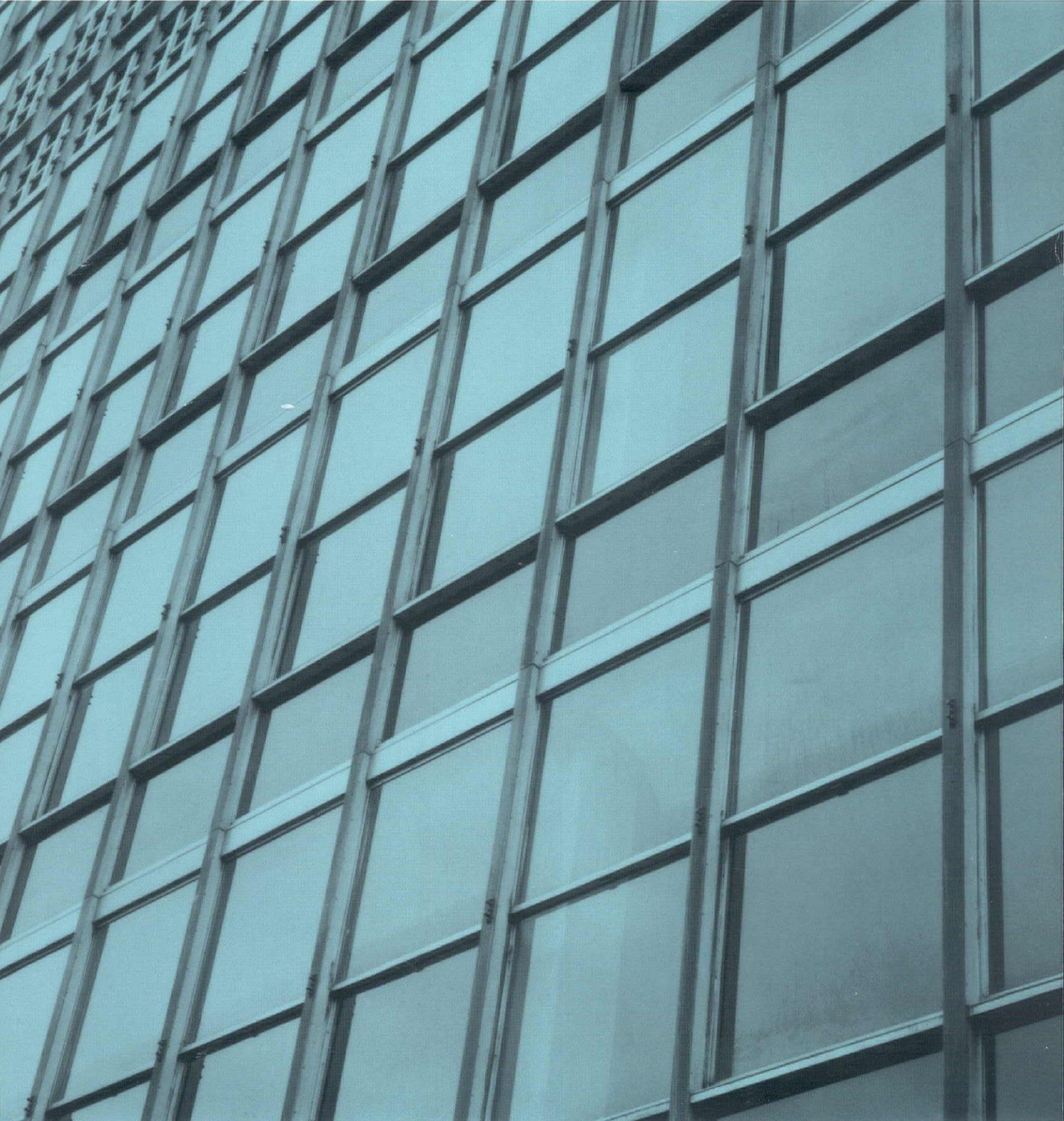


The Yale Architectural Journal

Perspecta 32

Resurfacing Modernism



Perspecta, The Yale Architectural Journal
is published in the United States of America
by the Yale School of Architecture
and distributed by The MIT Press.
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142
<http://mitpress.mit.edu>

©2001 Perspecta, The Yale Architectural Journal, Inc.
and Yale University.
All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any
form by any electronic or mechanical means
(including photocopying, recording or information
storage and retrieval) without permission in writing
from the publisher.

