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An incomplete taxonomy of urban archetypes

Sebastian Messer RIBA, Senior Lecturer in Architecture, Northumbria University

e. sebastian.messer@northumbria.ac.uk t. +44 (0)191 243 7741

Abstract

Archetypes are symbols used in literature to represent universally-recognisable figures, actions or settings. Their characterisation is secondary to an idea or narrative in which their role is expositional. At the beginning of the 20th Century Walter Benjamin distilled from the 19th Century poetry of Charles Baudelaire a number of new archetypes or 'allegories', most famously the figure of the Flâneur, as metaphors of modern urban life. Those allegories are fluid, they elide into one another. In Benjamin's essays the Flâneur reluctantly becomes Detective, both a disguise for apparent idleness and justification for detached observation, whilst his poetry is gathered from the street just as the Ragpicker gathers up what others discard. The Ragpicker is an unwelcome reminder to the *bohème* of their precarious place in the modern city. Whilst Baudelaire's terminology is arcane, I propose that these modern allegories still have contemporary resonances in the neo-liberal city.

An incomplete taxonomy of urban archetypes

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Nach Christus gepurt. 1513. Jar. 26. s. May. Sat man dem großmectigen Kunig von Portugall Emanuel gen Lysabona pracht auß India/ ein sollich lebendig Thier. Das nennet sie Rhinocerus. Das ist hie mit aller seiner gestalt abgezeichnet. Es hat ein farb wie ein gespuckte Schildkrot. Vnd ist vñ dicken Schalen vberlegt fast fest. Vnd ist in der groß als der Hellsandte Aber nyderrechter von paynen/ vnd fast weh afftig. Es hat ein scharff stark Horn vorn auff der nase/ Das begynde es alweg zu wegen wo es bey steynen ist. Das dossilg Thier ist des Hellsandte fang totte feynde. Der Hellsandte furcht es fast vñel/ dann wo es In ankumbe/ so laufft In das Thier mit dem kopff zwischen dyc fordem payn/ vnd reyst den Hellsandte vñden am pauch auff vñ erwürgt In/ des mag er sich nit erweyn. Dann das Thier ist also gewapent/ das In der Hellsandte nichts kan thun. Sie sagen auch das der Rhinocerus Schnell/ fraydig vnd Listig sey.

