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The Flexibility Imperative, the Transformation of the Building, and the “Unbecoming” of the Traditional Interior

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ABSTRACT

A shift toward the post-modern in the humanities has fostered novel discourses on spatial phenomena including the production of space, the spatialization of society and culture, and the becoming of interiors. A recent debate on the unbecoming of interior had both puzzled me and encouraged me to explore further and to reinterpret emerging ideas in the interior design academic community. These new developments generate opportunities for investigating spatial phenomena in unconventional and novel ways, construing them as products of changing social practices rather than technical action or artistic serendipity. The problem of this study is the unbecoming of interior as a result of the new sociocultural realities. These realities have led to the unbecoming of the conventional building and in effect, the unbecoming of the interior the way society construes it today. The methodology utilizes a Symbolic Interactionist perspective and a case study approach. The paper interprets the becoming and unbecoming of interior as a dialectical processes of developing and changing relationships between types of spatialities and human agency with respect to particular sociocultural context. The findings highlight how the concerns with social indeterminacy and unpredictability translate into a requirement for building flexibility and then into the unbecoming of conventional spatial paradigms and the interior the way we know it today. These ideas spur questions about the nature and purpose of buildings and interiors, the relationships between them, and the role of impending cultures in the production of new kinds of spatialities.

Keywords: Interior Design Philosophy, Interior Design Theory, Spatial Flexibility, Spatial Paradigms.

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1.0 Introduction

Conversations concerning bourgeois interiors naturally evolve to include *emerging* and *becoming* and have been put forth as key players in the development of interior design's theoretical realm (Penner & Rice, 2010; Rice, 2007). The shared humanistic approach of most authors who grapple with this topic has inspired non-traditional scholarly pursuits involving themes and topics that enrich how we understand and interpret interior phenomena—for example, the idea of the interior as a cultural phenomenon in a

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process of becoming, which has provided interior design theorists with fodder for their vision and consequently suggests the emergence of a new topic.

The problematization of the topic of the unbecoming of the interior started as an exploration in several developments in interior design theory. A recent debate on the unbecoming of interior (Hollis, 2013) had both puzzled me and encouraged me to explore further and to reinterpret emerging ideas in the interior design academic community. Once the debate on unbecoming has started and has gone open in the public domain, it becomes a legitimate object of attention, interrogation, and reinterpretation, involving competing perspectives and conceptualizations.

My conceptualization of the unbecoming of interior is different and distinctive from the debate mentioned above. There are major differences regarding philosophical basis and type of discourse, perceptions of the interior situation, and methodological approach. I am approaching the debate from a dialectical perspective, inscribing my explorations and ideas in a process framework of becoming, being, and unbecoming. In this line of thought, becoming and unbecoming are in a dialectical relationship. The logical arguments of becoming and unbecoming allow us to envision the phenomena in process, in constant flux, and, lastly, we visualize the phenomena enduring the unbecoming with the determination to become once again. The unbecoming of earlier becoming is necessary for successful transformation, evolution, and progress. The unbecoming of interior the way we know it will lead to new forms of spatialization and new design paradigms.

The notion of unbecoming can be interpreted in several ways, allowing me to make ontological choices and selective conceptualizations. I use as a stepping stone the idea of the becoming of interior as it is construed in contemporary interior design theory, with a reference to the bourgeois interior (Benjamin, 2007; Penner & Rice, 2010; Schmiedgen, 2009; Sparke, 2008). This starting point delineates the area where I explore the dialectics of space and search for ideas that trace the interiorization processes from a historical and cultural point of view. There are a number of scholars who have entertained the idea of the unbecoming or liquidation of interior, albeit from different perspectives and with different views in mind. The possibility of liquidation of interior has been envisioned by Walter Benjamin (1999) and later explored by Charles Rice (2007) and Penny Sparke (2008). Schmiedgen (2009) and Sparke (2008) have also investigated the porous nature of the post-bourgeois interiors and the prospects for their dissolution.

The goal of my project is to explore the possibilities for unbecoming of interior in terms of the liquidation of its social, personal, and spatial encapsulation (Benjamin, 1999) and the demise of the bourgeois egocentric space (Rice, 2007; Schmiedgen, 2009; Sparke, 2008). My paper presents the thesis that the new sociocultural realities will lead to the unbecoming of the conventional building, and this unbecoming will lead to the emergence of novel spatial phenomena and paradigms. These spatial paradigms will subvert the social construction of interiority and interiors that have emerged during the establishment of the bourgeoisie and the subsequent theorization of interiors. Further, I will examine how an unconventional building might contribute to the unbecoming of the interior, and will continue to reference this idea to the bourgeois and post-bourgeois interiors.