Printed in the United States by Mack Printing
North Haven, Connecticut.

ISBN: 0-262-52309-4
ISSN: 0079-0958

Send editorial correspondence to
Perspecta, Yale School of Architecture
180 York Street, New Haven, CT 06520

Resurfacing Modernism

HOUSTON
21 May 01

Perspecta 32 The Yale Architectural Journal

Acknowledgements

The editors of *Perspecta 32* would like to thank the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts for its support.

We would like to thank the members of the Board of Directors of *Perspecta, The Yale Architectural Journal*:

Peggy Deamer

Sheila Levrant de Bretteville

Michael R. Haverland

Gavin MacRae-Gibson

Cesar Pelli

Alan J. Plattus

Alexander Purves

Harold Roth

Robert A. M. Stern

Special thanks to Lauren Kogod for advising us at numerous points along the way: always patient, ever vigilant.

We are grateful to the graphic designers, Mark Owens and Leila Taylor, for their expertise, hard work, and dedication to this project, without which it could not have been completed.

We are also grateful to Jennifer Castellon, Kirsta MacLellan, Cavell Vassell, and Jean Sielaff of the School of Architecture. In addition, we were often aided by the immensely helpful and knowledgeable staff of the Yale Art and Architecture Library: Max Marmor, Christine de Vallet, Barbara Rockenbach, Margaret McGovern, Beverly Lett, Nicole Chardiet, Charles Summa, and Mary Shetler, as well as Slide Librarian Helen Chillman and Visual Resources Coordinator Susan J. Williams.

Additional aid in organizing the photographs was graciously provided by Ann B. Whiteside, Alix Reiskind, and Holly Getch Clarke of the Visual Resources Department of the Frances Loeb Library at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

The editors would like to thank Chad Clark, George Guman and Joe Maynard of Yale RIS, Louise Harpman, Paul Masi and Harry Bates of Bates Architects, Ann McDonald, Pamela McGirr, John D. McMorrough, James Pearson, Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, Lutz Robbers, Matthew Seidel, Lola Sheppard, Howard B. Spivak, and Frederick Tang.

The designers would like to thank the offices of one9ine and Straightline International for their generous support.

Special thanks to Christine Cardazzo of ESTO, William Whitaker of the Louis I. Kahn Collection, and Marie-Piere Sirois and Howard Shubert of the Canadian Center for Architecture, as well as Karen Cooper, Peter Morris Dixon, Jan Knikker, Keith Mendenhall, Sebastian Mittendorfer and Matteo Cainer, Jim Shedden and David Wilkinson, Andreas Savvides, and Rachel Wohler.

Design: Mark Owens, Leila Taylor

Copyeditors: Catherine Aman, Rebecca Garden

Typeset in Franklin Gothic, Akzidenz Grotesk, and Rockwell.

Text printed on Mohawk Superfine.

Cover printed on Lustrø Dull.

Resurfacing Modernism

Perspecta 32 The Yale Architectural Journal

editors ANNMARIE BRENNAN & BRENDAN D. MORAN

associate editor NATE GOODENOW

Table of Contents

- 005 Resurfacing Modernism: An Editorial Overview
THE EDITORS

Resurfacing

Reprinted from *Architectural Digest*, vol.47 No. 5, 1977

- 008 Rococo Modernism: The Elegance of Style
DEBORAH FAUSCH
- 018 Pandora's Box: An Essay on Metropolitan Portraits
DEMETRI PORPHYRIOS
- 028 OMA, "Neo-Modern," and Modernity:
George Baird in "Conversation" with the editors of *Perspecta 32*
GEORGE BAIRD
- 038 Making the Modified Modern
DAVID SMILEY
- 055 The Style of Education
HERBERT MCLAUGHLIN JR.
- 057 Redefining the Box

