

TRIANGULATION AND REPRESENTATION

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Submitted 10 Dec. 2010

Abstract. The erotic triangulation consisting of lover, beloved, lover's image of beloved is a mechanism that automates a projection of self into a desired subject. The projection is provoked by the partly imaginary but reality inspired reconstruction of the beloved that takes place in the lover. The geometric construction is an attempt to categorize and name the elements we experience as seduction. One thing we can learn from the erotic geometry is that seduction is not exterior to the lover; it is instigated by him and takes place in him. This change in vantage point can be considered a sleight of hands. I choose to see it as an opportunity to consider the erotic ruse as a tool that can draw the observer into the ideas proposed in drawing of a space or drawing of a building, while using the observer's empathy to generate meaning in a drawing that contain patches of yet indeterminate spaces, unknown programmatic functions and propositional subject matter that is ambiguous. The content of the triangulation (lover, beloved, image) is thus replaced by observer, drawing, and the observer's projected image of the drawn proposition (this strategy can be described shorter and in terms familiar to the production of drawn exploratory propositions for architecture: *fake it till you make it*, or, keep drawing even if you have only a vague idea of what it is you are giving form, step back and allow yourself to add meaning to the drawn content with guidance from the detached spectator's empathy).

Caught in desire the lover is intensely present and vividly emphatic to what he desires. Through a number of drawn investigations I explore if a similar engagement between the observer and the imaginary content of the drawn architectural proposal can be a way into sealing or diminishing the gap between representation and realization, thus unloading the pressure from the representational yoke prominent in the production of architecture.

Keywords: representation in architectural drawing, eros, erotic triangulation, desire, seduction by ambiguity into the unknown, indeterminacy, edge of self, personal outline, gap between representation and realization, the picture plane, exploratory drawing, definition by occlusion.

In drawing exploratory architectural drawings and looking at them one can recognize and emphasize an erotic projective mechanism similar to a concept of erotic triangulation found in analysis of ancient Greek poetry. Through writings by *Peter Cook*, *Anne Carson*, *Rebecca Solnit*, *Kester Rattenbury*, and analysis of a part of *Alfred Hitchcock's Vertigo* I attempt to relate and explore how the erotic condition has significance in architectural drawing. The discussion is part of a research project that explores the construction of meaning in drawings with a partly indeterminate content drawn on curved picture planes with a partly prescribed form. The research takes place through making and drawing to fuel written reflections.

Part of the design output is reproduced here in photographs accompanying the text. The photographs are of drawings and the photographs themselves vibrate between depicting the drawings and being drawings themselves. Like the drawn picture planes the photographs, through and perhaps against their representational nature, are part of an attempt to demonstrate the erotic triangulation.

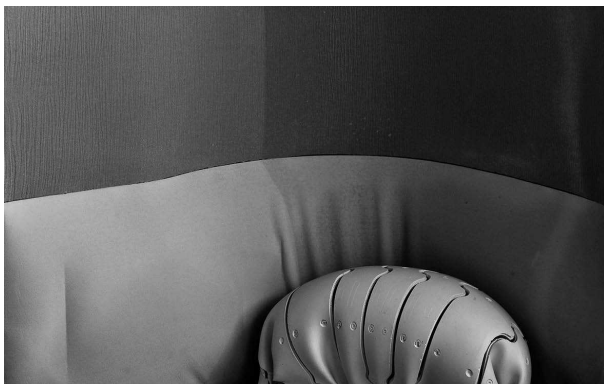
Anne Carson writes of a geometric ruse that ensnares us as we fall in love. Establishing the erotic tension is connected to, even presupposes knowledge¹, in

¹ "Both Aristotle and Socrates understood that *erōs* and knowledge are inextricably connected" (Pérez-Gómez 2008: 69).

particular a lack of knowledge, that has to be replaced by imagination and projection of self. The lover's reaching out for the beloved seems to split her, the beloved, in two. Upon her is forced an image of the lovers making. To maintain integrity the beloved insists on her outline. She must, through distance, separate herself from the image projected upon her and so she flees.

The difference between what is what could be is visible² (Carson).

