

# Dirty Details

The dancing at the Berlin Wall symbolizes the peaceful revolution of And, starting from nowhere and unexplained, unexplainable, to this day. If the borders in Europe that had fallen away are now being reconstructed, invoked and reflagged, this still remains a reaction - a reaction to the sheer intolerability of And. The global, diffuse and formless character of And is upsetting for many people. The dis-alienation of the alien and the concomitant dis-possession of that which is one's own, both involuntarily produced by the age of And, are experienced as a threat. Without either-or, they say, they cannot live and, they add, cannot even conceive of the And. So And is by no means the beginning of paradise on earth. Circumstances of a completely new type are probably beginning here. The world of either-or in which we think, act and live is becoming false. In one way or another, this is the beginning of conflicts and experiments beyond Either/or ...

Ulrich Beck

## Introduction

In the civil practice of social democracy, particularly in the Netherlands, the blessed and prosperous mediocre stands in the centre. One preaches a humanism that cannot and will not reach further than the request to tame and educate: "... man is presented to the humanist, who applies to him his taming, training and forming measures – convinced as he is of the necessary cohesion between reading, sitting and calming down", notices Peter Sloterdijk in his article "Regels voor het Mensenpark" (Rules for the Human Zoo) (1999). People started a domesticating system that makes them domestic animals. They create around them a park that shows an absolute beauty, consensus and order. Each risk, each form of noise, each rawness, each ugliness, incompleteness, difference, brokenness, alienation and schizophrenia, is disqualified in the discourse. Thus this civil practice is opposed to the idea of radical democracy, where the antagonisms of the beautiful and the ugly, the wild and the domesticated, convention and liberation, one and the other, Design and non-Design, good and bad, non-place and place, non-plan and plan, in brief the Dirtiness, are labelled as potential. Like Chantal Mouffe I am looking for a politics beyond the triumph of moralizing liberalism which pretends that antagonisms have been eradicated and that society can now be ruled through rational moral procedures and that the remaining conflicts can be resolved through juridical tribunals. I am not after making political architecture, but trying to make architecture politically again. I am looking for spaces full of "agonistic pluralism", where conflict is not eradicated, neither taking the form of a struggle between enemies, but helps us to project progressive multitudes on the bases of the complexity of our reality.

An architecture that wants to resist the tameness and mediocre of social democracy will have to deal first with the Dirtiness that the so-called Society of The And generates. Two new strategies that resemble each other at first sight, deal with this Dirtiness: Fresh Conservatism and what I call And/Otherness concepts. Fresh Conservatism uses the absurdity of our daily Dirtiness especially to surprise us. The subversive alienation of the Dirty Details-aesthetics of Fresh conservatism does not install new political propositions. Instead of proposing a progressive alternative, it celebrates the end of the political. It is rather a question of a new fashion and style. Uncertainty and alienation as a fresh and pornographic show already goes far enough in Fresh Conservatism. And/Otherness

concepts on the contrary use alienation and absurdity or Dirty Details as an inherent practice to achieve a kind of social equilibrium. Here the Dirty Details rest on an antagonism that does not lead to consensus, but to several points of difference. Through interaction the struggle is started over and over again, in search of liberation. It is a matter of taking a political stance by provoking with an absurd aesthetic intervention. Dirty Detailing is here a strategy of a multitude of resistance.

## **Dirtiness**

How to engage all the complexity and indeterminacy of the city through the methods of a discipline so committed to control, separation and unitary thinking? We thrive in cities exactly because they are places of the unexpected, products of a complex order emerging over time.

