
An-Aesthetics and Architecture

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Abstract (Article Summary)

Labour produces works of wonder for the rich, but nakedness for the worker. It produces palaces, but only hovels for the worker; it produces beauty, but cripples the worker; it replaces labour by machines but throws a part of the worker back to a barbaric labour and turns the other part into machines. It produces culture, but also imbecility and cretinism for the worker. (Marx, 1844/1972)

We consider it important to look at the built environment from the standpoint of critical management studies and ask how buildings contribute to the ideological, political and economic structures of domination. The paper begins by asking what is meant by 'aesthetics'. Using the work of Wolfgang Welsch (1997) and acknowledging his dependence on Theodor Adorno (1991/2001) we can see how polysemous the concept is. But hidden away in Welsch are a very few yet suggestive references to 'anaesthetics'. The paper, in part, seeks to develop this notion. Using Huxley's *Brave New World* we can detect within the Foreword what is tantamount to an ironic manifesto for anaesthetization. We compare aesthetics with anaesthetics in the context of architecture and attempt to show how the "dazzle" (Benjamin, circa 1930s/1999) of buildings is often accompanied by desensitisation of those who live and work within them. This is to say that almost every aesthetic development is matched with an anaesthetizing one. Sometimes this is only at the level of the individual sensorium but often those who designed the dazzle, those who produced the dazzle and those who provided the raw materials for the dazzle face intense desensitisation in order to produce the 'phantasamagoria' of which Walter Benjamin (circa 1930s/1999) spoke. The paper critiques an article by Mauro Guillen (1997) who sees Taylorism as an aesthetic and in so doing gives brief consideration to the 'zero architecture' (Banham, 1986) of Albert Kahn's factories and the work of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill whom are seen as the 'utilitarian heirs' to Kahn, in the realm of office design for corporate capitalism. Whilst corporate owners may well see these buildings as 'phantasamagoria', for those who work in them all that is offered is anaesthesia.

Full Text (6,922 words)

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WHAT IS AESTHETICS?

Wolfgang Welsch (1997) maintains that 'the aesthetic' is a polysemy in that there is a wide variety of usages of the term circulating which, although inter-related, do give one quite distinct perspectives on the topic. Some of these are as follows:

- The measurement and appreciation of the beautiful - callistics;
- The appreciation of good design and that which provides good form i.e. cosmetics;
- The ability to make a harmonious appealing whole from disparate elements;
- The ability to perceive contrasts between contiguous elements e.g. colour;
- The appreciation of the sensuous - that which appeals to all the senses;
- The appreciation of that which requires the higher cultivated senses;
- That which requires perceptiveness rather than sensateness;
- That which requires time to appreciate and is beyond the immediacy of the moment;
- That which concerns itself with phenomenological appearance and not substance, and
- The ability to draw all the above elements into one piece of artistic creation;

We find this helpful as a way of gaining purchase on the slipperiness of the term 'aesthetics', but what we find even more useful is a very minor point hidden away within the book. Welsch goes on, in one or two isolated spots within the text (1997, pp. 25, 72, 83), to raise the issue of the 'double figure' of aesthetics and anaesthetics. Is he suggesting then that the opposite of aesthetics is anaesthetics? Partly. This point is also made in part by Antonio Strati (1999, p. 81). Aesthetics, says Strati, is the knowledge given to us by our sensory organs and is related to the Greek verb "*aisth*" which means "to feel". It is thus very different from theological disputation about meaning. It can be seen, says Strati (ibid.), as "the sensibilities activated to help humans observe, just as anaesthetics' ... is the means whereby the sensory facilities are blunted, and one of these means may be art". In other words, art may stimulate sensibility into insensibility by transforming the 'everyday' into the 'special' by decoration, hedonism and the creation of illusion. "These are ways to 'anaesthetise' organizational actors and thereby render them insensitive and entirely unable to comprehend organizational life" (ibid.). So, for Strati, whilst aesthetics sharpens the sensory faculties (sic), anaesthetics dulls them (sic).

Welsch (1997) too, says that continued excitement leads to indifference. Over-stimulus gives way to the nervous system shutting down, nothing seems beautiful anymore and the sensuous gives way to desensitization. The globalization of the aesthetic means that ubiquitous beauty loses its appeal and its meaning. If beauty is everywhere it can even become terrifying. But at this point Welsch differs from Strati. For, to the extent that one or more of the senses is stimulated through an aesthetized stimulus it is implied that one or more of the remaining senses is anaesthetised. Welsch sees the human sensorium as a bundle of different senses undergoing differing levels of sensory stimulation whilst Strati rolls them all in together. The privileging of the visual, we might infer from this, can lead to the terror of loss of perceptive feeling in the auditory or the olfactory senses. Anaesthetization thus can become one way of surviving the terror of partial stimulation or over-stimulation of the senses and of perception.

