A Box in the Theatre of the World: Television, Interior and Urban Experience
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Although Walter Benjamin was much preoccupied with seeing and with the appearance of distance,[1] to my knowledge, in his writings, he mentions television — that is, seeing at a distance — only once, and he does not reflect on it. In a brief article entitled 'Moonlit Nights on the Rue La Boétie', which was occasioned by the sale of a collection of unusual, transparent paintings, Benjamin locates these back-lit, aquarium-like vistas alongside 'a group of arts which is reckoned inferior [...] and which,' he says, 'ranges from early techniques of the observer right down to the electronic television of our own day.'[2]

At the time of writing, in 1928, electronic television had, in fact, yet to be realised.[3] The devices demonstrated in the 1920s coupled various motor-driven, optical components to the state of the art borrowed from the telephone, the cinema and the radio. The television contraptions of the day used aperture-, lens- and prism discs, or mirror drums, -wheels and -screws for dissecting and reassembling images (Fig. 1). Vibrating mirrors and lamp-mosaics triggered by electrical commutators were also tried as well as the cathode ray devices which eventually made 'the tube' a household word.

The venues for these early demonstrations, when they emerged from the laboratories of their inventors, were not the fair grounds and arcades which had hosted the nineteenth-century 'techniques of the observer', but department stores, radio exhibitions and inner-city theatres. The early exhibits exerted a fascination which can hardly be attributed to the quality of the images, which then was just as poor as the content — certainly by comparison with the transparencies which enchanted Benjamin in the rue la Boétie (not to mention the

1 A discussion of 'aura' as the 'unique appearance of distance' is central to Benjamin's thesis on 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility' (trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn), in: *Selected Writings 1935–1938*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 101–122.

2 Walter Benjamin, 'Moonlit Nights on the Rue La Boétie', (trans. by Rodney Livingstone) in: *Selected Writings 1927–1934*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 107–109 [Published in *Die literarische Welt*, March 1928, *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, pp. 509–511].

3 On 2 September 1928, six months after Benjamin's article was published, Philo Taylor Farnsworth put on what is said to have been 'the first public display anywhere in the world of an all-electronic television system' (R. W. Burns, *Television: an International History of the Formative Years*, London: Institution of Electrical Engineers, 1998, p. 361). However, at this time, Farnsworth showed only silhouettes and images captured from film. A practicable electronic camera which could be used in tolerable studio conditions — Farnsworth's image dissector camera required 94.4 kiloWatts of studio lighting — or outdoors in available light, was not developed until the mid-1930s.

contemporary cinema). Nonetheless, television promised vision unimpeded by material or by distance; a view beyond the horizon which the telescope and camera obscura could not deliver, nor any Eiffel tower or mechanical aviation bring closer.

In the 1920s, when telephony by wire and radio were firmly established, it was not a big conceptual leap to imagine simultaneous video and audio transmission. But many of the applications of television which are by now ubiquitous were anticipated more or less ironically in the nineteenth century when the technologies of television were little more than hypothetical. The adventitious discovery of the photo-electric properties of the element Selenium in 1873 brought the idea within the horizons of the possible and prompted predictions of 'distant vision' and 'seeing by electricity' along with speculative terminology such as the *telephonoscope*,[4] *telectroscope*,[5] and *elektrisches Teleskop*.[6] In 1889, Jules Verne imagined the *phonotelephote* as a commonplace of the year 2889,[7] and Constantin Perskyi's paper entitled 'Télévision au moyen de l'électricité', read at the Congrès international d'électricité of 1900,[8] introduced the word which stuck.

George Du Maurier's 1878 drawing of 'Edison's Telephonoscope' in *Punch* depicted a device for long-distance video-telephony and explained it as an 'electric camera-obscura'.[9] (Fig. 2) In 1882, the futuristic novel, *Le Vingtième siècle*, by the satirist, author and illustrator Albert Robida predicted the *téléphonoscope* as the natural successor to the telegraph and the telephone. In addition to domestic video conferencing, as in the *Punch* illustration, Robida envisaged the live transmission of foreign wars for family viewing and of theatrical performances (*spectacles*) for home subscribers. (Figs. 3–4)

> The apparatus consists simply of a glass panel, fitted into a partition of the apartment or placed like a mirror over a mantlepiece. The theatre-lover, without any bother, sits down in front of this panel, choses his theatre, establishes the connection and immediately the show begins.

4 Du Maurier, 1878

5 Selencq, 1879

6 Nipkow, 1885

7 Jules Verne and Michel Verne, 'In the Year 2889', *The Forum*, Vol. 6 (February), 1889. 'The transmission of speech is an old story; the transmission of images by means of sensitive mirrors connected by wires is a thing but of yesterday. A valuable invention indeed, and Mr. Smith this morning was not niggard of blessings for the inventor, when by its aid he was able distinctly to see his wife notwithstanding the distance that separated him from her.'

8 Constantin Perskyi, 'Télévision au moyen de l'électricité' in: *Exposition Universelle Internationale de 1900, Congrès international d'électricité (Paris, 18–25 août 1900). Rapports et procès-verbaux publiés par les soins de M. E. Hospitalier* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1901), pp. 54–56.

9 'Edison's Telephonoscope', drawing by George Du Maurier in *Punch's Almanack for 1879* (9 December 1878). The device was Du Maurier's invention. Thomas Edison (1847–1931), the celebrated and prolific inventor, noted for his contributions to electrical-, media and communications technology, did not in fact develop television.

> [Everything] appears on the large glass panel with the clarity of direct vision; you are really present at the show with your eyes and ears. The illusion is complete, absolute; it is as of you are listening to the play from the depth of a first rate box [in the theatre].[10]

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Whereas idea of outside broadcast transmission, especially of popular sports fixtures and national events, had fired the ambitions of the televisors from the earliest days, until quite recently television *reception* outdoors was almost unimaginable.[11]

Before making an excursion into our contemporary urban landscape [2007], I would like to consider briefly why the interior should seem so compellingly the normal environment for the subject of television. What, beyond, or rather prior to technical practicalities and commercial interests, binds television to the interior? And the interior? How does the interior inhabit the city? I would like to consider the intersections of interior and exterior by tracing some of the implications of television's replications for urban experience, and hence for the construction of urban subjectivity. I would like to suggest where television cuts into, subverts and enfolds the image of architecture.