Stan Allen

### **Second Modernity & The Society of The And**

A picture that I took in Umbria, Italy, standing on a mountaintop, illustrates the difference between the First and Second Modernity. We can notice the following: at first, we see a cross, the symbol of the Roman-Catholic Church, a transparent object of our First Modernity. It was placed there a few decades ago. We are looking at an industrial product. It is a fine tectonic work, a steel construction that symbolizes what faith stands for and an institution of collective confidence and trust. This cross is not made of stone. This steel cross originates in the first industrial modernization, where the dialectical difference between “being at home” and “homeless”, getting alienated from authentic experience because of the influence of technology, are in the right place. Beside the cross, we see a totally different world. The container full of satellite dishes is a prototypical example of our Second Modernity. Its architecture no longer has any symbolic function; it no longer represents any normative value. We can even ask ourselves what the new role of architecture is when we contemplate this Dirty “beast” more profoundly. Anyhow, it is a big construction, to which you can add infinitely according to the need. It is also extremely flexible and there is a question of optimal efficiency due to the network of fast connections. A new tectonic arises, architecture as infrastructure: a fuzzy logic without the need for the symbolic as an expression of the power of individualization, the media, technology and global players acting on a world scale. The all-important military observation post on this mountaintop –beyond the camera’s range- has turned into ruins. The absolution of the place has lost power. Fixed circumscriptions no longer work in this space. The ordered chaos of the non-linearity of the container with satellite dishes on this mountaintop in Umbria represents our Second Modernity in a rather accurate way. This Second Modernity does not develop any more according to reason coming from above. Bipolar oppositions between man and woman, left and right, good and bad, poor and rich, being at home and homeless, beautiful and ugly, state interference and laissez-faire no longer help to understand this Second Modernity. The oppositions of the Either/Or type are no longer the engine for change; instead, it are the side effects, the crossovers, the unintended consequences emerging out of the endless additive processes, which change this society in a forceful manner. I therefore replace, just as Ulrich Beck does, Either/Or logics with the And, and I embrace his concept of current society as a Society of The And. Simply put, the And conjunction encapsulates the complexity of all kinds of conjunctions, full of oxymoron’s, contradictions, uncertainty, complex overlappings, and the intertwining of all kinds of different hierarchical values. The And conjunction is not even a specific conjunction or relation, rather, it embraces all relations. What is visible on this mountaintop in Umbria is the fact that the First as well as the Second Modernity are actively present. The Zero and First Modernity were not simply substituted by the Second Modernity. The process of modernization includes different modernity’s and traditions, which always come alive

differently in different proportions in every location. These And-conjunctions are responsible for the complex transnational cohesion of what is global and local, a so-called glocal condition, as seen on this mountaintop in Umbria. From the above we can conclude that the modernization of our present-day society is based more and more on a practical, almost manneristic And-logic coming up from the bottom, rather than being dictated by a pedagogical way of functioning. The new complexity of present-day modern society develops in an experiential way instead of a disciplinary way, as in the fifties and sixties, when it was principally institutional propaganda and the newly independent nation-states that shaped society. In short, we live in “chaos” or Dirtiness, which works very efficiently and in an orderly fashion thanks to the fine interactive network of And-conjunctions. In this rhizomatic system there is no question any more of beginning and ending. The panoramic view too is no longer able to control or oversee this disorder. Linear models are substituted by other maps to be able to function in this simultaneity of space and the imaginary of our urban culture. The changing meaning of our place in this Society of The And invariably involves a departure from the solid state world of a fundamental constructed reality, as well as its logic of total transparent communication, into a fluid state world of a virtual reality driven by disjunctive relational movements of homogeneity and heterogeneity. We are faced with a disjunctive And order full of complex overlappings that can no longer be understood through bipolar Centre/Periphery or other kinds of Either/Or logics.

### **The And-scapes, And-chitectures**

They met each other in France. He belongs to the new manager's elite. He helped to make the Poldermodel of the Netherlands come true. Yesterday she was still throwing snowballs in the sauna with her grandmother. Some hours before this cool event, she enjoyed an ostrich steak at the Copa Cabana with grandfather. He, deconstructivist, dreams of a traditional family house, close to the desert of Las Vegas. She is a chip designer and loves the Opera. With surprise and amusement they chatted about the news in the New York Times that researchers found female ice bears with small penises because of PCB pollution in Spitsbergen, Alaska. Right now, as we can see, they are enjoying the world cup football match of the Netherlands against Brazil, somewhere in Marseilles, France; he in a traditional women's costume from the Dutch village Monnickendam, and she is dressed in a football shirt of the player Romario of Brazil. Never before was the Samba so liberating and at the same time so conventional. What modernity is, or might become, is less clear than ever in the Society of The And. The political and social lexicon of space, city and architecture and the distinctions between public and private have become obsolete and have to be rewritten. Formerly the dominant forces were separation and specialization, the struggle for clarity and the reduction of the world to calculable proportions. Now, in the Society of The And, we talk about simultaneity, multiplicity, uncertainty, chaos theory, networks, infrastructures, non-linearity, rhizomes, hubs and nodal points, interaction, the hybrid, the diffuse, ambivalence, schizophrenia, space of flows, cyborgs and so on. Like the encounter between the two football-supporters in France there are indicators that the traditional landscape in the Society of The And no longer has a dominant influence on the idea of a community. In former times, everything that had a decisive influence on our common life could be localized in the immediate physical landscape. Physical objects and the relation