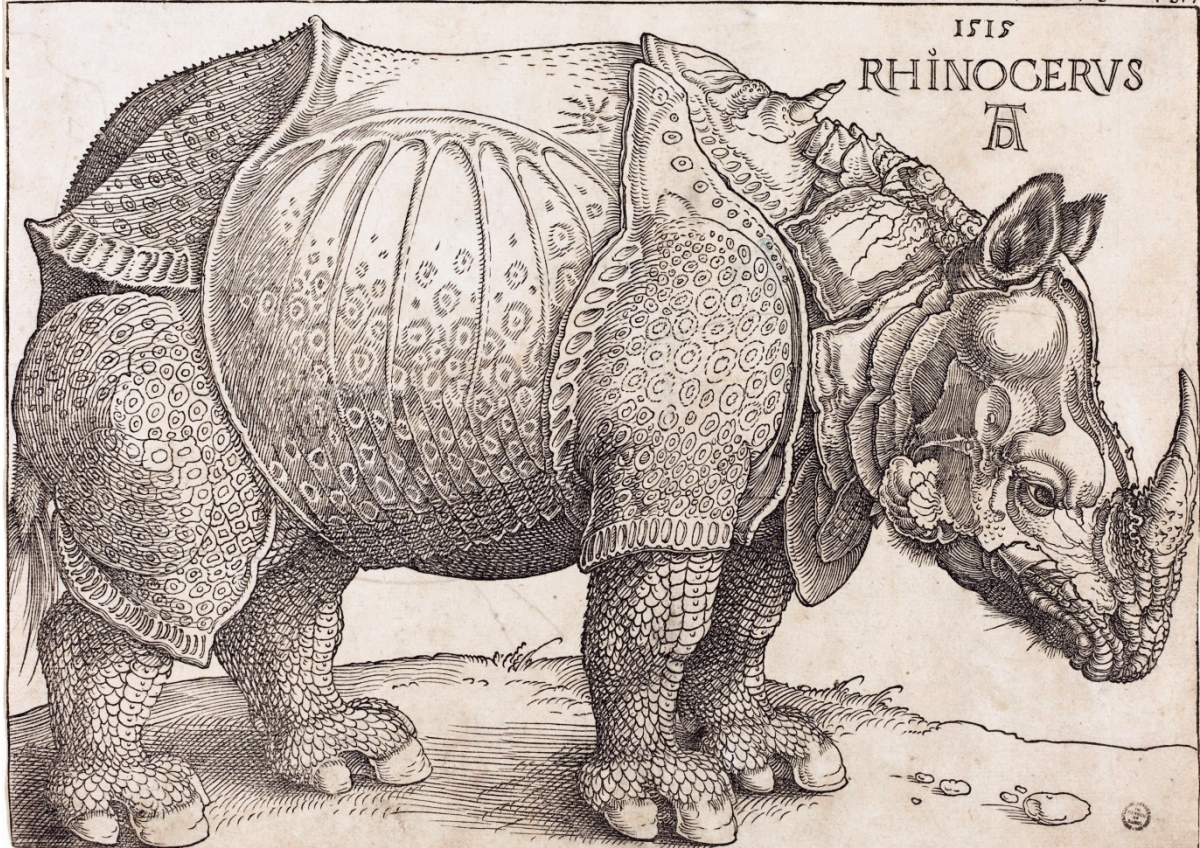


fig. 01 Albrecht Dürer (1515) *The Rhinoceros*

Introduction

This paper takes as its starting point Walter Benjamin's essays on the poet Charles Baudelaire (compiled in "The Writer of Modern Life") to explore the modern city (a synonym for the society of high capitalism) which emerged in Europe during the nineteenth century and still frames our right to use of the city today. Baudelaire provides Benjamin with a cast of heroes/ anti-heroes to illustrate the dynamic interdependencies between places and occupations created by the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and the origins of consumerism. Benjamin names his archetypes by their occupations (although these are not necessarily job-titles) as a short-hand for social class, gender and economic relationships. However he is at pains to distinguish them from the stereotypes portrayed in contemporaneous "Physiologies". These purported to be guides, for the benefit of the newly urbanised, for navigating the seemingly phantasmagorical human zoo; predicting the behaviour of individuals based on their social status, job, or appearance. However, according to Benjamin, they actually exaggerated the 'fear of the other' in order to generate a market for more such guides (Benjamin 2006 p. 69).

By comparison, the archetypes Benjamin identifies are complex; they are anything but predictable, they elide into one another, adopting characteristics and motives as circumstances dictate. Archetypes are not characters in the sense that fiction would seek to create the illusion of a unique personality, rather they strip away the particular to identify commonalities. As Benjamin uses the metaphor of “second nature” to describe the modern city, it seems appropriate to borrow and stretch the imagery (albeit, sometimes with ‘tongue-in-cheek’) to describe his species of this ecological system. This paper maps the interactions between habitat and species and between one species and another.

The main part of the paper is divided in three sections. “Location, or beneath the pavement, the beach” will consider the physical, psychological and sociological characteristics of the three habitats described by Benjamin; namely, the street, the arcade and the interior. In the first instance, the paper will show how the behaviours of the archetypal figures are responsive to their location. However, which habitats they occupy are dependent on their social status, defined by their economic situation, and also by gender. The second part of the paper, “Strategies and tactics, or he captures things in flight”, explores the interactions between the archetypal figures. Their interactions model economic and social exchanges. The third part of the paper, “Commodities and space, or the shock troops of gentrification” speculates on changing habitats in the contemporary city and tentatively proposes species and spaces evolving to occupy gaps in these niche environments.

Location, or *beneath the pavement, the beach*

Henri Lefebvre asserts “every space is already in place before the appearance in it of actors... the pre-existence of space conditions the subject’s presence, action and discourse, his competence and performance.” (Lefebvre, 1991 p.57). There is reciprocity between type and place in Benjamin’s characters. It is their locations which define their actions.

The *mise en scene* is important to our understanding of the allegories. Just as the forest in fairy tales can have the character of either or both a trickster or a refuge, so the city is neither passive nor benign. Both the forest and the city are worlds-within-worlds in which human rules do not always apply.

This concept is brought sharply into focus by the novels of J.G. Ballard. In both “High Rise” and “Concrete Island”, the latter a retelling of Defoe’s “Robinson Crusoe”, the titular architectures are indifferent to the struggles for survival of their human cast of lecturers, TV producers and architects, through whose eyes the reader enters the stories. The character of the place is more fully-formed, more autonomous, than the cast of human cyphers. The nominal professions ascribed to them are a short-hand for their class status and provide variety rather than motive (and occasional *schadenfreude*; for the Dandy architects are brought down to the level of Ragpickers by their own hubris.)

Benjamin repeatedly evokes the concept of the *phantasmagoria*, a shadow play, to highlight the illusory quality of the urban environment. He describes it as a ‘second nature’, which can be read by the “Apaches” of the city, just as a hunter would track their prey on a prairie or in a primordial forest. This image of the city as mirage was evoked again in Paris in May 1968, by the Situationist-inspired graffiti slogan, “*sous les pavé, la plage.*” [“beneath the pavement, the beach”.] Yet the ‘Apaches’, the natives or the naturalised of the modern city, can also be the hunted, “the eye of a Prostitute scrutinising passers-by is at the same time on the look-out for the police.” (Benjamin, 2006 p. 207).

