

— HEAD  
Genève

*Intimacy Exposed:  
Toilet, Bathroom, Restroom*

Interior Design  
Conference



Monday December 10, 2018, 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm  
Tuesday December 11, 2018, 9:00 am – 6:30 pm

New Campus, Le Cube  
Avenue de Châtelaine 7, 1203 Geneva

## *Intimacy Exposed: Toilet, Bathroom, Restroom*

“Toilet” is a euphemism, the result of a figure of speech rather than metonymy.

In contemporary Western societies, this ultimate area of privacy found its name through a process of extension and social exchange. Our social need for polite and indirect expressions to designate a place dedicated to evacuation in a public context (e.g. trains, buildings and open spaces) transformed what was initially a piece of fabric into an item of furniture first, then into a room, and finally into a place filled with other things.

It was only once the facility was incorporated in a room that the “petite toile”—that linen lining with lace resting on a shelf where vases, brushes and any other item required for personal hygiene were arranged—became a “toilet”.

Because of this transition from a two-dimensional item into an object, then a room, and finally an environment—which often acts as a meeting place—the toilet is a formidable tool to reflect on the current circumstances of interior architecture.

Roberto Zancan, Scientific Deputy of the conference

14:00–14:15

Jean-Pierre Greff, Director, HEAD–Genève

Javier Fernandez Contreras, Head of the Interior Design Department, HEAD–Genève

Greetings + Introduction to the seminar

### Section 1

Chairman: Roberto Zancan, HEAD–Genève

14:15–14:45

Roberto Zancan, Lecturer, HEAD–Genève

*Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste...*

The scientific introduction to the seminar will address the research topic on various levels: bathrooms and toilets in the social consciousness, public and private health as an ongoing issue in contemporary societies, and the specific contribution of interior designers.

14:45–15:30

Alexandra Midal, Professor in Design History and Theory, HEAD–Genève

### Contemporary plumbing

How could one not compare a shop bought urinal by Marcel Duchamp with a bidet by Le Corbusier taken from an industrial bathroom catalogue? The architect chose a violin-like bidet from Maison Pirsoul, a photo of which he published in the journal “L'Esprit Nouveau” between 1923 and 1924, i.e. six years after Duchamp sent Fountain, a white porcelain urinal, to the Society of Independent Artists exhibition in 1917. A contrast between the urinal that “furnishes” the street and the bidet that “furnishes” the house: the urinal collects urine, the bidet, secretions. Both are an expression of the secret plumbing that fits in with the productive process of “creative loss”.

15:30–16:00

Philippe Rahm, Lecturer, HEAD–Genève

*A gradation of intimacy: about two recent projects by Philippe Rahm architects*

The lecture focuses on a project by Philippe Rahm Architects, i.e. the construction of nine toilets in Taichung's Central Park in Taiwan which proceeds from a dissociation of layers of protection and perception, each of which shift from the outside to the inside, creating a concentric circle of boundaries, from the most public to the most private, that define limits relating to the ground, the light, the sound, taking shelter from the rain, and the view.

16:00–16:15

Coffee Break

16:15–16:45

Michael Jakob, Lecturer, HEPIA and HEAD–Genève

*On displacement. Toilets are very special places.*

Toilets are very special places. The processes that relate to what happens on the inside participate in a dialectical system that regulates the relationship between the inside and the outside, the pure and the impure. Some historical examples of 20th century architecture and art highlight the ambiguities of toilets, considered as social constructions.

16:45–17:30

Joel Sanders, Adjunct Professor, Yale University, New York

*From Stud to Stalled! Social Equity and Public Restrooms*

The lecture will trace the evolution of two decades of work on gender, identity and design from the publication of his book of essays *STUD: Architectures of Masculinity* (1996). The talk will look at shifting cultural conceptions about masculinity, femininity and LGBTQ rights over the past twenty years. Sanders will present *Stalled!*, a design research project that takes national controversies about transgender access to public restrooms as a point of departure to create inclusive public restrooms that meet the needs of people of different ages, genders, religions and disabilities.

### Special Events

17:30–18:15

Louise Lemoine et Ila Bêka, Filmmakers, Paris

*Spaces of intimacy*

*A conversation about toilets and films featuring Javier Fernandez Contreras and Roberto Zancan*

Toilet—Bathroom—Restroom. Musing on the many meanings and themes associated with this highly intimate and domestic place, Bêka & Lemoine will address the various ways their own work explores and translates into images physical, and by extension psychological intimacy. To that end, they will rely on a few iconic scenes taken from classic films as well as excerpts from their own productions.

18:15–19:00

Javier Fernandez Contreras, Head of HEAD–Genève's Interior Design Department

*Presentation of the new MA in Interior Design (to be launched in September 2019)*

## Section 2

Chairman: Javier Fernandez Contreras, HEAD–Genève

9:00–9:45

Renaud Haerlingen, Founder of Rotor Deconstruction, Brussels

*ROTOR: Field Reporting*

Renaud Haerlingen will address recent toilet-related works by Rotor as well as Rotor Deconstruction's current research which focuses on up-scaling the refurbishment of re-use toilets. Among the projects presented: toilets stripped from a commercial office building, a toilet project from a community centre, toilets from the decommissioned IOC headquarters, toilets from a luxury residence in Gland, and toilets from the hospital in Prato.

