Escaping the Museum

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Abstract:

When an architectural intervention is attempting to re-form people's way of living in space, people must experience the new kind of architecture surrounding them. But how? Distanced "aesthetic experience" of architecture is seldom appropriate, and especially not for the work of Arakawa and Gins. Many artists have tried to escape the Museum with its aesthetic reverence for canonized works presented in a traditional space. This essay investigates the not fully solved problem of presenting and publicizing Arakawa and Gins' new architecture without making it either the object of a tourist's visit or the target of a museum goer's contemplative gaze.

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Introduction: Out of the Background

Walter Benjamin argued that architecture is experienced in a state of distraction, because we concentrate not on the architecture but on the goals and activities we pursue within it. Architecture tends to sink into the background, a landscape behind the tasks and daily rituals and social norms that are the hour-by-hour of living.

Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. . . . Architecture [is] appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception, or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building . . . [Buildings are appropriated] not so much by attention as by habit. [1]

Image 1

Arakawa and Gins's architecture does not want to stay in the background; it fights to be noticed, because their aim is to increase and make more precise our self-conscious bodily inhabitation of space in daily life. But Arakawa and Gins may well be trapped by their modernist ambitions for total reconstruction, which can keep their work from influencing people's daily lives. This essay explores that trap, their confinement in the Museum.

The Museum

An art museum customarily enforces a very ritualized relation of one's body to the space of the building. One walks quietly through large spaces. There are convenient benches. One looks. Reads labels. And looks. The contemplative stance is normative; reverence rules. The art is removed from daily life, to be experienced intensely, but at an aesthetic distance.

Image 2

Putting art at the service of life to transform life has been a goal of modern artists. So removing art from the museum has been a passion for much of 20th-century art. (Of course there's been an opposite passion on the part of many artists to get into the museum so that their art can be noticed.)

Art became immured in the museum only in the 18th and 19th century, since museums are a relatively recent institution. Before that, much art lived in public churches and public squares. Other art lived privately sequestered away in aristocratic estates and gardens.

In the museum labels and posters use art history to broaden the experience of the artworks. This opens a context for the artwork to relate to other artworks, but this is often a confined space and a safe horizon. Or at least it used to be. Now art history

is breaking down barriers by relating artworks to social movements, revolutionary impulses, repressed feelings and desires, and other wider horizons that may scare the connoisseurs of comfortable history.

Still, reading descriptive labels remains a quiet activity [2]. Compare the art museum to the lively chaos at a science museum filled with children running about, pushing buttons, walking through apparatus that makes them feel different. Is there some way to bring such an energetic atmosphere to the experience of Arakawa and Gins's work, which begs to be acted within, not just contemplated?

Image 3

Outside the museum we run into obstreperous art that glories in denying reverential distance -- guerrilla theater, performance art, some public installations -- yet these often bring the museum with them, putting invisible lines around themselves as works to be contemplated. It is so easy for the work or for the audience to adopt an aesthetic attitude that insulates the audience from challenge to their beliefs, attitudes, or bodily orientation. Trying to overcome this distance can force the artworks to become more and more extreme, which in turn encourages still more distance on the part of the audience.

Architecture has the advantage that it can force us to adapt to its spaces and orientations. We cannot remain in a purely contemplative attitude when we are actually within and challenged by puzzling spaces, heights and depths, colors and volumes. We have to move; we have to organize perceptions and synthesize a bodily image of where we are and what we can do within the building. So the architect has more power, and Arakawa and Gins intend to use that power, to be more than the creators of objects for contemplation.

This is not to deny that there are many buildings created to be objects for contemplation, with aesthetic façades that photograph well and hide thoroughly conventional spatial patterns. Much architecture is designed to be consumed easily, so as not to challenge familiar activities and goals. Such buildings fit nicely into the flat media that display and publicize them.

Better architecture can transcend and challenge familiar activities and intentions, making them something more than they had begun to be [3]. Arakawa and Gins want their buildings to be more than displays. But for this they have to be lived in, not displayed at a distance.

The museum, love it and leave it.

