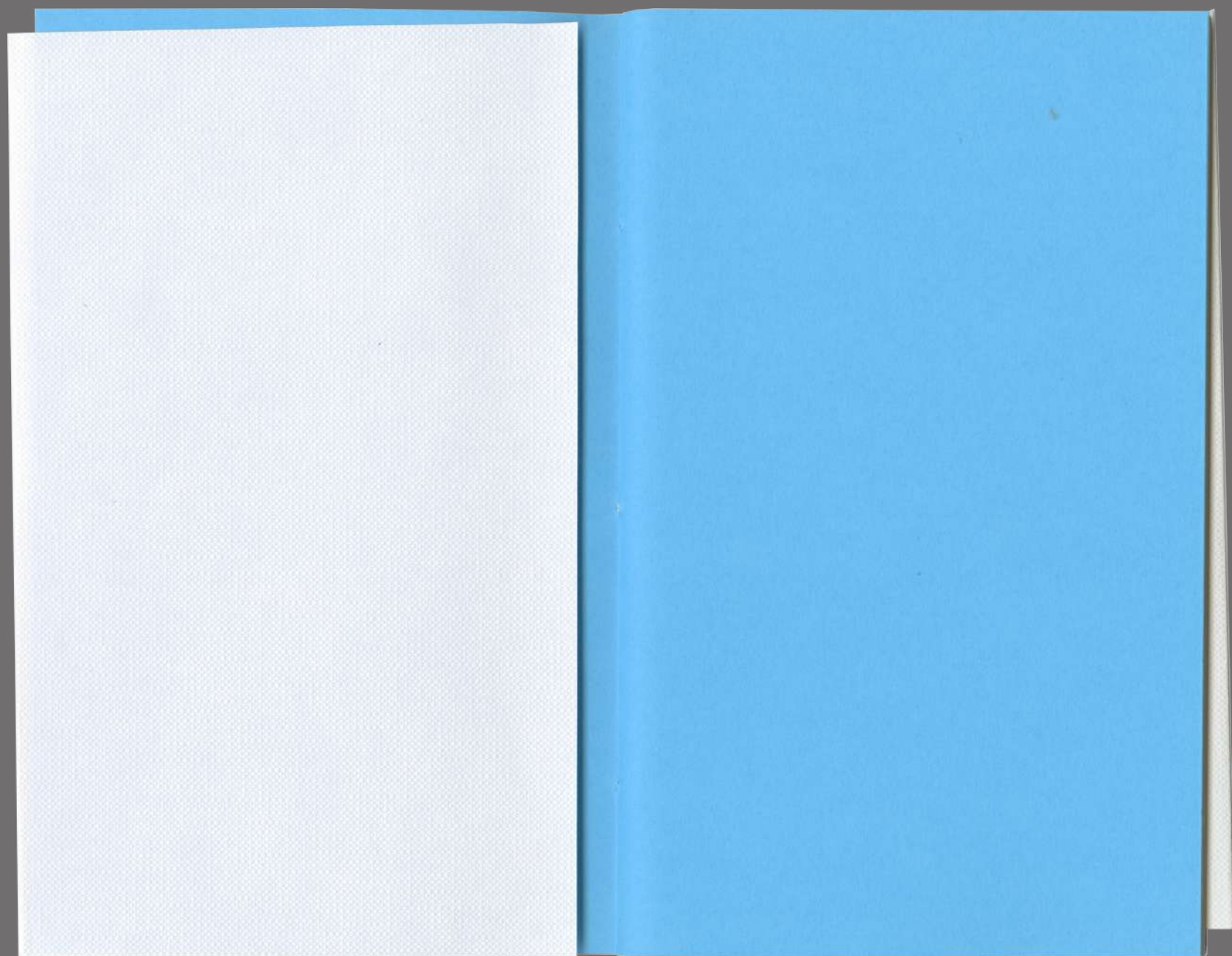


I plunged  
in slo-mo



I plunged  
in slo-mo

When I first saw pictures of Amsterdam, one striking thing was that water was always present: I mostly saw photographs of the streets which would include the bikes and the canals. Amsterdam has a strong relation to water, as being part of the Lowcountry of the Netherlands, sitting below sea level. When I finally settled down in the city, I could taste this water, I had never seen so many parks including little swimmable lakes. People I met here would swim everywhere as the sun would start shining. It seemed so easy. Even if the swimming wouldn't be for a long time in water due to its coldness, the idea was to refresh at any possible time. As a retired swimmer, I was happy to see this enthusiasm for water. Nevertheless, I've always been extremely afraid of deep water, especially when it refers to natural water. Which led me to discover intensely the public swimming pools of Amsterdam, that felt more familiar and safer.



There are different kinds of pools. Following is a non-exhaustive list of all sorts of pools I have been confronted with, from near to far:

Firstly, the public pools, from camping pools to olympic pools. The ones to swim back and forth, to exercise and to learn.


Secondly, the private pools, mostly outdoors, eventually indoors. They appeared with the rise of the suburban areas: an individual pool for an individual house. Those pools you directly imagine by looking through the window of an airplane. The most known example is the seen-from-above landscape made out of blue holes in California. They have different geometric shapes that I discovered through the catalogue of a swimming pool store; rectangular, round, bean-shaped, L-shaped. Their paradisiac names were striking:

Liberty  
Idyllic  
Diamond  
Haiwai  
Tropic  
Azure  
Cayo Coco  
Full-L  
Escale  
Oasis  
Tahiti  
Odyssey  
Lagoon...

