

elements of architecture*

rem koolhaas

floor ceiling roof

door wall stair

toilet window

façade

balcony

corridor

fireplace

ramp

escalator

elevator

taschen



elements of architecture is based
on two harvard graduate school
of design studios, conducted in
rotterdam and cambridge, organized
by dean mohsen mostafavi.
the students' research formed the
basis for this book and the exhibition
"elements of architecture" at the
2014 venice architecture biennale.



studio

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stephan trüby
stephan petermann
james westcott

harvard-amo
rotterdam studio 2012

heather dunbar
elizabeth eckels
elle gerdeman
patrick hamon
jenny hong
arthur liu
jielu lu
will lambeth
kurt nieminen
tiffany maria obser
nicholas potts
max wong

harvard-amo
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cynthia dehlavi
stefan dileo
andrew gipe
see jia ho
jingheng lao
alison ledwith
elizabeth macwillie
alison kung
difei ma
kangil ji
annie wang
eric williams

elements of architecture

taschen

FLOOR

Infinitely harmless, the floor is obliged to offer its occupants stability – yet receives from its users systematic harshness, if not abuse, in return.



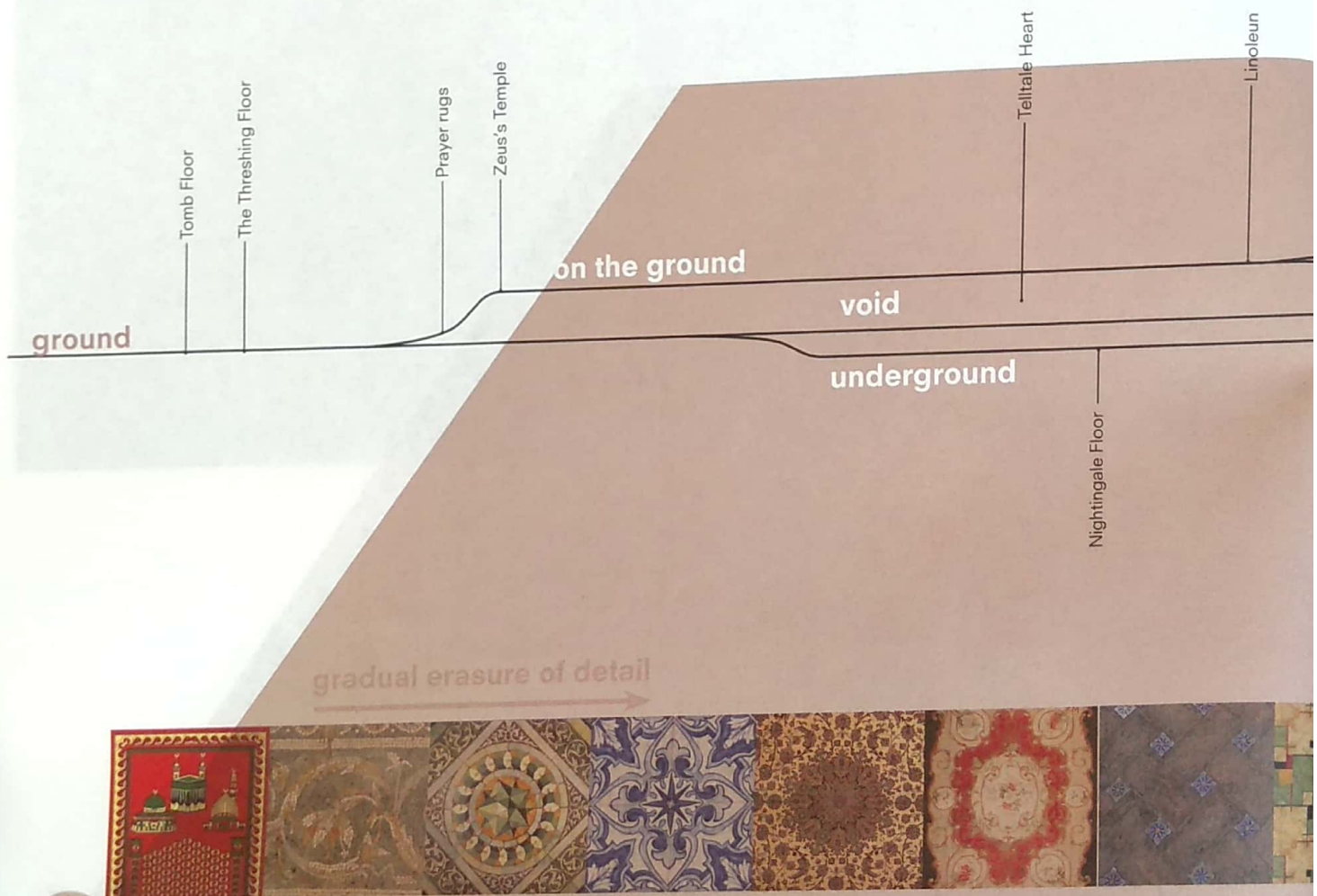
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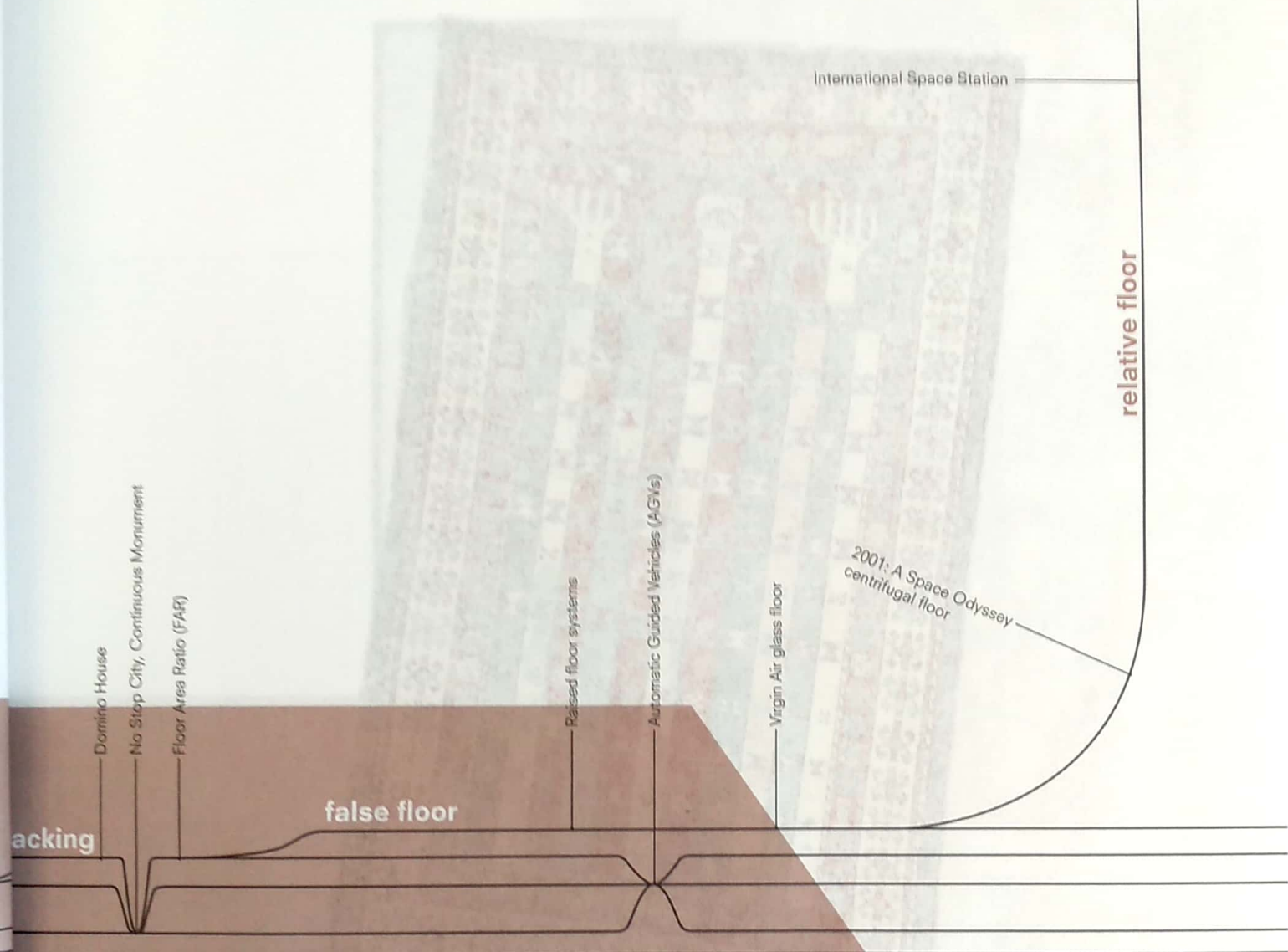