We would like to take the concept of *anaesthetization* somewhat further and infuse it with more of a political flavour than one finds in Welsch and with a non-Stratian conception of the human sensorium as being heterogenous in form. In this, we take the force of the argument developed in the sixteenth century by Loyola in appealing to all the five the senses of the whole population in encouraging those Catholics, through excitation of their whole sensorium (at different times) to attend Church and thus reject the Reformation because it was so depleted in its sensateness. We hope you will bear with us as we engage in this thought experiment, taking as our focal centre, the practice of architecture. First however, it may be useful to have anaesthetization described for us in graphic form.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932/1994) has within it clear and shocking descriptions of buildings and their functions. Indeed, the book begins with an architectural reference. It establishes the modernity of the future in which it is set by announcing "A squat grey building of only thirty-four storeys" (p. 1). In the *Foreword* of 1946 edition, Huxley presciently sees the great significance of Los Alamos to the post-war world. He says (Huxley, 1946/1994, u.n.):

The most important Manhattan Projects of the future will be vast government-sponsored inquiries into what the politicians and the participating scientists will call 'the problem of happiness' - in other words, the problem of making people love their servitude.

The problem of happiness will be solved, he argues, by better techniques of conditioning, the assignment of human beings into their proper position, a more pleasurable and less harmful drug than gin or heroin through which people may take holidays from reality and a foolproof system of eugenics.

We take this to be an ironic manifesto for anaesthetization.

Below, Huxley describes a conditioning process in which khaki dressed, delta class infants learn to turn away from aesthetic experiences.

the babies at once fell silent, then began to crawl towards those clusters of sleek colours, those shapes so gay and brilliant on the white pages. As they approached, the sun came out of a momentary eclipse behind a cloud. The roses flamed up as though with a sudden passion from within: a new and profound significance seemed to suffuse the shining pages of the books. From the ranks of the crawling babies came little squeals of excitement, gurgles and twitterings of pleasure. (Huxley, 1932/1994, p. 17)

Then "there was a violent explosion. Shriller and ever shriller, a siren shrieked. Alarm bells maddeningly sounded. The children started, screamed: their faces were distorted with terror" (ibid.).

'Offer them the flowers and books again'. The nurses obeyed: but at the

approach of the roses, at the mere sight of those gaily-coloured images of pussy and cock-a-doodle doo and baa-baa black sheep, the infants shrank away in horror. (Huxley, 1932/1994, p. 18)

And whilst, of course, Huxley was describing a world of the future from within the context of the early 1930s there must be a real sense in which the anaesthetizing process within our schools and universities *today* attempts to distort with terror the faces of those exposed to the ‘hardships’ of reading difficult books and of appreciating the non-human world as if it was of equal significance to the human one. Even Alphas and Alpha pluses within *Brave New World* require regular escapes into an anaesthetised existence through the taking of a gramme of stupefying ‘soma’.

So what Huxley offers us is a description of a dystopian world in which anaesthetization is literally ‘the order of the day’. He sees important connections between the architecture of this dystopian world and its attempts to make people love their servitude. And the culture of the society (based largely on imagery drawn from Fordist America) is one in which most of the aesthetic pleasures of the world cease to be on offer and are replaced by the anodyne anaesthetization of the populace through class based indoctrination and the biochemistry of management.

Clearly, in common understanding, being ‘anaesthetised’ means no longer being sensate to the world around. It is a form of extreme desensitisation to external and internal stimuli. And this distinction between inner and outer world is important. For are we talking here of the individual’s capacity for interest in and ability to seek out the aesthetic being impaired by some form of ‘soma’? Or does it mean that the ‘anaesthetic’ social order does not knowingly provide any aesthetics for the population to enjoy? Is this then an individual or collective issue? Now the reader may see this as a false dichotomy, but the questions asked and answers given depend in large measure on the level of analysis that one begins from. Thus anaesthetics might imply a condition in which beauty could not be appreciated *or* that there was nothing beautiful in the environment to actually appreciate.

Thus the equivalent of an individual, phenomenologically based analysis would produce workers, let us say, who could not appreciate beauty, sought no underlying form or wholeness in what they did, whose senses were dulled and whose higher senses were not developed, whose perceptiveness was dulled by lack of time and whose interest in the external was very low. The materially based equivalent of a social condition such as alienation and the attendant masking of reality would produce a picture of anesthesitization as there being nothing beautiful to appreciate, no sense could be made because of the organization of non-integrated parts, which also rendered cosmeticisation futile, that perceptions were artificially lowered by ideological control mechanisms and workers were time starved in order to deprive them of the opportunity to think. In *Brave New World* gammas and epsilons are portrayed as precisely this: anaesthetized drones.