In the same subdivision can be included the decorative pools: the filled pools in which no one swims. Usually on a highly luxurious property, perfect for a wedding setting. Those pools are pure decoration, it is almost secretly forbidden to touch them.

Then the empty pools, either in process of construction, or abandoned.

Familiar as well, the water parks with slides and artificial waves, mimicking the actual sea at its best, sometimes called the Splash Fun Water Park, Fun Splash Water Park, or Splash & Fun Water Park. Those pools are usually more noisy and have a strong smell of chlorine mixed with fries.

On a way smaller size and more peaceful ambiance, let us mention the hot jacuzzi that bubbles, where everyone seems so complete sitting inside (eyes closed, pleased smile, bodies vibrating). Thermal baths are also important to mention and fit to this category, for the well-being of its users. Baths, like pools, have existed almost forever. The Great Bath of Mohenjodaro is called *the earliest public water tank of the ancient world*  and was built in the 3rd millennium BC. The Ancient Greeks appreciated water, but the Romans adored it. They had different kind of baths, but also pools for military exercise, for athletic training, and for nautical games.

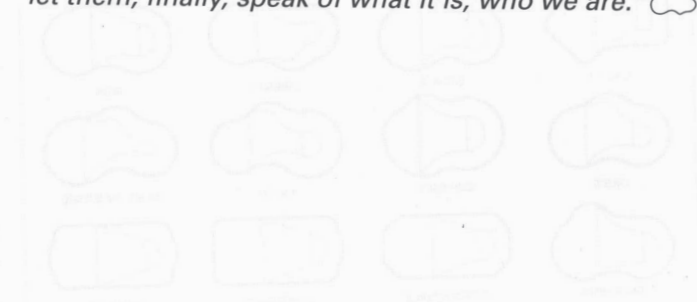
There are also the pools on top of another liquid, when natural water meets another chlorinated water: the pools in the sea, and the pools on the boats on the sea. The pools on rivers. Water on water, but a slightly different liquid. They skim past each other. Then the pools absolutely over the ground, from all sizes, mostly in garden: the inflatable pools, the wooden pools, the plastic pools and so on.

Different pools for different social contexts, they are not all accessible. Pools with their codes, how to behave, how to dress, how to sit, how to swim, how to lay down around the pool, how to hold the body, how to show the body.

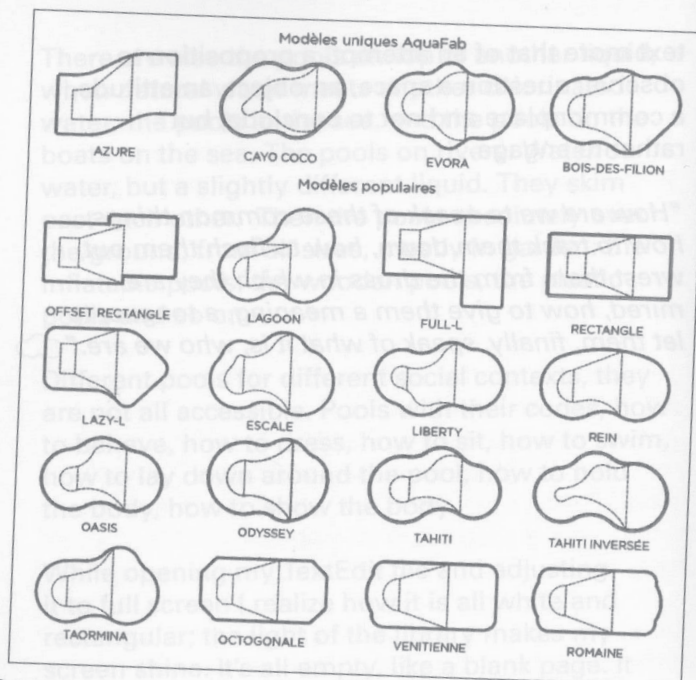
While opening my TextEdit file and adjusting it to full screen I realize how it is all white and rectangular; the light of the library makes my screen shine. It's all empty, like a blank page. It is sharp and rectangular, longer than its wide, and very, very white. It seems like an empty swimming pool seen from above, waiting for the story to be filled in. The following text is a result of very personal observations, I want to describe the space of the pool step by step, from my perspective, as a chronological immersion in the space of the pool. I actually started with a sketch and notes: a long stroke slowly exploring the inside of a rectangle, touching all its edges, and finally emerging on the outside. However, the act of writing is freezing the mind, the opinion, which is a bit of a paradox as the mind is always in movement, is provisional, in constant development. So I would call the following

text more that of an attempt, a proposition to observe, question a space, an object, an attitude, a commonplace and not to conclude, but rather to engage.