Keeping the lover at a distance is what maintains his desire. He is aroused by the erotic nature of that which simultaneously reveals and conceals itself – that which is alluringly available and at the same time remains on the edge of catastrophic rejection. In a discussion of drawing in architecture Nat Chard writes of the need for the drawing medium and its tools to be “related to our specific concerns... to provide a critical resistance”



² “For, where eros is lack, its activation calls for three structural components – lover, beloved and that which comes between them. They are three points of transformation on a circuit of possible relationship, electrified by desire so that they touch not touching. Conjoined they are held apart. The third component plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros. When the circuit-points connect, perception leaps. And something becomes visible, on the triangular path where volts are moving, that would not be visible without the three-part structure. The difference between what is what could be is visible” (Carson 2005: 17).

beyond their generic design. He suggests that the picture plane can be active rather than submissive, “critical in the way it accepts, modifies or rejects the projection upon it” (Chard 2005: 24). The potential rejection of the desire of the lover thus may have a parallel in the picture plane.

When we look at the erotic triangulation from the outside we see *lover, beloved*, and that which separates them: the *lover's image of the beloved*. The image of the beloved occludes the beloved herself. In this split lies the erotic tension.

The stereoscopic merging of the two, lover and her image, asks for disaster. They are by their nature incompatible. An attempt to merge image and reality of the beloved collapses the erotic triangulation. Even if the lover's greatest willed desire is to gain the beloved there is a desire beyond this and beyond his reach: the mechanics of the erotic construction. The maintenance of desire presupposes that the object of desire is never had, remains void; lingers as a painful absence³. It is an immaterial perpetual motion machine powered by paradox, anxiety of rejection, and ambiguity of appearance.

Looking closer at the triangulation we notice that the lover's experience of being invaded by the beloved originates in his own reach. He instigates the reach and it develops into a stretch of self and finally a blur of personal outline. To claim the beloved the lover gives up on his edge. When caught in the erotic triangulation the lover sees himself invaded and notices he is transformed. He is no longer himself, who he used to be⁴. He is reconfigured and he is lacking something. He can no longer recognize himself without the companionship of the beloved.

In terms of architecture and architectural representation I hope to draw a parallel between the image conceived by the lover and the representational nature of the architectural drawing: the drawing that suggests

³ “On the surface of it, the lover wants the beloved, this of course is not really the case. If we look carefully at a lover in the midst of desire, [...] we see how severe an experience for her is confrontation with the beloved even at a distance. Union would be annihilating” (Carson 2005: 62); and later “That which is known, attained, possessed, cannot be an object of desire” (Carson 2005: 65); later, same page “[...] the moment of ideal desire on which vase-painters as well as poets are inclined to focus is not the moment of the *coup de foudre*, not the moment when the beloved's arms open to the lover, not the moment when the two unite in happiness. What is pictured is the moment when the beloved turns and runs” (Carson 2005: 65).

⁴ “If we follow the trajectory of eros we consistently find it tracing out the same route: it moves out from the lover toward the beloved, then ricochets back to the lover himself and the hole in him, unnoticed before. Who is real subject of most love poems? Not the beloved. It is that hole” (Carson 2005: 30).

the construction of a building. Kester Rattenbury plays with the idea, within the domain of architecture, to separate representation and realisation, to understand architecture as strictly dealing with representation⁵. This is not only a game with words and categories within a definition. The suggestion points to the moment in looking at a drawing and the process of drawing, where we project ourselves into the imagined world the drawing suggests. The drawing asks its observer to lend to it his imagination of its continuation.

We may stay indifferent and uninvolved as we gaze at the surface of the picture plane and into the depth of the construction based on linear perspective. But, as we negotiate between the recognizable things in the drawing – familiar elements that make sense – we come to question and to imagine into parts of the drawing's aspects that are either undefined, deliberately indeterminate or simply unknown by its author at the time of creation. We may notice attempts to engage with ideas and things the drawing points towards that are beyond or that challenge the conventions associated with the medium itself; temporal occupation, a weave of different narratives, and social confrontations.

The ensnarement of the observer is a prominent concept. Peter Cook in *Drawing – The Motive Force of Architecture* recognizes seduction into the construction of the hitherto indeterminate as a strategy applied in several drawings. He writes of one drawing,

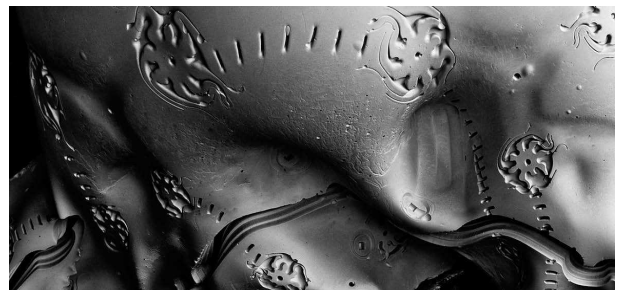
The strategy is one of seduction: to establish a certain credibility that we are dealing with architecture and to then open up a Pandora's box of goodies⁶ (Cook).

