's ideas of art and politics are also conventional, which prompted him to discuss 'aestheticisation of politics' and 'politicised art'.[26]

The second concerns the Marxist critique of commodity. On the one hand, Rancière acknowledges the critical school as an incidence in which that visibility on the anonymous and the everyday is enacted. On the other hand, he maintains a reservation with the Marxist critical tradition.[27] Apart from his overall ambivalence concerning Marxism and one of its key figures, Louis Althusser – a topic to be discussed elsewhere – Rancière's reservation on the critical school, such as Guy Debord's 'spectacle', is that, in turning artworks, articles, and entities into a capitalist commodity or manifestation of commodification for a capitalist domination, the Marxist critical gaze is static, freezing on a moment, without taking into account a flow of use and reuse that has innovative and political potentials. For Rancière, the critical gaze is a 'disenchanted' one, which leads the critique into an exercise of endless labelling and denouncing the domination, and a verbal rehearsal for revolution with no substance, when the observation is fixated on the entity being a commodity, ignoring an ongoing process of reappropriation and re-enchantment.[28] This perhaps should be read not as a critique of the critical thinking in its entirety, but as a warning for us about the problems of a highly reproduced formula of the critical school. It should serve as a call for an open, dynamic, and long view concerning the life of artworks and artefacts.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press



3



4

3 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* published 1923, p. 27.

4 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, p. 135.

The third issue concerns design in architecture. How to employ Rancière's ideas to study and reinterpret modernism and the Modern Movement in architecture remains a large and important project, given that Rancière has adopted a long and deep perspective on aesthetics and politics, and especially the aesthetic regime that displaces and challenges the common and basic concepts of 'modernism' and 'modernity' in art and architecture as anti-mimetic and anti-realist abstraction and formalism.[29] Though a proper study on this should be done elsewhere, some initial points can be made here. In his study of design in modern architecture, Rancière considers the efforts in the Arts and Crafts and in Bauhaus, though quite different from each other, as incidents in which products designed by William Morris, Adolf Loos or Peter Behrens, as artworks, act as strong cases in which 'art' and 'life', that is, pure forms and practical considerations of 'life' (function, structure, technology, standardisation, spirit of the time) are integrated, to assure an important 'heterogeneous sense', and to maintain the artwork as a 'form of life'.[30] In maintaining autonomy *and* heteronomy, these designed works resisted the fall into an entropy of death or disappearance when the work becomes a pure art or a complete socio-functional existence.

Another reading of the modern in architecture should be added here. If we follow Rancière and identify modern architecture as part of the aesthetic regime of art with a horizontal visibility against ancient hierarchies (political, cultural, and artistic), then we can say that the modern, as in Le Corbusier and in Bauhaus, is not about abstraction and autonomy of form, but a heterogeneous 'realism'.[31] The new architecture of the time had not only synthesised pure form and practical dynamics in society, technology and a historical spirit, but also absorbed a wide and horizontal world of references where the anonymous and the common, as well as the noble and the dignified, were placed together in a new visibility that eroded the old hierarchy of styles and dignity of the superior (Gothic for the Church and Classical for the Aristocracy, for example). The flat and simultaneous reference to warehouses, vernacular structures, mills and factories, cars and aeroplanes, ocean liners and classical architecture in Le Corbusier, as well as a matching between architecture, furniture, machine, crafts and graphics in Bauhaus, all demonstrate that this is indeed a 'realism' or a heterogeneous whole where modern architecture is not about form or abstraction, but an 'abstract form of life' *[3, 4]*.

Rancière also says that a revolution or a progressive political effort claiming equality is always a provisional act in the history of domination.[32] If this is the case, then the progressive thrust in architectural modernism is perhaps also a temporary situation in need of revival or reconstruction. This echoes Tafuri's analysis of modern architecture as progressive to a point before it retreated, in the hands of many architects and academics, into an internal and autonomous formal game in the last few decades of the twentieth century.[33] In Rancière's reading, this – modern

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press

architecture retreating to its own formal game – would be regarded a modern artwork attaining full autonomy and losing its heterogeneous sense, reaching a point where art dies or disappears when art becomes pure art. In a brief historical reading of what happened after the Second World War, we can say that the progressive thrust was picked up by other efforts, as found in Postmodernism, in participatory design, in critical regionalism, in the technology- and environment-driven attempts, in a neo-modern approach where figuration and abstraction are combined, and in some engagements with and from the non-Western world.

