Parlour of the Muses

Kiri McKenna
1387278

Supervisors
Mike Austin & Krystina Kaza

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Abstract

Architecture is inherently collaborative, however the most pervasive image of a great architect is that of an isolated genius. This image is gendered and contradicts the normal practice of collaboration in design. In the history of architecture, collaborative relationships have been ignored in favour of the individual monograph, and thus pluralities, like the female side of a family tree, cease to exist. Many architects who did not fit this image, have, until recently, remained critically unrecognised for their work. This research looks at similar phenomena within the art world and engages with the arguments in order to see what comparisons could be drawn with architecture.

In order to bring these arguments together, to make this project more than a survey of criticisms and to move away from the single voice in an argument, this research uses the idea of dialogue as a means for questioning the dominance of polemic individuals. This research project looks at the use of dialogue as a design tool, as a means of exploring influences and collaborations, and as a means of questioning the image of the great architect. Allowing for the interruption of other voices, it provides a method for exploring the areas between two sides of an argument and avoiding rigid positions. This project attempts to imagine how a design might begin to express the complexities, the give and take, the conversations, and the collaborators.

In this research the literature has offered a theoretical anchor for creative explorations. This was done in two ways: firstly, the texts which were most influential to this project were taken and used as the basis for an exploration through written dialogue; secondly, a further attempt to understand
Acknowledgements

Mike Austin
Krystina Kaza
The muses were the goddesses of the arts in ancient Greece. Their numbers varied: they were three and then nine, but there was never one muse. Nor were they passive subjects. As part of the Greek Pantheon they represented active forces. They are not the subject of this project. Instead, they are a metaphor for the collaborators in architecture, and the complexities and uncertainties of design production.

Architecture is inherently collaborative, even the smallest design requires conversations between client and architect, or architect and contractor, and therefore the input of more than a single voice. Critical recognition is still largely focused on a single author, or voice for a design; a monologue. The most pervasive image of a great architect has been that of a solo author, an isolated genius.2 Architecture is constantly presented to the public, through awards and publications, as the product of single designers. Experience has shown that an education in architecture is very much geared toward individual achievement and the study of polemists, individual precedents, and monographs.

Moreover it has been argued that this image, “genius”, is gendered male;3 thus presenting a prototype of a great architect which is a difficult fit for many. A single type of architect – the heroic genius – does not account for any marginal or un-heroic figures. This focus creates a census of architecture in which women and collaborators are largely absent.

This project has looked at museums as institutions which are the visible products of star architects, and are also significant in the dissemination of historical narratives. As prominent public institutions, museums are highly regarded for the cultural importance of their content. They have a cultural authority in that they determine what belongs in the collection, what is displayed, and how. Museums such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) hold large collections of work; so large that only a small portion is ever on display.4 Some of the work is permanently on view, and other work is displayed only as part of themed exhibitions. The MoMA has received a lot of criticism because the work that is hung is, and historically has been, work produced by men.5

There have been many commentators on this subject. This research has picked up arguments specific to art, which explore the reasons for the lack of women artists in galleries (specifically the MoMA) during the twentieth century. The explanations for this phenomenon - that certain galleries unconsciously invested in the male monograph;6 that art history has been formed by dominant oedipal narratives of contention and refutation;7 and that these conditions have created genealogies based on the absence of others - have been considered in order to see what the complexities within the arguments are, and how they might relate to architectural production and representation.

In order to bring these arguments together, to make this project more than a survey of criticisms, and to move away from the single voice in an argument, this research uses the idea of dialogue as a means for questioning the dominance of polemic individuals. A dialogue requires more than one voice creating the opportunity for muses, for more than one author, for the

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3 Hilde Heynen, Genius, Gender and Architecture: the Star System as Exemplified in the Pritzker Prize. Architectural Theory Review p335
collaborators to be unmuted.

Is it possible to use “dialogue”, both as a design tool and as a means of refuting the current polemic monologues?

Allowing for the interruption of other voices, it provides a method for exploring the areas between two sides of an argument and avoiding rigid positions. A counter argument would run the risk of mirroring the condition it is trying to debate, producing a polemic stance. The advantage of dialogue, Caroline Constant writes, is that it does not aim to prove a point; instead, it explores a variety of problems found within a subject, making it relative rather than absolute in its thought. 8 A dialogue “essays” a subject, using a combination of position and counter position to test the idea and in doing so allowing it the give and take of a discussion. 9 In this way it avoids the confines of the monologue, the imbalance of providing a rigid argument that omits irregularities. There is room for ambiguity, unfinished thoughts and conflicts, without the need for the neatly cauterised position of a manifesto. Dialogue, can allow for a flow of influence, theory, compromise, and uncertainties.

These qualities also allow for an attempt to engage with the ideas and criticism of other people in a design process, stepping past the spectre of an individual project exploring the theme of collaboration. This allows an “ever-shifting relationship between ideas, a generative exchange that is never resolved but perpetually in flux.” 10 Thus the design itself becomes an exploration of a theme, and in this exploration multiple ideas can be worked on, some of which may remain inconclusive. This space for comparison with the ideas of others and for open-endedness is important, because a narrative of genius could also be enforced through a process which relies on one mind to produce a perfectly resolved design.

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8 Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (London: Phaidon Press Ltd 2000) p. 69
9 Ibid. p. 69
10 Ibid. p. 68

This project looks to re-imagine a museum. To explore a building which might evoke the origins of the word, from the Greek Mouseion, meaning “seat of the Muses.” A museum that does not contribute to the current polemic narrative provides a program for this project in which the narrative of individual “genius” can instead be questioned, and the ideas gathered from others can be tested.

This project does not aim to create a substitute modernist pantheon, or even re-work the existing. This is already the work of others. Nor does this project aim to uncover some new solution of museum layout or curation. Instead, it uses the ideas of others, introducing the notion of dialogue as a means of connecting and exploring existing material and as a design tool. This project does not intend to recreate a museum as a display of objects. Rather, the aim is to make the building itself a conduit for the expression of the ideas that have been explored throughout.
Methodology

Various texts were referred to, to analyse, define the boundaries, and give form to the ideas of this project. The texts used include art historical as well as architectural feminist theory. The most influential theoretical aspects have come from the texts discussing art history – specifically the absence of women artists in galleries – and have been used to provide a comparison as a parallel for understanding some of the same issues in architecture. The overarching structure through which to make this comparison and tie the various elements in the texts together has been the use of dialogue.

Dialogue has helped translate and understand the relevance of these ideas to architectural history and practice. This was done in two ways: firstly, the texts which were most influential to this project were taken and used as the basis for an exploration through written dialogue; secondly, a further attempt to understand these arguments was made through drawings, models, and paintings, which explore elements of these texts.

The following texts were of particular relevance. Caroline Constant in her book, *Eileen Gray*, which discusses the use of dialogue both in Gray's writing and design, has been helpful in providing a precedent to bring the interests of this project together. Denise Scott Brown has been critical of the star system in architecture since the 1970's. Her essay *Room at the Top, Sexism and the Star System in architecture*, and recent quotes about the Pritzker Prize have been used to give an illustration of the historical and present context. Hilde Heynen in her article *Genius, Gender and Architecture: the Star System as Exemplified in the Pritzker Prize* brings the issues raised by Brown into the present in an analysis which also argues that “genius” is gendered male. A recent publication by the MoMA, *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art* has been a rich source of information and ideas, and essays by Cornelia Butler, Griselda Pollock, Beatriz Colomina and Helen Molesworth have provided the foundations for this project.

In an attempt to understand the meaning of these arguments and to clarify the relevance of art topics to architecture, drawings, models, and water-colours have been used to explore, sketch, and test the ideas raised. The process was instinctual but always assessed and steered by the ideas in the text; the texts shaped and edited the models and drawings with me. These explorations were not necessarily bound by a logic of a predicted design outcome. The most successful explorations did not try to presuppose a realisable formal outcome, but allowed for as many of the ideas to be expressed simultaneously as possible. This method of measuring the creative responses against the ideas in the texts, or using the texts to critique the responses, formed a silent dialogue.

Through these responses certain aesthetics of ideas began to suggest themselves as criteria for a more realised formal expression: the possibility of incomplete forms allowing the user to interpret and imagine their own completion; the use of opacity and transparency; soft boundaries to prevent the architecture becoming an object; perhaps a sense of mystery and the impression that others – the muses – have been present or can be found.

Working methods in this project about collaboration also produce a conundrum: how does one work in dialogue in an individual research project? Eileen Gray acts as a precedent for a method of collaboration. She used the work of others extensively as a starting point of engagement. In this way the use of existing work becomes a form of collaboration.

In this research the literature has offered a theoretical anchor for creative explorations that have provided certain criteria. The criteria include the desire for: a porous or soft border, so that an isolated object is not created; a layout which allows for multiple options of circulation; a questioning or interruption of the male monologue; a sensitivity to the site; and an open-endedness or ambiguity which invites interpretation from the user.

