

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Architecture as device: Estrangement theory from literature to architecture

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Abstract What is the estrangement of architecture? The concept has been incessantly mentioned by academics while there seems to be a lack of discussion systematically sorting out the significance, influence, and origins of estrangement as an architectural concept. This work aims to discern the meaning of estrangement from the beginning and its process of entering the field of architecture. The first part is expected to answer the following questions: what is estrangement's original meaning in the field of literature and its variations? The second part determines what estrangement is in architecture and in what form estrangement is represented according to these arguments. The third part points out the difference during this translation from literature to architecture and demonstrates the reasonable inference that may actually compose the possible way of applying the estranging technique in architecture.

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1. Introduction: Three fundamental techniques of estrangement and their variants with reference to Tolstoy, Shklovsky, and Brecht

Estrangement theory, one of the most influential concepts originating from literature, has been widely discussed in various art fields. This notion gradually gained its value in

architecture in the late 1970s. To date, the relevance of estrangement for architecture has yet wavered. There is no systematic discussion of the significance, influence, and origin of *estrangement* as an architectural concept even though it has been incessantly mentioned by academics. From literature to architecture, the term has detoured its way into our consciousness, obscured with layers of interpretation enchanted with ambiguity.

This work aims to uncover these veils. On the one hand, the work aims to establish a theoretical frame based on the derived variants produced in the procedure of its entering through tracing the source and evolution of this theory. On the other hand, the investigation intends to categorize and analyze them under the theoretical framework by studying

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existing architectural theories and practices. Furthermore, this work attempts to draw a theoretical spectrum, including a clearer theoretical framework of existing theories, and involves practices, cases, and architects.

The current interest related to the blurring of distinctions between Subject and architectural object in the framework of recent theories about “embodied design” and experience and relationships between perception and memories are also taken to the foreground by the concept of estrangement. The concept evolution from literature to theater and architecture would alter its own connotation. The effects of estranging spatial relations were also investigated. The aim of estranging (or the strategies’ result) would not differ.

When Massimo Scolari elaborated the works of Aldo Rossi in 1973, he pointed out *estrangement* as “the off-scale, the repetition of like elements, the juxtaposition of a gigantic order with a dwarf order, the use of like objects in different logical contexts, all this acts upon the objects of history with a laconic astonishment, as though they were being encountered for the first time” (Scolari, 1973). This work is one of the first few cases using the word *estrangement* in architectural discussion. In writing about “analogous city”, Scolari argued that this concept of *estrangement* came directly from Viktor Shklovsky, the Russian and Soviet literature formalist. Scolari’s argument is strong evidence supporting that there had been a clear inheritance of estrangement from literature. According to Scolari, it was ideated as the use of a disordinant collage strategy on the urban scale.

However, is the estranging technique limited to mere juxtaposition? The answer is negative.

1.1. Why architecture needs estrangement?

There has never been a clear, scientific explanation of this concept defining what it is. This situation is not due to a lack of rigor. The term was presented this way because it did not appear as an abstract concept, but as a practical solution. From the very beginning, the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky discussed this issue precisely in the article “Art as Technique” (sometimes also translated as “Art as Device”). The term *Ostranenie* was proposed to solve a dilemma. This term even included at least three techniques. In view of this, the beginning of this work will use a scenic description to reveal the situation that the concept of estrangement faced when it was first proposed.

1.2. Unconsciousness of perceptibility: Tolstoy’s divan and Shklovsky’s sack

One day, Leo Tolstoy decided to dust his room instead of working after a rough morning of unproductive writing.

“I wiped away the dust in my room and walking around, came to the divan and could not remember whether I had dusted it or not. Just because these movements are customary and unconscious I could not remember them and I felt that it was impossible to” (Tolstoy, 1897).

Such daily situation initiated his reflection upon the consciousness of life. Hence, he pondered, possibly sitting on his dusted/dusty divan, and asked:

“What, then, is this consciousness? What are the acts which are lit by consciousness?”

Consciousness could only be recognized when one is aware of it. However, one shall turn to the memory to verify the experience of unconsciousness — unconsciousness occurs when memory is absent. With such an understanding in his mind, Tolstoy made a conclusion upon this life without notice. He supposes that memory is formed only by the “consciousness of the past” and comes to the judgment that “life only exists then when it is lit by consciousness” (Tolstoy, 1897).

“And so life is reckoned as nothing”.

After reading Tolstoy’s diary, the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky made the following observation, which the discerning and logical mind was interested. If Tolstoy’s contemplation is not solely a literary sentiment for life but a problem or a phenomenon that needs to be indispensably answered, then the discussion of Shklovsky could be established. According to Shklovsky, the crisis of unconsciously perceiving has been there all the time. In his article “Art as Technique”, he argued that “we see the object as though it were enveloped in a sack. We know what it is by its configuration, but we see only its silhouette” (Shklovsky, 1917). He believes that this daily habitualization and familiarity absorb all the feelings from oneself. Over time, one could run the risk of losing interest under any circumstances and can no longer feel the thingness of things. Our eyes are wide open, but we no longer see the stone as stony. Art exists to confront this indifferent predicament. In his brilliant demonstrations, Shklovsky singled out the purpose of art as “to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, and to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged” (Shklovsky, 1917). The object regain its thingness only by prolonging the procedure of perception with a certain technique. Hence, the divan is dusted, while the sack is unsealed.

1.3. Pain of being seen: *ostranenie* as a device and its connotation

The moment Tolstoy saw the divan, it shivered. That feeling is the pain of being noticed by a casual, arbitrary glance. According to Shklovsky, the occasional trembling could be triggered by a systematic skill.

