

## **A Walk through the *Park***

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### **Abstract**

*In 2014 Félix Ruiz de la Puerta publishes a book describing three archetypes of contemporary spaces: the forest, the desert and the cave. Among those, the forest can be read as a particular space-concept that integrates pedestrian paths into the inner landscape of public architectural programs. This paper follows a comparison of the integration mechanisms of such paths in some recent examples in the architecture of SANAA and Herzog & de Meuron. SANAA, the well-known Japanese group of architects describes the intention in designing spaces as parks, as places of interaction, places of inter-relations and introspection at the same time. A comparative study between some of their examples and the Herzog & de Meuron examples can reveal the conditions under which public programs tend to integrate a strong social component in order to blend into the existing environment. In this context, continuity is revealed as a fundamental aspect of a sustainable approach and flexibility can be read as a fundamental feature within the development of the built environment.*

### **Rezumat**

*În 2014 Félix Ruiz de la Puerta publică o lucrare în care descrie trei arhetipuri ale spațiului contemporan: pădurea, deșertul sau spațiul cavernos. Între acestea, pădurea poate fi privită ca un concept spațial particular care integrează trasee pietonale în peisajul interior al unor programe de arhitectură cu destinație publică. Lucrarea de față abordează un studiu comparativ între mecanismele de integrare a unor astfel de trasee în exemple ale arhitecturii SANAA și ale grupului Herzog & de Meuron. Cunoscutul grup japonez de arhitecți, SANAA, își definește intenția de concepere a proiectelor asemenea parcurilor, ca locuri de interacțiune, inter-relaționare, dar și introspecție în același timp. Un studiu comparativ între exemplele SANAA și Herzog & de Meuron pot releva ipostaze prin care programe de natură publică tind să accentueze o componentă socială, în procesul de integrare în contextul existent. În această abordare, continuitatea apare ca o trăsătură fundamentală a unei abordări sustenabile, iar flexibilitatea ca o trăsătură fundamentală în cadrul dezvoltării fondului construit.*

**Keywords:** *park-space, movement, immersion space, continuity, flexibility*

## **1. Introduction**

In the context of sustainability, a continuous movement can be emphasized as a tool to describe the extension of the inner functions towards people and towards the exterior. This type of approaching

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the project, although it doesn't necessarily highlight an eco-design, points out the flexibility and the ability to grow a continuous dialogue between the interior and the visitor via a carefully designed immersion space. This immersion, as a partial of total sinking of a body in a liquid, can further be an allusion to the fluid nature of the object. It also allows us to read this type of space as a medium of contact, where the exterior and the interior overlap.

The two groups of architects that we chose to discuss, both SANAA and Herzog & de Meuron emphasize two different types of approaching the subject.

## 2. The park of SANAA

First of all, this paper develops the concept of *park*, as a specific type of space described by the Japanese group of architects, SANAA [1], a concept used to describe a type of architecture that allows different people, different generations to coexist in a same area, a space that allows reunions and where, in the same time, a person can look for solitude, which can emphasize introspection.

In designing the immersion space, two types of movement can be reflected by the architecture of the group. A first type, a continuous or a sequential movement, emphasize a maze like structure of spaces (Fig.1a). Within the second type, a free movement emphasizes an inclusive, *filter-box* that represents the first contact with the object (Fig.1b). Both these movements promote a space without any hierarchies that encourages the perception of ambiguity in the projects of SANAA and, how we will further see, in some of the projects of Herzog & de Meuron too.

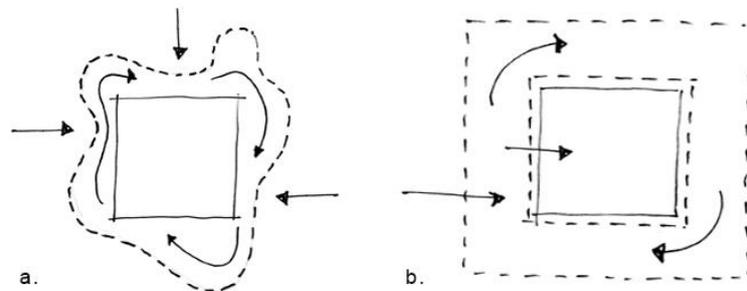


Figure 1. Two types of immersion

- a. The emphasizing of the exterior space - a free movement.
- b. The emphasizing of the interior space - the *filter-box*-like space – a movement inside the maze, a free movement.