This does not exhaust the range of possibilities, of course, for there is always the possibility that what passes for aesthetics *and* anaesthetics is predicated upon particular

class-based power maintaining common understandings of what is meant by the 'cultural'. Does anyone ask the gammas and epsilons what they find beautiful? A rejection of the problematique of aesthetics may be the most constructive way forward for large sections of the population. But nevertheless it is significant to recognise that the aesthetics/anaesthetics dualism does raise many relevant questions for critical management studies.

Elsewhere (Burrell & Dale, in press) we have argued that critical management studies needs to be much more aware of the significance of the built environment and the ways in which management is involved in the building of power, the building of consumption, the building of manufacture and the building of administration. This does not mean that we are interested solely in the buildings of buildings, but rather in the building of the social through buildings. In the present paper, we shall focus on that cultural product known as architecture and ask in what circumstances does the aesthetic/anaesthetic dualism come into play? When do buildings produce an aesthetic experience of the kind Benjamin describes in his *Arcades Project (Passagenwerk, circa 1930s/1999)* as *phantasamagoria*? And when do they produce a form of *anaesthesia*?

If anaesthesia, put simply, is about the suppression of the sensate, phantasamagoria are about the excitation of the senses through the surface lustres of beautiful aesthetics used to encourage consumption. The original phantasamagoria in the 19th century were back-lit projections (and, it is important to note, were *not* mere reflections) of ghostly images, onto a screen, that the audience could not detect the provenance thereof. They were bright attractive projections that entertained and amazed audiences. They had and have (for we shall argue that they are still to be found) an aesthetic impact on the crowds for which they were designed. The term becomes generalised in Walter Benjamin's work to mean any deceptive image designed to dazzle (Burrell & Dale, in press).

How then, specifically in the realm of architecture, does Benjamin's notion of phantasamagoria relate to a form of Welsch's anaesthetics? How does the encouragement of a brightly lit *dazzle* square with *desensitisation* of the subject?

First, we must note the emphasis on the visible. The primacy of the visual in the human sensorium is an important part of Benjamin's approach. As Welsch notes, to over-stimulate one part of the sensorium is to under-stimulate the other senses. Thus it is quite easy to see that dazzle and desensitisation can go together in terms of human sensateness. In the presence of bright lights one hears less. But we must note that we are talking here of the single sentient human being. There is more to this than that single point.

Second, it may well be that certain social beings are dazzled and pleased by an aesthetic experience. But at the cost of the desensitisation of those who serve them in the same space. One needs only to consider aesthetic labour (e.g., Hancock & Tyler, 2000) and emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) to see that the aesthetic experience of flying or entering Disneyfied spaces is at the cost of the self-anaesthetised labour of others. Here we are suggesting that one form of anaesthetic used is by staff supposed to engage in

emotional labour but who wish to switch off during work (Fineman, 1993; Hochschild, 1983).

Third, the possibility exists that dazzling ‘glass-roofed, marble-lined elegance’ is a form of aesthetic experience that is predicated in one way or another on the desensitization of those acting at a distance from the lights, those who provide the labour power to achieve the materials for this aesthetic experience. In other words, perhaps the glass factory workers are only offered anaesthetised labour, for sensory deprivation is an integral part of their building and the technological processes that go on within it. And so too of the back-breaking work at the quarry where the marble is hewn.

Fourth, the professionals who aim to produce phantasmagoria (and in this case we refer to architects) must seek to act as dazzlers. However, they are constrained in their art by economics, politics and the power of the client. Only signature architects who engage in Art Architecture may come close to producing beautiful lustres, but for them, some of the time, and for the journeymen and women of the profession, most of the time, compromises have to be made. Professional architects desensitise themselves from not being able to deliver what they want as a full aesthetic experience. Every architect-designed space is, to a greater or lesser extent, a compromise with cost and context in which the aesthetic ideal is lost. Thus architecture is a profession that is anaesthetised, as well as aestheticised, from the outset. Architects cannot seek the full achievement of beauty. Rather, they may have to follow fashion set for them by their clients, who themselves have different and dynamic desires associated with the human sensorium.

Therefore, to dazzle requires desensitisation of the individual who is dazzled, desensitisation of those who labour to produce the dazzle in the same place, desensitisation of those who produce the material to dazzle many miles away and desensitisation of those who produce the designs for the dazzle. Aesthetic labour must also have anaesthetic labour. And this is where, at long last, management comes in. Aesthetics and anaesthetics are both a matter of the *management* of the senses.

