The Poetics of Access Apparatuses in Contemporary Lyric Exhibition Spaces

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Abstract. Cultural architecture of exhibition spaces is a complex program, which oftentimes relies on dualities and contrasts that transcend the visual, material or functional experience, thus, sometimes imperceptibly creating a dialogue between the palpable and the intangible. As a fundamental architectural theme, that, in spite of extensive research, cannot be mathematically quantified, but only holistically experienced through an accumulation of senses, feeling, thought, imagination, personal memory and identity, the intangible may be regarded as an additional dimension only experienced in profoundly designed spaces that shelter an intrinsic emotion of architecture. These spaces of cultural, historical, social representation and remembrance succeed in "speaking" without using any "words", or even if they do, they come to rather represent the space between the "words"... The intangible aspect of representation spaces can only be analysed in regard with the human factor, as it is the one that, both through the process of creation and through the one of experimentation, doubled by the measure of time, can generate this additional dimension and lyric depth, transforming space into experience, mere visual assimilation into transcendental synaesthesia. The main feature of these spaces based on collective memory, emotions and reflexion beyond their tangible features is thus, given by their innate spatial and temporal identity. But when does this transformation from the epic to the lyric genre take place in architecture? Having this query in mind, we aim to study when and how this poetic dimension occurs, as cultural exhibition spaces are actual, physical buildings, part of tangible cities. Therefore, focusing on the boundary between the exterior and the interior of contemporary cultural spaces of exhibition, we intend to analyse and categorize types of access apparatus as part of welcoming gates into spaces with different types of immaterial depth and atmosphere. Generated through addition, subtraction, volume reinterpretation, contrast, dialogue, geometrical transformation or story-telling successive approach, accesses are the first tools the architect can use in order to design an experience. Being previously involved in collectives that designed innovative remembrance or exhibition spaces, our research will be based on both existing models and personally designed ones, as well as on both the experience of the user and the one of the architect, therefore, decoding the relationship between practice, empirical design and experiential environmental poetry. Focusing on the gateway between the pragmatic exterior and the interior intrinsic spatial consciousness, an expression of their dialogue will be revealed.

1. Introduction
The intangible in architecture represents a network of intertwining information, emotion and perception rather than a precise research area based on objective methods of analysis and classification. As it can only be validated through the presence and direct involvement of the human
factor, through their actual creative, emotional, spiritual and cognitive background, its creation (deliberate or incidental / accidental) and actual experimentation (deliberate or incidental / accidental) may represent a starting base for its analysis. Therefore, when static architecture that encompasses an innate poetical dimension encounters the human dynamic and touches one’s imagination, emotion, consciousness, an equation with rather many unknowns emerges. Moreover, as one of the factors include the subjective perception of each person coming in contact with the architectural monument, the actual result of the equation varies (e.g. some people may find inspiration in a visually dynamic, yet profound composition, impregnated with anthropological meaning, such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, designed by Peter Eisenman, while few others may not).

As the main focus resides, therefore, on the identification and possible classification of the determining factors of the equation that generates poetical architectural atmospheres, the first intention of the research process is to analyse the border point between ordinary, everyday architecture, and lyric one, that speaks to the senses, the ancestral memory, the emotion, the consciousness, rather than the intellect, by defining the air between the walls rather than the walls themselves... Because that is where architecture truly reaches the human frequency - when it speaks directly to their consciousness. “We perceive architecture through our own emotional sensibility - a form of perception that acts extremely rapidly [...]. Something inside us immediately reveals lots of aspects of that certain thing. We are capable of offering immediate appreciation, a spontaneous emotional response [...]. This capacity is very different from logical thinking [...]. We all know what the emotional response in meeting music is” (approximate translation from the Romanian version). [1]

The personal inclination towards this type of poetic architectural language was first consciously felt while experiencing the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance, more precisely, of the Recollection and Prayer Space designed by arch. Radu Mihăilescu, during the first academic year summer practice at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism in Timișoara, organized by arch. Drăgan Drăgan. This space with an intrinsic spatial-temporal consciousness, which makes its presence subtly felt while both physically and spiritually descending, became a defining part of the emotional dynamics of the place and made us truly understand the notions of poetry and theory of architecture studied during the first academic year, but even more so - feel them. It was as if architecture would encompass time, identity and sentiment, too, besides walls of stone, and that was when we realized that the actual air between those walls was the one that rematerialized the enclosed time and spoke to our presence. Materializing the indefinable and enclosing the intangible was, we felt, true architectural poetry.