to the land had a dominant influence on the identity of our culture. In the Society of The And it is not so much objects as diffuse fields led by electronic mediation and mass migration that orient our identity. Arjun Appadurai calls these fields imaginary scapes. These scapes create specific irregularities because both viewers and images are in simultaneous circulation. Neither images nor viewers fit anymore into circuits or audiences that are easily bound within local, national or regional spaces. Nothing stands still anymore in these scapes. Everything is constantly moving because there is a constant interaction going on in and through these scapes. What we have to focus on is how the different trajectories in these scapes produce all sorts of specific And-conjunctions. They are relational patterns that eventually give our Society of The And its true face. These media and migration scapes create a constant transnational traffic in ideas of peoplehood and selfhood, which create, according to Appadurai, imaginary scapes of abstract space and time. These scapes of imagination are now central to all forms of agency; it is a social fact, and the key component of the new global order locally and globally. In this condition there is a new order of instability, or Dirtiness in the production of modern subjectivities. It is a Society of The And where all kinds of And-conjunctions become intermingled with each other in a complex whole of cross-over scapes that can never be reduced to an absolute truth. These And-scapes show a high degree of Dirtiness. Differing according to location, a relational negotiation in these scapes will always take place, which will be extremely unstable, raw, incomplete and undefined because of the complex nature of the And. The Dirtiness of everything that gathers in these And-scapes, without ever forming a balanced whole, is in fact a form of brokenness. This brokenness should not be seen as a threat to civil liberty and political will, but on the contrary as its origin; it is not an obstacle –if it was ever seen as one- but rather a beginning of liberation. In our Society of the And we may have to deal with a moment of liberation because of the Dirtiness of the And-scape conventions, when a liberating moment suddenly appears thanks to clichés, such as our football supporters in Marseilles.

### **Reflexivity in the And**

According to the sociologists Beck, Giddens and Lash we are not so much controlled by the system as that we operate reflexively in the Society of the And. The knowledge of each individual, gained through a long education, makes every individual capable of considering the consequences, the problems and the premises of our modernization processes. But there is yet another form of reflexivity, that can be compared to the reflex of the knee when a doctor taps it with a hammer. What is striking is that our modernity generates by itself all kinds of unintended consequences and enormous risks because of its developed and applied specialized knowledge. Who could have expected that because of globalisation democratic parliamentary structures of the national states would be more and more dominated by the international economy? Who does not like to lead a life without the interference of state or church? We cannot just consider as a deterrent this reflexive modernization full of Dirtiness such as excessive consumerism, tourism, do-it-yourself-biographies whose only aim is individual development, without regard to any consequences the other might suffer, renewed imperialism in the form of globalisation, “junkspace”, snackism, and so on. According to Ulrich Beck, it is precisely the unintended consequences, such as natural disasters, and the increasing uncertainties in one’s own life, that generate a new politicalization of one’s own life from underneath.

Confrontation with the many risks that evoke a radicalisation of modernity forces us to reinvent politics, bottom-up, in our daily banal Dirtiness. This creates the opportunity for each one of us to react more and more reflexive. For this reason the Society of the And does not see the motor of reflexive modernization in something new, but rather in the familiar Dirtiness of the crisis-wracked, conflict-prone, production cycle of capital, technology, labour, science, taste, leisure, tourism, and individualisation scapes. The Dirtiness of the And-scapes and the reflexive potential of the unexpected, the uncertain and the many risks around us give us opportunities for innovation contrary to the linear transparent constructions that can only deal with predictable certainties. Real progress is therefore not present in the taming of reality, but precisely in negotiation with the Dirtiness of our reality.