The fourth issue concerns the non-Western world, and specifically China. Rancière's overall theory addresses any condition regardless of a specific location or cultural tradition. His identification of the three regimes and especially its last one, however, is based on his reading of the tradition in Europe and the West. In my reading, the overall conceptual scheme linking politics and aesthetics, as well as his concepts of 'police' and 'politics' are universal. Rancière's three regimes of art can also find their echoes in the Chinese art tradition, where ethical, representational, and aesthetic modes of art can be identified. The proportional weight of these three are, however, different in China, and the mimetic in European painting is much more intense than in China. Another mode or regime – of immersive enactment – when writing (as scripting) and painting (as action) includes an embodied participation of the subject, seems to be more important in China than in the West. Whatever the case, an early modern 'aesthetic regime of art' can be found with a horizontal visibility upon the anonymous in a secular society and culture, and with certain progressive thrusts at certain moments up until the present.

The same as in Europe, this also started in realist novels in China, of the late imperial time (Lanling Xiaoxiao Sheng's *Golden Lotus* of 1610, Pu Songling's *Strange Stories* of 1740, and Cao Xueqin's *The Dream of the Red Chambers* of 1784), and of the Republican period of the early twentieth century with a more Westernised notion of authorship, literary realism, and social critique (Lu Xun's *Madman's Diary* of 1918, Mao Dun's *Midnight* of 1933, and Ba Jin's *The Torrents Trilogy* of 1933–40). In painting, it is found in the similarly Westernised realist art of the same period (Feng Zikai's comic sketches of 1920s–40s, and Xu Beihong's Chinese and Western-style oil paintings, both depicting the ordinary people). The realist novel of the 1930s was also related to a rising leftist and communist movement, and the visibility upon and of the anonymous – peasants, workers, and commoners – also migrated into the communist ideology of Mao's revolution, when it was 'political'. A fresh and challenging visibility of the ordinary, with full vitality, appeared in China in a new medium in the post-Mao era of the 1990s and 2000s: the cinematic works of the so-called fifth and sixth generation of film directors: Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) and Jia Zhangke's *Still Life* (2006), in a melodramatic and documentarian approach, respectively. In the 1990s and after, experimental design works in architecture became a new venue where such a horizontal visibility on the ordinary and the everyday is found. Primary examples would include the works from Yung Ho Chang, Jiakun Liu, and Urbanus (Hui Wang, Yan Meng, and Xiaodu Liu): Book-Bike-Store (1996), Hu Huishan Memorial (2008), Xicun Bid-Yard (2015), and Tulou Housing (2008) demonstrated in different ways a fresh and horizontal visibility on the anonymous and the ordinary with implicit social and political reflections where, with abstraction and reference to life and society, they acted as an 'abstract form of life'.[34]

Synthesis: notes for a political aesthetic in design

If we adopt Rancière's reading and theorisation, which both includes and departs from the Marxist-critical observation on the everyday in a longer and larger framework, then a new architecture of the everyday, based on the political and progressive potentials of the aesthetic regime of art, can be sketched. At the level of principle, it should include a fourfold definition. First, as a political project aiming at questioning and challenging the police order, its efficacy or relevance is provisional in a certain context and at certain historical moment; what is effective in one context is not necessarily so in another, and therefore any political or revolutionary approach or mode may have to be reconstructed in another time and place. Second, in the basic outlook or epistemology for a design approach, it aspires to the universal claim of equality and is against the logic of hierarchy and division in any sense of the word. By disagreeing and disturbing a certain distribution of the sensible of the parts of a community, it aims to count the uncounted for a sensible, social, and symbolic whole. Third, to retain the efficacy of architecture, the approach has to resist the state of pure art form and pure socio-material reality as the two faces of death or entropy of art or architecture. In other words, it has to retain a synthesis of autonomy *and* heteronomy. Fourth, it has to include and intermix, to retain a crucial heterogeneity, to ensure that the design is not entirely art, not entirely form, and not entirely 'architecture', and that it always actively includes something else.