One tactic employed by aspiring architects has been to use museum exhibits to achieve status and publicity. The 1932 exhibition of The International Style at the New York Museum of Modern Art was crucial in bringing new European modes of building to the United States. Later curators attempted to duplicate that effect with

exhibitions on Postmodernism and on Deconstructive Architecture. Arakawa and Gins have had their own dramatic and successful museum shows, but such exhibits have an inherent defect: they turn their work into objects to be contemplated. It has been a challenge for Arakawa and Gins to escape the museum and build environments for daily living in which people will actually live, rather than just visit to see a curious possibility in which someone else might someday live.

More than exhibits are needed to get their work influencing people's lives. Arakawa and Gins have tried the other classic tactics of revolutionary architects who want new kinds of building to have new kinds of influence. One tactic is to start with private dwellings; another is to seek out minor civic and religious buildings. The architect looks for private patrons, then public sources, and corporations looking for a competitive distinction.

Image 4

Alvar Aalto started with houses and civic buildings in his hometown. Frank Lloyd Wright developed his theories while building private homes and churches. Much earlier, Palladio's villas became archetypes for other builders because they were successfully built for rich patrons, functioned well, and were featured in perhaps the first architectural self-promotion book [4].

Image 5

Arakawa and Gins have tried to find funding for buildings that would prove the effect of their architectural surrounds on people who live there rather than visitors who wander through them. There is a chicken and egg problem when there are no examples of people who have lived in Arakawa and Gins' proposed environments. This lack of long-term examples requires them to find other ways to publicize the new possibilities, and to write and argue to change social norms about what kind of architecture is appropriate for today's daily lives.

Social Norms for Buildings

It is important to recognize the way social norms govern our engagement with architecture. We identify a building as for a certain purpose. We act and hold our bodies differently in a courtroom or a church than in our living room or at a park. Those norms are passed along over time, and they can change, though usually they change slowly. For the most part, these norms are taken for granted, shaping the background for our activities.

Arakawa and Gins want what they call the architectural surround to have the odd combination of being a background for other activities yet also being obtrusive and demanding new kinds of bodily engagement.

Image 6

There is a danger that Arakawa and Gins's complex architectural surrounds will lose their effect over time as habituation reduces them to a familiar environment with familiar difficulties that get overcome automatically by habit. I have written about this danger elsewhere [5].

In this essay, though, I want to discuss a different danger, that without new social norms that encourage engagement, and new sites for that engagement, their kind of architecture would remain like a museum exhibition, an occasional foreground holiday or experimental lark, and could not have a continuing influence on bodily inhabitation. It needs to be more available and to be approached within social practices that define it as for daily life rather than for an exciting exception from daily life.

For example Arakawa and Gins's Yoro park in Japan [6] is socially defined as an extraordinary space where one concentrates on orienting oneself and experiencing the park and its novelties. The contortions of the space and its contents are the primary focus. One goes to experience this as uniquely different, not to live in it as one would in a "normal" park, going for picnics, playing ball, watching the children. When we visited Yoro we were one of perhaps four couples in the large expanse. The overall effort was towards solitary and bemused contemplation plus physical exertion. It was an experience akin to visiting a museum, where works of art are enshrined for an experience which is defined as different from everyday life, providing moments that may help illuminate everyday life but which do not remain present.

An apartment building or to a lesser extent a hotel designed along the lines of their Mitaka lofts in Japan [7] or the Bioscleave House on Long Island [8] would be places socially defined as to be experienced in the activities of daily living rather than themselves being the focus of attention. But as yet Arakawa and Gins have produced mostly demonstration projects, experiments, which are not socially defined as part of ordinary daily lives.

Besides making their architecture more available as surroundings for daily life, there also would need to be new social norms which encouraged people to try living their daily lives in such "difficult" spaces. Arakawa and Gins want our lives, which try to concentrate on their aims and rituals while make architectural surrounds a neutral background, are to be confronted by an architecture which will not let go, spaces that demands self-conscious bodily engagement and works procedures on our bodies and perceptions. For their architecture to achieve its desired effects, there would have to be a combination of new architectural surrounds available for daily life plus a social definition that these surroundings are for more than occasional stimulating adventures. In short, it would take not just new buildings but also changes in social norms to make Arakawa and Gins's experiments more than experimental.

