

The clothed

POLISH PAVILION AT LONDON
DESIGN BIENNALE 2021

home:

tuning

in to the

seasonal

1-27
JUNE 2021

imagination

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Foreword

Have we become indifferent to the natural ebb and flow of the seasons? This is the question that the creators of *The Clothed Home. Tuning in to the Seasonal Imagination* exhibition have tried to answer.

The curatorial concept by Małgorzata Kuciewicz, Simone De Iacobis and Aleksandra Kędziorek was the winning entry in an open competition run by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute – the third-time-running organiser of the Polish Pavilion at the London Design Biennale. The competition jury, which included international experts, found the topicality of the project compelling, and appreciated its relevance both to the ongoing public debate and the main theme of the Biennale – *Resonance*.

The mission of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute is to develop and communicate Poland's cultural dimension through unique values shaped by centuries-old tradition. Our activity is centred on the Institute's core programmes, one of which is the *New Polish Tradition*. The project aims to showcase the vitality and authenticity of Polish traditional culture and its response to current issues.

Tackling climate change has triggered a revolution in lifestyles and a change in material culture. The houses of our ancestors were 'clothed' with hand-woven kilims and tapestries, wall coverings, quilted headliners, carpets and other home textiles. Nature's seasonal cycle set the rhythm for the changing arrangement of the home interior – from a closed living space in winter to an open one in summer.

We hope that a revival of such practices, visualised by the renowned artist Alicja Bielawska, whose speciality is working with textiles, may inspire contemporary designers. The creators of *The Clothed Home* have set out to reconstruct our spatial imagination by venturing beyond the formula of four permanent walls. They draw on the history of the Polish avant-garde and on local rituals. Let's immerse ourselves in this experiment and see what the experience brings.

Barbara Schabowska
Director of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute



**The clothed home:
tuning in to the
seasonal imagination**

The exhibition explores the ways in which textiles have been used to reflect the rhythm of seasonal changes in domestic interiors. The art installation draws on bygone practices, from which it takes its cue for contemporary climate-responsive design.

In this day and age, when many of us are cocooned in centrally-heated apartments and air-conditioned offices, we have grown inured to the nuances of nature's changing cycles. Contemporary design can help us tune into the seasons again. Conceptually rooted in Polish textile designs from the pre-electric era, the installation recalls domestic rituals that allow us to cultivate our relationship with the natural world and react more attentively to its continued changes.

In manor houses, aristocratic mansions and peasant cottages of pre-modern Poland, textiles were widely used as seasonal clothing for architecture. They helped adapt domestic spaces to the twelve phenological seasons characteristic of the Central European climate zone. Their recurring appearance in domestic interiors allowed for conscious participation in the cycles of nature – in celebrating the passage of time, with an enhanced sense of immersion in the circadian rhythm, and the sequence of light and darkness.

As a result, *The Clothed Home* functions as a resonator, helping residents feel the pulse of the natural world. By clothing a room of Somerset House, the installation sets out to offer visitors a similar, multi-sensory experience.

Aleksandra Kędziorek
Curator

The kilim shows the twelve Polish seasons. The fabrics appear in the home interiors in keeping with seasonal changes.

The twelve phenological seasons in the Central European climatic zone:

Prespring
(mid-March – late April)

Early Spring
(late April – mid-May)

Spring
(mid-May – mid-June)

Early Summer
(June)

Summer
(July – early August)

Late Summer
(August)

Early Autumn
(first half of September)

Golden Autumn
(mid-September – mid-October)

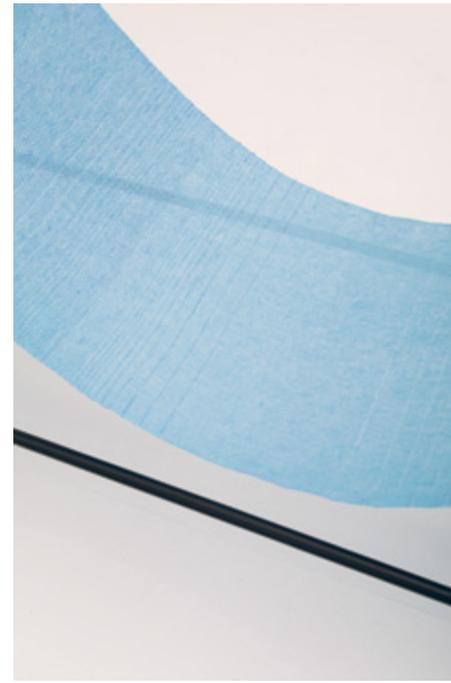
Grey Autumn
(mid-October – late November)

Early Winter
(late November – mid-December)

Winter
(mid-December – mid-February)

Late Winter
(mid-February – mid-March)













KACPER POBŁOCKI IN
CONVERSATION WITH THE
EXHIBITION CREATORS

Resonating with (dis)comfortable phenomena

KACPER POBŁOCKI: What is discomfort design?

ALEKSANDRA
KĘDZIOREK:

This is a reversal of the familiar status quo. In the 20th century, designers tended to focus on optimising the quality of life, sheltering people from harsh outdoor conditions by providing a constant temperature and protection from precipitation. We soon came to take living in such stable and predictable conditions for granted. As Witold Rybczynski argued in his book *Home: A Short Story of an Idea*, it was only in the 18th century that the notion of 'comfort' in the contemporary sense appeared; nevertheless, it soon became one of the main goals of spatial design. With our exhibition, we hope to demonstrate that allowing a degree of openness to some discomfort – no matter how small – can prove beneficial and revitalising. In his furniture design, Gerrit Rietveld did not shy away from the challenge; he maintained that it was only through sitting on an uncomfortable, hard chair that one could fully appreciate the act of sitting. And it is such tangible experience that fully grounds us in reality, enhancing the experience of our physicality and making us observe the responses of our environment.

MAŁGORZATA
KUCIEWICZ:

Discomfort makes room for mindfulness. When you are wearing unstable shoes, you are very aware of what you are walking on. If you are living in a house that resonates with phenomena that jolt you out of your comfort zone, you begin to take note of their nuances. The traditional Japanese kimono is as stiff as it is in order to codify certain gestures, while at the same time – in contrast – emphasising the softness of the body. Opting for a degree of discomfort opens us up to a much richer experiencing of the world. Conversely, immersion in comfort removes from our experience an entire gamut of phenomena, impoverishing our perception.

KP:

But discomfort may also go hand in hand with a failure to meet even the most basic human needs. For instance, the lack of toilets is a serious problem in many cities around the world.

AK:

But we are not talking about just any discomfort here. For example, *On Discomfort: Moments in a Modern History of Architectural Culture*, edited by David Ellison and Andrew Leach, looks at the social dimension of the issue, juxtaposing the comfort of the masters and mistresses of a Victorian house with the discomfort of their domestic servants. And we can also well imagine the discomfort that stems from being unable to fulfill purely physiological needs. Thus, the notion of discomfort is a concept that can be considered from many different aspects. We are, however, interested in it to the extent that, while it presents no threat to how we function in our daily life,



yet through opening us up to less stable conditions, it enables us to experience our surroundings all the more powerfully. In *A Philosophy of Discomfort*, Jacques Pezeu-Massabuau notes that discomfort is more than merely the flip side of comfort. These are sensations that complement each other. We can only appreciate and define what we find comfortable when we have first experienced *discomfort*.

KP: Is there, then, good and a bad comfort, and good and a bad discomfort? Conscious – and lacking awareness? What purpose would they be serving?

MK: This is easiest to explain using food as an example. In the countries of the Global North, where scarcity of food does not tend to be a problem, there are products available all year round – such as strawberries, which we can eat with gusto in the winter, if the fancy takes us. Or, we could decide upon something that imposes certain restrictions on us – such as seasonal or local cuisine, or we choose to prepare the food ourselves. That represents deliberately opting for a degree of discomfort – acquiescing in the fact that we cannot always have everything we want, and we must make do with what's

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Textile walls and floor insulation in Podhale region. Zofia Rydet, *Sociological Record*, 1978–1990

available depending on the seasonal and regional limitations. Such self-restraint does, however, allow us to open up to other customs and values.

KP: What kind of comfort should we, then, divest ourselves of?

AK: For one, the kind provided by contemporary architecture, furnished with air-conditioning and central heating. Think skyscrapers in Dubai: in their functioning, they are independent of climate, whilst completely relying on advanced technology. They use a huge amount of energy in order to ensure that their users are totally cut off from the environment.

KP: And they commercialise comfort – by employing very expensive climatic solutions. So, is this a kind of self-tightening noose that we have ourselves put around our necks?

AK: Indeed. And, paradoxically, as Sascha Roesler demonstrates in his research, it is the traditional methods of tackling the adversities of local climate that are more likely to prove more effective in the long run. They don't depend on electricity supply, and are less likely to fail. They could soon turn out to be the new luxury. What matters to us in that respect is the constant monitoring of our environment and paying close attention to the changes that take place in it.

ALICJA BIELAWSKA: Because comfort absolves us from many things. It enables us to gain more time, but also lose quite a bit. If I live in a traditional house, I switch the heating off for the night and, when I get up in the morning, I feel cold, so I turn it on again and open the curtains. These things can be seen as a nuisance, or else viewed as small rituals that enable us to notice how light and temperature fluctuate throughout the day. We gain sensitivity to minute changes.

AK: We have analysed this issue looking at examples of Polish residential spaces from different periods, from peasant dwellings to opulent palaces and modernist buildings – but the theme itself has a universal dimension. Recently, I read Bruno Taut's reminiscences of his stay in Japan, where he emigrated in the 1930s. As a world-renowned architect, he was immediately asked to record his impressions of traditional Japanese houses. In some ways, they were similar to the Polish ones that we find inspiring – they had areas that varied in temperature, and they did not provide tremendous protection from the cold. To Taut, who had arrived from a Europe that was undergoing modernisation, all these discomforts came as a shock. On top of that, there were the cultural differences in the arrangement of domestic spaces. When designing a house in Japan, however, Taut began to avail himself of just such solutions; he had come to realise that it is



sometimes worth feeling cold so as to be in touch with the external world.

KP: So, the issue of warmth and cold is the simplest indicator of what you're talking about?

AB: Warmth and cold, light and damp.

MK: Generally speaking, the microclimate of the house. We believe in chronobiological architecture, that is to say architecture, which synchronises our inner, biological clock with the planetary cycles, the times of day and the seasons. In our designs we demonstrate that architecture is not a hard shell that cuts us off from nature and biological phenomena, but – as we had already proved together with Iza Tarasewicz and Anna Ptak in the exhibition *Amplifying Nature*, in the Polish Pavilion at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018 – that it functions within the entire spectrum of planetary phenomena. To open ourselves up to their experience is to inhabit architecture in an aware manner. We do of course rely on the pragmatism of traditional building – and we are happy to take a lead from the architect Julia Watson in employing the term 'lo-TEK' (short for 'local traditional

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Door curtain in Chochołów.
Zofia Rydet, *Sociological Record*, 1978–1990

ecological knowledge'); we look for and restore the solutions that were used back in time. We hope that they will make it possible for architecture to re-establish firm links with its geographical location. And this is also the framework for the notion of discomfort as we understand it. For us, discomfort means a deliberate venturing outside the comfort of contemporary architecture with its artificially stabilised conditions – into confrontation with wind, cold, rain, the rhythm of the day and night, the changing seasons, and atmospheric and planetary phenomena. This take on opening oneself to discomfort allows us to *resonate* with what takes place outside, to use the leitmotif of the London Design Biennale. At the same time, we demonstrate the tools that provide comfort. These do, however, demand more of us: they require our commitment, mindfulness and sensitivity to the rhythms of the natural world.

AK:

KP: So, through opening up to discomfort, you aim to build a new kind of comfort. What are the tools that make this possible?

SIMONE DE IACOBIS: In this project we have focused on textiles and the soft matter of architecture. Textiles are one of the elements that create the microclimate of the house. At the same time they provide a boundary between our bodies and the surroundings. Our bodies are separated by a number of layers from what's around us: skin, clothes, domestic textiles and furniture, the walls of the house. We show that by softening the hard shell of the house – acting as a barrier between us and the exterior – with yielding, textile boundaries, we are better able to perceive what goes on outside. The point of the act in climatic terms lies not in energy reduction but in training our attention. The opening up to discomfort permits us to participate in planetary phenomena with full awareness and become aware of the speed with which changes occur in nature.

MK:

Textiles that create soft architecture become layers that clothe certain rituals. In *The Clothed Home*, we draw attention to the ritualisation of domestic space, related to the seasonal appearance of different textiles. By clothing and unclothing the home, we can experience the natural cycles and celebrate the changing seasons. We evoke twelve seasons – this is as many as one could distinguish in the Polish climate of the past. Through soft-cum-hard architecture we would be able to participate in these cycles with more awareness and fine-tune our mindful alertness to changes. In this project we deal with textiles from a narrow perspective – a European point of view. In the countries of the Middle East, or in India, where there is a Ministry of Textiles, textiles have an even greater presence.

