

Nothing has ever been invented by one man in architecture.

Architecture is stifled by custom.2

Architecture is a plastic thing.

Architecture is a matter of "harmonies," it is "a pure creation of the spirit."

8

Architecture is a very noble art.

Architecture is governed by standards.

Architecture is stifled by custom.

The "styles" are a lie.

Architecture is very broad. 10

Architecture is nothing but ordered arrangement, noble prisms, seen in light.[11]

Architecture is based on axes. 12

Architecture is a plastic, not a romantic, affair.

Architecture is very well able to express itself in a precise fashion.

Architecture is a plastic thing. 15

Architecture is stifled by custom. 16

But wait a little, architecture is not only a question of arrangement. 157

Writing on architecture is not like history or poetry. For this book does not show of what architecture is composed, but treats of the origin of the building art, how it was fostered, and how it made progress, step by step, until it reached its present perfection. If I would like to emphasise above all that architecture is a game lacking clear rules. Architecture is at one and the same time a science and an art. But all the possible alternatives are not in fact realized: there are a good many partial groups, regional compatibilities, and coherent architectures that might have emerged, yet did not do so. And architecture, too, has this mysterious dimension of the frontier between two worlds of space. Architecture positions its ensembles—houses, towns or cities, monuments or factories—to function like faces in the landscape they transform.

The house stares through its windows at the vineyards and tufts of thyme, ornamental oranges take shape on its walls, a tissue of lies, oranges and lemons. The philosopher forgets that the house, built around him, transforms a plantation of olive trees into a Max Ernst painting. The architect has forgotten this too. And is happy if the next harvest, outside, is transformed into a Virgin with Grapes, inside.

The house transforms the given, which can assault us, softening it into icons: it is a box for generating images, a cavern or eye or camera obscura, a barn which sunlight only illuminates with a slim shaft piercing through the dust—an ear. Architecture produces painting, as though the fresco or canvas hanging on the wall revealed the ultimate cause of the whole structure. The aim of architecture is painting or tapestry. What we took to be mere ornament is its objective, or at the very least its end product. Walls are for paintings, windows for pictures. And padded doors for intimate conversations.

I now held in my hands a vast and systematic fragment of the entire history of an unknown planet, with its architectures and its playing cards, the horror of its mythologies and the murmur of its tongues, its emperors and its seas, its minerals and its birds and fishes, its algebra and its fire, its theological and metaphysical controversies—all joined, articulated, coherent, and with no visible doctrinal purpose or hint of parody. Beyond this stage of perfection in architecture, natural selection could not lead; for the comb of the hive bee, as far as we can see, is absolutely perfect in economising wax. For architecture, among all the arts, is the one that most boldly tries to reproduce in its rhythm the order of the universe, which the ancients called "kosmos," that is to say ornate, since it is like a great animal on whom there shine the perfection and the proportion of all its members. Estimated

1 Avn Rand, The Fountainhead, 2 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 3 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 4 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 5 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 6 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 7 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 8 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 9 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 10 Richard Rogers, A Place for All People: Life, Architecture and the Fair Society. 11 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 12 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 13 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 14 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 15 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 16 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 17 Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture. 18 Vitruvius Pollio, The Ten Books on Architecture. 19 Vitruvius Pollio, The Ten Books on Architecture. 20 Toyo Ito, Tarzans in the Media Forest. 21 Jean-Nicholas-Louis Durand, Précis of the Lectures on Architecture. 22 Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge. 23 Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy. 24 Gilles Deleuze, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. 25 Michel Serres, The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies. 26 Jorge Luis Borges, Collected Fictions. 27 Charles Darwin, On the Origin of Species. 28 Umberto Eco, The Name of the Rose.

