A Space of Encounter

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colm Moore
Bsc.Arch, University College Dublin
B.Arch, University College Dublin

School of Architecture and Urban Design
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

November 2017
BOOK FOUR : FRAGMENTS
SPATIAL BIOGRAPHY: THREE LUMPS

‘O what a beautiful toy’.

The quote is reputedly Colin Rowe’s exclamation on first visiting the Leicester engineering building by Stirling and Gowan. While Rowe would later describe Stirling as being obsessed with the monumentally small, there is something strangely familiar to me in his reaction. We are compelled to visit buildings we admire. Yet, very often, I am surprised by the scale of these buildings. Somehow, in our admiration and conversations, their physical presence has been inflated. They have become larger than life.

Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that some very small buildings have held a very large presence in our studio. For example, the Solar or Upper Lawn Pavilion, discussed already, by Alison and Peter Smithson was a significant reference for our Tinakilly proposal and many others subsequently, in the seven years preceding our visit to the house this year. Likewise, mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, the Lutyens Cenotaph or indeed his works on Lambay Island, which, although a reasonable scale, as alterations and an

ills. 4.1 Gallery of tennis pavilion, Quinta da Conceição Municipal Parc in Leça da Palmeira, Fernando Távora, 1956-60
extension to the existing castle, represent a very minor work for an architect who built so successfully at the monumental scale.

Another such building is a tennis pavilion in the park of the Quinta da Conceição near Matosinhos in Porto. Designed by the architect Fernando Távora, like many small buildings, it holds a big place not only in our studio but in the culture of Portuguese architecture and possibly beyond. Its significance is in relation to its deft weaving of the local vernacular architectural culture and strands of modernism to form the germs of a language that would shape the coming generations of local architects.

Yet we make such trips to avoid the semantics. Instead, we travel to look at these buildings with innocence by means of carefully sketching, surveying and critically photographing them in the hope that we will return home to our studio with fresh eyes, renewed and excited again. For me, this small pavilion’s significance in our practice is for other, simpler reasons. So, here, I would like instead to talk about granite, gravity and movement. Or, more particularly, three great lumps of stone that made a profound impression on me in Porto.
The park, itself designed by Távora in 1953, was intended as a sort of filter between the residential area to the north and the industrial port on the Rio Leça to the south. It is in the port that one arrives at the end of the train line from the city. While the new light rail system was only completed in the late 20th Century, the monumentally-sized solid-flamed granite curbing that forms the edge to each of its platforms gives the impression that this new infrastructure has been woven about some archaic line in the landscape. This profound contrast between the local and the general, the contemporary and the traditional would seem to be Távora’s gift to the city. As if in some trick of time the course of this train line appears to pre-empt our arrival on the rough granite blocks that lay the pathways through the park. Here, the stone guides your movement across the land in much the same way as the path of an ancient Japanese Temple might. This first piece of stone is wedded to the ground.

The second piece of stone is raised above it, suspended in the air. More precisely, it floats in a wall of pink-painted roughcast render. This length of granite forms the lintel to the main portal framing the northern entrance of the park. A Barragán-like space it makes the first of the

---

1 A number of the new stations have been designed by Siza and Souto de Moura, both the direct ‘descendants’ of Távora.
2 Távora had himself visited Kyoto.
3 Reputedly, Távora had no knowledge of the work of the Mexican architect Luis Barragán.  
   ills. 4.3 Cross section through baths, Leça Da Palmeira, Álvaro Siza, 1959-73

outdoor rooms that form the underlying structure to the parkland.\(^4\)

The third long lump of granite is held fast by the rear wall of the tennis pavilion, itself another room in the landscape. These tall square sections of stone are inserted into the plastered white wall in series, protruding very slightly from its surface. Acting as the structural supports, or perhaps more potently tie rods, to the roof, they reference the idea of traditional Portuguese masonry pillars. Yet, quite deliberately, the stone does not meet the ground. In this arrangement, the tension of uplift is very visibly present, the pavilion presented, straining at the bit, as if held in a moment pre-take-off. The opposing south-eastern elevation, open along its entire length so as to afford uninterrupted views of the playing courts, reinforces this feeling of hovering. Suspended such, its buoyancy is exhilarating.