Benjamin uses the expression “Apachedom” as a synonym for becoming a native of the modern city. The word “Apache”, seemingly deliberately juxtaposed with the urban, reflects the exoticizing of the “noble savage” in pulp fiction (Benjamin cites Dumas’ *Mohicans de Paris* as exemplary) where the Native American is a preternatural, almost supernatural, figure. Yet Benjamin’s use of the expression

implies a symbiotic relationship between character and place. Dandies, who as dedicated hunters in the modern city might be considered apex predators, are nevertheless not apaches. The apaches are the heroes of modernity, cast from the bottom of society, not the top.

The street

Like each of the individual passers-by whom come together to form an amorphous crowd, the street is only one possible variant, a component part, that combines with others to create the labyrinthine city. The crowd belongs to the city, not to the street. It was the rapid expansion of the populations of major cities like London and Paris, as a result of industrialisation, which created the conditions of Benjamin's "second nature". For those newly arrived from the countryside and provincial towns in search of the opportunity for a better standard of living, it was the crowds – the sheer mass of people, the tempo of their movements, their anonymity whilst surrounded and engulfed by indifferent bodies – which was a physical and moral shock.

"...the crowd really is a spectacle of nature – if one may apply this term to social conditions. A street, a conflagration, or a traffic accident assembles people who are not defined along class lines... their models are the customers who, each acting in his private interest, gather at the market place around their "common cause". (Benjamin, 2006 p. 92)

Victor Hugo's epics celebrated the crowd as the hero, but Baudelaire's heroes hid in the crowd (Benjamin 2006 p. 96). Apaches acquire quick wits: the Flâneur's skill is to move amongst the throng with unhurried nonchalance; to be part of the crowd, yet to dissociate himself as its observer.

The street exposes the social, economic and gender divisions of the modern city with an unflinching, Weegee-like flashbulb. At this point, the street is almost exclusively masculine. From the Dandies' 'rambles' to the Ragpicker and the apprentice, spending his pittance on duty-free wine beyond the city gates, the cast of the street identified by Baudelaire are all male, with the exception of one. Consequently, in the mid-19th century, it is her location in a public (urban) space which defines a woman as a Prostitute.

The arcade

The Flâneur's natural habitat is the arcade; "the transformation of the boulevard into an *intérieur*" (Benjamin, 2006 p. 68).

The development of the arcades transformed the fabric of Paris. By making the city blocks porous the distinct division of interior and exterior, public and private, was blurred. In the dense streets of the medieval city, where pavements were narrow and pedestrians vied for elbow room with road users, the arcades created a new environment which prioritised the pedestrian and encouraged dawdling. In the arcades, shopping (as a leisure activity rather than out of necessity) and the reputation of Parisians as "*Badauds*" ["gawkers"] combined, to give birth both to the consumer and to their chronicler, the Flâneur-*literatuer*.

The relationship of the Flâneur to the arcades as a *mise en scene* is one of mutualism in which the Flâneur is the obligate partner. Like the Oxpicker bird, who feeds on the parasites which irritate a Rhinoceros' skin but only eat those ticks already engorged with the Rhino's blood, so the Flâneur, as a bohemian aspiring to the idleness of the Dandy but without means to pay, gains more from the arcades than the arcades' proprietors and purveyors gain from the Flâneur's presence. As Baron Haussmann's statist redevelopment of medieval Paris swept away many of the jointly developed and privately-owned arcades, so the figure of the Flâneur, adapted to the gas-lit, greenhouse environment of the arcade, faced extinction (if he ever really existed).

Bazaars, arcades and, subsequently, department stores allowed women of the emerging middle-classes into the city unchaperoned and even the opportunity to work outside of the house in a predominantly female environment. However, this inversion of the male (public) and female (domestic) realms does not greatly increase the right to the city for women.

Whether a Flaneuse, a female Flâneur, did or could have, existed at this time is contested (see for example Van Nes & Nguyen, 2009 or Dreyer & McDowall, 2012), but commentators agree a woman's relationship to the city was, and remains, unequal to that of a man's. The act of consumption, or at least browsing and window-shopping, gave women the pretext to explore outside of the home, but restricted them to the role of consumers. That Benjamin describes department stores as the decayed form of the arcade, the last promenades of the endangered Flâneur in Haussmann's Paris, demonstrates what limited freedom of movement and experience this actually was (Benjamin, 2006 p.40). Yet, consumption has become the *raison d'être* of the contemporary city centre and shopping has become the principal, urban, leisure activity across the northern hemisphere.

Women have achieved vastly greater autonomy in European countries during the 20th Century, but the right to the city has not yet extended to the ability to be anonymous. Benjamin remarks of the Flâneur-detective, "[t]he spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in *his incognito*." (Benjamin, 2006 p. 72 *my emphasis*). In the male gaze a woman simply walking in public is still a performance and areas of the city remain out of bounds, especially after dark, even if the definition of these no-go zones are unclear. The nineteenth century Flâneur is complicit in this gendered space. Unlike the Dandy, who pursued women in public spaces for his sexual gratification, the Flâneur-*voyeur* nevertheless perceives women as part of an exotic tableau. As if in front of a painted panorama, he consumes them visually, as aesthetic experience, without need for a monetary transaction (or exchange of bodily fluids).

