Auguste Rodin: *La Cathédrale*, 1908 (image Daniel Stockman)

This, then, is the fate of art when its unity is destroyed. It collapses into the arms of the photographer and the engineer or fades away into the land of dream.[1]

[1] Hans Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis: The Lost Centre*, trans. Brian Battershaw (Hollis and Carter, 1957), 94.

Christian Frost: Fragment, Material and Craft: A continuing tradition

In his 1948 work *Verlust der Mitte*,[2] Hans Sedlmayr[3] suggested that the growing use of the human form (and fragments of it) within art and sculpture as an 'independent artistic theme' was the result of the individual artist taking control, of what can be judged as the content of art, away from the institutions that had traditionally controlled it. And, as a result, he argued, the artist and the art produced both 'emancipate[d] themselves from nature, that is to say, from man'.[4] This argument comes in a section of the book entitled '*The Significance of the Fragment*' where Sedlmayr describes this 'fragmentation of themes' as decay, and representative of a belief that the unity of art and society evident in earlier times, was now lost.[5] In his writings and in studio Dalibor transformed this idea of the fragment, in relation to, amongst other things, phenomenological hermeneutics and Surrealism, into a part of a more restorative process, adapting what Sedlmayr saw as decay into the possibilities for representation to articulate a more complete understanding of the world.

The arrangement of my project for the Surrealist museum/metal workshop from Dalibor Vesely's studio in 1989 was an attempt to bring some of these themes of reconciliation into sharper focus through the articulation of the praxis of metalworking (both plating and forging). Hierarchies of order—building from the earth, through rooms of transformation by fire and water, to the diffusion of light—were articulated in a cave setting where the craft of the metalworker (alchemist) could be understood in relation to the transformative qualities of much Surrealist art.

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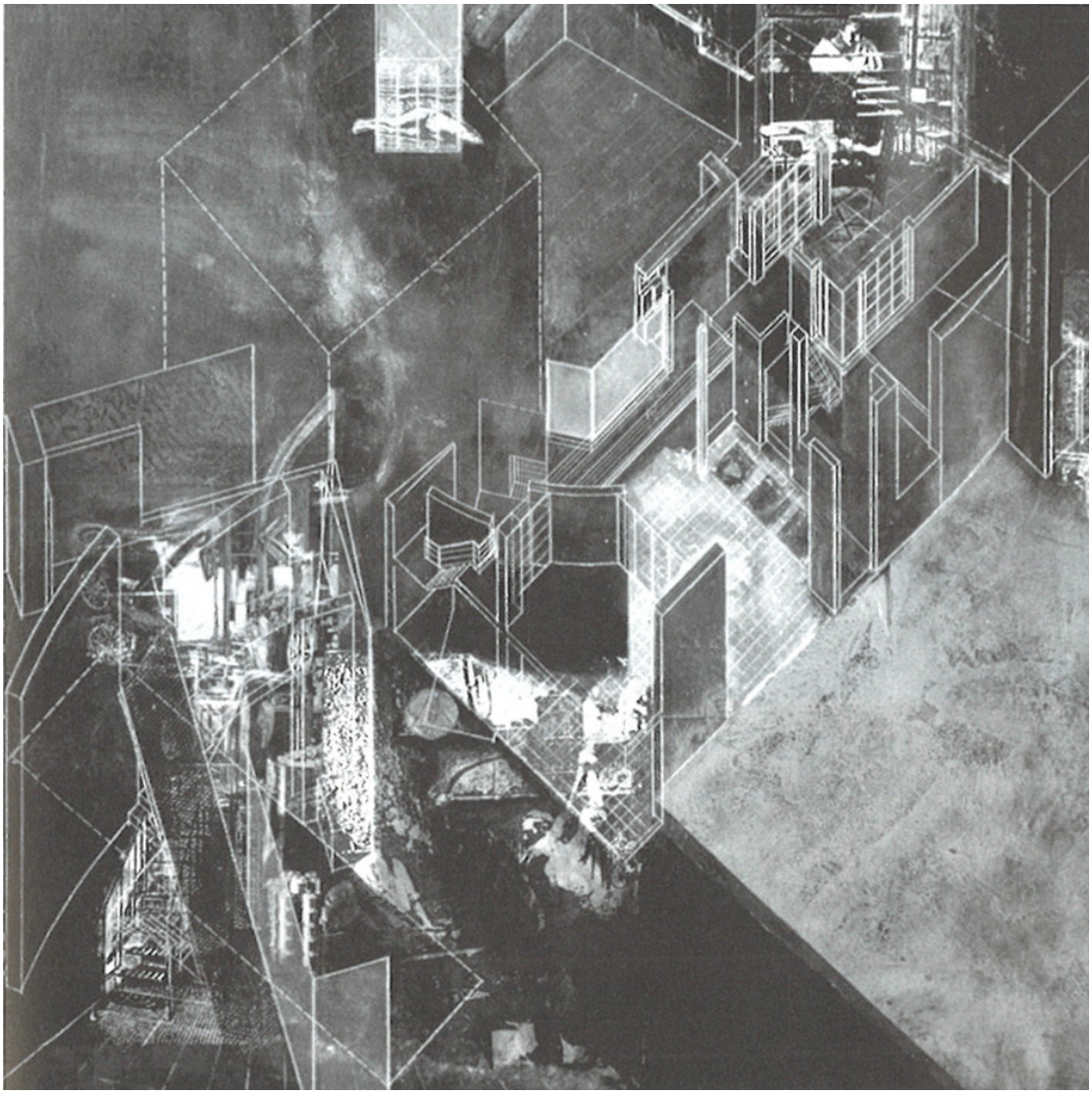
[2] The full title is: *Verlust der Mitte: Die bildende Kunst des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit*. Translated as Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis*.