“Stillness is the only thing in this world that has no form. But then, it is not really a thing, and it is not of this world.” [2] We identified hereby two main frequencies regarding the calmness of architecture that might speak to people and might be identified through their response, as follows: physical encounter generated by the stillness of architecture experienced through the movement of the human body in the hollowness of architectural space and non-physical encounter at the level of consciousness.

To begin with, in the lyric architecture of exhibition and memory, its stillness can paradoxically only be felt by moving through its generated space and air; that is where the human factor is defining in the equation, as only they can actually give voice (!) to the poetical stillness through their emotional response. Therefore, in our research, we remained still while facing Ainslie Murray's notes on air and the rhythm of breath, which defined the constant physical (although invisible) dialogue between our bodies and the environment: “by constantly transgressing boundaries, and through that transgression providing sustenance, we see that everything is in and of air, all materialities touching through air, the
immaterial materiality, conjured out of air, of breath and breathlessness. This notion provides a startling new precedent for conceptualizing a sense of intangible architecture.” [3]

On the other hand, besides the physical encounter, the stillness of architectural poetry also refers to the imaginative, emotional, spiritual dialogue between itself and its human user. In this case, the consciousness (human and architectural) meets and creates a unique dialogue, which is however mediated and translated into an interior monologue (that can only be generated through the human consciousness, as architecture remains petrified even if it recites through air and space). But which is the actual common language that they use? Beautifully described in Alain de Botton’s "Architecture of Happiness", objects and architecture may be encountered by humans in a frequency where they represent projections and virtues, with which people resonate; these “can, therefore, survive their temporal and geographical origins and communicate their intentions even after their initial public is gone. They can affirm their attributes independent of the flux and reflux of our unfairly generous or critical associations” (approximate translation from the Romanian version). [4]

All in all, the lack of objective constants related to lyric architecture, conducted our research towards experience-led analysis, in order for the intangible aspects of poetic spaces of exhibition and memory to be personally understood and felt, as to be able to identify some of the features of their intangible presence, both through physical movement and through an emotional response. And what better way to identify the indefinable than by analysing the border line between the ordinary and the extraordinary?

2. Access apparatuses between tension and mediation

While defining limits and borders between two worlds, entrances might develop spatial characteristics themselves, by either choosing to extend the features of one of the worlds and slowly projecting them onto the other (the transition involves time, too), by defining itself as an added alien element that generates a clear border (might involve time or not, depending on the entrance itself), or by existing through absence (the sharp, abrupt passing between the two worlds that does not involve time).

Therefore, regarding entrances “we recognize that they create some kind of in between, a breathing space between the outside and the inside - a place of preparation, where a person can change his frame of mind, and adapt to the different conditions: from the loud, noisy, public, vulnerable, exposed feeling of the street, to the private, quiet, intimate, protected feeling of indoors.” [5] Both the physical features of these borders and the involved time of their crossing might vary and thus might create different types of experiences, even if “this thing I […] call the transition is really nothing but a fiction: because what seems to be a thing is entirely defined by its field of relations anyway. [Yet] whether this formulation, as it stands, is correct or not, the pattern can be shared, precisely because it is open to debate, and tentative. Indeed, it is the very fact that it is open to debate, that makes it ready to be shared.” [5]

So, whether it mediates through presence by dint of transition and gradients, whether it creates tension through a materialized border, or through its absence, the entrance apparatus defines the boundary between two worlds, more accurately, between epic and lyric architecture in the analysed cases of the exhibition and memorial spaces.

3. Access apparatus classification

The classification criteria have been organically developed alongside the development of this study, allowing a broad observation of the typological diversity. By analysing the transformation of the experience between the felt atmosphere of the physically and emotionally completely objective exterior spaces and the one subjectively felt inside the studied architectural monuments, we identified three main potential typologies during the present study, as follows.
Firstly, we called the gradual transition between two worlds, which defined the absence of physical borders and the presence of time, the gradual entrance through exterior interstitial spaces, as a prolongation of public realms. Afterwards, we identified the gradual transition between two worlds that defined the absence of physical borders and the presence of time, as the sequential border entrance materialized by using successive exterior, interstitial or interior spaces. Lastly, we named the abrupt passing between two worlds, which defined the presence of physical borders and the absence of time, the gateway type of entrance. According to the aforementioned aim of the study, we, therefore, classified visited spaces of exhibition and remembrance through the established typologies (table 1).