My methodology is based on a case study approach, but I place an emphasis on extreme case analysis (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). I have selected the ground-breaking Fun Palace project to inform and support my thesis and analyze it from a Symbolic Interactionist vantage point (Seigel, 2012). Additionally, I use a sociocultural perspective that compliments and emphasizes the social genesis of environmental phenomena. One major assumption is that the becoming and unbecoming of interiors can be construed as processes of developing and altering relationships between users and buildings with respect to particular sociocultural context. The study is bound to the interpretation of unbecoming mentioned above, as well as by the scope of possibilities that emerge in the analysis of the Fun Palace project.

My paper begins by briefly referencing the sociocultural nature of the becoming of the (bourgeois) interior, and continues with selective analysis of the post-industrial society in terms of its dynamic nature.

The subsequent section presents the resultant difficulty with the counter productivity of conventionally constructed environments ensconced within rapidly transforming sociocultural situations. Next, I present building flexibility as a major solution anticipated by the architectural designers. Lastly, one scenario for the unbecoming of the interior in the context of the Fun Palace project is discussed, elaborating on how concerns with vagueness and unpredictability translated into a requirement for extensive building flexibility contribute to the unbecoming of the spatial conventions and the interior in the manner we are familiar with them today.

2.0 The industrial society and the bourgeois interior: Becoming and being

The 19th Century bourgeoisie were more educated, had more discretionary income, and led a more sophisticated lifestyle than the people who lived in previous centuries. The Industrial revolution generated wealth from which the bourgeoisie was born as a social class; consequently, more people could afford to furnish their own space not only to the standards of the time, but with their own personal flourish. In addition, art and literature were consumed by a wider audience, and so print media with images of contemporary interiors inspired interest in and enthusiasm for creating delightful home environment. Fascination with antiques and artefacts from exotic places stimulated the accumulation of collectibles (Rice, 2007; Seigel, 2012).

With the advent of mass production, ornament and decoration became more accessible and, therefore, more widely utilized. The financial possibility of acquiring artefacts that were lavishly adorned subverted the pragmatic thinking of the first bourgeois generations and contaminated them with the aristocratic tradition of adoring and displaying ornament and decoration as social and cultural insignia (Rice, 2007). The ability of the bourgeoisie to collect and hoard artefacts lead to extremes and contributed to cluttered and overcrowded spaces that sent a myriad competing (and often even conflicting) messages.

Besides mass production, there were several other influences on the becoming of interior. The merciless competition and ethical compromises created tremendous pressure on the bourgeois individual. This generated strong aspirations for domesticity, privacy and refuge and created new attitude and appreciation of spatial settings (Seigel, 2012). Additionally, the nouveau riche experience the need to acquire high social status and to imply aristocratic lineage, thus instigating conspicuous consumption and display of desired personal images, family histories, and achievements. The bourgeoisie enjoyed to demonstrate wealth, abundance, and sophistication in order to denote aristocratic status, power, and superiority (Penner & Rice, 2010; Rice, 2007; Sparke, 2008).

The social and functional divisions quickly lead to spatial divisions. In the bourgeois society, activities were segregated in space in order to control desired social status, hierarchy, and interactions. The spaces were defined functionally, dedicated to particular activities, and regulated by a system of behavioral norms. This social and functional segregation reinforced existing cellular organization of space and fostered artistic codification of owners' messages. A major strategy of interiorization was to soften the hard surfaces by padding and ornament. The mass manufacturing of artefacts and finishes with opulent ornaments allowed for excessive padding and upholstering of surfaces (Bell, 1976).

Thus, the new interior emerged at the intersection of functional dedication and cellular organization of space, the lavish decoration of the boundary surfaces, and the collection of exquisite furniture pieces, artwork, and mementos. The bourgeois paradigm of interiorization precipitated the becoming of interior as a major genre of the building arts and *raison d'être* for the built structures.

3.0 The post-industrial society: Exhilarating change and indeterminacy

The Industrial Society experienced both exceptional technological progress and major changes in social life, but it also inspired a great deal of turmoil. Regardless, everyday life was evolving with a manageable pace compared to the years after World War II, particularly after the late 1950s. The pace of development was fast enough to amaze humankind, but still not disruptive for the organization of built environment.

