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Penelope Haralambidou. *Marcel Duchamp and the Architecture of Desire*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2013. xxviii + 312 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. 46 color and 225 black and white illustrations. £ 45.00 GBP (pb). ISBN 978-1-4094-4345-2.

Review by Min Kyung Lee, College of the Holy Cross.

Penelope Haralambidou's *Marcel Duchamp and the Architecture of Desire* is more than a study of Duchamp's *Étant donnés* (1966), otherwise known as *Given*. It is also an attempt to fuse academic (i.e. scientific) methods with artistic practices in research. Published as part of the Design Research in Architecture series at Ashgate, the text exemplifies the merits and challenges of the endeavor to expand the methodological categories and outline specific models of design research, while simultaneously interrogating the epistemological claims of research itself. Haralambidou's perspective positions itself to address the divide between academic and artistic research that has been widened by changing funding standards for research in the UK and Europe and by the professionalization of artists and academics more globally. Not insignificantly, her research methods and disciplinary practices also parallel similar critical issues intrinsic to Duchamp's well-known heterogeneous materials and methods of art production. In both cases, artistic practice constitutes a means to produce knowledge, and their work stands as a kind of apparatus of and for aesthetic and spatial experiences.

An important qualification in the context of H-France is that this book deals neither specifically with Francophone culture nor generally with the Francophone world. There are many references to French theorists and scholars, such as Jean-François Niceron and Henri Poincaré, and of course, the French artist Marcel Duchamp plays a central role. However, the two central works under Haralambidou's investigation are on permanent display outside of France at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and their connection to a particular French artistic or intellectual context is not thematized.

The book is divided into six chapters including an introduction, structured into the themes of allegory, blossoming, visibility, and desire, pertaining to Duchamp's key concepts that are then connected to a body of artistic/architectural work by Haralambidou. The chapters are uneven in length and vary in content and method. The author explains this as intentional, an attempt to construct the book as a series of discrete but interconnected "rooms." Yet, at the same time that the *raumplan*—a canonical concept of modern architecture associated with Adolf Loos—serves as the book's organizing principle, Haralambidou also aims to challenge "architecture's established syntax of representation codes" (p. 14). Thus, the organization of the book also becomes a shifting variable in a complicated set of research propositions, methods, and results.

Trained as an architect, the author asks in the first line of the introduction, "How does an architect *write* about an artist?" (p.1). The question is a misleading one, for what the reader discovers is that this specific architect had to draw and build in order to write this book, and furthermore, much of the study is not textual but drawn. Here, drawing often mediates writing, and moreover, writing is often categorized as drawing. Haralambidou explains that her architectural analysis "uses drawing extensively as a research

methodology” (p. 7). How can drawing be a research method? The answer is deferred by means of another artist, who in response to Haralambidou’s exhibition, “Empathetic Blossomings: The ‘Drawings’ of Penelope Haralambidou” (2007) characterizes her graphic method as challenging “the principles of objectivity, dispassionate observation and remote criticism” and becoming “a process requiring empathy and love more than criticism” (p. 15). Thus, as the author outlines, drawing is a research method that intends not only to provide new insights into Duchamp’s work but also to interrogate the very epistemological assumptions—objectivity and distance, as well as reproducibility—on which those insights are made.

The second chapter, “Allegory: The Fall” begins with a mixed media drawing by the author, submitted as a design proposal of an imagined house for *Mona Lisa*. By reproducing pages from her sketchbook and describing her graphic analysis of Leonardo da Vinci’s painting, Haralambidou accounts for the orthographic and monocular bias in architectural representations. Eventually, her investigations lead to Duchamp’s transformation of the famous portrait in *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), which becomes the pivot into her analysis of *Given*. By comparing *Mona Lisa* to *Given*, speculatively focusing on the possible connection between the balcony behind Leonardo’s sitter and the landscape surrounding Duchamp’s nude, Haralambidou posits that the female figure in *Given* is a “fallen” *Mona Lisa*. She argues that Duchamp’s assemblage acts as a “three-dimensional expansion of the portrait and its other side, ‘envers de la peinture’” (p. 34).