*"How are we to speak of these common things, how to track them down, how to flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they are mired, how to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what it is, who we are."* ☁







Catalogue of pool shapes found on the website of a domestic swimming pool store

end very, very white. It seems like an empty swimming pool seen from above, waiting for the story to be filled in. The following text is a result of very personal observations. I want to describe the space of the pool step by step, from my perspective, as a chronological immersion in the space of the pool. I actually started with a sketch and notes: a long stroke slowly exploring the inside of a rectangle, touching all its edges, and finally emerging on the outside. However, the act of writing is freezing the mind, the opinion, which is a bit of a paradox as the mind is always in movement, is provisional, in constant development. So I would call the following

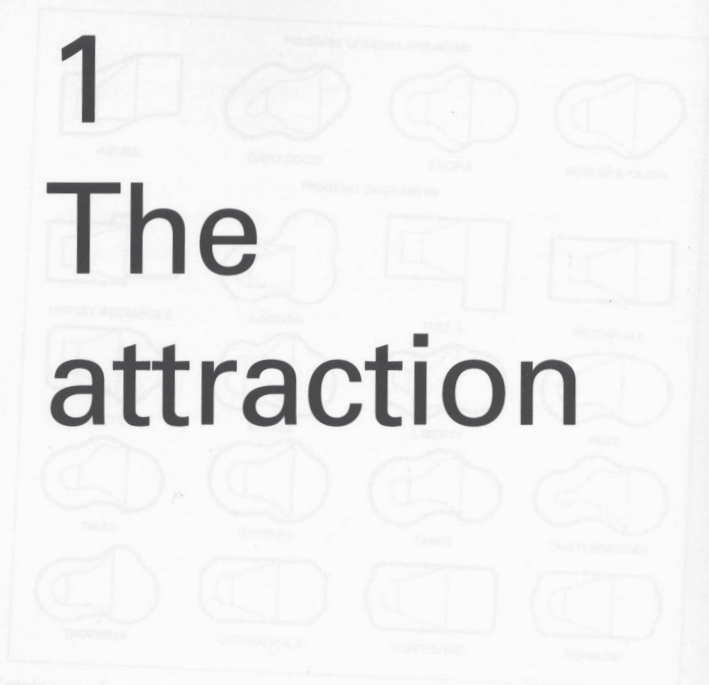
When we were in the very high swiss mountains last September with my class, we had a view from above onto a little village down hill. Family, the only element from this landscape that caught my eye was a shiny blue rectangle. Only the blue shape excited me. I could almost imagine packing my swimming bag with a still wet towel that smells a bit of chlorine or finding a piece of paper that is falling deep in the same pool because of its humidity. Swimming in the pool meant to have made more like a new environment with a blue environment. It looked like a bright candy vending machine in a gray metro station. I found it striking how it was in total opposition to the landscape: it was a precisely defined space, dug in the earth to replace this element with artificial water, with a color that tries to imitate an idyllic turquoise sea. For me, this feeling was close to a primitive attraction. A desire I couldn't have control on.

*"I think of swimming pools as a form of rebellion. You create an artificial environment and put water where no water should be."*

Starting writing about swimming pools, I enjoyed hearing everyone's pool-stories and personal references. I realized that everyone managed to relate easily and enthusiastically to the subject. At some point, I understood that some people had a total opposite relationship to pools than mine, which was something I first could not accept. I had to face the important truth: swimming pools also have a strong negative and repulsive connotation.


Quote from my friend William

# 1 The attraction




Catalogue of pool shapes found on the website of a domestic swimming pool store

When we were in the very high swiss mountains last September with my class, we had a view from above onto a little village down hill. Funnily, the only element from this landscape that caught my eye was a shiny blue rectangle surface: a big outdoor olympic pool. Only to glance at this blue shape excited me. I could already imagine packing my swimming bag with a still wet towel that smells a bit of chlorine or finding a piece of paper that is falling apart in the same bag because of its humidity. Seeing this pool from above made me realize how contrasting it was to its environment. It looked like a bright candy vending machine in a grey metro station. I found it striking how it was in total opposition to the landscape: it was a precisely defined space, dug in the earth to replace this element with artificial water, with a color that tries to imitate an idyllic turquoise sea. For me, this feeling was close to a primitive attraction. A desire I couldn't have control on.

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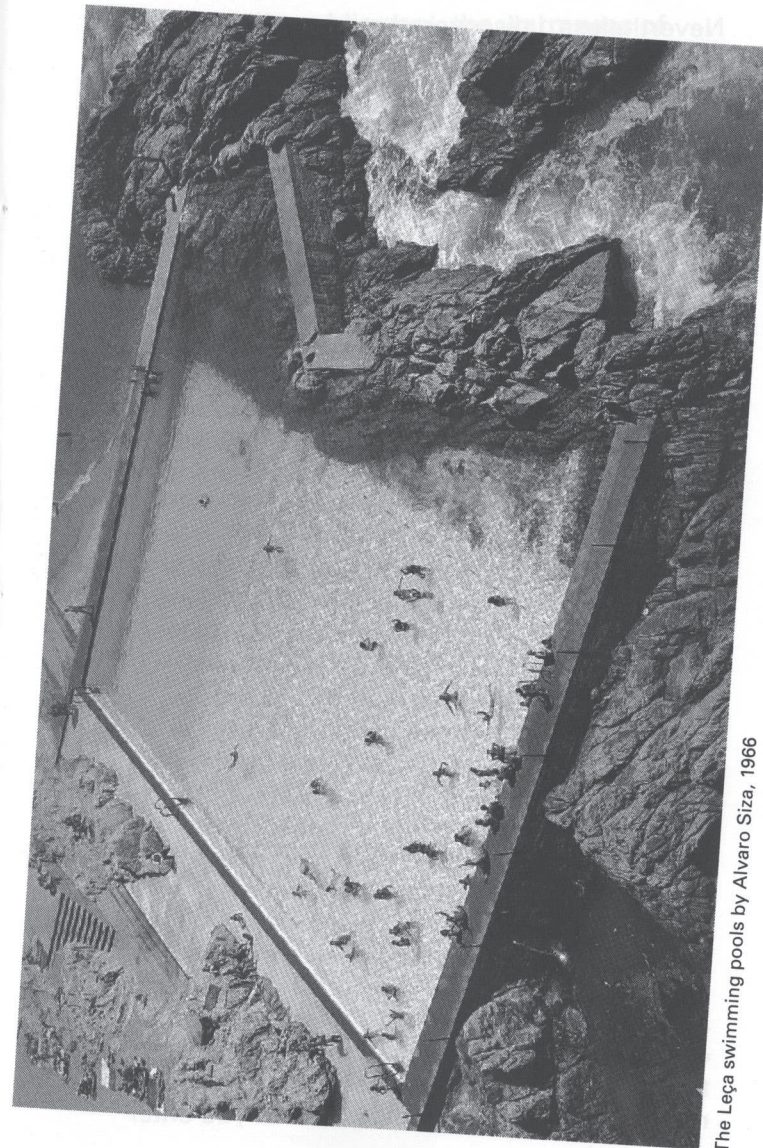