When television was *only* a matter of the imagination, when there was no television technology, it was not for technical reasons that it belonged to the interior. To be sure, for the nineteenth-century imaginers of TV to come, plausibility demanded an analogy with the camera obscura and magic lantern which were invoked as television's ancestors. Like the earlier devices which projected real or artificial images into a room, television tends to be aligned with the dualism which gives rise to an image of consciousness, ensconced in the skull, watching, more or less impassively, images projected on the retina as if on a screen. In

10 Albert Robida, *Le vingtième siècle* (Paris: Decaux, 1882), p. 56, my translation. Robida's téléphonoscope was probably influenced by Du Maurier. Robida also illustrates several other applications of telephonoscopy, including giant outdoor screens advertising the dominant media corporation of the imagined 1952 with the latest video headlines, home shopping and distance learning channels as well as some of the possible social complications which arise from pervasive video telecommunications and broadcasting. One could probably not find a better example of how 'Chaque époque rêve la suivante'. Surprisingly perhaps, neither Robida's *Twentieth Century*, nor indeed his 'Old Paris', turns up in Benjamin's *Arcades*.

11 To be sure, technical difficulties inhibited the expectations of receiving television out of doors. However, my argument here explores conceptual associations between television and the interior that do not involve any specific technology. In so far as the technical obstacles to receiving television outdoors have been overcome by the development of large-scale LED screens and personal mobile devices, watching TV outdoors tends to promote the privatisation, indeed the interiorisation, of traditionally (or supposedly) public and communal spaces. Communal viewing of television indoors (especially live sports in pubs) remains an aspect of the sociology of television reception and has been more important historically when and where the technology of television was not as widely distributed as consumer society demands. How television forms communities of isolated viewers is not separable from the efforts of marketers to identify the 'audience-commodity', which is the real product of commercial TV (and is as much so for the surviving state broadcasters).

this diagram from *La Dioptrique* (Fig. 5),[12] there is no mistaking the subject is a philosopher. In this one from the same author's treatise on man (Fig. 6),[13] the image received by the eyes is transmitted a short distance via cable before it is projected onto the pineal gland, which Descartes assumed was the seat of the soul. The Cartesian interior, as a room with a view, is, arguably, just a more comfortably furnished version of the cave in which the subject was imprisoned according to Plato's celebrated fable.

Benjamin's suggestion that the 'phantasmagorias of the interior' are the product of the nineteenth century, and, in particular, the result of the separation of the workplace from the dwelling which, 'for first time,' says Benjamin, 'gave rise to the bourgeois private sphere', ought to be back-dated — not necessarily as far back as the seventeenth century, when Descartes wrote, nor necessarily as late the end of the eighteenth century when the popular magic-lantern shows (for which the word phantasmagoria was coined) first made their appearance. Benjamin himself based his claims for the interior on a doctrine which, historically, belongs in between, around the turn of the eighteenth century: a monadology he freely adapted from Leibniz.

Leibniz gave Benjamin the notion of the monad as 'a perpetual living mirror of the universe' — and, as importantly for Benjamin's project as for Leibniz's, 'its present [is] big with its future'.[14] As the origin of perception, Leibniz's monad unifies subject and interior, and discards Descartes' discrete, resident consciousness.[15] With its potential of reflecting, that is, containing everything, the monad is entirely self-sufficient and isolated from every other. Thus, when Benjamin proposes the inside of the middle-class home as the model of a type of urban subjectivity born in the nineteenth century, it is more than just an illustrative or metonymic image, he stakes a philosophical claim based on Leibniz's model. The real nineteenth-century interior Benjamin described was, of course, his parents' house in Berlin.

Benjamin's notion of the 'dialectical image' whereby, he says, 'the historical object finds represented in its interior its own forehistory and after-history'[16] appears to conjoin an allegorical *mise en scène* with his own version of the monad.[17] The dialectical image is

12 René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences, plus la dioptrique, les météores et la géométrie qui sont des essais de cette méthode* (Leiden: Jan Maire, 1637), p. 36, repeated on several following pages.

13 René Descartes and Louis de La Forge, *L'homme de René Descartes et un traitté de la formation du foetus avec les remarques de Louis de La Forge sur le traitté de l'homme de René Descartes & sur les figures par luy inventées* (Paris: Charles Angot, 1664), p. 71, repeated or adapted on several following pages.

14 Gottfried Willhelm von Leibniz, *La monadologie*, 1714, § 56, § 22.

15 Benjamin, in turn, discards Leibniz's anxiety to recover the unity of the individual and the harmony of pre-ordained by God.

16 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLauglin (Cambridge MA and London: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 475 [N10,3].

17 Both these ideas can be traced to Benjamin's earlier, not-yet-materialist study of the seventeenth-century

ambiguous and recursive — 'Ambiguity,' Benjamin claimed, 'is the figurative appearance of the dialectic'.[18] Ambiguous, because it is not at all clear whether the dialectical image is the object or the product of interpretation.[19] Recursive, because Benjamin implies an analogy between the interior of any object and an architectural interior, such as the nineteenth-century apartment which Benjamin entered with the materialistic attentiveness of a detective at a crime scene — there to discover only more objects, each encasing its own interior.[20] Thus the image of the interior — with the special case of an inside without an outside, the arcade, which Benjamin compared to the dream[21] — is contained in, stands for, and envelops his whole project.

Adorno remarked in his book on Kierkegaard that 'a sociology of inwardness would be necessary to historically explain the image of the interior.'[22] Possibly, Adorno half expected this explanation from Benjamin, although the latter was content to transcribe into the Arcades the passage from Adorno's book in which his own ideas were cited.[23]

Adorno's investigation of Kierkegaard demonstrated how the image of the interior which the Danish philosopher had evoked metaphorically, overshoots his philosophical intentions and discloses to Adorno an image in which 'social and historical material is sedimented.'[24] The interior thus becomes the stage of a clash between philosophical designs and 'objective,

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German mourning-play (*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 'Conceived 1916 Written 1925' according to Benjamin's dedication, published 1928). The term 'monad' replaces 'dialectical image' in Benjamin's last writings 'On the Concept of History'.

18 Walter Benjamin, 'Paris: The Capital of the Nineteenth Century', trans. by Quintin Hoare, in: *Baudelaire: a Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1973), p. 171. Cf. *The Aracdes Project*, p. 10.