Architectural precedents have been used to give flesh to these criteria; to find strategies for dealing with these ideas and to give formal and material cues. The common museum layouts have provided typologies for a plan which does not fall into the trap of creating a single mode of movement or
use - and thus a single narrative or monologue - but instead provides the opportunity for independent exploration and interpretation from a user. Junya Ishigami’s *Extreme Nature: Landscapes of Ambiguous Spaces* has offered material cues for interacting with the site, and also for an aesthetic language which invites the imagination of the user. The material language has been further examined in Lina Bo Bardi’s *Glass House*. 
Literature Review as Dialogues

This document is not written in the traditional sense of a thesis as an argument; an intentional choice. The intention is to show strands of thought which have always in some sense been present, but which are not always shown because of the aim for a cohesive, singular argument. The dialogues are intended to cover the ground normally titled “literature review,” as well as describing the background of the project.
Figure 1. Dialogue with Helen Molesworth.
**Dialogue With Helen Molesworth**

**Kiri McKenna:** I’d like to introduce Helen Molesworth whose recent article, *How to Hang Art as a Feminist* was published in *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art*; a book created for the MoMA as part of addressing the institutions long history of only representing certain types of artists. She will talk with us through her writing, and hopefully we can shed some light on the similarities within architecture to the issues she writes about in art. Perhaps we can tease out some of the complexities in these comparisons. Museums such as the MoMA hold large collections of work, so large that only a small portion is ever on display. Some of the work is permanently on view and other work is displayed only as part of themed exhibitions. The MoMA has received a lot of criticism because the work that is hung is, and historically has been, work produced by men.

**Helen Molesworth:** The pervasive sexism in museums is evidenced by how slow museums of modern and contemporary art were to acquire feminist art of the 1970s. And when they did buy or accept it as gifts, they were often more reticent to exhibit it.

**KM:** Helen, your writing deals with the problem of liberating work from the basement so that it can be viewed. How do you then include and exhibit it? What needs to change in the museum?

**HM:** Part of what I’m after as a feminist, is the fundamental reorganization of the institutions that govern us, as well as those that we, in turn, govern. Therefore thinking about the introduction of feminism into the museum is no small matter.

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12 David C. Levey “Forward”. In *Designing the New Museum: Building A Destination*. By James Grayson Trulove. (Massachusetts: Rockport Publishers 2000) p.9
15 Ibid. p.499
**KM:** I wonder what the institutions which govern architecture are. Are they the universities, the magazine publications, the critics or awards? The publications are definitely a very good equivalent. Written works solidify ideas in a way. They seal the record and become the valid version until someone else publishes the next valid version. It was really the publication of modernism that created a history without women. You are referring specifically to the museum as a governing institution, and this is interesting because, as houses of culture, and often works of architecture themselves, museums play an influential role in defining the published architectural history of the twentieth century. In fact, *The International Style,*\(^{16}\) a publication that helped define modernism as a style, was published as a catalogue for an exhibition at the MoMA.

The MoMA has also invested in the “history of great men”, the heroic, as Griselda Pollock put it.\(^{17}\) This created a “half-truth” about modernity and in essence disappeared woman artists and architects.\(^{18}\)

**HM:** *We have recovered scores of women from oblivion.\(^{19}\)*

This essay looks to recent art-historical ideas with the aim of beginning to think through the translation of these new discursive formations into spatial logic.\(^{20}\)

**KM:** Meaning a logic to determine the arrangement of art in a museum or gallery. Is work hung chronologically by year, or grouped by style, or grouped to trace influence, or grouped to show commentary on a particular topic? The logic for curating a gallery also translates into a logic for discussing history or theories, and these ideas have parallels in the architectural world. For example, what is the logic for explaining creative influences or genealogies: do we categorise architects based on styles, nationalities, times, theories? Where do we start?

**HM:** Rather than simply denounce the status quo, I’d like to ask some questions about the distinct lack of visibility of feminist art production. What are the ramifications for the reception and understanding of contemporary art given the lack of display of earlier feminist work?\(^{21}\)

**KM:** Interpreting this into the context of architecture, I would ask what the ramifications are when individual endeavour is favoured over collaborative production. Because it is the privileging of individuals that creates the absence of women in architectural history. To begin with collaborators become “the ghosts of modern architecture, everywhere present, crucial, but strangely invisible.”\(^{22}\) We might ask how this absence affects the education of new architects for example. Especially given that working with others is normal and necessary in design. Does this affect the ability to work with or interpret the architectural work of others?


\(^{18}\) Ibid. p.29


\(^{20}\) Ibid. p.499

\(^{21}\) Ibid. p.501

**HM:** If art objects demand of their viewers various forms of competence for interpretation, what conditions of exhibition does the museum need to establish to create and satisfy those demands? For instance, if feminist works demand that viewers draw on new and different skills to interpret them, how can the museum create and accommodate those skills?23

**KM:** Architecture is a little different here. There isn’t the necessary need for understanding a building in order to use or experience its space. It doesn’t require the same response as art does. Rather, it just needs to be used. However I think there is a difference in the understanding needed from the user and the understanding needed from architects and students. I think the understanding that is required is the understanding of what it takes to create architecture. Architecture is the result of the labour of many, yet it is constantly presented to the public, through awards and publication, as the product of single designers. Experience has shown that an education in architecture is very much geared toward individual achievement and the study of individual precedents. Beatriz Colomina said that architecture is much more akin to movie making than visual art.24 How can this be conveyed so that collaboration is no longer marked by its historical absences? How do you start to structure a genealogy, or map of collaboration, if it is always hidden?

**HM:** Genealogies for art made by women aren’t so clear largely because they are structured by a shadowy absence. This is why art historians and curators have so often turned to the tasks of recovery and inclusion.25

**KM:** This seems to be the case in architecture also. A lot of material is available on women now, written mostly in the last twenty years. On Lina Bo Bardi, the material is more recent. But it is only there for those who search it out. In my experience of education, this material is missing from the main discourse of architectural history. That is not to say that this information is hidden; rather, it is available separately for those who are interested. Interesting, but kind of like an appendix.

**HM:** The work of recovery is important; I have done it myself and will continue to do so. But I am increasingly puzzled about how to reinsert these absences, repressions, and omissions into the narrative continuum favoured by the museum. I know I don’t want ghettoized galleries dedicated to art made by women or even a room of ‘feminist art’.26

**KM:** Of course, separating women into a category of architecture only underpins their exclusion in the first place. A ghettoised gallery perpetuates sexism and doesn’t recognise the issues that led to the exclusion. These exclusions in architecture are made by the notion of the sole creator, the heroic genius, which ignores the collaborative reality of architectural production, and fails to recognise the contribution of many designers and clients - men as well as women - needed to complete any work.

26 Ibid. p.504
**HM:** Is it really as simple as reinserting them into a chronological narrative that hitherto hasn’t accounted for them?27

The chronological purist in me loves this idea, but I fear it is the non-feminist in me that desires such a pat formulation: a broken story repaired by insisting that these artists occupy their rightful places in the grand narrative. But is this solution feminist enough? Is it a revelation of the deepest order to insert women artists back into rooms that have been structured by their very absence? What would it mean to take this absence as the very historical condition under which the work of women artists is both produced and understood? Might feminism allow us to imagine different genealogies and hence different versions of how we tell the history of art made by women?28

**KM:** Reinserting these artists or architects appears to be a tidy solution, but it doesn’t deal with the problem of narrative: the narrative only exists as it is because these architects and artists are missing. There are no gaps to reinsert them into without re-writing the narrative. To re-write the narrative then presents other problems: does an alternative narrative then become a history of the other? The history becomes this version or that version, one or the other, and too complex to deal with here. How might this inclusion happen without resorting to a history of the other?

**HM:** Two art historians, Lisa Tickner and Mignon Nixon, have recently argued, tentatively but with promise, for historical models of influence, production, narration, and interpretation that eschew the two most powerful and familiar in art history: the Oedipal narrative of the son who murders his father (the trumping of one style by another) and the mother daughter learning through the transmission of oral history.29

**KM:** This could also describe the star system in architecture and the way that historical narrative is focused around heroic figures. The oedipal narrative could be read in the overthrowing of modernism by post modernism; post modernism defined itself by documenting the failures of modernism. It could be read in the language of the manifestos published by polemics, such as Towards a New Architecture, in which Le Corbusier calls for the overthrowing of the old; a revolution against the past.30 Likewise a narrative of knowledge passed from one generation to the next can be read in the identification of patriarchal lineage which is often used to “identify the cultural capital of architects.”31

**HM:** Tickner and Nixon look to another version of family life for models of production and reception, specifically to the relationships of siblings and cousins.32

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28 Ibid. p.504
29 Ibid. p.504-505
KM: They also offer a slightly different way of exploring the more hierarchical relationship of apprentice and master. Not just a generational transferal of knowledge but a horizontal transferal. You have raised the idea that cousins and siblings are more uncomfortable as they present a sameness, an image of ourselves that is normal and fallible. Siblings and cousins also provide an alternative to the oedipal terms of opposition between architects and styles.

HM: Tickner argues that historically women artists have sought attachment rather than separation, meaning that one of the effects of operating within a genealogy marked by absence and omissions is that you try to seek out your predecessors rather than refute them.