When Chester Barnard said in 1939 that management was as much an issue of aesthetics as it was of rationality, he participated in a process of the managerialisation of aesthetics. The separation of mind from the senses, of critical reason from practical reason, of sense from sensibility may appear to be a progressive splitting off, for it presents a world in which there are legitimate alternative readings to that derived from reason and rationality. In an issue of the journal *Organization* (1996), on aesthetics and organization, the authors seemed to share a belief that aesthetics offered a parallel interpretation to that derived from managerial rationality and that this should be analysed as an alternative to managerialism. What is amazing, of course, (to us at least) is that the range of human senses supposedly being used in aesthetics — the sensorium — could be seen as remaining untainted by — as independent from — managerial control. The body-in-space is a target for control, discipline, dressage and indoctrination. To assume that it remains a free spirit, outside of the pull of capitalistic rationality, is a triumph of optimism. The interiorisation of power flows and the manipulation of the sensorium are totally ignored in much treatment of aesthetics and organization. The current fashion for,

and accompanying valorisation of, transparent openness in organizational life is reliant upon an obvious manipulation of the human senses and what is to be welcomed by them. The visible is seen (sic) as the valued.

Organizational life, then, is undertaken inside a built environment in which the human body and the sensorium are placed. But we know that the notion that space is empty and is filled by the human physique is not a very social one. It is much better to see the space we inhabit as created by us and by the needs of our enfleshed skeleton. In order to demonstrate this social construction of space, we want to spend a little time discussing an article from *Administrative Science Quarterly* (Guillen, 1997) that attempts to widen the debate on Taylorism by suggesting that Taylorism was an aesthetic ideal that spread around the world. We wish to argue that it may well have been an aesthetic for the capitalist classes since it offered to them a wonderful bright *phantasmagoria* of what could be achieved by efficient mass production, but for the labouring classes it represented *anaesthetization* by dulling the senses of those who worked in factories using such principles. The buildings of Albert Kahn, for example, allowed for worker desensitization to the presence of 'zero architecture' inside and outside his factories, factories in which Taylorism and Fordism were to gather apace.

Mauro Guillen (1997) had an article published in *Administrative Science Quarterly* entitled 'Scientific Management's Lost Aesthetic: Architecture, Organization And The Taylorised Beauty Of The Mechanical'. It is worth considering this piece, we would maintain, for it throws into relief the 'an-aesthetic' stance we are to take on the relationship between space, architecture and organization. In many ways it is an exemplary article, sophisticated in its understanding of Europe, historically aware and interested in cultural issues. He seeks to show that the aesthetic 'modernists' in European architecture were highly influenced by Taylorism and saw in it a beauty that latter-day critics, particularly in the social sciences, have not. Guillen (1997) claims that these modernists, such as Gropius, Mies van de Rohe and Le Corbusier, saw in Taylorism and Fordism "beauty with technical, economic and social efficiency" (p. 683). Here, immediately, the reader confronts several problems. Nowhere in the article is aesthetics defined. The level of complexity in defining the term with which we began this paper is totally absent in Guillen. He only looks at 'architects and other artists' who combine 'beauty with technical, economic and social efficiency'. There is, therefore, a certain tendentiousness in the approach that he takes from the outset! He claims that European architects of a modernist persuasion found an aesthetic message in what was going on in the reorganization of production in the USA. Nowhere does Guillen reveal that the European modernists waxed lyrical about the future on what they had seen of Scientific Management's concretisation within factory walls, *solely on the basis of a dozen or so grainy photographs*. What he fails to realise is that they seldom visited the USA in this period and much of what they thought they knew was derived from poor quality snapshots. Gropius published North American photos in 1913, but only visited the USA in 1928; Le Corbusier borrowed these images in 1919 and went to the US in 1935 (Banham, 1986, p. 9). It is very surprising that Guillen does not pick up on this because he certainly references *A Concrete Atlantis* by Reyner Banham (1986) who claims that the work of the European architects in the modernist tradition did copy from American

industrial prototypes and models but that: “it must be the first architectural movement in the history of the art based almost exclusively on photographic evidence rather than on the ancient and previously unavoidable techniques of personal inspection and measured drawing” (Banham, 1986, p. 18).

It is a strange aesthetics, perhaps, that is based on grainy photographs rather than first hand impressions. These aesthetics, we might surmise, were actually in the eye of the (*non-*)beholder. From the distance conveyed through the photographic medium, not only did the European architects not have material knowledge of the design and construction (discussed in Banham, 1986, p. 18), but they also had no social knowledge of the arrangements and relations of production that actually guided the development of such architectural forms. It was a curiously ‘externalist’ appropriation that was facilitated by the distancing, singular vision of an optocentric aesthetics. Venturi, Scott-Brown and Izenour (1972, pp. 92-3, discussed in Banham) emphasise that Le Corbusier “claimed the steamship and the grain elevator for their forms rather than their associations, for their simple geometry rather than their industrial lineage”. Banham adds that this adoption of the industrial ‘style’ was symbolic: these buildings appeared to fit the values of the modernist credo with their functional honesty, structural economy and being up to date yet hinting of a futuristic technological utopia.