Building types retained the cellular organization of space based on the corridor system, and interiors enjoyed exponentially growing attention and attracted the investment of unimaginable quantities of materials, finishes, and furnishings. The tempo of manufacturing and the rate of accumulation allowed for mass infusion of elaborate designs with lavish decorations.

The post-industrial society has by far outpaced the Industrial Society and has brought incredible dynamics and change in everyday life. Different authors use a number of terms and distinguish various stages and aspects of societal development in the second half of the 20th Century; I will use the term *post-industrial society* as an umbrella category because the time period I envision in this paper coincides with the emergence of several new developments that are usually known as information society and networked society (as well as service economy, knowledge economy, and so forth.)

The post-industrial society heralded the post-modern project with its exhilarating dynamics, rapid change, indeterminacy, and unpredictability (Toffler, 1970). The new kind of society developed different value system and priorities, favoring fast-track everyday life, constantly changing situations, activities and behaviors, and innovation and novelty (Toffler, 1970). Emerging needs were situational and temporary like the activities and subjective states that generated them. Everything was transitional and transient, bridging subsequent phases in the spiral of progress (Holdsworth, 2011; Littlewood, 2003; Mathews, 2007a).

After World War II, British society experienced rapid social and cultural changes (Toffler, 1970). The empire dilapidated. The country that had started the Industrial Revolution and led the World in manufacturing and heavy industry hastily transformed its economy and reoriented toward service industries; the heavy industry and the technical superiority of the nation were in decline. These changes generated a landslide of redundancies and unemployment. In these circumstances, the state failed to deliver its promises for a Welfare State. Mass culture from the West side of the Atlantic flooded the Island and threatened to undermine the value system and the foundations of society. The majority of the population who still remember the pre-War glory of the British Empire had to experience the debilitating effects of unemployment and the new mass culture. The typical human experience in rapidly changing social and cultural situations was later described by Alvin Toffler in his book *Future Shock*, albeit with material from the United States of America (Toffler, 1970).

On the positive side, however, the years after the War brought a number of technical innovations that stimulated both the imagination and everyday practices of society. With the advent of the new computing machines, the amount of information produced overwhelmed people more accustomed to the lethargic pace of the fountain pen. The hierarchical organization of bureaucracies could not cope with the informational deluge and the necessity for situational decision making (Toffler, 1970). The pyramid-like management structures became clogged with information and were unable to process it and make decisions, and there was a tendency to transfer decision-making responsibilities from administrators to operating individuals who had to assume responsibilities and risks in a highly volatile social environment. Teams were organized and disbanded on demand, reconfigured, and reinforced as the work progressed and the problem domain changed (Mathews, 2007a; Toffler, 1970). Correspondingly, these developments influenced everyday life and introduced higher expectations for autonomous functioning of individuals. Everything became transient, oscillating, and unpredictable (Toffler, 1970).

In the *Future Shock*, Toffler emphasized the rapid transformation of everyday life, new ways of consumption, a new attitude towards time, and the glorification of experience and entertainment in the U.S.A. Concerned with the acceptance of transience as a fact of life, Toffler identified a number of new social phenomena driven by information and new technologies, one of which was with the ephemerality of new buildings and the design explorations for even more transient spatial structures (Mathews, 2007a). The common denominator in both the American and British narratives is the indeterminacy, fluidity and volatility of the social processes and emerging human activities. Although there were major

differences in the post-War development of the two societies, when taken together the narratives are complementary and portray a fuller picture of the post-industrial society in the 1960s.

The changes in Britain were so fast and sweeping that the population had difficulty navigating the cultural and moral maze in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. The optimistic belief in systematic scientific and industrial progress was replaced by feelings of unpredictability, indeterminacy, volatility, and instability (Littlewood, 2003; Price, 2003). The collapse of value systems and social institutions could lead to the downfall of the society and required prompt and unconventional response, and the British intellectual elite were among the first who identified these new developments, formulated a problem situation, and started thinking on possible solutions.

