

BEYOND BUILDING: ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THE HUMAN BODY

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the gestalt discourse of form and shape of tectonic buildings, the human body plays an imperative role throughout the whole process of production, exchange, and consumption of everyday architecture. Besides its objectival nature of enveloping skin, the human body as a dialectical subject becomes an epistemological dispositif in order to transcend the positivistic paradigm of architecture. Focusing on a series of critical arguments by philosophers and architectural theorists, this paper seeks to explore the contextualization of the human body as a performative critique in the production of architecture. As such, we argue that both the human body and architecture are a form of "material flow" that are made up of many machines for enunciating, which include the prosthetic body of fashion, the moving body of urbanity, and the technologized body of mediatecture. Within this field, this paper suggests the potential of transforming the way in which we envision and understand contemporary architecture, revealing new desires and possibilities for bridging interdisciplinary design research between architecture, fashion and the sociologic study of pop culture.

Keywords: Architecture beyond building, human body, material flow.

1. INTRODUCTION

[T]he human body is defined in terms of its property of appropriating, in an indefinite series of discontinuous acts, significant cores which transcend and transfigure its natural powers.

-Maurice Merleau-Ponty in Phenomenology of Perception (1945; 2002: 225)

Beyond the gestalt discourse of form and shape of tectonic buildings, the human body plays an imperative role throughout the whole process of production, exchange, and consumption of everyday architecture (Deamer, 1997). Besides its objectival nature of enveloping skin, the human body as a dialectical subject becomes an epistemological dispositif in order to transcend the positivistic paradigm of architecture (Borden, 2001; Ballantyne, 2002). The design in architecture, as such, is perceived as "not about some transcendent 'creation' of objects or elements but rather an act of attenuation, amplification, resonance and intensity" (Smith & Ballantyne, 2010, p. 22), and this is more often than not of the human body. Hence, within this field, according to architectural theorist Aaron Betsky, architecture is transcending beyond the tectonic physicality of buildings; architecture is "as it always is,

about buildings, but it might be able to rise above or beyond building, move through building, or perhaps even come before building. It must be out there, not an affirmation of the mainstream way of making buildings, because if it did so it would disappear into the building” (Betsky, 2008, p. 15).

With respect to this idea, this paper argues that the contextualization of the human body is a performative critique in the production of architecture. As such, the paper is outlined into four sections. The first section (i.e. Architecture and the Body) discusses the contextual relationships between the human body and architecture with reference to the exposition of “hylomorphism”, “territorialisation,” and “fragmentation of flow” as pointed out by philosophers and architectural theorists. The discussion is extended in the second section (i.e. Architecture as the Prosthetic Body of Fashion), which draws the ‘connection’ between the design practice of fashion and architecture. The third section (i.e. Architecture as the Moving Body of Urbanity) highlights the contextualization of the human body as an experiential embodiment in the production of contemporary architecture. Finally, the fourth section (i.e. Architecture as the Technologized Body of Mediatecture) examines the historical cybernetic culture together with the emerging discourse of “mediatecture” in order to contextualize the performative critique between the human body and architecture.

2. ARCHITECTURE AND THE BODY

The contextualization between the human body and architecture is perhaps best articulated from the critique of hylomorphism by the architectural theorist Chris L. Smith. Smith (2009, p. 46), while formulating his argument on the deployment of sexual and sensual masochism, establishes synchronization between architecture and biology by writing:

Architects and biologists find themselves in a similar and curious position in this regard [the differentiation between form and matter]. Following Aristotle (as well as Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger), both disciplines attempt an articulation of hylomorphism in regard to the body of the “individual”. Both disciplines are also resistant to the proposition of Platonisms, essentialisms and determinisms as a means to negotiate form and matter [...]. Outside of biology, cultural text and deployment understandings complicate the form–matter distinction in suggesting that individuals themselves cannot be differentiated from Others and the technologies they surround themselves with, imbed within themselves and interact with as matters of basic survival.