19 See Anthony Auerbach, 'Imagine no Metaphors: the Dialectical Image of Walter Benjamin', *Image [&] Narrative*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (18.), 2007, *http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/thinking_pictures/auerbach.htm*

20 Benjamin also toys with another analogy whereby, as the intestinal movements of the body correspond to images in the dream-consciousness of the individual, and because what is external to the individual, like the dwelling, is internal to the collective, so, architectural interiors as collective intestines provoke the dream-images of the collective. This analogy permits Benjamin also to speak of 'the interior (and, as it were, the bowels) of the historical object' (*The Arcades Project*, p. 475 [N10,3]). Leibniz's image is also recursive: 'Each portion of matter may be conceived of as a garden full of plants and, as a pond full of fishes. But each branch of the plant, each member of the animal, each drop of its humours is also such a garden or such a pond.' *Monadology*, §67.

21 *The Aracdes Project*, p. 406 [L1a,1].

22 Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 45.

23 Kierkegaard, p. 54, *The Arcades Project*, p. 461 [N2,7]. Other excerpts and quotations taken from Adorno's *Kierkegaard* are filed in 'convolutes' I The Interior, the Trace [I3,a], M The Flâneur [M2a,2], R Mirrors [R3,1], S Painting, Jugenstil, Novelty [S2a,2].

24 *Kierkegaard*, p. 42.

historical contents.'[25] For example, an architectural detail mentioned indiscreetly by Kierkegaard betrays the social and economic location of the inhabitant, or, one may say, the protagonist of the interior. By deciphering such characteristic details, the subject is specified as 'he who looks into the window mirror,' a feature of nineteenth-century bourgeois housing which, Adorno says, 'casts into the apartment only the semblance of things.'[26] Adorno reads ironically: that is, he reveals the meaning of the text which was hidden only to its author. Ironically, Adorno delivers the interior back to metaphor as the 'incarnate imago of Kierkegaard's philosophical "point".'[27]

Benjamin's project, as he himself put it 'in one word,' was 'the "critique" of the nineteenth century'.[28] He therefore took aim at a more diffuse historical topic than that of Adorno's monograph, but tried to show it no less concretely. That does not help make Benjamin's concept of the interior more coherent. But the value of Benjamin's notion lies in its complications. As much as he accepts that the economic existence of the bourgeoisie is implicated in its domestic environments, Benjamin's notion of the interior is not confined to describing the middle-class residence and the domain of the collector. It is cella in the temple of things, the alembic in which use-value is evaporated from commodities. It is, variously, like a web or shell secreted by the individual; a plush-lined case which bears the hollow imprint of a missing object; an apparently windowless box which for the 'private man, represents the universe'; thus a paradoxical 'box in the theatre of the world' which affirms the 'monadological insistence'[29] that Benjamin associated with the world of dialectical images.

Benjamin's interior and the apartment which housed Robida's imagination of television point to the same nineteenth-century room, the former recovered from the past, the latter projected into the future. It is as if, already present in an alcove of Benjamin's interior, there is an apparatus of television which 'brings together the far away and the long ago'.[30]

In the figure of the *flâneur*, the subject (the protagonist) of the interior goes for a walk, but does not quite go out. His wanderings bring him only to the threshold of the metropolis, and of his class.[31] To the flâneur, Benjamin says, 'The city ... opens up ... as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room.'[32] His refuge is the arcade, an interior without exterior, cut into a

25 *Kierkegaard*, p. 43.

26 *Kierkegaard*, p. 42.

27 *Kierkegaard*, p. 45.

28 *The Arcades Project*, p. 391 [K1a,6].

29 Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 163. Cf. Benjamin: 'It is owing to this monadological structure that the historical object finds represented in its interior its own fore-history and after-history.' *The Arcades Project*, p. 475 [N10,3].

30 'Paris: the capital of the nineteenth century', p. 9.

31 'Paris: the capital of the nineteenth century', p. 10.

32 *The Arcades Project*, p. 417 [M1,4].

city-block, a parade of luxury goods and home of the panorama.

The rhetorical equivalence of subject and interior which Adorno read in Kierkegaard (and which Benjamin took literally) suggests, as Adorno says, that 'Space does not enter the intérieur; it is only its boundary.'[33] Accordingly, when the flâneur emerges from his apartment, he annihilates space as he goes. For he does not cross the boundary of the interior but expands it to encompass the city. So the city becomes the host of phantasmagorias, such as Benjamin's image of walking through the arcades as 'a ghost walk, on which doors give way and walls yield'.[34] (Fig. 7)

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What happens when television goes for a walk? When 'the box' emerges on the street? (Figs. 8–9) In addressing these questions I would like to shift abruptly to the present.[35] What could appropriately be called the interlacing of interior and exterior mediated by television is amply illustrated:

— when the historic centre of a city is configured as a domestic interior fit for a chat show, televised in situ and transmitted as an outside broadcast; (Fig. 10)

— when football on telly flips the interior of the tavern outdoors. The police were supposed to be watching the crowds; (Fig. 11–12)

— when a screen short-circuits architecture, obliterating part St. Peter's famous colonnade while bringing an image of the pope closer to the faithful; (Fig. 13)

— when devotees of secular pilgrimage have camcorders handy to mediate their consumption and authenticate their experience; (Fig. 14)

— when carnival parades for television in a purpose-built, flood-lit Sambadrome; (Fig. 15)

— when everybody is on the street, but the TV is not home alone; (Fig. 16)

— when a civic space and its public are hijacked by an American president for an 'historic' event you could only see on TV, even if you were present; (Fig. 17)

— when arcades host phantasmagorias of the city as the domains of criminals, zombies and table tennis-playing robots; (Fig. 18–19)

33 *Kierkegaard*, p. 45.

34 *The Arcades Project*, p. 409 [L 2,7]

35 Not long after this piece was written (2007), the final appearance of the box on the street was as the detritus of the greatest consumer electronics bonanza of all time, that is, of the demise of the cathode ray tube.