KM: Eileen Gray, for example, sought attachment from many people in order to produce her work. From the group De Stijl to Jean Badovici to Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, she sought out contacts to engage with as starting points for her designs and ideas.

But perhaps these moves of connection are not so uncommon in architecture. It has been common to seek out work in the offices of established architects, in order to learn in a collaborative sense. It seems, however, that these connections and transferrals of knowledge, have then been described in generational terms of learning from parents, with ideas flowing in one direction only, rather than siblings or cousins.

HM: To amplify her argument, Tickner turns to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s powerful idea of the rhizome as a metaphor for organizing history and knowledge. Unlike the image of the tree – vertical, hierarchical, and evolutionary – the rhizome offers a horizontal structure in which all ideas have the possibility of connecting to all other ideas.

KM: All ideas having the possibility to connect to other ideas certainly allows for more fluid, variable maps of influence or contribution. It also begins to describe architecture in terms of collaboration. Do these maps of influence cease to be confined by a chronological logic?

HM: There are also alliances formed despite geographical distance and temporal incommensurability. Thus an artist seeking an elective mother might not place her in a hierarchical relationship but might instead construct a situation of relative degrees of parity.

KM: Without the need for a common measure, time-based connections or geographic connections become less important. Rather like our conversation here. We have never met, and this is really just a conversation I am inventing using what you and others have written, but I have picked out the ideas which I would like to engage with. Thus treating your ideas as a starting point for collaboration, and alliance, not as a set of rules to follow.

34 Ibid. p.505
35 Ibid. p.506
36 Ibid. p.506
**HM:** A model of history structured by alliance allows us to think about lines of influence and conditions of production that are organized horizontally, by necessarily competing ideas of identification, attachment, sameness, and difference, as opposed to our all familiar (vertical) narratives of exclusion, rejection, and triumph. Such a modification in our thinking, might in turn, help us reorganise our institutional dynamics of power.

**KM:** Cousins provide many voices, not just one. This structure of alliance, of collaboration and influence, can be described by dialogue. Dialogue allows for all of these contributions to be acknowledged and discussed without the need to attribute all speech to one sole author; the need to prove originality in the face of “sameness”. It allows for the ambiguity and complexity that narrative often edits in order to present coherent, sequential, logical developments.

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Dialogue with Denise Scott Brown and Hilde Heynen:

Denise has been commenting on the problems of the star system since the 1970’s, beginning with her essay *Room at the Top, Sexism and the Star System in architecture*. She has had the personal experience of having her collaborations misattributed or ignored by others, most famously perhaps when Robert Venturi, her partner in architecture, was awarded the Pritzker prize in 1991. Her criticisms over the years have been aimed at the reductive view of what an architect is that is presented via the “monologue”. Awards systems play a role in the critical recognition of architects, and are both influential in the propagation, and symptomatic of the dominance of the monograph or male monologue. Hilde Heynen has provided an analysis of the Pritzker prize citations over the last 36 years to highlight the narrow scope of architects recognised. Her analysis is focused mainly on the gendered nature of “genius”, but it also illustrates the lack of collaboration recognised, and how the oedipal narrative described by Helen Molesworth is evidenced through the citations.

**Kiri McKenna:** To begin with, it is often architects, as well as critics, who create the stars. Why do you think this is such a common occurrence?

**Denise Scott Brown:** Why do architects need to create stars? Because, I think, architecture deals with unmeasurables. Although architecture is both science and art, architects stand or fall in their own estimation and in that of their peers by whether they are ‘good designers’, and the criteria for this are ill-defined and indefinable.\(^{38}\)

**KM:** So we attempt to put the unmeasurable, the ambiguity and subjectivity of creative work, in some sort of order by producing criteria or standards – such as “masterful”, “courageous”, “originality”, or “uniqueness”\(^{39}\) – for greatness, or “good designers”. We have noted that the big problem of the “star” system is that it produces a monologue, and a monologue cannot reflect the truth: that architecture is collaborative. Is this true from your experience in your practice?

**DSB:** We ourselves cannot tease our contributions apart. Since 1960 we have collaborated in the development of ideas and since 1967 we have collaborated in architectural practice. As chief designer, Bob takes final

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38 Denise Scott Brown, *Room at the Top, Sexism and the Star System in Architecture*. P. 5
design responsibility. On some projects, I am closely involved and see many of my ideas in the final design; on others, hardly at all. In a few, the basic idea (what Kahn called the What) was mine. All of our firm’s urban planning work, and the urban design related to it, is my responsibility; Bob is virtually not involved in it, although other architects in the firm are.

As in all firms our ideas are translated and added to by our co-workers, particularly our associates of long standing.40

KM: So we have a case of collaboration - the normal working reality - where there are many contributing voices of different and variable volume. Yet work was so commonly misattributed that your office began providing information sheets defining how work from the firm should be attributed.41 The purpose of this was so that critics wouldn’t get their facts wrong.

DSB: The critic in architecture is often the scribe, historian, and kingmaker for a particular group.
These activities entitle him to join the “few” even though he pokes them a little. His other satisfaction comes from making history in his and their image. The kingmaker-critic is, of course, male; though he may write of the group as a group, he would be a poor fool in his eyes and theirs if he tried to crown the whole group king. There is even less psychic reward in crowning a female king.42

KM: These anecdotes are fairly old, mostly from when you first began speaking out on these issues. The 1970s was the start of the women’s liberation movement. You wrote ‘Room at the Top’ in 1975, in the midst of this movement. But you didn’t publish it until 10 years later in 1985. Could you tell us why?

DSB: I decided not to publish it at the time, because I judged that strong sentiments on feminism in the world of architecture would ensure my ideas a hostile reception, which could hurt my career and the prospects of my firm. However, I did share the manuscript with friends and, in samizdat [the secret publication and distribution of government banned literature in the Soviet Union], it achieved a following of sorts. Over the years I have received letters asking for copies.43

KM: Of course popular sentiment has changed a lot since then, and for the better. Many of your anecdotes, about the blatant social slights for being a wife of an architect, no longer apply.44 While there may still be imbalances and contentions in architecture around pay parity and gender diversity, in the upper levels of the profession these are not unrecognised and are issues championed by many. The website www.archiparlour.org being a great example. But the issue of collaboration and star architect is as salient as ever.

We have talked about the relationship between stars and critics. There is another important contributor to the star system and the glorification of individuals: architectural awards. The most notable of which is the Pritzker Prize, which until 2001, when it was awarded to Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, had rules prohibiting the recognition of more than one architect. The award went to twenty four men before it went to a woman, Zaha Hadid, in 2004.

40 Denise Scott Brown, Room at the Top. Sexism and the Star System in Architecture. P. 3-4
41 Ibid. p.2
42 Ibid. p.2
43 Ibid. p 7
44 Ibid. p.3
DSB: It took 23 years for them to find a woman who fits the mould that, to them, means great architecture. Now I criticise their criteria enormously. But the fact that they couldn’t bend their criteria—they couldn’t see other ways of being an architect. They couldn’t say, ‘maybe there are various streams’.\(^{45}\)

KM: Instead they privileged the heroic individual.

DSB: The Pritzker jury has a certain definition of architecture, an almost 19\(^{th}\) century notion of great men and great design that is generated through the genius of one mind. It’s taken a long time to find a woman to fit these notions.\(^{46}\)

KM: The notion of “genius” begins to stand out as a gatekeeper of sorts. To gain recognition demands a fulfilment of certain criteria for greatness. And these criteria do not allow for much diversity.

Hilde Heynen: It seems worthwhile to investigate the situation further and examine the validity of Denise Scott Brown’s claim that, in its conception, the Pritzker Prize builds upon a nineteenth century notion of genius.\(^{47}\)

KM: Hilde, what do you mean by nineteenth century notion of “genius”?

HH: In Gender and Genius, Christine Battersby analyses the history of the concept of “genius”. According to her, our understanding of the term has its roots in nineteenth century romanticism, which admired originality and creativity in the individual.\(^{48}\)

KM: ...so the association is with individual endeavour, sole author, monologue, and this is achieved through becoming distinct from everyone else.

HH: Romanticism borrowed the term “genius” from older usages. The Roman genius involved the divine aspects of male procreation, which ensured the continuance of property belonging to the gens or male clan. In Romanticism, the notion of genius came to refer to men of great intellectual and artistic capacities, who were in touch with their feminine side.\(^{49}\)

KM: The meaning derived from Romanticism therefore is gendered: a man in touch with the feminine, but not a female, and part of a male lineage. “Genius” is an integral part of the narratives discussed earlier with Helen Molesworth. Hilde, your discussion highlights the way an architectural lineage is often referenced, similar to Helen’s description of an artist being “legitimised into comfortably entrenched art-historical narratives, given fathers by their critics.”\(^{50}\)

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45 Denise Scott Brown, 2008 interview at Drexel University.
46 Alan G. Brake, “Zaha Hadid: Barrier Breaker, Conversation Starter”, Architectural Record, 192, no. 5 (may 2004), 25
47 Hilde Heynen, Genius, Gender and Architecture: the Star System as Exemplified in the Pritzker Prize. Architectural Theory Review p.333
48 Ibid. p335
49 Ibid. p335
**HH:** It would seem that the cultural capital of architects is strongly enhanced by their identification as part of a patriarchal lineage. This seems to happen more often where the architect is not already a household name for the larger public. Thom Mayne received the prize in 2005, but was not well known in Europe at the time, and in his award citation he was linked with the Californian lineage of the Eameses, Neutra, Schindler and Gehry.\(^{51}\)

**KM:** In the last decade, and in response to the male domination of the Pritzker a whole range of new awards have sprung up. While awards such as the Pritzker have reinforced the notion of sole author, they are arguably not the cause or the creators of the stereotype. Rather, they are a reflection of the popular culture of the time, and this is already changing.