Reprinted from *Progressive Architecture*, vol.39 No. 7, July 1958

Reading Surfaces

- 066 Atrocities. Or, Curtain Wall as Mass Medium
REINHOLD MARTIN
- 076 Four Stops Along an Architecture of Postwar America
RICHARD M. SOMMER
- 090 Structuring Surfaces: The Legacy of the Whites
PEGGY DEAMER
- 100 Prolegomenon for a Study Linking the Advanced Architecture
of the Present to that of the 1970s through
Ideologies of Media, the Experience of Cities in
Transition, and the Ongoing Effects of Reification
K. MICHAEL HAYS
- 108 Recurring Surfaces: Architecture in the Experience Economy
SANDY ISENSTADT
- 120 Contributors

Resurfacing Modernism: An Editorial Overview

THE EDITORS

PERSPECTA 32 is an investigation into architectural modernism in a postmodern age and an exploration of surface as a subject with depth. If it is understood that we are now in an age that does not look at modernity uncritically, how does its optimistic imagery continue to play a vital role in architecture? We have seized the phenomenon of the recent resurgence of formal and stylistic attributes associated with mid-century modernism as an opportunity to survey a panoply of cultural issues that lurk behind surface appearances.

The issue, **RESURFACING MODERNISM**, is composed of essays and images that invoke the two simultaneous meanings of the verb *to resurface*. In the first sense, some of our contributors interrogate ongoing returns of past "stylistics," specifically the recent vogue for postwar, mostly American, production loosely united under the rubric "The Fifties." In the second, other contributors reflect upon current emphasis being placed on architectural surfaces. In this latter sense, *resurfacing* describes dual activities: the layering of new meanings and interpretations on top of accepted conventions, and the peeling away of accrued patinas associated with stereotypical or acculturated views. The relationship between modernism and surface has always been an engaging topic for speculation and inquiry that continues to proliferate. In this light, the following contents are efforts towards an initial scratching of the auratic surface associated with a topical return of a *certain* modernism.

From its very beginnings, architectural modernism was associated with smooth, pure, and more often than not, white surfaces, registering abstraction's role in an attempted break with the past. In the post-World War II era, however, architects such as Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson, Eero Saarinen, Gordon Bunshaft, and others initiated innovative variations, attenuating such surfaces in various directions, adding texture, color, and screens, or by replacing them entirely with gridded glass curtain wall systems. In most of the buildings designed by these figures, investment in the sleek qualities of glass, metal, and stone constituted perhaps the primary stylistic features. This habit has reappeared with a vengeance in recent years; coupled with the utilization of image technologies, new materials, and divergent theoretical interests, such neo-modernist activity marks a distinct break from earlier "postmodern" practices.

Many buildings from the last decade—some of which are featured in a color gatefold—consist of simple, cleanly proportioned envelopes in which almost any function can be housed. These volumes span horizontally across the landscape in smooth, frequently long lines, and can be repeated with little variation. While most can be categorized as "boxes" in the current "box" vs "blob" dichotomy, some projects exhibit the subtle curves of Eero Saarinen, such as Kayzou Sejima's O-Museum; others such as Neutelings Riedijk's Vreeman printing factory with its Breuer-esque butterfly roof reference 1950s gestures. Whether it is the organic stone wall of Herzog and de Meuron's Napa Winery, the neo-classical modernist "bicycle rack" structure of Livio Vacchini's Ticino Gymnasium, or the ecologically-innovative, multi-colored curtain wall of Sauerbruch and Hutton's GSW Tower Block renovation in Berlin, attention is unflaggingly drawn to the qualities of these building's various surfaces.

Resurfacing Modernism is the first issue of *Perspecta* conceived and published since architect Robert A.M. Stern—editor of the formidable double volume *Perspecta 9/10* of 1965—returned to Yale as its Dean. A selection of his earliest studio critic appointments, including Peter Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey, and Demetri Porphyrios, provoked reflection on the discourse instigated by these figures during the 1970s, debates and events which launched most of their noteworthy careers.

