

Why white? Why do we surround ourselves with white walls? What is it about their smooth surface that is so captivating? Where did we get them from? When?

The identity of modern architecture seems inseparable from the whiteness of its surfaces. The very idea that there is such a thing as "modern architecture," a set of principles or practices that unite an otherwise heterogeneous group of architects and buildings, seems to turn on the white walls they share. The white walls are rarely discussed. On the contrary, the fact that they are ever there seems to render them unproblematic. At the very moment that modern architecture is perceived as such, the whiteness that made such a perception possible becomes unperceptible. In most, if not all, instances of commentary have referred to it in passing as "neutral," "blank," "clean," "white," "bright," "open," "light," "airy," "fresh," "so on—a generic rhetoric that has circulated uncritically through the discourse until these qualities have been tacitly associated with the basic agenda of modern architecture without being explored, let alone challenged. But clearly the white wall is far from neutral or silent. For the modern architect, it speaks volumes. Indeed, nothing is louder. The white wall is precisely not blank. Its apparent passivity is but the curious effect of a whole set of coordinated actions by the discourse, a concerted campaign that began as soon as the majority of architects started to reach for cans of white paint. In a striking twist, the white wall was precisely situated in the very moment of its surface.

The remarkable pathology underlying this twist only becomes evident when the elaborate negotiations that made the white wall successful in the first place are carefully tracked. These negotiations started toward the end of the nineteenth century and took around forty years to reach some kind of accord between all the different trajectories that constituted the emerging avant-garde. It was not until 1927 that the protagonists were able to collaborate on a unified image of modern architecture on the side of a hill overlooking Stuttgart. In the infamous Weissenhof Estate, which received over half a million visitors and unprecedented coverage in the professional and popular press, sixteen of the most accomplished architects presented a unified front by contributing to a small estate of exhibition houses. The only restriction was that they use flat roofs and white exterior walls. Photographs of the idyllic collection seemed to capture the look of an imminent future, a coherent environment defined by white walls. The idea that modern architecture is white was successfully disseminated to an international audience. The identity of this architecture had finally been located in its white surfaces, surfaces that assumed a monumental force, so much so that they continue to define modern architecture.

Introduction

...ing their architectural to remove the layer of paint in favor of the look of exposed concrete or stone. While the matter of white surfaces may have been dramatically reduced, their definitive role remains. If anything, it becomes more decisive. Each such surface is ever more intensely charged. So intensely, it would seem, that the discourse cannot face them.

Then, this seemingly innocent image of white architecture required that the white walls of contemporary art, the polemical simplifications of black and white photography, and a sustained labor by an emerging historiography to ignore the diversity of colored surfaces presented at Weissenhof and by most "modern" buildings. Modern architecture was never simply white. The image of white walls is a very particular history. It is the mark of a certain desire, the promise of an invisible and unspoken obsession. Though the image is extremely powerful, it is also extremely fragile. It is vulnerable and yet is constantly protected and preserved by multiple institutional practices. It is almost always looked at in passing, lightly, obliquely, held in the periphery of the discourse, if not the blind spots that occupy its center. The image here will be to explore the way that it has been constructed by various means, the histories and twisted threads out of which it was woven, many of which were drawn out of architectural- and art-historical course and yet continue to structure contemporary debates. Throughout the years in which the white wall was slowly invested with an extraordinary charge, very particular theories about whiteness were deployed, theories with idiosyncratic agendas and effects that need to be explored in some detail.

This does not involve rewriting the history of modern architecture. Rather, it involves looking into some of the blind spots, interrogating the historiography for what is routinely left out of the picture. Or, more precisely, what is left out in order that there can even be a picture in the first place. As to looking at what is left out—the traditional frame is a possibility to think about the white surfaces that situate white walls through the middle of it. Rather than construct a new history, it is a matter of studying the unique structure of a key subject that constantly works its way across the discussion of modern architecture, orchestrating much of that discourse while rarely becoming evident within it. Rather than bring new archival material to the surface, it is a matter of looking at the evidence lodged in the public record, sitting right there in front of us, nestled between the lines of the all too familiar literature, hidden only because it is so close to our eyes. To see it simply involves letting the pages speak for themselves. We do not have to dig to find it. For all, to explore the white wall is precisely to explore the surface itself. The surface is far from superficial. Details matter. Textures are telling. The story of the white wall begins by the detail on its surface, the detail of its surface.

Introduction

'After all, to explore the white wall is precisely to explore the surface itself. But the surface is far from superficial. Details matter. Textures are telling. To tell the story of the white wall here is to dwell on nuances...'



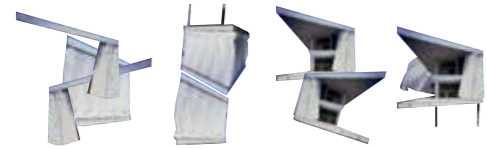
The 3-in-1 is a unisex collection that is both multi-functional and environmentally conscious. It presents a collection of outfits that can be worn throughout the day and within various different situations - from classic basic staples through to sturdy woven layering and waterproof extras for use in the elements.

The inspiration for this work comes from architectural references - these being the communication between exterior and interior, layering, shelter and protection. The juxtaposition between the hard and soft, the fluid and the structured is echoed through the material combinations and contrasting forms.

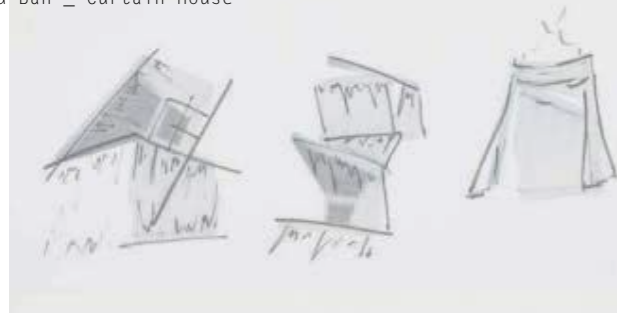
The collection blends knitwear and woven garments within a neutral colour palette to ensure these compositions become the focus without distraction - as a whitewashed or concrete wall would show its textures upon the surface.

THE 3-IN-1 : DAILY CONSCIOUS LIVING





Shigeru Ban _ Curtain House



Handwritten notes in the notebook: "Handpicking colors upon a visit - only the materials - I am exploring the idea in Shigeru Ban's 'Curtain House', 'Curtain House', 'Curtain House', 'Curtain House', 'Curtain House'."

Handwritten notes in the notebook: "The fabric looks a little like a 'curtain' - I would like to explore this in other forms - paper - paper panels to provide the various shape / form and also 20m x 10m fabric sheets to be used / cut to the exact sizes."

EXPOSURE + CONCEALMENT



Cotton + lycra _ biodegradable nylon