This artistic technique is called *ostranenie*. It has been nearly a hundred years since Shklovsky first proposed the term as a literature concept. The Russian word *ostranenie* (Russian: *остранение*) was first translated into English as *defamiliarization*, then as *estrangement* or *alienation* (for the sake of unification, *estrangement* will be utilized hereinafter). As a neologism, the word originally implies two types of actions: making strange and pushing aside (Buchanan, 2010). However, Shklovsky, as the father of estrangement, gives the term significance far beyond these actions. He not only proposed the definition of the concept but also built a concise system demonstrating how this technique works accompanied by a detailed analysis of Tolstoy’s writing, leading to a better understanding of its mechanism. Shklovsky believes that Tolstoy made things

unfamiliar by describing them as if they were seen for the first time. In terms of the method of accomplishing this principle, he adds further interpretation:

- (S.1) A detailed description of an object without naming it;
- (S.2) Using an irregular narrator, sometimes even with the vision of animals (similar to the one in *Kholstomer*, where the story was told from a horse's point of view, even after the horse was killed);
- (S.3) Extracting things out of their normal contexts, which is a technique often displayed by Tolstoy which is "the perception of disharmony in a harmonious context" for Shklovsky.

The three writing techniques are concerned with human's sensation and their reading experience. The illusion of estrangement is accompanied by feelings of terror in literature — terror towards the unknown strangers. For example, in *Kholstomer*, the striking feeling comes from the establishment of a new class: the horse. This concept shows the clear purpose of estrangement: "to create a special perception of the object — it creates a 'vision' of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it" (Shklovsky, 1917).

Although Shklovsky claimed that the only reason he chose the orchestrated examples from Tolstoy's work is that they are already well-known, he had prejudged Tolstoy's creation in the first place — it has long been closely connected with the concept of estrangement, just waiting to be theorized and systemized.

At present, Shklovsky work is still commendable, which makes it possible for the forthcoming scholars/artists/critics to have a perspicuous and theorized vision toward the main technique involved in estrangement. The year 1917, when young Shklovsky published his article, was later recognized as "the decisive moment in the development of what would come to be known as literary theory" by the British critic Terry Eagleton. Eagleton greatly valued Shklovsky's text because his it allowed him to separate the reading experience from the perception of meaning (Eagleton, 1983). In a way, the estrangement technique emancipated the literature from being a carrier of story and endowed it with the status of a pure form of art.

In Tolstoy's writing and Shklovsky's argument, we must bear in mind that the title of this article "Art as Technique" focused on the device, instead of a mere new concept. This notion suggests a type of art that have its essence laid in the strategy, regardless of the object and content. This is the premise of this essay and of decisive importance for the following discussion.

1.4. What about architecture?

The dilemma of Tolstoy's divan is what architecture has easily been faced with: the unconsciousness caused by the familiarity. Among all objects surrounding us, architecture suffers the most. Architecture not only is often recognized as something practical and useful but also accompanies our human being in the most accessible but silent way. The judgment of Tolstoy is highly accurate that it could be modified into a despondent statement of architecture

itself: If architecture is often unconsciously perceived, then it is as if it had never existed.

"... as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic" (Shklovsky, 1917). Although people may remember exactly the first encounter with a house, a museum, a factory, ..., etc., they could hardly recall every encounter afterwards. Once an object is recognized, it will be barely noticed. The term *defamiliarization* or *ostranenie*, for Shklovsky, could take the artfulness out of an object's conventional form and produces a new vision of perception toward them.

Here, we can first grasp the purpose of estranging before analyzing the specific estranging techniques. The estrangement effect is the consequence of certain operations whose aim is to make something unfamiliar, alienated, or disconnected, thus decentering the subject. In the application of estrangement techniques, the old hierarchy in the relationship is broken — the priority of the subject is deprived — while a new one is established — an equal status between the subject and object. Accordingly, a new vision of perception emerges. Estrangement effect could be regarded as an instrument to expand the boundaries of "status quo" and the weapon to break through the tight encirclement of modernism. This consequence is the most advantageous weapon against the neurasthenic, the blasé type, the conventional, the traditional, and the superficial. In summary, estrangement represents a change in the way of observation, followed by a re-examination of the nature of things. Given that Shklovsky regards estrangement as the essence of "all forms of art", is it possible to suppose that this theory and its techniques have also invaded architecture? During such a crisis, estrangement is an extremely symptomatic remedy for architecture to solve the unconsciousness of perceptibility. To solve the unconsciousness and mental fatigue of observation, the most important problem is to arouse emotion. We can assume that architecture becomes a kind of machine — a device — under such conditions. People can obtain an unprecedented vision through spatial experience and visual stimulation.

1.5. Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (V-effect): a transition

When Bertolt Brecht introduced the estrangement effect into theater theory as *Verfremdungseffekt* (often translated as estrangement effect or alienation effect), it gained fruitful spatial interactions with the audience. In Brecht's comment on traditional Chinese acting in 1935, the V-effect was "the efforts in question were directed to playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the character in the play" (Brecht, 1961). According to the him, this *anti-Aristotelian* theory provides the audience with an objective and critical way of watching theater. The estrangement effect of Brecht's theory enabled direct contact between the audience and the actor. Brecht developed a more interactive mechanism of estrangement effect from Shklovsky's literature technique. He took advantage of spatial experience and transformed it into a catalyst of human's sensation.

According to Brecht, Chinese actors applied the estrangement effect in their acting as follows:

- (C.1) The actor expresses his awareness of being watched.
- (C.2) The self-observation of the actor.
- (C.3) The actor holds himself remote from the character portrayed not to make its sensations into those of the spectator.

The abovementioned three mechanisms were developed into Brecht's theory of how to apply the distancing effect in theater (Brecht, 2014).

- (B.1) Use third person pronouns
- (B.2) Utilize the past tense when speaking
- (B.3) Describe the stage directives

The similarities and differences between Brecht's three performing principles and Shklovsky's three estranging techniques are quite obvious. Using third person pronouns and speaking in the past tense directly correspond with the second technique of Shklovsky (S.2). The last principle is adopted to detach the actors of the character, which could probably be related to Shklovsky's third technique (S.3). Although unnamming the object (S.1) is quite obscure in Bertolt's theory, its impact could still be spotted in his discussion upon Chinese actors, especially in (C.2) when the actor looks at himself with surprised expressions as if he is observing his body for the first time.