This detailed articulation presents the pavilion as a construction that has been brought into form by negotiation; its junctions are unfixed and appear as open conversations, an assemblage by agreement only. It is a structure of excited flirtation where every one of its component pieces appears to have sidled up to the next in silent

---

provocation. Nothing joins; everything touches. This pavilion is an elaborate performance. Enigmatic, it remains brawny and tentative. An energy held in a movement paused. It moves you.

ills. 4.5 Model study for a house at Bohemabreena
ROGUE ELEMENTS.

While teaching together in Belfast, Andrew and I made a series of publications with our students. Our intention was to avoid complex theory and instead understand the underlying knowledge embedded in the actual fabric of great buildings. Each of these publications – *Stair Rooms*, *The Elaborated Window*, *The Constructed Floor* – understood the making of architecture as an assembling of elements in space.

Based on observation, our *Elements of Architecture*\(^5\) sought simply to understand architectural form and spatial character through its composition and detailed assembly. The exhibition of this work provided an invaluable opportunity for us to understand the great effect of these ‘minor’ calibrations. Of particular interest to us were the rogue elements, the ones that revolted in an effort to establish some independence. These days in the university’s studio were formative conversations in our practice.

---

\(^5\) This work preceded Rem Koolhaas’ *Venice Biennale 2014: Elements of Architecture*. Crucially, it sought not to merely catalogue the elements typologically but to examine and understand their contribution to the total character and atmosphere of the space they engaged.

ills. 4.6 Window from the Banco Populaire by Carlo Scarpa
THE DIFFICULT WHOLE: A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION


Illustration 1.

Client’s Neighbour no.4: What is that?
Architect: Oh, that is a roof light. The kitchen is in the old house far from the light so we have made a window in the roof to get some daylight in.

Client’s Neighbour no.4: Sure, but we will see directly into their house from our bedroom windows upstairs.
Architect: Em (long pause) actually you can’t see through that roof light.

Client’s Neighbour no.4: But its glass (short pause) - what do you mean?
Architect: Well, I suppose its easiest to say the ceiling inside covers it.

Client’s Neighbour no.4: The ceiling covers the roof light?
Architect: Yes, (short pause) there is a small gap for the light.

Client’s Neighbour no.4: OK, right, so we can’t see them through it and they can’t see us out of it.
Architect: Exactly!

Client’s Neighbour no.4: (Long Pause) Fine.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: And what is that?
Architect: Oh, that’s a window too.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: But it looks straight into our kitchen.
Architect: Mmm, not really—it is at a high level, above your head.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: But we will see straight in from our son’s bedroom window upstairs.
Architect: (Short Pause) Actually, no you can’t.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: But it’s a window and it is directly opposite our window.
Architect: Yes, but there is a wall behind it.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: Ah, a wall behind the window. What do you mean?
Architect: Well, I suppose, I mean there is a wall immediately inside the window.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: A window you can’t see out of?
Architect: Yes (long pause) but it contains the light.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: Interesting design (skeptical tone).
Illustration 3

Client’s Neighbour no.6: And that there, that window looks into my garden.
Architect: Yes, it does but it is up high too.
Client’s Neighbour no.6: But there is a room there behind it.
Architect: Yes, there is. Did you know Michael Collins\textsuperscript{6} used to hide out there during the Easter Rising?
Client’s Neighbour no.4: Really?
Client’s Neighbour no.6: No, I did not know that, but there is a room there and a window that looks into my garden.
Architect: Well, the window is made of two windows; one is turned at 90 degrees to the other.
Client’s Neighbour no.6: Two windows, 90 degrees?
Architect: Yes, the window inside looks at a brick wall, the window outside lights this wall.
Client’s Neighbour no.6: 90 degrees ......

\textsuperscript{6} Michael Collins was a leading figure in the struggle for, and achievement of, Irish independence.

ills. 4.9 Section through living room for house at Albany road
Client’s Neighbour no.4: The new walls are made in red brick but the rear of the house is white.
Architect: Yes, the neighbouring returns are made in red brick so we wanted to do the same.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: Not ours!
Architect: True, but to the other side and along the length of the terrace.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: And could you paint the side facing us white?
Architect: Well part of it is actually.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: OK, great (short pause)... Part? Which part?
Architect: The outside face of the internal wall.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: What?
Architect: This wall is actually made of two walls, one inside, the other outside.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: Right, is that normal?
Architect: Sure, its called a cavity wall. It’s filled with insulating stuff.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: So, all you’re saying is you’re painting the inside white?
Architect: Well, not just the inside (short pause) sometimes you can see the outside face of the inside wall from outside.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: Eh? (long pause)
Architect: Well, sometimes the opening for the window is smaller in the inside wall than it is in the outside wall.
Client’s Neighbour no.4: OK? (long pause)
LITTLE BUILDINGS.