### Table 1. Classification of case studies (visited spaces)

| Case study                          | Classification typologies       |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                    | Gradual (exterior interstitial spaces) | Sequential border (successive interior spaces) | Sequential border (successive interstitial spaces) | Sequential border (successive exterior spaces) | Gateway type |
| National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, 1964 – arch. Pedro R. Vázquez | X | X | X | X | X |
| Brisbane Contemporary Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia | X | X | X | X | X |
| Museum Colónias Guaraní, Lisbon, Portugal | X | X | X | X | X |
| City of Arts and Sciences, Valencia, Spain | X | X | X | X | X |
| Fòrum, Barcelona/ Fòrum, Fòrum, Barcelona, Spain | X | X | X | X | X |
| MAXXI Museum of the 21st Century, Rome, Italy | X | X | X | X | X |
| Ateneo di Modena, Modena, Italy | X | X | X | X | X |
| Nimea Contemporary Art Museum, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil | X | X | X | X | X |
| Kiasma Contemporary Art Museum, Helsinki, Finland | X | X | X | X | X |
| Kolumba Museum, Cologne, Germany | X | X | X | X | X |
| Jewish Museum, Berlin, Germany | X | X | X | X | X |
| MAS Museum, Antwerp, Belgium | X | X | X | X | X |
| TATE Modern, London, England | X | X | X | X | X |
| Contemporary Art Museum, Sydney, Australia | X | X | X | X | X |

### 3.1 Gradual entrance through exterior interstitial spaces, as a prolongation of public realms
The gradual transition between two worlds defines the absence of physical borders and the presence of time.

Case Study: National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, 1964 – arch. Pedro R. Vázquez

As the environment and the function of the interior space both inspire the creation of certain types of connections, the degrees of transparency and opacity are oftentimes directly related to the function, the climate but also to the way the architect wanted to create the dialogue between the visitors and the exhibits of the museum. The National Museum of Anthropology, surrounded by a large recreational area, which looks like an urban slab with excavated zones throughout the entire path, announcing the
visitor of the visual experience that will follow, is a playful composition of dynamic relationships between the interior and the exterior (Figure 1). Thus, the inner atrium area generates a direct visual connection to the interior courtyard, a central space defining the heart of the museum. As the chronological tour of the exhibition is extremely easy to follow, the courtyard space offers an oasis of peace and rest highly needed during the visit, because the users are required to interact with it during the whole visit. Once located in the central courtyard, one can see the independent volumes that accommodate each of the exhibition rooms. However, the tour is planned to be done in each volume independently, but also invites visitors to always return to the patio. In this interactive way, Ramirez Vázquez has designed a museum that encourages visitors to take a break once they leave any volume before continuing the tour. The main feature of the central patio is a giant roof that covers the place, which both defines the interior courtyard and protection from rain and sun, in order for the visitors to go from room to room without having to get influenced by the outside weather. So, in his own words, Vázquez decided to use “childish” ways in order to create the patio that is through a gigantic “umbrella” of 52 by 82 meters.

![Figure 1. National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City (visited 2019) [6]](image)

3.2 Sequential border entrance
The sequential crossing between two worlds defines the presence of both gradual physical filters and of time.

3.2.1 Sequential border entrance materialized by using successive exterior spaces. Case Study: Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, 1993 - arch. Renzo Piano

Although the main building entrance is not immediately visible from afar, an elongated pathway, partially grounded, partially suspended above water, attracts the visitors towards a designated entry zone (Figure 2). The trajectory is not obstructed by physical obstacles. However, the distance determines an initiatory process with profound symbolism related to space, place and time. The veil-shaped dynamic volume is a strong reference to the nautical function and location. The main axis leads gradually through the building, offering various degrees of support and coverage: base plan (the pathway), vibrant transparent roof (intermediate space) and opaque roof (inside the building). Once located in the centre of the volumetric composition, the main entrance is transversally situated relative to the main axis, therefore offering the visitor two choices: entering the museum or continuing the pathway towards the seaside landscape.