Other than performing skills, Brecht also mentioned several other techniques on music, lighting, and stage setting, such as historicizing the environment and making visible the source of light. However, these skills will not be discussed in this work, although a further study into the aforementioned skills may contribute to the overall conception of estrangement methodology.

Multiple senses are involved when performing to produce an estrangement effect. A traditional "Aristotelian" actor uses every effort to convert himself into the character as completely as possible to give the audience the closest experience. Hence, the actor is alienated from his own "human nature". According to Brecht, Mei Lan-Fang could demonstrate a female character wearing a dinner jacket. When he performed, people can find two identities on stage: the actor and the character. Specifically, the "species-essence" of the performer is conserved and presented. As Karl Marx pointed out in his alienation theory, the alienation from the self is "a consequence of being a mechanistic part of a social class, which condition estranges a person from his and her humanity" (Marx, 1844). In the theatrical space, people are divided into two classes: the spectator and the performer. In the bourgeois theater (the *Aristotelian* type of theater), the spectators are entitled with much more priorities than those of the performers. According to Brecht, an epic theater that involved *anti-Aristotelian* acting and techniques is to take these priorities away from the bourgeois and to introduce a critical attitude in theater.

2. Architecture of estrangement: Status quo

Is it possible to suppose that this theory has also invaded into architecture because Shklovsky regarded estrangement as the essence of "all forms of art"? The answer is

positive. After keeping the general idea of the three techniques of Shklovsky and their variants of Brecht in mind and before delving into the deep nature of the very concept, the exact time when this term was mentioned in the field of architecture must be pointed out.

2.1. Épater the bourgeois: the grain elevator and the popular

To date, the relevance of estrangement for architecture is far from spent. Before resolving what estrangement in architecture is, we must first clarify what it is not. There is *estranged architecture*, and there is *architectural estrangement*. Although the two seem to base on the same concept, the nature of each aspect is particularly distinguished. The present discussion seeks to clarify the meaning of the later heresy. It aims to establish a sense of avant-garde progress and architecture within the postmodernism in which we are immersed to grasp the Ariadne's thread that may lead us to the monstrous core in the labyrinth.

Estranged architecture must be examined to clarify the concept and avoid misunderstanding. Special attention should be paid to the vagueness or ambiguity that remains in-between the two aspects.

Architecture, similar to many other forms of art, has been consistently searching for a change from itself with the need to coordinate with its own time to seek stimulation. Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi were sensitive enough to capture this aspect. As early as 1969, the importance of bringing something "unusual" into architecture was pointed out by the two intellectuals. In their text, the "unexpected use of a conventional element in an unconventional way" (Brown, 1969), the "horror giving energy source" was drawn to the use of *the Popular*. Their work seems to allow itself to focus on the commercial, the popular or the highway: to love what is supposed to be hate, to embrace the capitalism despite its *cliché* appearance, and to learn from everything that is going on at that time. Nevertheless, architecture cannot learn from the *Popular* and the commercial forever: the *Popular* in architecture, ironically as it seems, quickly went out of style. However, the insight of introducing something new into architecture to keep it alive is still worthy of discussion.

Scott Brown also referred Le Corbusier's photographs of western grain elevators and tops of ships as a technique to "*épater the bourgeois and to blow the minds of the citizens*". Who were to be impressed were *the bourgeois* and *the citizens* — the subject of observation, not the architecture itself. The object of this given horror must be determined. The two targets of the horror are as flows: architecture as an individual discipline; and bourgeois and the citizens, as observing a subject who, once exposed to the shock given by that architecture, would no longer see them in the same way.

At present, incorporating the form of a factory or that of a ship to build a house is not something unimaginable. However, in the contemporaries of Le Corbusier, seeing such photos is extremely shocking, especially for those bourgeois who are accustomed to pretty images of "belle villas". The two reasons for this shock are as follows: First, this is a completely different type of building. "The house should be

what a house looks like". This is the first idea that Le Corbusier set out to attack. We see his efforts: any industrialized building, especially the new industrial product in his era, has the possibility of becoming a "villa". Thus the boundaries of the form expanded. Many studies are focused on this aspect of Le Corbusier. When confronted with this unprecedented proposal, the customer's first reaction must be disturbed, and the architect's job is to sincerely ask them to imagine and think: How would it feel to live in a car, a boat, or an airplane? Second, the class leap it represents is significant. These factory buildings, the images living in the vehicles, and the homeless dwellings are easily associated with poor laborers. When the bourgeoisie with large houses and fortune were presented with such a challenge, it is easy to see how this might be construed as a provocation. Did they ever feel offended? Will they be persuaded? In either case, this would have provoked an unprecedented emotional shock. Third, the material is unique. Concrete was first produced as a cheap and rapid material and used in the construction of large factories. Nevertheless, fast and cheap often mean that its rough craftsmanship will not conform to the aesthetics of middle-class housing. Le Corbusier foresaw the potential of concrete and was committed to promoting this beautiful material.

The easiest methods to use among the three reasons of shocking are the first and second points (given that the change of construct materials is relatively slow). Scott Brown and Venturi also borrowed from these points, introduced the Popular into architecture, and adopted new forms, such as highways or advertising shops, as a new solution to the unconsciousness of perceptibility in architecture.

If we take this part out of Scott Brown's argument, it could be represented as follows: Le Corbusier used the photographs of industrial machines – something other than residential buildings – and successfully made the citizens sensed a feeling of strangeness – a sense arose when what they see is uncoordinated with what was expected: a house that looks like a house. In this case, we might say, a feeling of *shock*.

The purpose of estrangement has already been elaborated in the first part of this article. It is almost the same as what Le Corbusier and Scott Brown are aiming for. When we think of the *bourgeois theater* to whose nature Brecht's *V-effect* was strongly opposed, the mentioned architectural operation – to introduce a conventional element in a hasty manner – is settled to achieve the *V-effect* in architecture in these architectural related arguments.