The White/Gray debate, which in retrospect seems to be perhaps the primary American concern on the East Coast during that era, revolved around both the question of representation and the articulation of surfaces. The Whites opted for the clean, purist experimentation of Le Corbusier, DeStijl, and Terragni, while the Grays were inspired by precedents further back in time, quoting traditional and popular elements on building surfaces. The early 1970s also marks the moment the "project" of Modernism was simultaneously pronounced ("officially") dead *and* relegated to history as a theme for reflection. Becoming another style awaiting revival, manipulation, and revision, modernism brought with it, as Manfredo Tafuri noted, a spectre of nostalgia that has significantly *not* diminished over time.

The "High Modernist" style, which both White and Gray ignored by looking elsewhere for models, has reappeared in much contemporary work. Current *resurfacing*, a revival of that particular modernism, would not have been possible without the earlier theoretical debates between these architects. Rather than see fascination with the past as some escapist yet over-determined return, such interest is best viewed as productive on numerous fronts. Within this body of recent work, we observed a blurring of the distinct line that previously defined the Whites and the Grays during the 1970s. Thus, in an effort to further explicate the present return of mid-century modernism stylistics, we revisit the discourse of the 1970s, seeing it as a vital hinge for understanding connections between the postwar period and the contemporary moment.

The increased appreciation of some of the original High Modernist buildings—such as Lever House in New York City and Nestlé's Headquarters in Geneva—is endemic of the recent sea change. Both of these buildings have lately undergone a literal "resurfacing," with their original curtain walls exquisitely replaced by new systems. In the process, this activity dispels any criticism that these were boring, poorly constructed boxes that contributed to the failure of the modernist project. Today, the distaste of the 1970s for mid-century modernism has indeed dissipated, for it has gained newfound respect in the eyes of a heterogeneous group of architects, historians, preservationists, and tastemakers. Recent events—the purchase by Martha Stewart of Gordon Bunshaft's former residence in Long Island, the proliferation of neo-modernist-themed mass-market magazines (such as *Wallpaper* or *Surface*), the efforts toward securing landmark status for artifacts as disparate as SOM's Lever House and Morris Lapidus' Summit Hotel in New York, and the commodification of modernism in the branding enterprises of retail ventures such as Calvin Klein, Prada, and Target—show a turning of the tide. Modernism is, once again, being embraced by the elite as well as by the mainstream: the arbiters of taste are not merely Mies or MOMA, but also Miuccia and Martha.

The diverse spectrum of research contained in *Resurfacing Modernism* is arranged in two sections separated by a color insert featuring recent international work. The first section—**RESURFACING**—contains studies of seemingly distinct eras from the 1990s to the immediate postwar period united under the topic of surface and “style.” The second section—**READING SURFACES**—takes the White/Gray debate as its immediate datum and opens it up to new themes.

Resurfacing examines connections between: mid-century modernism, with its sleek, curtain-walled exteriors; the 1970s and the revival, representation, and articulation of (building) surfaces; and contemporary work reminiscent of the 1950s, featuring new surface technologies and a proliferation of sensual skins and screens. Deborah Fausch’s opening essay, a meditation on recent additions to 1950s buildings, discerns the terms of modern architecture’s continuing revisionism; with mid-century modernist works as the context for contemporary intervention, unique problems of character and quotation arise.

Two pairs of articles devoted respectively to the 1970s and the 1950s follow. Two previously-published pieces have “resurfaced” from each of these earlier decades. In “Pandora’s Box: An Essay on Metropolitan Portraits” from *Architecture Design* (1977), Demetri Porphyrios interprets OMA’s early work as a re-investigation of “metropolitanism,” the quixotic success or failure of early modernism, and the nature of representation. We discerned a fourth, latent theme that makes this essay particularly important for us: a concern for the fate of passé mid-century modernism during the theoretically capricious 1970s. The conversation with George Baird that immediately follows it, a recent reflection on OMA/Rem Koolhaas’s production during the era of Rationalism, pursues the logic of such interests, relating them to pedagogical and theoretical practices commonly linked to figures associated with the Yale School of Architecture.