The recognizable becomes the leverage mechanism that allows acceptance and a kind of safe ground before entering into the skewed proposal of the drawing: an area that appears to have significance though meaning is not easily retrieved from this imagined content, because meaning, occupation, and a definite programme

exists in the drawing as an unknown known⁷ – a tacit knowledge that allows the spaces to simultaneously exist in the drawing and be indeterminate, even if dressed in form, given a body and apparently tangible, to-the-hand; it remains in a realm different from words and textual knowledge. He elaborates on the strategy when he writes of his drawings of *Instant City* (1968),

A transfigured city can stay in the mind because it can nearly exist – it can be related to the pre-existent city. It might of course, be unlikely, but always possible (Cook 2008: 44).

Unlikely but possible since the transfiguration gives us clear points of reference to occupy. But in some ways the strategy of reassurance is, in relation to an observer, a paternal guidance that could be felt as a controlling and correcting device instead of a supporting instrument. I think though, that the origin of the *reassurance of the familiar* – its necessity – comes from the act of drawing itself. When the draughtsman asks questions that lead him beyond the capabilities of conventional tools of drawing and geometric projection he needs to distance himself from the potential paralyzing discomfort and anxiety of the abstract unknown. There



⁵ “There’s a strong argument, probably even a historical one, that architecture – as distinct from building – is always that which is represented, and particularly that which is represented in the media aimed at architects. Architectural drawing evolved for description, not for construction” (Rattenbury 2002: xxii).

⁶ The quote is from *Drawing – The Motive Force of Architecture* by Peter Cook, p. 35, and the drawing Peter Cook writes of is by Eric Owen Moss (Fun House, Hidden Valley, California, US, 1980) and consists of two parts. The left hand part is a reassuring axonometric view of the exterior of two half domes. The right side is a collaged view consisting of interior parts that attempts to figure out the abstract, idea-experience of the place and not, as the left hand side, a concern with visual and spatial coherence.

⁷ Slavoj Žižek points to the fourth category that Donald Rumsfeld omits in “There are known knowns. There are the things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don’t know we don’t know” (2004), Widely reproduced, here from *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (Solnit 2005: 169, 209).

is a parallel to this in Rebecca Solnit's *A Fieldguide to Getting Lost*. In the context of not finding one's way as opposed to losing, immersing oneself in the mystery of the city⁸, she writes of worries and the need to assign name and category to the unknown in map making⁹. The same mechanism is recognizable in the process of drawing when we examine one of those seemingly tangible ideas that turns out to require work on both side of the ephemeral and the visceral.

Trying to find our way back to the point of departure, we can ask how the seduction of the observer in the indeterminate drawing is connected to the erotic triangulation. I believe the lover meets the indeterminate twice. First, in his desire that establishes a structure of the incompatible but stereoscopically connected images of the beloved. He knows he desires, this is beyond doubt, but the exact nature of the desire and the reality of the object of desire remains veiled to him.



⁸ "Not to find one's way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal. It requires ignorance – nothing more, [...] but to lose oneself in the city – as one loses oneself in the forest – that calls for quite a different schooling" [...]. "To lose yourself: a voluptuous surrender, lost in your arms, lost to the world, utterly immersed in what is present so that its surroundings fade away. In Benjamin's terms, to be fully lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery. And one does not get lost but loses oneself, with the implication that it is a conscious choice, a chosen surrender, a psychic state achievable through geography" (Solnit 2005: 6).

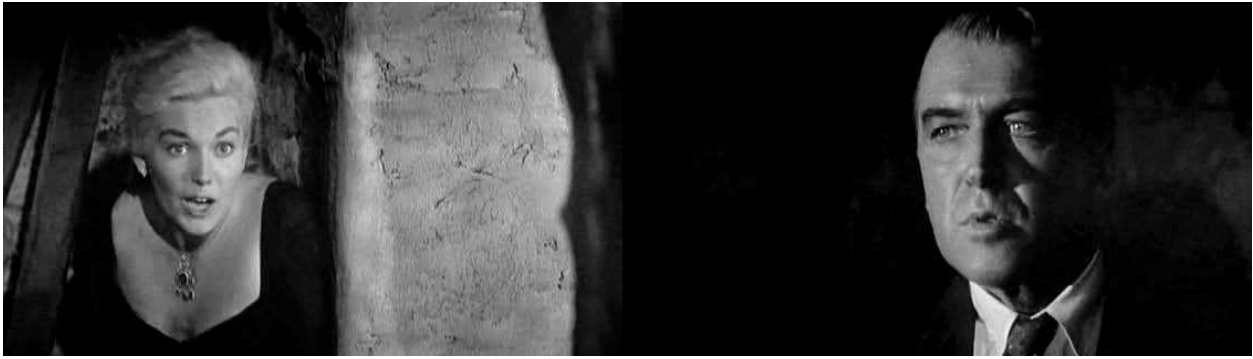
⁹ "Worry is a way to pretend that you have knowledge or control over what you don't – and it surprises me, even in myself, how much we prefer ugly scenarios to the pure unknown. Perhaps fantasy is what you fill up maps with rather than saying that they too contain the unknown" (Solnit 2005: 165).