People hate those places for various reasons, for example being modest about wearing bathing suits, or the intimacy it creates with strangers. Also the fear of the water, seeing the pool as a deadly place. In a french podcast a swimming teacher said:

*"You learn to swim to be able to survive or to save. If you can't breath, you can die within three minutes. Survival instinct isn't enough for someone who can not swim. Three minutes go fast."* □

If you scream underwater, no one will hear you. Water is a danger, and it takes some time to trust this liquid and be confident within it. Let us recall also that humans are almost one of the only mammal that can not swim by instinct. Even as a regular swimmer I sometimes got scared under water. Specially during winter when it got quickly dark outside, it felt that the water was also darker. The further you go, the deeper the swimming pool became, which made me swim really fast. The scariest pool was the diving platform pool, which was four meters deep. After some discussions, I realized that we could underline in a very binary perspective two categories of people: the ones who are definitely more attracted to the swimming pool for its safe and clear structure, and the ones who prefer the openness of the sea.

□ Kronlund, Sonia. *Vues sur la piscine: Pascal, maître-nageur (R)* in *Les Pieds sur terre*, 2015



The Leça swimming pools by Alvaro Siza, 1966



Nevertheless, I discovered more ambiguous pools: the Leça swimming pools by Alvaro Siza in Portugal are pools in conciliation with the wilder nature that surrounds it. A subtle intervention that doesn't contrast with its direct surroundings. The pool is located at the seaside, including the natural stones of the sea, as a defined safe extension of the sea, that avoids any danger of swimming in the ocean and its wild waves. Siza was concerned to conserve a large quantity of the existing rock formations when he planned his modern interventions into the landscape. The pools he created reach out into the ocean and easily blend in with the natural pool formations along the coast of the Atlantic. Maybe an interesting compromise for the non pool lovers.

The swimming pool is commonly seen as a place of leisure, relaxation, sports, free-time. Any swimming pool is a place outside daily constraints. The place where the city-dweller transforms into the naked athlete or monkey. Even the idea or representation of a pool is stimulating. For example, seeing a pool on the flyer of a hotel, keeps the mysticism of this place, its smell, its feeling. It is associated to old memories. There are different kind of smells associated to swimming pools. The smell of the chlorine, of the bleach can stir exciting memories. Or while swimming the smell of someone wearing perfume that would be a surprising mix with the ambient smell. The smell of urine close to the children baths. The smell of the fries, the ketchup, the sausage close to the snack stand. For me the most exciting one is the smell when you enter

the doors of the public pool, the warmness of the entry hall mixed with the chlorine. It would announce that the happy moment would happen in a short time, no obstacles to it.

There is a word to name this anticipation in German, it's *die Vorfreude*, which could be translated by *pre-happiness*. It is this moment of projection of the happy moment itself, the fantasy, the idealization, or more precisely the big excitement thinking of the upcoming happy moment. For example, the car ride before reaching the parking of the amusement park for a long day of fun. A proverb says that the greatest pleasure lies in *die Vorfreude*. Maybe the idea of the pool itself, the associated souvenirs are more pleasant than the moment itself. Just the view on it, the smell of it, the memories, feed the mystery.



San Alfonso del Mar is a private resort in Algarrobo, Chile. It's one of the world's largest swimming pools in the world (1013 m long)



*"In the exhibition halls, the car on show is explored with an intense, amorous studiousness. It is the great tactile phase of discovery, the moment when visual wonder is about to receive the reasoned assault of touch (for touch is the reason why the car is made, the right touch which is the car's responsibility.)"*

In this quote, Roland Barthes is describing the magical function of the sense of touch when seeing the New York City skyline. It is the moment when the eye with its cold, objective gaze is touched by the subtle, the sense of touch is one of the most demystifying, it is the moment of destruction of the magical distance that feeds the fantasy, thus the fantasy.