— when a portable device promises a pocket arcade for real experiences of simulated cities; (Fig. 20)

— when you are accosted by TV presenters telling you what to watch when you get home; (Fig. 21–22)

— and screens telling you how to watch if you can't get home; (Fig. 23)

— when you are greeted by our own image at the threshold of a place, with the message 'You are being watched.' (Fig. 24–25)

The examples are multiplied daily. (Appendix)

Images like these demonstrate precisely how television and its cognate technologies shape urban experience. Not only does television mediate subjective perception and imagination of urban environments, not only does the apparatus of television populate the city, and the city continuously replay itself in closed circuits: the technology of TV is part of the fabric of the city.

We could also speak of the interlacing of architecture and television.

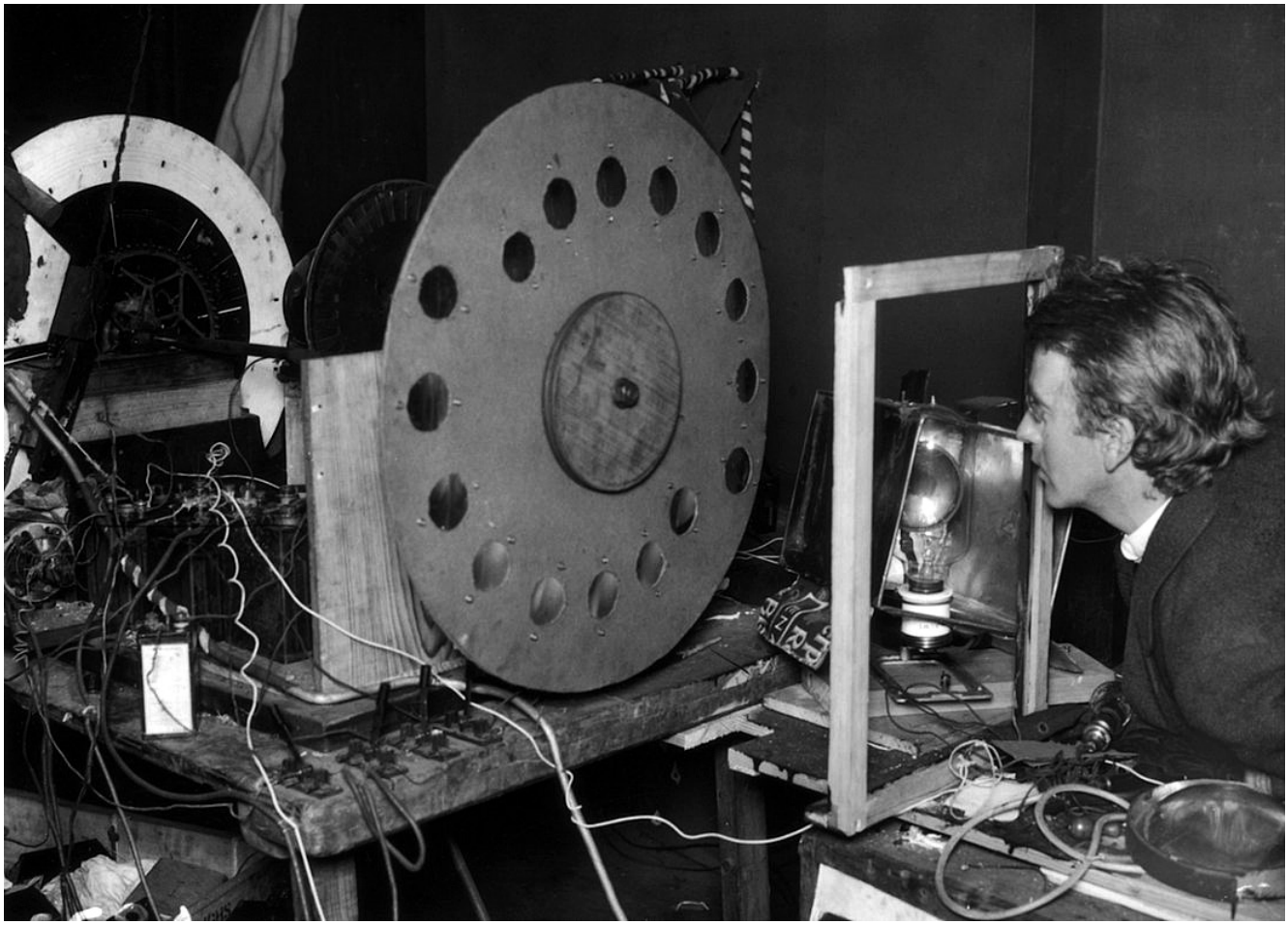
The terms in which I earlier developed the concept of the interior suggested how the interior marks a boundary and space lies outside it. The interior excludes space the way television simultaneously asserts and abolishes distance. By contrast, architecture is traditionally understood as defining and enclosing space as interior. The exterior of architecture is only a façade. Beyond that is the vague realm of landscape, or of the city so confused and ridden with conflicts that it has been called 'junk space'. The extent to which urban space falls within the bounds of architecture, it is interiorised. What is celebrated as 'public space' (presumably in contradistinction to 'private space' — and frequently in vague nostalgic evocation) is already interior, even if it is not, by now, also privatised politically and economically.

Benjamin makes a remark about how the bourgeois, because of his economic self-confidence, is 'careless of façade'. 'The domestic interior moves outside,' says Benjamin, 'The street becomes room and the room becomes street.' Façade is simply wherever you cut into it.[36] Whereas Benjamin is actually talking about mid-nineteenth-century residential buildings in Berlin, the glass curtain-wall beloved of modernist architecture would appear in this light *a fortiori* as a function of the empire of the bourgeois private sphere and consequently the indifferentiation of inside and outside; as an arbitrary cross-section of an interior which extends almost without limits. Such a façade merges with a vitrine, displaying the interior as commodity, while consuming the exterior as semblance.