These conversations are not meant to sound facetious. In fact, I came away that morning feeling both a little confused and slightly silly. Certainly, the poor neighbours definitely thought me very much the latter. While these urges might be personally validated now in their construction it is worth reflecting on what produced this merry dance.

Among our studies included in the Elaborated Window publication were two very determined rogues, a circular window to the street facade of the Banco Popolare by Carlo Scarpa and the bay window applied to number 13 Lincoln’s Inn Field by John Soane.7 Scarpa’s use of stratification to construct an architecture as a fictive archaeology is understood and such sentiment is no doubt in play in our project.

More important to us here, perhaps, is Soane. Like Scarpa, the majority of Soane’s work represented additions and alterations to existing buildings. Consequently, the architect was forever inscribing ideal rooms into existing spaces. ‘This meeting of abstract principles with compromising conditions yielded unique qualities of architectural

---

7 Both architects who spent the much of their career making additions and alterations to existing buildings. ill. 4.11 Window, Banco Popolare, Verona, Carlo Scarpa, 1973.
invention’. Common to all of these rooms is the dissolving of the structural walls into a layered scenography of play between the new insertion and the existing fabric. This condition has an especially profound spatial charge in the breakfast room and the bay window applied to the drawing room of his own house at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. In both instances, independent structures, miniature architectures, establish complex relationships with the found rooms of the house. Although operating at a different scale, many of the furniture pieces present themselves to this conversation as further small buildings. John Summerson, himself a curator of the Soane Museum for much of his career, opens his seminal essay ‘Heavenly Mansions’ with a description of play that he claims is common to nearly every child and recognisable to us all: ‘That is to get under a piece of furniture or some extemporised shelter of his own to exclaim that he is in a ‘house’.’ It is a tired metaphor but one that he rightly states as having much to do with the aesthetics of architecture. Tracking the development of the aedicule or small shrine in the Roman house and its reflection in

9 Indeed, on reflection and at a stretch, Albany might incorporate many more of Soane’s devices as defined in van Schaik’s essay on the subject – a tartan grid containing an ideal space, the insertion of lighting vaults, the layered wall and the offset linking of side zones of a tartan grid, in our case the spaces of the existing house.
10 Curator of the Soane Museum from 1945 until 1984.
the portals of Pompeian wall paintings to the architecture of the Gothic cathedral he makes a simple yet radical case for an architecture of continuity as opposed to one created by paradigm shifts. In doing so, he makes a claim for the idea of the aedicule, a ‘little house’, as an idea of fundamental importance to the aesthetics of architecture. During the review of my PRS3 presentation, it was observed that one of the central spatial motivations of the practice was nesting.¹² In our project for Albany Road the whole perimeter wall resolves itself into these aedicular moments, sometimes articulating the construction, other times confusing it, they create an ambiguity between inside and outside, new and old, enclosure and opening. The wall becomes a space of encounter.

Clearly, in this making of one architecture inside another is a desire for intensification. An intensification of articulation, perhaps, but most importantly to us an intensification of inhabitation. The wall to the space of this extension is made in a multitude of smaller spaces or niches.¹³ A sort of necklace of little buildings. Like their classical predecessors, these are envisaged as containing figures. In this particular case they currently house two spoilt cats, an ageing black Scottish terrier, many plants, some spiders and Tilda, the client’s new born, who

¹² Boris Bromán Jensen, PRS 3
¹³ The word derives from the Latin ‘nidus’ or nest, via the French ‘nicheur’, to make a nest.
recently found her legs. Shrines to domestic devotion, if you will. An exaggerated image of this delaminated wall is as a scenographic space such as that of Palladio’s Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, where the thickness of its staged elevation contains the city itself. Indeed, in a generous act of reciprocity, one of our little buildings, the fireplace, now functions as an improvised stage for the children’s nightly performances.