A friend of mine from Libya told me that he has four different sets of carpets, for the four different seasons. We are exploring the Polish context.

AK: We – by which I mean especially architects and architectural researchers who generally focus on the hard substance of the building – have been blind to these solutions for a long time. When we embarked on this project, we recalled the kilims that used to hang above the bed in rural dwellings so as to make the wall warmer, or the rag runners, placed on the floor to create ‘warm corridors’; these were arranged along routes that varied with the season. They were present in traditional Polish houses and can still be found there. These seasonal textiles were so ubiquitous that they became practically invisible, to the extent that, when we first began to document them, they often turned out to have no name at all.

MK: Not only were they without a name, but they were also not even allocated exclusively to interior design. Sometimes the textile was a bed covering, but would be thrown over the shoulders for going out.



Floor insulation in Dr Dłuski villa, Zakopane, between 1902 and 1918

WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI

Dress and decor

”Domestic interiors traditionally incorporated textiles. Curtains, swags, window treatments, and wall coverings were made of silk, damask, satin, brocade, muslin, and velvet – the same materials found in clothing. (...) Before houses were air-conditioned oriental carpets were rolled up and stored for the summer, and replaced by woven jute and sisal mats, just as heavy winter clothes were replaced by linen suits and light cotton dresses.”

Józef Mehoffer was a leading Polish painter associated with the Art Nouveau movement. Before 1918 when Poland regained its independence, the southern part of the country, including Krakow where Mehoffer lived, was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Mehoffer (1869–1946), who grew up in a polonized Austrian family, studied art in Vienna and Paris, and, like many of his contemporaries, was active in the decorative arts, including the design of stained glass, furniture and interiors. His own house on Krupnicza Street, not far from the city’s main square and today restored as a studio museum, is evidence of his skill.

In 1904, Mehoffer painted a full-length portrait of his wife Jadwiga in their summer lodging in Zakopane, a resort town in the Tatra Mountains south of Krakow. She is standing in front of a small pump organ in what is probably the living room; in the dining room, their little boy Zbigniew, sitting at the table, can be seen through the open door. Jadwiga is holding a pine sprig; perhaps she is in the process of arranging flowers, for the apartment is full of plants. Several small vases stand atop the organ, and a large flower pot sits in the middle of the dining table. The decor is floral, too. The woven carpet is decorated with a swirling flower motif, so is the cloth that is draped over the deck chair; the flower vases themselves are decorated with flower patterns. The green material loosely wrapped around the oil lamp suspended over the table appears to be muslin, which was commonly used to protect lamps from flies in the summertime; the shrouded form suggests some sort of tropical plant. And there is more. The plant motif reoccurs in the leaf-like green lace decorations of Jadwiga’s dress. Women’s hats at this time were large and often decorated with flowers, and her wispy and rather extravagant headgear suggests blooming white peonies.



Józef Mehoffer, *Portrait of Wife (Summer Lodgings)*, 1904

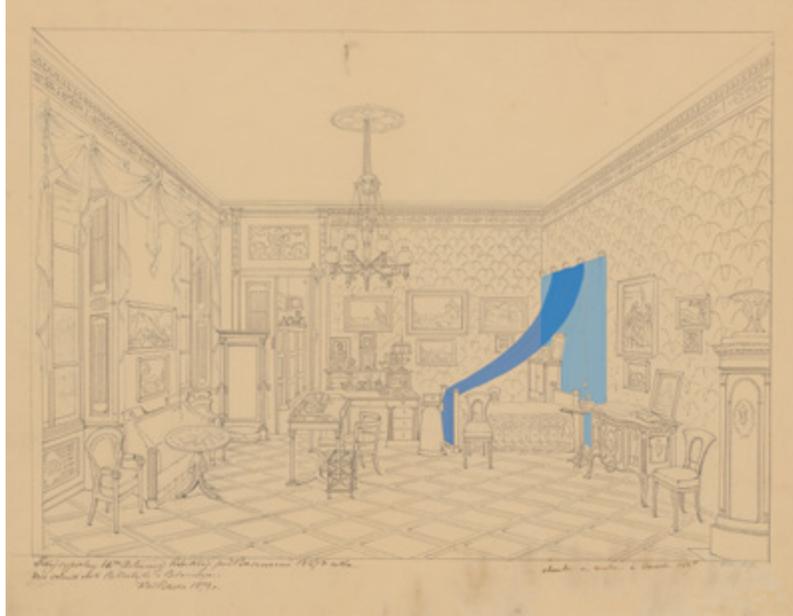
Textile walls. E. Hackert, *Armory room in Zagań Palace*, 1850s



Flowers and plants were an Art Nouveau preoccupation, but the ubiquity of the floral theme in Mehoffer's painting is not simply an artist's conceit. The connection between decor and dress has always been close. We say that we dress ourselves and we dress up a room. In the Polish language, the words for dress (*strój*), for decor (*wystrój*), and for the general ambience of an interior (*nastrój*), have the same root. Paintings are a good place to observe this correspondence. Look at an English eighteenth-century portrait of landed gentry at home; the owner's riding boots are as plain and unadorned as the legs of the varnished mahogany furniture. The flouncing ribbons that embellish women's dresses and the frills of men's shirts in a French Louis Quinze salon scene mirror the arabesques and curlicues of the mouldings and architectural ornaments. In seventeenth-century Dutch domestic genre paintings, the very proper black broadcloth and white lace collars of the people portrayed are of a piece with the spotless black-and-white checkerboard marble floors of the rooms. The Swedish painter Carl Larsson, who was roughly contemporaneous with Mehoffer, painted his wife and children in their Arts and Crafts home, whose casual, handmade decor echoed the family's naturalistic mode of dress.

There are three specific reasons for the close relationship between dress and decor. The first is purely technical: domestic interiors traditionally incorporated textiles. Curtains, swags, window treatments,

Bed canopy. Willibald Richter, *Bedroom in Pod Baranami Palace in Krakow, 1827*



and wall coverings were made of silk, damask, satin, brocade, muslin, and velvet – the same materials found in clothing. Heavier, woven materials were used in tapestries, wall-hangings, carpets and upholstery. Inevitably, the dressmaker's technique of embroidering, gathering, pleating, stitching and trimming found its way into interior decoration. That is why furniture skirts mimic women's skirts, and why the fringes, cords, and bobbins of nineteenth-century drapery recall ladies' ball gowns.

There were several reasons to use fabrics in decor. Perhaps the most basic was comfort. In the past, poorly heated masonry buildings were cold in the winter, and in rich households heavy wall-hangings and tapestries served as a form of insulation. Portières prevented cold drafts, so did heavy curtains and draperies. Carpets, rugs, and assorted floor coverings performed the same function on the floor. Like clothing, these fabrics could be easily changed from season to season. Slip covers could alter the appearance of sitting furniture – lighter colours and fabrics in the summer, and darker and heavier materials in the winter. Rattan furniture and folding deckchairs like the one in Mehoffer's painting could be brought out in the summer. In hot climates – before houses were air-conditioned – oriental carpets were rolled up and stored for the summer, and replaced by woven jute and

A textile regulating space volume to prevent heat loss. Dzieduszycki Palace and Park Complex in Zarzecze, photos taken between 1918 and 1939



sisal mats, just as heavy winter clothes were replaced by linen suits and light cotton dresses.

Fabrics also served to enliven the decor. Long before painted walls became common, tapestries introduced colour to rooms. So did silk wall coverings, carpets and drapes. Fabrics, which have a shorter useful life than architectural materials, could be easily replaced when fashions changed. Fabrics also served to visually soften the home's interior. There was a long tradition of swags and wreaths in carved wood and plaster decoration, and fabric festoons served the same purpose. Fabrics softened an interior, not only visually but also acoustically, creating a quiet, muted atmosphere.

Perhaps the most radical example of a 'soft' interior was the Empire fashion for so-called tent-rooms in which quilted, gathered, and pleated fabrics were draped from the ceiling and often entirely covered the walls. The tent-room originated at the end of the eighteenth century and was intended to recall an army campaign tent. Originally designed for gentlemen with military backgrounds, this form of decor was later 'orientalized' and acquired a more feminine character. The decorative motifs of the tented salon in the Zarzecze palace in southern Poland, for example, have oriental overtones. Rooms could be totally or partially tented; sometimes only the ceiling was tented, creating

Window screens. Willibald Richter, *Cabinet of Artur Potocki in Palais Coburg in Vienna, 1832*



a domelike effect. The elaborate fabric bed canopy that produced the appearance of a mini-tent was an offshoot of this fashion. The delicate details of the canopies over the day beds in the eighteenth-century Uphagen House in Gdańsk would have matched those of the dresses in the armoire of Abigail Uphagen's dressing room.

The second connection between dress and decor was social. As people earned more money, they desired better food, better clothes, and larger homes – both for prestige as well as comfort. Because homes and clothes are timeworn vehicles for conveying status, there is a natural conformity in the types of materials and iconography used to communicate social standing. For example, if family coats of arms are displayed, they might be seen on wall medallions as well as on blazer buttons. If gold was valued, the wealthy could wear gold braid and surround themselves with gilt mouldings. If this was considered too flashy, other materials could convey status: stainless steel kitchen appliances and stainless steel watch bracelets, down comforters and down parkas. Diamonds may be forever – but fashions change constantly. In the past, leather was considered utilitarian; leather aprons and vests were worn only by workmen, and leather easy chairs were only found in smoking rooms and men's clubs, leather being less combustible than fabric; leather furniture was never used in salons or drawing rooms. Today, leather is considered a luxury material and is used both for expensive furniture

Living room designed by Jerzy Hryniewiecki and Wiesław Lisowski, Polish Pavilion in Paris, 1937



and expensive clothing. When corduroy, originally encountered only in workingmen's dress, became accepted by the middle class, it also showed up in upholstery. The current fashion for 'natural' dress fabrics – cotton, wool, linen – has a counterpart in 'natural' decor: exposed brick, oiled barn wood, polished concrete.

In a more general sense – and this has nothing to do with conspicuous consumption – both homes and clothing convey values. The Mehoffers' summer home was a statement of Józef and Jadwiga's artistic and naturalistic aesthetic – he was also an enthusiastic gardener. Whether or not we are artists, our homes – like our clothes – communicate who we are, or at least how we wish others to perceive us: starchily formal or comfortably casual, intensely avant-garde or resolutely traditional, cosmopolitan or homely. The psychedelic poster on the wall and the embroidered denim jacket convey one set of

Bedroom in the Castle of the President of the Republic of Poland in Wisła, 1931



values; Georgian breakfront bookcases and straw boaters, another. That is why it is disconcerting if dress and decor are not in harmony. Sweatshirts and running shoes in a Louis XIV salon send a decidedly mixed message, as does a three-piece suit in a lakeside summer cottage.

The third connection between dress and decor concerns perception. Architecture, interior decoration and fashion are three distinct fields, yet they are experienced with the same eyes. Whether we look at a dress or a chair, we bring the same visual bias, the same sensibility, the same taste. The last is not a constant. Sometimes we appreciate simplicity, at other times we prefer complexity. Fashionable seventeenth-century French eyes favoured stylised floral decorations and embroidered fabrics, and introduced the custom of keeping vases of fresh flowers in the home. English eyes in the midst of the Neoclassic Revival sought fundamental simplicity and sobriety in men's clothes as well as in architecture. Victorian eyes fancied dense patterns that were as likely to show up in waistcoats as in wainscoting, in dress fabrics as in wallpaper. Parisian eyes in the early 1900s admired the same neo-Empire motifs in dress and decor. The Bauhaus-influenced avant-garde of the 1920s favoured plain dress and distinctly non-bourgeois decor and furniture: Thonet café chairs and bare white walls.

The modernist tubular furniture in the 1931 photograph of the personal residence of the president of the Republic of Poland does not look as comfortable as the overstuffed easy chairs it probably replaced, but in decor – as in clothing – comfort is not always the first concern. “I am a progressive, modern person, forward-looking and unhampered by the burden of history” was the message that the decor of the president's residence was intended to convey. Here is another parallel between decor and dress: suitability. Clothes were traditionally suited to the occasion, just as the decor in a personal study was different from that of a formal reception room. In certain situations, comfort could be compromised. Women's corsets and men's high collars, for example, were not designed for comfort; a formal dining room was different from a family breakfast room.

The modern evolution of domestic decor, like the evolution of dress, seems to point in the direction of greater and greater comfort, more informality, more relaxation. We may have reached the point of diminishing returns in this development, however. Is there such a thing as too much comfort? Central heating and central air-conditioning create an undifferentiated atmosphere, just as the contemporary uniform of T-shirts and jeans creates an undifferentiated costume. But uniformity can mean dullness. Life is enriched by contrasts: the warmth of a fireplace, the occasion of a special meal, or a special dress. Can one imagine a future where we rediscover the thermal delights of inglenooks, curtained beds, and breezy screened porches, and the pleasures of dressing up for dinner? Maybe.