The estranged architecture refers to the consistent effort that architecture and architects have made over time to innovate and stimulate architecture as a specialized subject – a category of art itself. However, this is not the focus of this dissertation. This work is based on the knowledge of architectural estrangement mechanism as a device of sensation and mainly focused on projecting a technique for invoking a sense of strangeness in architecture.

How is this important? How could this investigation serve for the project of architecture in our time? After we have eliminated everything that estrangement is not, we should try to discover what estrangement is. Estrangement has long existed in the history of architecture.

2.2. Techniques of shock: Tafuri's reference to Simmel and Benjamin

Manfredo Tafuri agreed with Scott Brown and Venturi's opinion. Manfredo Tafuri mentioned *shock* when analyzing oeuvres of Piranesi (Fig. 1), Picasso, and Le Corbusier in 1968, similar to their definition of *horror-giving fact*. Furthermore, the *shock* appears as the moment when "the individual architectural fragments collide with one another, indifferent even to the clash, while their accumulation attests to the uselessness of the inventive effort made to define their form" (Tafuri, 1968).

Other than Scolari's elaboration on the works of Aldo Rossi in 1973, Manfredo Tafuri has also correctly singled out the specific areas of concern in the work of John Hejduk and Michael Graves in 1974, referring the perpetuated existence of "semantic distortion" as a device from the Russian formalist Shklovsky and Eichenbaum. The term "estrangement" was used twice in the very same article when Tafuri analyzed the Italian experimentalists and American neo-avant-gardes (Tafuri, 1976).

It also justified estrangement's thorough penetration into architecture by references of other scholars, such as Peter Eisenman's mentioning of *defamiliarization* (Eisenman, 1976), Martin Steinmann's quotation of Poe's writing while discussing alienation effect (Steinmann, 1976), and Mary Mcleod's notion of alienation resulting from an architectural language.

Tafuri borrowed the term *shock* from Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin. According to Simmel's argument, the opposite of *shock* is the *blasé type*: the neurasthenic who survives the increase in nervous life by becoming totally intellectualized and indifferent (Simmel, 1994). To apply the technique of *shock* means to mentally stimulate these debilitated individuals with a view to rescuing them from the mire of repetitive metropolis life.

Walter Benjamin intellectually reinforced the individual estrangement with the description of *flâneur* in his analysis of Charles Pierre Baudelaire. "The *flâneur* is that character who retains his individuality while all around are losing theirs and derives pleasure from his location within the crowd, but simultaneously regards it with contempt" (Benjamin, 1997). Moreover, the *flâneur* resisted the influence of his circumstances by refusing the complete conversion of becoming a "timely" person. The estrangement effect in this sense might be characterized as the central method for a human being to observe his environment without the alienation from his essence.

We have a brief knowledge of how estrangement techniques operate between a subject and an object and humans and things from Shklovsky and Brecht. The later study of Benjamin describes estrangement effect a higher approach of the context in which this relation is placed.

"The contemporary is the untimely", Roland Barthes said, quoting Giorgio Agamben, who claimed that the concept of estrangement effect is the key to "contemporariness". It provides a man with a special vision of perception towards his own time. Specifically, a contemporary person should keep his distance with his environment.

"Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time,

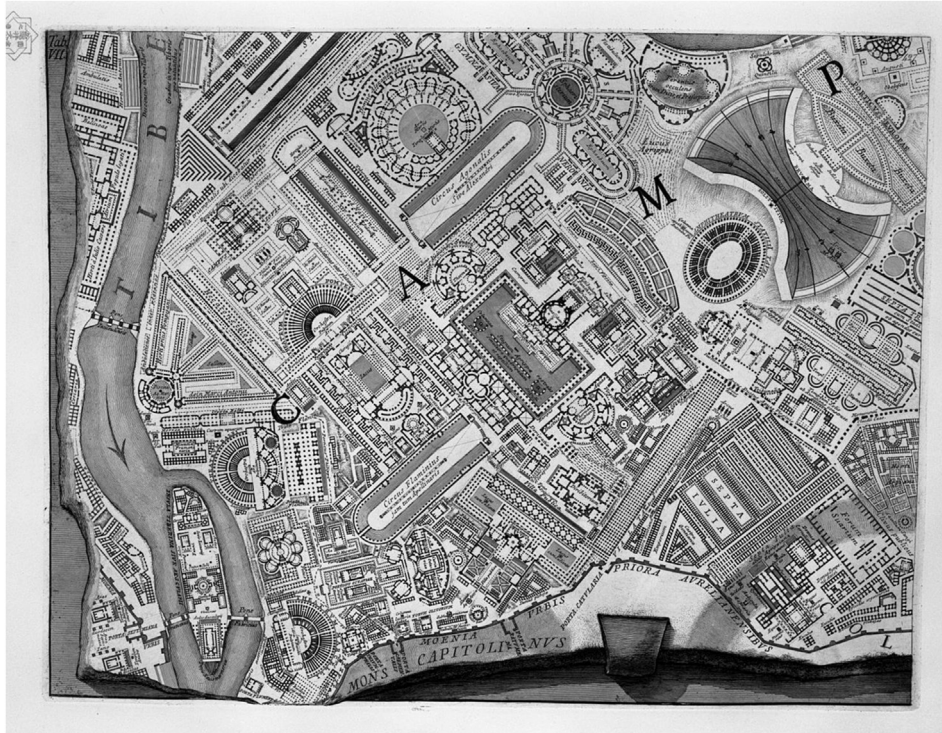


Fig. 1 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Campo Marzio, 1762. In public domain. Concept diagrams, images from a theater stage, and costume design related to Hejduk's mask/masque structures.

keeps a distance from it. More precisely, it is that relationship with time that adheres to it, through a disjunction and an anachronism" (Agamben, 2009).

The relationships between a writer and a reader, an owner and a belonging, a performer and a spectator, etc. are the hierarchy between an object and a subject. It is a clear parallel to the hierarchy between one and one's city/time — only in this time, the human is the object, while his city/time is the subject.