The view on a pool can be attractive. I've noticed that the first thing people do when they finally arrive to the pool is to touch the water with their hand. That's what human also do when they visit appealing fountains when they travel. It is this special gesture to estimate the warmth of the water. It is also a way to get the neck wet before entering the water and so to avoid thermal shock. There is a certain need from it to be touched, to be grasped. Isn't it the moment of disappointment? The warm side of the pool, the sense of sight, sometimes turns out to be extremely cold and distancing. At this precise point, when the sense of touch occurs. The mysticism, the fantasy disappear. The expected feeling of grasping the water is not reached, water is not touchable. It dissolves quickly between the fingers,

Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, 1957

# 2

## The touch with the hand

*"In the exhibition halls, the car on show is explored with an intense, amorous studiousness: it is the great tactile phase of discovery, the moment when visual wonder is about to receive the reasoned assault of touch (for touch is the most demystifying of all senses, unlike sight, which is the most magical)." ☞*

In this quote, Roland Barthes is describing the magical function of the sense of sight when seeing the New Citroen. How it is visited through the eye with an immense intensity. For the author, the sense of touch is one of the most demystifying, it is the moment of destruction of the magical distance that feeds the mystery, thus the fantasy.

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☞ Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*, 1975



which maybe is also the reason why it is so appealing. It is an impossible material. We use our hands to confirm an impression we have about a certain materiality. This extreme need to touch comes from a difficulty to understand a material. We touch the water also because we want to touch what pleases the eye. Touching, it is getting closer to it.

I've been thinking a lot about the materiality of water, wondering why it looks so attractive. I am not specially attracted to any other kind of water, when I wash hands or take a shower. But seeing it moving slowly in this shiny blue rectangle, becomes strongly mesmerizing. My eyes are hypnotized while my fingers instinctively want to have a privileged contact with it. It is the same captivation as when I watch slime videos on my Instagram feed.

*"Watching someone else ply and poke and squish slime together is calming. It's easy, as the repetition washes over you, to lose track of yourself and your worries; the video becomes a momentary escape from quickly moving, anxiety-inducing social-media feeds. (...) they allow a brief suspension of the self, in an environment founded entirely on the self's constant construction and reconstruction."* ☹

The manipulation of slimy materials has a big success on Youtube and Instagram: videos of slime, of hands touching ambiguous materials

☹ McKinney, Kelsey. *These Mesmerizing, Satisfying Slime Videos Are the Internet's New Obsession*, 2017



Hands and slime



have been more and more shared and viewed. Those videos of colorful, beautiful shiny, glossy, fluffy, materials have a very hypnotizing power that bring you into some sort of meditative state. The actions are simple, they mimic primal organic desires, always executed with the help of hands that have this important role of activating the material. For example, a recent trend is videos where two fingers hold a needle that slowly goes through a balloon filled with shaving foam, so that the foam splashes beautifully, like the act of exploding a white pimple on your face. Or videos of honey being spread on a surface, which looks like fecal matter. It seems like those videos are unconsciously repeating those body actions, but in a smoother way, for an optimal visual pleasure.

The attraction is even bigger, because those videos are watched through the screen of a smartphone: the thumb is just caressing the screen to choose the video to watch, and the eye can enjoy this satisfying video, without getting dirty with its hands, not having to clean the stage of the action. It is only the pure positive aspect of it. Yet meanwhile, some frustration is created by not feeling it directly, thus fantasizing the feeling of this material, which is one of the greatest pleasure. I see the water in the space of the swimming pool as this appealing, calming material, calling to be grasped.

*"In the swimming pool pictures, I had become interested in the more general problem of painting the water, finding a way to do it. It is an interesting formal problem, really apart from its subject matter; it is a formal problem to represent water, to describe water, because it can be anything — it can be any color, it's movable, it has no set visual description."* ➡

In this quote David Hockney, one of the major swimming pool painter, is confirming this idea of the difficulty of this material, here in terms of its representation, of how to paint water. Liquids don't keep any shape for long, liquids are constantly moving, which creates this frustration of wanting to touch it, to appropriate it. Building a pool is a way to *solidify* this liquid, that usually is so unreachable: now, it is placed in the closed rectangle of the pool, the uncontrollable is finally under control, in a clear spatial dimension. The water is ready to be touched, the water is ready to be appropriated.

➡ Stangos, Nikos. *David Hockney by David Hockney: My Early Years*, 1988

# 3

## The splash

After the touch of the hand in the water comes the time of the splash, the jump. The whole body is then involved.

*"One by one, spaced by the beat of hearts, they reach the tongue of the board at the top. And once on the board, they pause, each exactly the same tiny heartbeat pause. And their legs take them to the end, where they all give the same sort of stomping hop, arms curving out as if to describe something circular, total; they come down heavy on the edge of the board and make it throw them up and out. It's a swooping machine, lines of stuttered movement in a sweet late bleach mist. You can watch from the deck as they hit the cold blue sheet of the tank. Each fall makes a white that plumes and falls into itself and spreads and fizzes. Then blue clean comes up in the middle of the white and spreads like pudding, making it all new. The tank heals itself." ○*

The jump is the most frontal way of going from the world above the waterline to the world below. It is so frontal because of the speed of going into this other dimension, and because the entire body is confronted with this other material, the water. Taking a deep breath, and then letting your body access another state. All the physical senses are now disturbed. Going to the world below means accepting a kind of deafness, slow movements, blurry vision, different breath.

○ Wallace, David Foster. *Forever Overhead* in *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men*, 1999



I see the jump as the moment of the swim that creates the most excitement, stimuli. It is the moment of relief for reaching this other state. I see the jump as the moment of pure pleasure that provokes efficient, direct, immediate excitement. The kind of excitement, that because of its immediate effect, can have negative connotations. It is usually seen as a sign of ignorance, weakness, a lack of distance. But it would be lying to pretend never to be sensitive to a form of immediate pleasure. I see the jump as this immediate pleasure, probably easy to reach, but at least it provokes emotions, reactions.