Returning to the Gothic, in his essay, Summerson makes mention of Wilhelm Worringer’s *Form Problems of the Gothic*. Worringer describes the chaos of Gothic architecture as having an intensity derived from a ‘nervous passion for multiplication’ constructing an animated field or, as he puts it, ‘a deliberate chaos of energy’. While the column may indeed be the witness of energy the dissolved mass of our wall bears witness to another exchange of pressure and resistance, between the individual and the collective. In the fizzy articulation of its fabric lies an ambition to dissolve architecture from the substantial to the insubstantial, from the monumental to the human. In this tension resides a field of energy and the desire for a levity discovered in Porto.

---

16 This same attitude is being developed in the detailed articulation of envelope and opening in our conversion of a barn at Shatwell, Somerset. Ills. 4.14 Window and fireplace at Albany Road
A BARN DANCE

It is rare that Andrew dances. But here he is caught in flagrante, so to speak. His partner, the subject of attention, is a concrete column; an awkward character. Fittingly, for all my talk of choreography, our conclusion lies here in the moment of a barn dance.

AT COST

This concrete figure sits at the centre of a barn in Somerset. Unusually for the location, it is a concrete portal-framed barn clad in a collage of fibre cement, twin-wall polycarbonate and timber railway sleepers. It is, more precisely, two adjacent barns of different width and height that share a boundary wall. In doing so, they share a column and prop each other, becoming one mutually dependent broad structure. This arrangement has been constructed using a prefabricated system developed in the 1950s. Produced by the Faircloth Company in Sussex, it is called the AtCost (sic) system. A new technology then and still in existence, like much of its time, it appears redundant now, perhaps the victim of its own optimism. These concrete portal figures are forged by economy, their profile close in section to a very subdued steel universal column or beam. Similarly,

17 Somerset is renowned for its oak-framed long barns.
ills. 4.15 Site visit to Shatwell farm.
for reasons of efficiency of erection, the joint from beam to column is lapped and pinned as if assembled in timber. The arrangement possesses a strange personality tempered by pragmatics and legacy. Visually, it is an endearingly bizarre and awkward hybrid of technology, one exacerbated by the apparent incongruity of its constituent ingredient, concrete. This odd character has been amplified in this instance by the addition of a brace at the junction of the combined frames, an aberration within the system.

CALCULATED UNCERTAINTY

Reputedly, the original prototype drawings for the AtCost system were made by Cedric Price. By way of supporting evidence there is something of the playful sentimental futurist in the structure’s expression. Yet, beyond the purported authorship of the blueprints, his spirit is present elsewhere in this project.

Price, an architect who welcomed the contingent, \(^{18}\) saw the making of architecture as a site of exchange and a means of connection. Furthermore, he saw constructed and calculated doubt as being a fundamental part of our job as architects. \(^{19}\) He suggested that the only means to establish a valid equation between contemporary social aspirations and architecture was to add to the latter doubt, delight and change as design criteria. \(^{20}\) Price called this an architecture of calculated uncertainty. It is an expression that I believe could well describe the design process of our barn conversion.

---

\(^{18}\) Hegel describes contingency as the ‘unity of actuality and possibility’.

\(^{19}\) Interview with Will Hodgkinson for The Guardian, May 3, 1999.

\(^{20}\) Quoted in an article by Kester Rattenbury, The Architects Journal, 05.0.1996.

ills. 4.17 Mirrored reveals and green steel braces, temporary exhibition, National Print Museum, 2015
NEGATIVE CAPABILITIES

It also brings to mind another oxymoron worth a brief digression here, that of ‘negative capabilities’. This term was born in a conversation between the poet John Keats and two friends on a walk home from a pantomime. He subsequently defined it in a letter to his two brothers as ‘when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason’. Both expressions dwell in doubt and treat the space of uncertainty as beneficial and positive to the act of creation.

The word doubt is from the Latin ‘dubitare’, which itself comes from ‘two’, as in to be in two minds. Perhaps this best captures the essential task underlying all our talk of conversation. Any conversation is a non-hierarchical exchange between at least two characters, an ability to hold the subject in two minds at once. Also inherent to the word is a conversion, to turn around, a volte-face. It describes a territory that resolute certainty would destroy. A sort of topology of exchange, it is a landscape defined by ‘cooperative unpredictability’. Without the ability to improvise the conversation is over. It could also describe the

essentially heuristic act of our studio process where drawings and models, as conversation pieces, form the outlining characters in this vague terrain. Returning to the barn, beyond the supposed tango, the photograph documents a moment of taking measure. In fact, it depicts Andrew sizing up this column in an attempt to judge the precise location of the proposed living room floor. Figure against figure, the relationship to the eye of the joint is crucial to the calibration of this large space.