Estrangement has gradually gained its spatial quality from literature to the complexity of city and from Kafkaesque writing technique to urban-experiencing strategy. Meanwhile, the operation of space intensified the result of estrangement effect.

The *blasé* type and the *flâneur* are inextricably linked with metropolitan life. With Simmel and Benjamin as models, it is only natural for Tafuri to focus on the connection between estrangement and metropolis. Nonetheless, this discussion needs further exploration because the original definition of estrangement is much more complex than this. Although Tafuri never ceased to remind us of the importance of shock technique when speaking of the history of architecture leading us into the discussion of important architects, such as Piranesi, Aldo Rossi, and John Hejduk, this is not its most profound characteristic.

In John Hejduk's proposal *13 towers of Cannaregio* (Fig. 2), Hejduk composed a fictional one by collaging public architectures of Venice in the district of Cannaregio different from the other architects' strategy. This collage technique has a deep reference to the *Dot the Dot* game of Texas Rangers (Fig. 3) in the 1950s inspired by *Exquisite Corpse* — a game originally invented by the surrealists. Both games are dependent on the media of drawing,

sharing a common quality of detaching the object from its context. This displacement enacts a strong character of vagabond quality in John Hejduk's architecture. On the one hand, this consistency proves that *13 towers of Cannaregio* was the predecessor of the Mask/Masque projects. On the other hand, it provides the basis for further analysis of Hejduk's intentions and methods behind the collage city drawing and fictional site (Wan and Zhang, 2018).

In these hand-drawings, two features draw attention: one is the authenticity of singular buildings, and the other is the falsehood of their location. Both features suggest that these "strangers" seem to have been withdrawn from certain other places and wandered their way into these disorderly maps to make the scene even more chaotic.

Let us try to synthesize the argument made so far. The aforementioned statement of *horror-giving fact* of Scott Brown and Venturi, the *épater the bourgeois* of Le Corbusier, the *estrangement* of Scolari, the *technique of shock* and *semantic distortion* of Tafuri could be well retrained as the same effect when the *duty of being aware* (Tafuri, 1976) is aroused by architecture, calling for the contemplation of pain in observation and transfer architecture into a science of sensation that aches.

When the term *estrangement* made its first appearance in the architectural discussion, it was closely related to the bricolage/montage/assemblage technique in urban scale. However, is that all?

2.3. Anthony Vidler: the *Uncanny*

Sigmund Freud once mentioned that the *unheimlich* "was more than a simple sense of not belonging; it was the fundamental propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners,

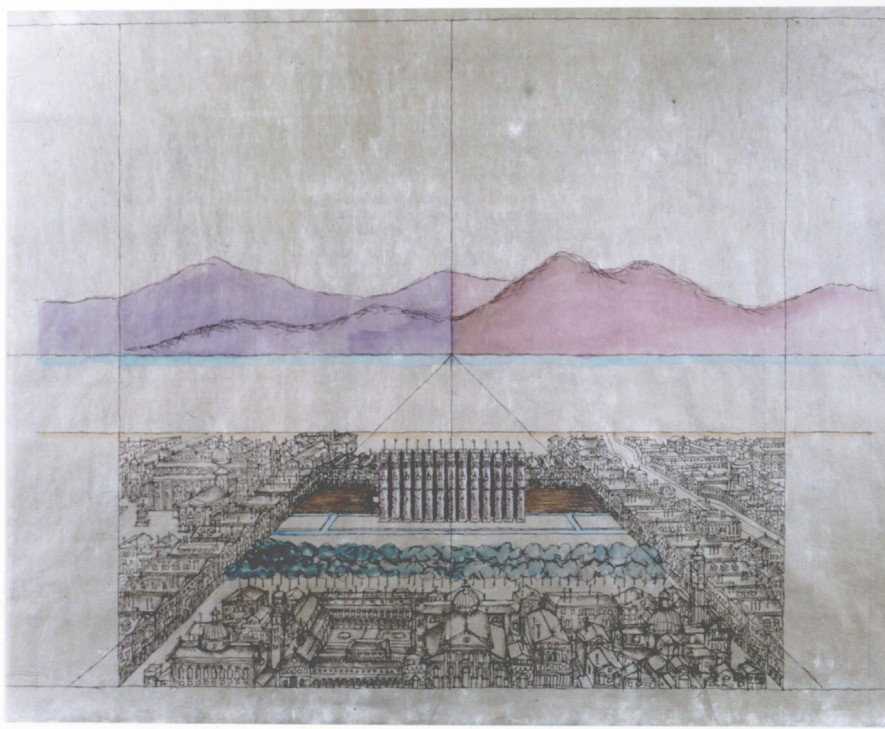


Fig. 2 John Hejduk, 13 Watchtowers of Cannaregio, c.1978. ©Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti.

suddenly to become defamiliarized, derealized, as if in a dream" (Freud, 2003). The "unfamiliar familiarization" is established on a familiar object that has already existed and was once unfamiliar. The estrangement effect arises when the owner loses his control on his belongings. If Shklovsky took the estrangement effect as a technique of expression, then Freud involved the concept into a politic relation between the object (the familiar) and the subject (the owner). On the basis of *the unheimlich*, Anthony Vidler later pointed out that the operation of John Hejduk went "beyond the situationist obsession with the spectacle and its proto-panoptical implications, to explore a new type of space, that of the nomad, as it intersects with the more static space of established urban realm" (Vidler, 1994). Vidler referred this kind of vagabond architecture to the distinction argued by Deleuze and Guattari and compared these unidentified vagabond architectures with the aimless wanderers in the world of Baudelaire which is "neither inexact like sensible things nor exact like ideal essences, but an exact yet rigorous (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980)", clearly revealing the giant gap between "state space" and "nomad space".

Vidler's work must be incorporated in our discussion because his elaboration of the *Uncanny* was not only limited to the aspect of vagabond architecture. A relatively broad range of discussion that may strike the feeling of *Uncanny* is developed from the haunted houses to Cyborgs and from nostalgia to dark space.