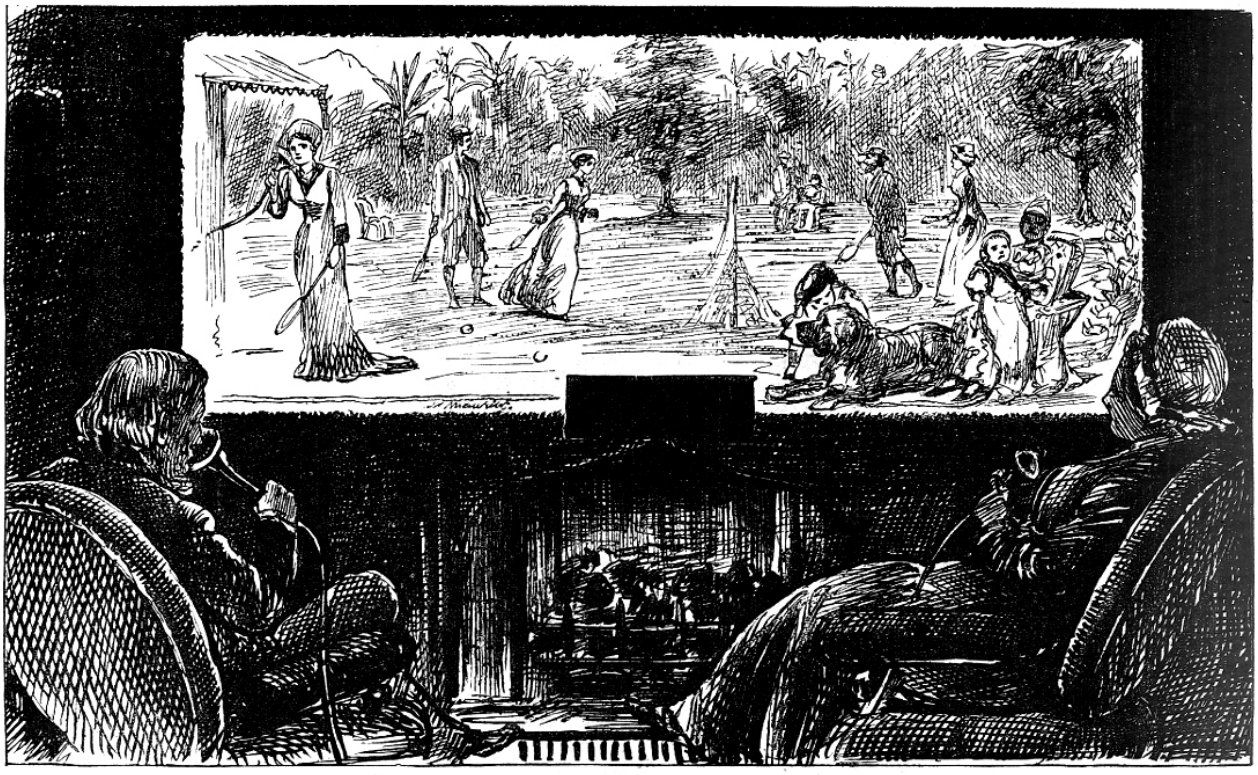
It ought to be clear enough what architecture has in common with television. Architecture has a good historical claim on what may be called the techniques of the screen. It is these

36 *The Arcades Project*, p. 406 [L 1,5].

aspects of architecture, namely: discrimination, mediation, and projection — of images and of ownership — which appear to be taken over by television. By 'television' I mean a small set of technologies — the cameras, transmission and recording devices, the screens — whose interconnections, applications and implications proliferate uninhibited by architecture's disciplinary structures and its ideological burden. In other words, the television I'm talking about is not concerned with being television the way architecture is concerned with being architecture (and not junk). It seems as if the technologies of television are not yet architecture in the way, in nineteenth century, iron construction was not yet architecture. The question is what happens to cities when television becomes architecture, when architecture assimilates what it already shelters in the blind spot of its interior of and in the thin space of a façade?



1 John Logie Baird (1888–1946) with his television apparatus, c. 1925



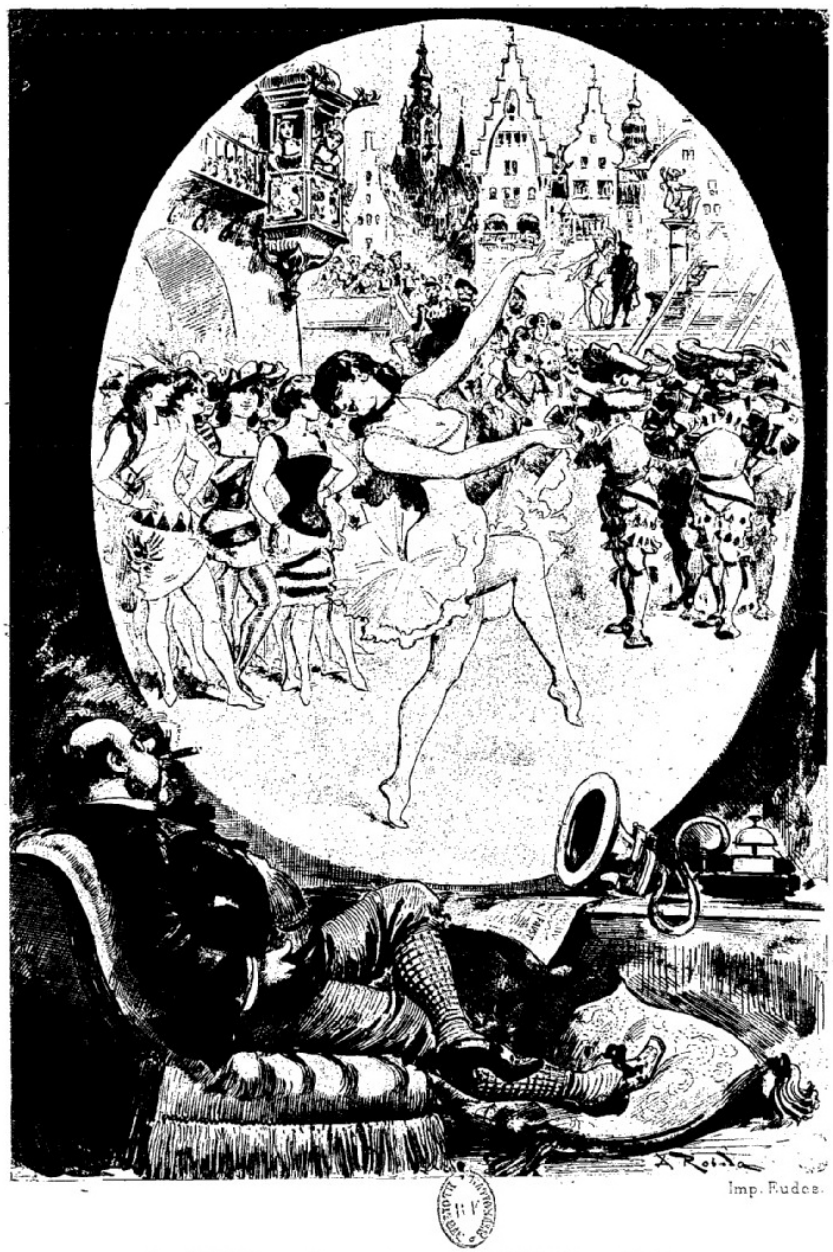
EDISON'S TELEPHONOSCOPE (TRANSMITS LIGHT AS WELL AS SOUND).