The Mehoffers' plain and unostentatious summer home was intentionally casual and natural, a counterpoint to their Krakow house which was more formal – different settings for different activities. But if the relationship between dress and decor is intimate, it is also one-sided. Interior decorators and architects will bridle at this, but there is no doubt that dress comes first. “People have always worn what they wanted to wear,” writes the fashion historian Anne Hollander, “fashion exists to keep fulfilling that desire.” And decor follows. For the truth is that a building or a room – no matter how useful, well put together or beautiful – is always a setting for the way that life is lived at the moment. If the setting is not sympathetic to the way that people dress, it risks looking not merely anachronistic but even downright silly. Like it or not, architecture and design cannot escape fashion.



Window screens. Willibald Richter, *Cabinet of Duchess Potocka in Pod Baranami Palace in Krakow (Mon petit cabinet à Cracovie)*, 1829

Summer lodging designed by Jan Bogustawski, Polish Pavilion in Paris, 1937



Dzieduszycki Palace and Park Complex in Zarzecze, drawing from Magdalena Morska, *Zarzecze: plansze*, early 1900s



KACPER POBŁOCKI IN
CONVERSATION WITH THE
EXHIBITION CREATORS

The soft
matter of
architecture

KACPER POBŁOCKI: Colour is an important element of the exhibition. Is this yet another medium that helps stimulate mindful attention and enhances participation in the planetary cycles, which you have been talking about?

SIMONE DE IACOBIS: In a sense, yes. Witold Rybczynski points out in his essay that in pre-modern architecture it was not customary to paint walls; they usually remained bare, whether stone or wood. In order to introduce colour into the interior, the walls had to be 'dressed'. And, while alterations to the fabric of the building were both expensive and time-consuming, it was much easier to roll up the heavy winter curtains and replace them with light summer blinds. So this was also another way of altering the interior decor in terms of colour. In Poland, the colour code was a means to convey the climate, season of the year, and temperature.

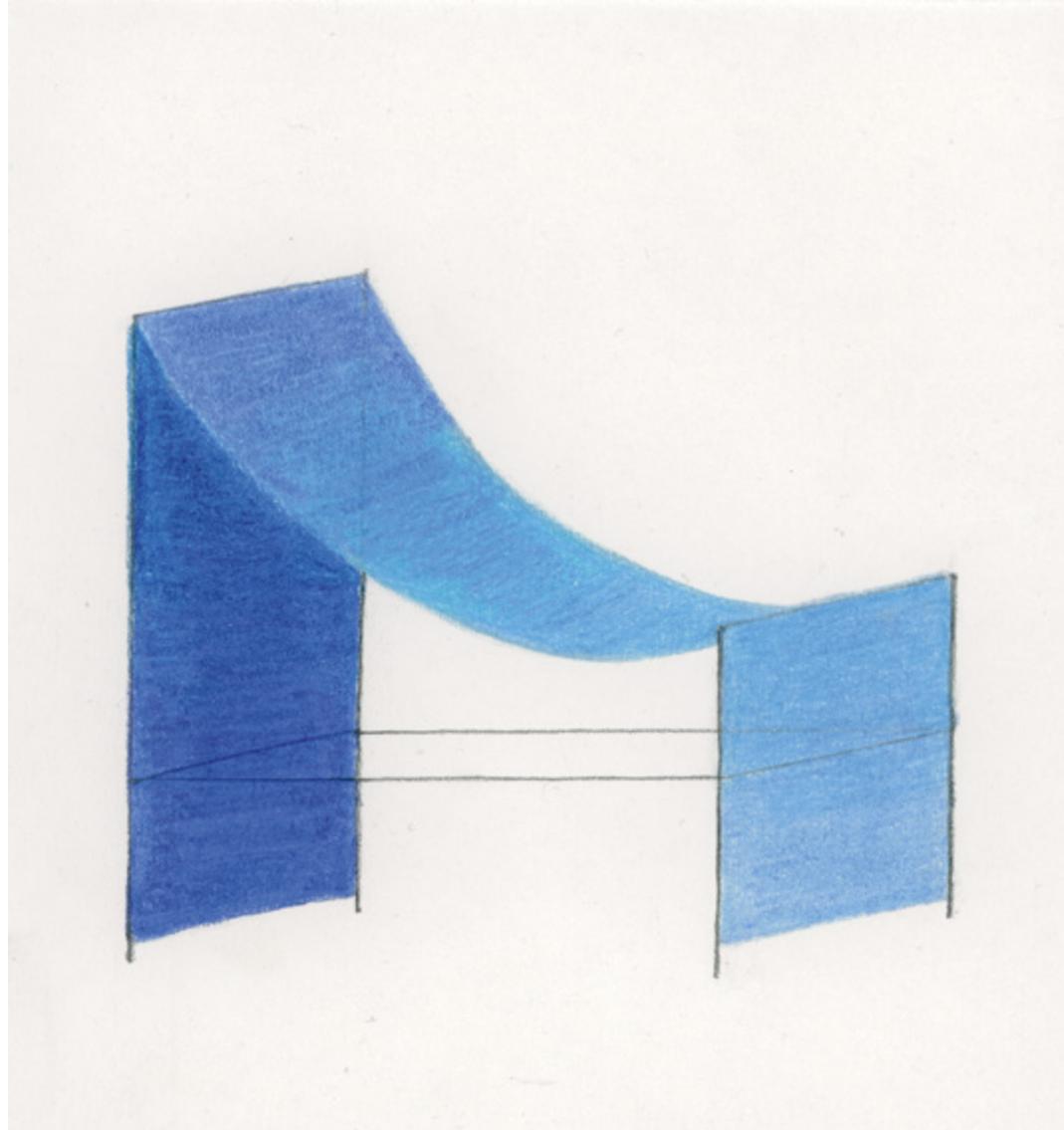
MAŁGORZATA KUCIEWICZ: The colour code is quite intuitive. In the summer we opt for lighter and cooler hues. In the winter, warm colours dominate, providing extra visual warmth.

ALICJA BIELAWSKA: These almost physical properties of colour are incredibly important to us both in the context of the mediation with the external world and how we physically respond to a given colour. What was important to us was to emphasise the connection between colours and the rhythm of the changing, natural seasons.

KP: In what way?

AB: I interpreted this quite literally, and combined our exhibition with my own experience of landscape. My parents and I have an all-year house in Podlasie, on the outskirts of the Narew National Park. My experience of nature is firmly rooted in that landscape. I watch it change with the seasons. With my mother, I document this in photographs, usually taken from the same spot: the river bank high above, with a sweeping view over the Narew valley, stretching out to the horizon. We register the changing landscape, the light, the greenery and the water, with its annual flooding. While preparing the exhibition, I arranged all this photographic material according to the seasons and I extracted from it the essential colours. I distilled the landscape into a palette of hues, which I then used to design textiles and create individual elements of the installation that is part of the Polish exhibition.

The presence of colour is not random. It stems also from my experience in working with different materials. I employ colour extensively in sculpture, spatial installations and drawings; for me, it is an important element of building a relationship between the work of art, the viewer and the space. Colour helps distribute the emphasis within the interior; it is capable of emphasising selected aspects of a given space, whether to expose or conceal them. The experience of colour can be



Alicja Bielawska, Drawing for
The Clothed Home, colour
pencil and pencil on paper,
2020–2021

1 (see p. 56)

incredibly physical. It's also crucial that we are mindful of the relationship between how a given colour makes us feel or how we feel about it, and how colour has an impact on our perception of architecture.

KP:

So, colour is not just art for art's sake, but an element that opens us up to a tangible, multi-dimensional experience of the textile.

AB:

Colour is inextricably linked to the textile and its physical existence. For me, the textile is a phenomenal tool from the artistic point of view. It offers a huge wealth of textures, different degrees of transparency and different weaves. This is why I have begun to use textiles in my work, precisely in order to draw attention to how we experience space; so as to delineate and construct space, but in a soft way. Textiles are very flexible, fluid, capable of altering their shape with our movement or under the influence of air. At the same time they are very close to our bodies, so we are highly sensitive to them. We feel this connection even subconsciously; we are capable of sensing differences in textures almost tangibly – yet without actually touching. While working on the exhibition we found many inspiring archival materials such as photographs, engravings and paintings, which indicated a range of seasonal use of fabrics in interiors. Interestingly enough, browsing through these visual materials allowed us to feel the ambience of various historical interiors. Even in the pictures, the fabric has an extraordinary effect on the senses of the recipient. The textiles used in the exhibition offer a whole spectrum of possible multisensory experiences. The textures are rough and smooth, heavy and airy, soft and stiff, flowing freely and taut. The textiles that build up the exhibition are made of natural fibres, wool, flax and hemp. We wanted to draw attention to the properties of natural materials and their traditional use. The thicker or woollen fabrics, which help to maintain warmth, are allocated to the colder seasons. In turn, lightweight, linen fabrics protect against the sun in the summer months. Hemp is durable and, like other fibres, very resistant to moisture. Woollen fabrics wrap up walls and furniture, separating areas of space, reducing heat loss and protecting against draughts. Linen fabrics act as screen layers, regulating the inflow of light and heat. They are thin; when hung in doorway or windows, they yield to and encourage the movement of air.

MK:

The textiles that we use in different seasons affect our sensual perception of the home. Winter brings out specific textures – heavy and furry. The space is snugly padded out, altering the acoustic. The flowy summer fabrics highlight the hardness of architecture through their gentle, swaying motion. The rustling of the air that penetrates the loose weave of the door hanging is part of my experience of summer.

Hanging an eiderdown
beneath the roof of the
Oskar and Zofia Hansen
House in Szumin,
photos by Michał Matejko,
2020



SID: In his essay, Sascha Roesler uses the term 'synesthesia', related to what Alicja and Gosia have been talking about. The fact that seeing blue makes us think about the cold is a quasi-synesthetic moment. Added to this is the sense of touch – the experience of a light, fine, slippery fabric that intensifies the feeling of coolness. The opposite is true for warm colours. You see red or yellow, and instantly feel warmer and cosier. You touch these fabrics, and they turn out to be thickly woven and chunky, tempting you to wrap yourself up in them. Due to the prevailing pandemic, this haptic experience of the exhibition will be less accessible, but the exhibition itself has been designed with just this kind of multisensory experience in mind.

KP: On entering the exhibition, do we enter a sample home, with different rooms designated for summer and winter?

ALEKSANDRA KĘDZIOREK: Not at all, we have treated the exhibition space as quite abstract. Despite having marked out certain functions – such as the sofa – this is not an illustration of a place- or time-specific home. You enter a kind of circle of the seasons, and find yourself amongst textile installations, which simultaneously evoke the rituals of both clothing and unclothing the home that take place throughout the entire annual cycle.

MK: Walking through the exhibition, you thus walk through all the seasons. In an actual home, these particular textiles would not be present simultaneously. What is crucial for us is the ritual of clothing and unclothing the space – a ritual that no longer exists, but which is not so very remote from our own time. We experienced it ourselves in Szumin, in the house of Oskar and Zofia Hansen, a modernist space.

KP: The house that you call the 'onion-skin house'?

SID: Szumin has been an inexhaustible source of inspiration for us. This is the house of the Polish architects Oskar and Zofia Hansen, which they began to build in 1968, and which today, designated as a historic relic, houses a branch of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. We have been visiting it since 2013 and carried out an inventory; today we provide support for the conservation work there. And throughout all this, we have been learning a lot *from* the house. Earlier, on the occasion of the exhibition *Amplifying Nature*, at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018, we viewed its architecture through the prism of its relationship with day and night, with light and darkness. To return to Szumin and re-interpret the space anew, this time though from the perspective of the textiles, was a very refreshing experience. The Hansen family treated the house as a living organism that they clothed and unclothed according to the rhythm of the seasons. To prevent snow from falling on the terrace, they would draw a white oilcloth tarpaulin across it.

Home textiles in the Oskar and Zofia Hansen House in Szumin, photos by Michał Matejko, 2020



To prevent the heat from escaping upwards, they would hang an eiderdown beneath the roof. My first visit to Szumin was a dramatically striking experience: we spent half the day trying to heat up the whole house. This let me understand better the metaphor of the onion-skin house: a structure in which you must decide which spaces you are going to use during the colder part of the year, which you will heat up, and which you will leave unheated. The entire house in Szumin is just such a climatic apparatus; on each occasion we discover yet another aspect.

AK: What we discovered this time was the 'house eiderdown', made by Zofia Hansen. For years it had been stored in the attic, unused. It consisted of a kind of roof lining made from typical eiderdown stripy material and stuffed with eiderdown wadding, made to measure to fit between the collar beams when hung on the joists. These could be put on the roof spans in the winter to lower the ceiling and prevent the heat from escaping upwards.