## Dirty Details

... I have a feeling that rules have to be discovered; one should neither obey nor revolt automatically. It is better to discover what can be yours in the system, and accept or change it. ... work it, and discover the unknown...Jean Luc Godard

### **Puff pastry concepts**

As discussed under the title *Dirtiness the Society of the And* comes alive because of the experimental and reflexive trajectories that move actively through the turbulent *And-scapes*. Not only does sociology try to understand this complex every-day *Dirtiness*, but also architecture, art, film, philosophy and economics are gaining new insights by getting involved in this artificial urbanized landscape, or the *Society of the And*. The works that deal with this *Dirty reality* become involved, and seek contact and interaction with the other person/the other in this daily reality. The new work is relational: it consists of the interhuman experiences that it generates; it makes the visitor a spectator, an interlocutor and a neighbour. This new architecture does not try to restore contact with the user and the contemplator through passive experience, but by active participation; it seems to want to coincide with the *Dirtiness of reality*. It is not really a will to abolish the profession, but rather an emancipation from institutional-representative structures, from the glorification of autonomy, from the tradition of the critical margin. It is a plea for acting, experiencing and doing. There is a desire to make a connection with time and reality, seen as fragmentary. The old role of the architect is being reconsidered. To find the reality, the profession has to reinvent itself. It develops strategies and programs that emerge from the making of *Dirty hands* in every-day reality. It speaks the language of our mass production, distribution and popular culture. It is an “architecture against architecture” that does not set out to attack the profession, but tries to escape from space in the sense of delimitation, dependence, centre of management, order and administration. It seeks to connect more places at the same time, to escape from the closed, from suffocation. It is an architecture not really interested in the objective, in representation, or in the structure itself of a building, but which engages itself especially with the creation of conditions for all kinds of current activities. It is architecture as a *scape* that offers room for the dynamic of our reflexive modernity. It is a position that considers the *Dirtiness of life* as an intrinsic as well as a cheerful part of life. It takes paradoxal reality as a point of departure. All kinds of (sub) cultures come alive. Consumerism is no longer described as a pure impoverishment; on the contrary, it is accepted as a condition in which all sorts of fascinating qualities can be activated. The implementation of many *Dirty Details* practices starts from a kind of puff pastry concept. Although these creations often look like an enlarged croissant, it is not a matter of literal form, but one of a concept resembling a refined system where many layers are stuck on top of or under each other, or in a heap, in a whole of continuous fields without necessarily beginning or ending. And we, the user and the program, are the freely moving raisins in the puff pastry concept. It is up to us to make all kinds of possible ends meet through a zigzag route. The puff pastry concept is a porous, compact and performative construction, in which mass moves fluently. In this construction, oppositions and paradoxes are applied in different mixtures. It concerns a game where the puff pastry concept (re) activates all manners of ambiguities and unintended consequences in a rather

primitive form that can be constantly infiltrated and re-evaluated. The puff pastry concept is construction as infrastructure, in which different sorts of circuits can be built and can appear spontaneously. It is a heterogeneous landscape where the walls and floors function as a membrane. The puff pastry concept allows a greater amount of complexity in the use and programming. It is specific and undefined at the same time. This concept can develop in an orthogonal space as well as in an “animated form” .



## Two ‘young’ practices of architecture

A world in which reform takes place without violence is not a world in which I like to live. It could be either an absolutely undimensional society in which 100 per cent of the population would agree with any single reform, or one in which the decisions would be made by an army of social engineers with the backing of the rest of the population. Any reform involves changing the status quo and in most cases this will hurt existing interests. The process of reform is a process of struggles, not a process of quiet piecemeal engineering. And there is nothing to regret. It is in this active process of struggle that human abilities – new language games – are created.

Ernesto Laclau

The interest of getting involved with the Dirtiness of the Society of the And does not mean that one submits to the status quo. Rather, the opposite is true; precisely by being a part of the brokenness of Dirtiness, one can achieve progressive innovation. Therefore operating from within the Society of the And does not lead automatically to adaptation or loss of critical sense. However, to activate progression one must build a deliberate absurdity or friction in the puff pastry concept. I summarize the main issue of this aesthetic complex under the term Dirty Details. The aesthetic that Dirty Details architects handle aims deliberately to overturn reality while creation is an intrinsic part of the Dirtiness of the Society of the And. A Dirty Detail can be the result of a small “détournement”. A small component, one that is not important to the whole, is changed, but it produces a whole new context of meanings. The tree as a column in the art gallery Kunsthal of Koolhaas introduces such a “détournement” in the whole. The white box concept of the “neutral” museum is consciously broken and provided with comment. This alienating “détournement” is, however, a conscious diversion of an intrinsically meaningful element, which demands another vision of the museum. This Dirty Detailing is a method for attacking institutions from within and thus opening a route for an open society in which the deliberate diversion has become permanent. This diversion is an important device for unmasking meaning-systems without necessarily exploding or denying them. It is Dirty Detailing that wishes to localize the margin among us. Dirtiness which is all the time bubbling just below the surface in the Society of the And is brought to our attention and provoked by an absurd aesthetic intervention you never can fully comprehend.