We would be able to point out the difference between *Uncanny* and estrangement by examining the chain of the *Uncanny*. The architectural *Uncanny* of Vidler has its origins in romantic thought: literature, psychology, and philosophy, Freud's *unheimlich*, and literary and psychoanalytic criticism of Lacan and Derrida.

The first common point that the two concepts share is that they all originate from literature. According to Vidler, the notion *Uncanny* is connected with architecture as early as the end of the 18th century due to the rise of horror fictions in haunted houses. The horror fictions, such as E.T.A. Hoffman or Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, relate the literal meaning of the term estrangement to the spatial experience. It is the first time that estrangement deals with a spatial status. To achieve this vision, the most effective is not sweet and pleasant emotions, but frightening, shocking, and confusing feelings. This condition also explains why more scholars have turned their attention to more disturbing emotional states. The body experiences pain when it yearns for pleasure. The descriptions of a haunted house or abandoned town set up the atmosphere of the background of the story and somehow influence their readers. However, the literature has its own limit because writers cannot control the reading status of readers. The horror fictions are experienced in cozy leather sofas by wood-burning fireplaces. The physical secure shelter makes the horror fiction seemed unrealistic. Readers are carefully protected, and the effect of estrangement was weakened by the secure feelings. The only link between literature and its readers is the action of reading while the other senses of human feeling are out of its control. On the one hand, the abstract art form of literature limits itself to an absolute object. On the other hand, the reader, as the only subject, enjoys the total priority in the relation between books and himself. The estrangement effect gained its spatial meaning in architecture in the first place by describing the lonely houses. Hence, the estrangement effect in the literature, while potential, failed to play a dominant role in the reading experience.



Fig. 3 Bernhard Hoesli, Colin Rowe and other members of the Texas Rangers, Dot-the-Dot drawing, c 1956. © gta Archives/ETH Zurich.

Second, both concepts stimulate the bourgeois' fear. Similar to Brecht's effort of taking priorities away from the bourgeois and Le Corbusier and Scott Brown and Venturi's épater the bourgeois, the *Uncanny* is defined by Vidler as "the quintessential bourgeois kind of fear: one carefully bounded by the limits of real material security and the pleasure principle afforded by a terror that was, artistically at least, kept well under control" (Vidler, 1994). However, what is different here is that the *Uncanny* is the unsettling feeling itself, while estrangement is a methodology of evoking this type of sensation.

Following the argument of Vidler, Bernard Tschumi has also included the technologies of *defamiliarization* and the *Metropolitan shock* as the first two concepts out of the six. Tschumi gave an almost declaration-like speech, claiming the notion of *defamiliarization* as a clear tool in architecture. In the writing, he said: "If the design of windows only reflects the superficiality of the skin's decoration, we might very well start to look for a way to do without windows. If the design of pillars reflects the conventionality of a supporting frame, maybe we might get rid of pillars altogether" (Tschumi, 1976). It is at that moment when architects refuse to build something beyond its thingness, rather than what it is supposed to be.

3. Missing part: two left out techniques

3.1. Two left out techniques

Posing a productive question about estrangement from literature to architecture is difficult because this subject raises whole clusters of problems, not simple or single

questions. We do not demand a one hundred per cent transformation when architecture borrows a concept from outside. After centuries of successive translations and interpretation, through semantic and conceptual innovations, such as Sigmund Freud's analysis of the "unhomeliness", Bertolt Brecht's theatrical practice of *V-effect*, and Walter Benjamin's reinforcement of the individual estrangement with the description of *flâneur* in Baudelaire's works, we have an exceedingly wide range of issues and meanings from which we borrow and select, always partially, sometimes uncritically. In our search for the history of estrangement in architecture, we supposed that this meaning has already been modified; therefore, it should be clarified. However, the original estranging techniques do provide us with a more comprehensive vision. What interested us most is whether these techniques mentioned by Shklovsky have been used in architecture, but unfortunately have not been incorporated into the system of architectural estrangement. Furthermore, how could estrangement, as an architectural mechanism, be used in contemporary context?

The first part of this article elaborates the three fundamental techniques of Shklovsky's *Ostranenie* and their three variant methods of Brecht's *V-effect*. The second part listed several arguments related to the theory in architecture. It is time to compare these architectural operations with their original techniques.

The three very techniques of estrangement for Shklovsky (in literature) are as follows:

- (S.1) A detailed description of an object without naming it;
- (S.2) An irregular narrator, such as the one in *Kholstomer*, where the story was told from a horse's point of view (Tolstoy, 2010);

(S.3) Extracting things out of their normal contexts, a technique often displayed by Tolstoy which, for Shklovsky, is “the perception of disharmony in a harmonious context”.

The most related technique that Shklovsky has mentioned to Tafuri’s argument and Scolari’s definition of estrangement — bricolage/montage/assemblage in urban scale — is the third one (S.3): Extracting things out of their normal context.

This situation raises an extremely interesting question: why estrangement, as a literature concept, was originally invented as a whole pack — a specific manual with a precise definition and purpose accompanied by three detailed techniques of estranging, only ended up as the use of bricolage when entered the field of architecture in 1970s? Moreover, have the other two estranging techniques already appeared in architectural design, but unfortunately left behind in the corners covered with dust and dirt?

3.2. Basic theoretical frame of architectural estrangement

In this article, the *V-effect* skills of Brecht are also considered for the following reason. First, the direct inheriting relation between Shklovsky and Brecht has already been discussed in terms of theater and literature; hence, there’s no need for us to reinforce it. Given that both theories have such a great impact on contemporary thinking, such as theories of Benjamin and Scolari, it is almost impossible to separate one from the other.

However, the frame would take Shklovsky’s techniques as fundamentals while using Brecht’s skills as supplementary materials to this theoretical frame. The decision is made not only because Shklovsky is the very inventor of this theory but also that once we look into Brecht’s technique, we could find that it corresponds with several points of Shklovsky argument.

For example, “speaking in the third person” (B.1) and “speaking in the past tense” (B.2) have more to do with the second technique of Shklovsky (S.2). In these cases, it includes a specific type of interpretation in which the story was given an unusual angle of perspective. Meanwhile, the third *V-effect* method is more of a variant from the (S.3).