[3] Hans Sedlmayr was one of Dalibor Vesely's PhD supervisors

[4] Sedlmayr, *Art in Crisis*, 115.

[5] This idea of a loss of unity emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in German Romanticism



Christian Frost. Spitalfields project, museum of Surrealist Art, composite study. 1989.

'In a proposal for a museum of Surrealist art, which could be treated as a collection of neutral fragments, each part of the museum is handled instead as a segment of a situation linked metaphorically with other segments. The process of metaphorical interpretation begins in the workshop for metal plating situated in the lower part of the museum, exploiting a deep analogy between the transformation of materials and the poetic metamorphosis in the artworks.'[6]

[6] Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: The MIT Press, 2006), 349.

These hierarchies, formulated using metaphorical juxtapositions (material and spatial), were designed for the craftsmen but also, because the rooms engaged with paths across the site and through the city, for city workers curious enough to enter this world of heightened ambiguities.

At the heart of this architectural collaboration[7] is the idea that the reconciliation of architecture, with deep structure of the latent world of which it is a part, only occurs through praxis, or the representation of praxis (*mimesis of praxis*),[8] in that action in the world is always more revelatory than the object alone and hence holds more potential for reconciliation. The drawing, as well as the building it represents, both strive to represent this duality—hence its composite structure; the drawing as an object, like the building, is incomplete.

More recently, working in schools of architecture with extraordinary workshop facilities, collaborations with students have focussed more on the possibilities of understanding the same dilemma through making, shifting the surreal/material axis more towards the praxis inherent to material/craft. Students do not become 'masters' of a trade but engage in a process of learning that in itself offers redemptive possibilities:

> … the craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that shape our dealings with others.[9]

In the Charlotte Street: Civic Craft project completed in my studio with Holly Galbraith at Birmingham City University the student returns to the metalworking theme but sees the possible benefits of the relationship to the city through the development of the casting skill itself. Small casting rooms link together with a set of community bedrooms and a large hall for dining and meeting. Above this room is a single study that is reached by a path between the hall and the roof