### **Fresh Conservatism**

Nowadays the Dirtiness of our Society of the And generates almost by itself an infinite series of antagonisms that inspire many designers to pass on to a Dirty Details aesthetic. Droog Design and many other young Dutch designers in art, graphic design and architecture are a good example of this. The “détournements” that our society generates abundantly can be picked up easily from the streets (through datascares) and incorporated into a new absurdist design. When we understand the Dirtiness of our Society of the And as a potential field to achieve a progressive architecture, we certainly have to ask ourselves what the aesthetic of Dirty Details instigates. When Dirty Detailing does not wish to refer to itself as so much design does, but just aims to connect itself to

the context, what does it in fact want to activate with its absurdity or Dirtiness? The Dirty Details of the Asian woman with Euro centric looks, reading the Bauhaus catalogue, surrounded by “Event Space”, opening her legs provocatively, challenges the viewer, but what kind of progressiveness does this represents? A mix of High and Low art is introduced in this pornographic image. It is a Dirty Details copulation of clichés. In the And it is a very conservative depiction of what sexuality is and what the qualities of a woman are. Another example is the green universal remote control of Philips, designed for the last World Cup football championships. The green colour hints at the ecological correctness of these days, while the word Universal indicates that televisions all over the world can be operated by this remote control. Furthermore, this Dirty design is capable of opening a beer bottle while you zap to the football channel. It is a literal And conjunction design. Both these Dirty Details examples find their inspiration in the antagonisms of Dirtiness of our Society of the And, but lose every form of resistance. They are politically and economically correct. They provide the new, fresh, provocative design for our Dirty reality that awaits good new selling brands. The rich diversity that lives in the Society of the And is flattened in these Dirty Details. They create a new style that will soon become a new conformism before you have the chance to notice. This Fresh Conservatism is not really interested in traditional values but is fascinated by the present and the near future. It is a kind of lounge-futurism of an do-it-yourself avant-garde. The work that this Fresh Conservatism produces is made of a kind of avant-garde junk space. This Fresh Conservatism throws up fresh ideas non-stop, amusing us and keeping us happy. It keeps us out of mischief. It is a kind of ideological smoothness, summarized by John Travolta thus: “Whatever you do, do it cool baby”. Fresh Conservatism is a situation in The And where a certain degree of absurdity serves as stimulant and identity, thus forming an essential element in a fragmented society where the results of conflicts in power, and political interests of resistance are swept under the carpet. It all comes down to the well-known adults’ lullaby - “do not worry, be happy”.

### **And/Otherness concepts**

How can we get to a new form of liberation in the Society of the And? Is there another possible way to handle Dirtiness than the one that the Fresh Conservatism chooses? The Dirty Details of Fresh Conservatism are extremely problematic in their creation of freedom. All sorts of old conventions remain in place or are transformed into new conventions. The Dirty Details of Fresh Conservatism hardly provoke us to take another position with regard to what exists. Much more painful is the fact that the makers of such work are not even aware of their own political position. They maintain a passive and often naive Dirty Detailing which is satisfied with what the Society of the And produces “automatically” of Dirtiness in its many And-scapes. That is why I plea for Dirty Details which are not only inspired by the Society of the And, but also incorporate a certain Otherness as a political will in their work. Fresh Conservatism lacks two essential aspects to achieve liberation. In the first place, the absurdity of their Dirty Detailing does not generate a real alienation that instigates thinking beyond what one already knows. No alienation is generated that forces us to handle, or put differently, that forces us to develop the possibility to move towards freedom in the battle against unfreedom. The Kunsthal of Rem Koolhaas in Rotterdam uses, on different fronts, an aesthetic of Dirty Details, which enables different conventional positions of the museum to confront each