In addition to providing a comparison between a Renaissance painting and Duchamp’s installation, this chapter also presents allegory as another architectural research method, by concentrating on “imaginary projects using architectural drawing to express something ‘other’ than the construction of a building” (p. 38). Having previously offered drawing as a research method in the introduction, the connection between the two is that “[the] critical use of drawing is fueled by an individual desire for allegory” informed and structured by “narrative as a vehicle for grasping and developing spatial ideas” (p. 38). Is allegory a research method, an object of desire, literary mode, or a framing device? Haralambidou’s definitions are slippery, perhaps because of the inherent tensions between the synchronic experience of architectural representations and the diachronic experiences of space in text and through movement that she attempts to represent.

The third and longest chapter, “The Blossoming of Perspective: An Architectural Analysis of *Given*” represents a deep description and analysis of Duchamp’s last work, and as such, serves as the core “room” of the book. It is organized into six parts that relate to the material components of the assemblage as well as the conceptual elements of perspectival projections. For example, the first section, “square linoleum” literally relates to *Given*’s constructed base and to the Cartesian grid. Thus, moving from the wooden door to the cast nude, Haralambidou deconstructs in detail the monocular bias of perspectival drawings of space and *Given*’s model of a “blossomed” perspective (p. 58). This comparison is best represented in two diagrams drawn by the author comparing *Given*’s layout according to his *Manual of Instructions* and a perspectival composition of the work. They make evident a basic architectural contradiction in the composition of and in visual experiences of space. Generously illustrated and assimilating scholarship on Duchamp as well as on histories of vision, Haralambidou argues that the “blossoming of perspective” is stereoscopic (p. 86), and that *Given* functions to expand the monoscopic economy of spatial representations and accordingly, the imaginary spaces of desire (p. 112).

Throughout the chapter, Haralambidou reproduces her own artistic work, which ultimately serve as “evidence” in her textual analysis of *Given*. This “empathetic” procedure (p. 156) is a reversal of the general schema found in art historical studies that often use textual sources to support formal claims. This process of argumentation allows Haralambidou to investigate a number of fascinating details in their materiality, composition, and conception through her artistic reception, such as the relationship of the landscape and the figure, which have not yet been adequately addressed in the scholarship. She recomposes Duchamp’s work in different formats, media, and forms in order to look closely, producing a large body of work from

maps, sculptures, installations, drawings, to digital renderings. They are then attached to discussions of stereo-photogrammetry, dioramas, Renaissance perspective, casting, and camera obscuras, among many of Duchamp's other works including *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* or *The Large Glass* (1923). Her diverse practice is intended to parallel Duchamp's own artistic investigations of "cinematic blossoming," which Jennifer Wild has described as "[his] recognition of the binding diagrammaticity underlying technological perception and intermedial forms of knowledge."<sup>[1]</sup> Here, "blossoming" becomes a concept to describe the mechanism and process of perception offered by *Given*, as well as the method and process of research offered by Haralambidou.

The fourth chapter, "Visuality: The Act of Looking" continues the thread of vision and visibility in the previous chapters. Relying on Craig Adcock's work on Duchamp and the n-dimension, Haralambidou contextualizes *Given* in his own investigations into perspective and geometry, and argues that the work functions as a stereoscopic apparatus to represent the fourth dimension (p. 189) and to expose normative binocular operations (p. 199).<sup>[2]</sup> Her analysis of stereoscopy leads to discussions of fluid dynamics measured by stereo-photogrammetry, eroticism and pornography in its early uses and development in stereoscopic photographs, and "stereoscopic architectures," which refer to stereo-photography used in contemporary architectural design. This process of looking stereoscopically is thematized by a description of her own work, *The Act of Looking* (2007), in the second half of the chapter. The piece is a three-dimensional diagram of *Given*, delineating in steel and wax thread the voyeur's gaze through the peepholes of the wooden doors. It is an inversion of Duchamp's assemblage, intended to expose the viewer rather than the nude, and to make visible the stereoscopic mechanism at work in his composition.