Joan Littlewood, for example, an avant-garde theatre director, and Cedric Price, a maverick architect, envisaged education--and in, particular adult and continuing education--as a major strategy (Mathews, 2007a). They initiated the design of an institution and organization of a completely new type, predating contemporary edutainment and computer-mediated education with several decades, the famous Fun Palace Project. Littlewood and Price were devoted to constructing an organization for autonomous social agents that make informed decisions about preferred activities and engagements that were going to change constantly depending on popular demand. A sophisticated cybernetic system would provide information about building users intent and would suggest how to reconfigure the building. This space-age project was actually feasible and was close to materialization--only the constant rejections of the London authorities of the applications for a building site prevented the actual embodiment of these ideas (Littlewood, 2003; Mathews, 2007a).

The Fun Palace project was remarkable largely because it anticipated extraordinary behavioral dynamics and the fast pace of changing situations and circumstances. The project was intended to accommodate constantly changing activities with multiple variations and unpredictable number of people. Since The Fun Palace planners and designers were aware of the overwhelming indeterminacy, randomness, and unpredictability of social life, they envisaged participatory democracy with the belief that empowered and autonomous social agents can make the best decisions in rapidly changing social situations as a solution (Seigel, 2012). The objective was to provide infrastructure for spontaneous organizing of building users who decided in what activities to engage, when to engage in them, and for how long. The self-organization contributed to the emergence of fluid and unpredictable social situations that had major implications for the organization of space and the creation of spatial mechanisms that can accommodate promptly activity changes. In this fluctuating, fluid, indeterminate, and unpredictable sociocultural environment, a major conflict emerged between the well-defined interior with its restrictive materiality and the rapidly changing activities and behavior patterns.

4.0 The counter productivity of materiality in the new sociocultural situation

The becoming of interior was part of the cultural project of modernity, spurred by an epoch of predictability, rationality, industrialization, and human development. Becoming was a major value and an objective that was meticulously pursued in all strands of life. The bourgeois interior had become and gained definition in a period of more than a century, slowly progressing and building upon the legacy of previous centuries. In the 19th century, generations of people grew and lived in the same interiors, safekeeping the legacy of their grandparents and parents, and raising their children and grandchildren in that same space (Price, 2003). The traditional cellular organization of space is predicated to some extent on human ability to forecast its use over a long period of time. In that social context, the materiality of interiors had more positive contributions than side effects.

Materiality was providing support for everyday human needs and had functioned as a primary medium of interiorization and the becoming of interior. For a long time people have appreciated the comfort provided by built environment, as well as the regenerative effects of artistically appropriated surfaces and objects. Its oppressiveness at that time was not that much a result of restricting activity opportunities but a product of political oppression and domination.

Historically, the wall has always been more useful than counterproductive. The wall contributes to better microclimate, privacy, security, and control – all of them indispensable for conducting social life and business. A major side effect of the wall is that it restricts human movement and ability to operate freely. The wall also requires a lot of resources in order to be appropriated – softened, embellished, imprinted, and personalised as a means for producing interiority. With the gradual maturing of the interior, people develop sense of territoriality, affection, and attachment. They start experiencing loss whenever they have to forfeit control over this cherished possession.

With the advent of fast-track life and rapidly changing human needs and activities, the materiality of the wall and the corresponding interior appear to be out of place with reality. The contradiction between the two becomes so abrupt and obvious that it is experienced like a nuisance and inconvenience. Materiality is much more inert than behavioral situations. Social agents and their activities are highly mobile and nimble in space and time. Activities constantly change and with that, their spatialization patterns change. Social interaction increases the range of variations and affects the patterns of spatialization. Social agents develop different communication practices that spur new information needs, which in turn lead to different control mechanisms and subsequently to new types and levels of privacy and territoriality that often are achieved with spatial means.

However, when the realm of social action starts changing with an exasperating pace, most of the predications and assumptions about the cellular organization of space cannot work anymore. The customization of space for particular activities and modes of functioning starts seeming impractical. The first doubts about its rationality appear in the process of preliminary programming and planning the layout of the building and the organization of the interior space (Mathews, 2007a). There is a growing awareness that future uses of space, user behavior patterns, and preferences are unpredictable (Rice, 2007). It is difficult to foresee the kinds of decoration and customization of interiors that users would appreciate. And when the social situations start changing with an overwhelming tempo, there is no justification for the investment of resources in an interior that will soon become obsolete, restrictive, and counterproductive.

