

# BECOMING SKIN: Cultivating Interfaciality

by Mina Yaney

Architectural theory and aesthetic approaches have repeatedly proved receptive to, as well as reformable by, larger intellectual and interdisciplinary contexts. Perhaps the 1950s and 1960s have been most distinctive in rendering how several sciences, such as physiology, psychology and sociology, have provided design, through readily available research, with more critical and rigorous theoretical devices. However other, more abstract, disciplines such as (post-) structuralism, phenomenology and semiotics have been equally impacting architectural and aesthetic approaches by virtue of their involvement with the dynamical change and relation of form, meaning, structure and perception whereby problematizing various profound isomorphic, functionalist, assumptions of modernism.

The paper grapples with the undertheorized notion of the interface as ontological and epistemological device while relating it to such seminal approaches to form, structure and meaning in a phenomenological, structural and post-structural discourse. The interface as contemporary applied device is transposed into the *notion of skin* as ontological device in order to examine its versatility in various discourses of difference: (1) Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic model of *semiological difference*, in (2) Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist notion of *différance*, (3) Maurice Merleau Ponty's phenomenological ontology of *Flesh* as well as (4) Gilles Deleuze's *ontology of the body-without-organs*.

Having demonstrated and examined the applicability of the notion of skin in those different philosophical fields, I wish to show how *the skin* might be subsequently extrapolated as a creative, open-ended, non-isomorphic, ethico-aesthetic notion while describing an approach to the aesthetic object beyond its visual appearance and preoccupations with questions of mere beauty.

Architecture, as co-adaptation between natural dynamics, built environment and embodied subject, is followingly construed as *interfacial skin*. As Gilles Deleuze might say, the skin is constituting "a One, not a pregiven unity, but instead the indefinite article that designates a certain singularity. How can the Many become the One? A great screen has to be placed in between them. Like a formless elastic membrane, an electromagnetic field or the receptacle of the Timaeus, the screen makes something issue from chaos, and even if this something differs only slightly?"

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