Based on these rules, four interrelated pieces of advice can be suggested here: First, this new approach would abandon the idea of autonomy as this leads to the death or disappearance of an effective art or architecture; and it also abandons a critique of commodification of art and architecture and the associated use of autonomy or an autonomous design position, as this critical position negatively identifies commodification as a frozen spectacle, rather than a dynamic flow of potential reuse and re-enchantment. Instead, this new approach would actively engage, and embed itself in an open and dynamic process in which form, technology, function, social aspiration and even market force, can be interrelated to maintain an active heterogeneity. Second, architecture should

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press



5



6



7



8

be considered or conceived as a 'form of life' or an autonomous form of life, where, to maintain this vital heterogeneity, it has to include art and non-art, and art and life, that is, form, program, instrumentality, production, social function, historical spirit, and collective aspiration together – the point here is not about being correct and

5 The Kunsthal (view at entry), Rotterdam, 2006.

6 The Kunsthal (view to the tower), Rotterdam, 2006.

7 Book-Bike-Store by Atelier FCJZ, Beijing, 1996.

8 Book-Bike-Store (view from inside) by Atelier FCJZ, Beijing, 1996.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press

comprehensive, but being multiple and multi-focal. Third, this new approach should adopt a visibility that is inclusive and horizontal, in the sense of having an open and inclusive view that breaks into and breaks down any exclusive divisions and hierarchies between, for example, 'architecture' and 'building', abstraction and figuration, form and ornament, noble and ignoble, 'high' and 'low', fine art and applied art, art and instrument. Fourth, this new approach would place emphasis on inclusion and participation in programming and the related formal design. It should be an architecture that provides a 'count of the uncounted', for the 'part that has no part' in a certain existing order, and identify the count to a material, social, and spiritual whole. Participation here can be actual in a design process or mediated and designed for the product in totality.[35] In either case, the aim is to include all parts and voices with the aspiration of equality.

If we examine Rem Koolhaas's Kunsthal museum in Rotterdam (completed in 1992), we will discover a deliberate heterogeneity or hybridity between abstract modernism and expressive realism where pure forms coexist with figurative ornament, colourful surfaces, and bold lettering and signage; the use of materials is also 'messy' or heterogeneous where the expensive and the cheap coexist *[5, 6]*. His Villa dall' Ava in Paris (completed in 1991) reveals more clearly this 'heterogeneous sense'. In medium-sized and larger projects, the compositional language also includes a deliberate mixture of modernist reason (purity) and contemporary 'unreason' (complexity) where the column grid is violated and enriched, and the grounds and floors fold up and down.[36] In design theorisation, Koolhaas also aims to break down abstract formalism to incorporate function and development; his affirmative openness to the messy 'congested' urban condition (New York) and the modernisation of the non-Western world (Singapore, China, Africa, the Middle East) is nothing less than a challenge to a certain elitism, or the 'hierarchy' and 'division' of the 'distribution of the sensible', in the institution of architectural theory across the Atlantic, at least in the 1990s and 2000s.[37] This is not a place to study Rem Koolhaas, nor can one reach a unified conclusion on all his ideas and works (including the much-debated CCTV of Beijing). Yet I argue that there is a certain stream in Koolhaas's thinking and design practice that is clearly about the 'heterogeneous sense', the 'autonomy *plus* heteronomy', the inclusive and horizontal visibility, that brings about a certain political thrust, at a certain time and place.

Recent practice in China also reveals interesting incidents that are pointing towards a political and progressive heterogeneity based on a horizontal visibility on the ordinary and the everyday. Yung Ho Chang's Book-Bike-Store (Beijing, 1996) uses bicycle wheels for the interior structures of a small urban bookshop in a city where bicycles formed a central object and tool of the daily life of commoners *[7, 8]*.[38] Here, an object from life, an object of non-art or non-architecture, is included to create a lively heterogeneity. Jiakun Liu's Hu Huishan Memorial (Anren Town, outside Chengdu, 2009) is a small, single-room building in which the everyday objects in the life of Hu Huishan – an ordinary schoolgirl killed in the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake – are collected



9



10

9 Hu Huishan Memorial by Jiakun Architects, Chengdu, 2009.

10 Hu Huishan Memorial (close-up view) by Jiakun Architects, Chengdu, 2009.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press