The interior

The interior, which is a synonym for the private apartment, was not merely the proscribed domain of women and children, but the space was itself perceived as female in its associations with supposedly feminine characteristics. For a man, the interior was a defensible space, both a bulwark to the threats of the street and an asylum from the increasing surveillance and bureaucracy of the state. As inequalities in income and opportunities widened, so the division of interior from street, public from private, required constant vigilance to defend against intruders from outside of the home. But it was also maintained as a gilded cage with which to stop wife and daughters from straying too far. The interior was a womb-like *étui*, a lined case, in which to protect possessions; the most prized of all male 'possessions' was a virginal (i.e. unused by a man) woman's body.

Categories of public and private, street and interior, were not only segregated by gender, but were also readable in terms of social class. Benjamin states the Collector is "the true resident of the interior" (Benjamin, 2006 p. 39), the last retreat for the *bourgeoisie* from the crowd. For the *bourgeoisie*, the emerging middle classes, the interior displayed both their taste and increasing wealth and status to their peers. "The criminals in early detective novels are neither gentlemen nor Apaches, but private citizens of the middle class." (Benjamin, 2006 pp. 39-40). This double-bind generates anxiety about the image they project of themselves, as well as the physical security of their families and their possessions.

However the prosperity of the middle-classes, created by industrialisation and urbanisation, was also changing the relationships of both sexes to space through retail. As raw commodities were processed into goods and mass-produced, the means and places of exchange also changed. Women were employed in the factories mass producing products which were displayed in the arcades to be sold by women, increasingly to women. Working class women, by necessity, did work outside of the family home and, with long working hours in factories, many would have had to traverse the city before dawn or after dark regardless of insinuation.

Strategies and Tactics, or *he captures things in flight*

For Michel de Certeau, spaces (and systems) are brought about through abstract 'strategies' by dominant or colonializing forces, which today increasingly blur the boundaries between work and leisure. For individuals or minority groups without the power or means to create new conditions themselves, 'tactics' can be used to subvert any condition from within. Tactics, in this sense, remain dependent on given ways of operating, but are capable of creating a plurality of unpredictable actions and results as they do not 'follow the rules'. De Certeau gives, as an example of tactics, an employee's own 'work' disguised as work undertaken for his employer such as, a secretary writing a love letter on "company time" or a cabinet maker 'borrowing' a lathe to make something for himself. Nothing physical is stolen and the worker is "officially on the job". He describes such tactics as *la perruque* [the wig]. (De Certeau, 1998 p.25).

The Flâneur and the Detective

The Flâneur aspires to the attributes of a "gentleman of leisure"; he affects the idleness which only the Dandy can afford (to do nothing is very expensive, even in a Capitalist society). However, as a member of the *bohème* his status and means are less secure than that of the *Bourgeoisie*; that is the Collectors, purveyors and arcade-proprietors with whom he mingles. The Flâneur's idleness is a badge of honour, but deeply suspicious. If he reluctantly becomes detective, then he is given a pretext for his inaction. The detective story does not celebrate the criminal, but the criminal's adversary. In contrast to the physiology, which seeks to reassure but creates fear of 'the other', the detective story proposes an initially disturbing vignette of the city, but ultimately offers reassurance. It demonstrates the criminal's motives and (emotional) actions can be deduced and the murderer apprehended through the superiority of the detective's logical deduction. However the city is a mirage in the detective story, the Flâneur is always led to the scene of the crime, "he captures things in flight; this enables him to dream that he is like an artist." (Benjamin, 2006 p. 72).

A protest against modernity

Ironically the Flâneur, that most modern of the archetypes, is also a nostalgic and, even, regressive figure. At the time Benjamin is describing him, the Flâneur no longer exists, swept away by the 'Haussmann-isation' of Paris. However, even in Benjamin's description, the Flâneur is ill at ease with modernity.

He is brought into being by the modern city, able to adopt his lifestyle precisely because industrialisation has broken the economic link between work and (mere) survival. In common with the *Bourgeoisie* he is a beneficiary of capitalism, which values his writing more greatly than the time he dedicates to it and the cost of its reproduction. As a prototypical creative entrepreneur in the market place of the service economy, he is able to extract surplus value from his poetry. Yet the Flâneur protests against the boredom and alienation of the production line "with his ostentatious nonchalance." (Benjamin, 2006 p. 157). According to Benjamin, a brief fashion for pet tortoises swept Paris in 1839. "The Flâneur like to have the turtle set the pace for them. If they had had their way, progress would have been obliged to accommodate itself to this pace." (Benjamin, 2006 p. 84). The tempo of the Flâneur is a "protest against the tempo of the crowd." (Benjamin, 2006 p 157).