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\(^{51}\) Hilde Heynen, *Genius, Gender and Architecture: the Star System as Exemplified in the Pritzker Prize.* Architectural Theory Review p334
Dialogue with Beatriz Colomina

Beatriz Colomina has written a great deal on gender and architecture. Her work, *With or Without You: The Ghosts of Modern Architecture*, add to the themes – of the star system, gender, narrative and collaboration – we have already introduced.

**Kiri McKenna**: Beatriz, Helen has talked about the problem of adding architects to a narrative that was built on absences. What does it mean to you to address these historical absences?

**Beatriz Colomina**: Correcting the record is not just a question of adding a few names or even thousands to the history of architecture. It is not just a matter of human justice or historical accuracy but a way to more fully understand architecture and the complex ways it is produced.52

**KM**: Has this production, the production of ideas and designs, rather than the technical production of buildings, not been so open in the past?

**BC**: The secrets of modern architecture are like those of a family. And it is perhaps because of the current cultural fascination with exposing the intimate that they are now being unveiled, little by little.53

**KM**: These complexities in design are nothing new though. The twentieth century was full of collaborations, especially after the Second World War.

**BC**: The post-war period inaugurated a new kind of collaborative practice that has become increasingly difficult to ignore or subsume within a “heroic” conception of the individual figure.54 Also during this period, all the “great masters” associated with other architects on key projects. Mies van der Rohe worked with Phillip Johnson on the Seagram Building (with crucial intervention from Phyllis Lambert

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53 Ibid. p 217
54 Ibid. p 218
as both patron and young architect). In 1945 Walter Gropius founded The Architects Collaborative (TAC) with a group of younger architects, and in 1963 he collaborated with the corporate office of Emery Roth and Sons on the Pan Am Building.55

**KM:** And even before then it was common. However, this production, the collaborations, never worked with the oedipal narratives. Those who didn’t fit this narrative remained critically unacknowledged. For example, Eileen Gray collaborated with others throughout her career, and Caroline Constant has suggested that her work was dismissed as derivative by critics and historians of the period because of their pre-occupation with the heroic.56 You mention Phyllis Lambert an example of the fact that client collaboration also does not fit this narrative.

Even those who exemplified the heroic individual, worked with others. Charlotte Perriand said, “But it wasn’t just the atelier I found there, nor was it only Le Corbusier - it was Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, and that is crucial. Corbu was the symbol, he had his ideology, he acted as a catalyst - but Pierre Jeanneret spent all his time at his drawing board, from morning to night. He drew out everything very precisely, in great detail - he drew like Aalto. So there were the two of them; they were complementary. Corbu was the publicist, of course, but Jeanneret was his shadow.”57

**BC:** ...what is perhaps the most unexplored relationship of the century, that between Jeanneret and Le Corbusier and about what the former may have contributed to the latter’s work.58

**KM:** Today there is a surge in popular interest in what goes on in architecture perhaps helped by the popularity of TV series like Grand Designs.

**BC:** Today even the clients – who were previously only treated as “problems” for the architect or as “witnesses” to the effects of architecture – are being considered as the active collaborators that they are.59

**KM:** The fascination with relationships, such as those with clients, you have mused may be likened to the voyeuristic fascination with the personal relationships of others that is prevalent in popular Western culture; social media, Television, and the Internet have redefined the boundaries of privacy.60 Perhaps because of the proliferation of information via the Internet, architecture is no longer as esoteric as it may have been. It is not just the initiates now who have a knowledge of the complexities and ambiguities around the production of ideas.

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56 Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (London: Phaidon Press Ltd 2000) p.8
57 Interview with Charlotte-Perrriand http://www.architectural-review.com/interview-with-charlotte-perriand/8659677.article?blocktitle=Charlotte-Perriand&contentID=11273
59 Ibid. p 218
60 Ibid. p.229
**BC:** The focus is shifting from the architect as a single figure, and the building as an object, to architecture as collaboration.\(^{61}\)

Dialogue Response
Throughout the writing of the dialogues, responses were made by drawing, model-making and watercolour sketches. These responses were made to aid in the understanding of ideas. For example, attempts were made to create a visualisation of concepts such as non-linear genealogies. They are a response to the ideas put forward by others in the dialogues.

This process created a series of steps formed in relation to someone else’s work, and responding to what another person has said. This series of steps was not always clear or linear: sometimes it meandered into drawing comics, sometimes it was inconclusive, but always it was guided and edited by referring back to the ideas in the texts.
Comics are not a traditional design tool, but here they were useful as they use certain mechanisms to create a narrative. They rely on the collaboration of the reader to help create the story. This is done in a number of ways, one of which is through the act of “closure,” where only parts of a story are observed but the reader perceives the whole. This happens in the space between the frames of the images. Here, the reader imagines the link, the relationship of the images. They employ varying elements of abstraction, not to eliminate details or simplify an idea or story, but instead the intention of this is to draw the focus to specific details. The visual elements of closure and abstraction are transferable to design.

Figure 2. Comic of drinking coffee while reading an essay.
These models explore the different ways that closure might occur in built form. In them missing information is hinted at, or partially given, in an attempt to invite the imagination of the viewer.
Figure 3. These two models explore the idea that we constantly receive an incomplete picture, it is instinctive to imagine patterns or links to fill in the gaps.

Figure 4. What is seen and not seen and varying layers of exposure.

Figure 5. Watercolour and paper maquette incomplete perspectives.
This sketch began as an attempt to visualise a chronological genealogy in which all the spaces already have occupants and there is no room for others. To refer back to the comics, this sketch lacked the abstraction necessary to convey the idea. The recognisable people created an image which would need to become a highly detailed visual map of an existing modernist narrative.
What would a workplace of cousins and siblings, as introduced by Helen Molesworth, look like? Would it be like an artisan district, a marketplace of architects, where one would go in search of a designer? This model imagines a close proximity of workplaces. It is not a single building but is a cluster of smaller pieces. There are many possible routes through this marketplace where a person could explore and find an architect. Integrated into a city, the borders of this marketplace could become indistinct in areas. A person might wander in by chance.
Figure 8. Paper model visualising work spaces, or spaces for a genealogy that is more complex than a simple linear one.
Made by re-interpreting my past studio work, this model was an exploratory visualisation of a narrative and what is shown or hidden. It works around the idea of the process we see represented in a narrative, i.e. single authors or collaborators and attempts to imagine a work space used by “cousins” where there are varying levels of transparency. How do you visualise a space where the work of some is seen more clearly than the work of others?

It is made using scraps of old sketches and a section from past design projects. They are layered to provide an image of spaces which may be separate or interconnected; there is an intended ambiguity. The cut pieces of drawing become similar to facades, almost fake like the construction of a film set. Pieces of other sketches/ideas hang off its structure.
Figure 10: Details of work spaces within paper model.
This model follows on from the model on page 36, which aims to visualise possible workspaces, interpreting the work areas as clustered platforms within a structure. In the first model it is not clear if these platforms connect or are separate from each other. This model tries to express that ambiguity.
Figure 13. Further exploratory paper maquettes.
Figure 14. Watercolour and paper maquette: what can you see and what is obscured?
Further paper models were made. This model uses a re-drawn floor plan of Lina Bo Bardi’s Sesc Pompei and re imagines it into structure and facades. Pieces were carefully cut out in order to create layers of varying visual penetrability. Because it is built onto a base it sits like an object. The boundaries are still too hard.
Figure 16. Experimental model using a redrawn plan of Sesc Pompeu.
Figure 17. Model after E1027.
This model was made using a re-drawn floor plan of E1027 by Eileen Gray. The drawing is hand drafted and has a different quality of line to the previous model. It is not built on a base and is split into two pieces which can be placed in varying juxtapositions.

The two pieces are then photographed in different arrangements, re-framing and abstracting the image of the model. It alludes to interior spaces which can be moved through, not just seen.
Figure 21. The front and back of the paper suggest an inside and an outside.

Figure 22. Inside or outside!
Figure 23. Unlike the previous model (after Lina Bo Bardi) this model works on two axes.
These responses suggest certain criteria which would be desirable in a design:

- A porous or soft border
- A layout which does not limit the choice of direction or create a sub-conscious narrative
- It should not be an isolated object
- A sense of incompleteness, open-endedness, or ambiguity could invite the user to develop their own interpretation
- The creation of some sort of dialogue with the site
- That it provides the possibility for an interpretation which alludes to the presence of the muses, collaborators, or the interrogation of a dominant narrative
Dialogue
there is room for debate and contestation between designers. But this is lost in the monologue: “Monologue does not exist; it is an artificial construct employed in the manifesto to hide any minor contestations.” Instead it is an explicit statement of architectural principles. A monologue or manifesto omits any irregularities and ambiguities.