Recognizing this, Arakawa and Gins have been trying to bring about such new social norms through their campaign against dying. "Making dying illegal" includes a plea for new social definitions and norms that would require their kind of architecture to be built and lived in [9]. Arakawa and Gins are trying to open up the possibility of their architecture being used on a daily basis by large numbers of people. The full implementation of the "making dying illegal" program would make it a necessity for everyone.

In this, Arakawa and Gins share the modernist dream of shaping life anew and making their kind of architecture unavoidable.

Image 7

They closely parallel the demands made by Le Corbusier for a new mode of building that would correspond to what he saw as the dawning modern mode of life [10]. In both cases the architect is attempting to redefine both how one builds and how one lives in buildings. In his rhetoric Le Corbusier says that the new norms are already present and architecture needs to catch up with society and industry. He exaggerates the change already happening; his examples of streamlined wonders show more a possible mode of life than real new social norms. But he was right that economics and industry were pushing us into new modes of life.

Arakawa and Gins do not have his kind of impersonal economic impetus behind their architecture. Yet it is true that in recent years there has been greater emphasis on healthy living, on bodily care and training, and more willingness to try unexpected and "foreign" exercises and diets. Feng Shui has become more prominent, and architects are becoming more attuned to studies in environmental psychology. People are more accustomed to the idea that their architectural surrounds may be influencing, for good or bad, their body, energy, and physical possibilities, as well as their psychological well-being. Such changes may make people more open to new social norms that might lead to importing some aspects of Arakawa and Gins's larger designs into more ordinary spaces.

Inserting bits of Arakawa and Gins designs into already built ordinary spaces would parallel the way Le Corbusier and other early modernist architects moved into interior design, furniture, and accessories, thus affecting public taste and encouraging new behaviors. It is not accidental that the classic modernists such as Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Mies van der Rohe strove for total control of one's environment. What seemed dictatorial was part of their effort to change social norms.

Arakawa and Gins need new social norms that encourage people to live daily life in their difficult and ambiguous spaces. But it would be more accurate to say that what would benefit their work would be the collision of multiple social norms. The activities of daily life would go on, defined by their usual norms and requirements. But cross-cutting and challenging them would be the norms of mindfulness, bodily

care, and a new precision that enriches daily routines.

Colliding Systems

Panel 11.1 in Arakawa and Gins' Mechanism of Meaning [11] urges us to "consider that any representation or system can be used as a map when paired with or plotted against an object or environment". An intervention into a familiar space might suggest new ways to map, divide, and rearrange its activities.

Borrowing from Max Black [12], Paul Ricoeur's book on metaphor [13] explores how new meanings arise when two articulated systems are made to cross. For example if Romeo says "Juliet is the sun" a whole net of associations with the sun now get applied to Juliet: she is bright, life giving, she illuminates the world and dispels the dark, she would be dangerous to approach nakedly, she could burn you if you came too close, and so on -- there is no end to the things that could be elaborated out from the central metaphor. Each shows new aspects; Romeo can understand his relation to Juliet more precisely by talking about something else metaphorically [14].

We could apply this insight to systems of spatial organization. Hand someone a map of Manhattan and one of Chicago. Tell them to put the maps together. The task seems impossible but might provide new insight as the user was forced to make metaphorical connections between Manhattan's rivers, grid, parks, Broadway, with Chicago's lake, river, grid, and diagonal avenues. New York's difficult address system maps onto Chicago's easy one. Manhattan's boundaries at the rivers could be mapped to Chicago's El tracks or tiny streams. Conversely, Chicago's expanse could challenge Manhattan's sense of itself as so distinct from Brooklyn and Queens.

Arakawa and Gins did something like this when they overlaid wandering paths in their Yoro Park with maps of Tokyo and New York streets printed on the undulating surface.