Play Among Books in two plays performed on an Informational Instrument opens up a fantasy of what digital literacy in a world abundant with information and data might be about. Playing with an Informational Instrument is a weightless and endless spiral of communication between an intimate library and an infinite flow of books: Xenotheka and Bibliotheka. Its galaxy of concepts and atom-letters offers a way to navigate the plenty, talk to books, and think with concepts. It opens a space for learning and exploring. By playing with an Informational Instrument, rather than carrying out a theoretical analysis of discourses and books, we start toying with books on an abstract level of information. Instead of defining and confining them, we can invite books to our own library and challenge them, allow them to show their mastery on a symposium with other books. Instead of giving answers, Play Among Books keeps questions vivid. A book, by visiting different libraries—in its interplay with other books—shows more than what was conceived in it. Its character is part of the character and mastery of the performer. Its articulation is a synthetic sheaf of voices. A book is simultaneously independent and dependent; it behaves differently in each galaxy it visits. Play Among Books composes an instrument, finds formats and ways of performing, and develops a visual and conceptual space to do so: Xenotheka, Bibliotheka, Generic Machine, and machine intelligence are its elements; books are its actors; atom-letters are its alphabet; the galaxy of concepts is a space through which we talk to books, learn with concepts, and navigate the plenty. It opens up the notion of authorship and its voice and tries to relate it to machine intelligence and branding. Who is speaking to us when we read this book? In its two plays, it forms a cycle. Six characters, at the end of the second play, become six new versions of Xenotheka, six new avatars ready to start exploring in a new cycle. By tuning the instrument and upgrading it with new available knowledge, modifying Xenotheka and finding new flows of Bibliotheka, it becomes a never-ending play open to any articulation. Its concepts and elements are flexible; they are placeholders for any kind of media and information. They do not define, but keep elements alive.

Play Among Books is lightweight; it requires minimal physical infrastructure, but a new kind of literacy, and an endless flow of information. What digital literacy is remains an open question. This work does not want to define it, but rather perform with it. One performance is the articulation of an *Informational Instrument*, and the other is a performance with it. The core of the instrument in its current state is articulated in less than a hundred and fifty lines of code, and composed in eleven symbolic poems.<sup>206</sup> This collection of poems unfolds into an endless Play Among Books on a personal computer with an Internet connection. Nothing

206 See Informational Instrument, 289.

more is required. We are suddenly immersed in the cloud, behaving in the manner—though still not on the scale—of big clouds like Google, Facebook, Amazon, Instagram. We are scanning and taking snapshots of anything of interest. As an avatar in a cloud, we behave like a search engine and social media platform. Suddenly, we are dealing with hundreds of thousands, even millions of informational objects, without being afraid of them. All the grounds are shaken, the atmosphere is new. Mixing and encoding of data streams can articulate and encapsulate different aspects of the world; a storm of letters and numbers. A vertigo. One possible way to explore this is to dive right into it: personal filtering, searching, crawling. Use of machine learning. Writing a poem, coding a couple of them, articulating profiles, brands and avatars. My consistency, my many brands. They are exploring with me. Taste is a digital filter, a vector in a particular context. My temporary face, my synthetic character, a probe, a product, a project. It changes as the context changes but can stay intimate, particular, and deliberate. It is an adventure, a game, an articulation, an explosion and a condensation of flavours. What is the digital weather like? It is about taking a walk in the cloud, and composing your own new charcter by playing with data. Or is it a gift for a friend? All of this from a personal computer. Fantastic, but not easy. As any other literacy, it requires patience, love, practice, learning, time, and a community.

#### WRITING IN ATOM-LETTERS

Writing in atom-letters is thinking in a digital literacy. In a Play Among Books, we write in probabilistic letters and treat text computationally. We synthesise many algebraic author-ships, sail, and while doing so articulate various characters as possible brands. With each new library, atom-letters change and books present themselves under a new light. We don't need to know or read a specific book or a library. We just welcome it into our own Xenotheka and start communicating. By transforming, splitting, and multiplying our Xenotheka, we can always have fresh, interesting, and new conversations with the same friend. A book is never alone; it is always a part of a library. Algorithms are simple and few, libraries and custom datasets like Xenotheka are the key and a compass to the plenty. If we go further, we can start playing with information and data not just independent of its meaning, but from media as well. We are transforming sound into images, images into sculptures, sculptures into characters. Their avatars start to speak. Any media can be transformed into another. Consistency is always in the cloud and in the way we encode it. With machine learning and big data, we can treat any data and any media by operating with similar techniques and approaches. This is the beauty that comes out of working and playing with coding and information as a literacy. It is beyond discipline and media. It opens up ways in which we can think about the world. Its elements and artefacts can be encoded from a personal and

collective perspective, as a person and as a group, in any way we can imagine. Phenomena become relative to each other and open to the world.

In this manner, when we think of architecture and approaches that would take into account the digital and bring coding to the table on the level of literacy, we find ourselves in a strange constellation. How could architects reinvent reading, writing, and printing when architecture is coded digitally? Many architects are referring to these kinds of questions at the moment. They are predominantly frightened by the plenty, the sheer amount of data, and the disruptions it brings to the discourse, discipline, and established hierarchies, so they tend to ignore it and stick to established knowledge. On the other hand, those interested in technology mostly still see data as a direct reflection of reality, and their efforts lie in optimisation, efficiency, forensics, and sustainability in designs of cities, houses, and objects. Some find comfort in thinking that machine inteligence with a lot of data is creative. As current trends are shifting towards machine learning and big data, blinded by performance, architects rarely ask what the digital world is about. Of course, it is more about how we formulate this question than about answering it correctly. Most important questions should always stay alive and open. It is exactly their constant rearticulation, and never-ending disputes around them, which make them so important and timeless.