I see the jump in the water as similar to crossing the gates of an amusement park. It is as frontal as jumping in the water, because of all the sudden artifices within the landscape. Stefan Zweig describes the entry in the Prater in Vienna as a moment of loss of any optic and moral senses. Notions of time disappear. Some people start running, suddenly some parts of education dissolve to let the primitive side take place.

The jump is the head-on moment of escaping the world above the waterline. The term of *escape* is in my sense one of the most significant in relation to the act of jumping, as entering in this state, the liquid, is entering in a total opposite state from our daily life, a temporary distraction from reality. It is clearly expressed in the text *The Swimmer* by John Cheever. The short story depicts the journey of the main character Neddy, through the pools of the neighborhood, in which he swims to reach his home. The pools represent periods of time that

Neddy crosses, but he is trying to escape the truth of his life, ignoring the time passing, denying it by jumping and swimming from pool to pool:

*"His life was not confining and the delight he took in this observation could not be explained by its suggestion of escape. (...) As he was pulling himself out of the water he heard*

*Mrs. Halloran say,*

*'We've been terribly sorry to hear about all your misfortunes, Neddy.'*

*'My misfortunes?' Ned asked.*

*'I don't know what you mean.'*

*'Why, we heard that you'd sold the house and that your poor children...'*

*'I don't recall having sold the house,' Ned said,*

*'and the girls are at home.'*

*'Yes,' Mrs. Halloran sighed. 'Yes...'*

*Her voice filled the air with an unseasonable melancholy and Ned spoke briskly.*

*'Thank you for the swim.'*

*'Well, have a nice trip,' said Mrs. Halloran. (...)*

*Was he losing his memory, had his gift for concealing painful facts let him forget that he had sold his house, that his children were in trouble, and that his friend had been ill? His eyes slipped from Eric's face to his abdomen, where he saw three pale, sutured scars, two of them at least a foot long. Gone was his navel, and what, Neddy thought, would the roving hand, bedchecking one's gifts at 3 a.m., make of a belly with no navel, no link to birth, this breach in the succession?"* □

□ Cheever, John. *The Swimmer in The Brigadier and the Golf Widow*, 1964



# 4 The boredom/ the erotism

At first, I thought first that pools were designed for fun, that they exist just for immediacy, for a consumption of pleasure, that doesn't leave a lot for the imagination, which was partly wrong. Nothing is particularly dictated when you enter the pool. There is a lot of options, so you better have an idea what to do within this space.

Unlike the rollercoaster, in which you go in, sit down, and the fun comes to you in which you don't have to search for it or to think. What do I do when I swim? I breathe and I observe. My breath suddenly becomes something I have to consider and which gives rhythm to my movements. If nothing arrests my gaze I will just start counting my strokes in my head, but usually something would interrupt the counting.

I remember this loneliness I felt during my swimming classes as a kid. When you are swimming, you are totally alone, you can not really hear when the teacher calls you. It's a big introspective moment. I remember the high ceiling that kept moving forward when I was swimming on my back, sometimes I got so hypnotized that I lost track. And back with the head under water you notice all the little things. A broken tile, a floating plaster. Those details become the main characters of your swim, you need to shift your angle of vision and consider the things as they are and give them a new meaning, a story to be written. Even though you are working out, getting exhausted, doing this tedious movements, the exercise has slowing down properties. The sweat as a physical sign of working out disappears in the water.



Being active but meditative. A bit like cycling in Amsterdam. You can not do anything else, like using your phone, interacting, answer those messages that you postpone answering. You can not even write down your thoughts. It is a strong moment of you with yourself. Nothing can distract you from being only with your own thoughts. It is like a beautiful emptiness, that needs some time to be reached, that is not immediate.

I would like to see other kinds of pools exist, in which we could easily swim eyes closed, not seeing anything, but just feeling our body with the water, following a safe endless path. At some point the sense of sight is disturbing the thoughts and puts itself as the main focus. It seems that the only thing you can do while swimming is watching what is happening under water. Apart from the little details floating, an important part of the swim is the other swimmers. Water accelerates excitement (*émoi* in french), gives the envy to synchronize your body with another one, to dare to touch, chose your water line, analyze who is swimming back and forth. You have time to think, to imagine and to fantasize. You see everyone almost naked, glossy, soaked. The swimming suit is a second skin that doesn't cover so much. You can't hide, you are here in one of your most natural state. Head under water, you only see bodies and bodies, almost no heads visible, only arms, legs, open arms, open legs. You identify people from their bodies, a tattoo, a scar... Only when you reach the wall and stop for a bit, you can put a face on the watched body. Head under water, bodies

move slowly, the slow-motion effect adds a cinematographic and sensual layer to the action.

The pool is an ambiguous space, sensual in its observation, but anti sensual in its action. Even before being in the water is the dressing and undressing in the cabin, hearing someone in the next cabin doing the same. The pool is also the place for perverts to watch, suddenly everyone looks into each others eyes when you reach the wall.