3.2.1. Detailed description of an object without naming it

When Shklovsky summarized Tolstoy’s estranging writing technique, the primary way he points out is to describe an object without naming it. By doing so, “he avoids the accepted names of its parts and instead names corresponding parts of other objects”. For example, instead of saying the word “flogging”, he described the scene as “to strip people who have broken the law, to hurl them to the floor, and to rap on their bottoms with switches...to lash about on the naked buttock”. Names are the usual shortcuts to cognition, and they represent a connection to things that are already familiar to people. When one loses this shortcut, this connection is broken. By doing this, one will jump out of the daily knowledge and observes it as if he sees it for the first time. Hence, the procedure of perception is prolonged again.

Unlike literature, architecture cannot describe itself; however, those who create them are capable of doing so. Scott Brown, Venturi, and Le Corbusier have deprived the houses of their names by the use of a new language of forms that radically differs from its standard appearance. Hence, a factory can be a house, and a duck can be a shop. These images are different from what one would expect that a minor cognitive dissonance bursts out—and that’s where the strange feeling comes from. Hence, the deviation of form from its function is the first technique of architectural estrangement.

Another technique that could be considered is the setting for architecture. Taking John Hejduk’s projects as examples. These projects never come alone. Most of his structures come with special names, such as “House of Suicide” or “House for the inhabitant who refuses to participate”. These names of profound meanings give rise to the curiosity of a visitor who is unable to stop thinking about the connection between the buildings and their names. However, Hejduk’s description is not just limited to the naming of architecture. In *Victims*, Hejduk’s proposal is more of a theater creation, rather than a simple architectural proposal — it has all the elements (actor, stage, story, background, and audience) that a theater needs. As a scene-style theater, the *Victims* of Hejduk have a composition similar to a theater — a play with a total of 67 participants and a length of 60 years divided into two scenes. The long “script” and construction sequences of architecture are truly architectural ways of “describing” the project without naming it. This mechanism is an effective strategy of highlighting the significance of architectural characters, such as materials, compositions, and building mechanism, to allow the viewer to observe with a brand-new vision.

3.2.2. Irregular narrator

Discussing what is the irregular narrator in architecture is extremely intriguing. The purpose of architectural estrangement is to produce observer’s *Uncanny* feelings upon architecture. Hence, it is only natural to suppose that the “narrator” should be architecture itself, which is anthropopathic architecture, in this case.

This topic has been discussed by several scholars. Anthony Vidler has already pointed out three transformations of bodily projection (Vidler, 1994):

1. The notion that a building is a body of some kind.
2. The idea that the building embodies states of the body or, more importantly, states of mind based on bodily sensation.
3. The sense that the environment as a whole is endowed with bodily or at least organic characteristics.

Vidler argued that the oppositions “between classical humanism and modernist antihumanism, between faced buildings and faceless ones (Vidler, 1994)” were presented in the time of postmodernism.

The object (building) should, at the first step, reveal its own essence (in architectural terms, its interior). The external appearance (façade) is divided into two: one as the original separation (enclosed space) and the other as the new connection (operations, such as window/

transparency/embodiment/frontality) between its own identity and the original subject.

Many scholars argued that the projects of John Hejduk have a certain quality of autonomy. "Like the animals in a fable that speak with human voices, Hejduk's objects seem to be aware of us to address us". They seem to have a figurative manner: standing right up on two legs, hedgehog-like hair, and sometimes with their wild opened window staring right upon the observers (Hays, 1996). "Hejduk's subtle dialectic reveals in the flash of a moment the cohesiveness of form and person and proves that every form has a personal physiognomy — is a person; every person is a form" (Mertins, 1996).

In an interview with Don Wall, Hejduk also admitted the biomorphic quality of his model (Hejduk, 1985).¹ Hejduk's architectures, especially his structures in Mask/Masque projects, could be easily regarded as creatures with its own autonomy. The small structure on subject-object has a prototype of Cherub or angel heads with wings. In the drawing Angel Catcher (according to the date of publication, Hejduk drew it after the construction of House of suicide in Prague), architecture becomes a human body. It enacts a moment when the building becomes human.

The architect wants the visitor to realize his being faced with. The building, with their autonomy, becomes an observer subject instead of the dead observee. Michael Hays take these "anthropopathy" as a key to interpret the idea of how those structures encounter the observers. For Edward Mitchell, the House of the Suicide "does resembles a head with a crown" (Mitchell, 1996).

"The 'face is the mark of Hejduk's doubt' (Allen), his 'nature theater' (Mitchell), his and 'wilderness urbanism' (Ingraham)" (Hays, 1996). The "eye contact" of these faced buildings with their audience breaks the invisible fourth wall. Given that the original observers could no longer be able to watch upon the observee with priority, the audience is forced to keep a critical view upon the performance. The structures of Hejduk enact a rethinking upon daily scene, producing an estrangement effect on the way of seeing.

John Hejduk, though outstanding in this aspect, was not the first one to introduce the practice of anthropopathic architecture. Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's houses for the métiers of the forest were named in a similar format. Meanwhile, Ledoux use architectural forms as expression of the resident's identity. Michael Hays states that Ledoux employed multiplied strategies to express the habitants identity (métier) with architectural operation, one of which is to use elements "derived from objects or constructions associated with work and industry". The Woodcutter's House is a heap of firewood piled up as a pyramid. The Cooper's house is constructed by wooden buckets of different sizes, and the river keeper's house has a waterfall running through the building. However, the Shepard's

house, which is mostly related to Hejduk's works, shows a slight difference among the others. A cylinder is more appropriate to represent the Sheepfold than a Sphere; however, Ledoux used the shape of the latter, resulting in an outstanding house outstanding. The form is no longer an abstracted element derived from the workers' daily experience, but a highly summarized product of a Shepard's spirit: a spirit of enclosure to prevent the sheep running away. Accordingly, the House of Shepard received its characteristic properties. The architecture becomes a Shepard indeed.