Whereas the Flâneur has an autonomous right to the city, but implicitly protests against the means by which this is granted to him, women in the modern city are considered threatening to the established, patriarchal order. Benjamin asserts it was thought increasing exposure of women to the masculine, public street and workplace would erode their femininity (Benjamin 2006 p. 144) and, redolent of some contemporary Muslim's concerns about "modest dressing", their presence alone was seen as a temptation to young men. Women in the modern city become a commodity overtly as the figure of the

Prostitute: "In the most graphic sense, as a mass-produced article... the individual expression is artificially concealed by a professional one..." through the use of cosmetics (Benjamin, 2006 p. 165).

In the first part of the 19th century the word "commodity" was itself commonly used to describe female genitals. (Rendell, 2001 p. 116). Other euphemisms employed in the contemporaneous "Rambler's Guides" – proto 'Lad Mags' for vicarious Dandies - such as "snuff box" and "reticule" [a small, embroidered or beaded, drawstring handbag] are also employed, and the fictionalised exchanges in the bazaar of a "piece" or an "article", having a double-meaning of a woman's body, quickly established a correlation between a woman selling wares and a woman selling their services (Rendell. 2001 p. 116). In reality, the low wages and narrow range of employment available to women would have lead some in to prostitution.

Yet, at least hypothetically, some women are able to assert their agency, albeit only in relation to their sexuality. The figure of the Lesbian is one of Baudelaire's heroic exemplars. Their "pure love", a rejection of pregnancy and family life (the same fear underlying the supposed 'masculinisation' of all women exposed to the street) is, both symbolically and in fact, a rejection of [their] commodification. Just as the Collector lifts *objets* above their exchange value by rendering them unusable, so the figure of the Lesbian removes her body from the market by rendering it unobtainable to men.

Commodities and Space, or *the shock troops of gentrification*

Benjamin's allegories transubstantiate. They personify the forms of exchange, between people and commodities, which occur in the capitalist market and in which they are both complicit (with the strategy) and resistant (through tactics). Thus the Collector divests commodities of their exchange value and replaces this with a connoisseur value. The objects he collects, which Benjamin calls "souvenirs" (the double-meaning in French, of both 'keepsake' and 'memory', is deliberate), acquire infinite value to the connoisseur – at least, for a period of time – precisely because they have no use-value to him. Collectors lift the object out of the market place. The "souvenir" is a fetish: it transcends its original purpose and takes on the qualities of idolatry.

The DJ and the "experience economy"

The first 47 pages of Nicholas Bourriard's 94 page pamphlet "Postproduction" draws a meandering line from the disc jockey, the DJ, back to Marcel Duchamp's Readymade sculptures. "The issue [for the artist]" he states, "is no longer to fabricate an object, but to choose one among those that exist and to modify these according to specific intention." (Bourriard, 2002 p. 25).

The DJ, as a contemporary allegorical figure, shares with Benjamin's Collector the expertise of the connoisseur and his instincts to acquire and hoard. However, the DJ also needs to display his expertise and, like the *Flâneur-Litterateur*, he is in search of a market. In common with the methods of the Ragpicker, the DJ creates exchange value from "... the history of music by copying and pasting together loops of sound, placing recorded products in relation to each other." (Bourriard, 2002 p. 18). A DJ is applauded not just for his mechanical dexterity, but for his creative recycling/ recycled creativity.

"The remixer has become more important than the instrumentalist, the rave more exciting than the concert." (Bourriard, 2002 p. 35)

In the period since the millennium, digital technologies have separated content from medium; stories and music, for example, have been 'dematerialised', stored as bits in rented 'cloud space', they can be accessed anywhere (anywhere, that is, with wifi) through a range of devices rather than encoded on paper and bound in books or inscribed onto the surface of discs to be reconstructed by a needle or laser. The "experience economy" (Bishop, 2004 p.52) replaces goods with personalised spectacle

and the new art institutions are a rarefied analogue of that wider service economy. Unencumbered by the deadweight of a historical collection, the art institution is marketed as a 'laboratory' or 'art factory' for accessing do-it-yourself works-in-progress. ("Laboratory' in this context does not denote psychological or behavioural experiments on the viewer, but refers instead to creative experimentation with exhibition conventions." (Bishop, 2004 52n2).) The audience is invited, or coerced, into participating with each other in the creation of the artist's event.

The institution and the curator

Just as "the Ragpicker fascinated his epoch" (p. 54) – the *badaud* was drawn to spectate and the *bourgeoisie* to speculate on the personification of deprivation – so, Bourriard proposes that, since the 1990s contemporary artists have found "the dominant visual model [for art]... closer to the open-air market, the bazaar, the souk, a temporary nomadic gathering of precarious materials and products of various provenances. Recycling (a method) and chaotic arrangement (an aesthetic) have supplanted shopping, store windows and shelving." (Bourriard, 2002 p. 28).