An interesting approach by Félix Ruiz de la Puerta, mathematician and philosopher, professor at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura in Madrid, describes, within the context of architecture, three archetypes of spaces: the forest, the desert and the cave [2]. Among these, the forest can be read as a particular concept that integrates pedestrian paths into the inner landscape of public architectural programs. The author describes the forest as indefinite space, without a clear form, a mark of disorientation. The light and shadow are the main elements that describe this archetype, the light in the forest is perceived by the filter of the tree's crown. Both the light and shadow have the property to reveal themselves in a continuous movement, influenced by the leaves' motion. In the absence of landmarks, the landscape is one of disorientation and introspection [2:23].

### 2.1 The emphasizing of the exterior space – a free movement

A first type of movement in the *park* of SANAA is the free movement, a type of approaching the

project that emphasizes the *forest* archetype described before. The example of Moriyama House (Fig.2a) is a meeting point between the two types of movement. One can observe here that the exterior courtyard has, somehow the aspect of a maze. If we think at the metaphor expressed by the contemporary Romanian philosopher Bogdan Ghiu (in the context of Michel Foucault's concepts) that, the exterior spaces should be carefully organized like an archipelago, like a sea that unites objects in a free manner [3], one can read in this first example some of the characteristics of the fluid nature of architecture. The user's movement has a variety of choices; it is configured with narrower spaces, larger spaces that unite the apartment blocks within an immersion, indefinite area.

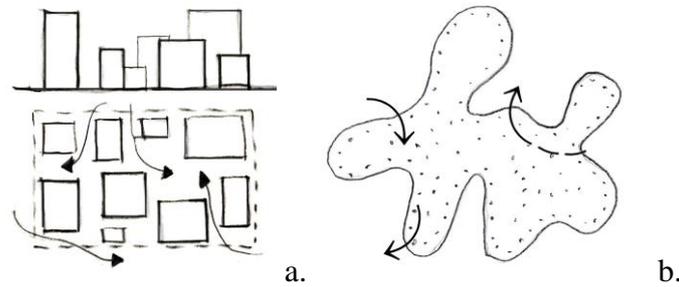


Figure 2. SANAA: a. Moriyama House, Tokyo, 2005. b. Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, London, 2009

This type of perspective emphasizes the spatial component of movement, as read in Bernard Tschumi's works. The architect describes movement as an arbitrary component of the project; simple illustrations of arrows cannot always be relevant, the movement acts rather as a fluid body that shapes the space as a dancer "that has been carving space out of a pliable substance" [4]. This perspective regarding people's movement can be read also in some of the less extensive interventions, especially in some of the temporary pavilions of SANAA, the Serpentine Pavilion (Fig.2b) for example, and also in some of the pavilions created for international events, such as the Venice Biennale. The intervention of Eduardo Souto de Moura (Fig.3a) in 2012 opens up some perspectives towards the Arsenale canal. The pavilion of Alvaro Siza (Fig.3b) draws the attention towards some of the particular areas in the Arsenale garden. Both these examples can be read as interventions that give this indefinite movement a particular form.



Figure 3.a. Eduardo Souto de Moura, Venice Pavilion, 2012. b. Alvaro Siza, Venice Pavilion, 2012

## 2.2 The emphasizing of the interior space - a sequential movement inside the maze

The orientation towards the interior highlights this immersion space developed by SANAA as a type of maze [5], especially in some of the museum projects. Among them, the examples in Kanazawa and Toledo (Ohio) are the most relevant. In the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa the circular shape of the building allows the visitor's approach from any direction. As a continuity of the park alleys, the museum offers a variety of routes, of different sizes, routes that each individual can choose. Some of these interior paths extend towards the exterior emphasizing the connection of the interior space with the context. The main concept of the building is based on the interior connections between different functions by means of a random circulation. Although the

multiple routes of the inner circulation seem to have a random organization, the routes near the inner courtyards seem to organize the visitors' movement [5]. These inner courtyards thus become an orientation mechanism in SANAA projects.



Figure 4. SANAA, Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, 2004

Figure 5. SANAA, Toledo Glass Pavilion, Ohio, 2006

The example of the Toledo glass pavilion in Ohio is a similar approach. But, unlike the first, the way in which it encloses the pavilion with glass surfaces emphasizes multiple reflections. The maze-like space in this example, although it is not physically accessible, it is used to mark ambiguity.