The image also captures another lost moment, the birth of the project. Standing with the clients parallel to the centre line of the barn’s structure during our first meeting on-site, Andrew and I point to this concrete knuckle and say, ‘This – this is the project’. The playing out of a previous critical moment in our practice is not lost on either of us. Our job, understood in that instance, is simply to remove the bracing boundary wall. To make the project by releasing the figure of the column and brace. The first figure of this project is found here.

Finally, stretching the underlying metaphor beyond its acceptable limits, like two shy boys at a local disco we walk the wall’s perimeter, plotting the new rooms of the house as we go. Observing the ensuing performance, we intervene when necessary.

23 Noted earlier in this dissertation – that of Dirk’s observation upon entering the Quarry houses, ills. 4.19 Cross section through house and gallery, Shatwell Farm, 2017
CARRY ON BAGGAGE.

The project has three clients. One is a collector of architectural representations; the other two, the collector’s son-in-law and his wife, cannot read such drawings. This had exacerbated their frustration with a previous architect for the project – a colleague of some repute and esteem, the winner of an invited competition we had lost.\textsuperscript{24} The brief is the combination of a house for the couple and their three young boys alongside indeterminate space and perhaps the production of some sport or quarry in the design process for our drawing collector.\textsuperscript{25}

The working methodology is a product of illiteracy and some distance. The client meetings take place on-site in the barn. Each visit, we fly a Ryanair red-eye to Bristol and drive through Cheddar Gorge to the nearby site. Drawings mute, we work in model only. Our restrictions, the measurement of the barn and the internal dimensions of low-cost airline carry-on baggage.\textsuperscript{26} The models are constructed at 1:33, one room at a time. Each one conceived in relative autonomy. In

\textsuperscript{24} The invited architects included Tony Fretton, Witherford Watson Mann, Pierre D’Avoine and ourselves. Clearly, by reputation, or lack thereof, we were the intended ‘wild card’.

\textsuperscript{25} The suite of rooms in development for him started life as rudimentary storage spaces with a small office space, became a workshop for a timber-frame company, then became a suite of galleries, then became a house, then became a suite of galleries you could live in sometimes. The project is not finished.

\textsuperscript{26} A planning restriction required us to work within the envelope of the existing barn. It did not require us to retain the structure.

ills. 4.20 Model study for family room, Shatwell farm, 2016.
our design conversations we move from room to room developing relationships between the found and the proposed. It describes a performance of a sort, a call and response.

Producing only a detailed series of fragments we now feel comfortable with the risk of postponing total understanding of the inevitable general arrangement. We draw step by step through the space of the house in conversation with our clients. It is a process that is both rigorously pluralistic and phenomenological. With each step, relationships develop. An arrangement slowly emerges. Figures and fragments set in motion courtesy of Ryanair. An emergent methodology understood as a benefit of our Practice Research Symposia.

ills. 4.21 Model study for family room, Shatwell Farm, 2016.
CRISIS
Of course, in this process resides an implicit, even inevitable, crisis. Five meetings, five flights, five carry-on bags, five models later this crisis is welcomed. During my final PRS presentation, a panellist, the architect Jo Van de Berghe, accused the practice of operating like a cat repeatedly making extended leaps in the secure knowledge of landing safely on all fours. Perhaps we continually place things at risk because we only excel in crisis. Or, at the least, we enjoy the space of potential created in the postponement of knowing. It is a strategy very much reminiscent of Cedric Price’s aforementioned calculated uncertainty or an indeterminate resolution.