9:45–10:30

Catherine Ince, Chief Curator, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

*A dancer, a poet and an artist: the seductive story of an 'all glass' English bathroom*

This talk will expose the intriguing history of one of the most extraordinary objects in the V&A's collection: an avant-garde glass bathroom designed in 1932 by the artist Paul Nash, commissioned by surrealist art patron Edward James for his wife Tilly Losch, the Austrian dancer and film star.

10:30–11:15

Mariana Siracusa, Founder and Curator, SPAZIO Gallery, Milan

*Hygiène populaire*

A topic (toilets) which nobody wants to discuss makes for a very appealing exhibition! Curators will take advantage of the public's voyeuristic inclinations to stretch the topic, include historically-relevant material, and develop a reflection on contemporary design. Should a possible exhibition take place in an architecture gallery in Milan, the curator could start the narrative in the 1970s by showing plans of a "casa a ballatoio" (public housing) and a Gabriele Basilico photograph of a latrine in the same building. This somewhat disturbing yet familiar picture for the Italian public would provide a good starting point for the exhibition to show how much things have changed, in architectural and social terms, to get to the white freestanding bathtubs advertised in so many contemporary magazines.

11:15–11:30

Coffee Break

11:30–12:15

Ignacio G. Galan, Assistant Professor, Barnard College-Columbia University, New York

*Crip Bathrooms*

This lecture will consider the radical experiences of the Centre for Independent Living at Berkeley, among other reasons, to challenge the role of the bathroom in the normalisation of needs and bodies and the formalisation of intimacy. As an alternative to these, it will discuss assistance, community, belonging and the politics of disability in the bathroom.

12:15–13:00

Eva Gil Lopesino, Architect, Founder of elii [architecture bureau], Madrid

*Spaces for body cares*

Some of elii's projects develop the idea that our everyday lives are like a soap opera. Consequently, spaces like toilets and bathrooms for example have been designed like a transformable stage, enabled for the choreography, rehearsal, action and fiction of daily life. The spaces are equipped to intensify the performing experience of the users' bodies, to test and question their social roles and limits, rehearse their shared imageries, test their subjectivity and explore the potential of the ordinary.

13:00–14:30

Lunch Break

## Section 3

Chairmen: Roberto Zancan and Javier Fernandez Contreras, HEAD–Genève

14:30–14:50

Pierre Schaefer and Béatrice Deslarzes, Artists, Founders of the Bea Foundation for Young Artists, Vessey

*"Les cacares", an ancestral institution*

These facilities are an integral part of old Swiss mountain homes. They are located outside, close to the stables: a wooden box, covered by a plank with a hole and a lid. No heating, no light, no water. Access is protected by a wide roof. The location means all foul smells are kept out of the house and the latrines are thus easier to empty and clean.

## Special Events

14:50–15:10

**Maria Maddalena Margaria, Editor-in-Chief at INNER MAGAZINE**

*Public Toilet as a place for Art*

Everything began a century ago when Marcel Duchamp featured in an art exhibition with an upside-down urinal signed and dated with the trade mark “R. Mutt, 1917,” which he entitled Fountain. This was the first of many artistic intrusions, and toilets have since become the object of art itself. A few decades ago, we saw another form of exchange between toilets and art: In the ‘70s, underground culture, expressed through graffiti and street art, began using public toilets as a canvas. Nowadays, there are various examples, temporary or not, where public toilets are transformed into art galleries. This talk aims to understand what all this means for interior architects in terms of design and future developments.

15:10–15:30

**Andrés García Pruñonosa, Architect, Universitat Politècnica de València**

*Dawn the hall to the right? A glimpse into Le Corbusier’s bathrooms*

From a transversal perspective on the architectural work of Le Corbusier and other relevant contemporary architects, the bathrooms of a series of 20th-century homes will be analysed, focusing on their spatial impact on the overall layout of the home. The aim is to show how domestic devices, which are seemingly restricted to their functional scope, are actually pioneers in a way, in the organisation of the domestic layout.

15:30–15:45

Coffee Break

15:45–16:45

Group discussion between guest speakers and young researchers

16:45–17:00

**Roberto Zancan, HEAD–Genève**

*Closing speech and scientific summary of interventions and papers presented*

17:00–17:30

**Franco Paracchini, Metis Presses**

*Presentation of the book “L’architecture par l’intérieur”*

17:30–18:30

**Jean Pierre Blanc, Director Villa Noailles, Hyeres**

*Presentation of the book “Stéphane Boudin-Lestienne et Alexandre Mare, Charles et Marie-Laure de Noailles. Mécènes du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle”*

***Intimacy Exposed: Toilet, Bathroom, Restroom***

A conference organised by HEAD–Genève's Interior Design Department

10–11.12.2018

Scientific deputy: Roberto Zancan

Organisation: Javier Fernandez Contreras, Valentina De Luigi, Anne-Lise Ollier

With the participation of Anne-Catherine Sutermeister, Research Institute  
for Art and Design (IRAD), HEAD–Genève

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