It is a bit the same erotic tension as in the subway, everyone is watched, you watch everyone. It's deeply looking at people in every detail, it is really intimate and intrusive, but in the same time there is nothing else to do. Most of the time, when you go out of the train at your stop, you forget about it. It has its importance mostly during the moment itself. When you leave the pool, you immediately forget about the bodies you have watched and the stories you have built around. There should be a name for those places that possess such a close and closed structure, where you are stuck with strangers, and looking at each other is the only action offered, like in pools, trains, elevators.

Of course not everyone experiences it in this way, but pools are often represented with such erotic connotation. It can be seen a lot in the cinema, a lot of movies take place around a swimming pool, where the sexual tension plays an important role of the setting. For example the movie *Deep End* ☐ plays with the heavy misty, warm

☐ Movie directed by Jerzy Skolimowski, 1970



and yet illicit ambiance of the public pool, as a place for seduction. Mike, a young boy, quitted high school and found a job in a grimy yet elegant public bath. In the beginning of the movie he gets harassed by an older women, that just got out of the pool, half naked, and apparently very desiring. The public bath is used as a strong image of the place of the discovery of sexuality.

The reason why it is so strongly erotic is also because most of the people don't go to the pool for this aim in the first place. The swimming pool is initially not meant for that. This creates a secret envy, that not a lot of people would admit. The fantasy has something beautiful which is that it will remain a fantasy.

*"Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes? (...) the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance. The pleasure of the text is not the pleasure of the corporeal striptease or of narrative suspense. In these cases, there is no tear, no edges: a gradual unveiling: the entire excitation takes refuge in the hope of seeing the sexual organ (schoolboy's dream) or in knowing the end of the story (novelistic satisfaction)."* □

For Roland Barthes, veiling (*the garment*) is an essential part of eroticism. He is describing the

□ Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure of the Text*, 1973 □

erotic portion of the object of the text, but this is also relatable to a body, swimming back and forth. A staging of an *appearance-as-disappearing*. A friend of mine mentioned a swimming pool in Amsterdam that has a special schedule for people to swim completely naked. It first sounded very exciting for this feeling of complete body freedom, that we maybe once experienced by swimming naked in the ocean. However, the only time she went the pool was filled with men, and she felt very uncomfortable. Instead it had a feeling of repulsive voyeurism.

*"Pornography avoids detour. It gets straight down to business. Erotic, by contrast, are signs which circulate without disclosing themselves. Pornographic theatre is the theatre of disclosure."* □

The veil within the pool consists for me of two elements: the bodysuit of the swimmer and the material of the water that covers the bodies. The veil is the reason why the erotic tension is not literal, nor clear or admitted. The water changes the color, the texture, the view on the skin, like a filter. The water smoothes the view on the skin. The only beautiful moment is under water, as for when you leave the pool it disappears.

I don't really like the world *filter*. Filters to make something more beautiful, to embellish for a provisory moment. I wonder to what extent we could say that today's veil is the filter. I feel that it is more and more permanent, we are surrounded

□ Han, Byung-Chul. *Saving Beauty*, 2017 □

by filters, in advertising obviously, but also in our daily interactions, on the pictures in our smartphones. Instagram, Snapchat, even the karaoke application called Mule uses filters to embellish the voices. Is the filter through the prism of the phone not anti-erotic though?

Water of the swimming pool doesn't usually appear to be the cleanest. It is associated to lice, to mosquitoes, to algae, especially in public pools. I once stood up in a swimming pool and I saw a lot of people who were not swimming but who were just standing there. I saw a lot of people who were not swimming but who were just standing there. I saw a lot of people who were not swimming but who were just standing there.

Water of the swimming pool doesn't usually appear to be the cleanest. It is associated to lice, to mosquitoes, to algae, especially in public pools. I once stood up in a swimming pool and I saw a lot of people who were not swimming but who were just standing there. I saw a lot of people who were not swimming but who were just standing there. I saw a lot of people who were not swimming but who were just standing there.

This is what Lady Macbeth claims after persuading her husband to kill Duncan. She is helping to wash Macbeth's hands of blood with the water of the fountain. The water here has the role of cleansing the guilt, cleaning the conscience after the crime. The water of the pool has more of a mental cleansing role, and the first shower has to clean the last layer of the body, on the surface: the skin. I see the shower as this moment of perspective on the swim, this step back. It is also the moment of reconnection with the common world. We are


Shakespeare, William, Macbeth, 1673




# 5 The rinse of the mind and the skin

After a swim comes the time of rinsing, which consists of cleaning yourself from the chlorinated artificial water with pure water, it is the highest moment of feeling clean. Even though being inside the water would already suggest this feeling.

Water of the swimming pool doesn't usually appear to be the cleanest, it is associated to lice, mycosis, verruca... specially in public pools. I write this from a French perspective, that is probably different from a Scandinavian one for example. A Danish friend explained me how educated they became as kids when they had to take the shower before the swim, all naked. She said that the teachers were intransigent about the cleaning, every body part had to be free from dirt before sharing all together the same water. In France, it is only kindly reminded you should keep your bathing suit on during the shower.