Image 8

Arakawa and Gins design spaces and buildings that provide multiple and intersecting sets of horizons and orientations. Each pivots off the other; their purpose includes but goes beyond creating new meaning; they bring you to see the spaces as richer than they seem at first, and by creating uncertainty they want to force more precision in the ways you inhabit and move in that multiply structured space. This is not unlike the way metaphorical language in poetry can make us more sensitive and precise about using the echoes and systems of ordinary words.

Arakawa and Gins are trying to make bodily readjustments amid multiple systems of reference that cross each other to create new kinds of incarnated maps of daily activity. Once again, though, this can only be achieved if the bodily activity is real and not something contemplated from a distance, or something experimented with

as a game in a safe and isolated environment like a museum or a display.

Self-Aware Living

In a book and website project, Sprawling Places [15], I argued that the familiar criteria of authenticity and hierarchy are no longer adequate for judging and improving the networked and multiply defined places that we are now creating. Instead, I argued that "complexity" was the appropriate criterion to use. This complexity shows up in the multiple sets of social norms structuring the same areas of space, in the ongoing and often conflictual interpretations and reconstructions that combine space and social life across time, and in the multiple outside forces that impinge upon our places. Such complexities already exist, and they can be increased by social changes and conscious choices. So, for instance, suburbia is already a more complex place than appears from its banal architecture and layout, and increasing its complexity would make it more livable.

Image 9

In dealing with simplified contemporary places [16] we should work to increase our self-awareness of the multiplicity of social norms active in a place, and increase our participation in the processes which define social norms, and take more account of the external forces playing over the place. We need to inhabit more fully the social processes of our inhabitation of such places.

Arakawa and Gins also work to increase our self-awareness [17]. While I have been interested in new places formed by the intersection of multiple social norms, they have been examining our bodily inhabitation of space independent of any particular social norms. They have been trying to create architectural environments where daily living would demand a new awareness and a new effort at being bodily. Their work aims at a level where every place, even quite traditional and ordinary ones, could be lived with increased precision in the processes of perceptual landing sites, movements, orientation and disorientation that Arakawa and Gins study and try to provoke [18].

I have argued for increased self-awareness of the social complexities in contemporary places even if they have the most banal architecture. Arakawa and Gins have been trying to create a new non-banal architecture that demands a new kind of bodily awareness, no matter what the social norms, simple or complex, might be.

All this effort is for the purpose of bodily reorientation in daily life. If successful, this would enrich our inhabitation of social landscapes, and it would lessen the constant pressures to reduce places to tokens of status. But to be successful their architecture must escape the museum, becoming more common and socially defined as for daily life.

Publicizing the Revolution

To achieve its goals, Arakawa and Gins's work needs to influence the public. Attempts to publicize the work using traditional or new media are important, but they can undercut the work's ability to work as it was supposed to. What might be done to make the work available? Is there a successful way to publicize an architecture designed to challenge the inhabitant's body and perception? How does one recreate a difficult architectural surround in flat media?

In print everything is made small and static. Probably most people who have experienced Arakawa and Gins' Mechanism of Meaning series have done so in book form. The panels in full size [approximately 5 x 8 feet] confront a person face-to-face. They demand attention. In a book, even in a large-format coffee table book, the panels are reduced to the size of crossword puzzles. There is a subtle change in what dominates what. The reader is not challenged in the same way; she can pick up and put down.

Beyond print, perhaps a kind of cinéma vérité might help? Imagine using hand-held cameras accompanied by verbal narration as one walks through one of their buildings, perhaps at a Warhol-like film length reproducing daily living. This might make a difference, but who would watch it?

Cinema began outside the museum and then crept in, yet film has never had the museum as its goal. In many ways cinema has tried to do what architecture tries to do, create a place that influences people to live differently. Of course, most films, like most architecture, aspire only to reinforce current patterns. But film's institutionalization in movie theaters created a special place with its own physicality, not of motion but of attention, a way of holding the body and being open. Now that spatiality is changing as more and more films are viewed at home.