### 2.3 The emphasizing of the interior space – a free movement

A free movement inside the interior space appears, probably in its most eloquent form, in the project for the extension of the Valencia Institute of Modern Art (IVAM). The project aims to achieve a much larger area for exhibition of the existing museum, without much intervention over it and over its functionality during the building-site. And so, SANAA developed a comprising box, like a shell, over the existing building. This shell reflects the forest-like space described by Félix Ruiz de la Puerta, not only by the mimetic aspect of the metal structure that extends towards the city, but especially by the filter role of the intervention. As seen in the architects' sketch, this proposed shell allows the functionality of a roof-terrace on top of the museum (an urban garden used as a sculpture exhibition) and an urban garden at the ground level – the pedestrian level. The new skin of the building acts as a filter through which external conditions (wind, temperature) can pass, but are transformed in order to maintain the proper conditions of the museum. As seen in the sketch, the wind can pass turning into a light breeze, the sunrays are transformed into a homogeneous light, creating a different interior environment.

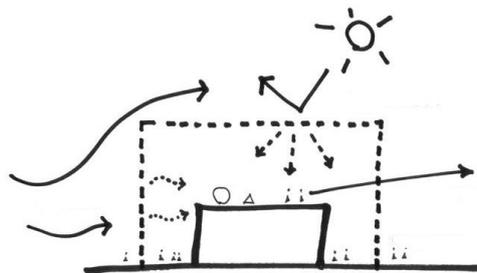


Figure 6. SANAA, The Extension of Valencia Institute of Modern Art, 2002 (competition, 1<sup>st</sup> prize).  
Sketch of the authors

Florian Idenburg, one the SANAA associates, describes the natural light in Valencia as one of great contrasts - very strong on the outside and a cold light in the interiors. In opposition, the light in Japan is very different, it is more continuous, more diffuse. Light is thus considered one of the main factors of the solution [6].

This type of configuration of the *park*, in all of these examples, reflects a convergent character of space, indicating a movement oriented towards the interior landscape of the building. A different approach can be read in recent projects of the architecture of Herzog & de Meuron.

### 3. The *park* of Herzog & de Meuron

Regarding the Herzog & de Meuron group, internationally known after the Tate Modern project (London, 1995), we can identify in some of the recent projects of the group a form of binding the interior to its exterior, by means of a similar immersion space. A first indication of this type of approach can be read in the Dominus Winery (project 1995, construction 1996-1998). The enclosure of the interior indicates a filter-like box, made up of a metal network filled with various densities of local stone [7]. But, if we consider the inner configuration, this filter-box doesn't yet take the form of an inclusive - immersion typology.

More recent projects of the group address a type of more permeable connection between the interior and the exterior. The Pérez Art Museum in Miami (Fig.7,8) is located in an area of contact with the Biscayne Bay, with valuable perspectives towards it. The museum is organized as an almost complete open space (around a vegetal pillar structure) in which the inner functions are inserted. The architects describe this area as a type of veranda occupying the entire site [8]. As in the project in Valencia of SANAA (the box-like space) this immersion space is oriented along the entire height of the building, but, unlike the IVAM extension, this type of veranda conceived by Herzog & de Meuron does not emphasize the character of ambiguity. With a clear horizontal demarcation, on the bottom and on the top of the museum, the project highlights an intermediate labyrinthine area, a forest-like space with a very strong connection to the exterior.

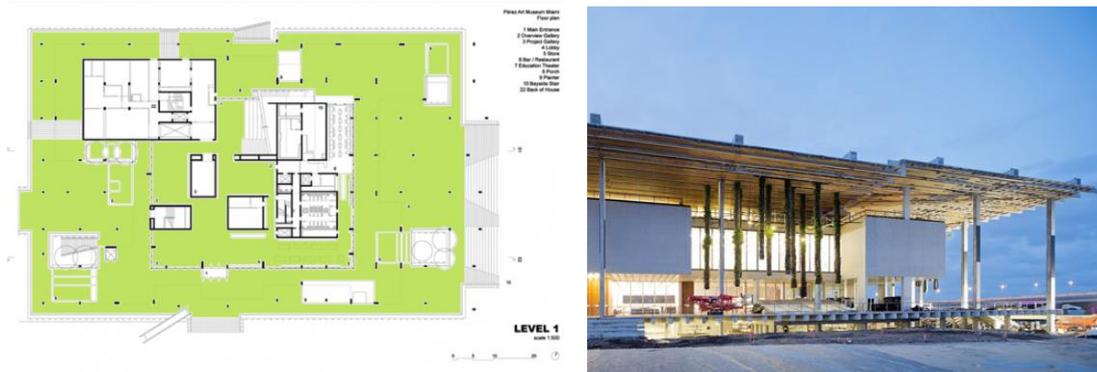


Figure 7. Herzog & de Meuron, The Pérez Art Museum in Miami, plan, 2013

Figure 8. Herzog & de Meuron, The Pérez Art Museum in Miami, exterior perspective, 2013