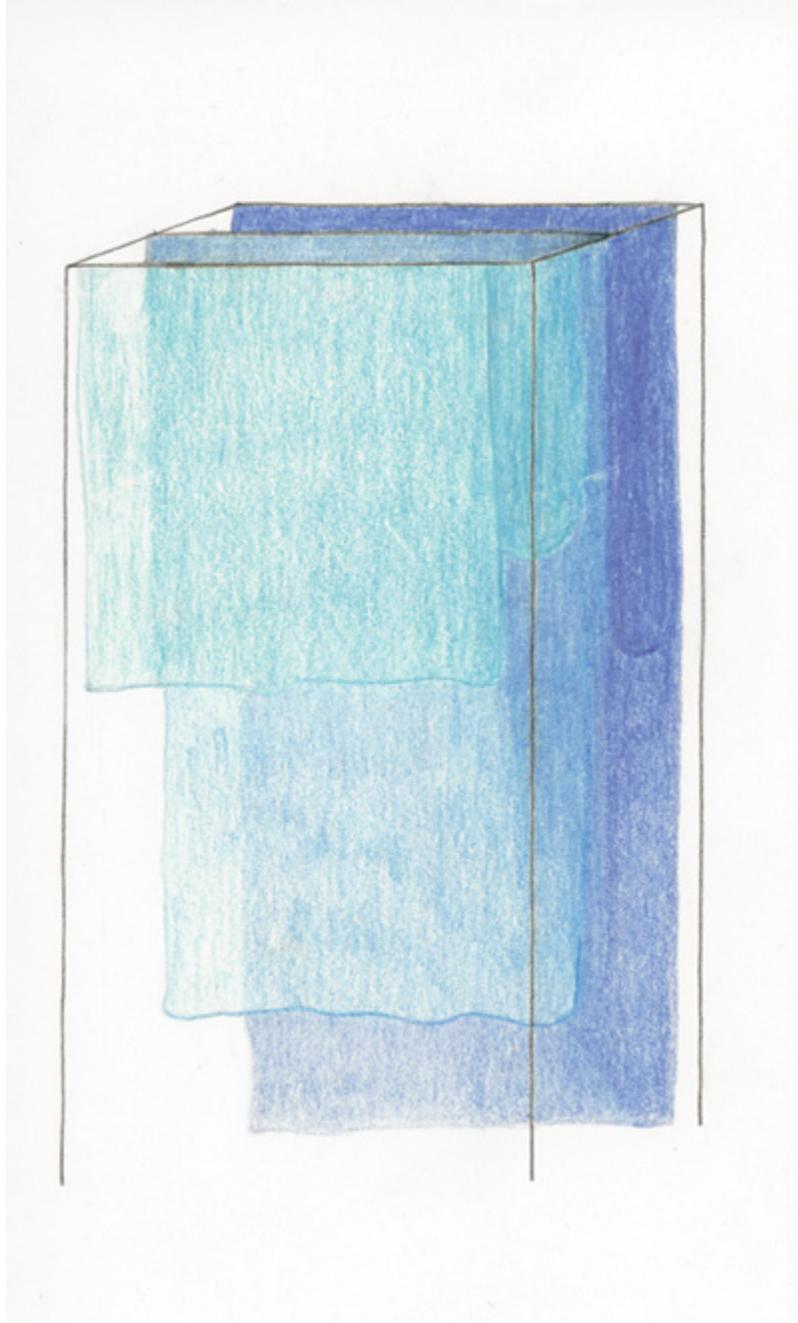
KP: In other words, what this is about is constructing additional coverings or layers between the human body and the world outside.

AK: Exactly. And this approach has been firmly rooted in vernacular architecture – both Polish and Scandinavian – as they were both important points of reference for the Hansens. Both Zofia and Oskar Hansen took stock of folk architecture during their architectural studies; later, Zofia Hansen went more deeply into these studies. Szumin, initially built as a summer house, later became a year-round house and its use changed according to the seasons: sometimes, it would be a spacious, airy and open summer house; at other times, it would become an inwardly focused, textile-clad, enclosed winter house.



Home textiles in the Oskar and Zofia Hansen House in Szumin, photos by Michał Matejko, 2020

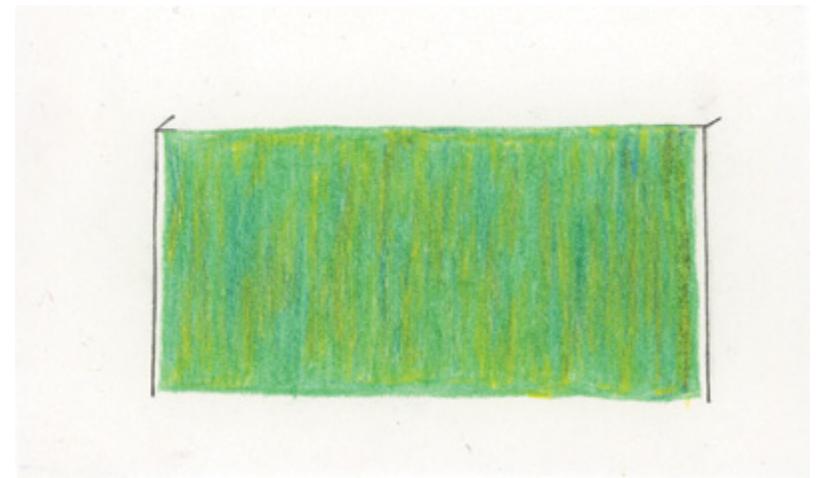
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Following pages: Alicja Bielawska, Drawings for *The Clothed Home*, colour pencil and pencil on paper, 2020–2021



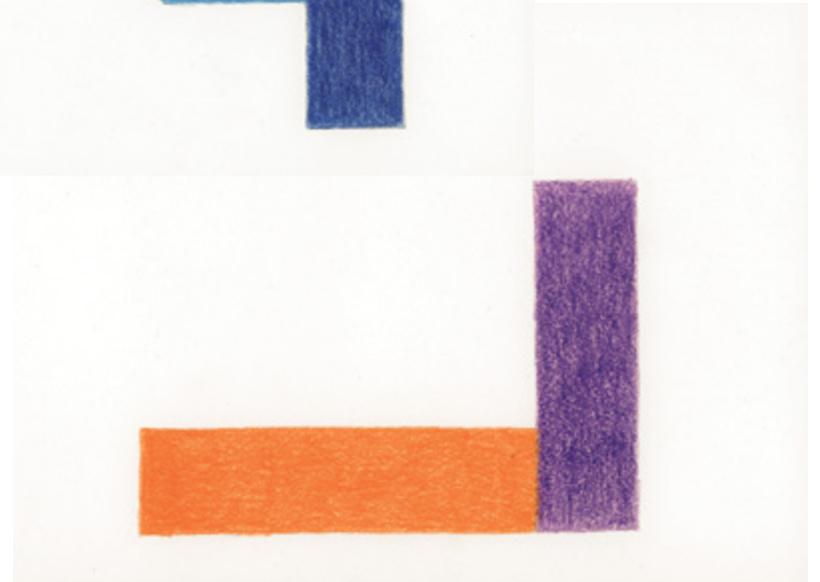
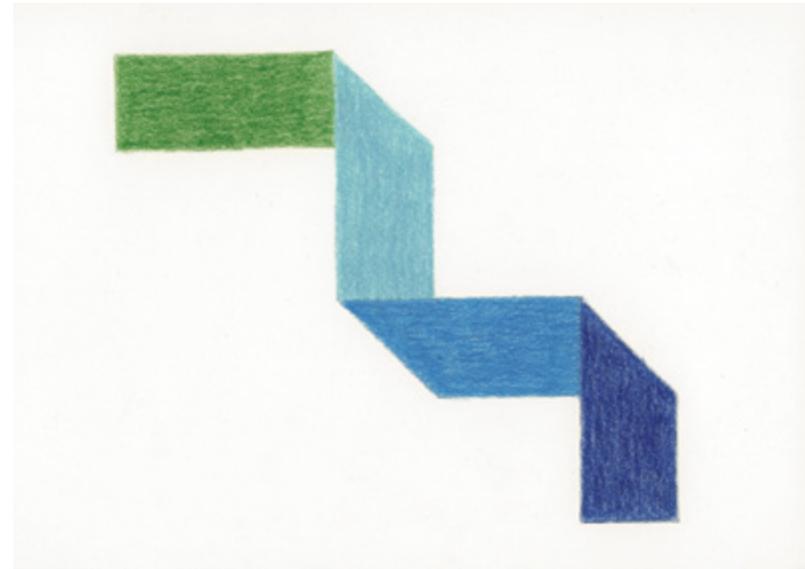
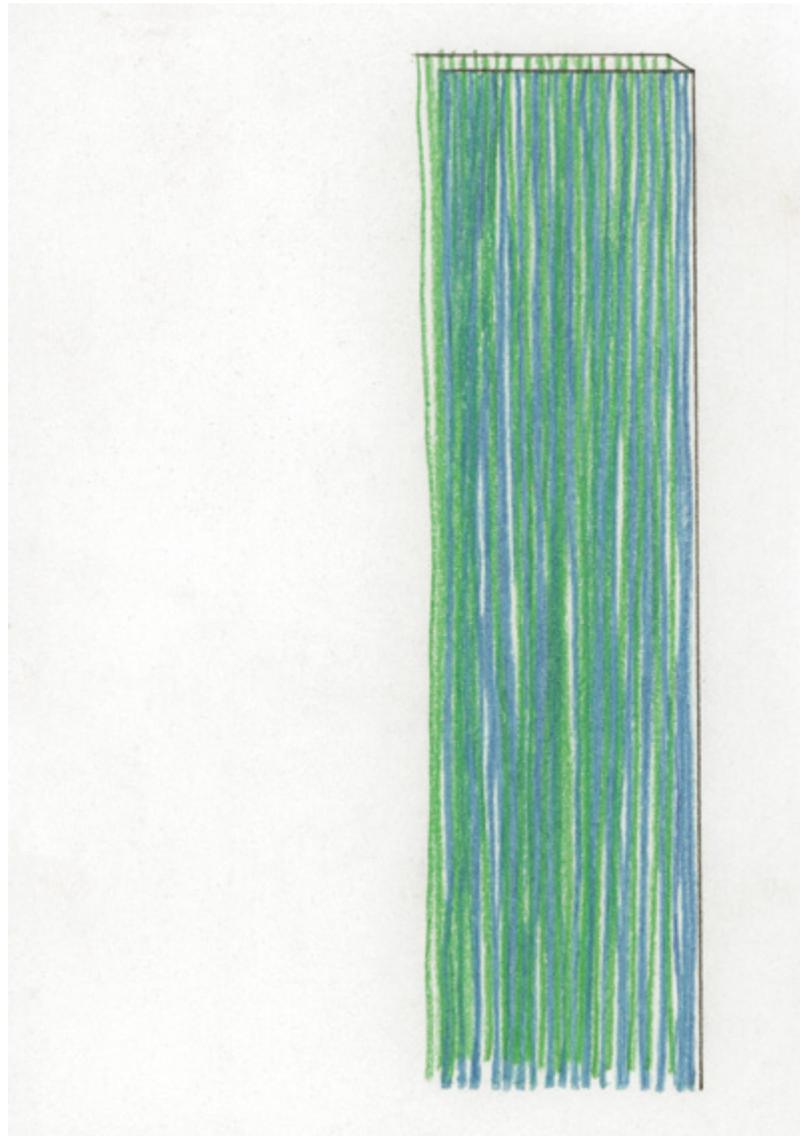
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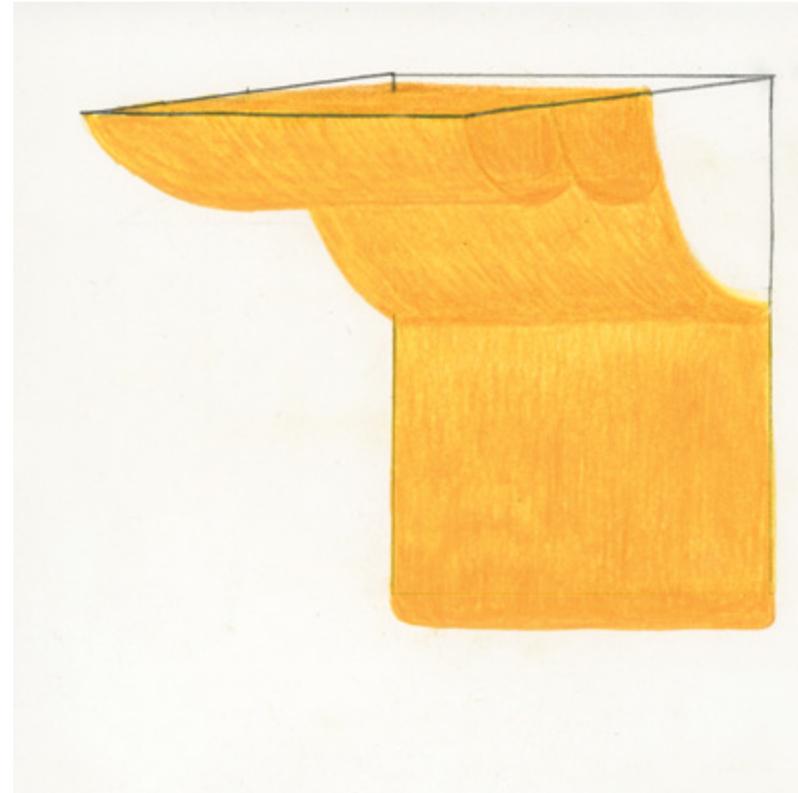
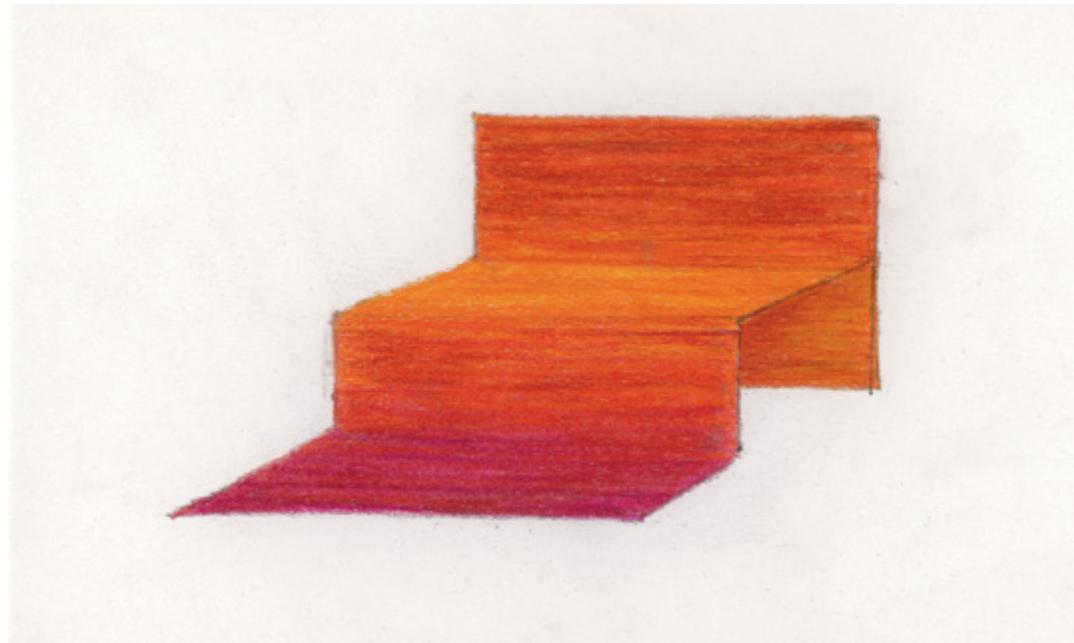