floor

...once a surface for symbolic expression – defining the way spaces are used, implying the 'rules of the game' – floors in the 20th century tended towards a purely Cartesian surface... rational, undecorated, unloved, perfectly flat, ideally soundless... simultaneous with our neglect of programmatic, symbolic, and haptic potential, floor space became the dominant economic measure of architectural space: real estate adopted a fetish of the m^2 , masking the reality of the three-dimensional volume, and the floor itself is typically a thick slab, sometimes a 'false floor' containing mysteries similar to those of the ceiling...

...staking the claim of civilization on the raw ground, encoding usage and assuming decoration, the floor then accrues complexity in its section while simplifying its surface details...





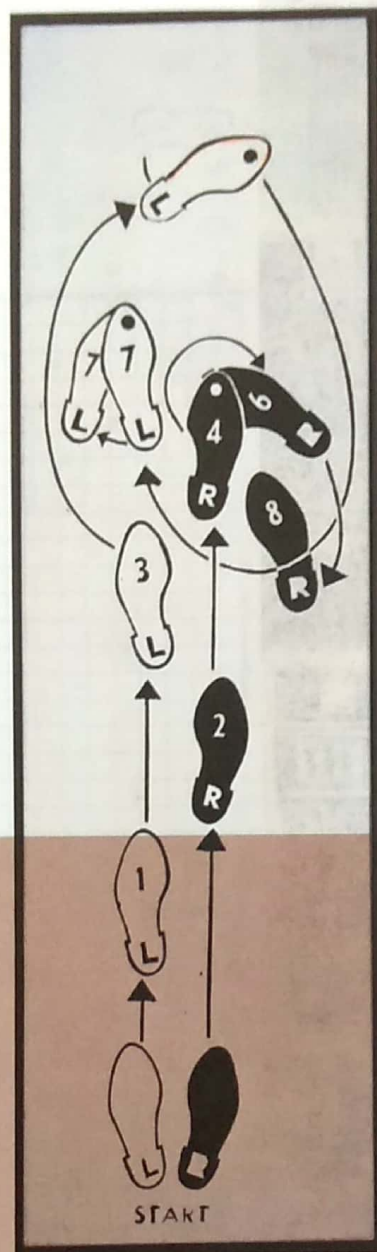


Early 19th century Guide to prostration: Akstafa prayer rug from Azerbaijan, featuring niche pattern, a reference to the mihrab in every mosque, which points towards Mecca, with stylized hand prints.

negotiating between gravity and

keller easterling

The floor is the customary technology for negotiating between gravity and the upright body. Every step is magnetized to its surface. It is the architectural element that is almost always touching the body. Floors can fall away or out from under, but they are usually there, idling beneath us. Throughout most of its history, the floor has been a basic assumption, often a starting point. Occasionally, it has been a place to display elaborate patterns and graphic story telling, or a surface reflecting mathematical fascinations like tessellation. But for eons, the floor was simply the surface of the earth or a technical, architectural response to make that surface more habitable or useful. It has also sometimes been a muted registration of cultural practices and construction technologies.



1962 Guide to pleasure: Andy Warhol's Dance Diagram, 5 (Fox Trot: "The Right Turn - Man").

the upright body

From prayer rugs to tatami grids to basketball courts, the floor has established a few presumed, if unspoken, rules of the game.

A contemplation of architectural elements does not assemble an encyclopedia or reinforce a canon. It does the opposite. A prolonged look at each element presents puzzles about cultural habituation – something like architectural why-stories that defamiliarize, even upset, conventions.

It may also expose a fatal error when a set of limited cultural habits have stiffened around the element, eliminating a whole range of techniques for making space. A contemplation of the floor returns to one of those forks in the road – territories sidelined in history that can become fresh projects for the discipline.

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elements of architecture
rem koolhaas

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a group of students from the harvard university graduate school of design, organized by dean mohsen mostafavi, were engaged in a multi-year research studio in rotterdam and cambridge, which formed the basis for this book and the exhibition "elements of architecture" at the 2014 venice architecture biennale.

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taschen

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