3.2.3. Extracting things out of their normal contexts

The third technique will not be discussed in this article for it has already been elaborated in Chapters 2.2. and 3.1., although more architectural practice other than the mentioned ones could be incorporated in regard of this skill.

4. Conclusion

As previously stated, estrangement has been a common mentioned concept in architecture with its origin rooted in literature Formalism. However, most relevant discussions suffer from limitation and only focused on the decontextualization, which is solely one of the estranging techniques Shklovsky had suggested. This limitation contributes to incomprehensive research in architecture upon the very theory that has already been widely theoretically investigated in almost all art fields — except in architecture. This work aims to examine the basic techniques of estrangement theory — from literature to architecture — and evaluate their difference to clarify its innate character. The evaluation was conducted in terms of its original connotation, the developed technique in theatrical style, and derived argument in philosophy and their influence on architectural academics. This work also provided a systematical list of the relevant studies in relation to this theory in the field of architecture.

From the evidence writer's offering a deep penetration into Shklovsky's argument, estrangement is used mainly as a methodology to unfamiliarize the familiar, seduce the indifferent, and upset the contented. The main literary techniques involved are as follows: a detailed description upon the anonymous object, a borrowed perspective of the others, and decontextualization. This work attempts to reconstruct a theoretical framework in the field of architecture, including not only the known technique as decontextualization but also other possible left out skills that might have followed the formalist's principles but were unfortunately left out, such as the deviation of form from its function, attaching story background to architecture, and anthropopathic strategy, using Brecht's skills as supplementary materials to the three fundamental skills of estrangement.

The implications for further research on the architectural strategies of the estrangement effect is of much importance because not only the estrangement effect is the essence of changing the rigid status quo but also the spatial operation as a medium can express the estrangement to its maximum effect. Architects can translate the

¹ "Hejduk: The remark about the biomorphic façade is right. I had seen it that way. It's a good observation because it's true. Look at this little guy! [Hejduk is holding the diminutive Element House model in his hands when speaking: it measures 4 × 4]" Hejduk, John. *Mask of Medusa: works, 1947–1983*. Rizzoli Intl Pubns, 1985, 64.

literary language into a spatial technique because of the spatial quality of the original concept.

The estrangement effect is a tool with which one may detach himself from daily routine. This notion is the most important value of the estrangement effect. The reversed relations of historical dichotomies give the visitors a mental confusing state, which may lead to a reconsideration of solid concepts in everyday life. In this technique, the art could pull out the subject from the object, the foreign body from the familiar identity, and the building from its context. This technique brings out the artfulness out of the normal neglected things and makes us recognize their essence.

The estrangement effect is a revolution of class struggle. This technique aims to solve the self-alienation of the materialized working class, anti-objectify the commercialization of articles, and reverse the solid priority of capitalism. It is a technique of techniques, a strategy of strategies, and an operation of operations. Tradition challengers, class revolutionists, and critique observers use this technique.

The estrangement techniques in architectural practice have a wide range of applications. First, they work as a new treatment to the limitation; it does not matter if it is between the inside and the outside, the observer and the observee, or the settled citizen and the vagabond. The basic medium of this limitation may exist in physical form of a wall/façade or in conceptual forms of visibility and fixed context. An estrangement operation is conducted to redefine the characteristic of a wall/façade for their hidden quality of engagement and connection is revealed and magnified. Secondly, it operates in monitoring systems as a disturbing unstable element. It casts spotlight on the hidden supervisor to ensure that they are deprived of the visual priority. Third, it detaches a building from its context. A building need not be related to its context. Other areas that can use the same estrangement method includes but not limited to changing the spatial scale of daily life, mixing different functional spaces together, and providing confessional feeling to their users.

Although stimulating the estrangement effect is not only a rethinking towards the character of architecture itself but also an inspiration to the inhabitants, many people still view estrangement as a negative quality that interrupts their jobs and the routine of their daily lives. However, estrangement effect is part of revolutionary strategies with critique eyes that push the society forward to be a more liberated one. Thus, estrangement challenges us to observe our generation with a critical mind and an objective distance.

We attempt to trace in thought the essence of estrangement effect. The next stop on this path would be the question: what is the estrangement in our precarious age?

Various areas, such as time and space, life and death, and male and female, still lack of attention because of the investigation constraint. As an architect, he has spread his theory across nations and cultures by the mask projects in his late works. A further study on other architects is also necessary. His friendships with Aldo Rossi, Peter Eisenman, and other architects and theorists show his great influence on contemporary architecture. Accordingly, the estrangement effect has widely existed in architecture as an inevitable element nowadays. As an educator, Hejduk's students,

such as Daniel Libeskind, Elizabeth Diller, Shigeru Ban, and Toshiko Mori, still play important roles in contemporary architecture. The fragments in the Jewish Museum of Libeskind in Berlin gives visitor uncanny feelings. The deconstruction of space and time could also be related to the estrangement effect. The exploration of Diller, especially her early stage layouts, have to do with breaking the fourth wall. The estrangement effect in the works of Libeskind and Diller may be a good starting point for further research.

The estrangement effect also obscures the "proper plight" of contemporary architectures. Nowadays, we have heard about the shortage of contemporary building on all sides. Architects have tried for centuries to provide enough buildings for dwelling. The functional use of architecture may never be eliminated. However, the meaning of architecture sometimes does not lie in the physical functional and practical use. The proper light of architecture is not the lack of sufficient dwellings; instead, it lies in how architect could bring architecture to the fullness of its essence? How can philosophic thought be carried out in sound architecture practice? Is architecture an independent existence this time and no longer an extension at our disposal? The estrangement provides a mechanism for releasing the architecture from the control of human beings, living things, and its contact. In this case, the architecture becomes an automatic existence, such as a Cyborg that challenges the historical dichotomies, such as interior and exterior, body and architecture, subject and object, and building and context. By doing so, the processing feelings of the dominating sides are weakened, the priority is reversed, and the essence of architecture arises.

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The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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