11 The Big Courtyard by Jiakun Architects, Chengdu, 2015.

12 The Big Courtyard (view at night) by Jiakun Architects, Chengdu, 2015.



and displayed, and the inside walls are painted pink, a colour she liked [9, 10].[39] The outside is exposed concrete; and the shape of the building is an abstracted form of a tent in the earthquake relief effort. Outside the austere and solemn memorial hut is a sweet Osmanthus tree planted there on the request of Huishan's mother. The building and the tree are placed in a small, clear plaza surrounded by a wood of bamboo and young trees (Clover and Gingko). Adopting an 'abstract form of life', focusing on an ordinary person, in fact a young girl from a small county, who became a victim of a certain corrupt practice of the building industry where standards of rural public schools were compromised – an issue Ai Weiwei has investigated and exposed – is nothing less than a brave and extraordinary manifestation in a country where the grand projects of the nation overwhelm the condition and the voice of the individual. This project is about 'inclusion', about 'counting the uncounted', about presenting a 'part that has no part' in a new identification with the whole. Jiakun Liu's Xicun Big-Yard (Chengdu, 2015), a vast urban block and urban community of 135,552 m^2, is a design where residential and communal programs are creatively accommodated and celebrated [11, 12].[40] Ramps for walking and jogging, courts and grounds for social functions, open-air cinemas for evening gatherings, screens for commercial advertisement (of small shops) are actively included as part of the design language, where the product becomes a form of life, a heterogeneous set of autonomy-plus-heteronomy. This building is about 'inclusion' in the sense of a designed 'participation' where programming for a dense and lively urban community plays a major role in the design strategy.

Forging a political aesthetic in design in architecture, with a horizontal visibility to include the anonymous and the everyday to challenge a hierarchy, and for a lively heterogeneity that resists entropy, is a long-term project that needs further debate and verification.

Notes

1. This article is developed from an initial draft presented at a symposium titled 'The Everyday: Spatial Design and Spatial Practice with/against Modernity', Southeast University, Nanjing, 21 May 2016. I would like to thank the two anonymous referees for their comments and suggestions on the draft.
2. Mary McLeod, 'Henri Lefebvre's Critique of Everyday Life: an Introduction', in *Architecture of the Everyday*, ed. by Steven Harris and Deborah Berke (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp. 9–29.
3. Henri Lefebvre, 'The Everyday and Everydayness', in *Architecture of the Everyday*, ed. by Harris and Berke, pp. 32–7. See also Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. by Sacha Rabinovitch (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), pp. 10–18.
4. Lefebvre, 'The Everyday', p. 34; McLeod, 'Henri Lefebvre's Critique', pp. 13–14; see also Lefebvre, *Everyday Life*, pp. 10–22.
5. Lefebvre, 'The Everyday', pp. 32–4.
6. Ibid., pp. 36–7.
7. McLeod, 'Henri Lefebvre's Critique', pp. 15–16. This deep potential of the everyday is also described elsewhere by Lefebvre as 'the lived' in 'representational spaces' (symbolic, artistic, festive, religious, anthropological) as opposed to the conceived in representations of space (rational, abstract, systematic, dominant)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press

– a realm that cannot be totally controlled or dominated; see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 33–53.

8. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 3–26.
9. Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).
10. Michel Foucault, 'Other Spaces: The Principles of Heterotopia', *Lotus International*, Nos 48–9 (1985–6), 9–17.
11. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), pp. xi–xxiv, 29–42.
12. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 15–25.
13. Ibid., pp. 15–25, 27–30.
14. Ibid., pp. 29–30.
15. Ibid., pp. 7–14, 89.
16. Rancière's rejection here is associated with his critique of Benjamin; see Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, pp. 8, 13.
17. Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: on Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 27–44. See also, Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, pp. 86, 88, 90, 93–4.
18. Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, pp. 7–14, 89.
19. Ibid., p. 28.
20. Ibid., p. 19; see also, Jacques Rancière, *Dissenting Words: Interviews with Jacques Rancière*, ed. and trans. by Emilian Battista (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 134–6.
21. Rancière, *Dissensus*, pp. 115–33, esp. 123, 124; *Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 84; *Dissenting Words*, p. 134.
22. Rancière, *Dissensus*, p. 118
23. Ibid., pp. 118, 124.
24. Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), pp. 91–107; see also, *Dissensus*, pp. 120–1.
25. Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*, pp. 27–30.
26. Ibid., pp. 8, 13.
27. Rancière, *Dissensus*, pp. 124, 127–8; *Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 30.
28. Rancière, *Dissensus*, p. 128.
29. Gabriel Rockhill has attempted to explain the social, institutional, and spatial factors behind the rise of the 'aesthetic regime of art' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which provided a connection between architecture and Rancière's theorisation in that historical context; Rockhill, for example, identified the importance of art museums and other cultural institutions in that historical context. See Gabriel Rockhill, 'Modern Democracy and Aesthetic Revolution in the Work of Rancière: Reflections on Historical Causality', in *Architecture against the Post-Political: Essays in Reclaiming the Critical Project*, ed. by Nadir Lahiji (London: Taylor and Francis, 2014), pp. 31–9.
30. Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, pp. 91–107, esp. 100, 102, 107; see also, *Dissensus*, pp. 120–1;
31. I have developed this observation described in this paragraph in my lectures 'Art and Politics: Walter Benjamin and Jacques Rancière' since 2014.
32. Rancière, *Dissensus*, pp. 35–6.
33. Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. by Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976).
34. This paragraph on the cases in China was first presented at a symposium on 'The Everyday', Southeast University, Nanjing, 21 May 2016.
35. An important study on the use of Rancière's theory for design practice in architecture, especially on participation in a direct and actual sense, can be found in: Camillo Boano and Emily Kelling, 'Towards an Architecture of Dissensus: Participatory Urbanism in South-East Asia', *Footprint* (autumn 2013), 41–62.
36. Rafael Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies: in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 307–59; Peter Eisenman, *Ten Canonical Buildings: 1950–2000* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008), pp. 200–8.
37. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994); Chuihua Judy Chung, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, Sze Tsung Leong, eds, *Harvard Design School Project on the City: Great Leap Forward* (Cambridge, MA: Taschen GmbH & Harvard Design School, 2001). See especially: OMA, Rem Koolhaas, and Bruce Mau, *S, M, L, XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), pp. 494–516, 958–71, 1008–89, 1238–64, that is, on bigness, urbanism, Singapore, and the Generic City, respectively. On Rem Koolhaas, see also: Jianfei Zhu, 'Criticality in between China and the West', *The Journal of Architecture* 10, No. 5 (2005), 479–98 (pp. 481–5).
38. Jianfei Zhu, *Architecture of Modern China: A Historical Critique* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 118–28, 136–3.
39. I am grateful for the information provided by Jiakun Liu on 5 November 2017. See also: <http://www.jiakun.com> and <http://www.jiakun-architects.com> [accessed 5 November 2017]; and Zhu, *Architecture of Modern China*, pp. 118–28, 136–43. See also: Feng Qing, 'Du Hu Huishan Jinianguan [A Read of the Hu Huishan Memorial House]', *Jianzhushi: The Architect* 5 (2011), 38–42.
40. Tao Zhu, 'Xin Jiti: Lun Liu Jiankun de Chengdu Xicun Dayuan [The New Collectivity: Liu Jiakun's Big Yard at Chengdu]', *Shidai Jianzhu: Time + Architecture* 2 (2016), 86–97; Yi Hua, 'Liu Jiakun de Xicun Shijian Sheji Celue [The Design Strategies of Liu Jiakun through the Practice of Xi Cun]', *Shidai Jianzhu: Time + Architecture* 2 (2016), 98–105.

Illustration credits

arq gratefully acknowledges:
Atelier FCJZ, 7, 8
Author, 5, 6
Le Corbusier / Butterworth Architecture, 3, 4
Jean-Francois Millet, Wikimedia Commons, 1
Jiakun Architects, 9–12
Pablo Picasso, kpcykler, 2

Acknowledgement

The research underlying this paper is supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (project no.: 51678128).

Author's biography

Jianfei Zhu is Associate Professor in Architecture at the University of Melbourne. He is also a Visiting Professor at Southeast University (Nanjing) and China Academy of Art (Hangzhou). He is the author of 'Criticality in between China and the West' (*Journal of Architecture*); 'Empire of Signs of Empire' (*Harvard Design Magazine*); and a number of books on modern and imperial architecture of China.

Author's address

Jianfei Zhu
jianfz@unimelb.edu.au

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135517000458 Published online by Cambridge University Press