As a “form”, the human body is measured. In architecture, as such, to design is to establish the anthropometric distance between the human body and tactile

objects, to orientate the proxemic interactions between one body and another, and to articulate something of the Divine Proportion of the human body. As a “matter”, the human body is subjectified in which the aesthetic experience of architecture is articulated in accordance with the phenomenological bodily contact with the ‘gesture’ of everyday buildings. The body, for instance, moves freely in the recreation park, becomes more cautious in the library, and merges with noise while waiting in the subway station. Through this hylomorphic exposition, the human body and architecture encode a very particular dispositif, which Andrew Daly and Smith (2011, p. 36) refer to as the “machinery of connection”, whereby architecture allows the logic of material and space of the human body to decipher simultaneously. In this regard, architectural theorist Bernard Tschumi (1994, p. 110) remarks:

The sole judge of the last term of the trilogy, “appropriate spatial accommodation”, is, of course, the body, your body, my body – the starting point and point of arrival of architecture. The Cartesian body-as-object has been opposed to the phenomenological body-as-subject, and the materiality and logic of the body have been opposed to the materiality and logic of spaces. From the space of the body to the body-in-space – the passage is intricate.

While the subsequent discussions by Tschumi ‘reduce’ within the pragmatic binarism of ‘form/function’, in contrast, Smith draws attention to the “flows of fragmentation” between the human body and architecture. For that purpose, Smith deploys the philosophical conception of “territorialisation” postulated by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the psychoanalyst Félix Guattari. According to Smith, both the human body and architecture prompt the internal system of ‘rhythmization.’ In addition, Smith also argues that architecture, like the body, is a set of repetitive rhythmic actions, or what Merleau-Ponty (1945; 2002, p. 225) refers to as “an indefinite series of discontinuous acts” that defines territory in order to regulate the “chaos” of the external world. Smith (2010, p. 4) writes, “Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the rhythms of sound cast into the chaos allow us safe harbour from chaos; allow us to carve some territory in chaos. The rhythm stabilises us; and make us somewhat more architectural in stability and order.” Smith later concludes, “[t]he carving of [...] architectural territory is so much more than the construction of classifications and the measurement of rhythms. The linguistic and material ordering of the world of [...] architecture is much more than the control or regulation of chaos.” Through this argument, Smith suggests that the human body and architecture are neither discrete objects nor singular elements. Both of them otherwise constitute a form of “material flow” (Ballantyne & Smith, 2011) that through their machinic capacities, regulate chaos in order to codify knowledge of architecture.

3. ARCHITECTURE AS THE PROSTHETIC BODY OF FASHION

The philosopher Marshal McLuhan (1964, 1994) implicitly clarifies such a conception contextualizing the material flows of fragmentation between the human body and architecture with respect to the sociological discourse of clothes. Through his seminal phrase, “the medium is the message”, McLuhan regards that both the human body and clothes are a form of communication media, as a material flow that allows architecture to ‘extend’ and push its traditional boundary. While clothes function to seek protection from harsh climates and define the self-territorialisation of the human body, people also ‘wear’ architecture for the same reason. Architecture in this sense, as argued by McLuhan (1964; 1994, p. 119-120), is the third skin which functions as the extended medium that envelops the human body in order to control chaos by regulating mechanistic heat flow and organizing social realities. McLuhan further posits:

Clothing, as an extension of the skin, can be seen as a heat-control mechanism and as a means of defining the self socially. In these respects, clothing and housing are near twins, though clothing is both nearer and elder; for housing extends the inner heat-control mechanisms of our organism, while clothing is a more direct extension of the outer surface of the body.

Bradley Quinn (2003), a fashion theorist, introduces the critical discourse of fashion while responding to this pseudo-synonymous polemic between architecture, the human body, and clothes. According to Quinn, through the language of fashion, the ‘ordinary’ human body, clothes, and everyday buildings are semiotically transcended into an ‘extraordinary’ work of art. Fashion assigns the ‘sign-value’ to both the human body and architecture. Fascinated with the shared language between fashion and architecture, Quinn outlines the structural affinities of spatiality, visuality, materiality, and construction techniques between both disciplines. In this regard, Quinn establishes the synchronization between the practice of fashion designers and architects, primarily through the works of Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, Hussein Chalayan, Pia Myrvold and Yeohlee Teng.