Almost certainly, such leaps were not previously possible. We can now work positively in a state of confusion or doubt understanding that a relative resolution will inevitably arrive. Indeed, in the case of this project, it arrives in another moment of aedicular intensification. With little left to do we make our own figure, a small building that sits at the centre of the old shed. It is a structuring figure unifying the various fragments of rooms woven through the found frame. This little building is also a fragment carrying with it the figure of a former project, the previously discussed inverted roof of our proposal for the Hayden Mitchell House, itself a legacy of a fascination with our visit to the library at the School of Architecture at Porto University by Álvaro Siza.

ills. 4.22 Model study for staircase and roof light, Shatwell Farm, 2016.
Coincidently, in some mysterious alignment, around us lie other figures, fragments contained in the story of this dissertation. Friends of destiny perhaps. To the north of the barn lies Peter Smithson’s timber obelisk. Newly supplanted, it is a fragment from a lost project in Sienna by the husband and wife partnership. Fittingly, it slumbered potently on its side in the yard, a rocket pre-take off, for much of the duration of this PhD. Now standing vertically, it was craned into place auspiciously with our growing understanding of the project.

Álvaro Siza is also a neighbour. His yellow columns from the Royal Academy’s Sensing Spaces exhibition\textsuperscript{27} still slumber in the yard. A green patch of grass, recently planted, awaits their erection. These columns are also fragments, figures borrowed and abstracted from the courtyard of Burlington House, itself a construction by montage of many styles and authors over time.

\textsuperscript{27} Sensing Spaces: Architecture Reimagined, Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts curated by Kate Goodwin.

ills. 4.23 Álvaro Siza (*1933), Shatwell Farm Columns Sketchbook, 2013. Pen and ink on paper, 210 x 295 mm
The same architect is also soon to construct a sinuous concrete canopy to the west of the house. As a collaboration this will become an entrance to two silos converted by another architect, colleague and friend Hugh Strange. This project’s context is one of fragments found on and off the site and within our studio.28

28 Dalibor Vesely notes “There is a tendency to see fragmentation as a result of isolation and disintegration and thus as potential chaos. Yet we must also account for the fact that in so many areas of culture apparent fragmentation has played the opposite role contributing to the formation of meaning and a sense of wholeness” Vesely, Dalibor (2004) Architecture in Age of Divided Representation, The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts.  

ills. 4.24 Model study of living room for a dwelling at Shawl Farm, 2015.
LOST ARMATURES

The story of how we have made it to such a dalliance with this figure is no less important to the product of the PhD process. As I stated previously, we lost the competition. In fact, we destroyed the very figure that now makes the project. We razed the barn! Understanding a nascent urbanism in the farmyard situation as a provocation, we proposed the construction of an intensely planned terrace of houses. Ironically, in spite of the demolition the structure of the houses carried the memory of the existing barn. In this process an attitude and, indeed, various figures emerged that would become central to the current proposal. Paradoxically, the attitude lost us the competition but won us the project. Andrew calls these moments Lost Armatures, fragments of conversations necessary in the development of a project and then necessarily discarded. They are a regular occurrence; cast-offs, they live on the studio shelves for future use. With the increasing resolution of the project, further figures arrive – the fireplace a fragment from this lost competition project, the windows a development of the dissolved walls in our recently completed Albany Road project.

29 The competition interview took place in number 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the John Soane Museum. Another coincidence of note.

ills. 4.25 Model study of competition entry for a dwelling at Shaw Farm, 2015
A GREGARIOUS PLAN

Made following the development of the central aedicular staircase, this plan drawing describes the primary strategy of offset that defines the proposition. It establishes an arrangement of interconnected spaces as a matrix of enfilade rooms. The composition is a consequence of the client’s desire for ‘open plan living’ and our conflicting desire to frame a series of spaces of a suitable scale for comfort and domestic inhabitation within the form of the existing barn. It could be described as a plan of filtration rather than isolation.

In his essay ‘Figures Doors and Passages’, Robin Evans sets out to analyse human relationships as they are realised in an architectural plan. Of interest to us here is his fascinating comparative analysis of 16th Century paintings and floor plans of domestic spaces. Drawing a comparison between Raphael’s original plan for the Villa Madama and the composition of his painting of the Madonna dell’Impannata he notes, ‘if the tally between figures and plans is to be sought anywhere, it might as well be sought here, in a painting where personal relationships were translated into a compositional principle’. Evans proposes that the plans of interconnected rooms as found in the

---

30  Robin Evans, Translations from drawings to buildings and other essays (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997).