Nonetheless he manages, from the touch of reality (that is what the beloved is to him), to project an image powerful enough in terms of precision of contents and in terms of seductive ambiguity for desire to be maintained and to grow. Second, he must confront the unknown in the form of the void left in him by his reach. It is not alone the longing for the beloved that burns and melts him. He faces also the question of who he is, with or without his desire attained.

I like to liken the observer of the drawing to the lover. The drawing is thus a ruse. Knowledge of its content is what is desired; this is *the beloved*. As the observer steps into the drawing he enters a structure prepared for him, even expecting him in a wicked way with the intention of using his blankness for its own purposes; to continue it and construct meaning where before the observer's account there was only weak suggestions of significance.

The points of attachment are critical for they are what secures that the observer is intrigued. They are also the point of departure for the image he is to project. In the constellation of observer, recognizable points of attachment, and depth of indeterminacy lie a potential ascription of meaning to the drawing. For a similar structure we may look at Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), the story of a private eye snared into falling in love with the doppelgänger he is hired to follow. What fascinates me about *Vertigo* is how the protagonist steps into a thoroughly planned trap that resembles the ruse of the erotic triangulation. With one significant exception, that brings the trap closer to the structure of drawing we have discussed: the woman the private detective follows, falls in love with, watches die, becomes obsessed by, attempts to reanimate in the shape of another mistress which he *dresses rather than undresses*¹⁰ and finally recognizes not as the image but the original goal of his desire, was never real. From the start of the film what he follows is a phantasm, already an image instituted by someone else in order to seduce him into a hunt. This matters little to the detective. Whether the image he is obsessed by is the image of something real or the image of an image formed by someone else, he is already in love. It matters though for us. It shows the the beloved needs only to consist of enough surface and apparent underlying structure to appear stable for the lover to imagine into her. That she is hollow, acting as someone else and does not contain the meaning she radiates to the observer does not prevent him, or us, from veiling her in significance.

¹⁰ "[...] struck by her resemblance to Madeleine, dates her, dresses rather than undresses her, and forces her to come closer and closer to becoming Madeleine" (Solnit 2005: 139).



Vertigo has a similar structure. When the object of desire finally comes true; stops its flight to turn around and embrace the lover, it is too late, for the game's act of turning around to face and be faced by the huntsman is in itself catastrophic¹¹ (this is what we witness in the last scene of *Vertigo* from where the two frames reproduced herein are taken). In the lover two similar images attempt to merge only to find, that not only does it cause strain to the eyes to maintain the stereoscopic overlap in focus. The content of the two images have come so far apart that they are not reconcilable even to the cut out cardboard effect of some stereoscopic photographs, but produces two separate worlds that the lover cannot reconcile within himself.

The illustrations accompanying this essay are photographic reproductions of drawings made in an attempt to reconsider the conventions of the picture plane in architectural drawing¹². The drawings rely on the intervention of the observer to attain meaning. Formally the drawings explore conventions of the picture plane as it is found in drawing, trompe l'oeil painting, the natural habitat diorama, photography, film, Renaissance quadratura and buildings. They are an attempt to draw out an architecture that does not point towards a more real state than the drawing itself. They do not point to a space that can be realized through a more tangible construction in reality. They deal with producing the experience of the space that

they are, and so attempts to diminish a prominent gap between representation and realization in architecture. The illustrations *In Landscape*, *Skin Close-up 1*, *Skin Close-up 2*, *In Room*, and *Alone* are better off left to the reader-observers imagination. Explaining their functions and built-in intentions serves only to diminish their erotic potential.