As a response to the intersectional dialogue between fashion and architecture, Dagmar Reinhardt (2007), an architectural theorist, coins the notion “surface conditioning.” Furthermore, Reinhardt (2007, p. 183) remarks that “fashion and architecture are two professions that equip the urban inhabitant.” She continues, “both share methods of surface conditioning, a term used here to describe methods or strategies that profile and enable such surfaces to address

change properties and behaviour under a continuous impact of data in the concept, design, construction and application phase.” While emphasizing the schematic process of “surface formations” between both fashion and architecture, Reinhardt formulates three shared languages: compressed, flexible, and elastic.

For the first shared language — ‘compressed’, Reinhardt correlates the surface formation of the famous Western little black dress (firstly designed by Coco Chanel in 1926) with the modernist architecture of Farnsworth House by Mies Van der Rohe (completed in 1951). While both of them employ a strict Cartesian geometry in order to produce “a specific form with a close fit” (p. 187), the designs, as argued Reinhardt, ‘compress’ the function of inhabitant (or wearer) within the constructed spaces. In the second shared language — ‘flexible’, Reinhardt draws attention to the traditional design of the Kimono and tatami principle of the Japanese House. As opposed to the former ‘Western compressed’, these two iconic Eastern designs offer ‘flexibility’ in terms of (re)configuring materiality and spatiality in accordance with a “stable set of options” (p. 188). Such an appropriate (re)configuration, as argued by Reinhardt, reflects the everyday communication process between the inhabitant (or wearer) and the ‘non-representational’ constructed spaces. For the third shared language — ‘elastic’, Reinhardt highlights the ‘post-modern approach’ of surface formation between fashion and architecture. Drawing connections between the experimental fashion works of Martin Margiela’s 157 Percent, Issey Miyake’s Pleats Please, and Rei Kawakubo’s Dress Becomes Body in comparison to the architecture of Wall-less House by Shigeru Ban, in this context, Reinhardt suggests the production of “phenomenal elasticity” (p. 191). For Reinhardt, through both design approaches, the Cartesian geometry of representational space is deformed and this allows the inhabitant (or wearer) to behave ‘elastically’ regardless of predetermined functional codes. Here, through Quinn and Reinhardt, fashion and architecture are contextualized as an archetypal representation of prosthetic layering. This form of representation systematically coordinates the interstitial spaces between the individual inhabitation and the external environment through a programmatic set of skin surface formations. It is within this context that Brooke Hodge, the curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, organized an exhibition entitled *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture* in 2006.

By comparatively displaying the artworks of forty-six prominent international designers, namely, Chalayan, Teng, Alexander McQueen, Kawakubo, Nanni Strada, Miyake, Ralph Rucci, and Isabel Toledo, as well as architects, namely, Tshumi, Zaha Hadid, Diller Scofidio, Renfro, Herzog, de Meuron, Ban, Koolhaas, Foreign Office Architects, and Jakob and MacFarlane, the

exhibition aims to establish synchronization between both fashion and architecture through their thematic convergent vocabularies, such as shelter, identity, structural skin and tectonic strategies of wrapping, pleating, printing, draping, folding, and weaving. The statement below from Hodge (2006, p. 12) may provide an overall conclusion for this discussion of 'representational' practice between fashion and architecture:

[A]s architects have moved away from freehand drawing and model-making toward increasingly sophisticated design software to generate more complex architectural forms, they have looked to fashion for inspiration [...] Interpreting strategies from each other's work and engaging with issues of body, shelter, and identity, they [the artworks displayed] have forged new connections between disciplines [fashion and architecture].