On the couch watching the television, or at one's desk watching the monitor, the physicality of film changes. Its influence becomes less total. Being closer to the TV or monitor makes the audience more distant from the film. Perhaps it is the ambient light level and the ease of moving about. Perhaps it is the absence of others concentrating together. Home viewing has then rebounded on the theatrical experience, as people feel more free to talk in the theater as they might at home.

People have been working to re-create the theatrical experience in home entertainment centers with special chairs and large screens and darkened rooms. But this does not have the spatiality nor the crowd, nor the social norms of the movie theater.

Yet viewing a film remains predominantly a passive experience, far from what Arakawa and Gins want for their architecture. So their work will not be well presented on film [19]. Might there be some way to make a digital/home experience more active and "physical"?

Image 10

Architects use models to present their designs. But with a wooden model it is difficult to avoid the god's-eye view from above. Digital models presented can show on a screen a model of the building's interior from different points of view. This can help. But if the architect's wooden model is replaced by the digital fly-through, which is literally disembodied, the experience still remains a kind of omnipresence that lacks precisely the kind of physicality that Arakawa and Gins are trying to influence. The screen focuses as a single landing site, and a computer mouse makes all motion a flick of the wrist. There is no effort, no need to reorient one's body.

So a digital re-creation of one of Arakawa and Gins's buildings using ordinary screens would not accomplish their goals. It would again turn the building into a spectacle and lose the effort of living in this new surround. The usual digital presentation faces you, it does not surround.

Some digital presentations can surround you physically. A "Cave" uses three wall-sized screens, sensors to detect bodily motion, and computers to alter the images on the huge screens in response to the viewer's motion [20]. In such a room you could feel you are inside a space designed by Arakawa and Gins. Peripheral vision and the ability to walk around and see different views would allow some of their architectural procedures that affect orientation and horizon. But, however much improved, the effect would still be mostly visual.

All this makes it difficult for Arakawa and Gins's architecture to be successfully publicized on the Internet. On the net their work can only remain a curious spectacle, and the Internet, which brings some art out of the museum, would put their architecture back in.

Image 11

A web page is not enough. A virtual world like Second Life could be a way to make a digital presentation of Arakawa and Gins's architecture. However Second Life is also largely disembodied. It is purely visual and it is not fully first person. That is, the "camera" point of view floats around a person's avatar and can be made to back off and see what is behind and above, more than the embodied avatar's limited cone of vision could include. There is also no sense of difficulty dealing with slopes or rough surfaces. In addition, one can fly and avoid all the surface geometry. There are reasons for these features in Second Life, and one can move around inside buildings, but the overall effect still reduces the experience of architecture to scenographic spectacle.

Is there a way to bring activity and physicality into a digital experience? The closest we could come, given currently available technology, would probably be to use the graphic potential of digital games, but arrange that one's avatar would be less

bouncy and renewable than in games. Some difficulty and fatigue factors could be introduced, making motion less easy when there were slopes or narrow spaces. There could be an enforced first-person point of view, as in some shooter games, where participants only see what they turn their head to see, and have to choose what to concentrate on and what kind of visual landing sites to take note of, so that the surroundings are revealed piece by piece, perspective by perspective.

This would allow procedures that involve multiple horizons and disorientation to have effects which would be missed in the usual digital fly-throughs that allow one to see too much at one time and so avoid the physicality of attention.

Even so, such a digital presentation would remains on the screen and does not challenge the viewer's bodily inhabitation of space. A further step would be to feed the digital imagery into virtual reality equipment such as 3-D goggles or a Cave, with controls that have varying resistance, so that the viewer sees a limited and changeable perspective and experiences some muscular sensation of difficulty.

These reflections on the usability of various media for publicity show that Arakawa and Gins's work demands more than photos or a screening. Physical visits are needed, but shared bus trips their works remain visits to the museum. Perhaps what would help would be to have samples of their work inserted into people's already built daily architectural surroundings -- not representations, but actual samples.

