



Cadeau / Gift (1921) by Man Ray.

“There is a labyrinth which is a straight line.”

Borges

“But the universe to the eye of the human understanding is framed like a labyrinth, presenting as it does on every side so many ambiguities of way, so many deceitful resemblances of objects and signs, natures so irregular in their lines, and so knotted and entangled.”

Francis Bacon

ASSIGNMENT 3 – THERE IS A LABYRINTH WHICH IS A... (35%)

Labyrinth

Daedalus, whose name is associated with the legendary Labyrinth of Knossos, is the archaic figure of the ancient Greek architect. He was best known for his craftsmanship, which used art and

technique to create wonder, a divine moment.¹ Daedalus comes from the word *Daidala* means “to make” or “to place on.” In Homeric poetry, the word connotes mysterious powers, fear, admiration and seduction.² Daedalus built his legendary labyrinth to enclose the half-man, half-bull Minotaur. Umberto Eco identifies its unicursal design as the classic labyrinth in his categorization of labyrinths.³ In such a maze, there is only one path, waiting to be solved by a single thread in our hands—the thread of Ariadne, the Cretan princess who solved the Labyrinth riddle in the legend. For Eco, the second labyrinth type is the Mannerist labyrinth which proposes alternative choices, with all the paths leading to a dead point—all but one, that is, which leads to the way out. The final type of labyrinth is a network, in which every point may relate to any other point. A network cannot be solved the same way, since every one of its points can be connected with any other. There is an infinite number of corridors. This labyrinth is like the open-ended conception of knowledge found on the internet or in online encyclopedias.⁴

Jorge Luis Borges’ collection of stories and poems is also a collection of Labyrinths, covering and combining the various types with a creative approach. He makes the classic maze represent the human extensible fear of loneliness by talking about anxieties and the human fear of the Minotaur in his poem *The Labyrinth* (1969). He humanizes the monster for the reader, and changes the definition of the labyrinth. The moralist labyrinths in his stories are the pathways that his protagonists take without knowing their destinies as hero or anti-hero, as seen in *The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* (1944). The network labyrinth is the one he uses most frequently, for example in *The Aleph* (1945), *The Zahir* (1949), *The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths* (1939). He applies the idea of the labyrinth to an object, a word, or a book, to create a mysterious universe, constantly changing, full of surprises, observing it as human life, hiding and revealing its ideas. The Borgesian labyrinth exists everywhere. It just needs to be found.

Assignment 3

Inspired by your Borges story from Assignment 1 and 2, and relying on Daedalus’ techniques and craft, you are asked to make an object for the final assignment. Create the mysterious experience of your story through a material demonstration. The goal of Assignment 3 is not to design a classic labyrinth, but rather with a Borgesian approach to capture the atmospheric and mysterious qualities of your story that you have worked on until now, and reveal them through an object which poetically exhibits those qualities. Imagine the function of your object as a mystery – something which should be revealed through a process, as for many centuries machines and buildings were created to produce wonder.⁵ Imagine your object as a game, a puzzle which engages the audience. The architectural educators Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne insist that the essence of architectural design is deliberate “play.”⁶ Applying H.G. Gadamer’s hermeneutics to architecture, Snodgrass and Coyne argue that the design process takes place like a game or a dialogue between the

¹ Alberto Pérez-Gómez, “The Myth of Dedalus: On the Architect’s Metier,” *Timely Meditations: Selected Essays on Architecture*. Vol. 1, (Montreal: Rightangle International, 2016), 8.

² Ibid.

³ Eco was heavily influenced by Borges in writing his famous novel *The Name of the Rose* (1980), he integrates the Borges’ *Library of Babel* (1941) and concept of Labyrinths with his historical murder mystery.

⁴ Umberto Eco, *From the Tree to the Labyrinth: Historical Studies on the Sign and Interpretation*. Translated by Anthony Oldcorn. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 52-55.

⁵ Pérez Gómez, “The Myth of Dedalus: On the Architect’s Metier,” 6.

⁶ Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne, *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as a Way of Thinking*, London, New York: Routledge, 2006, 33.

architect and the specific design situation.⁷ Thinking of design as “play” or as a situation can help you define your Borgesian object in the broad sense of term not just as a physical model or an architectural sculpture: you may consider it a mini-installation, Video-art, or a cinematic approach relying on architectural qualities and atmosphere. You may even see your body as your material (See the work of artists such as Marina Abramović) by creating the mystery partly through body movements, dance and music, a ritual, or an art performance, to create a theatrical space for human interaction. Daedalus in Homer’s *The Iliad* is the founder of a dance and a ritual stage.⁸ Your object should rely on the poetic aspect of the materials you are using – the feeling of touching it, the texture, how it appears in shadow and light – by bringing forth a poetic understanding through the art of making inspired by Borgesian mysteries.

For better understanding the technique and art of Daedalus, please read “The Myth of Dedalus: On the Architect's Métier,” in *Timely Meditations: Selected Essays on Architecture*, Volume 1 by Prof. Pérez Gómez. Also read “* WATER WRITES ALWAYS IN * PLURAL” by Octavio Paz on the mysterious and mythical aspect of Marcel Duchamp’s artworks (both uploaded to the Google Drive Assignment 3 section).

Object Material Expectation:

- The object should be made of a single material (or mixed materials) such as metal, plexiglass, wood, or metal, for example. Other materials, media, and performances (such as dance, music, light, and projecting videos) are acceptable but you need to consult with your TA).
- For final submission and presentation study models are not acceptable. Your work will be evaluated based on the quality of your final object, which should be of gallery quality (The quality and detail of your work is important. Pay attention to the materials and your craft.)
- You should also add a separate sheet of 8.5” x 11” paper, describing the ideas involved (no more than 300 words).

MANDATORY MEETING WITH THE TA (5%)

Please sign up for the mandatory meeting with the TA in preparation for Assignment 3. The Google Sign-up sheets with possible time windows will be distributed after the Mid-term review on February 19. The discussions will take place on the following days:

Wednesday, March 4 between 11:30 – 1:30
Friday, March 6 between 9:30 – 12:30
Monday, March 9 between 9:30 – 1:30
Wednesday, March 11 between 11:30 – 1:30

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Pérez Gómez, “*The Myth of Dedalus: On the Architect's Métier*,” 8.

Participation is mandatory and counts for 5% of your final grade. Please bring study models, good quality sketches, some visual or theoretical references for your object to the meeting.

References

Borges, Jorge Luis. *Collected Fictions*. Translated by Andrew Hurley. New York: Viking, 1998.

Bergh, Wim van den and Mark Proosten. “Narrative as an Educational Approach: Literary Methods in Architectural Education,” in *Writing Place: Investigations in Architecture and Literature*. Edited by Klaske Havik. Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2016.

Eco, Umberto. *From the Tree to the Labyrinth : Historical Studies on the Sign and Interpretation*. Translated by Anthony Oldcorn. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Matyiku, Anca. “Project Daedalus: An Earnest Play of Building Between Storytelling and Metaphors Anca Matyiku” in *Writing Place: Investigations in Architecture and Literature*. Edited by Klaske Havik. Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2016.

Pérez Gómez, Alberto. *Timely Meditations: Selected Essays on Architecture*. Vol. 1, Montreal, Canada: Rightangle International, 2016.

Snodgrass Adrian and Richard Coyne. *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as a Way of Thinking*, London, New York: Routledge, 2006.