(*Every evening, before going to bed, Pater- and Materfamilias set up an electric camera-obscura over their bedroom mantel-piece, and gladden their eyes with the sight of their Children at the Antipodes, and converse gaily with them through the wire.*)

Paterfamilias (*in Wilton Place*). "BEATRICE, COME CLOSER, I WANT TO WHISPER." *Beatrice* (*from Ceylon*). "YES, PAPA DEAR."
Paterfamilias. "WHO IS THAT CHARMING YOUNG LADY PLAYING ON CHARLIE'S SIDE?"
Beatrice. "SHE'S JUST COME OVER FROM ENGLAND, PAPA. I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO HER AS SOON AS THE GAME'S OVER?"

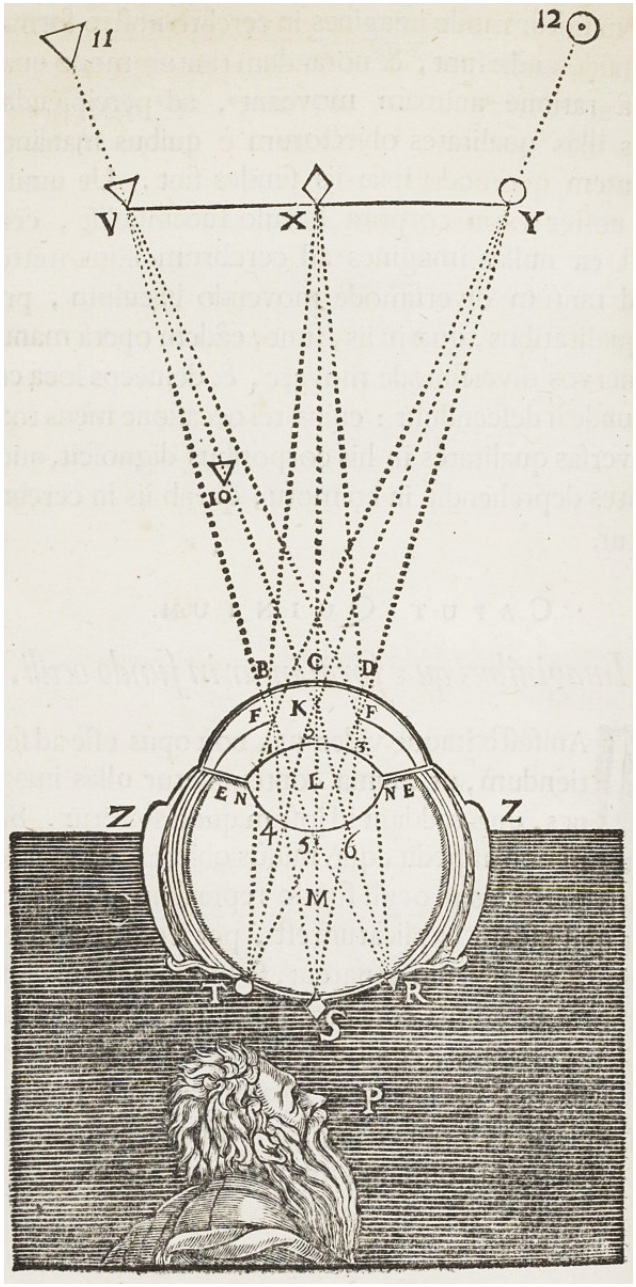
2 'Edison's Telephonoscope', drawing by George Du Maurier in *Punch's Almanack*, 1878

3 'Telephonoscope News', drawing by Albert Robida in *Le vingtième siècle*, 1882

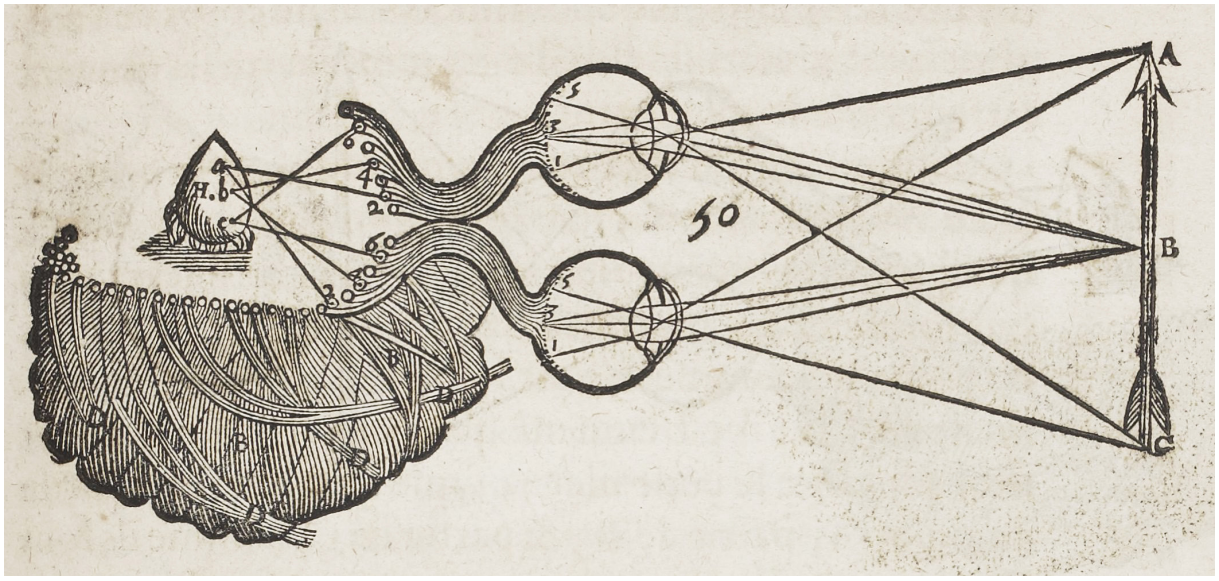


Le Théâtre chez soi par le Téléphonoscope.