other in an open manner full of antagonism. The policy of the 'neutral' exhibition room, which should eliminate the subjective choice of the curator and remove the cultural context of the work of art and its relation to the exterior, is foiled in many ways in this art gallery. In different places in the building all sorts of programs meet. The monumental entry, common to most museums, is replaced by a cross passage that relates everything and everyone in an unexpected manner and releases one repeatedly from a preoccupied perspective. The museum and the city constantly move alongside each other. The selective world of the museum and the day-to-day world are involved with each other and have to take up position over and over again. It is the opposite of the museum as a temple, where art is subordinated to the fancy sculpture of the architectural shape that prefers to refer to itself, as seen in, for example, the Bilbao Modern Art Museum of Frank Gehry. So liberation takes place here while there are specific conditions of many forms of alienation or dislocation that form a hindrance to liberation. A second aspect that Fresh Conservatism overlooks is that a certain political position must be taken through the Dirty Details aesthetic. Dirty Detailing can not only provoke or be developed to create the shock of what is new on the basis of the many And-conjunctions in our Society of the And. Following the example of the Kunsthal, a certain ideology of exhibitions, which originated in the sixties in the Netherlands, is also further developed. Here we meet the Otherness-aspect of And/Otherness concepts, or the insight that Dirty Details have to carry a certain political dimension when one wants to attain liberty. This is demonstrated by Willem Sandberg's extension of the municipal museum in the sixties in Amsterdam, allowing urban life to penetrate the building. Sandberg came to this political position because he thought: "Today we do not want to live with what we are expected to venerate. We really do not know if museums and especially museums of contemporary art should exist in eternity. They were created at the time when society as a whole was not interested enough in the work of living artists. The ideal would be that art became integrated again in daily life, went out onto the streets, entered the buildings and became a necessity; this should be the major aim of the museum: to make itself superfluous..." . Sandberg removed all walls in his new wing. The floor of the exhibition room is at street level. Everything that stands vertically is made of glass, and all windows can be opened onto the street. Sandberg provokes the curator to think about how a certain exhibition is related to the city and what kind of route a specific exhibition in the room requires. There are no more walls where as a curator you can 'simply' hang everything; he is provoked to take a position. This is a museum as a meeting point, as a workroom, as a platform of discussion, as a public sphere in conflict with the conservative institutions such as the classic museum. Like Sandberg, Koolhaas also breaks the autonomy of the neutral, isolated exhibition room. The work of art and the public sphere confront each other as an open work in the museum. The political dimension of such a And/Otherness creation never aspires to a final reconciliation. The freedom of possibilities has to be created and has to be renegotiated again and again. This radical idea of freedom makes clear that in order to be liberated, the development of a progressive becoming can only occur when there is still a certain stammering or alienation present in the positioning or interpretation of the specific program. In And/Otherness concepts a new form of liberation emerges, based on all kinds of And conjunctions of our Society of the And, full of complex imaginary scapes. Somehow many other ways of the museum in the Kunsthal are still in place, while they function in all other manners at the same time, something which Bertold

Brecht calls "Umfunktionierung" (or re-functioning). On the basis of commoditification, also being typified as unfree, a new freedom blossoms through a certain dose of alienation by the Dirty Details. What becomes clear between the antagonistic demands of Dirty Details, as in the case of the Kunsthall by Koolhaas, is that a certain balance is also needed. This balance cannot be reached by locating one point through which the Details harmonise with each other. Rather, the antagonism of two opposite points, in a certain context, consists of a balance in which both parties reach a kind of social equilibrium - something very different from a rational harmony. While we take a stance, choose a position, and defend our argument, we understand that there will always be a dialogue full of ifs and buts, differences in power and even violence. The moment of solidarity is not created by the fixation of facts, but by the permanence of a dialogue aware of contradictions, where a radical democracy is sought again and again.

### **The method of And/otherness concepts**

Finally I will discuss the film Celebration (Festen) by Thomas Vinterberg to make clear that film – as multitude medium par excellence with a long tradition of critique – can help us to understand better what the concept of And/Otherness is after. Film also opposes the naive belief that the multitude itself already creates enough alternative worlds. I will analyze the film Celebration and the Kunsthall by looking at three aspects applied in the method used by Vinterberg: (1) the narrative, (2) the stance, and (3) the aesthetic devices. All these three elements are simultaneously operative, they cannot be understood separately.