The fifth chapter, "Desire: Female New Drawing" is a short autobiographical response to questions about the non-figurative and non-pornographic quality of Haralambidou's artwork. She restates the critic's question: "As a female viewer, critic, and architectural analyst, how do I negotiate entering a construct representing an apparent male desire? Is my resistance to addressing the explicit subject matter of *Given* a repression?" (p. 230). Referencing psychoanalytic language, she reworks her previously published essay, "Drawing the Female Nude" into a new text, "Female Nude Drawing" in order to inscribe her physical figure into her work in words and not drawing. Perhaps as a critique of academic procedures of analysis, her response offers no argument, but instead a series of intuitive connections made between *Given* and her pregnant body. These personal connections, however, seem to skirt around the issue of intention that is at stake in the opening question and maintain heteronormative distinctions between viewer and nude, and artist and subject that were not necessarily fixed and literal for Duchamp.<sup>[3]</sup>

The final chapter, "Defrocked Cartesians: Duchamp's Influences and Legacies," serves as a curated set of full-color images selected based on Duchamp's architectural and philosophical references, including Jean-François Niceron, Jean-François Lequeu, Frederick Kiesler, and Max Stirner, and architects and philosophers who have been influenced by Duchamp, including Jean-François Lyotard, Bernard Tschumi, OMA, Diller + Scofidio, Michael Webb, Ben Nicholson, Jonathan Hill, Nat Chard, Victoria Watson, Smout Allen, and Haralambidou's own work. In her choice of the contemporary projects, she makes the case for their connection to Duchamp based on that "which is either obvious, admitted or self-professed" (p. 238). Thus, explicit references constitute the main criteria for their inclusion, except for one case, Michael Webb, whom Haralambidou footnotes as not seeing the link himself. As a hinge between the past references and contemporary architects, Haralambidou includes two works by Duchamp, *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-1914) and *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* (The Green Box) (1934), and one of the artist, *Marcel Duchamp as Rose Sélavy* by Man Ray (1920-21). The latter serves as an ironic play with the title of the chapter, in which Duchamp is "frocked" as a woman.

A conclusion composed almost entirely of architectural images returns the reader to Haralambidou's opening gambit to challenge architectural representational codes. Of course, the contemporary images are not orthographic drawings, that is, plans and elevations maintaining a distinction between two and three dimensions, between drawn and built forms. Instead, they document a small group of projects

through a variety of media—drawings, photographs, assemblages and film—offering possibilities of how to occupy the spaces between binocular and monocular vision, between architect and user, between two and three dimensions, between realization and desire. The projects offered by Haralambidou's selection are each fascinating, even if as a whole unsatisfactory, but overall they do not seem to challenge established codes for one main reason. They leave the primacy of vision, itself, untouched, unlike Duchamp.[4] And as a consequence, architectural practice also remains fundamentally unchallenged.

In this book, Haralambidou has provided an insightful context to Duchamp's last work in terms of its stereoscopic operations. Through her rigorous process, she has also offered important epistemological questions and propositions about both architectural production and artistic research. In my view, this latter point is this study's more far-reaching and compelling contribution. However, the study's ambitious aim is also its weakness. One has the impression that the author was asking this book to do too much, and her discrete theoretical points are often lost in the sheer amount of material. Moreover, the complicated and often repetitive organization of the study also detracts from her particular insights into *Given*. For example, drawing is central to her analysis, however, its definition is never stabilized and is asked to do so much conceptual and methodological duty—as analysis, as writing, as perceiving—that its meaning loses precision. As mentioned earlier, allegory is another term deployed in such a variety of ways—as organizational structure, as research method—that it becomes difficult to keep track of its shifts. Yet, with all of these difficulties, the work holds great merit in making explicit the dynamic tensions in method, representation and reception that constitute artistic research and knowledge production, with Duchamp's work as exemplary.

#### NOTES

[1] Jennifer Wild, *The Parisian Avant-Garde in the Age of Cinema, 1900-1923* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), p. 104.

[2] See Craig Adcock, *Marcel Duchamp's Notes from the Large Glass: An N-Dimensional Analysis* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983); "Conventionalism in Henri Poincaré and Marcel Duchamp," *Art Journal* 44 (Fall 1984): 249-258; and "Duchamp's Eroticism: A Mathematical Analysis," *Dada and Surrealism* 16 (1987): 149-67.

[3] Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and, "The Ambivalence of Male Masquerade: Duchamp as Rose Sélavy," in Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon, eds., *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture since the Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[4] Regarding the non-visual in Duchamp's work, see Janine A. Mileaf, *Please Touch: Dada and Surrealist Objects after the Readymade* (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College, 2010).

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