In this way, the traditional cellular interior becomes oppressive and unnecessary, a nuisance and a problem that diminishes efficiency and productivity, undermines user experience, and leads to overall dissatisfaction with the built environment. This is an obvious problem situation that needs to be improved. The foundations of the problem are identified and attributed to societal fluctuations, indeterminacy, and unpredictability. It is not possible anymore to customize spaces for well-established activities, users, and behavior patterns. It is not feasible to invest resources in spaces that will soon become obsolete. One solution to the design problems associated with social volatility, indeterminacy and unpredictability is building interior flexibility.

5.0 The flexibility requirement, the failure of traditional paradigms, and the search for new ways of spatialization

Traditional and bourgeois interiors in particular were based on stability, inheritability, and accumulation as well as motivation for display and conspicuous consumption. The most common and the most respected approach to interiorizing was through decorating (Holdsworth, 2011; Mathews, 2007a). Expensive and richly ornamented finishes, furniture with elaborate detail, and collectibles and artwork were essential for bourgeois interiorizing. They constituted both a display of luxury and power and a wise investment. With the advent of the constantly changing social situations of the post-industrial Society the bourgeois interiorizing strategies lost ground and ceased to make sense; consequently, the very foundations of the needs for decoration, privacy, and control started to be questioned.

The social concept behind The Fun Palace emerged from a philosophy stipulating the indeterminacy, fluidity, and unpredictability of social processes in a fast-changing social environment. User needs were expected to be constantly fluctuating and oscillating, emerging and disappearing, and the belief in the transient nature of the needs of the post-industrial society led to the conviction that functional

programming should be practiced only at general level; functional decisions should be strategic and the details should be left to the spontaneous developments in everyday life (Kronenburg, 2007; Leupen, Heijne, & Zwol, 2005). When the philosophy of indeterminacy and unpredictability was operationalized one step further into the architectural realm, it led to the idea of flexibility.

Flexibility is a major concern for architecture in the second half of 20th Century (Banham, 1976; Busbea, 2007; Kurokawa, 1977; Sadler, 2005). There are numerous proposals for solutions: addition, superstructure, alternating variable bay widths, light movable interior walls, and of course, a combination of all of these. However, these solutions still require considerable amount of time transformation of space, as they are not substantially different from traditional remodeling. Addition and superstructure are too cumbersome, slow, and expensive. The light movable walls contribute to much faster project completion, but they by themselves alone cannot be a radical solution.

In the 1960s, there were already a number of proposals for resolving the flexibility problem (Mathews, 2007a). One exciting and at the same time quite feasible proposal was Cedric Price's Fun Palace project. Price envisioned an innovative, technologically advanced, and daring solution and offered a design based on modular containers that can be moved around in a vast area and arranged in various configurations (Rice, 2007). His project promised speedy reorganization of space, transforming areas and surfaces within minutes and hours.

The invention of transformable and reconfigurable spaces heralded that the future of interiors and interiority would radically change—Projects like Fun Palace become the first indicators that the conventional interior has reached its zenith and from now on it might have to follow the path to unbecoming. If the appropriation of inside space with various means and approaches is conceptualized as the becoming of interior, the lightning transformations and the creation of instant-use and disposable spaces is a reason to make us think about the unbecoming of interiors.

6.0 The non-building, the non-program, and the unbecoming of interior

Buildings make possible the materialization of interiors (Banham, Barker, Price, & Hall, 1969; Hughes & Sadler, 2000; Mathews, 2007b; Price, 2003; Price & Littlewood, 1968; Wigley, 2004). If buildings vanish, so would their enclosures and the interiors that would have become within them. No matter how we interpret the becoming of interior, it might also be annihilated by the demise of the building as we know it with its enclosure and cellular structure.

If the building as an archetype is in a process of unbecoming, it is logical to expect that this will lead to the unbecoming of interior. One thrilling example is the Fun Palace project. Its architect, Cedric Price proudly referred to himself as an anti-architect and to the building as a non-building (Littlewood, 1964). Complementary, the initiator of the whole endeavor, theatre director Joan Littlewood, referred to her design brief and subsequent conceptual program as a non-program (Price & Littlewood, 1968).

The social concept that guided the project was unconventional and challenging, inviting education through play in a fun environment and atmosphere. A completely novel institution was conceived as an 'edutainment' organization. However, this was not the only breathtaking aspect of the proposal. Considering the cultural dynamics of their time, and extrapolating the trend in the future, the authors of this idea envisioned spontaneous user participation involving unconventional and emergent activities managed through a cybernetic feedback system. Both activities and the spaces for them were going to be managed based on popular demand and with the help of cybernetic tools.