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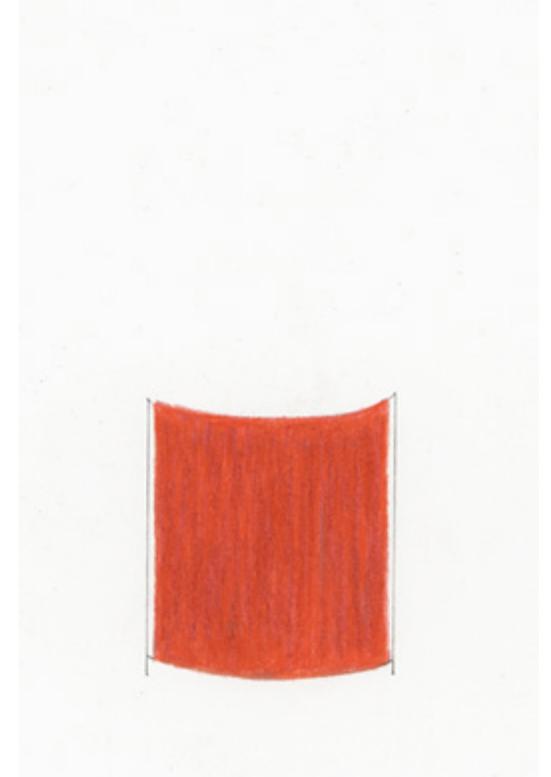
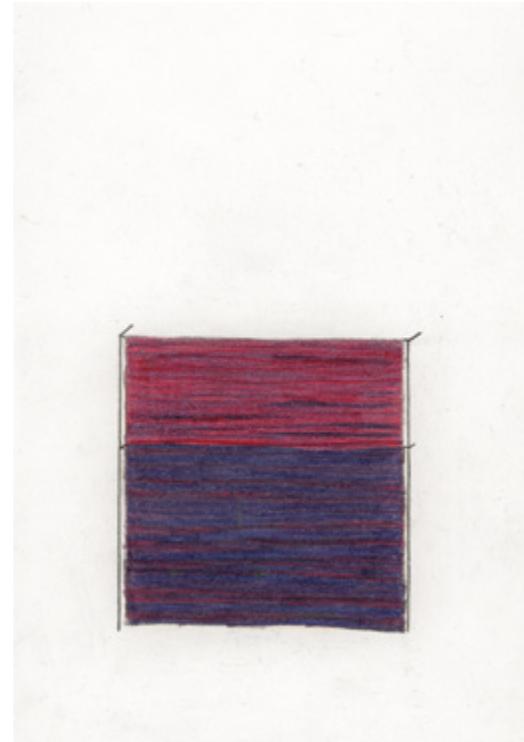
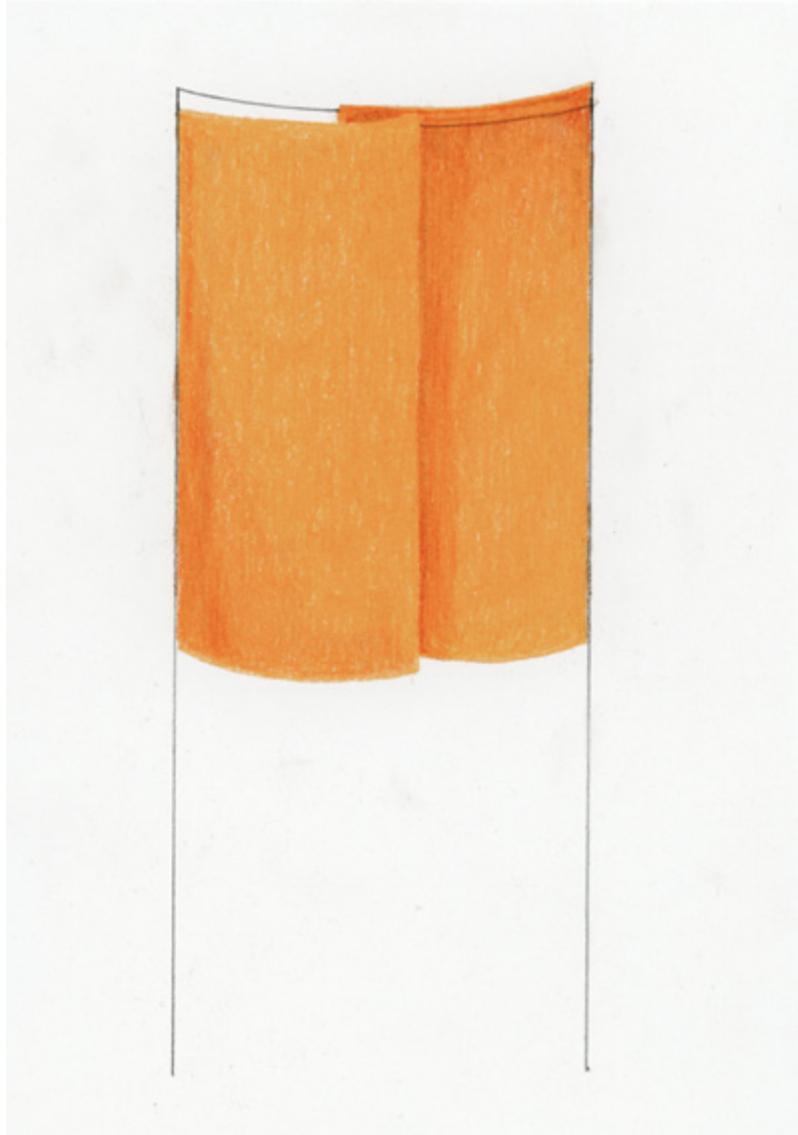




9



10



Warm seasons

- 1 *Baldachim* [baal-daakh-eem] shades the bed during sleep, so that other occupants of the same space, including animals and plants, can have continued access to light.
Seasons: summer
- 2 *Zastony* [zaswonny] are window screens made from light fabrics, which regulate the ingress of light. They inspire the daily contemplation of sunbeams wandering around the room.
Seasons: early summer, summer, late summer
- 3 *Parawan* [pa-raah-vun] provides a screen against draughts. Its portable design facilitates quick rearrangement of the surrounding interior space.
Seasons: prespring, early spring
- 4 *Zaplecek* [zapletseck] warms the wall during cold spells in the spring so that one may lean against it without feeling a chill.
Seasons: prespring, early spring, spring
- 5 *Mucholap* [moo-hoh-wup] separates the interior of the house from the outside during heatwaves. It provides a protective barrier against insects and provides privacy, while ensuring constant air circulation.
Seasons: spring, early summer, summer, late summer
- 6 *Chodnik* [hodneek] creates pathways on the daily route of indoor walks round the house, in the warm season protecting bare feet from catching a splinter.
Seasons: all-year

Cold seasons

- 7 *Chodnik* [hodneek] creates warm pathways on the daily route of indoor walks round the house.
Seasons: all-year
- 8 *Narzuta* [naage-ootah] enfolds pieces of furniture and a section of the floor, increasing the thermal comfort of the users. In old peasant houses it used to be thrown over one's shoulders when going outside.
Seasons: golden autumn, grey autumn, early winter, winter, late winter
- 9 *Podpinka* [podpeenkah] lowers the height of a room for the duration of the winter. This reduces the volume that must be heated and prevents excessive escape of heat upwards.
Seasons: winter
- 10 *Zaplecek* [zapletseck] provides multiple layers of insulation to the wall during winterfrosts.
Seasons: early autumn, golden autumn, grey autumn, early winter
- 11 *Portiera* [portiyerah] reduces heat loss and prevents cold air entering the room when the door is opened.
Seasons: early winter, winter, late winter
- 12 *Parawan* [pa-raah-vun] creates a pocket of warmth for those cosying up to the fireplace.
Seasons: grey autumn

SASCHA ROESLER

Amplifiers of perception

”The vertical surfaces (...) played a critical role for the sensory imaginary in large halls. (...) Freely hanging textiles formed highly sensitive surfaces that made the invisible air space of the large halls tangible. The air volume of the hall architecture was turned into a sensitive space of resonance of the artificial climate.”

In his book *Hallenbauten*, (Hall Buildings) of 1931, Ludwig Hilberseimer astutely pointed out that the ever-increasing proliferation of large-scale halls was a recent phenomenon, related to the industrialisation of construction and the modern metropolis. Driven by the new structural possibilities that emerged from reinforced concrete and steel construction, numerous uses – not only production but also trade and leisure – were accommodated in large volumes. Hilberseimer unfolds a whole typology of large halls as part of the then-modern big-city architecture: ‘commercial buildings’ such as department stores, offices and business premises, hall and theatre buildings for cinemas, exhibitions and trade fairs, and ‘transport buildings’ such as railway stations, large garages and airports. In the introduction to his book we read: “In the past, hall buildings were relatively rare and therefore extremely significant. It was through them that the constructional-technical as well as the architectural-artistic problems developed. On the other hand, no closer attention was paid to special needs such as good viewing or listening, as is required by the various purposes of the halls today.”¹ Hilberseimer thus understands large halls in the modern era not only as a problem of construction but also of perception.² In the case of hall buildings, the architectural construction itself cannot be separated from the perception that takes place within it. Ensuring the desired *perception* is a cognitive act of *construction* in itself, to be achieved both by the building’s architect and the users.