Herbert McLaughlin’s “The Style of Education,” published in *Progressive Architecture* soon after he graduated from Yale in 1958, describes the stylistic perambulations within the School during the 1950s. His analysis suggests that the superficial question of “style” is at times more complex than frequently recognized. We have paired it with David Smiley’s examination of the American postwar housing industry, concentrating on how the theme of “modernization” was played out through the surface images of architectural periodicals and the mechanisms of consumer culture. The terms through which modernism was made manifest in the 1950s domicile reveal tensions between the cultural forces that mediated between different interests, shaping events that foreshadowed the White/Gray debate which followed.

McLaughlin’s article also serves to introduce the issue’s gatefold insert, framing the re-emergence during the 1990s of the 1950s “box” as a powerful design paradigm. This insert includes images of recent projects that bring to life—through their multiple resurfacings—two of the most dynamic aspects of American mid-century modern architecture: understated elegance and heterogeneity within a restricted vocab-

ulary. This collection shows that building surfaces and the materials that constitute them are coming under renewed attention and are the vehicles for addressing new symbolic and programmatic capabilities.

The second section, *Reading Surfaces*, consists of essays by Reinhold Martin, Richard Sommer, Peggy Deamer, K. Michael Hays, and Sandy Isenstadt, all inflecting on the 1970s in heretofore unfathomed manners. But as Peggy Deamer notes in her essay, it would be tautological at this point to succumb to the pressure exerted by the protagonists of the White/Gray debate by reading events through the parameters they established as primary for its understanding. Thus we are opening the 1970s up to further investigations in order to expose themes that *on the surface* might not seem related to this era, themes that played a significant role in subsequent (and earlier) discourse. By doing so, this section of our volume offers additional threads through the last fifty years of architectural production, augmenting and inflecting those raised in the *Resurfacing* section.

The hidden spectre of television stands revealed in Reinhold Martin’s examination of the curtain wall and its relation to the 1970s debates. Attending to the curtain wall as a form of mass media, Martin acknowledges the violence inherent in cultural productions. Richard Sommer’s essay examines two sets of unrealized residential projects dating from the late 1950s and late 1970s. By juxtaposing American architectural experimentation to themes of formal play and everyday aesthetics, he brings to light thematics previously downplayed or excluded from our understanding of those moments. Peggy Deamer writes about the legacy of the Whites, dissecting a lineage of ideas about not only forms and the figures (or techniques) who created them, but also assumptions regarding the essential aspects of architectural surfaces.

K. Michael Hays’s sketch of thematic trajectories over the last thirty years reveals a very different lesson from the White/Gray debate than the formal games Tafuri saw. At the same time, his analysis points toward a new understanding of how autonomy and mediation connect past theoretical concerns to current design preoccupations and their smooth, ambient surfaces. Sandy Isenstadt’s final essay locates the emergence of themed and entertainment environments in some of the common perspectives and narrative explanations of both White and Gray architectural positions from the early 1970s.

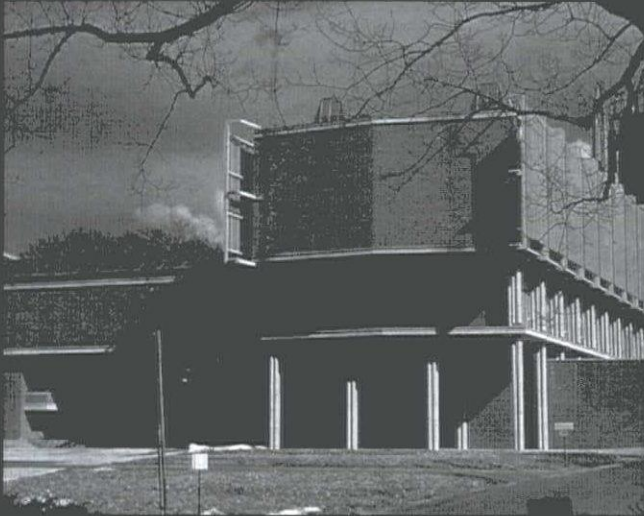
All these essays assert that the play between architectural surfaces and depths of meaning has not been absent from architectural culture over the last fifty years since High Modernism first began to comfortably take root and transform in America. If anything can be claimed about the contemporary moment and the perpetual resurfacing that now takes place seemingly everywhere, it is primarily that meaning and cultural density are more than ever before read on and through the surfaces of the world around us.