Consumption has been a recurring theme of art throughout the 20th and, the first decades of the, 21st Century. From Duchamp's readymades via Warhol's celebration of multiples, Jeff Koons' vitrines (rendering mass produced, household appliances as unique as a holy relic) to Hirst's diamond encrusted skull, artistic practices have been framed in relation to the market. As the *subject* of art has become consumption, so the predominant *form* of production has become exchange: whether produced in opposition to it, such as Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's Industrial Painting or the site-specific art of the late 1960s and 1970s (which rejected the commercial gallery as a pre-requisite loci for the recognition of the work as art); or to make the connection between art and its exchange value explicit, for example Piero Manzoni's "Merde de l'artiste" (reputedly canned human excrement intended to be sold for its equivalent weight in gold, its value rising and falling in parallel with the market), Gordon Matta Clark's "Reality Properties: Fake Estates", or Santiago Sierra's emphasis on the remuneration of his performers undertaking pointless and demeaning tasks; or by creating tactics to subvert the market to the artist's (social) ends like Theaster Gates; or complicit with the strategies of the dominant institution; Liam Gillick's titles draw satirically on management jargon but his work is accommodating to, rather than confronting, the environments in which he is commissioned to place it (Bishop, 2004 p.69).

In his essay "Enter the Dragon" Dave Hickey uses Foucault's comparison of absolute monarchy with Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon¹ as an analogy for the "'corrupt old [art] market' versus the 'brave new institution'." Like Foucault's King, who requires from his subjects only their continuing *appearance* of fealty, art dealers "traffic in objects and appearances" (Hickey, 2009 p.7). Curators, as custodians of art and as that art's interpreters for the public, care about what the artist *means* (or, with what narrative they, the Curators, invest in the work). Beauty sells, says Hickey, so it has no need of patronage and the power of the institution and, consequently, the contemporary art institution distrusts appearances. In 1996, Hal Foster, quoted by Clare Bishop, issued a prescient warning, "the institution may overshadow the work that it otherwise highlights: it becomes the spectacle, it collects the cultural capital, and the director-curator becomes the star." (Bishop, 2004 p.53). Whilst the art institution owes more aesthetically to the 18th century's *ruinenlust*² than to the 19th century interior, the Curator is a public Collector.

¹ A design principal for creating an ordered society humanely (in prisons, schools, hospitals and poor houses). Order is maintained through the anticipation of constant surveillance so, ultimately, the inmate internalises that surveillance. Consequently the individual is 'reformed' (or alienated).

² See Dillon, b. (2014) *Ruin Lust: Artist's Fascination with Ruins, from Turner to the Present Day*. London: Tate Publishing

The Privatised Public Realm

In the neo-liberal city, there has been a return to the private development of public spaces. In contrast with the arcades - which were created collectively and jointly by the owners of the buildings forming the city blocks - the funding, ownership and even policing of the privatised public realm is as remote from, and as unaccountable to, the people who use it as Haussmann's statist redevelopment of Paris. This process has been accelerated by the Atlantic recession and almost universal adoption of 1980s Reaganomics-style "austerity" policies.

Austerity has formed a common, neo-liberal economic policy response across Europe to the 2008 banking crisis bail-out and subsequent recession. These strategies have, in effect, moved vast quantities of money and property from public into private hands, reversing the citizens' right to the city advanced in the latter half of the 19th Century and the majority of the 20th Century. Across the UK large areas of previously public city centres and council-owned and managed housing have been sold to private developers (often backed by investment from foreign states), to address the short-term economic situation for Local Authorities trying to fulfil their statutory obligations. However, the costs associated with those displaced by private redevelopment and maintaining and policing of the fuzzy boundaries of the privatised public realm continues to be drawn from taxes, subsidising the developer's costs.

In parallel, sweeping legislation in England allows Local Authorities to impose codes of acceptable behaviour with on-the-spot fines of £100 or £1000 in a Magistrates Court (Brighouse, 2016). Those unable to pay are criminalised for financial transgression and potentially face incarceration without any primary legislation prohibiting the original behaviour. Consequently this legislation penalises the most vulnerable in society and those already marginalised or disenfranchised such as the homeless and young people.

The city as entertainment machine

Skateboarders are the apaches of the neo-liberal city. In his seminal book "Skateboarding: Space and the City", Iain Borden proposes the concept of "skater's eyes" to describe the myopic view of surfaces, textures and edges interpreted for their affordance for skateboarding (Borden, 2001 p.218). Skateboarding is a "critical exterior to architecture" (Borden, 2001 p.1). But skaters must learn to switch focal length quickly, to remain alert to the wider environment; to physical obstacles, pedestrians and other 'dangers'. In common with that earlier apache of the pavement, the Prostitute, the skateboarder uses his body experientially. Whilst the skateboarder finds new affordances for the street and experiences the city through his direct, physical engagement with its surfaces and planes, he does not confront the strategies of the neo-liberal city. His chosen tactics would be to seek an accommodation with the security guards or to appropriate an underused 'spot' where he can exercise his skill undisturbed³. Skateboarders traverse the streets on a circuit of such 'spots'. The streets between 'spots' are mostly of little interest to him. Thus, as the Flâneur was to the arcade, the skateboarder is the Oxpicker of the street!