Interventions in Existing Homes

Would there be ways of adapting Arakawa and Gins's architectural procedures to already existing houses or apartments? If the creation of an architectural surround with their necessary qualities demands completely new construction, this limits their possible impact and puts their ideas at the mercy of too many external forces and institutions. Could Arakawa and Gins bring some of the qualities of their new constructions into already built environments? [21]

Imagine, for instance, rugs that have patterns and bumps that would accomplish some of the disorientation and reorientation found in their more three-dimensional creations.

Imagine color patterns on walls and floors and ceiling, perhaps duplicating some of the effects from the Bioscleave House where color and texture rotate about from room to room.

Imagine furniture that refuses to sit quietly in the background, or that forces walking routes through a suburban living room to twist or use ramps.

Imagine mirrors and colors and inserted curtains reconfiguring spaces that cannot be rebuilt, where horizons and landing sites can be made problematical even in rooms that remain rectangular and flat-floored.

Image 12

Imagine a "kit" that allows you to add a room to your house as you would add on a sunporch, but this room is like one of the rooms at the Bioscleave House.

Besides providing income for larger projects, such add-ons could echo the effects of Arakawa and Gins' completely new constructions. People might learn and change. New social norms might develop.

How might such a partial intervention do its work? We can refer to the Mechanism of Meaning series of panels, since these were not total architectural surrounds but were pieces of art that tried to escape their status as isolated works hanging on the wall.

Panel 7.3 of the Mechanism of Meaning [22] states that "a line is a crack." That is the hope that the kind of interventions and additions I am suggesting would embody. That they would crack open the familiar environment, the habituated architectural surround. A line in the rug, or the edge of a mirror or a color boundary might function as a disorienting and ambiguous crack, both in the invisible line isolating art works and in the fabric of daily life.

Panel 3.1 states that "everything is ambiguous as well as the judgment that something is ambiguous. As soon as any fact is presented, ambiguity appears as the zone of alternate possibilities." Phenomenology from Husserl [23] to today has insisted that for anything to be presented as meaningful if must be surrounded by or appear against a horizon of related possibilities. The pen on the desk is meaningful because there are possible uses of the pen which are present in our habitual taking up the pen as part of a familiar world. We might read panel 3.1 as reminding us of this fact.

However, the point the panel is making is stronger. For besides the habitual set of possible uses for the pen there are wilder, stranger uses and non-uses and challenges to the whole familiar scheme of writing and using writing instruments. Furthermore, there is no sharp division between the customary and the wilder possibilities.

Arakawa and Gins are trying to force us to be more self-conscious and precise about locating and moving our body in a space which has cracked open and become ambiguous. The "horizon" metaphor from phenomenology becomes perversely appropriate in their architectural surrounds that refuse to offer a single unambiguous perceptual horizon for orienting bodily and movement.

Could such partial interventions accomplish something of what Arakawa and Gins are hoping to accomplish in their total constructions? Partial interventions in existing spaces would not have a total effect, but they might piece together a

challenge that plays against the ordinary habits of using a room and its furniture, suggesting new ways of holding one's body and organizing one's perceptual landing sites.

The problem of making an intervention into an ordinary room resembles the problem of escaping the museum. In order to succeed they would have to be more than artworks hanging quietly on the wall or lying demurely on the floor. They would have to crack open the subtle borders that frame an artwork as different from ordinary life. The inhabitant must abandon an attitude of contemplative distance. One way to force this would to be intrusive, something you could trip over, something you can't avoid looking at, something you have to detour around or sit awkwardly on or readjust your body to get by.

Suggesting such interventions must seem pallid reformism instead of the total revolution that Arakawa and Gins propose. Yet if an uncompromising demand for total rebuilding and new construction makes their only alternatives "total rebuilding or nothing," the powers that be and the economy that is will decide for "nothing."

On the other hand, there is the danger that if they were sold as products, such interventions might get commodified into a "style" subject to fads rather than an attempt to change bodies and lives?

Commodity Art

Museumized artworks such as a Monet or Van Gogh are both strengthened and weakened in their special aura today [24]. Iconic works become shrines to be visited reverently, while their reproductions become commodities, sold as stimulators of feelings [when, as Heidegger says, the art business becomes a service providing feelings on demand] [25]. Then art has little transformative power because the demand of the consumer assumes control of the artwork, which is leveled down to meet the desire to repeat a familiar feeling.