If architecture is collaborative, and collaboration includes the input of diverse architects and many different ways to be an architect, then the statement of a manifesto is always going to be one that frames a single viewpoint or type of architect – the heroic architect – and does not account for any marginal or un-heroic figures. Moreover, producing an alternate manifesto would risk producing a manifesto of the other; one version vs. the opposing.

To avoid the confines of the monologue - the imbalance of providing a rigid argument that omits irregularities - an alteration is needed. Perhaps other voices - the collaborators - could be heard, revealing an exchange of ideas between cousins or siblings in a dialogue.

64 Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (London: Phaidon Press Ltd 2000) p. 68
65 Unknown author(s), E.5132, published dialogues p. 2 http://www.archire.com/eileen_gray/background.html
Dialogue describes a way of working which can allow for a flow of influence, theory, compromise, and uncertainties. There is room for ambiguity, unfinished thoughts, and conflicts, without the need for the neatly cauterised position of a manifesto. Importantly dialogue allows for many voices and the plural authorship involved in architecture.

A written dialogue is more of an exploration than polished argument. Caroline Constant describes the reasoning of a dialogue as more relative than absolute; it “essays a topic”, testing it through discussion and counterposition, and allowing it give and take without seeking to prove a point.67

Eileen Gray and Dialogue

Dialogue can be seen in the process of some architects. This is seen in the way Eileen Gray engaged with the work of her peers, both in theory and design. Sarah Whiting describes how she changed modernist manifestos into dialogues:68 she took Le Corbusier’s Five Points of Architecture, the five principles, and used them as an opening theme, rather than rules, by turning them into four problems which could then become architectural strategies.69

Gray began writing dialogues with the architect Jean Badovici. Badovici had been publishing his dialogues since 1922, taking Paul Valerie’s Uepalinos or the Architect (1921) as a precedent.70 Using this form, Constant elaborates, allowed two alternate points of view to be advanced: one more rational and logical, and the other inspired by a more sensitive human re-

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69 Ibid. p. 3
The nuances and contradictions in the Modern movement were revealed in this way, to show a more complex character than was apparent in the polemics of the avant-garde.72 Eileen Gray was Irish and lived and worked in France. Whiting writes that she was never clearly identified as either French or Irish by others, and has been referred to as both in exhibitions.73 She muses on a sense of “disbelonging” in Gray’s work, that she sees in “the experimental aspect of it; the nonconformity to architectural styles and conventions; the use of different materials for her furniture; the use of different tectonics; the non-heroic aspect of it.”74 We can read this interpretation as describing an occupation of the periphery, or the margins, as production space. The title of her most well-known house, E1027, has been described as a dialogue, an intertwining of its two designers Gray and Badovici.75

Whiting has written pieces on Eileen Gray in the style of a dialogue. The intention of these is to draw together quotations and excerpts taken from locations and times different to the author/authors own, and use the method itself to flesh out the ideas and trace the nature of the dialogue in her work.76 Whiting’s text on Gray and dialogue attempts to both explain the nature of dialogue, and present the text as such. She presents the different contributions as if they were part of the same stream of speech: “The voices of Gray and Badovici appear distinct at the beginning of the text (to the point that Adam in translation inserts identifying initials G, B). The dialogue is at first constructed as an interview. But as we enter the view, moving between two views, the voices become blurred. If we had at one point been able to identify a major and minor speaker (interviewee/interviewer) the roles become mistreated, the roles are rendered optional. The text becomes a collective assemblage.”77

This blurring of views, or voices, can also be seen in the way that Gray developed her designs. Gray’s polemic counterparts developed designs to elaborate a list of theoretical diktats stated in a manifesto, and she challenged these sweeping aims by adapting and expanding on their precepts in dialogue.78 An example of this methodology can be found in her experimental adaptation of the Villa Moissi (1923) by Adolf Loos. She took his design as a starting point, and adapted it by incorporating forms from the architecture of Le Corbusier.79 In this way, she used aspects of one polemic to critique the other; Constant writes that she used elements of the “free plan” from Le Corbusier to escape the conventional gendered spaces of Loos’ design.80

In her writing and design, Eileen Gray demonstrated the scope of exploration that a dialogue allows. Constant states, “She recognised the capacity for dialogue to operate on multiple levels and at multiple scales with respect to architecture: between the designer and the work, between the occupant and the work, and between the individual work and society at large.”81

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71 Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (London: Phaidon Press Ltd 2000) p. 68
72 Ibid. p. 68
74 Ibid. p. 2
75 Ibid. p. 2
78 Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (London: Phaidon Press Ltd 2000) p. 72
79 Ibid. p. 73
80 Ibid. p. 74
81 Ibid. p. 69-71
Dialogue opens a route to the occupation of contentious ground in a way that doesn’t seek to establish a fortified position, but accepts overlaps and uncertainties. Thus, some ideas can develop in an illogical and unchronological fashion. In a design process this allows for an exploration of an assortment of ideas without the need for a polished argument. In a research project which is assessed on the basis of individual work, the methods of Eileen Gray help to alleviate the problem of an individual project about collaboration. Importantly, dialogue raises the possibility of leaving something open ended, presenting an intentional ambiguity to allow the viewer/reader/user to draw their own conclusions or make their own interpretations.

A Place of Dialogue: Salons

Synonymous today with haircuts and gossip, a salon also describes a reception room or parlour in a large house (or a hall used for exhibiting art). Salon also refers to a regular meeting, hosted in such a room, of writers, artists and other notable figures. These conversational gatherings, hosted by wealthy aristocratic women, were especially common in France during the 17th and 18th centuries. Salons as a social institution have been a relatively un-researched topic. Possibly, Jolanta T. Pekacz suggests, because the centrality of women led the salon to be regarded as more a source of gossip and intrigue than a topic of serious research within history. Lacking sufficient research, it is considered unclear what influence salons had on social, political, or cultural developments during the Enlightenment. Even with the additional academic focus on matters female afforded by the advent of “women’s studies” in the late 1960’s, the influence of the salon on the wider social, academic, artistic, and political developments of the 17th and 18th centuries is disputed. Possibly the salonnières facilitated the growth of the philosophies; possibly, a view favoured by Pekacz, they hindered it through controlled social formalities around conversation. Were these 17th and 18th century salons an avenue where women could pursue higher learning, or did they support the social conventions, the status quo? Pekacz argues, “the salonnière was founded upon the agreement that the only “public” role for a woman (that is, outside the strict sphere of domesticity), was that of the provider of propriety and good manners.”

These were spaces of independence for women. The salon was a space in which the women who attended them, even if they were only upholding the status quo, were in control. They chose the guests and facilitated the topics of conversation. The meetings and conversation, while they involved both men and women, took place within a feminine space. The salons could also be interpreted as a space existing on the margins because of the restriction of women to the salons. Intellectual discussion took place in the academies, conferences and salons, but only men could attend all three; women were restricted to the latter. The salons were on the margins of this discourse during the Enlightenment because of this restriction of women in the public sphere.

During the romantic period of the 19th century intellectuals and literary men instead attended cenacles (a clique or circle, especially of writers; also

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82 http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/salon
83 http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/salon
85 Ibid. p.3
87 Ibid. p. 1
88 Ibid. p. 10
89 Ibid. p. 15
90 Ibid. p. 10
91 Ibid. p. 12
the room in which the last supper took place\(^{92}\)) which were exclusively male gatherings.\(^{93}\) But there is mention of them again in Parisian society at the start of the twentieth century.

Paris, at the turn of the twentieth century was home to, “a Cultural Revolution for and by women.”\(^{94}\) There was a community of strong female personalities. As Caroline Constant describes, by the 1920s it was a convivial city for socially and financially independent women.\(^{95}\) There were female modernists active in all the major movements from Dada to Surrealism to architecture.\(^{96}\) In the midst of this salons are once again mentioned as part of the social scene of the arts.

Eileen Gray sometimes attended Nathalie Barney’s salon when she moved to Paris in 1906.\(^{97}\) Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas held a regular salon which included Pablo Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Henri Matisse among others.\(^{98}\) Interestingly, her salon has also been referred to as the first “Museum of Modern Art,”\(^{99}\) thus combining the literary salon and the salon of art exhibition into a collection of both objects and conversations.

\(^{92}\) http://www.thefreedictionary.com/cenacles
\(^{95}\) Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (London: Phaidon Press Ltd 2000) p. 9
\(^{97}\) Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (London: Phaidon Press Ltd 2000) p. 9
\(^{98}\) http://brbl-archive.library.yale.edu/exhibitions/cvwp/gallery/steintoklas1.html accessed 15/09/2015

The combination of the literary salon and the art salon of Gertrude Stein raises a question of the role of women as “hosts” to the art museum. This position could certainly be argued for Peggy Guggenheim; a woman whose art collection and patronage “played a vital role in the development of America’s first art movement of international importance – Abstract Impressionism.”\(^{100}\) The proximity of the roles of “salonniere” and “patron” is worth noting.