Peter Cook writes of “a nagging suspicion: that the drawing can possible be better than the reality”¹³. He continues “So we have another paradox: that the drawn is more pure, more concentrated than the build building. Is the latter the *real* thing but the former the *true* thing? A tricky question”¹⁴. I would like to address a similar concern. Not whether the drawn architecture is better, real or true, but enquire into how, and which kind of reality we enter through the drawing, or, which kind of reality the drawing itself launches into us. I propose a drawing that do not hold within the potential realization of something that can be intensely present, but in itself is such a presence. The suggestion recognises that depth of space is the sum of metric values (belonging to the realm of perception-quantifiable, measurable-inscribed by the visual projections conventional to architectural drawing) together with historical narratives, emotional and social proximities.

To claim to understand the implications or the structure of the projections back and forth in the erotic triangulation is a tricky business. The erotic triangulation is theory. At certain points it makes its way through to reality and runs parallel to lived experience. At others the model is clinically ineffective. I learn from this that in eroticism, as in architecture, geometry should not be trusted.

¹¹ The conversation between Madeleine Elster/Judy Barton and the detective Scottie in the last scene of *Vertigo*:

Scottie: “That was when you made your mistake Judy. You shouldn't keep souvenirs of a killing! You shouldn't have been... you shouldn't have been that sentimental... I loved you so Madeleine”.

Judy: “Scottie... I was safe when you found me, there was nothing that you could prove. When I saw you again I couldn't run away. I loved you so, I walked into danger – let you change me because I loved you and I wanted you. Scottie, please, you love me now, we'd be safe”.

Scottie: “Too late, it's too late there is no bringing her back” (Transcription from *Vertigo*).

¹² This research owes much to the work and teaching of architect, maker and researcher Nat Chard, Professor and Head of University of Manitoba's Faculty of Architecture.

¹³ Peter Cook, Drawing, p. 16.

¹⁴ The sentence begins “In certain respects, this intensity directs us more clearly than the built building: it holds onto the vision while only occurring on a piece of white paper, whereas the house, though finely executed, is subject to its surroundings, the time of day, the state of materials in wet or dry weather and the like. So we have another paradox: that the drawn is more pure, more concentrated than the build building. Is the latter the *real* thing but the former the *true* thing? A tricky question” (Cook 2008: 60).

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I have been a teaching assistant at the Aarhus School of Architecture in Denmark and at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Architecture in Canada. My research interests are experimental architecture explored through design and making: drawing, photography and related constructions. At this moment I am working on a number of curved picture planes, trying to figure out how they register and interact through stereoscopic photography.

TRIANGULIACIJA IR VAIZDAVIMAS

F. Petersen

Santrauka. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos architektūrinių piešinių prasmės. Meninio tyrimo pagrindu tampa autoriaus grafinėmis priemonėmis sukurti, tačiau fotografijų pavidalu pristatomi kūriniai, balansuojantys tarp piešinio atvaizdo ir paties piešinio. Eksperimentinės kūrybos procesas ir rezultatas yra apmąstomi, kontekstualizuojami ir konceptualiai plėtojami remiantis nevienalyčiais humanitariniais tekstais: Peterio Cook'o, Anne Carson, Rebeccos Solnit, Kester Rattenbury, taip pat Alfredo Hitchcock's *Vertigo* filmo analize.

Tiriamąjį pobūdžio architektūrinius piešinius bandoma interpretuoti pasitelkiant trianguliacijos, kuri įvardijama kaip erotinė, analitinę struktūrą. Geometrinė schema naudojama siekiant apibrėžti reprezentacijos proceso komponentus: architektūrinį piešinį, jo suvokėją ir suvokėjo subjektyvų patyrimą, juos įvardijant kaip mylintįjį, mylimąjį ir mylimojo vaizdinį, ir išsiaiškinti jų sąveikos principus bei galimybes. Atskleidžiama, kad ši trinarė sąveikos struktūra yra dinamiška ir atvira, leidžianti naujai interpretuoti tai, kas vyksta daugiareikšmėje terpėje tarp reprezentacijos (idėjos vaizdavimo) ir architektūrinės realizacijos. Ieškoma galimybių išlaisvinti architektūrinį piešinį iš žanro suvaržymų, jam suteikiant suvokėjo kuriamų vaizdinių projektavimo plokštumos, savotiško geismo generatoriaus, lemiančio aktyvų suvokėjo dalyvavimą kūrybiniame procese, statusą. Daroma išvada, kad kuriančio piešimo naudojimas mažina atotrūkį tarp atvaizdo ir realizacijos, daro jį ne mažiau svarbiu realybės formantu nei realūs architektūriniai objektai.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: architektūrinis piešimas, vaizdo plokštuma, reprezentacija, realizacija, trianguliacija, erosas, geismas, neapibrėžtumas.