Mass and Air

While the consumption of (horizontal) surface area in large halls is due to functional reasons, the multisensory requirements, which integrate hygienic, climatic and perceptual aspects of architecture, involve a vertical dimension (and thus the volume). Large halls, as they have evolved in European cities since the beginning of the 20th century, set up new sites of publicity for, and representations of, urban societies, recognising themselves in the idea of the ‘mass’ (as for instance

Market hall in Breslau (Wrocław) during the erection of the concrete structure, 1907



described by Siegfried Kracauer or Elias Canetti³). Through their principal gesture of enclosing air, large halls became part of the symbolism of the crowd and the large volumes of enclosed air contributed to the emerging – proto-fascist – ‘heroic style’ in European architecture.⁴

With their wide-span supporting structures of iron and reinforced concrete, the market halls built by Richard Plüddemann and Heinrich Küster between 1906 and 1908 in Breslau (today Wrocław, Poland), by Tony Garnier between 1909 and 1914 in Lyon (France) or by Martin Elsaesser between 1926 and 1928 in Frankfurt am Main (Germany) are more reminiscent of cathedrals or palaces than conventional market places. The enormous enclosed volume above the heads of the people gathered in the market forms an architecture that makes a vast volume of air a mass ornament. It is no coincidence that during the inter-war period in Europe the term ‘palace’ was used for the (self-) aggrandisement of new halls dedicated to the consumption and leisure of workers and employees; there was talk of a ‘Sports Palace’ or a ‘Thermal Palace’. With Siegfried Kracauer, the large air space of the new halls can be understood as contributing to an urban proxemics that evokes a feeling of hygiene above the heads and between the bodies of the individuals. The revues, such as those performed in the Haus Vaterland (Fatherland House) or the Große Schauspielhaus

(Great Theatre, in 1947 renamed Friedrichstadt Palace) in Berlin, epitomised the new ‘physical culture’ (Körperkultur)⁵ for the masses, which also permeated the proxemics of everyday urban life and in which, despite the high density in the cities, a regulated separation of people was maintained. In tightly “packed stadiums,” Kracauer writes, “performances of the same geometric precision are taking place.”⁶

Architects such as Hans Poelzig, Mies van der Rohe, Lilly Reich and Leo Nachtlicht, as well as landscape architects such as Georg Plover and Herta Hammerbacher explored, in the course of their design work in Berlin and at the same time as Kracauer, the everyday rituals of modern life. Exhibitions, theatres, night clubs, restaurants and public baths, located in large halls, opened up spaces for new visions of design during the 1920s and 1930s.⁷ As I will now show, not only the structure and building services but also the vertical surfaces and cladding – whether painted, woven or vegetal – played a critical role for the *sensory imaginary* in large halls. Vertical surfaces served as amplifiers of perception – and thus as promoters of a new “good viewing”⁸ – in that a mass of air, for instance, either sets textiles in motion or is set in motion by them. Relying on the agency of surfaces, such a symbolism of large air volumes contributed to a *climatic imaginary*, which converged in the concept of “artificial climate”. As a term and metaphor, artificial climate had emerged in the 1920s and 1930s for describing various anthropogenic urban climate phenomena and their appropriation in design. There was talk of “climatic conditions” (Klimazuständen), which “have come about with the help of man’s creativity, as an artificial climate”.⁹

Installation of Freely Hanging Fabrics *The Velvet and Silk Café*

The topological interlocking of interior and exterior spaces was at the centre of the urban climatological thinking in the 1920s and 1930s. Accordingly, climatic *interactions* and thermal *transitions* played a critical role in the climatologists’ investigations and the design appropriations made by architects.

A subtle reflection of this is the Café Samt und Seide (Velvet and Silk Café), developed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich¹⁰ in 1927 for the Die Mode der Dame (Women’s Fashion) fair on behalf of the German silk industry.¹¹ In the project, textiles were used to create a filigree space of self-representation in which all the heaviness of architecture seemed to be suspended. Freely hanging textiles formed highly sensitive surfaces that made the invisible air space of the large



Overview of the Velvet and Silk Café at the Women's Fashion Exhibition (Die Mode der Dame), Berlin, showing various hanging wall segments, 1927

halls tangible. The air volume of the hall architecture was turned into a sensitive space of resonance for the artificial climate. Over an area of 300 m², silk and velvet fabrics hanging at different heights formed various textile wall segments. As a room installation, they preceded the sculptural minimalism of the American artist Richard Serra. In addition to two semi-circular walls, the café was structured by textiles arranged transversely and longitudinally to create a number of different zones. The design potential of free-hanging fabrics was evident in the shapes of the walls and the selected colours and textures of the fabrics, as well as in their optical overlapping of and their movements in the room.

Depending on the line of sight and the fabrics, different overlaps and alternating shiny and matt colour spaces were evoked, thus creating a dynamic play with colour, materials and textures of silk and velvet fabrics. According to Philip Johnson, the only person who was later able to recall the colours of the fabrics used, the velvet fabrics were

black, orange and red, and the silk fabrics – gold, silver and yellow, while the floor was finished in white linoleum.¹² The colour palette was just as contrasty as much as it evoked 'national appeal' – a gesture to acknowledge his clients' desires that was not untypical for Mies.¹³ Although the lighting in the café area softened the contrast between the different colours, it further enhanced the powerful simplicity of the room installation as a whole. Frames were fitted along the long sides of the café where the light sources were mounted, distributing the light diffusely.¹⁴ That the light sources were hidden again served to emphasise the theatrical character of the café.

Temporary installations, such as the Velvet and Silk Café, created spatial subdivisions of huge interiors that are reminiscent of the dazzling scenery and staffage of a theatre stage. With sociologist Erwin Goffman, one can speak of 'front' and 'back' stages, which characterise this kind of temporary architecture in exhibition halls. The Café in Berlin can be conceived as a blueprint for the open floor plan and a feel for materials used later in the main living room of the Villa Tugendhat in Brno, which Mies was designing at the same time as the Café and completed three years later, in 1930. The textiles used as room dividers, the nickel-plated steel and brass tubes of the suspensions, and the chrome-plated surfaces of the cantilever chairs, stools, and glass tables were part of a new modern vocabulary. In the villa, the principle of "scenery-like walls"¹⁵ was applied in a permanent version with onyx marble, an exemplary application of Gottfried Semper's principle of 'material change' (Stoffwechsel), in the transition from 'textile' (Gewand) to 'wall' (Wand).¹⁶

A Courtyard with Images of Natural Vegetation *Gourmenia House*

Urban microclimates – from smoky coffee houses to stuffy workplaces, from unheated apartments to overheated subway stations – made the modern metropolis such as Berlin a focal point of new climatic experiences in which air pollution, heat and cold went hand in hand. The ambivalence of the artificial climate of the city became subject of the design appropriations made by architects.

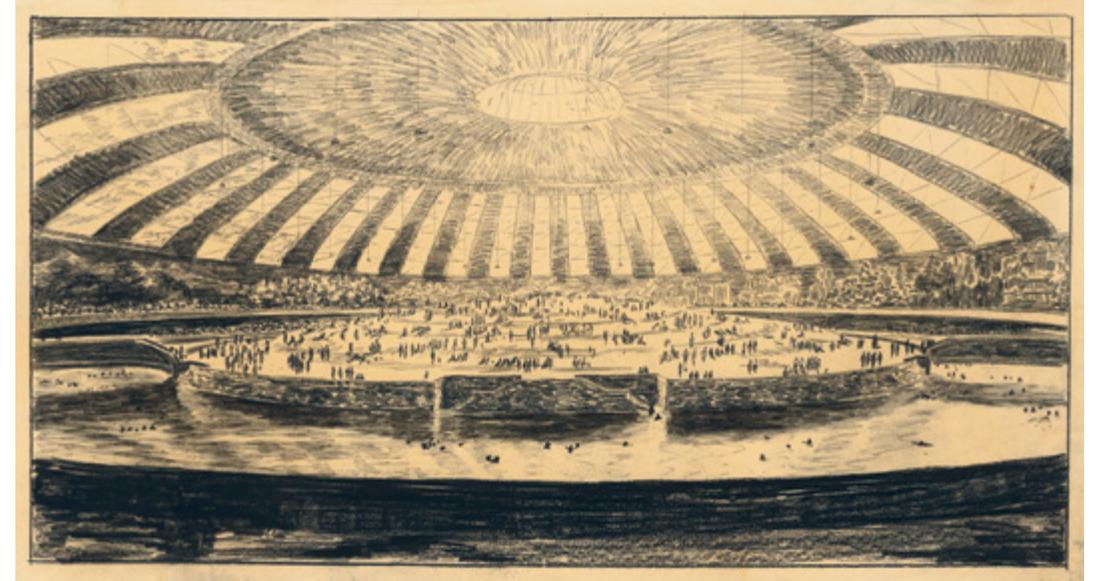
One remarkable project related to this ambivalence of urban climates is the Haus Gourmenia,¹⁷ a building (erected in 1928/29 at the Hardenbergstrasse in Berlin-Charlottenburg) with a "pioneering interior design",¹⁸ which housed several restaurants. In the case of the Traube wine restaurant, a spiral staircase connected the garden with the galleries of a three-storey hall. The idea of creating a "glass-roofed

inner courtyard” with a “natural garden” was the brainchild of the building’s architect, Leo Nachtlicht, and landscape architect Georg Pniower.¹⁹ As Pniower remarked, this courtyard gave the interior a “subtropical character.” In addition to subtropical plants, including palm trees and cacti, the garden of the Traube restaurant featured water basins and fountains as well as a complex topography that included bridges and changes in materials. The artificial subtropical climate was created in the Haus Gourmania by means of mechanical air conditioning and artificial light for the plants. It was Pniower’s main concern to “tightly combine the horticultural with the architectural in order to create natural images of vegetation” within the restaurant.²⁰ Such an amalgam of nature and culture formed a central design and planning idea of the Berlin interwar period. The intensive greening of the big city, as had been demanded at least since 1915 with Martin Wagner’s ground-breaking dissertation *The Sanitary Green* (*Das sanitäre Grün*)²¹ not only included streets and squares but also façades and interiors – the greening of cities thus had to be approached both horizontally and vertically.²² In this sense, the restaurant comprised vertical ‘images of vegetation’.

The Haus Gourmania has since been regarded as one of the “outstanding projects of [Georg] Pniower in the Weimar period.”²³ The garden developed here formed the first culmination of Pniower’s experiments with conservatories and flower windows, which he designed for private clients in Berlin during the Weimar Republic.²⁴ Johannes Reinhold emphasised the visionary significance of this project, in that it showed, among other things, Pniower’s “scientific way of working.” “For the first time, work was carried out here with an air-conditioning system and the plantations were maintained under artificial light. The experience gained there (...) was a valuable contribution to cultivation techniques in horticulture. With this work, Pniower also provided many creative suggestions, e.g. regarding the inclusion of animals.”²⁵ At the Traube wine restaurant, it was not only plants but also parrots that enriched the room acoustically and visually.

Panopticon of the New Physical Culture *Thermal Palace*

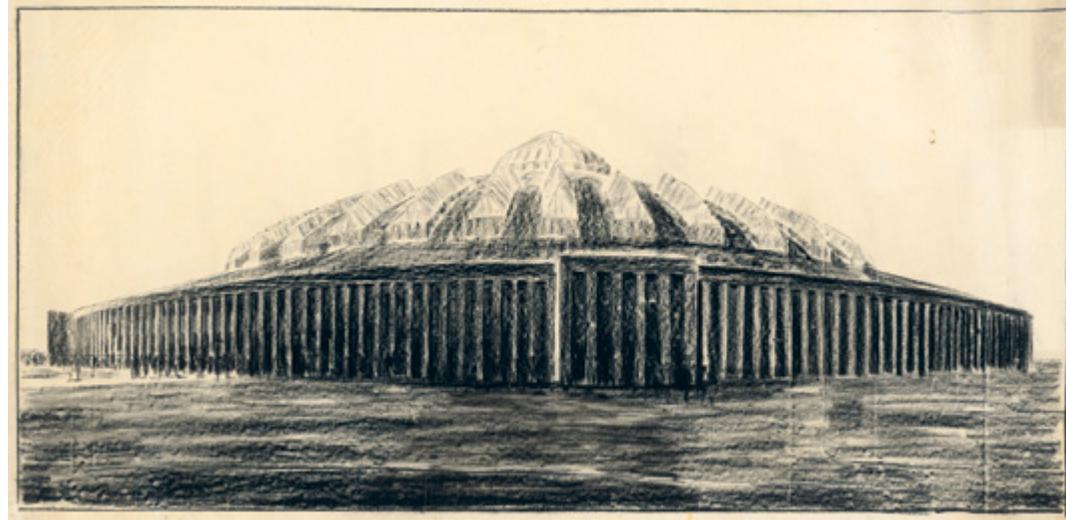
The democratisation of society, strived for during the short era of the Weimar Republic, was also reflected in the desire to build climatic infrastructures for broad sections of the population; climate control was still seen less as a private matter than a part of public urban infrastructure.



Interior view of the Thermal Palace in Berlin designed by Hans Poelzig, 1928

With the *Thermenpalast* (Thermal Palace) – an (unbuilt) project for a public bath in Berlin – the empirically experienced climate of Berlin was countered by a deliberately created artificial climate. Based on the new technical developments in air conditioning,²⁶ the design developed in 1927/28 was an exemplary blueprint for an artificial climate, which was worked out in every detail. Goldmerstein and Stodieck, whose brainchild the Thermal Palace was, entrusted the architect Hans Poelzig with the architectural design, and with the assistance of numerous experts from the “building and bathing industry,” a precise “evaluation of the feasibility, cost and profitability”²⁷ of the project was elaborated.

