

THROUGH *CHORA*:
AN OFFICE, DAYCARE, GYM, AND RESTAURANT,
IN SURREY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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ABSTRACT

The term *Chora* was introduced by Plato in *Timaeus*, where Plato explains the universe through rational and metaphysical principles in his account of the genesis. In Plato's drama of the genesis, the architect of the Cosmos or the *Demiurge* must reproduce the *Forms* or the ideas of the universe as accurately as possible and for this he turns to *chora*. Plato establishes a series of binary oppositions that have marked Western thought: being and becoming; the intelligible and the sensible, the ideal and the material, the mind and the body, and the divine and the mortal. These oppositions are complicated where a mode of transition or passage is made by devising a third or intermediate category, *chora*. *Chora* has no existence or being, it is a mass of neutral plastic material or a tabula rasa upon which differing impressions are stamped. It is designated by its function to hold and nurture where it is positioned between being and becoming as the nurse of all becoming and change. In the reproduction necessary for genesis, Plato likens the receptacle to the mother and the *Demiurge* and reproduced forms to the father. *Chora* is a "neutral mother" leaving no trace or contribution but rather allowing the product to speak indirectly of its paternal creator without acknowledging its incubator. Feminists critique applications of Plato's myth that deny the gendered construct of the tale of *Timeaus*. In later applications of Plato's *chora*, such as that by Peter Eisenman at Parc la Villette, Paris, the *Demiurge* and the forms remain male, but *chora* is not female but rather an abyss, or void. The feminist applications of concepts of *chora* in architecture, semiotics and philosophy, often involve the reinstatement of the feminine in places where it has been disenfranchised. In these areas of inquiry where the rational has been the primary basis of explanation particularly in philosophy, *chora* as a principle offers an alternative. It is not chaos, but it is a space that makes room for intuition as well as reason, the body as well as the mind. *Chora* is used in this work as a study of relationships; a careful positioning where the inbetween is considered as a positive space. Rather than attempt to pin a form on

chora, the thesis rather looks to how *chora* works through movement, transition, simultaneity, slippage, repetition and difference. A system is established that is seemingly open ended and nonspecific. Fissures and creases in the system become the place where *chora* happens; what has been formerly concealed is now revealed through the frame of the building. Orientations shift, oppositions blend or flip, outside becomes inside, and the opaque becomes transparent or reflective. The fissures reveal more about the building than is initially perceivable; the underpinnings of infrastructure from parking to subterranean inhabitation, to a children's playroom, to a stream running adjacent and passing underneath the building. The creases are the places where the majority of social activity occurs as evident in ; the communal spaces for offices, the daycare, and the shared entrances to parking and conference areas.

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