*"A little water clears us of this deed."* 

This is what Lady Macbeth claims after persuading her husband to kill Duncan. She is helping to wash Macbeth's hands of the blood with the water of the fountain. The water here has the role of cleaning the guilt, cleaning the conscious after the crime. The water of the pool has more of a mental cleaning role, and the final shower has to clean the last layer of the body, on the surface: the skin. I see the shower as this moment of perspective on the swim, this step back. It is also the moment of reconnection with the common world. We are

 Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*, 1623

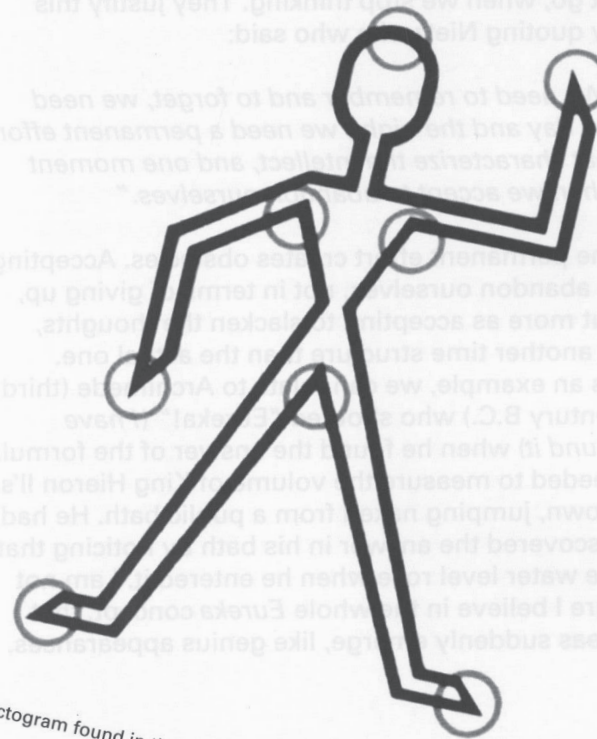
used to shower everyday, so stepping out of the deep blue rectangle and directly taking a shower is stepping back to a familiar gesture.

I like to associate the water of the pool with a sort of therapeutic benefit, a sort of long brain massage that would order your mind. Water, having this power that purifies the inner being, of course associated with the legend of the Fountain of Youth. It stands as a symbol for renewal, as the fountain brings back the youth of anyone who drinks or bathes in its waters. Water as a hope for cure.

I see the shower as the moment of having distance and getting perspective on all the thoughts that got mixed underwater. It is a step back. Lately, I've been dreaming about pools a lot. Pools with complex shapes, a pool maze, where the water only goes until the breast that would suggest a safe place. I checked online ☁ what my dream was trying to tell me: *To dream that you are swimming suggests that you are exploring aspects of your subconscious mind and emotions. The dream may be a sign that you are seeking some sort of emotional support. It is a common dream image for people going through therapy.*

Swimming as a therapeutic exploration, to clean your mind, as this big introspective moment. Maybe the swim gives perspective on your mind as it is appealing to all the senses but in a very different way as usual.

# HUSK!



Pictogram found in the Danish swimming pool showers



I was listening to a french podcast called "D'où viennent les idées" (where do ideas come from), questioning where the essence of ideas originate. A science teacher and a philosophy teacher both emphasize and underline the fact, that we find our response when we let go, when we stop thinking. They justify this by quoting Nietzsche who said:

*"We need to remember and to forget, we need the day and the night, we need a permanent effort that characterize the intellect, and one moment when we accept to abandon ourselves."*

The permanent effort creates obstacles. Accepting to abandon ourselves, not in terms of giving up, but more as accepting to slacken the thoughts, in another time structure than the actual one. As an example, we can relate to Archimede (third century B.C.) who shouted "Eureka!" (I have found it) when he found the answer of the formula needed to measure the volume of King Hieron II's crown, jumping naked from a public bath. He had discovered the answer in his bath by noticing that the water level rose when he entered it. I am not sure I believe in the whole *Eureka* concept, that ideas suddenly emerge, like genius appearances.

Klein, Etienne with Barbier, Justine, *D'où viennent les idées?*  
in *La Conversation scientifique*, 2017

Taking this bath, being present in this common action, gave Archimede perspective and distance towards his initial question that comes from a different working context. I believe that getting perspective on things come with the help of different time and space frames.

Following the different steps of my observations and researches, I realized that the subject of the pool was finally obvious for me with this idea of immersion, of *plunge*, of obsession towards one subject. This is how I try to understand a content, to dig into it, to detect my own perception on it, to understand where my intuitive attraction comes from.

I've been looking at the pool through five chronological steps: the attraction to the pool (1), the taste of the water with the hand (2), the immediate splash (3), the boredom under water (4) and the final rinse (5); that all engage different feelings. The fantasy, the deception, the over-excitement, the exhaustion, the reflection, the distance. A series of feeling that finally sound so familiar.

What is it to question an automatic gesture, what I considered obvious, the habitual. To write to let those thoughts survive and to give them a structure, to *solidify* them in a way, in this rectangular frame of the page. Now I leave the pool, till next time, the air outside seems fresher than before, and I will smell like chlorine during the rest of the day.

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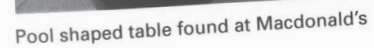
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'I plunged in slo-mo'  
by Clara Pasteau,  
Winter 2017

Special thanks to  
Louis Lüthi,  
Phil Baber,  
William Eckerstein,  
Manon Bachelier

Typeset in Univers

'I plunged in slo-mo'  
was written as a  
Graduation Thesis  
from the Graphic  
Design Department  
of the Gerrit  
Rietveld Academie,  
Amsterdam

Designed by  
by Charles  
Wasserman  
from the Graphic  
Design  
of the  
Piet Mondrian  
William Elwell  
Manon Bacheler  
Typeset in Univers