This abstract and abstracted aesthetics highlights the controversial nature of Guillen’s notion that the ‘outcomes’ of scientific management might not all have been seamy and unpleasant. Clearly if one was an industrialist then this might well be true. Even some scientific managers may have welcomed and embraced the new managerial regimes. Nowhere, however, is the elision between Taylorism, Fordism and Scientific Management confronted. If they were and are separate entities then one has to treat them accordingly. Homogenising them into one category serves little purpose if one wishes to understand their dynamics (Littler, 1985). As with the European modernists, Guillen also seems to be using aesthetics to justify the avoidance of an understanding of the social relations of production.

Elsewhere too, Guillen (1997, p. 688) seems to find difficulty in the notion that these great architects were only too well aware of the needs of corporate clients. The possession of *avant-garde* credentials does *not* necessarily mean that these talented individuals would take sides against individualistic, mechanistic and engineering based models. After all, these models were sweeping Wilhelmine Germany with their promise of military and industrial success. Why, we might ask, does Guillen find this consanguinity of the *avant-garde* with capitalism so troubling? It is only to set up the discussion that follows. There is a non-question to which he provides an answer. He is right to say that we have neglected aesthetic issues in Organization Theory but he brings his discussion into being by dissembling about an obvious politico-economic explanation for the motivation of these leading ‘Art-Architects’. They sought clients who could and would willingly support their work.

Most importantly, however, the problem of Guillen’s focus on the leading figures of architecture, these ‘Art-Architects’ (Upton, 1998, pp. 262-264), means that he

completely ignores the ‘journeymen’ of the architectural profession who, whilst they do not have artistic pretensions nor abilities, are yet well served by the Art-Architects in the day to day business of making a living. He asserts that things that may be seen as beautiful are aesthetic in some objective sense and therefore the Art-Architects themselves legitimise these forms of cheap industrial building by finding beauty in them. Upton (1998), however, observes that “the conspicuous minority of art-architects bolsters the position of the majority of ordinary practitioners by generating new forms to resupply the professional’s visual stock ... imbuing the entire profession with the cultural prestige ... of art” (p. 263).

Thus our argument is that Guillen’s piece is to be welcomed for introducing the debate on aesthetics in architecture into the mainstream of organization theory but that it fails to understand the specific differences between particular clients for projects and ultimately opts for a view which privileges that of elite culture and elite capital in its assumptions about aesthetics. From a worker perspective we might hazard a guess that the factories devoted to Taylorism and Fordism, as built according to Kahnism, were places of anaesthetization and zeroes: zero stimulation; zero time for contemplation; zero encouragement of perceptiveness; and, zero architecture. And therefore we turn from the ‘externalist’ point of view of the aesthetics of modern industrial building, to consider the ‘internal’ dynamics of the production of these key spaces of twentieth century capitalism.

Born in Germany in 1869, Albert Kahn excelled in the design of buildings for mass production. The construction of single storey buildings covering many acres, illuminated by saw tooth roofs was his trademark. What he developed through his firm was no more and no less than a new paradigm of factory construction. Large factories with their mass production technologies and a workforce used to the rhythms of the industrial day are associated of course with Ford and with Taylor but rarely with Kahn. Yet it is Kahn’s development of the ‘daylight factory’ that produced the spaces in which such efficient mass production work could take place. Beginning with contracts with the Packard Motor Co. in 1903 and thence working for Ford and GM, Kahn established a huge reputation for meeting corporate needs. Most (in)famously, Building Ten of the Packard Motor Company’s site in Detroit, is seen by some as a defining moment in 20th century architecture. The building has been described as ‘zero architecture’ (cf. Banham, 1986, p. 86).

Culture was thus to disappear into the rapacious cost-sensitive maw of administration. And as this zero-architecture took hold, so too did Kahn take his firm increasingly in the direction of looking more and more like the large firms and state departments with whom he interacted. His huge drawing offices resembled ever more closely the very designs of the buildings upon their drawing boards. One of his contributions then and a key to his success was to develop the large-scale architectural firm that mirrored the large-scale industrial conglomerate. His company grew then by responding to the changes in the US and Soviet economies in the inter-war period and even more so as a result of the Second World War itself. The design principles in his architecture themselves reflected the growth of large-scale bureaucracies. His plans emphasised linearity and hierarchy, with Detroit as the centre of his architectural practice

in the same way as it was the centre of medium engineering. Michigan was the gravitational point for his work and it reflected the huge development of the car industry at this time. Also related to this, although not in Kahn's hands, were the public housing programme at Leavittown and the Liberty ship construction programme. Whilst these were and are seen as cheap, low quality and mass-produced architectural activities perhaps these are the very things in which we should be interested. It is not the great figures of architecture in terms of their creative originality of whom we should speak but the utilitarian forces at work which drive forward capital's aims.

THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE

The intellectual property rights involved in assigning ownership to 'The International Style' are complex and contested. What Guillen has done is to reverse the usually accepted flow of ideas in which architectural aesthetics are seen as running westward. For him, Taylorism moves into Europe in the 1920s as reflective of a new work process in which architects become interested because of its 'elegant' rationalistic forms. For Europeans and most American architects, the lines of influence run the other way in that the USA takes on board the International Style which originates in Europe in the late 1920s. But in the same way as Le Corbusier touched up pictures of Canadian and Argentinian grain silos and called them American, Americans transformed European modernism and air brushed out all the social criticism. Therefore, the Trans-Atlantic flows are indubitably both ways.

In 1931, the year in which *Brave New World* was in the production stage of being published, automobile production in the USA was at about 20% of its 1929 output. Employment in the building industry was less than half of its 1929 level and 85% of all the architects in New York city were out of work (Handlin, 1997, p. 197). The unemployed looked elsewhere. A new architecture based on a new aesthetic appeared to be developing in Europe. It preached austerity, broke its connections to the older traditions of architecture and made prophetic statements about the new social order based on industrial production. In 1932 an exhibition took place of the 'modern architecture' at the Museum of Modern Art and thereafter this became known as the 'International Style'. According to Hancock and Johnson who organised the exhibition, the new style's aesthetic concerns were with volume not mass (meaning what went into the building was now much more unconstrained), the appearance of a building should reflect its purpose and finally that external decoration served no useful function at all. What this set of principles does, of course, is to strip out any formal discussion of issues of ideology, politics and social relevance. In the European tradition such issues were paramount but once European ideas entered the USA there was a tendency for them to be seen without any sense of context from which they originated. Colin Rowe (quoted in Curtis, 1996, p. 403) says that "European modern architecture, even when it operated within the cracks and crannies of the capitalist system, existed within an ultimately Socialist ambience. American modern architecture did not". For in America, European architecture "was introduced simply as a new approach to building - and not much more. That is, it was introduced largely purged of its ideological or societal content". Thus, the transformation

into some neutered form of those *avant garde* political aspirations for and of art-architecture, took place very easily indeed within the USA. Housing, for example, was given a very low status in the USA's appropriation of the International Style and whilst the Tennessee Valley Authority (studied by Selznick in 1947 as one of the classic pieces of organisational analysis) did represent Government-sponsored attempts to raise the profile of such social planning, it failed dismally to achieve this objective.

Somewhat perplexingly, Kahn despised the International Style when he may well have been seen as engaging in precisely the same sort of aesthetic. But he saw it as the lowest form of architecture. Architecture in its proper sense was about ceremonial purpose. Functionality (in which most of his practice specialised) was the least important in the hierarchy of the discipline. Of Gropius's work he asked "Is it architecture at all?" and that of Le Corbusier was "utterly stupid" (Handlin, 1997, p. 209). This is why he could be sanguine about his own buildings being 'zero architecture' for he saw such a condition all around him in the new European style. It was not proper architecture. This stance came from a visit he made in 1881 to various European cities, with Henry Bacon, a colleague, who was later to design the Lincoln Memorial. They were both influenced by the classicism of the Beaux Arts movement in France and thereafter saw 'real' buildings as being necessarily monumental, with a clear architectural hierarchy existing from ceremonial buildings at the top and functional buildings way down at the bottom.

Harvey Wiley Corbett (1873-1954) argued that "advertising, exploitation and publicity were the animating agents behind the commercial age" (1924, quoted in Handlin, 1997, p. 183). The architect, according to Corbett, had to give expression to these forces and the skyscraper, the architectural form with which he is associated, must have a distinct physiognomy which would really identify the company who paid for it to be built. Skidmore Owings and Merrill (SOM) were just such a company who were able and willing to provide corporate identity through monumental buildings. Influenced by Ludwig Mies van de Rohe (1886-1969) with his image of the tall building by which to set agendas, they opened their office in Chicago in 1936 but immediately also placed themselves in New York.

Thus SOM were the heirs to Kahn's 'utilitarian boxes'; they were the firm who took this aesthetic of function and fully stripped out any sense of left wing confrontation within it. Beginning with their successful bid to the US Army for the design for the facilities of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos (and their ultra sensitivity to reflecting military hierarchy that this necessitated), SOM went on to develop their version of the International Style into the house style of corporate capitalism. Office buildings became great phantasmagoria in the sky. They were phallic symbols of the potency of their Chief Executive Officers and, through their glass curtain walls, spoke to the audiences, paraded before them in the streets of the metropolitan centres, of their brightness and powers of illumination made possible by their amassed dollars. The appeal to corporate owners comes from their phantasmagoric capabilities to dazzle. These office blocks conventionally represented 'sky-scrapers' but offered more symbolically, penetration of the clouds. Yet, as within the factories of Kahn, they relied upon anaesthetised bureaucrats labouring within. The buildings of SOM which came to dominate office

building in the latter half of the 20th century were also places of anaesthetics and zeroes.