#### **1) The narrative**

A grand party to celebrate a father's 60th birthday unleashes a family drama, with all the lies that conceal the horrendous secrets of incest. The eldest son, Christian, stages a showdown with the popular paterfamilias; his provocative, moving after-dinner speech dislodges all the masks, which finally fall completely as the father-son conflict intensifies with bewildered guests looking on. The structure as well as the performance tells a clear and rich story, specifying complex circumstances and their effect on the human flesh and behaviour, playfully and painfully. We immediately recognize our own everyday culture and its almost unconscious banal qualities. Celebration is not a Hollywood film with a happy end full of commodified beauties or anti-heroes. Nor is it a critical commentary on the bourgeois class (such as traditional Marxism would make) – that would be an "accident," according to Vinterberg. Rather, what defines the authentic speech and action in the film is what defies or subverts representation as a social force. In this film it is child abuse which is "celebrated" to displace the characters and expose the idealized image of the non-nuclear family. In fact the story rejects the middle-class model of the family in order to provoke other, less commodified and controlled, extended family structures. It opens up other possibilities between family members and produces another public sphere beyond the upheld clichés. Liberation takes place, through and with the clichés, not by disqualifying them. The structure of the story not only communicates a clear storyline, it is dialogical as well. The Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin defines "dialogism" as a world dominated by a "heteroglossia," where there is a constant interaction between meanings in the story, all of which can potentially influence the others. "Dialogization" occurs when a word, discourse, language, or culture becomes

relativized and deprivileged, and is subject to competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language remains authoritarian or absolute. To dialogize architecture challenges the conceptual hierarchy under which most designers operate. One could say that through the introduction of an absurd element -- a dirty detail -- (something unconsumable) -- in this film, incest -- a certain anxiety and/or alienation is introduced and exposed in order to activate different differences with liberating potential. The disenchanting element of incest introduced in the story is clearly there not to satisfy us, but to challenge us, to liberate us. Vinterberg also stressed that incest was chosen not so much to put it on the political agenda -- he is not interested in all the conspiracy and victim stories which judge how bad and horrific incest is -- but "used" in the film to allow the multitude of the family, through its clichés, to emerge again, and to free it from its negative entanglements. The film breaks through the symbolic representation of all the people involved and starts to awaken alternative and liberating becomings which would otherwise stay hidden and impossible. In Celebration we are confronted with a kind of progressive becoming that allows no one to have an authentic voice, but those who cannot speak, or those made empty and vulnerable by the pain, suddenly find another way, are given another permission to speak and to build a multitude beyond the limits and good manners of the family. The Kunsthall tries to communicate with banal middle class culture in the same manner as Celebration. Commodification is clearly here the basic condition for creating a deeper social value. The margin is not sought to locate resistance; instead the museum is put right in the middle of our pleasure museum culture. Like Celebration, it seeks to activate another creative potential right in the middle of the mesh, in coexistence with mass culture. It makes clear that the old notion of critical distance is outdated, even impossible. The way the Kunsthall is broken open, folded against the dyke with the highway, how the walkway breaks the museum open and how the exhibition and lecture space relates to the city and the park, is in another way, like the film Celebration, an incestuous act. In the same way that Vinterberg uses incest to break open the family, Koolhaas uses the technique of displacement and alienation to provoke the speechlessness to speak again. Both Celebration and the Kunsthall thus try to frame a politics of speechlessness. The Kunsthall, like the film Celebration, communicates with the masses and creates dialogical conditions within the mesh of the multitude. The viewer and user/visitor start to see different experiences and are confronted with different viewpoints on the trajectory through the spatial and filmic spaces of transformations. The narratives of Vinterberg and of Koolhaas create a genuine two-way street, and feedback. They use the contradictions from within everyday (banal) society, but at the same time allow and energize other voices, because they give the multiplicity a chosen directionality (stance) which is linked to a progressive idea beyond the mesh which is just out there.

