

A note on design:

*'I would wish us to indicate the determining relationship between architectonic reality and physical well-being. I hope that we may implicitly instruct the reader in the comprehensive impact of every Where, of any place. This requires development of an idea or theory of place in terms of human being; of space designed as the volumetric expression of successful existence between earth and sky; of space cherishing as it amplifies the experience of being alive, the capability of endless beginnings, and the entrusted liberty of motion; of particular space inexorably connected to multiple spatialities, a particular space that is open-receptive and communicant yet sheltering particular life.'*⁵

— June Jordan

We don't think that the layout of a house or street can determine our capacity for being. Living as we do, on top of one another, with no room to stretch our legs or for our children to play, and being so isolated, not knowing our next-door neighbours, not knowing whom we could depend on in an emergency, is a political question.

Design is more than just an architectural component; it is more than just the arrangement of physical objects in order to make something. Design is also the speech we use to build and give meaning to the world around us. June Jordan knew this; if you changed how people conceived

⁵ June Jordan, *Civil Wars: Observations from the Front Lines of America*, New York: Touchstone, 1995, p. 28.

of living, you could also change their understanding of themselves and their relations with others, breaking the inertia of this unliveable life.

The way we talk about this life and living, the language we use, builds a kind of structure that turns the horizon (that point where potentiality meets the substance of our reality) into a mirage. When we say 'housing for all' and the government responds with 'the homeless are being temporarily housed in hotels to avoid the spread of the virus', they are building a linguistic structure that defines the realm of the possible, that implicitly tells us to want less, to expect that total reconfiguration is out of the question. Like a poorly designed building, linguistic structures affect how we think, breathe, move and act. The mould sticks to our skin. We are familiar with a particular kind of linguistic structure: the preservation of a system of organisation that places capital before all else. This system ties our hands and feet together.

But... if we follow Jordan, 'every Where and any *place*' has a comprehensive impact, and so, everything we do and say that brings place and space into existence, that defines its contours, that explicitly makes clear who can and cannot enter also has an impact. To get free, we have to redesign linguistic structures before they morph into linguistic loops, or, in the meantime, at least get comfortable with repetition.