4 ‘Home Theatre by Telephonoscope’, drawing by Albert Robida in *Le vingtième siècle*, 1882



5 Illustration in René Descartes, *La Dioptrique*, 1637



6 Illustration in René Descartes, *Traité de l'homme*, 1664

7 Photographs by Anthony Auerbach: Vienna, 2004
8 Rome, 2004

9 New York, 2006
10 Vienna, 2004

11–14 Rome, 2004

15–16 Rio de Janeiro, 2006

17 Bratislava, 2005
18 London, 2004

19 Vienna, 2004
20 New York, 2006

21 New York, 2007
22 London, 2004

23 New York, 2006
24 Rio de Janeiro, 2006

25 London, 2006

Appendix

Video as Urban Condition was initiated in 2004 with an exhibition and a symposium 'reflecting on the mutability of video' and lasted roughly until 2008, when I convened the conference *Video needs art history like a TV set needs a plinth*, or 2009, when I wrote the essay 'Who is Big Brother? or The Politics of Looking'.[1] It comprised a growing collection of videos and a series of exhibitions, workshops, discussions and conference contributions taking place in London,[2] Birmingham,[3] Bratislava,[4] Amsterdam,[5] Vienna,[6] Rio de Janeiro, São Paolo,[7] Yerevan,[8] New York[9], Belo Horizonte,[10] Linz,[11] Paris[12] and Dallas.[13]

Under the slogan 'how video shapes urban experience', the project announced:

> Video as urban condition is about the ways in which video has become part of the urban fabric: the omnipresent screen and the watchful eye that inhabits private and public space. Video is the ubiquitous equipment of the home, the street and the work place: the tube, the box, the telly, CCTV, info-screen, electronic billboard, in-store advertising, mobile, terrestrial, cable, satellite, pay-per-view, downloadable, for sale, to rent.
>
> Video as urban condition is about how our knowledge, perception and fantasy of urban environments are mediated by video. Video is the mass medium of innumerable fragments, multi-channel, remote control, camcorder, games console, webcam, public service broadcasting, peer-to-peer, MTV, 24-hour news, reality TV, soap opera, family entertainment, pornography, home video.
>
> The project examines a medium whose most distinctive characteristics are multiplicity and diversity, a form which is not contained by the norms of art institutions or the exclusive domains of professionals. Video is a medium of mass production – that is, mass participation – as well as of mass consumption. The accessibility of video technology has encouraged not only the private interests of home video and independent artistic activity, but has also prompted community and educational initiatives putting the medium in the hands of underprivileged or excluded groups in society. Video technology has moreover become established among the tools of communication and witness at the disposal of activists and campaigners who maintain a position beyond the mainstream. At the same time, the power of video as a means of controlling desire and space continues to grow.
>
> The project recognises the diversity of activity in the field and challenges us to reflect on how the relations of representation in society are mediated by video.

A series of public discussions organised by Anthony Auerbach and Thomas Edlinger during the exhibition at Lentos Kunstmsueum/Museum of Modern Art Linz in 2007 explored the following themes:

— I See You, You See Me: public space and personal media politics
— This is a Simulation: model cities, wish images and playgrounds
— Closed Circuits: voyeurism, (self-)control and TV

Notes

1 Published in *Dérive Zeitschrift für Stadtforschung*, no. 42, January 2011.

2 Symposium, Austrian Cultural Forum London, 2 July 2004, with: Juha Huuskonen (Katastro.fi), Manu Luksch (AmbientTV.net), Anna McCarthy (New York University), Paul O'Connor (Undercurrents News Network), Ole Scheeren (Office of Metropolitan Architecture), chaired by Anthony Auerbach.

3 Vivid Hothaus Seminar, 4 December 2004. 'Video as Urban Condition' by Anthony Auerbach published in *Hothaus Papers: Perspectives and Paradigms in Media Arts*, edited by Joan Gibbons and Kaye Winwood, Birmingham: Vivid/Article Press, 2006, pp. 155–162.

4 Academy of Fine Arts, Bratislava, 8 March 2005; Video-Café Bratislava, 12–13 March 2005.

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Following pages:

Photographs by Anthony Auerbach taken in Amsterdam, Berlin, Bratislava, Linz, London, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, São Paolo, Tijuana, Vienna, Yerevan, 2004–2012.


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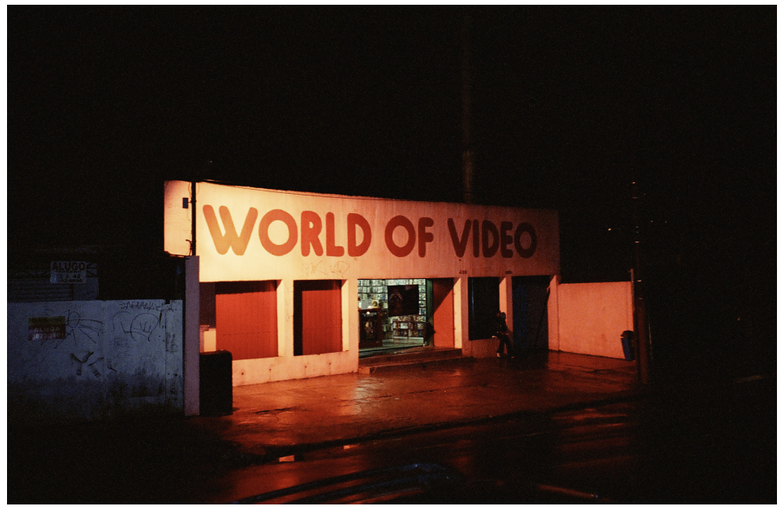
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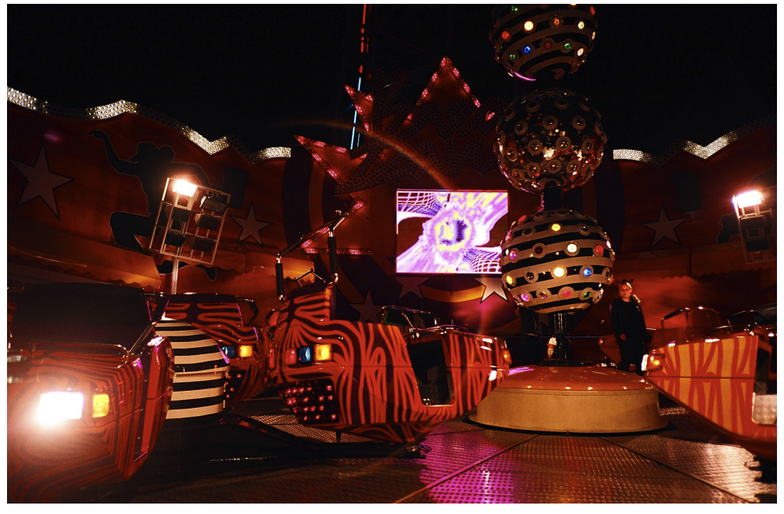