The designers proposed dozens of types of activities organized in several centers. However, they assumed that they would not be able to anticipate all user needs and resultant activities, and supposed that users would come up with their own inventions and creations. The authors of the project also assumed that it would be impossible to guess in advance the number of people wishing to engage in a particular activity. In principle, the type of activity and the number of participants could be considered

the cornerstones of any space program; without such prior information, it would be impossible to plan a facility, and impossible to determine its interiors (Toffler, 1970).

Ultimately, the architectural project resembled a shipyard on the Thames rather than a building. The idea of the anti-architect Cedric Price was to erect several dozens of service towers connected with space frame trusses; this structure would support gantry cranes which were intended to move around steel containers and rearrange them in various configurations. In a matter of minutes or hours, new activity spaces could be organized and prepared for use depending on emerging needs and specifications.

This solution is quite different from a typical building with loadbearing walls or a skeleton structure and continuous floor plates. The Fun Palace provides an exoskeleton and infrastructure for constant rearrangement of spatial containers. This is quite different from the traditional buildings defined mostly by the skin and integrated internal enclosure—the new spatial configurations emerge and disappear like in a giant transformer toy given that the spatial arrangements constantly change their configuration and function. Although the outlines of the building remain almost unaffected, the space between the service towers and space trusses fluctuates, and the inside of the building permutes and produces different configurations.

The Fun Palace exoskeleton allows for rapid production of transmutable activity spaces by rearranging spatial containers in various locations and binding them in new configurations with different square footage. The modular containers can be organized on demand in a variety of patterns to provide space and functional area for various activities, which falls in sharp contrast with the traditional building with cellular structure where activity spaces are dedicated, well established and embellished, and rarely change their intended function.

Alvin Toffler comments on this project, mentioning that ‘the distinction between disposability and mobility is, from the point of view of the duration of relationships, a thin one’ (Mathews, 2007a). Each new spatial configuration presupposes a disposed old configuration, even though some of the components remain the same. Spatial arrangements become disposable and the traditional interiors vanish. This is probably a turning point in the conventional way of spatialization, and a corner stone of disposability of space and the unbecoming of interior.

Cedric Price conceived the Fun Palace as a transient artefact that would exist as long as it could accommodate existing social processes; afterwards, it would be disposed to make place for a more efficient structure that will support better newly emerging cultural situations. Regarding the study of interiors, it is more important to focus on Price’s vision about constant reconfiguration of internal spaces so that they can support emergent and fluctuation activity patterns. In fact, while the exoskeleton has been expected to have meaning existence for about ten years, an internal space arrangement has had much shorter life expectancy, projected to last as long as its target activity is going on. After the activity ends, the space containers will be dismantled and commandeered to new activity sites (Mathews, 2007a).

The mobile activity containers of Fun Palace have to serve various activities with different patrons. These space containers are designed for rapid assembly and disassembly, for optimal support of various activities, and for easy production and servicing. The making of space breaks away from the historic pattern of layering materials. Here the space literally emerges by flipping container sides, preparing the modular components for sticking, and moving boxes horizontally and vertically, and the gantry cranes transport containers and parts of containers as needed to enlarge floor area or to provide a special configuration. Some of the container surfaces have to be dismantled to open to adjoining containers and for a new configuration, and the boxes flip open their sides to interface with other containers and produce a large space or depart from the scene of action and enclose all their sides in anticipation of their next location. The resultant spatial operations are dynamic, efficient, and pragmatic—and so are the interior spaces that this method produces.

There is an enormous difference in the way boundary surfaces are used and treated in conventional buildings and in Fun Palace. In conventional buildings with functionally dedicated spaces, the surfaces that produce an interior are appropriated through decorative work, becoming a medium for displaying important messages about social status, power, ownership, and characters. The Fun Palace container surfaces cannot be customized each time an activity change takes place, as they are not intended to communicate customized messages. In order to make them equally adaptable to all situations and to optimize their functioning, the surfaces are stripped from the multiple layers of meaning typical for the bourgeois interior. While someone might say that they are blunt, boring, and minimalistic, we would contend that this stripping of the boundary surfaces to their basics indicates the beginnings of a process that reverses the becoming of the bourgeois interior as a genre and as a high point of interiors.