Historically, salons are somewhat ambiguous, contentious ground, and performed an undecided role in the public sphere and in influence of the arts and sciences. They were feminine spaces, defined by the hosts or salonnières. More recently they were an inspirational space for creative individuals; a private gathering, and a place for conversation. A space for conversation, which has an indistinct boundary between public and private, is an idea that is useful programmatically in this project.

Figure 25. Engraving of a salon, artist unknown (http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/images/hNRS%203305/philosophes.jpg accessed 24/09/2015).

Programme – The Problem of Museums – The Seat of the Muses
A Brief History

The history of preserving and interpreting material evidence of the human race - the basic concepts of a museum - has been traced as far back as Mesopotamia during the second millennium BC, and the collection of objects has been common in cultures around the world, from Asia to Africa to Europe.101

The origins of the word museum comes from the Greek, mouseion, meaning “seat of the muses”. Temples were built for the muses - the goddesses of the arts and the sciences - and were filled with tributes such as sculpture, scientific instruments, poetry, and literature, which might demonstrate a person’s worthiness for divine inspiration.102 These marked a place of contemplation or a philosophical institution.103

During Roman times the Latin museum was reserved for places of philosophical discussion, such as the museum at Alexandra. According to the Britannica Encyclopaedia, the Museum at Alexandra, with its scholars and library, was more like a University then any museum we know today.104

The word fell out of use until the 15th century in Europe, where it was used to describe a comprehensive collection, but not a building. Although, until the start of the eighteenth century it was still primarily used to refer to an academy of scholars.105

Another form of collection which acted as a precursor to the museum as we know it today was the early 16th century cabinet of curiosities, or Wunderkammer.106 These cabinets of curiosity held natural curiosities as well as art objects that were jumbled together across walls and ceilings in cabinets or drawers, in one or two rooms.107 These were not didactic displays: viewers had to make their own connections in a collection whose purpose was to surprise and delight.108

The institution known as a museum - a building to hold a collection - did not come into being until the 18th century.109 The museums we are familiar with today, i.e. buildings to display store and preserve cultural artefacts, began in the 19th century and were seen as neo-classical cultural temples.110 The use of the word museum signalled a building dedicated to housing cultural material for public access.111

104 Ibid. p.1
107 Ibid. P.15
108 Ibid. P.9
110 David C. Levey “Forward”. In Designing the New Museum: Building A Destination. By James Grayson Trulove. (Massachusetts: Rockport Publishers 2000) p.8
Common Museum Layouts

The layout of a museum can influence how a viewer moves through an exhibit and the order in which works are viewed, thus supporting the narrative that structures the exhibit. For example, a direct sequence of rooms, with a clear starting point and suggested direction, can help a viewer read a sequence of objects or art as fitting within a directional chronological order or a certain logical narrative. Layouts can vary from the highly structured, didactic, sequence of rooms to an arrangement of equal, differing, opportunities for direction, to an open space with no “route,” such as Lina Bo Bardi’s Sao Paulo Museum of Art (MASP), which in its original conception allowed a viewer free choice of which art works they viewed and in which order. (Although the orientation of the artworks in the MASP still implies a starting point, and therefore loose direction of viewing; i.e. front to back).

The different arrangements found in museum plans can be categorised as follows:
**Direct sequences of rooms**: rooms that allow a view through at least three rooms, generally with the doors or openings aligned along a single axis. Often arranged to suggest a principle route to view the museum, museums with this layout typology may also have a more ambiguous route of sequence rooms with alternative or secondary routes.

*Figure 27. Direct sequence rooms. The Cy Twombly Gallery, Renzo Piano Building Workshop. 1995*
Matrix-like arrangement of rooms: describes a layout in which the linking of rooms offers a number of equal and differing opportunities of route. This typology can occur in section as well as plan.
**Spatial Interpenetration and Spatial isolation**: the concept of spaces flowing into one another with indeterminate boundaries, and the concept of a pavilion or isolated space. These can be combined or operate exclusive of each other. They are also elements common to the modern movement in architecture, as the plan of E1027 demonstrates.

*Figure 30. Part of E1027 floor plan. Demonstrating inter spatial penetration.*
Figure 32. Spatial interpenetration of rooms, Kunsthalle, Bielefeld, Germany, Philip C Johnson 1966-1968

Figure 33. Spatial isolation, Museum for the 21st Century, Kanazawa, Sanaa 2004
**Open plan:** essentially a flexible container. An envelope with a single neutral transformable space.

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*Figure 34.* Open plan, MASP, Lina Bo Bardi, 1957-1968 (http://www.afterall.org/2011/02/04/masp03_sized-588x378.jpg) accessed 29/09/2015

*Figure 35.* Diagrammatic floor plan of MASP gallery space
Free-form spaces: this typology refers to spaces which are expressive or plastic in shape and volume. These spaces can also describe direct sequence rooms or open layout.
A Plan Typology to Support Dialogue

The matrix-like, spatial interpenetration, and spatial isolation museum layout provides a plan typology that can move away from the didactic or monologue, and allow more open interpretation from the viewer. There is no one direction of movement through the architecture. Also, there is the possibility of a more ambiguous boundary between what is inside and outside space, private and public, in order to move away from the museum as an isolated object.

Figure 37. Spatial interpenetration.

Figure 38. Spatial isolation.

Figure 39. Matrix-like layout.
The Dissemination of Knowledge and Narrative

As prominent public institutions, museums are highly regarded for the cultural importance of their content, and are often also highly visible. Museums also have a cultural authority, in that they determine what belongs in the collection, what is displayed, and how. Museums operate as preservers and maintainers of cultural heritage. Kimon Keramidas states that museums tend to function less as public spaces for “knowledge engagement” and dialogue, and more as platforms for the presentation of accepted knowledge, underpinning the traditional forms of learning via instruction. Museum knowledge has historically been “unassailable and rigid, a condition that is further enforced by the display of static objects that perform the incontestable and immovable museum narrative.”

This static presentation of narrative is changing. Keramidas explains how digital media is beginning to change twenty-first century museums. Collections can now be accessed through online databases, and experiences in the museum are more focused on using new media to encourage creative participation. However, there is still an element of researched constructed narrative required, and he cautions that technologies might create didactic environments or interfaces which can be explored freely, but the content for exploration still relies on “objective specificity.” In other words, the information available, while interactive, might still be part of a particular narrative; especially if it is just a digitisation of the current didactics for the collection.

The authority of the museum in determining important cultural collections, and in forming narratives to disseminate the knowledge of these collections (for example art historical narratives or architectural historical narratives), can be evidenced in institutions like the MoMA. The MoMA established the first curatorial department of architecture in the world in 1932. It has since been criticised for investing predominantly in the “history of great men” in its collections. While this is changing (the MoMA recently published Modern Women, Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art - an active engagement with feminism and catalogue of essays which address the history of the MoMA (excluding women), the problems this creates, and the possible ways to address this history), the effect of the narrative presented by this “institution of cultural authority” must still be acknowledged.

The MoMA serves as an example of how both the didactic information provided to viewers, and the layout of the physical spaces in a museum can enforce a particular logic or narrative. Griselda Pollock argues that the vision of modernism presented by the MoMA has excluded the participation of women, which, she says, presents a paradox, as the involvement of women was central to the new and democratising aspirations of the modern movement. This exclusion, she writes, was never consciously planned, but is a result of a “double narrative” that is scripted through the physical layout of the cultural material and the selection of what is displayed.
The museum has played a part in the reputation of the male sole author; the heroic individual. Pollock writes that research since the 1970s has pointed to women’s continual presence as makers of art throughout the centuries, and their active presence in the avant-garde movements in art and architecture since the start of the twentieth century. Yet, she writes, the dominant version of the history of modern art (and architecture) presented by the MoMA - the “most influential American Museum” - failed to convey the highly visible participation of women in the modernist movement. It was therefore influential, in the past, in the construction of a specific narrative of “great men,” which can still be found in architecture today, as Denise Scott Brown and Hilde Heynen attest.

Object Architecture

There are certain building typologies which are common to the portfolios of star architects: buildings such as theatres, museums, art galleries and sports stadiums. Arguably museum architecture is most visible to the public (excepting the ubiquitous skyscraper), and thus museum architecture has a certain platform. Museums stand out as they have become synonymous with the iconic. Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim set a precedent for the architecture of a museum to be more than just an elegant receptacle for a collection to the museum becoming part of the collection. Now they have become destination buildings in their own right competing with the collection. Few visitors to Frank Gehry’s Bilbao Guggenheim check the exhibition schedule in advance; the museum is better known than the artworks it holds.

In some, the importance of the building has been placed before anything else. In Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim, a curved wall and sloped floor conflict with the viewing of art and the flexibility to hang art (and also only provides for a linear narrative). As such, museums are the ideal point to engage in programmatically: they are a strong institution in architecture and in the dissemination of architecture, yet the architecture disseminated is a monologue.