4. ARCHITECTURE AS THE MOVING BODY OF URBANITY

While the aforementioned discussions of Reinhardt and Hodge focus on the representational practice between fashion and architecture, Lucy Orta, a fashion artist, questions the 'institutionalized' approach. Through her work, Orta provokes an "on-going dialogue" between fashion and architecture in respect to emerging socio-cultural phenomenon. Emphasizing the underlying meaning of fashion and architecture as the "collective voice" for human existence, Orta refers to her fashion work as a "visual antithesis" against the voluptuous imagery of high fashion and couture design. According to Orta, "[t]here is an on-going dialogue in my work between the principles of design, social awareness and concepts of visibility. It brings issues into view". Moreover, Orta continues, "[i]t's about taking the art outside the institutional venue and into the street" (quoted in Quinn, 2003, p. 164). This statement is manifested through her series of exhibitions: *Refuge Wear* (Figure 1), *Body Architecture*, *Nexus Architecture*, *The Connector Mobile Village*, *Modular Architecture*, *Citizen Platform*, and *Commune Communicate*.

Reflecting the situationist stratagem of *derive*, *détournement* and *psychogeography*, through her work, Orta rethinks the positivistic interface between urban space and the human body. In this respect, Orta conceptualizes the human body as an urban cultural statement, providing complex narratives "between movement and stillness, between the visible and the invisible" (Quinn, 2003, p. 159). It is within such a conception that Orta deploys the philosophical paradigm of Martin Heidegger by referring to the human body, clothes and urban architecture as an "act of dwelling." Rather than mediating architecture into a specific place, Orta draws its fundamental meaning into a phenomenon of 'being.' As such, Orta further explains, "since to inhabit

a space means to consider it part of one's body, clothes are fully entitled to become architectural dwelling" (quoted in Quinn, 2003, p. 160). Through the *Refuge Wear* (Figure 1), which is one of Orta's famous works, she specifically 'materializes' the previous statement. Responding to an emerging crisis of homelessness, her *Refuge Wear* remains neither as a distinct object nor a separated element from the human body. *Refuge Wear* claims its "body's architecture" (Quinn, 2003, p. 166) by providing an intimate space and protection like the tectonic of buildings. Extending her radical idea, Orta treats the body's architecture as a mechanism for disseminating social agendas. Inscribing the 'facade' with texts and images, Orta deploys the guerrilla strategies of pop culture in order to broadcast communiqué and provoke sentiments. This may be seen as a manifestation of Orta's earlier proposition that architecture and the human body, as a whole, is a form of a material flow, that is the collective voice of human existence regardless of mediating it into a very specific place.



Figure 1: *The Refuge Wear* by Lucy Orta (Source: Quinn, 2003, p. 165)

In a similar vein, Iain Borden (2001), an architectural theorist, formulates a performative critique of experiencing architecture through the pop culture phenomenon of skateboarding (Figure 2). In this light, Borden 'ramifies' the phenomenological approach of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre in order to negotiate the shared coding of the discourses of spatiality between the human body, the "aesthetic urban practice" of skateboarding,

and the built environment of architecture. According to Borden, beyond the objectival “reductive architecture” of the “things, effects, production, authorship and exchange” (p. 265), the pop culture of skateboarding provides a methodological platform for understanding “architecture as a set of flows, as a set of experiences and reproductions” (p. 6) within the practices of everyday life. As such, Borden (2001, p. 11-12) promulgates:

[S]pace is part of a dialectical process between itself and human agency; rather than a priori entity space is produced by, and productive of, social being [...] This has methodological ramifications, not least to think about histories of spatiality through different levels of consciousness, temporalities and periodization, social events and actions, and spatial scales [...] A closer reading of Lefebvre provides further clues [...] to invoke a total revolution [...] [T]he human subject – and in particular the body – is one of the primary sites of this revolutionary activity, not just in terms of its effect on the external world but as a redefinition and reproduction of the self. Beyond the scopic dependence of the visual on the part of capitalism and many architectural manifestations, the human body bears witness to all senses, emotions, birth and death, and orientations. Different rhythms of space and time are produced by these kinds of fleshy body [...] [T]hese are also bodies which actively do something, which have a dynamic operation in the city, and which thereby transform everyday life into a work of art.

Through the “appropriative negation” of the pop culture of skateboarding with the spatial and temporal rhythms of a modern city lifestyle, architecture, as postulated by Borden, “is seen to lie beyond the province of the architect and is thrown instead into the turbulent nexus of reproduction” (p. 217). It is within this postulation, Borden deploys the Lefebvrian conception of rhythm analysis in order to understand the “elemental modes of engagement” (p. 266) between the everyday populist activity of skateboarding and the urban space of architecture.