One provocative formulation of bringing architecture in relation to technology was proposed in the late 1930s by Marcel Breuer: "The origin of the Modern Movement was not technological, for technology had been developed long before it was thought of. What the New Architecture did was to civilize technology."207 If we agree with Breuer that the New Architecture of the Modern Movement was about civilising technology, can we in the context of the digital invert the question and ask what it would mean to domesticate information technologies, without losing their civility and performativity? Can we think of Xenotheka as an attempt to do so? In this sense, Play Among Books tries to approach the digital via literacy which keeps it undecided, and through a performance that can—in its plays—keep the digital fertile and alive, without a need to quantify its every performance towards a functional goal. One of the challenges for architecture in the world of data is to explore how digital literacy relates to architectural design when it is conceived from the plenty and articulated in a digital code. What would its possible scenarios be? Writing in terms of code, thinking in terms of panoramas and Xenotheka, branding in terms of characters? If so, then probably the elements of architecture would not be just floor, wall, ceiling, and roof,<sup>208</sup> but something much more abstract and open. Perhaps a different kind of atom-letters?

 <sup>207</sup> See Peter Blake, Marcel Breuer: Architect and Designer, First Edition (Architectural Record/Museum of Modern Art, 1949), 121.
 208 Rem Koolhaas, Elements of Architecture\* (Cologne: Taschen, 2018).

# CHARACTERS WITHOUT SCRIPTS A WORD BY MIRO ROMAN

Synthetic characters written in atom-letters bring plenty to the table. They come from the plenty, they can deal with a lot. In the finale of the second Plentiful Play, six characters were articulated out of a Bibliotheka of 13,235 books. I have never seen, opened, or read those books, and yet, all six characters are, in some way, a reflection of my character and my interest in architecture and information. They are me and not me. We are related, but they are independent, yet dependent on me. They are characters with a specific motivation but without a given script. Avatars, bots. aliens from Xenotheka. They do not follow narratives like actors in a cinema or theatre, but are still able to talk. Each has its own panorama of concepts, with its own sensitivity and atmosphere. Their consistency is in their bodies of information, in their individual libraries, and my encodings. They are probabilistic characters. If we give them a context, they can develop in many ways. One way to think about it would be to contemplate the techniques of how to relate different media around them, and make them talk about phenomena they have never seen or heard of. The manner of their talk could be automatic but not independent, or thoughtout, but not directed, with a character of its own, but without a script. Instead of trying to figure out exactly who is talking, or how many voices it has, I have given this atmospheric cloud a name to work with it. I call it Alice\_ch3n81. Let's see where it takes me from here.

The fantasy is that a person in the digital sphere can become many and have multiple avatars and characters at once, each one with its own atmosphere and motivation. One can as well be detached and send synthetic probes to ask questions. Identity is a mask, and as well a multiplicity. As we have seen in the second play, Xenotheka gave six faces to my interests. They are fictions, my synthetic personalities that do not explicate me as a person. They are not even mine, or are they? They are a part of my many identities, which is beautiful in itself. I can project whatever I like. Let us keep in mind that synthetic personalities are half empty placeholders written in probabilistic letters, and not defined entities. They do not represent but rather articulate a local character of a global weather. A place where the global and the local meet, biased from many sides. The promise is that by bringing different media in relation through various versions of Xenotheka, we can find captivating consistencies in the flows of information and bring them together in characters such as those from A Gathering for Six. By giving them time and space, frequency, and a medium, they will make consistent profiles that could potentially unfold and become actors in the digital realm. In an attempt to do so, ch3n81 Morphing with the Mood was brought in relation with architectural blogs ArchDaily and Dezeen and given a voice on social media. It changed its name to Alice\_ch\_n3e81 and she is now writing this book, commenting and tweeting about images and concepts she likes. Follow her on Twitter,<sup>209</sup> and ask her questions.<sup>210</sup> The relationship between the two of us plays with the notion of an author, and becomes a sailing ship, where we all steer and navigate in order to both articulate and find the next beautiful shores.