122 ibid. p.34
124 ibid. p.9
Museum Building and Star Architects

There is a strong relationship between museum design and star architects. For some, like Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, the design of a museum launched their individual careers.\(^{125}\) "Stars" receive numerous international commissions for museums: Zaha Hadid has received the commissions for the MAXXI (Italy), Heydar Aliyev Centre (Azerbaijan), and The Guggenheim Museum (Taiwan) to name a few; Steven Holl has numerous museum commissions, including Tianjin Ecology and Planning Museums (China), Danish Natural History Museum (Denmark), and New National Centre for Contemporary Arts (Russia); Jean Nouvel lists projects like the Guggenheim Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Cité Nature Museum Arras (France), Leeum Museum Seoul (South Korea) and the Louvre Museum Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates). The suggestion could be made that it is almost a requirement for a Pritzker prize winner to have built, or to build a museum (or multiple museums).

\(^{125}\) Victoria Newhouse, Towards a New Museum. (New York: Monacelli Press Inc. 1998) P.193


Figure 45. “High Museum of Art.” Bluffton University. September 6, 2015. https://www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/atlanta/high/high.html


Figure 52. “Someone has built it before.” Archidialog. September 6, 2015. http://archidialog.com/2010/03/31/sanaa-kenzo-tange/


Figure 64. Itinerarist. September 6, 2015. http://itinerarist.com/page/8/


Figure 66. “Musée Hergé.” Wikipedia. September 6, 2015. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mus%C3%A9e_Herg%C3%A9


Figure 86. Tesdorf-Design Architecture. September 6, 2015. http://tesdorf-design.com/the_architects.html

Figure 76. Cityzenart. September 6, 2015. http://cityzenart.blogspot.co.nz/2010/12/on-collecting-john-dominique-de-menil.html


Figure 91. “Centre Georges Pompidou Panorama.” Shadowfire.nl. September 6, 2015. http://shadowfire.nl/pages/d821239f/Paris-2010-Centre-Georges-Pompidou-panorama


Figure 112. The Three Muses, Auckland Domain. Watson bequest (1955)
The Muses

In ancient Greek mythology, the original mother goddess, or muse, was regarded as the provenance of all forms of inspiration. Later, mythological elaboration produced a threefold goddess, and eventually nine sister goddesses who presided over song and poetry as well as the arts and sciences. There were originally three muses, Melete (practice), Mneme (memory) and Aoede (song). These later became nine: Calliope (epic poetry and also rhetoric), Clio (history), Erato (song), Euterpe (lyric Poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Polymnia (hymns to gods and heroes), Terpsichore (dance), Thalia (comedy), and Urania (astronomy).

Genius or Muse?

The relationship between these two terms is interesting. Art history repeatedly presents the image of the muse (woman) as the subject of the genius (man). One is passive; the other, the maker, is active. The criticism of woman existing only as a muse in art is not new or unknown. It was part of an advertising campaign by the Gorilla Girls in 1989 with their billboard which asked “Do women have to be naked to get into the Met.Museum?” The Muses have not always represented a passive subject. The myth of goddesses who provided inspiration in its original conception is more similar to the original Roman conception of genius, which is described as an active entity, separate to the individual.

The original genii referred to a spirit, Hilde Heynen writes. It described divine aspects of procreation (ensuring property continued through the gens or male clan) and male protective spirits associated to a place or person. These spirits would then shape a person’s ability; they were external to the individual. Then, Heynen says, in romanticism it became a description of the innate artistic and intellectual character of a great man.

The novelist, Elizabeth Gilbert, gave a TED talk in 2009 in which she also discussed the idea of an external genius in opposition to the internalisation of the idea. To her, the idea that genius is a separate spirit is an escape from the weight of unknowable, creative mysteries, which, if they are made purely the responsibility of the self, would be “like asking somebody to swallow the sun.” Here the connections become somewhat tenuous and open to subjective interpretation. But, for the purpose of this design, I would like to speculate and imagine the muses fulfilling the role described by Gilbert.

130 Hilde Heynen, Genius, Gender and Architecture: the Star System as Exemplified in the Pritzker Prize. Architectural Theory Review p335
132 Hilde Heynen, Genius, Gender and Architecture: the Star System as Exemplified in the Pritzker Prize. Architectural Theory Review p335
A Short Speculation

It is necessary to allow the muses to be a more active force. To do otherwise would be to accept the role of the muse to be less than the maker, a role that supports the gendered status quo of genius=maker and muse=subject. I would like to speculate that the muses fulfil the role described by Gilbert of an intangible external creative force.

The outside creative force is not some quasi-religious spirit, but a space of Keatsian “negative capability,” external to our individual selves. This space is occupied by our cousins and siblings. “Negative capability” describes the ideal productive space of the mind as one of uncertainty, doubt, and mystery; an idea first coined by the poet John Keats.134 John Keats said the mind of a poet or artist is best when it is “capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after facts and reason.”135 This concept was later adopted for women artists by Anne-Marie Sauzeau-Boetti as the idea that a rich productive space exists in the margins.136

In turn I would appropriate this space of the margins - of “negative capability” - for the Muses. I would also propose that creativity does not only come from the individual, and that it does come from muses; not passive naked women, but collaborators. To me, the idea of Muses represents a requirement to think of any creative work as collaborative in some small way, or at least a cumulative mass of ideas and thoughts that are gathered from outside of one’s self; from the cousins and siblings of Helen Molesworth, to clients.

135 Ibid. p. 30.
Un-Museum

This project suggests a move away from the didactic narrative - the object architecture so common to museums - to propose instead a design which explores the breaking up of the object, the blurring of defined boundaries, and the suggestive loose ends possible in a dialogue. A move away from the didactic is made by re-introducing the idea of the place of the muses to suggest a place for dialogue, and looking to the cabinet of curiosities as a place of mysteries and delight. The project does not aim to present curated objects; it does not aim to present objects at all. Instead, it is the building itself which acts as the catalyst for the interpretation of ideas. Showing the varying privacy, openness, opacity, transparency, overlapping, flux, and uncertainties of history, the practice and critical recognition of architecture, the collaborative relationships between cousins or siblings, and the dialogue between the building and user, and building and site.

The un-museum does not aim to become an object that sits comfortably within the accepted canon. It resists the narrative of architectural history. It references history through the collaborative process which made it: Lina Bo Bardi and Eileen Gray are present, but in a fragmentary way. Through this dual role - of acknowledging historical narrative (albeit an alternative one) and resisting it - the un-museum sits in an ambiguous position to architectural history. It resists it but also engages with it. It is this ambiguous relationship that avoids sliding toward one end or the other of history or anti-history. Instead of “either-or” it uses “and-and.”
Design Response

Site

The gardens of Old Government House is now a part of the University of Auckland. The site is in central Auckland, highly accessible to the public, and, on the university grounds, it has increasing foot traffic. I wanted a location where people could come across the building by chance, to provoke perhaps a thought from a passer-by or an interest. The old government house is currently hidden from the public by a white picket fence which demarcates the footpath as the public boundary. It is possible that people who have not attended Auckland university do not even know it exists. It would be a possible place of meeting, romantic rendezvous, or discovery.

This site is also surrounding the old government house. It sits around a part of a dominant institution in New Zealand history. The first government was built on the site in 1841. It burnt down on the 22nd June 1848. The current building was built in 1856, and was the seat of government until 1865 when the capital moved to wellington. It then became the country’s vice royal residence, a place for visiting dignitaries to stay. It was transferred to the University of Auckland in 1969, and is now home to the staff common room club, for members only.

It also sits between two other institutions: the Auckland high court building, and the University of Auckland. So we are sited in amongst the vestiges of the law, governance, and higher education; institutions which in combination have a strong influence on the narrative of the country. They are also institutions which have, historically, been male dominated. Moreover, while not the focus of this project, it is worth acknowledging the presence of the colonialis/pt colonialist narratives in the influences of these three institutions. There are trees on the site which match the old government house in age (relatively young). They are introduced species, foreign to the grounds when they were planted. There are also native trees planted more recently, within the last fifty years.

In short, it is a site rich for engagement and provocation. A site where logic, law, governance and order can be introduced to the doubts and mysteries of negative capability, and to the influences of the muses. A site where the museum can engage with ideas of dialogue, the opacity/transparency of history, and with those forgotten. A parlour for the muses.

Figure 114. (https://www.google.co.nz/maps/@-36.851305,174.770794,704a,20y,41.54t/data=!3m1!1e3).

High court.

Old Government House.

Auckland University.
Figure 115. The framing of views will be used to help control entry to the site.
Occupying the Margins

The architecture will occupy the margins of the site, both controlling and facilitating the entry to the old government house and the connections with the university, courthouse and the public.