The specific ambiguous character of this typology – the immersion space, inspired by the forest archetype, can be read in the new Stadium in Bordeaux, inaugurated in May 2015 (Fig.9,10). Inspired by the famous image of the pine forest in the region of Aquitaine [9], the largest of its kind in Europe; the exterior of the stadium appears as a slender curtain made up of white pillars, framed by the two slopes emphasizing the connection with the exterior. The filter-like character of the previous examples reappears, its spatial character being emphasized by the white lane of circulation that passes through the pillars, in a wavy like movement. Beyond the mimetic character of the project (the pillars` forest), a divergent character of the immersion space is emphasized by the angle and the slope of the roof and the stairs, towards the exterior, as seen in Figure 10.



Figure 9. Herzog & de Meuron, Bordeaux Stadium, exterior perspective, 2015

Figure 10. Herzog & de Meuron, Bordeaux Stadium, detail of the exterior perspective, 2015

If the SANAA examples emphasize an internal landscape of the project, we can observe that in the Herzog & de Meuron examples, the role of this filter is to draw the attention towards the external landscape in which the project blends. All of these examples highlight a non-linear, arbitrary movement inside the immersion space.

#### 4. Conclusions

Two main criteria are emphasized by this analysis: the movement and the user; the relation and the influence of these two main components of space towards the way in which the object relates to its context. We can distinguish the two main configurations of this relation.

The development of a filter-like typology passes from the general filter surface to a tri-dimensional filter. The examples describe a direct immersion into a rather ambiguous space, either convergent or divergent. Movement and ambiguity are thus emphasized as aesthetic experiences. The SANAA examples draw the attention towards the rather internal landscape of the project, while the Herzog & de Meuron projects stress a rather divergent character of the immersion. Through a process of gradual immersion, user's movement appears as almost a real body that shapes the exterior limit of the object. This approach is highlighted by a series of less extensive interventions and can ultimately illustrate a mechanism to address the indefinite space.

By giving users the choice of following a particular, arbitrary exploration path, these types of approaching the project reflect a strong sustainable component. This analysis raises awareness towards the relation between the object and its surroundings, the interior configuration and its relation to the exterior. The configuration of an immersion *park-like* space tends, in a creative manner, to connect the user of the object to the existing context.

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podría estar cerca en soledad leyendo un libro o bebiendo zumo. Me gusta esa sensación o este carácter, en los edificios.”

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Figure 4. SANAA, Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, 2004. Image source: <http://www.detail-online.com/inspiration/a-critical-view-the-21st-century-museum-of-contemporary-art-in-kanazawa-107938.html>, accessed Aug.30, 2015.

Figure 5. SANAA, Toledo Glass Pavilion, Ohio, 2006. Image source: <http://buildipedia.com/aec-pros/featured-architecture/pritzker-prize-worthy-sanaas-glass-pavilion-at-the-toledo-museum-of-art>, accessed Aug. 30, 2015.

Figure 6. SANAA, The Extension of Valencia Institute of Modern Art, 2002 (competition, I<sup>st</sup> prize). Architects' sketch. Image source: *El Croquis* 121-122, p.140.

Figure 7. Herzog & de Meuron, The Pérez Art Museum in Miami, plan, 2013. Image source: Herzog & de Meuron, <http://www.metalocus.es/content/en/blog/p%C3%A9rez-art-museum-miami-herzog-de-meuron>, accessed Sept.02, 2015.

Figure 8. Herzog & de Meuron, The Pérez Art Museum in Miami, exterior perspective, 2013. Image source: Herzog & de Meuron. Image source: Photography © Iwan Baan, <http://www.metalocus.es/content/en/blog/p%C3%A9rez-art-museum-miami-herzog-de-meuron>, accessed Sept.02, 2015.

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