It is true that reproductions of art works do not need to function this way -- one could have, for example, a full-size reproduction of a Rothko painting that might challenge one in daily life just as might the original in Houston, but it is more likely one would have a photograph or a poster of the painting, much smaller and confined. The encounter would be defined and limited. The art work would be more under control, stimulating standardized responses, fitting into one's color scheme. And, large or small, the reproduction might be serving mainly as a token of one's taste and status.

Image 13

So far Arakawa and Gins have avoided such commodification. Yet this depends on their works being full size and immersive. It's not then clear whether the wide

distribution of their work is possible, given the realities of the art market. They have escaped the art market into the world of building, but there the cost factors rise so steeply that it is difficult for their work to have the kind of widespread effect they hope for. Trying to make their work have a wider effect, they share the modernist dream of becoming architectural dictators, as in their "making dying illegal" project.

Would partial interventions and samples inserted into existing spaces become commodities, the latest art fad, a style of decorating, something to be admired as signifying status and avant-garde positioning, and so be insulated from challenging people's lives?

Arakawa and Gins have managed to avoid commodification of their total architectural surrounds because those structures still have the status of unique experiments. There is no way that someone living in their Tokyo lofts would not be distinguished as someone living in an experiment with an avant-garde spirit. The lofts are too distinctive and rare to become commodities. They still function like singular artworks.

But the danger of commodification would be much greater for small interventions. These would be multiple and probably not individually designed for each place. If one could pick up an Arakawa and Gins designed carpet or mirror or piece of furniture at a store, there would be a delicate balance between it becoming something representing your avant-garde taste, or becoming an investment, and it actually functioning to challenge and modify the way your body forms and inhabits space.

Notes

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction." in Hannah Arendt, editor, *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1968).

[2] This is not to say that museums aren't trying to change their atmosphere and create more multi-sensory experiences. See, for instance, in the blog *Sensing Architecture* (http://sensingarchitecture.com/), Maria Lorena Lehman's discussion of how to enrich the impact of museum exhibits (http://sensingarchitecture.com/1713/top-10-tips-to-great-museum-exhibit-design/).

[3] Louis Kahn said "a work of art...is not a living thing that walks or runs...but the making of a life.... you know it you must see it again." And, "a great building must begin with the unmeasurable, must go through measurable means when it is being designed and in the end must be unmeasurable." (Louis I Kahn: *Writings, Lectures, Interviews*, introduced and edited by Alessandra Latour (New York: Rizzoli, 1991).)

[4] Andreas Palladio, *The Four Books of Architecture*, trans. Robert Tavernor and Richard Schofield, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002). Palladio's publication of his

book of designs greatly influenced aristocratic houses in England, Jefferson's Monticello in Virginia, and common ideas about what a country villa should look like.

[5] See the discussion of the problem of habituation in David Kolb, "Oh Pioneers! Bodily Reformation Amid Daily Life," *Interfaces*, no. 21/22, 2004, vol. 2: 383-398, and also in my review of *Architectural Body* in *Continental Philosophy Review*, Volume 35, Number 4, Date: December 2002: pp. 461 - 469. I still worry that Arakawa and Gins do not have a lasting solution to the habituation problem. Orientations get set. You learn where the traps and tricks are and develop daily routines around them. In their buildings the demand for physical activity would not decrease but the perceptual disorientations and challenges would fade.

[6] Site of Reversible Destiny - Yoro. Pictured and discussed in Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided Not to Die* (New York: Guggenheim Museum/Abrams, 1997). The park is shown online at http://www.yoro-park.com/e/rev/bbs001_en.html.

[7] See the online pictures and discussion of the Tokyo lofts at Reversible Destiny Lofts MITAKA -- In Memory of Helen Keller, also at this slideshow, and in the brief Japanese video at *Decojournal*.

[8] Bioscleave House. See this online discussion of the house, and this *New York Times* online article and video.