Furthermore, Borden underscores his argument that the experience of the modern city is “having lost the characteristics of the creative oeuvre” (p. 190) and “appears simply as the ‘likeness of a sum or combination of elements’, reduced to the legibility of signs” (p. 188) like dwelling units and the constraints of traffic. The experience of the modern city, therefore, is banal monotonous, creating an environmental scenario of “a field of the meaningless, a series of signals, a code reductive in individual signs and complex in its multitudinous instructions” (p. 229), of what Borden coins as the “zero degree architecture”. As an antithetical critique against such an urban experience of ennui and passivity, the pop culture of skateboarding acts as a “counter-inscription”. In this regard, the skateboarders “transcend” the passive signal element of

urbanity, such as handrails, fire hydrants, bus benches, sidewalks, and traffic lights, beyond the ‘inscribed’ normative utilitarian logic of urban semantics. Such “urban transcendentalism” (p. 219), as suggested by Borden, “turns the signal element of urbanity into an object of risk” (p. 192) by providing the explorative ‘ollie flight platform’ among the skateboarders. As such, Borden remarks, “[w]here signals have no expressivity beyond direct signification, skateboarding is a lived utterance, a symbolic parole to the univalent language of the city as technical object. Skateboarding is a critique of the emptiness of meaning in zero degree architecture. How, then, does skateboarding create this critique? [...] The answer lies less in the realm of semantics, and more in the realm of sensory rhythms and the physical” (p. 192).

In a similar vein, Borden later argues that, the ‘embodied’ rhythmic production projected from the proximate matériel of space, between the self-techniques of body movement, the tool of skateboard, and the physical architecture of terrain, (re)produces “another reality” of architecture, of what Borden calls the “super-architectural space”. Borden further remarks that the direct engagement of “lived experience” between the motile body of the skateboarders and the objectival urban elements, such as street, plaza, mini-roundabout, wall, and ledge, “re-images and recreates the representation” (p. 89) of the super-architectural space. In discussing further such a conception of super-architectural space, according to Borden, architecture is “projected from the whole body, and not just [through] the eye” (p. 106). Borden also criticizes the “symbolic overt iconography” of modernist urban planning. He later highlights the ‘subcultural slang’, such as “ollie”, “invert”, “layback”, “alley oop”, “layback air”, “canyon jump”, “Miller Flip”, and “Elguerrial” in order to clarify the technical coordinated body movements during the actions of skateboarding. According to Borden, “[t]he moving body treats architecture as but one projector of space to be interpolated with the projection of space from itself [...] Here, the skater’s questions concern the distance across the gap and the orientation of the bordering walls [objectival architectural element], and are answered by a move involving speed and a bodily-throw” (p. 107). Therefore, the physicality of architecture is “at once erased and reborn in the phenomenal act of the skater’s move” (p. 108).

In his subsequent argument, Borden emphasizes the ‘guerrilla strategies’ in the dissemination of the pop culture of skateboarding in the global urban space. As a production of the self, the pop culture of skateboarding, as suggested by Borden, is manifested through the communicative “signification of imagery” from graphical T-shirts, customized shoes, designed clothes, street advertisements, popular magazines and other forms of “counter-cultural practices” including indie music, films, and coded gestures. Apart from that, the pop culture of skateboarding is also manifested through “localized spatial activity”. In this

regard, the skateboarders territorialize an urban place for skating based on their “cognitive representation” of seeking the new possibilities of excitement and immediate adaptation with the tectonic physicality of architecture. It is within this ‘emotional-appropriative territorialization’, Borden (2001: 223) suggests that the cognitive representation of such localized spatial activity is coordinated beyond the positivistic Cartesian geography as a tactic of “situationist psychogeography”:

[T]he skateboarders’ cognitive representation is neither map nor directory [...], nor of a spectacularized centre-point, but a mental knowledge composed of highly detailed local knowledge about dispersed places, micro-architectures and accessible times [...] Skaters’ representations thus have more in common with the Situationist tactics of the derive, détournement and psychogeography – ‘maps’ composed from the opportunities offered by the physical and emotional contours of the city ...