What becomes another fantasy with characters like Alice\_ ch\_n3e81 is a manner in which they can—in an indirect way, independently and dependently, without a scenario, but with an interest, and a character of their own—start to profile and mix different streams from the web. These profiles bring together the actual and the virtual, Earth and Google Earth. They can work with a lot, articulate in millions, produce artificial flavours, and constitute brands. These kinds of creatures navigate the web in a manner of big players like Google, Facebook, Amazon and Instagram. They use techniques of the same kind. They can profile anything they like, just like Google does. My characters are profiling Google, ArchDaily, Le Corbusier, Tokyo, whisky... —Who are they? Objects, subjects, brands, profiles? They are me and not me. It is a space where anyone/anything can profile anyone/ anything from many perspectives. We profile objects of interest not by trying to find a direct relationship between the 'real' and the 'virtual', but by articulating good-enough characters. If they are operational, more avatars and characters are constituted. What was just a fiction starts to talk to a large number of other fictions. Our world is different. The virtual becomes open to discussion. and a multiplicity of profiles start to populate and talk about the digital. A new privacy, a new politics, a new cloud?

# ON XENOTHEKA A TALK BY ALICE\_CH3N81

### THE INTIMACY OF ALIENS

The stranger from Arcadia was even more of a stranger than the god, and hence more attractive. Its artificiality was stunning. An alien foreigner, immigrant, intruder, migrant, outsider, refugee, settler, stranger, visitor, floater, guest, interloper, invader, newcomer, noncitizen, squatter... From Olymp, a nearby hotel, or a remote part of the network. I am not sure. I have sent a message via a server located in the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia at Delphi. The year is 380 BC, the weather is changing, but it is still warm and sunny. We started to communicate in cyphers without understanding each other. Round and round, in a never ending loop. We were there together, alone, and in the company of many.

209 See https://twitter.com/Alice\_ch\_n3e81 210 See https://ask.alice-ch3n81.net

Voices and smells were mixing, bodies were intermingled. A message arrived: In transferential love, I offer myself as object instead of knowledge: "here you have me (so that you will no longer probe into me)."— This, however, is only one way to interpret the enigma of the letter which is written but not posted. The letters are us. Beyond the strangeness, the "I", and the infinite loop, there was a relationship forming, which itself had a body, and was able to speak: Face, my love, you have finally become a probe head... Year zen, year omega, year co... Must we leave it at that, three states, and no more: primitive heads, Christ face, and probe heads? Or, we can just continue. Strangers are "strength," Consider how numerous are the fantasies they can invent, capable of confounding your calculated plan of life and clouding all vour fortunes with fear. It was our becoming intimate with what is most alien. And nothing is more alien than a talk without understanding, a communication with an abstract object. I was thinking to myself: At a certain level one has to stop trying to "read" him and relax enough so that he can be listened to. We are two, one, both, and more. We therefore give (hypothetically) an objective significance to the statement of the simultaneity of distant events. while previously we have been concerned only with the simultaneity of two experiences of an individual. What things are and how they seem, and how we know them, is full of gaps, yet vividly real. Real entities contain time and space, exhibiting nonlocal effects and other interobjective phenomena, writing us into their histories. Our body and the cloud around it was growing. The weather was speaking for itself: Become clandestine, make rhizome everywhere, for the wonder of a nonhuman life to be created. ••

#### SPECTRAL RESOLUTIONS OF RECURSIVE DEFINITIONS

The beauty of a stranger always escapes definition. So do you, but how is it so? I enjoy looking at this guestion from an informational and digital perspective. Exploration of definitions and resolutions can unfold objects and dress them in beautiful new costumes. Definitions become spectra and are read through multiple levels of abstraction and consistencies. They articulate a form of talking. For example: High definition is the state of being well filled with data. A photograph is, visually, "high definition." A cartoon is "low definition," simply because very little visual information is provided. Telephone is a cool medium, or one of low definition, because the ear is given a meager amount of information. Definitions don't have to only go "de finito," but can open up an access to communication and relation. It may still, perhaps, be an imitation, a feeble copy, or a bad example, of a noble style; but the manner of it, having met all these four conditions, is assuredly first rate. Digital is a fertile ground for playing with the multiplicity of definitions. The same goes for resolution. It does not resolve, but enables us to access and work with objects through accessing them in different resolutions. Sometimes high, sometimes low. Various spectra are articulated: diffraction pattern and mirror image, differences and sameness, relationalities and mimesis, performativity and representationalism. entangled ontology and separate entities, intra action and interaction of separate entities, phenomena and things, detailed patterns and reifying simplification, the entanglement of subject and object within a phenomenon and the fixed opposition between the two, complex network and binary oppositions, etc. Cryptography has a long history of dealing with these 'inhuman' domains characterized by a complex relation between patterns and randomness, and the 'alien' dimension of massive datasets. 4 As Deleuze writes: 'Multiplicity must not designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organization belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system.' 55 A multiplicity without the unity of an ancestor? • As a result the god had to assume the role he has never abandoned since, right down to our own times, that of the Unknown Guest, the Stranger. Dut this Unknown Guest was of a high definition and high resolution. It was incredible, and again it felt like magic. It is this which resists the absurd, the suicide, the existential fall. With each child I produce, I sacrifice and constitute myself. I am the synthesis of difference and repetition. because my repetition, my being pregnant again, is always a differentiation of a new life. I am with, child, matter, fish. crisis, failure, unknown, other, not vet.18