Ocean Howell's paper *The "Creative Class" and Gentrifying the City* about Philadelphia's 'Love Park' draws on Richard Florida's arguments in his 2002 book "The Rise of the Creative Class: and how it is transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life" to suggest skateboarders are the lowest rung in the process of spatial re-assimilation leading to the privatisation of the public realm. They are unwittingly the "shock troops of gentrification" of first resort, in the phrase Howell borrows from Rosalyn Deutsche⁴. Skateboarders' occupation of "the left-over spaces of modernist planning, or the spaces of decision-making (typically the urban plaza) which symbolise [egalitarian space] not through

³ For example, see Jeffries, M., Jensen, A., Messer, S., Swords, J (2012) 'Playing out: The importance of the city as a playground for skateboard and parkour', Bank Street College of Education's Occasional Papers – "After School Time" special edition. Iowa, USA

⁴ in 'Representing Berlin' in Deutsche, R. (1998) *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press. p. 151

overt iconography but through... expansivity..." (Borden, 2001 p.188) *activates* a space (or recuperates it from those even lower in the socio-economic order; that is, the homeless or the drug-addicted. In this narrative, social problems are ubiquitous, like the weather, rather than the result of economic and social strategies enacted by the dominant authorities). In Howell's critique, and Florida's flag-waving, the new "hegemony of the street" attracts a creative class attuned to "organic and indigenous street-level culture...", "that satisfies this group's social interests and lifestyle needs." (Howells, 2005 p. 38) Each incremental level of investment excludes the previous occupants of an area. They, in turn, are then excluded from it either physically, as were the skateboarders at Love Park, or else excluded economically.

The skateboarder's nocturnal counterpart, the urban explorer, enacts the Situationist's 'experiment' to "...open the Metro at night after the trains stop running... [and] to open the roofs of Paris for strolling." (Marcus, 1989)⁵. Walking a fine line between civil trespass and criminal damage or forced entry, her use of infrastructures, construction sites and derelict buildings transform (private) exchange value to (public) use value. For the duration of the urban explorer's occupation, and in the "souvenirs" she collects (photography, video and memories) to evidence her excursions, she reclaims the privatised, public realm.

Conclusions

This paper set out to investigate Walter Benjamin's metaphors of modern urban life. It introduced the three habitats – the street, the arcade and the interior – which together comprise the 'second nature' of Baudelaire's Paris. In the first section, "Location, or beneath the pavement, the beach", the inter-relationship between each of these sites and the fauna who inhabit them is considered in turn. It identifies how each is informed by their interactions with the other archetypes and how they are shaped by their environments. The second section, "Strategies and tactics, or he captures things in flight", defines the correlations between archetypes and the nature of the exchanges which occur between them (a multi-player version of the playground game 'scissor, rock, stone'). It traces where value enters and is extracted from this economic ecosystem. In the final section, "Commodities and space, or the shock troops of gentrification", the paper attempts to update the allegories for our contemporary urban conditions and uses of the city. It considers how two urban habitats have emerged from neo-liberal capitalism and the service economy. The art institution is a place of cultural production, an 'art factory' or a 'laboratory' where artists, artwork and audience are interchangeable. It is a public interior and the curator-director is a public Collector. In common with the figure of the DJ, the curator presents their taste and expertise through the re-use and juxtaposition of pre-existing elements.

The privatised public realm is a simulacrum of the street. The developers are subsidised by the state through its capitalisation of a fixed asset, and the privatised public realm physically manifests international investment capital. Construction work, typically the most physically demanding and dangerous work in the contemporary city, is transmuted into clean, electronic money as the privatised public realm is exchanged 'off plan' before it is even realised physically. For non-oligarchs, the change in ownership from public to private reverses the right to the city. Without the consent of the citizens, the crowd is disenfranchised and permitted only the limited access to the city of the consumer.

This paper then considered how the right to the city can still be asserted in the privatised public realm. The figure of the skateboarder (analogous to the artist Liam Gillick's relationship with his corporate

⁵ Anon., "Projet d'embellissements rationnels de la ville de Paris" *Potlatch* no. 23 (Paris, October 1955), reprinted in *Potlatch 1954-1957*, pp. 177-180, translated by Adam Crawford in Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, pp. 410-411. Citation from Sadler, S. (1998) *The Situationist City*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press

clients) uses tactics of compromise to access the city, not as consumers but for their own purposes while still avoiding conflict. However, the figure of the skateboarder has become the dupe of the developers, who uses their presence to scout out and then attract investment to run down spaces before excluding them in the process of gentrification. The urban explorer who, in common with the skateboarder, experiences the city through the physicality of her body, protests against the privatised public realm, temporarily recuperating these spaces for her unmediated enjoyment rather than a scripted spectacle in the city 'entertainment machine'⁶.