But, of course, it would be foolish to think that politics had been stripped out of the International Style completely. SOM reflected a politics which was anti-union, anti-‘liberal’ and anti-craft ethic (one of the ways in which they achieved these goals was the widespread use of mass produced, prefabricated components, factory-built and then shipped to the site - a commonplace activity now but initially a radical move). The aesthetics of Hancock and Johnson were supposedly outside of politics but what this masked was the capture of left leaning socially aware architecture by American corporate architects whose politics, were they to win business for their offices, had to be inclined to the right.

So, in America or elsewhere is it possible even to envisage architectures that do not anaesthetise and that do not represent a phantasmagorian dazzle designed to simultaneously desensitise?

ARCHITECTURES OF EMANCIPATION?

Rather than a rationalist view of the aesthetics of architecture which posits that the structure and form of a building reflects its functions, and that these functions are hierarchically arranged — with of course the architecture of industry at the bottom — we have sought to argue a more complex relationship between aesthetics and organisation. Art has often been seen as somehow autonomous from the social and political relations in which it has been produced. Through this relative autonomy it could stand outside and protest against the ‘petrified relations’ of bourgeois society. Theodor Adorno was keen to assert in his aesthetic theory that art had an emancipatory potential, through its presenting of a vision of an alternative world. Art which required the engagement of the observer and was not merely an entertainment or distraction had this potential to liberate (Leach, 1997, pp. 17-19).

Following Adorno, who here prefigures much of what Welsch has to say in his tour of the meanings of aesthetics, Architecture as Art may be assumed to be where every detail/part is central to the totality of the enterprise; themes and detail are highly interwoven and the latter cannot be changed without affecting the whole; a high level of technical competence is required. The audience for the building or edifice which is high art have to experience all of it, they have to concentrate on it very hard for it is like no other piece and ultimately it is disruptive of the continuum of everyday life (cf. Held, 1980, pp. 101 & 103). Architecture devoid of art (in a sense ‘zero architecture’) reflects the opposite tendencies. The piece uses familiar and cliched frameworks; it is repetitive, rigid and underdeveloped thematically. Stress is on individual effects not the totality and therefore detail can be substituted at will. The conventional norms are unchallengingly supported by such edifices. Audiences react to such artless buildings by responding to the parts not the whole. The piece is standardised and already known and predictable; little effort is required to understand it and there is manipulation of the form and content so that they appear familiar. This sense of pre-existing recognition produces pleasure for the observer and the quality of the building is measured by how often it is repeated. Thus it

reinforces a sense of continuity with everyday life and renders the process of thinking unnecessary.

The problem with such an analysis is that one cannot assume that difficult and disruptive buildings which challenge the status quo are necessarily going to rely on an aesthetics which are sympathetic to the workforce! Surely it might be possible for aesthetically challenging edifices to be erected which are antagonistic to subordinate value systems and quality of life.

Adorno thought that 'authentic art' would succumb to 'the culture industry' where its consumers, the workforce, were at their weakest and most ill-informed. He saw Benjamin as having embraced "the anarchistic romanticism of blind confidence in the spontaneous power of the proletariat" (quoted in Held, 1980, p. 88) and instead of this he advocated the merits of work which both rejects market requirements and nineteenth century philosophies and embraces the dissonant character of the twentieth century. For him, that authentic art which was revolutionary in a Left wing sense was likely to be under real threat. What he did not fully address was art which is revolutionary in a right wing sense. However, Adorno did recognise that the inaccessibility of high art would reduce its revolutionary effectiveness for the Left. The relationship between architecture, aesthetics and high art on one hand and the power of the workforce, spontaneous or not, on the other, therefore does merit further investigation and is more complex than Adorno recognised. High culture in the form of Art Architecture can be authentically autonomous from what has gone before but nevertheless culturally emiserate large sections of the populace. Indeed, revolutionary new buildings derived from the domain of Art Architects can be just like the buildings of popular culture: profoundly enslaving.

So, in concluding this paper, we seek not to find and analyse architecture which is only left-leaning high art on one hand or an architecture of popular culture which reinforces the existing structures of domination on the other. Rather, for us, architecture is a practice which can be conceptualised as being other things. First, it might be revolutionary from the point of view of the interests of Capital and with aesthetic content from the phenomenological standpoint of the organizational subordinate. Bel Geddes' design for the General Motors stand 'Futurama', in 1939, seems to have some of these features. In what prefigures a lot of Disney type rides, visitors (sometimes GM car workers) were placed in a travelling vehicle from which they were meant to see the freeways of 1960 and the ameliorating effects these was to have on city life. By all accounts, visitors were amazed and delighted by this diorama. It can be seen as a phantasmagoria which dazzled the consumer and allowed GM to press ahead for freeway expansion on a massive scale. But it moved almost all who saw it. Second, architecture is possible which is revolutionary in the interests of Capital without aesthetic interest from the viewpoint of the subordinate. The interpretation of the subordinate is important but it may well be that he/she sees an architectural aesthetic (or not) because of manipulation of their sensorium. This is the sort of position we think that Huxley is adopting in *Brave New World*. Most crucially, however, for us is that third case where an architecture may be devoid of aesthetic intentions or interpretations on the parts of the architect, perhaps even the client and certainly their subordinates, yet it may be truly

revolutionary. It may be the architectural soma which induces anaesthetization. This description perhaps is what fits the factory design work of Albert Kahn.