[9] Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *Making Dying Illegal* (New York: Roof Books, 2006).

[10] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1986).

[11] Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *The Mechanism of Meaning*. In *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided Not to Die* (New York: Guggenheim Museum/Abrams, 1997).

[12] Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in language and philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).

[13] Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor,* trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

[14] See also Ted Cohen, *Thinking of Others: On the Talent for Metaphor* (Princeton University Press, 2008), and the discussion of architectural metaphors and ironies in my *Postmodern Sophistications: Philosophy, Architecture, and Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[15] Book: David Kolb, *Sprawling Places* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2008). Website: *Sprawling Places*, http://www.dkolb.org/sprawlingplaces plus related writings linked at dkolb.org.

[16] Marc Augé discusses such simplified places in *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995). See my reaction to his ideas in the *Sprawling Places* website and the fuller discussion in the book version.

[17] Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *Architectural Body* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002).

[18] Great architects may challenge perception, but they do not all try to disorient. Often they try to make one feel even more grounded and clearly located. Frank Lloyd Wright's domestic architecture uses maneuvers with centralized fireplaces and enclosed spaces to increase the sense of being "at home." In this connection it is worth remembering that Arakawa came to America to work with Marcel Duchamp and Gins wrote radical poetry before she met Arakawa. Their history of trying to upset perceptions and question meanings began earlier than their architectural procedures and their goal of extending life.

[19] The film industry is hoping 3-D movies will lure viewers off their couches and into the theaters. The home entertainment industry is preparing 3-D TVs to keep people at home. Would 3-D film be a better medium for publicizing the architectural work of Arakawa and Gins? While it would improve on 2-D film, it would still be a presentation on a screen, not a bodily experience. The digital maneuvers suggested below would be perhaps as good we could do with present-day technology.

[20] For diagrams and explanations of how a digital "Cave" room works, see the discussion of Brown University 's Cave, at http://graphics.cs.brown.edu/research/cave/home.html.

[21] It would be interesting to think about a new kind of interior consultant whose task would be to look at your house or apartment and discern what interventions would enliven and challenge the space and your bodily habits -- a kind of Feng Shui Plus.

[22] Madeline Gins and Arakawa, *The Mechanism of Meaning*. In *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided Not to Die* (New York: Guggenheim Museum/Abrams, 1997).

[23] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction To Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague : M. Nijhoff, 1960).

[24] Walter Benjamin discusses the weakening of the ritual aura of works of art in "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (edited by Hannah Arendt, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1968). Benjamin did not fully perceive how the "original" Monet or Van Gogh would keep their aura and become objects of pilgrimage, and attract to blockbuster shows huge audiences who already had available reproductions of the originals.

[25] See Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), and *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

Image captions

Image 1: Patrons at a restaurant in Kyoto, taking the architecture for granted. (Photo by John Strong – unless otherwise indicated, photos are by David Kolb)

Image 2: A gallery at the North Jutland Museum of Art, Denmark, designed by Alvar Aalto.

Image 3: Street theater in Toronto, Canada.

Image 4: Alvar Aalto's early (1924) Workers Club in his hometown of Jyväskylä, Finland. (Image from the Great Buildings Collection CD.)

Image 5: Palladio's Villa Rotonda (1571), outside Vicenza, Italy.

Image 6: Bioscleave House (image courtesy of Joke Post/Arakawa+Gins).

Image 7: The interior of Le Corbusier's Villa la Roche outside of Paris.

Image 8: Map of Manhattan avenues and streets overlaid on incised paths at Arakawa and Gins's Yoro park.

Image 9: Traffic at Tyson's Corner, Virginia, and sprawl outside Madison, Wisconsin.

Image 10: Wooden architectural model of a student project at the University of Texas School of Architecture.

Image 11: Digital architecture presented in the virtual world Second Life, where the "camera" can give an aerial view and move around the player's avatar. (Image copyright Second Life, all rights reserved).

Image 12: *Multiple Horizons*, by David Kolb.

Image 13: A sign in a mall, and the living room in a show house.