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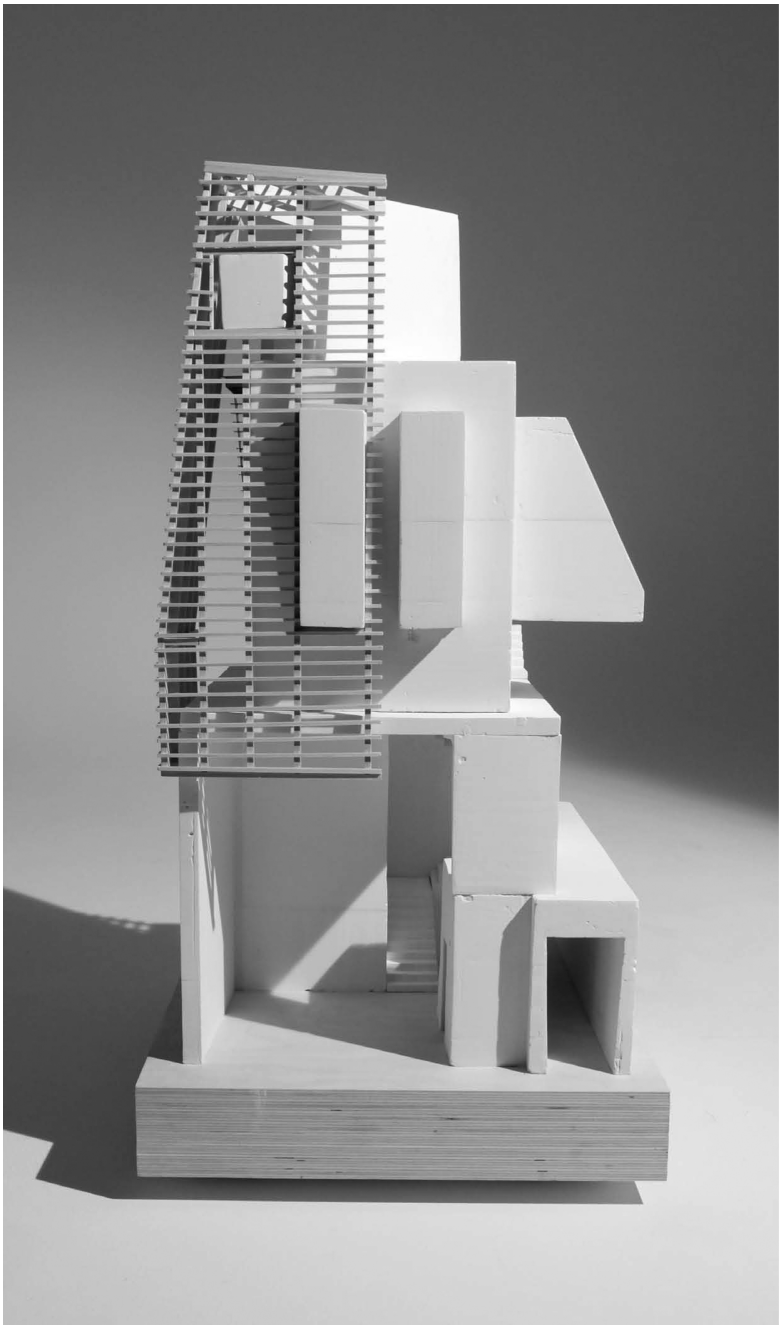
[7] Dalibor always described studio projects thus.
[8] See Aristotle Poetics
[9] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (Penguin UK, 2009), 289.



Alex Billingham, Charlotte Street House: Civic Craft,
Tectonic Study, Plaster wood and metal. 2015

Dear Bernhard Heiliger,
The hours in your workshop—I am pleased to say—have opened my eyes to what your current work is able to say to the people of today and those to come.
To say means to show.
And you show the emergence of the earth into the earthly sky still veiled from us.
Your works no longer present—they place us in a residence between the earth and sky—the *movement itself* of such a growing into the liberating free space, and precisely *this*, is made manifest—a "transfiguration" (not an idealization) of being—from out of a concealed source.
The secret dwells in your workshop—
A friendly greeting.
Yours,
Martin Heidegger

allowing the tectonic qualities of the architecture to manifest the transition from *vita activa* manifested on the ground to the *vita contemplativa* in the tower. In making the model the student developed skills in casting different materials in order to understand more about the transformative qualities of the casting process.

By using casts of rooms as well as walls around rooms the final tectonic study is incomplete but articulates the difference between being in a room or in a different place (like inside Brunelleschi's dome for Santa Maria della Fiore). Unlike most students' castings of 'space' which have, since Rachel Whiteread's *House* (1994), suggested that the cast of a room offers another way to understand the intentional space of a project, here the space being described is the 'space between', the process through which the creator shifts from the active to the contemplative; the shift between 'space in' and 'space around' is apposite and attempts to describe, in a different way, the complexity alluded to in the composite study of 1989.

That the mode and methods of representing similar conditions (in 1989 and 2015) should adapt, develop and change is recognition of the success of the studio teaching Dalibor instigated; it indicates a '… preservation amidst the ruins of time'.[10] There is change from Alois Riegl,[11] through Hans Sedlmayr, to Dalibor Vesely, Peter Carl and a generation of Cambridge Students but the continuity survives as tradition. As Hannah Arendt says:

> Insofar as the past has been transmitted as tradition it possesses authority: insofar as authority presents itself historically, it becomes tradition.[12]

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[10] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. William Glen-Doepel (Sheed and Ward, 1979), 257.

[11] Sedlmayr, who had been supervised by Max Dvořák, used the writings of Riegl as ground for the development of the *New Vienna School of Art History*.

[12] Hannah Arendt introduction to Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, (London: Pimlico, 1999), 43.