ills. 4.26  Living room floor plan for house and gallery at shatwell farm, 2017
Renaissance villas represent an architecture and a society of habitual gregariousness. While the plan is suggested as depicting a social pattern it could also represent the society of its production. That is, it could describe not only how social encounter is the product of a plan but also how a particular social structure or process might produce its general arrangement. In this sense, our ambition for how we work, summarised in Evans words, is to create ‘an architecture arising out of the deep fascination that draws people towards others; an architecture that recognizes passion, carnality and sociality’.
A PLAN FOR PRACTICE

Though a little mawkish, and with a definite whiff of midwifery, the illustration made by a colleague and friend, Professor Greg Keefe, during PRS4 is intended to represent the practice of Clancy Moore. It describes Andrew’s hands to one side and my own to the other with a space held between. It would appear to be a space held in guardianship, a good description of our duty of care as practitioners, a good description of our burgeoning practice and a good description of a friendship.

This research has been focused on the kinds of conversation that house the creative practices of Clancy Moore. It describes our young studio’s evolving working process and, as such, represents the practice’s coming to terms with the world within a contemporary context that demands a multitude of complex negotiations in the production of any single work. The Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa wrote, ‘to achieve anything we must invent relationships’. While one imagines he was referring to the artful detailing of junctions in the various renovations he undertook it is clear that our architecture is forged by and found in relationships.
Accepting that all work is born in this network of relations, the research documents the development of a relational design approach that commands the resolution of multiple contingencies in an open process rather than the imposition of any unifying order. In doing so, in our work, we seek to establish a space of encounter that allows for meaning to be elaborated collectively. The original contribution to knowledge that has emerged in this PhD concerns the identifying – within a project’s evolution – of a number of figures that are set in motion through the design process, coming to rest as a final design when the project is completed. Indeed, once created, these figures continue to roam through our studio practice. While others have documented their use of figuration in design, none have shown how figures are found and then orchestrated through a design process.

Our practice began in the making of poché d space. Defined very simply as the black stuff of the plan, the etymology of the word is important to our understanding of the work. Derived from the French ‘puche’ (‘purse or small bag’) and the Proto-Indo-European ‘buk’ (‘to blow or swell’) it carries with it a sense of resuscitation, a drawing out into life. We have continued to search in all of our work subsequently for each project’s consciousness, the moment when the inanimate is animated.

31 Insertion into the Church of St Thomas and St George and our project for two houses in a disused quarry, Slievebeamogue.

ills. 4.29 Andrew and I standing in the Quarry bowl, the site of our Slievebeamogue project. This is the moment our practice was born.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would like to return to the moment that began this PhD investigation, a chance conversation with another architect upon visiting our first project. When Dirk identified the Slievebawnogue project in the figure made by two doors (see page 111) he was seeing through the lens of this figure the complex conversations by which an architectural project finds its voice and the means by which this voice is made manifest in physical form.

In examining the pursuit of the figure in our work this research has allowed me to separate it from its conventional relationship which contrasts the whole as a figure with a ground that is its context. In our designs we draw out figures at various scales throughout the development of a project. We see these figures as relational devices as their form and presence reveal tensions innate to the resolution of the design. These figures are then choreographed through the larger ‘figure’ of the whole, revealing the negotiations and ideas that have made the design. This process of figuration became apparent in the development of our proposal for a house on a salt marsh at Tinakilly, Co Wicklow (See page 135).
Our practice exists as a conversation between Andrew, myself and the world around us. We conduct this dialogue in the production of drawings, models and buildings. Intending them as conversation pieces, in this research, I have used drawing as an analytical tool to probe the actuality of our designs. The first realisation came with the drawing of the previously mentioned door in the quarry house. These same analytical drawings have now become a device by which we test whether our designs have become what we regard as an architectural project. You can see this with the slow emergence of the portal junction figure and others in the Shatwell Farm design (see page 269).

This new found understanding has had multiple consequences for our practice. We are now able to move more rapidly to a search for the ‘figures’ that in our understanding reveal and hold the key to resolving a project. As a result our designing is becoming both more focussed and more eloquent. Whilst with the change in scale of projects from small scale domestic work to larger scale public commissions this keener understanding of the figure as a relational device also allows us to negotiate a more complex collaborative design process.
Furthermore, this analytical approach enables us, and others, as studio teachers to help students to discover and clearly articulate the cruxes of their design intentions. More generally this discovery helps architects to understand in a new way what lies behind the power of their designs when they are indeed powerful.

ills. 4.32 Axonometric study of living space to warehouse renovation, Portobello.