## **2) The stance, or positioning**

As I explained earlier, it is almost impossible to deal separately with all three aspects of (1) the narrative (the programmatic), (2) the stance (or taking a position) and (3) the aesthetic. They operate simultaneously. In fact one could say that the stance is the hidden stratifying factor. Both Celebration and the Kunsthall try to let the speechless speak again. Both makers argue for a social program that was stripped away in the fundamentalist image of the multitude we find normally in the museum and the family. Suddenly, through the trajectory of the clichés of both the museum and the family, other, radical

options start to emerge. Suddenly commodification and liberation can go together. The stance is not about having an opinion or giving a final answer. This is why the stance is dialogical. It doesn't want to be paternalistic or celebrate a better future full of authentic moments and without alienation. It sees alternatives not by going back or stepping out, but precisely by "embracing" the schizophrenic condition of life (even when it is perhaps feared). The work is opening it up, through a positioning in the work, by means of its technique and narrative. The trajectory through space is as important a dialogical device as the imaginary of the materiality steered by the image. In the Kunsthall a very specific trajectory unfolds, freeing architecture from the obligation of the symbolic, or in the words of Serge Daney, from the visual: "If the visual keeps us from seeing (because it prefers that we decode, that we decipher, that we "read"), the image always challenges us to carry out a montage with others, with some other. Because in the image, as in democracy, there is 'free play,' unfinished pieces, gaps, openings." "There is not just one mood in such images," says Bertolt Brecht, "but a diversity of moods. And while the painter Breughel brings his contradictions in balance, he never equalizes them with each other." The Kunsthall compresses the building into a social condenser to become a place of experiment, pushed to its contradictions, but not without a progressive stance. The building gives the speechless a voice. Hopefully the dirty details of the Kunsthall helps the public to experience art and culture beyond the perfect simulation of the Frank Gehry brand-style in Bilbao and other places.

### **3) The aesthetic devices**

Let's look at some techniques, or aesthetic devices, which both Vinterberg and Koolhaas use in addressing their progressive stance. Here I will discuss just two: aesthetic roughness and "trucage." The Kunsthall, for instance, with its tree as column and many other ironic games with the tectonic indicate -- if you look carefully -- that you can see that there is a war going on. Instead of pacifying the user -- as in the neutral white museumbox -- Koolhaas introduces a certain roughness which goes beyond the simulacrum of the visual activating the user and the viewer. Koolhaas introduces a kind of war, a conflict which does not destroy the story, but in fact opens up dialogue and communication between viewer and user. In Celebration, Vinterberg used many small handheld digital cameras to get close to the conflictive dimensions of the party. The images are rough and provisional. A same kind of provisionality emerges in the Kunsthall through the use of Dirty Details and the different trajectories penetrating the building inside-out. The roughness of the digital camera, the wild movement and natural light conditions create a blurred focus, an opacity and performability which undermine the finality of the film. The same can be said for the Kunsthall. It is an aesthetic complex where the details do not so much refer to themselves, but are there to activate the stance and narrative to be unfolded. Christian Metz spoke about the quality of, and need for, "trucage" in film. The trucage in Celebration and the Kunsthall can be understood as the undermining of a monumental structure devoted to its own preservation. A delicate provisional framework is proposed instead, open to interpretation. In fact, the roughness introduced by the aesthetic complex in both works introduces a kind of irrationality or absurdity that breaks open the commodity. Henri Lefebvre pointed out that although experts and intellectuals are embedded in everyday life, they prefer to think of themselves as outside and elsewhere. Convinced that everyday life is trivial, they attempt to evade it.

They use rhetorical language, meta-language or autonomous language as “permanent substitutes for experience, allowing them to ignore the mediocrity of their own condition.” Vinterberg and Koolhaas embrace the everyday culture in all its factual mediocrity, triviality and the bizarre possibilities we all share. They are not against mass culture, but use its hidden qualities in order to create liberating options. What I am looking for with Dirty Details is a kind of radicalization of our everyday condition through a certain dose of foreign language while maintaining, and not eliminating communication with the Dirtiness of The Society of The And. This foreign language, or Dirty Details of And/Otherness concepts, provokes us to speak. It does not select who is and who is not allowed to speak, a matter left to the police, but opens up a dialogue where those who do not speak start to speak. Although an And/Otherness concept with a Dirty Details aesthetic should be constantly on the move and never finish, and should always be negotiated, it should stress the need for the currently outdated idea of a place for human agency, in short the need to take a political stance in the light of the Dirtiness of our Society of The And.

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