

## Inorganic Collections

**Carl Douglas**

Auckland's suburban streets are only intermittently places of public assembly, personal encounter, or common use. They are primarily part of an infrastructure of mobility and circulation. Pedestrian infrastructure is vestigial; cropped grass verges and trees provide a conventionalised landscape veneer. In planning rhetoric traceable to nineteenth century Europe, streets were reconceived as bundled technical systems that "bind the metropolis into a functioning 'machine' or 'organism'" (Graham and Marvin 2001: 53-55; Kostof 1994: 11). Auckland's streets are formed according to this model; but who and where are we when we're in them?

This paper will approach these spaces of coexistence as what Peter Sloterdijk (2011) calls "atmospheres". He gives the term "atmosphere" a broader sense than Böhme (1993), using it to refer not only to experiential environments, but to "air-conditioned" spaces in which coexisting and fragile subjects form. For Sloterdijk, as for Böhme, atmospheres are affective—"we find ourselves seized" (Böhme 1993: 119) not merely enclosed, by "air conditioning systems in whose construction and calibration it is out of the question not to participate" (Sloterdijk 2011: 46). The technics of the street are no less atmospheric, harbouring a very particular air conditioning that not only produces lived experience, but defines the terms of that experience. To inquire into the atmospheric of suburban streets is not only to describe their ambience, but also to treat them as a growth medium for a particular kind of coexistent urban subject.

This paper observes a suburban street event: inorganic waste collections. Regularly held by the Auckland Council to capture waste

that cannot be robotically whisked away from kerbside plastic bins, inorganic collections entitle households to put out "one small trailer load" of inorganic waste (Auckland Council 2013). Proscribed for collection are car parts, organic matter, building waste, but commonly piles reach monumental proportions, supplemented by illegal dumping. The streets become messy, strange and clogged, and new behaviours emerge. People drive the streets, moving from pile to pile, scavenging (and perhaps re-dumping). Concepts of function are overtaken by practices of making use. Many studies of waste have emphasised its correlation with consumption (Gille 2010), but this is to oversimplify the role of "practices of divestment" (Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe 2007) in suburban experience. Waste is not simply the husk of use-value, but a vital element in the formation of suburban subjects.

By disturbing the usual air-conditioning of the streets, inorganic collections provide an opportunity to discern its mechanics and conceive of alternatives.

## Digital Atmospheres: Rethinking public place in light of locative and pervasive communication technologies.

**Farzad Gharaghooshi**

Where digital technology is found in architecture it is typically treated as neutral infrastructure, deployed and managed alongside technical instrumental devices and other amenities. Sometimes, it strongly emerges in the architectural materiality exploiting its communicative features in theatrical digital streetscapes, facades and billboards. The resulting digital atmosphere can be interpreted like a desire town, "the town, which is nothing more than an immense script and a perpetual motion picture" (Baudrillard cited in Proto, 2006). Yet, as Baudrillard (2006) critically observed, that desire generates counterfeit realities - like Disneyland - and thereby manipulates the imaginary world of a society.

Architecture has traditionally elaborated poorly the problem underlined by Baudrillard. As a consequence, it now experiences difficulties in interpreting and articulating the changes wrought by digital technology on spatial practices, and in turn, misses the potential in the new imaginary, memory and emotion attending it (Zumthor 2006). Digital atmospheres, in their fusing of physical spaces with virtual ones, emphasises how the public sphere permeates architecture practices. Consequently this paper explores how 'digital atmospheres' constitute public space politically, culturally and emotionally. In particular, the paper considers how digital network potentially offer a democratic atmosphere of freedom and can support a political mechanism that - in a "Baudrillardian" sense - entangles the public and the entire society in a controlled virtual distraction from reality. To develop this point Habermas' (1987) public sphere theory will be utilised as a framework to rethink public place and for analysing

the impact of communication technology on architecture. William Mitchell (1995), Manuel Castells (2000) and Richard Coyne (2010), will similarly be drawn on.

Digital atmospheres are further deepened by mobile devices. The paper will analyse the affect of these atmospheres on sensible qualities of public places such as cafes and public squares. Breaking away from viewing technology as neutral infrastructure or commodified spectacle, this paper will interpret the new dynamics of sociability in light of the impacts of digital technification on the bodily experience of the urbanism and architecture of public place.