

**Smoke through walls**

a publication by team2

*english translation*



**There is no outside – but the milieu.**

What we call milieu is not at all a stable room. It is a breeding ground, without a concrete limitation between the inner and the outer space. The walls of this room are porous in both directions. The milieu creates no exterior space, out of current ratios. Still it has the potential to the other, probably subversive or new. The existence of the milieu provides the possibility to treat the common ratios instead of forgetting them as unalterable. Smoke has the quality to spread. For the cultivation of the milieu, people, ideas and utopia are needed. Relevance can only be produced by those involved.



Starting freshly from the definitions: Can you explain to me the difference between clouds, fog and smoke?

In any case, they're all ephemeral. Fog moves more in the width, is a flat thing. Clouds are high and compact, and smoke has a scattered character. It is everywhere. One could still imagine to walk on clouds, this is not the case for smoke.

And the opposite of smoke, what would that be?

Concrete.

Is there a moment, in which smoke stiffens?

I would look at it from another angle: It is something firm that transforms into something vaporizing, not hard.

What does this moment of transition look like?

The example of tobacco would work here. Or steam. There is this moment of dissolution, burning or evaporating, in which there is a transition to the non-form. The activity behind it is interesting: Burning, condensing.

The moment in which there is enough movement for flying.

What are the characteristics of smoke?

It is scattering, transparent, dissolves and is consequently impossible to grasp. Temporary containers are the ones in which smoke can be kept. I'm thinking of a soap-bubble or a balloon.

So, the smoke is everywhere and nearly transparent. And what about the dense, cloaking smoke?

Atmospheric and suffocating.

Is smoke traitorous?

Yes. The aroma stays, when the smoke itself is already gone. And especially if we think about burning, smoke is actually super intense.  
Is it absorbing or 'taking space' that describes the smoke best?

There is no either/or in this case.

Perfidious, muffling, entering, staying outside.

*Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach are publishers and owners of two bookstores in Paris in the 1920s. In the back room of Monniers bookstore „La Maison des Amie des livres“, that is also a library, Gisèle Freud takes photographic portraits of the Parisian artists and writers. Freud took this picture, too. Monnier and Beach can be seen here together with James Joyce (r.t.l.). His book Ulysses has been published by them.*

Can you behave with smoke, take a position vis à vis?

Yes. In a ritualised way for sure. There are many examples of smoking and burning in that. It's always a moment of exchange, maybe this is the relation to smoke. Breathing in and out.

Something is consumed first and made visible by breathing it out. Is there a center or a border of smoke?

If there is, then only really shortly before not being identifiable anymore. The border is maybe the time or the infinity of space. I'm thinking of smoking in terms of a process, always in transition: The fire consumes the tobacco, the smoker breathes in, absorbs the smoke, and then? When breathing out it's still there – and then?

An intense relation of exchange between the smoker and the world. But isn't breathing the same? What is it about?

There is some additional thing to the basal correlation between me and the air. A third part, material, maybe the way it smells.

Would we need, said figuratively, more smoke in everyday life?

I think so. The smell of it is also important. But this is also the part that is problematic in society. The electronic cigarettes are a good expression for that. They still smoke, but don't smell.

But you don't smoke?

No. The smoke cannot go through walls by itself. Seen from the physical balance of power, it cannot do anything in front of the wall. But then it starts to spread and suddenly, there is a possibility. In its fickleness, smoke unites many aspects, always several. This keeps him active.

What is a wall?

A wall is primarily a surface. It is supposedly solid, interrupting a movement, but also makes it possible to locate. I can take a distance to it.

So, a separating, maybe even disturbing character?

Also. If I want to go on, the wall is disturbing, if I am searching to locate myself, she can be – opposed to smoke – a stable counterpart. I can even lean against it. In this case it reveals its configuration/workmanship.

Let's imagine several walls. Can a wall create privacy?

Therefore, you would have to really rely on the full density of the wall and I think that's not possible. There are several ways for things to go over or through the wall. Assuming the total impenetrability is only possible if the construction of the wall is there from the beginning, it has always been there and there is no doubts about it.

What is the difference between one wall and many walls, a room?

The room is a way of applying the walls. It is something very pragmatic and finally deconstructable into several walls. A room, that is simply several walls that stand in an angle to each other.

Do you think about a door when you think about a wall or is this superfluous in your imagination?

To me, the relation between wall and person is more important. A shift in scale. The room between me and the wall, the imagined room behind, the question where the wall begins and ends. The door would be a metaphor for intersection of the wall.