The constellation of the aforementioned arguments allows Borden to bridge the critical gap between the pop culture of skateboarding and the urban space of architecture. As such, Borden draws his conclusion that “[a]rchitecture is not an object but a process, not a thing but a flow, not an abstract idea but a lived thought” (p. 9).



Figure 2: Skateboarding, space and the city (Source: Borden, 2001, p. 264)

5. ARCHITECTURE AS THE TECHNOLOGIZED BODY OF MEDIATECTURE

While the aforementioned discussions of Orta and Borden offer a salient mechanism for bridging the intellectual gap between the ‘moving human body’, urban pop culture, and contemporary architecture, Jane Pavitt (2008), a design historian, draws attention back to the mid-1960s concept of ‘architecture as the technologized body’. In this regard, Pavitt highlights the experimental works of the 1960s’ ‘subversive’ architecture groups of Archigram, Coop Himmelb(l)au, Haus-Rucker Co and Utopie. Inspired by the proliferation of cybernetic pop culture in that era, these architecture groups, according to Pavitt, contextualized their visionary artworks as an antithetical reaction against the “inhuman, alienating and impenetrable in traditional architecture and institutional structures” (p. 101). In contrast with Orta and Borden, who refer to their architecture as a ‘signifier body’ of urban cultural statement, these architecture groups regarded their architecture as a ‘technologized body’ of everyday life practices. Peggy Deamer (1997: 195), an architectural theorist, while reviewing the works of these 1960s architecture groups, remarks:

[I]n actuality, this (visionary) work was fundamentally lodged in a utopian image of the body, one animated by visions of the future yet bound by the concerns of the everyday. The particular formulation of this body – as technologically advanced but programmatically primitive – defined a “new man” who was ideologically committed to seeing the self as the safeguard of the values of ordinary life and the defence against the co-opting of the everyday.

In reference to the visionary projects of these subversive architecture groups, Pavitt suggests that “once lightweight synthetic fabrics were durable enough to be used to create architectural structures, buildings would be as simple to ‘put on’ as clothes” (p. 98). Pavitt, among other projects, instantiates the White Suit designed by Coop Himmelb(l)au in 1969 (Figure 3). Through the White Suit, sensuous experience of the everyday environments is ‘embodied’ based on the interconnected mechanism between the lightweight technological apparatus, the television helmet and pneumatic vest, and human bodily function. Coop Himmelb(l)au while describing the project explain, “[t]he cold medium of TV is getting hot. The audio-visual information that appears on and in the projection helmet is supported by smells. And the pneumatic vest presents tactile information” (quoted in Deamer, 1997, p. 205). Architecture in this regard is conceptualized as a “portable hardware” that is at once filtering information from the external environment and yet maintaining its territorialisation of the internal intimate spaces. According to

Deamer, in order to regulate the flow of information between outside and inside, such an ‘intertwined portability’ makes architecture “so transportable that it can be worn on its own body” (p. 205) regardless of its traditional monumental representation. This conceptualization recalls the statement by David Greene of Archigram that “people are [indeed] walking architecture [...] who carries knowledge sensors with him/ her” (quoted in Deamer, 1997, p. 199). While further emphasizing the relational dialectic between virtual reality, fashion, and architecture, Pavitt (2008, p. 101) draws her conclusion that contemporary “architecture was to become not only shelter from environmental conditions, but also a kind of filter for media and information.”