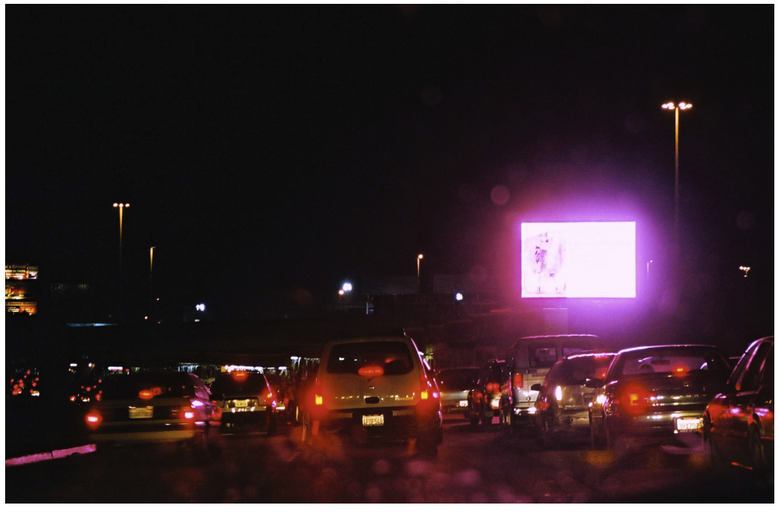


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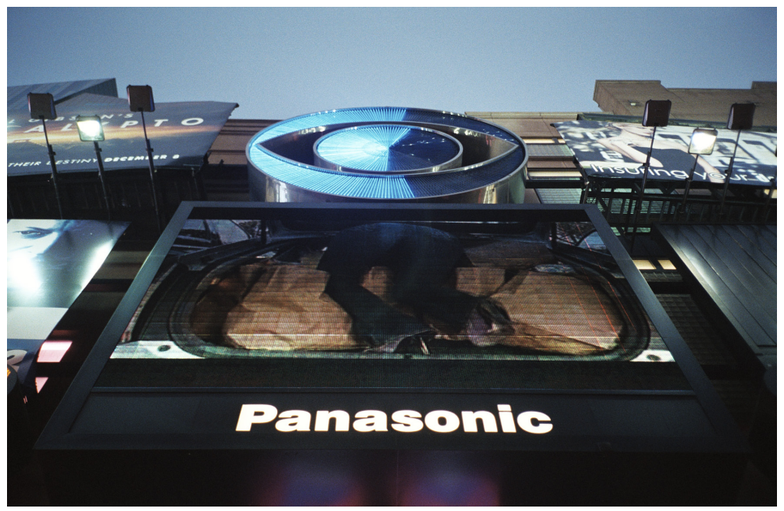
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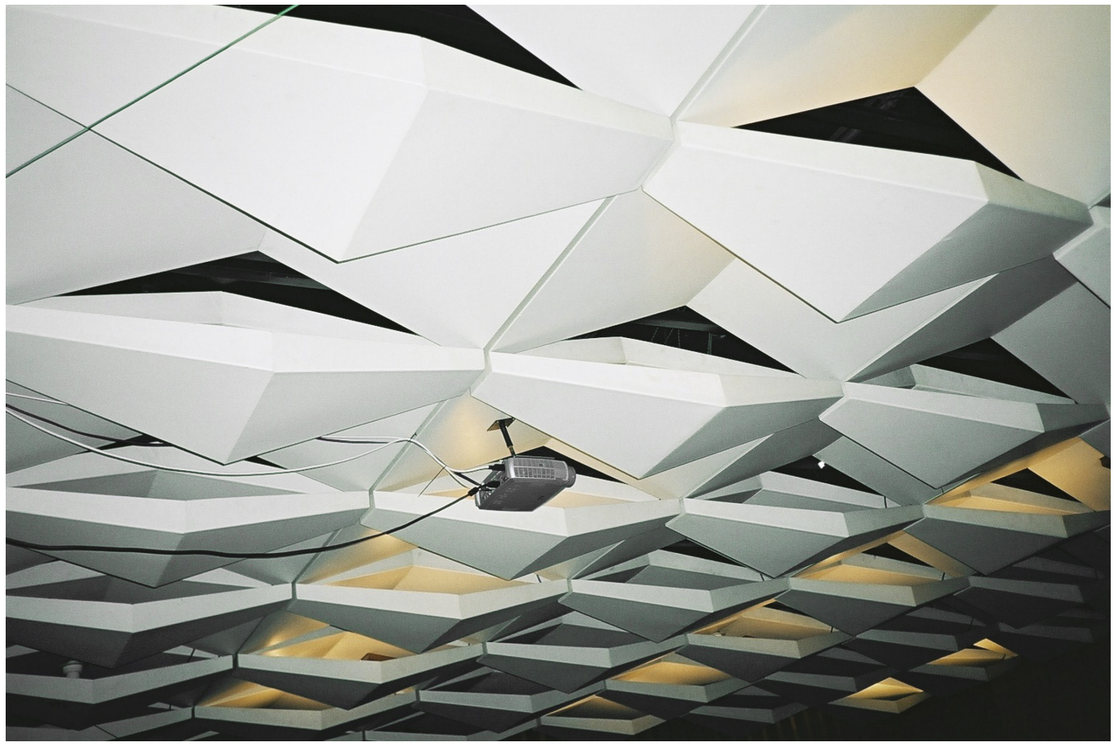


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