*Abundant balls in the 1980s New York. Epic gowns and a dance ("Voguing") that manages to question common heterosexual and white categories. The voguers go wild and perform the poached gestures of the models in fashion magazines. Everyone can be the lawyer, beach girl, schoolboy or jockey. Real realness. Outside, Inside, Underground? This is a still from the film Paris is burning by Jennie Livingstone.*

The room behind the wall always has to be taken into account. When standing in front of the wall, this room is always part of the constellation. What's its configuration, also in relation to the space in front of the wall?

I will describe an exemplary constellation: Several things lay on a table. There is a grey cardboard that I can put on top of the things. Seen from above, they disappear in that moment. Is they are right under the cardboard or if they fell through the table, I cant tell for sure. But the cardboard could also be endlessly thick or there could be a receiving space, a container under it.

To what extend does the wall make the space behind the wall something else?

The wall makes this space actually possible, it is projected area of imagination. And it stimulates imaginations and thoughts about what is behind. The wall has to be perceived as such to be able to think about what is behind.

And what is inside the wall?

One or several layers of wall material of course. They can be light, solid, flexible, thin or heavy.



*Nathalie Clifford Barney drew this plan. The Salon de l'Amazone is the space created by her at 20, rue Jacob in Paris. An intellectual milieu, full of relish in the 20s in Paris.*

How far does the Inside of the wall influence the in front or behind?

The other way round. What is inside the wall can only be grasped by the activity in the space in front. You bump into the wall, check the firmness, scratch it, maybe remove one layer. Peeking on what is under the first layer.

If a curtain is the wall, are the wrinkles then what is inside the wall?

The outside turned to the inside.

Is the wall the most important thing or the look at the wall? The way we think about the wall and what is behind, standing in front of it.

The speculation about the behind happens when recognizing the wall. If the wall becomes infinitely big and therefore ultimate, imagining behind becomes impossible and disappears from consciousness. The whole thing loses its imaginary, subversive, pestering potential.

The quality of the wall decides, if its possible to imagine the space behind.

It is not completely dense, not entirely solid, I imagine. Vibrating thoughts.

Continuing the thoughts about the in-between, I end up thinking about the configuration of the layers, wall, adobe/matte, plaster, bricks, wallpaper. Is the wall infinite?

The wall is a big amount of relations (Beziehungskiste) and therefore not only dependent on itself or ultimate. There are thousands of relations to the wall.

Stabilizing, constructing, providing order.

# Who is the smoker?

Epilogue by Theresa Schnell

What we see here is the reproduction of an advert for cigarettes from the 1920s. The smoker is partly facing me, the viewer and potential consumer. She pertly (and somewhat surreptitiously) looks over her shoulder, focusing me. Have I caught her at something or is she just indicating me to come over? She certainly is well aware of her own and my presence. Something in her gaze prevents me from looking at her as if she was an only object.. The short haircut and her shiny dress seem to say: “I want otherness ”. Does she clash with the female stereotype in her time? In her left hand, she holds a cigarette, smoke rises from it. In a way she is ahead of me. With a genteel movement the other hand points towards a pack of cigarettes. An offer to me, the viewer, the consumer and to herself.

The woman smoker spoke to Irène Mélix and me and we went into a conversation. The cigarette in its brevity is both sign and time unit of modernity. Paris, Berlin, Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century: The production, increased through progressive industrialization, manages to fulfill the needs on an unprecedented scale. Next to utility and longevity, now other qualities are needed to seduce people to buy goods. Desire. Pose, gesture and appearance of the smoker suggest freedom and independence. Edward Barneys, nephew of Sigmund Freud and the so called “father of public relations”, manages to transmit the desire into a whispering promise. It is to be found in the smoke of the cigarette. The enactment of the promise follows in 1929: Barnes employs models and dresses them in the wishfull green of Lucky Strike. On a suffragettes’ demonstration in the US they shout “torches of freedom!”, meaning the cigarettes in their hands. The tobacco industry discovers women as potential consumers. The smoker on the billboard doesn’t only offer the product or pose next to it. She herself is the consumer. The appropriation of anothers’ gestures holds emancipatory potential. Thus it can be a political stance . We learn this

from Venus Extravaganza, Pepper LaBeija, Willi Ninja, Junior LaBeija and Octavia St.Laurent. What we are interested in, is spaces where such gestures can be tried.

Smoke through walls is a work by team2 (Irène Mélix and Theresa Schnell). It is the forming of our own images and featuring of others. It is the conception of an exhibition as well as the screening of films like “Paris was a woman” by Greta Schiller and “Paris is burning” by Jennie Livingstone on several occasions in January 2015. This dialogue in print is to be understood not as the result but a part of our working together.

**by team2**

**Irène Mélix, Theresa Schnell, 2017**

concept and layout: Theresa Schnell

25 copies, numbered and stamped