Symbolically, the architect has generated the building connection towards two perpendicular axes: a horizontal one, related to the sea and a vertical one, related to the sky. The two directions are gradually perceived in time, as the end perspective of the pathway continuously leads the visitor's attention towards the horizon, where the sky meets the sea.
3.2.2 Sequential border entrance materialized by using successive interstitial spaces. Case study: Museum of Primitive Arts, Paris, 2006 - arch. Jean Nouvel

“Everything is designed to evoke an emotional response to the primary object.” (arch. Jean Nouvel) [7] A novel intervention in the restrictive historical Parisian context, The Museum of Primitive Arts (Quai Branly or Jacques Chirac Museum), is simultaneously set in dialogue and contrast to its environment, as the historical façades dematerialize into a green façade and further into a fine transparent limit that reflects its surroundings. Set back from the urban alignment, the main building is completely hidden from pedestrians, waiting to be discovered only by those who intentionally enter the premises (Figure 3). The gateway, a subtle interruption of the glass limit, surprisingly leads to an oasis of vegetation and winding pathways that further invite towards promenade and discovery. In strong correlation to nature and primary senses, the path from the gate to the main entrance is not imposed, leaving a lot to intuition and perception.

There are three main filters interposed between the public space and the interior: physical (the transparent informative wall), visual (the park), temporal (the pathways). Located centrally within the site, the building is composed of a massive suspended slab, hosting colourful opaque volumes, a vibrant and extremely dynamic setting, referencing diversity. All the above-stated elements determine a certain distancing from the urban world, transposing the visitor into a wild, non-urban environment.

3.2.3 Sequential border entrance materialized by using successive interior spaces. Case study: Foro Boca / Events centre, Boca del Rio Veracruz, Mexico, 2017 - Rejkind Arquitectos

A real enrichment for the musical and cultural life of Boca del Río’s community, the Foro Boca events centre accommodates orchestral concerts, music performances and an after-school social development program for low-income children. The public area of the building is made up of a three-story height vestibule combining all the floors and voids in order to create accesses to each function (Figure 4). So, the main core of the building is actually a multifunctional interstitial space with diverse
features; it can thus host public events, art exhibitions, play and socialization areas for children, cafeterias and restaurants. The architects have designed sequential access through various interior zones, in order for the visitors to be able to reach the main functions.

![Figure 4. Foro Boca / Events centre, Boca del Rio Veracruz, Mexico (visited 2019) [6]](image)

3.3 Gateway type of entrance  
The abrupt passing between two worlds defines the presence of physical borders and the absence of time.

Case study: Kolumba Museum, Cologne, 2007 - arch. Peter Zumthor

An example of modesty and respect towards memory, history and urban site, the Kolumba Museum might pass unnoticed, as it is located on a secondary street in Cologne. The corner site marked by a taller volume is a landmark for the monumental building, that leaves no significant openings on the lower levels, other than the main entrance (Figure 5). The museum arises symbolically and constructively from the war ruins of a Gothic church, which also signal on the outside the religious theme of the exhibition. Treated as a compact mono-volume, with reduced textures and perforations, a symbol of both stability and fragility, the presence of a unique penetration point, enhanced by a dark textured surface, is characteristic for the chosen type of access apparatus.

![Figure 5. Kolumba Museum, Cologne, Germany (visited 2018) [6]](image)

4. Discussions and practical implementations

4.1 Interior courtyards as access landmarks proposal

An interesting approach when discussing access apparatuses for historical buildings with several apartments or functions is the way these entrances interact with the building, connecting the outside with the interior space. We analysed the potential of the interior courtyards of Timișoara's historical city centre in relation to the direct access from the public street. If we wanted to increase the visibility of these courtyards, we would have to firstly focus on access areas, the true interface of the buildings, a complex sequential filter. A specific characteristic of these typologies was the presence of a covered hallway, segregating public and private territories. Originally, the functional profile of historical interior courtyards was linked to daily household activities as well as communal meetings, social and cultural events. The patio offered a sheltered retreat from the busy urban life while maintaining a certain semi-public character as a space of transition between street and house [8]. This allowed for important space and time distancing to appear, relevant to the possible generation of an intimacy.
gradation. Nevertheless, the initial scope of the gangway was to isolate the residential function from 
the public space; but newly implemented public and semi-public functions, demanded a greater 
opening to the urban space, thus, transforming the access apparatus into a landmark or attractor, rather 
than a means of enclosure. The patio was a shared space and the gangway became an active link that 
allowed visual and physical penetration from the street to the active core of the building, an interaction 
territory of public and private actions. Whether the patio was used as an interaction means or just 
another empty ventilation and lightning system depended on the social degree of the neighbourhood as 
well as its visual attractiveness. Few interventions have been noticed during the last decade that 
impacted the character and functionality of interior courtyards. By introducing vegetation, a natural, 
dynamic element, oftentimes overlooked and forgotten in historical area interventions, these 
courtyards could become significantly more attractive, offering an oasis of nature in densely-built 
areas (Figure 6). Private or public investments could thus aim to enhance the aesthetics and potential 
not only of the buildings, but of the exterior spaces as well. In conclusion, open to the public and their 
direct beneficiaries, these spaces could offer pleasant semi-public destinations on the urban pedestrian 
track: urban furniture for short breaks, water features and various types of vegetation for shade, 
cooling and fresh air.