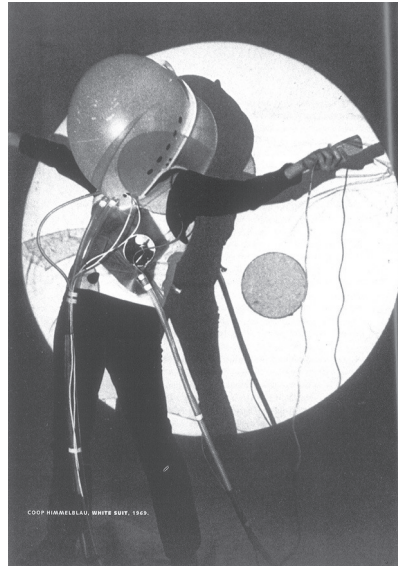


Figure 3: *The White Suit* by Coop Himmel(l)au (Source: Deamer, 1997: 204)

Extending Pavitt’s statement beyond the microcosm of bodily function, Louise Crewe (2010), a cultural geography theorist, broadens this discourse of fashion and architecture with respect to emerging urban phenomenon of the “commercialised mediatecture landscape”. Crewe remarks, “[e]merging as the new heroic city builders, archistars are vilified as depoliticised,

desocialised celebrity elites who serially reproduce retail formats in a nasty commercialised mediatecture landscape. And in the process they become stylised urban laureates who peddle their own brand” (p. 2096). Perceiving the human body and architecture as the two singular “performative elements of everyday life” (p. 2106), Crewe highlights the omnipresence of retail fashion as a form of logocentric gravitation in order to “aestheticise, project, and (re)present the city” (p. 2094). Conceptualizing this scenario as a form of “mediatecture”—to borrow a term coined by Christoph Kronhagel (2010)—the contemporary urbanscape, argues Crewe, turns out to be a massive advertisement, projecting a voluptuous imagery of bodily gestures and branded fashions. The solidification of buildings is a result of ‘dissolves’ beyond the eyes of the architects themselves and becomes a repetitive set of urban signage (Figure 4). Koolhaas refers to this scenario as the “megalomaniac accumulation” of the Flagship syndrome (quoted in Crewe, 2010, p. 2096). Klaus Wassermann and Vera Bühlmann (2010), the digital architectural theorists, while extending this discourse, contextualize Venturi’s vision of “architecture as information surface.” In addition, Wassermann and Bühlmann also propagate the conception of “media façade.” Wassermann and Bühlmann argue that, through the media façade, the tectonic of buildings is no longer mute but rather it ‘enunciates’ a series of phonetic sounds for signifying its existence. Wassermann and Bühlmann (2010, p. 340) further state:

The function of the façade [in architecture] is neither limited to physical protection nor to indexical [sic] representation – indeed, we suggest completely to forgo any pretence to functional inclusion. The primary “activity” of the façade to us seems to be the narrative, irrespective of materiality, means or media [...] There is the façade on the one hand, and the showing of images on the other. Consequently, we are in the presence of an intermediatic phenomenon.

Hence, within this conceptualization of “intermediatic phenomenon”, Crewe (2010, p. 2105) draws her conclusion in the following manner: “Clothing and architecture overlap to fashion the contemporary city. Yet both are about far more than retinal stimulation, fabrication, and fantasy, the spectacular or the superficial. Rather, they articulate our experiences of being in-the-world and strengthen our sense of space and self.”



Figure 4: The mediatecture of the human body in New York City

6. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

Throughout all the discussions in this paper, there is the affirmation of the contextualization between the human body and architecture as a material flow. The human body and architecture, as such, are not machines by themselves, but are mechanisms made up of many machines for enunciating, which include the prosthetic body of fashion, the moving body of urbanity, and the technologized body of mediatecture. Therefore, we conclude with an evaluation of the significance of convergent analyses between the human body and architecture for broader debates about fashion, urbanity, and social reality — about how we imagine, inhabit, and represent architecture beyond the positivistic paradigm of the tectonic building. Thus, with this in mind, we believe that this convergence will chart a new dimension of contemporary architectural thinking and prompt more possibilities in interlinking design research between architecture, fashion and the sociologic study of pop culture. The statement below from Quinn (2003, p. 135) may provide an open-ended conclusion for the overall discussions of this issue:

No longer just spaces for living, working or wearing, architecture and fashion seem to engage on an equal footing with the philosophical, historical and formal principles once reserved for art practice alone. At the heart of this debate is reflected contemporary society's ever-changing relationship to material culture, where contemporary techniques and environments have become interactive, and the division between functionalism and representation is breaking down.

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