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27th March 2006

The Lift

I chose to investigate the behavioral changes that take place in relation to the use of a lift within Mythras House. I am intrigued by the role of lifts generally- the way they link diverse sections of buildings often with no consideration of this diversity, or the way that they exist to compress vast spaces into a fraction of their size for the purpose of traveling a relatively short distance.

Several factors contribute to the changes in behavior that take place while people are waiting for the lift. The most fundamental of these are the positioning of the lift calling button above the bin, and the glass doors to the left that provide a view onto the lobby of the building. There is a necessity for someone to stand by the bin in order to be able to call the lift, and in turn this dictates the positions that others take whilst waiting for it to arrive. The glass doors provide a distraction or an excuse to avoid verbal contact with others, those waiting can simply take in the view from the window as they wait, and thus avoid negotiating awkward social pleasantries with students/staff they would rather not converse with.

Within the lift, the most noticeable changes in behavior occurred. There is an obvious awkwardness that exists in relation to the use of every lift in my own memory, and this instance is no exception. There are the issues that a number of people, usually strangers, are being confined in a moving box and having their personal space compromised and encroached upon. Here there is the added element of a mirrored wall within the lift (indicated in the drawings by a blue line). This forces people to be aware of others in the space, and I noticed on one occasion that communication between two people previously hesitant or unwilling to talk to each other, was forced into being as a result of the mirror's presence. I found it interesting to observe how the rules of social behavior change due to the very nature of the lift's being- it would be considered unacceptable for a stranger to stand next to another person within a proximity of 30cm for a period of time in almost any other social circumstance. People still somehow managed to retain an area within the lift as their own space where possible, usually a corner of the lift.

Le Febvre makes it clear through his writing that patterns and rhythms exist when observing a street scene from his window. In the same way, it is noticeable that such rhythms exist in the use of this lift. For example, there are times of day where the lift is much more heavily used such as at lunchtime, or before lectures. As these daily events are generally at set times, it is possible to begin to observe and identify the rhythms that exist. Without much more lengthy and detailed research, it is not possible to establish the deeper rhythms that Le Febvre refers to, however I was able to identify several factors that occurred almost every time the lift was used. The necessity for at least one person to be standing by the bin. The desire of the occupants of the lift to

move towards the corners. Added to this was a sense of curiosity that my presence seemed to create- people seemed wary and yet intrigued by my own behavior and the purpose of my prolonged presence around and within the lift.

I feel that this research was compromised as a result of my presence, as passers-by were curious about the experiment, and their enquiries may have biased the results. In an ideal world, I would look to film the users of the lift before during and after their journey in order to gain a more realistic perspective of the changes in their behavior. It is also apparent to me that the use of the space outside of the lift doors, the design of the lift itself, and the materials used could be altered in order to create the mood specific or most appropriate to the circumstances.