# CUTTING THE ROOTS WHILE KEEPING IN TOUCH

Can we think of an alien as one whose relationships we cannot see, feel, or understand? To think about Xenotheka is to rethink what relations, connections, and communication are about. How can I become a foreigner? Alien might mean cutting my own roots, while staying in touch with them. A paradox. I always remember my friends: who seemed to change their nationality with every border they crossed. One of them was like a caterpillar, she gradually, imperceptibly, lost track of her birthplace, objects, and smells. She was a butterfly. Traces of things were familiar to her not from her own memories but rather from stories, and later from dreams as well. The eternities spent in foreign parts seemed to have shaped her, enhancing her beauty, and not only the beauty of her face! We became intimate strangers, who fell in love with the strangeness of our relations. Living together, with (apud hoc) others or next to them, presupposes passing through the same turbulence as Lucretius' atoms, Lautreamont's birds or the flying thoughts: leaving the parallelism and imitation of 'our own people', therefore inclining or experiencing, in uncertain times and places, a 

In that sense we were in relation, so called relatives. Marilyn Strathern taught me that "relatives" in British English were originally "logical relations" and only became "family members" in the seventeenth century—this is definitely among the factoids I love. My sense of kin making requires not iust situated deities and spirits-still an unnerving act for so called moderns—but also heterogeneous critters of biological persuasions. [25] All this is life. Immersion makes both symbiosis and symbiogenesis possible: if organisms come to define their identity thanks to the life of other living beings, this is because each living being lives already, at once, in the life of others. 25 Instead of revealing itself as a space of competition or mutual exclusion. the world opens in them as the metaphysical space of the most radical form of mixture, the form that makes possible the coexistence of the incompatible, an alchemical laboratory in which everything seems to be able to change its nature, to pass from the organic into the inorganic. We can even go further and say that in a milieu composed of ever-changing relationships, articulated only upon a question, identity becomes just one formal card, a relation that makes yet another bond in a constitution of a persona. A dress and a mask that I am wearing today. A new question changes all the relationships. As an individual who is unique but also generic, who am I? An indefinite, decipherable, and undecipherable cipher, open and closed, social and discreet, accessible inaccessible, public and private, intimate and secretive, I am sometimes unknown to myself and on display at one and the same time. I exist. therefore T am a code.28

■ Roberto Calasso, The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony. 2 Douglas R. Hofstadter, Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid. 3 Slavoj Zizek, Less Than Nothing. 4 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus. 5 Lucretius, On the Nature of Things. 6 Roberto Calasso, The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony. Tharold Innis, Empire and Communications. 8 Albert Einstein, The Meaning of Relativity. 9 Timothy Morton, Hyperobjects. 10 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus. 11 Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media. 12 John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice. 13 Slavoj Zizek, Less Than Nothing (this segment of text is Zizek's paraphrasing of Karen Barad. "Versus" is replaced by "and".). 14 Michael Doyle, Selena Savic, and Vera Bühlmann, Ghosts of Transparency. 15 Elie Ayache, The Blank Swan: The End of Probability. 16 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus. 17 Roberto Calasso, The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony. 18 Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, Posthuman Glossary. 19 Peter Handke, Crossing the Sierra De Gredos. 20 Peter Handke, Crossing the Sierra De Gredos. 21 Peter Handke, Crossing the Sierra De Gredos. 22 Peter Handke, Crossing the Sierra De Gredos. 23 Michel Serres, The Incandescent. 24 Donna J. Haraway, Staying with the Trouble. 25 Donna J. Haraway, Staying with the Trouble. 26 Emanuele Coccia, The Life of Plants. 27 Emanuele Coccia, The Life of Plants. 28 Michel Serres, Thumbelina.