The interplay of a free-span dome 150 m in diameter, a huge ring-shaped water basin and an artificial topography reflected the desire to create an environment beyond the conventional scale of a building, in which the dichotomy of the inside and outside was suspended. “In the large, airy and light-filled room, the visitor has the sensation of being outside in the open air.”²⁸ With its multimedia approaches, which combined technical and artistic aspects, the swimming hall would have represented a *total work of art*, in which a 12-metre high mural was intended to provide a counterpoint to the dichotomy between the interior and the exterior. Comparable to nature or history dioramas, the outer infrastructural ring of the bathing facility (with its serving rooms)



Exterior view of the Thermal Palace in Berlin designed by Hans Poelzig, 1928

was to merge seamlessly into the landscape of an Arcadian island world. The project description explains this in detail: “The periphery of the hall will be artistically equipped with all the aids of modern stage technology, both sculpturally and visually, in such a way that the visitors think they are in an unlimited space with a wide panoramic view. The 12-m high mural, which closes the hall like a panorama, represents friendly, sunny landscapes. Cold, rain and all unpleasant natural phenomena will not bother our guests.”²⁹ The new “physical culture” propagated by the initiators – “The planned palace should not only serve water sports, but any physical culture at all”³⁰ – was thus overlaid by a panoptic experience that combined the “needs [...] of good viewing” (Ludwig Hilberseimer) with thermal sensations of various kinds.

Huge areas of skylight provided a sun-flooded atmosphere, which was further enhanced by an “artificial sun.”³¹ The heating systems also conveyed novel microclimatic sensations on the ground. “All berths are heated. The bathers should definitely feel as if they were on a beautiful, warm summer day on a natural, sun-drenched beach.”³² Everything was designed to simulate or even improve upon nature with modern artistic and technical means. In contrast to Buckminster Fuller’s famous Dome over Manhattan, the Thermal Palace had an explicitly socio-political dimension, since a democratic concern was the driving force behind the project. The Thermal Palace was intended to create a climatic

counter-world to the unhygienic atmosphere of the living and working environments of workers and employees. The project initiators speak of “about four hours (...) of relaxation after the day’s tiring work.”³³

Climatic Scenery in Large Halls

As I have aimed to show, climatic imaginary of the interwar metropolis cannot be reduced to the intellectual framework that emerged in the second half of the century; the broad understanding of ‘climate’ wasn’t congruent with thermal and energy issues. The climatic concepts of 20th century architecture must be thus (re-)examined in the light of the big city. As cultural geographer Matthew Gandy has emphasised, interwar Berlin was “the capital of European modernism”³⁴ and an “experimental city”,³⁵ and as such had a major impact on how architects and planners of the time approached artificial climate.

The urban concept of artificial climate comprised the full ambivalence of the industrialised metropolis, which was also conceived as a climatic ambivalence. The artificial climate of the city was considered “wicked”;³⁶ it could not be equated with the idea of the “well-tempered environment” as promoted in the second half of the century.³⁷ Neither *comfort* nor *energy conservation* served as the critical blueprint for capturing and addressing urban microclimates through design. Instead, design approaches to urban microclimate were explored as trade-offs between eccentric *sensations* and biological *needs*. Gandy speaks of a “series of modernist architectural interventions that explored the possibility of creating a new synthesis between nature and culture” at the time.³⁸

Referring to climatic scenery in large halls, three design approaches to artificial climate were presented in that contribution: with freely suspended fabrics forming an installation, vertical vegetation as part of a subtropical courtyard, and a landscape mural contributing to the visual regime of a panoptic public bath. These designs stand for the staged character of climate in big cities, in which visual impressions are synaesthetically combined with thermal experiences. The “phenomenon of cladding”³⁹ played an important role, underestimated in historiographic terms, in conveying the microclimatic diversity of the city, as this contribution intended to show.

With the large halls in big cities, a modern symbolism of air volumes evolved, that connected the indoor with the outdoor climate, and the static structure with the movable surfaces. Climatic scenery was used to amplify the experience of climate in large halls, in the process revealing a broader spectrum of how climate was being

conceived and represented, meandering between (thermal) control and (visual) simulation. Mechanical air conditioning was combined with pictorial representations of an artificial climate. The omnipresent nature of Berlin opened up a “space of urban imagination” which has also shaped the architectural thinking about the artificial climate. The “connection between the city and nature [appears] in the existence of natural spaces within Berlin, such as the Tiergarten or the Landwehrkanal,” which inscribed themselves into the design thinking of the “modern and future-oriented city.”⁴⁰ In view of the new era of the Anthropocene, this urban tradition of reflecting ‘climate’ comprehensively and at the intersection of nature and culture needs to be further examined today.

Endnotes

- 1 Hilberseimer, Ludwig (1931), *Hallenbauten. Stadt- und Festhallen, Turn- und Sporthallen, Ausstellungshallen, Ausstellungsanlagen*, Leipzig, p. 7.
- 2 Markus Kilian criticised the hitherto rudimentary reception of Hilberseimer’s work and aptly emphasised that he “publishes art criticism and art theory on a large scale as a text author and, from [his] position as an active critic, has taken a specific path in the planning and design of architecture and urban planning. The unique combination of art theory, architecture and urban planning united in the person of Hilberseimer, which is unique in its intensity, has so far not been given sufficient consideration.” Kilian, Markus (2002), *Großstadtarchitektur und New City. Eine planungsmethodische Untersuchung der Stadtplanungsmodelle Ludwig Hilberseimers*, Dissertation Technische Hochschule Karlsruhe, p. 13.
- 3 See Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* and Siegfried Kracauer’s famous 1927 essay *The Mass Ornament*. Although Canetti’s book did not appear until 1960, it had already taken its starting point as 1922.
- 4 On the notion of the ‘heroic style’ (heroische Stil) see Frank-Bertolt Raith, (1997), *Der heroische Stil. Studien zur Architektur am Ende der Weimarer Republik*, Berlin.
- 5 Siegfried Kracauer, (1977 [1927]), *The Mass Ornament*, in *Weimar Essays*, Harvard University Press, p. 76.
- 6 Ibid., p. 51.
- 7 See Hannah Steurer, (2017), “‘Berlin ist eine Sandwüste. Aber wo sonst findet man Oasen?’ Stadtdiskurs als Naturdiskurs in der deutschen und französischen Berlinliteratur (1800 bis 1935)”, in *Literatur und Ökologie. Neue literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, eds Claudia Schmitt and Christiane Solte-Gresser, Bielefeld, pp. 129–142.
- 8 See endnote 1.
- 9 Ernst Brezina, Wilhelm Schmidt, (1937), *Das künstliche Klima in der Umgebung des Menschen*, Stuttgart, p. VII.
- 10 Reich had met Mies in the run-up to the Weissenhof exhibition, where she was responsible for the design and organisation of the hall exhibition. This also included the glass room designed with Mies at the Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart. As a member of the board of the Deutscher Werkbund and experienced exhibition organiser, Reich was an eminent mediator not only of modern craftsmanship, but also between the permanent architecture of exhibition halls and temporary exhibitions to be set up there. See Lange, Christiane (2011), *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Architektur für die Seidenindustrie*, Berlin, p. 30.
- 11 The initiators were the Association of German Silk Weavers and the Association of Velvet and Plush Manufacturers. The opening took place on 21 September 1927. In addition to the café, eight booths with showcases were set up in the surrounding gallery of the exhibition hall. The fair was located in the recently completed exhibition hall at the Berlin Radio Tower. See endnote 10, p. 71.
- 12 Ibid., p. 71.
- 13 Other colours of the fabrics exhibited in the bunks were “white, red, black, blue, grey, green-yellow.” Ibid., p. 88.
- 14 Ibid., p. 73.
- 15 Deutsche Seide 1929, p. 216, see endnote 10, p. 72.

- 16 On Gottfried Semper’s notion of ‘Stoffwechsel’ (material change), see Sascha Roesler, (2013), *Weltkonstruktion. Der aussereuropäische Hausbau und die moderne Architektur – ein Wissensinventar*, Gebr. Mann Verlag, Berlin; Ákos Moravánszky, (2017), *Metamorphism: Material Change in Architecture*, Basel.
- 17 A neologism, combining ‘gourmet’ and ‘Germania’.
- 18 Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn and Peter Fibich, (2004), *Vom Sonnenrund zur Beispiellandschaft. Entwicklungslinien der Landschaftsarchitektur in Deutschland, dargestellt am Werk von Georg Pniower (1896–1960)*, Schriftenreihe des Fachbereichs Landschaftsarchitektur und Umweltentwicklung der Universität Hannover, p. 31.
- 19 Ibid., p. 32.
- 20 Ibid., p. 32.
- 21 See Martin Wagner, (1915), *Das sanitäre Grün der Städte. Ein Beitrag zur Freiflächentheorie*, Dissertation TU Berlin, 27. Februar, Berlin.
- 22 Under the title “Big city redevelopment: Reclamation of playgrounds, sandy and green areas in side streets with proof of profitability,” Goldmerstein and Stodieck 1931 provided suggestions for stone Berlin, which included intensive greening of façades. See J. Goldmerstein and K. Stodieck, (1931), *Grossstadtsanierung. Gewinnung von Spiel-, Sand- und Grünflächen in Neben- und Seitenstrassen mit Rentabilitätsnachweis*, Deutsche Bauzeitung, Berlin SW 48.
- 23 See endnote 18, p. 32.
- 24 His work comprised gardens for single-family houses, winter gardens and flower windows with relevance for their interior design, gardens in new building estates (open space planning), and sample designs for allotment gardens, memorials, cemeteries and public areas. In the Pniower House (c. 1935) at the Hochsitzweg 105 in Berlin, a flower window with cacti was also installed.
- 25 Prof. Reinhold: Report on Prof. Georg Pniower, submitted to the University of Horticulture in Budapest, January 1960, p. 3. See Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn and Peter Fibich (2004), *Vom Sonnenrund zur Beispiellandschaft. Entwicklungslinien der Landschaftsarchitektur in Deutschland, dargestellt am Werk von Georg Pniower (1896–1960)*, Schriftenreihe des Fachbereichs Landschaftsarchitektur und Umweltentwicklung der Universität Hannover, p. 32.
- 26 Since the beginning of the 20th century, the technical know-how had existed to modify mechanically the microclimates in large halls – whether factories, warehouses or public buildings such as cinemas or theatres. The new apparatus and processes included “heating systems, air improvement systems, ventilation, de-aeration, dust extraction and demisting.” Salzmann, Heinrich (1911), *Industrielle und gewerbliche Bauten (Speicher, Lagerhäuser und Fabriken)*, Band II Speicher und Lagerhäuser, Sammlung Göschen, Leipzig, p. 30.
- 27 J. Goldmerstein and K. Stodieck, *Thermenpalast. Kur-, Erholungs-, Sport-, Schwimm- und Badeanlage*, Wilhelm Ernst & Sohn: Berlin, p. 4.
- 28 Goldmerstein and Stodieck. Cited according to Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke (1985), “Thermenpalast: ein Projekt aus Weimarer Zeit,” in *werk, bauen + wohnen*, volume 72, Issue 10, p. 37.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 J. Goldmerstein and K. Stodieck (1928), *Thermenpalast. Kur-, Erholungs-, Sport-, Schwimm- und Badeanlage*, Wilhelm Ernst & Sohn: Berlin, p. 7.
- 31 Ibid., p. 6. “The apparatus is completely new; not only does it emit ultraviolet rays as devices frequently used for healing purposes do, but all the rays that the sun sends down to the earth.” Ibid., p. 10.
- 32 Ibid., p. 7.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Matthew Gandy, (2014), “Borrowed Light: Journeys through Weimar Berlin,” in *The Fabric of Space: Water, Modernity, and the Urban Imagination*, MIT Press, p. 56.
- 35 Ibid., p. 55.
- 36 On the notion of a “wicked problem” see Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, (1973), “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” in *Policy Sciences*, 4.
- 37 See Peter Reyner Banham, (1969), *The Architecture of the Well-tempered Environment*, Architectural Press.
- 38 Matthew Gandy, (2014), “Borrowed Light: Journeys through Weimar Berlin,” in *The Fabric of Space: Water, Modernity, and the Urban Imagination*, MIT Press, p. 59.
- 39 Harather, Karin (1995), *Haus-Kleider. Das Phänomen der Bekleidung in der Architektur*, Vienna.
- 40 See Hannah Steurer, (2017), “‘Berlin ist eine Sandwüste. Aber wo sonst findet man Oasen?’ Stadtdiskurs als Naturdiskurs in der deutschen und französischen Berlinliteratur (1800 bis 1935)”, in *Literatur und Ökologie. Neue literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, eds Claudia Schmitt and Christiane Solte-Gresser, Bielefeld, p. 137.