One final contemporary example may serve to bring these themes up-to-date. This is the headquarters building of PowerGen, constructed in the mid-1990s and receiving a number of awards for its innovation. Despite this we are not selecting it because of its uniqueness but its typification of the an-aesthetics in organisational aesthetics. The building is constructed as one large space, around an atrium at its centre which allows all three floors to be observed at a glance. However, the effect of such a large space on the senses is surprisingly deadened. The noise levels of up to 600 workers in this open space would be expected to be deafening, but the sound is flattened through the pumping of 'white-noise' which removes the highs and the lows upon the ear of the listener. The atmosphere is also constant and consistent — kept so by a computerised building management system. Visually, the experience of the architecture is one of levelling, transparency and consistency: there are few contrasts or surprises, and a lack of variation in colour and texture. The overall impression, then, is one of calm control of the environment: a fitting setting for professional bureaucratised man and woman?

CONCLUSION

Saskia Sassen (2000, pp. 168-9) has argued that: “the emphasis on hypermobility, global communications and the neutralisation of place and distance needs to be balanced with a focus on the *work* behind command functions, on the actual *production process* in the leading information industries, finance and specialised services and on global market*places*” (italics in original). In this paper we have tried to take these notions of material conditions, sites of production and place boundedness very seriously indeed.

Harry Braverman (1974), a figure whose influence on our subject has been enormous, in his discussion of the Labour Process writes almost nothing on space and place. Whilst it is clear that he did discuss the importance of production processes and was incisive about the materiality of this process, in his sections about Taylorism and Human Relations, about factory and office, these notions are 'deterritorialised' so that they appear to be universal and placeless. What we have sought to argue is that architecture played a key role in the 20th century's development of management practice and the labour process and that our understandings of space and the place of the human body within it are highly influenced by our architectural confinements. Following Merleau-Ponty, Harvey and more importantly Henri Lefebvre, however, the space we inhabit with our bodies is not to be seen as abstract space, nor is it formal space. It is lived space and has to be seen phenomenologically. We are not looking here for space for the body but at the-body-in-space. Human interpretations of the significance of this lived space must be placed at the forefront of our analysis rather than being conveniently forgotten.

In seeking to portray the body-in-space from more of a phenomenological perspective, our encounter with aesthetics raises several issues. Is the desire to find an independent aesthetics across the full range of the human sensorium capable of being

fulfilled? And is the search for authentic architecture capable of being realised? Or, is aesthetics merely a hand-maiden of management? And, is any piece of authentic art able to withstand this pressure to accommodate and comply?

Sassen's encouragement in the face of acres of 'virtuality' to remember material conditions, production sites and place boundedness struck us as important. Office blocks and factories have an ontological depth which confronts the phenomenological world of the body-in-space. We have not space here to explore the philosophical implications of the architecture we inhabit. The opening offered here is one centred on placed, material, sites of production. Frampton (1992) has argued that 'Productivism' is a dominant force in architecture. The central tenet of this style is that architecture is nothing more than elegant engineering and is the product of industrial design on a gigantic scale. The task should be accommodated as far as possible in an undecorated shed that should be as flexible and as open as possible. Openness and flexibility are best served by the services to and within the building being treated in an integrated way and finally the building itself should represent the unimpeded manifestation of production. In their own ways and in different halves of the twentieth century the designs of Kahn and of SOM represent forms of productivism. These two companies have produced buildings all around the world which are cheap to construct, are destructive of craft skills, comfortably meet the symbolic and material needs of capital, and, in their different ways, build upon anaesthetics more than aesthetics. Their success depends also on their incorporation into the dominant social institutions and norms of their time. Thus we emphasise the significance of the everyday architect and architectural practices, and their relationship with business. However, it is perhaps not the architects, great or otherwise, nor the capitalist class that we should focus on but the effects on our very *selves* of the anaesthetics and the aesthetics of our built environment. It is important that issues of space, building and design, very often taken-for-granted in our experience of everyday life, are incorporated into our understanding of alienation and identity.

A critical management studies must be critical, first and foremost, of its own production and consumption of knowledge. Thus, in our discussions of aesthetics and organisation, we must be careful not to de-politicise the nature of the material, embodied relations of production of which we write, in favour of more romanticised, beautiful — but, perhaps anaestheticising — versions of organisational life.

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