The becoming of interior is a process of producing a retreat, a refuge, and a safe haven for intimacy; it is a space for safekeeping memories, mementos, and collectibles of personal value. It is concerned with privacy and meaning that foster reflection and comprehension of the world, made possible by the materiality of a permanent enclosure that provides protection, control, security, and safety. The permanence of materiality is fundamental for semiotic appropriation of space and transforming it into an interior and the stability and solidity of the shell is a prerequisite for investing in it and producing layers of meaning that in their own turn transform the enclosure into an interior.

The transmutable space of the movable containers lacks all these properties and prerequisites; the constant reconfiguration and transformation and the fast pace, with which it is done, is a new phenomenon in the realm of built environment. The degree of its transience and ephemerality surpasses even the boldest conceptions of the temporal nature of interiors. Compared to the dynamics of human action, however, interiors look inert and unyielding. Activity flow constantly changes direction and drifts unpredictably. The flux of activity always outpaces the ephemerality of interiority and often makes interior features obsolete even before they are fully developed and appropriated.

In the Fun Palace project, the tempo of creating new spaces is comparable to the dynamics of activity systems and the volatility of popular demand. The production of space is so accelerated that the space is reduced to a physical medium that makes possible the embodiment of activity. This physical medium is a phenomenon of a new kind that is different from the uncanny narrativity of the traditional interior. The new kind of space is enabling, facilitating, and empowering just like Cedric Price envisaged the function of the Fun Palace. This type of interiority and the materiality that defines it are expected to last as long as a particular human activity lasts; after that, it has to disappear and transform into a new activity support system that will exist for another couple of hours.

If the bourgeois interior and its obsession with appropriation of space and surfaces through decoration and leaving traces is a culmination of the becoming of the interior, then the Fun Palace project heralds the beginning of the unbecoming. The dissolution of the permanent boundaries deprives social agents from the opportunity to leave personal imprints and to produce territoriality and privacy. If privacy and domesticity are fundamental for the becoming of interior as we historically know it, flexibility and transformability are key to its unbecoming.

7.0 Concluding remarks

The new social processes are emergent, constantly evolving, volatile, and unpredictable, requiring fluidity and flexibility of social structures, intellectual openness, nimble interaction, information exchange, genuine collaboration, and active participation. Their embodiment into activity morphology leads to the production of new spatial paradigms that defy the traditional interpretations of interiority and interiors. The becoming of the bourgeois interior is an example of the production of space in the modernity, in a society that supports stability and accumulation of wealth over experimentation and pragmatic sharing of resources. The post-modern society with its amazing cultural dynamics and egalitarian attitudes fosters completely different approach to space. The ensuing hypermutability of space leads to the emergence of new relationships among buildings and their users and as a result— the

unbecoming of interior. Thus the spatialization of new sociocultural realities will result in new spatial paradigms.

The new flexible buildings will challenge our conceptualization of interiors, resulting in our traditional notions of interiorization based on softening of boundary surfaces, padding, and ornamenting, starting to lose importance. The bluntness of the reconfigurable spaces contrasts the well-appropriated spaces of the bourgeois interiors. The constant reconfiguration of space and the public display of activities change the ways privacy is experienced and achieved, surfaces are claimed, and ownership is enforced. All these new phenomena challenge our beliefs about the nature of interiority and its material realization.

The current study reveals that the unbecoming of interior can be construed as the process of transmuting relationships between spatial structures and their users driven by rapidly changing sociocultural realities. The emerging spatialities of the advanced stages of the post-industrial society might be very different from the elaborate bourgeois interiors of the modernity. The accelerated tempo of everyday life, the indeterminacy of social situations, and the unpredictability of the near future might lead to dynamic and disposable spatialities that defy traditional conceptualizations of interiors. In the attempt to develop spatialities that can keep with the pace of mutability of human activity, various forms of disposability might become technically and economically feasible. In this respect, the unbecoming is looming.

The inquiry on unbecoming has implications regarding several issues of philosophy of interiors: the nature and purpose of buildings, interiors, and the relationships between them; the role of materiality in moderating such relationships; and the role of culture in the production of space. Although some of these issues have been discussed in different formats for some time, the aspect of unbecoming is shifting the vantage point and opening a new perspective. As a result, we can expect the unbecoming of a number of traditional views and beliefs and the emergence of new knowledge about spatial phenomena.

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