KACPER POBŁOCKI IN
CONVERSATION WITH THE
EXHIBITION CREATORS

A coat
with
a thousand
sleeves

KACPER POBŁOCKI: You've mentioned that textiles have practically disappeared from architectural awareness, or else have not been considered a legitimate tool for architects. Why is that?

ALEKSANDRA KĘDZIOREK: Of course, textiles have been continually used by interior designers, but they have rarely been treated as architectural material. We propose that they should be seen in terms of soft architecture. This perception of textiles has disappeared, and I think this is related to their temporary character. What we see as their virtue – the fact that you can dress your house for a particular season, and when the season comes to an end, replace one textile with another – appears as something makeshift, ad hoc, from the point of view of 'serious' design. It makes you remain part of the process at all times, maintaining the rituals and responding to the changes around you. Contemporary architecture favours maintenance-free solutions.

KP: Or could it be that textiles have become less noticeable, because they have been made by women? Is it not the case that hard, durable, monumental architecture, finite and isolating from the environment, is more 'male' – while the soft, processual architecture that relies on dialogue and requires care is more 'feminine'?

AK: These are certainly two different ways of thinking about architecture. Hard architecture provides stable conditions; it doesn't demand constant attention nor does it need looking after. The characteristic of soft architecture is that it requires care, which is something associated with things that are stereotypically feminine. The introduction of seasonal textiles triggers the need to remain at all times within the process, maintaining rituals, being forever vigilant and sensitive to the environment. These two approaches also differ in their definition of architecture. In the former, the construction process ends at the point of handing the keys over to the resident. The architect has designed the building, it has been built, and its photographs find their way on to magazine covers or into books on the history of architecture. What we find interesting, however, is what happens next: how the building endures and how it changes in the process. In their article "Give me a gun and I will make all buildings move", Bruno Latour and Alben Yaneva compared the life of a building to the famous photographs by Eadweard Muybridge that show animals in different phases of movement. A building also moves and changes, albeit very slowly. The walls begin to crack, draughts appear here and there. This is where caring architecture comes in, which is what we are interested in: being in the process, caring for the space. In this concept of architecture, textiles play an important part as a vehicle to mediate between us and the environment.

- SIMONE DE IACOBIS: They turn a house into a *home*; architecture has become our home. Through the caring and rituals, we domesticate space. Otherwise it would be no more than a bare shell.
- AK: Interestingly, these two ways of thinking about architecture have been with us for a long time – in the history of architecture, there are two legends about its origin. One is the myth of the primitive hut, described by Marc-Antoine Laugier, which is related to the ‘hard architecture’ that comprises the columns and the roof. On the other hand, Gottfried Semper saw the beginnings of architecture in textiles. He saw the origins of walls in woven mats. Just as in Polish, a linguistic relationship has endured between the terms ‘dress’ (strój) and ‘decor’ (wystrój) – as Witold Rybczynski observes in our catalogue – and similarly, in German, the relationship between textiles (Gewand) and the wall (Wand), referred to by Sascha Roesler, is still reflected in the language. And indeed, soft architecture and the entire domain of textiles tends to be more ‘feminine’, even at the production stage; the builders of hard architecture are male – but in the mills of 19th-century industrial Łódź, or in the Bauhaus, the weavers were female, as continues to be the case.
- ALICJA BIELAWSKA: And household management is also a feminine area. For a long time, the home was the sole space where women could find self-realisation – and it was in fact women who, as Rybczynski points out in *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, created the notion of comfort. Perhaps when women were finally able to relinquish having to look after the domestic area to the same extent, they themselves abandoned seasonal textiles as a chore too far. Moreover, mass production resulted in further removal of textiles from the traditional practices and customs related to them. In our project we evoke manual production – the slow process of making textiles.
- MAŁGORZATA KUCIEWICZ: And we draw attention to the gradual phasing out of textiles, recalling how in the old days textiles went through different phases, serving first as clothes, with every last remnant finally utilised as a tea towel.
- KP: To sum up, the key concept is ‘maintenance’ – a word that we don’t have in Polish, which we refer to using the English word ‘servicing’.
- MK: Yes, maintenance is essential in the context of contemporary architecture – and the age of climate crisis. We want to show that the soft layer of architecture is just as important, and by no means a thing of the past. In the future, marked by climate crisis, we will be building less and less, opting instead for nestling in already existing structures. Just as of old, when the woman brought to her husband’s home a dowry of eiderdowns, bedspreads, table clothes and napkins in order to furnish

herself a comfortable nest there. Or in the Middle Ages, on arrival at the destination, canopied headboards would be set up – the span of textiles marking out one’s personal space.

The textile compound of architecture can be used as a springboard for a multitude of ideas and spatial design through the means of soft architecture. From a design point of view, we are interested in two things: the way that soft architecture complements the hard one, and how hard architecture should be designed so as to provide room for the soft version. Soft architecture can be moulded by personal touch, but hard architecture is capable of imbuing the textile with shape, while at the same time using it to relieve its own sharp edges, as when covering the stairs with a runner.

We are intrigued by the group experience of space mediated in this manner. When talking about ‘clothing’ space, you can easily imagine your own coat, but it is harder to envisage a coat with a thousand sleeves. The most interesting experiment, I think, will be to get away from this small-scale, domesticated space and translate these concepts into the scale of the city – with its microclimate, and shared participation in the clothing and unclenching of reality.



Biographical notes

ALICJA BIELAWSKA

is a visual artist, a graduate in art history (University of Warsaw) and fine arts (Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam). She creates sculptures using textiles, metal, wood, and ceramics. Her works focus on the material sphere of everyday life and the relationships between objects, interiors and memories, touching on the relativity of human perception and the role of memory. Her art incorporates elements of choreography and performance. In 2015, she was nominated for Views 2015, the Deutsche Bank Award co-organised by Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, and in 2016, for Polityka Passport in the visual arts category. She was commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw to create site-specific works (2013, 2018). Her works have been shown in numerous exhibitions. She has collaborated on dance performances with internationally renowned choreographers, creating sculptural installations and objects. She lives and works in Warsaw.

CENTRALA

(Małgorzata Kuciewicz and Simone De Iacobis) is a Warsaw-based architecture and research studio that works with reinterpretations and spatial interventions aimed at renewing the language of architecture. In their architecture research practice, they examine the relationship between architecture and natural phenomena. They conceive of architecture as a process, considering gravity, water circulation, and atmospheric and astronomical events its building materials. Their work has been presented in solo exhibitions: *Amplifying Nature* in the Polish Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale, and *The Pavilion of Reverberations* at the 2020 Festival Internacional de Arquitectura y Diseño de Logroño. They have collaborated as exhibition designers with numerous European museums and gallery spaces, including the Polish pavilion at the 2016 Triennale di Milano.

ALEKSANDRA KĘDZIOREK

is an architecture historian, researcher, curator, editor and writer based in Warsaw, Poland. She worked at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Bęc Zmiana Foundation and Museum of Architecture in Wrocław. She cocurated the travelling exhibition *Oskar Hansen: Open Form* presented at MACBA in Barcelona, Serralves Museum in Porto, Yale School of Architecture, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and National Gallery of Art in Vilnius (2014–2017). She was a curator of the Oskar and Zofia Hansen House in Szumin (2013–2017). She also curated exhibitions, seminars and public programmes on modern and contemporary architecture in institutions including La Loge in Brussels, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation and Index gallery in Stockholm. She co-edited *CIAM Archipelago: The Letters of Helena Syrkus* (with K. Uchowicz, M. Wirkus, 2019) and *Oskar Hansen – Opening Modernism: On Open Form Architecture, Art and Didactics* (with Ł. Ronduda, 2014).

KACPER POBŁOCKI

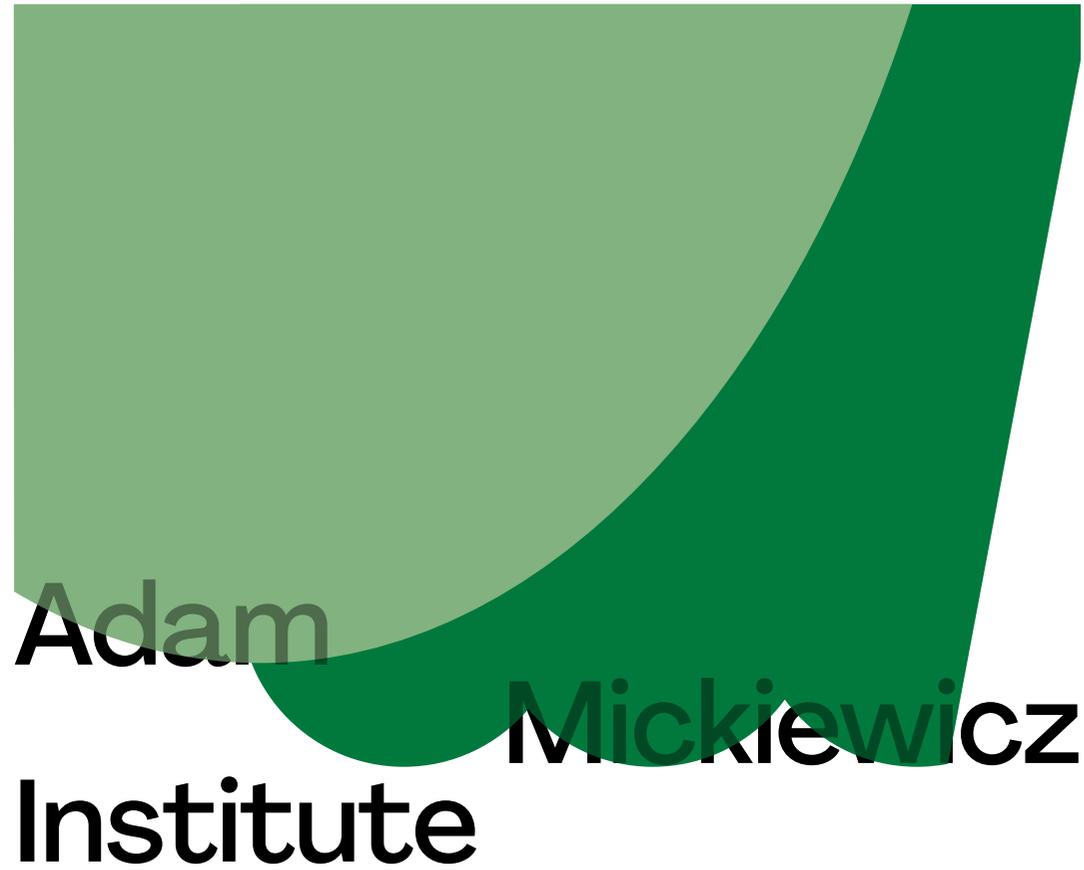
is a social anthropologist and professor at the University of Warsaw, with a PhD in Sociology and Social Anthropology from the Central European University. He is also a graduate of University College Utrecht and has been a visiting fellow at the Center for Place, Culture and Politics at CUNY (directed by David Harvey). He published on urban movements, class and uneven development in East and Central Europe in a number of anthologies and journals (e.g., in *Critique of Anthropology* and *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*).

SASCHA ROESLER

is an architect and theorist, working at the intersections of architecture, ethnography, and science and technology. Since 2016, he has been the Swiss National Science Foundation Professor for Architecture and Theory at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio, Switzerland (Università della Svizzera Italiana). Roesler, who holds a doctorate from the ETH Zurich, has published widely on issues of global architecture, sustainability, and relocation. Recently he co-edited the anthology *The Urban Microclimate as Artifact* (Basel 2018).

WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI

is an architect and writer born in Edinburgh and educated in England and Canada. He has taught at McGill University and the University of Pennsylvania, where he is the emeritus Meyerson Professor of Urbanism. He is the author of more than twenty books, including the bestselling *Home*, a prize-winning biography of Frederick Law Olmsted, and, most recently, *Charleston Fancy*. He is currently completing *The Story of Architecture* for Yale University Press.



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- p. 66: Hans Poelzig, Thermenpalast, Berlin, exterior view, 1928, charcoal drawing on carbon paper, 149 × 73.6 cm. Collection of the Architekturmuseum der Technische Universität Berlin, inv. no. HP 050,003, public domain.

The Clothed Home: Tuning In to the Seasonal Imagination
Polish Pavilion at London Design Biennale 2021
1–27 June 2021

Organised by:
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Artworks:
Alicja Bielawska

Curator:
Aleksandra Kędziołek

Concept and exhibition design:
Centrala (Małgorzata Kuciewicz, Simone De Iacobis)

Visual identity:
Anna Kulachek

Graphic design:
Piotr Chuchla

Production:
Marcin Baranowski, Agata Bisping

Textile production co-ordination:
Joanna Waśko

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The clothed home: tuning in to the seasonal imagination

POLISH PAVILION AT LONDON
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