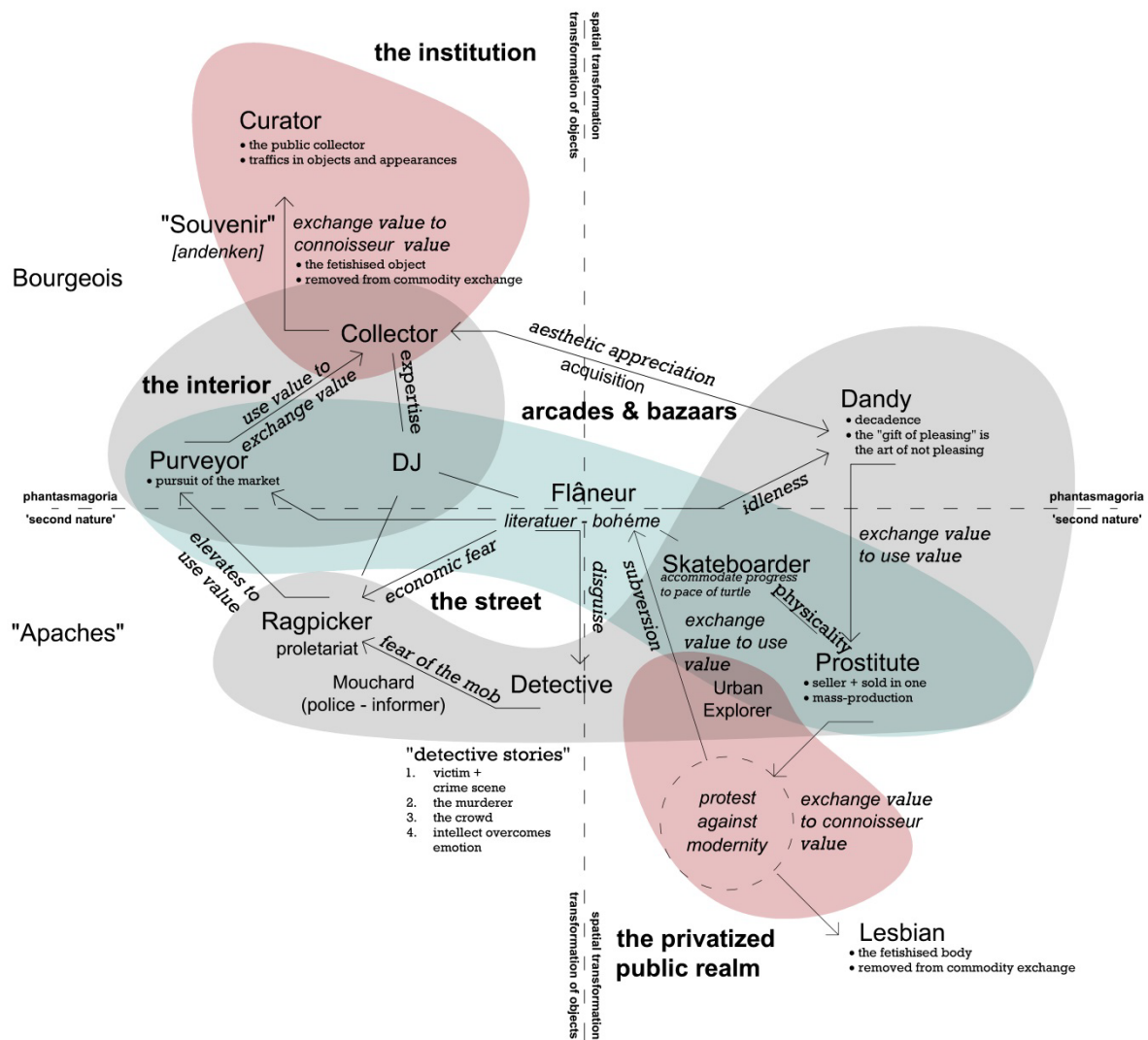


fig. 02 An incomplete taxonomy of urban archetypes

⁶ "...the city is no longer industrial engine, or even "growth machine" but rather an "entertainment machine"." (Howells 2005 p. 38) attributed to Molotch, H. "The City as a Growth Machine," American Journal of Sociology, 82/2 (1976): 309-32 and Nichols Clark, T., Lloyd, R., Wong, K.K. and Jain, P. "Amenities Drive Urban Growth: A New Paradigm and Policy Linkages," in Nichols Clark, T. ed. (2004) *City as Entertainment Machine*. Oxford: Elsevier, 2004 p. 302.

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Figures

fig. 01 Albrecht Dürer (1515) *The Rhinoceros*

Online:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%BCrer%27s_Rhinoceros#/media/File:The_Rhinoceros_\(NGA_1964.8.697\)_enhanced.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%BCrer%27s_Rhinoceros#/media/File:The_Rhinoceros_(NGA_1964.8.697)_enhanced.png) (accessed: 22 June 2016)

fig. 02 the author