![Figure 6. Proposals for interior courtyards revitalization related to access apparatuses (before and after simulations made by the team members)](image)

4.2 Timișoreana Museum proposal

Further deepening our involvement in the analysis and creation of entrance apparatuses for exhibition 
spaces, we participated in a contest organized by the Timișoreana Beer Company, which owned the 
oldest beer factory in Romania and wished to transform it into an experiential museum [9]. The 
concept of the proposal involved reclaiming the initial factory buildings and creating an initiatory path 
through all production phases, including past and present ones. The access apparatus was developed in 
order for the visitor to both abruptly enter the interior scenographic world of the tour, and go through 
several sequential spaces before entering the main exhibition areas. Therefore, we used a weaving of 
access typologies so as to gradually invite and attract the visitor into the lyrical realm of intrinsic 
historical identity.

Concretely, the first phase of the access was a gradual entrance through exterior interstitial spaces, 
by prolonging the public space onto the beer factory property, made possible through the absence of 
doors or other physical limits. Afterwards, the gateway type of entrance materialized itself through a 
crease on the pavement, which generated an elevated metallic fold that invited visitors to descend and 
therefore, both physically and emotionally immerse themselves into the storyline (we used both the 
theme of the human movement through the air and the mystery of the descent that triggered the 
imagination). Being welcomed into an underground minimal space generated through rough textures 
flooded by light, the visitors would continue their journey of discovery by following the metallic strip 
on the floor towards the next nuance of the access apparatus: the monumental industrial elevator. The 
vertical interior void would continue the initiatory tour. The moving platform that would slowly glide 
towards the upper cupola and the natural light that flooded the upper level, would present the visitors’
projections about the history of the oldest beer factory in the country. Thus, after experiencing a complex entrance apparatus (Figure 7) that both physically and emotionally immersed the visitor into the poetical realm of the museum, the actual exhibition would begin.

![Museum sequential entrance apparatus](image)

**Figure 7.** Museum sequential entrance apparatus (simulations made by the team members)

4.3 Spiral of Silence proposal
The entrance apparatus theme was further developed through a competition proposal of a remembrance space, generated through clear architectural gestures, which would enable it to align itself to the emotion and spiritual intensity of the sober function. In addition to this, the sequential entrance apparatus was doubled by an antithetic exit apparatus defining the circular feature of the project, as described below. The concept of the proposal was based on continuity and eternal transformation, on the path between the materiality of our earthly life and the immateriality of the following unknown. The Spiral of Silence connected life and death, matter and space, Earth and Heaven. It consisted of two fundamental parts: the Under- and the Overground. The underground hosted “the return to dust” while organizing the burial ceremony along solemn paths and ritual spaces, which were intertwined with the access apparatus that described the physical and emotional descent. We imagined the family walking gradually from the exterior meadow into the underground sacred place, a circular primary **lieu** for the rite of passage. The journey involved both presence and time, while the atmosphere was grave, ceremonial and introverted.

After the ceremony, we imagined the family returning to the starting point and more than that, physically and emotionally ascending onto an exterior ramp, which defined the procession in contrast to the underground descent. The overground, therefore, enabled the “ascension of the souls”, while creating the Spiral of Silence (Figure 8), a structure on which the family, while standing on the highest point of the exterior ramp, would put their memorial diamond. Thus, by materializing faith, the spiral would open itself towards the sky and stars, directing the soul towards Heaven...

![Spiral sequential underground and overground entrance](image)

**Figure 8.** Spiral sequential underground and overground entrance (simulations made by the team members)
5. Conclusions

Entrance apparatuses represent a complex verse in spatial poems of architectural exhibition and remembrance and, therefore, deserve profound holistic studies based on actual physical encounters. While experimenting with the existing visited spaces and further implementing the identified typologies in personal experiences and projects, we drove our research further, thereby both generally emphasizing the necessity of its further study and personally joining a new journey of discovery of lyric architecture.

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