The aim of this is to create some sort of dialogue with the user in relation to the three institutions. It is also in a more literal sense the occupation of the margins - the domain of negative capability. The space of “negative capability” has also been described by Anne-Marie Sauzeau-Boetti as the idea that a rich productive space exists in the margins.138

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Incomplete Pieces

The intention is to move away from the museum as an object. This intention also suits such a large site. Instead of one contained building, there will be many pieces. Instead of a single controlled entry point, the borders will be softened to allow for multiple options of entry. These fragments - parts of a whole - also make use of a mix of Spatial Interpenetration and Spatial isolation; the concept of spaces flowing into one another with indeterminate boundaries, and the concept of a pavilion or isolated space. The intention is for the soft boundaries to become somewhat ambiguous, allowing for an interpretation both of space and the movement through it from the user. I would also like for there to be an uncertainty in these interruptions, pavilions, and facilitators of movement on the site. I would like the aesthetic to leave gaps: Are they separate or is the building unfinished? In the parlour of the muses this would be left for the viewer to imagine.

The intention of the materials is to present a fragility (almost tongue in cheek) in the use of glass: this project occupies contentious ground, and is prone to having stones thrown at it. The other materials - steel and curtains - are used with possible gender metaphors in mind.
Figure 116. Watercolour sectional diagram of site occupation strategy.
This drawing is a sketch of the strategy of site occupation. It diagrams the three institutions of the site and the green spaces in between. Done in watercolour and collaged paper model it shows the architecture forming in the green peripheries.
Figure 117: Watercolour sectional diagram of site occupation strategy.
Following on from the previous watercolour and paper collage/diagram, this sketch imagines a section. Diagramming the possible interaction of the architecture with the surface of the earth.
Figure 118. Watercolour sectional diagram of site occupation strategy.
Figure 119. Placement strategies. Could it come right up to the facade of the house?

Figure 120. Occupying the corner entry off Symonds Street.

Figure 121. On the edge of the lawn.

Photographing the model was used as a tool to test different options for site placement.

Figure 122. Opposite: the locations of the possible additions are shown in a lighter line-weight.
The paper model and watercolour drawing of the site are combined, further fragmenting both. Together they are used to try to describe the atmosphere of the interaction. The model is not imagined literally as part of the un-museum but as a method of describing the possible architectural language which may be drawn from the theory.
Extreme Nature: Landscape of Ambiguous Spaces.

By Junya Ishigami and Hideaki Ohba

Extreme Nature was the 2008 Japanese pavilion for the Venice Biennale by architect Junya Ishigami and Botanist Hideaki Ohba. The work consisted of four delicate glasshouses situated amongst the garden surrounding the Japanese pavilion. The path approaching the pavilion wound between the glasshouses, and there was furniture scattered around the path. There is greenery inside and outside the glasshouses, which have an ephemeral aesthetic. The glasshouses are rectilinear with flat glass roofs. The columns supporting the structure are separate from the thin glass walls and are scattered within the structures. The columns themselves are steel with a white finish and are also thin, with diameters intentionally matched to the plants surrounding them. The structural plans for these glasshouses were produced by Jun Soto.

Describing the work, Ishigami said he wanted to blur the edge of architecture and landscape to create an ambiguous boundary between the two by taking two environments - the artificial environment of the inside and the existing environment of the landscape - and juxtaposing the two to create an equal presence of plants and architecture with the use of delicate columns and “glass that looks like soft bubble”. Photographs of the installation show the physical lightness and the transparency of the materials. Visually the architecture and the greenery have an equal balance. The path to walk through the installation winds around and between the four glass houses, but not through the inside. Therefore the blending of borders, of artificial and existing, of inside and outside, is a visual experience. It is an ambiguity of the borders our eyes see, more than the spaces we pass through. This could be to preserve the plants inside the green houses; Japanese plants, selected by Hideaki Ohba, which could not survive in the Venetian climate. Therefore, also the inside artificial environment, is still artificial to the existing Italian environment.

What I am taking from this precedent is the way the architecture takes cues from the site to define the sizing of structural elements. The idea of an ambiguous space and the blurring of interior and exterior. The use of transparency and delicacy. The aesthetic suggests an intention to delight the user; the pavilions could almost have stepped out of a cabinet of curiosities. Moreover, the fineness of the structure offers a solution to the occupation of space between trees or garden in a way which does not overpower or crowd the site.

Figure 123. In amongst the glass house. (source: https://www.bmodm.com/flip-15295-greenhouse-designing-with-yoshizaka-c2-a9junya-contemporary-greenhouse-architecture-1140x760.jpg).
Figure 124. The play of light and reflections on the glass add to the ambiguity. (https://www.pinterest.com/pin/51889188268299082/).


Figure 126. The boundary between artificial and natural environments. (https://www.jpf.go.jp/j/project/culture/exhibit/international/venezia-biennale/art/11/image/7.jpg).
Glass Houses

Lina Bo Bardi; Phillip Johnson

The Johnson glass house was looked at because, unlike the glass house by Mies van der Rohe, this pavilion dwelling sits on the ground. The house has a brick floor in a herringbone pattern which is only slightly raised from the level of the ground. It is, however, very austere. There is a very distinct border between the inside and the rich green of the landscape.

Lina Bo Bardi’s glass house sits on a slope. The rear of the house is earthed in the hillside, and the front, which gives the house its name, sits amongst the tree canopy. Strikingly different from both Johnson and Mies’ glass houses is the use of curtains. They have a transparency and softness, yet they introduce the control of privacy to the occupant. The glass wall of the house is just as definite a border as the house by Johnson, but the introduction of curtains provides an element by which this border can be adjusted and changed. The curtains change the light, the view. They prevent the space from the austerity. Lina Bo Bardi also let her designs be filled with the signs of life: belongings and personnel effects.
Figure 128. Curtains soften the boundaries and lend a more intimate feel. (http://flodeau.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/gnaedinger_0101.jpeg)

Figure 129. The curtains allow the user to control the boundary of the space. (http://www.metropolismag.com/Point-of-View/September-2013/Lina-Bo-Bardis-Personal-Modernism/3-Atrium%20opening%20into%20ground%20at%20Casa%20de%20Hierro.jpg)
Figure 130. Panorama from lawn.

Figure 131. Panorama of current drive way.
Figure 132. Panorama of Old Government House and lawn (old tennis court)
Figure 133. Watercolour of panorama. Abstracting the photograph.
Figure 134. Parti sketch. This method of drawing begins to investigate the fragmentary nature/language of the architectural response. Here nature and building begin to occupy the same space (both conceptually and physically).
Conclusion

This project has used dialogue to both engage with and refute the narratives in architectural history, which focus on polemic individuals. In the history of architecture, the normal practice of collaboration has been ignored in favour of the pervasive image of the great architect as an isolated genius. This project used written dialogues to engage with texts on similar phenomena within the art world, and to see what comparisons could be drawn.

Dialogue was also used as a design tool, and has been rich in offering possible ways of involving the work of others – thus allowing for collaboration with others within an individual project – and in defining a thinking space in which multiple ideas could converge and be measured against each other. Dialogue also created a bridge through which a theoretical exploration could become a design response. This way of working helped to inform how the design should relate the site, and its history.

The linking of theories and topics in this research has raised many other avenues of engagement. The parlour of the muses – the un-museum – is, appropriately, one of multiple possibilities. Within the ideas of dialogue, narrative, and collaboration, much larger explorations could have been made: into salons, the relationship between genius and muses, and specific collaborative relationships; all of which could have been topics in and of themselves. Extending the project to include the New Zealand context – the collaborations of New Zealand’s architectural history and/or the dominant colonialist narratives that could be read in the site – could further add to this topic.

In this method of working I have noticed certain themes occurred often in my creative responses to the project. The fragmentation of plans and images is used often: to break down and disintegrate objects, loosen the boundaries, and to act as a tool of abstraction. There are also multiple translations which occur: interpreting a text into a dialogue – acting as a mediator between both my ideas and understanding of the theory, and the reader’s understanding of the theory – then translating the ideas into spaces through models, and sometimes translating again through photographs. The ambiguity facilitated within has become a rich landscape of expression. It is not a vagueness or confusion, but an “and, and” instead of “either, or.” It allows the borders between ideas to overlap, allows simultaneous engagement and opposition, and it can invite the interpretation of others.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


11. Harvard GSD, Junya Ishigami, “Recent work” may 23 2011 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgleIBds_OQ


Appendix 1: Parlour of the Muses
Figure Ground of Trees and Structures
Structure Typologies

Single screen
Doorway
Three piece screen
A tall structure with a pitched roof
Equal directions of movement in and out, regular symmetrical shape
These are split to allow one canopy to sit above the other.

A mono-pitched roof suggests a direction of focus.

Two rectilinear spaces intersect in plan.

Columns have a varied placement creating differences in the space they define, a more varied sense between in and out.
Spatial Isolation

Spatial Interpenetration
Axonometric, Plan and Perspective from Waterloo Crescent
 Axonometric, Plan and Perspective Inside Structures
Axonometric, Plan and Perspective from Pathway
Models
Appendix 2

Other site possibilities which were considered
A google search of auckland architects builds an image of people literally working on the periphery or the centre of the city.
Institutions of architectural dissemination

Rosebank road as a site for a market place of architects
Edge conditions of Rosebank Road.
Too dominated by cars, no casual foot traffic.
Photographs of edge conditions on Rosebank Road.
Appendix 3
Using comics to understand ideas.
Obstruction and transparency in narrative.
Further photographs of models.