RESURFACING

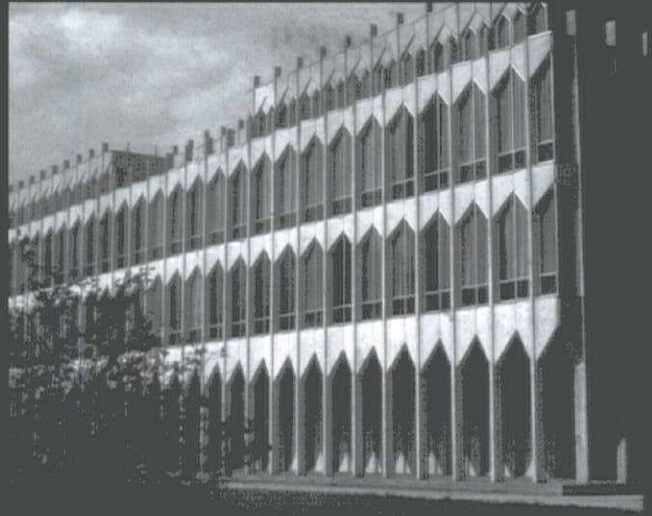
∨

Jewett Art Center
Wellesley, Massachusetts
Paul Rudolph, 1955.

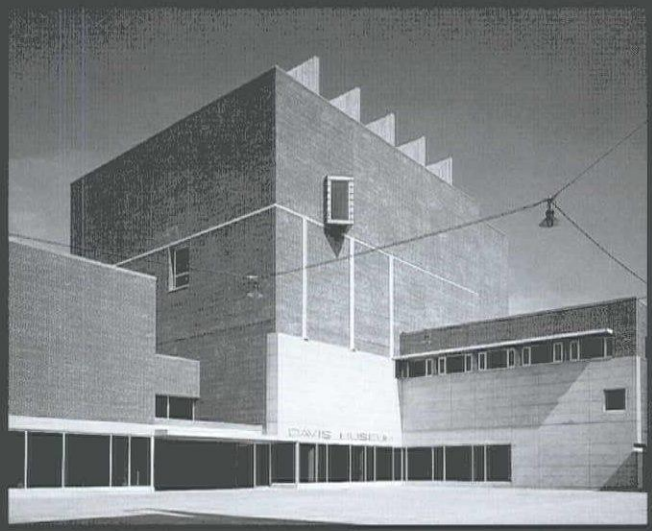


∨

College of Education Building
Detroit, Michigan
Minoru Yamasaki, 1959.



∧
Phoenix Central Library
Phoenix, Arizona
William P. Bruder, 1992.



∧
Davis Museum and Cultural Center
Wellesley, Massachusetts
Rafael Moneo, 1993.

© Scott Francis, ESTO

Rococo Modernism: The Elegance of Style

DEBORAH FAUSCH

"The word 'architecture' related to a judgement upon building, the word 'modern' to a verdict upon history."

—Colin Rowe (1994)¹

To understand the recent American crop of neo-modernist buildings, these structures must be located not only alongside the international reanimation of the idiom, but also within the sheer variousness of contemporary American modernism. Drawing from the deep repository of modern forms and ideas, William Bruder's **PHOENIX CENTRAL LIBRARY** (1992), for example, with its fabric *brises-soleils* and its weathering metal surfaces, is an exemplification of open planning and the exhibition of "honest materials." Tod Williams and Billie Tsien's **MANHATTAN TOWNHOUSE** (1997) is a practiced and sophisticated abstraction of context in glass and stone, enclosing a flowing layout that recalls nearby residences by both Philip Johnson and Paul Rudolph (Rockefeller Townhouse, 1950; Alexander Hirsch Townhouse, 1966). Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron's **DOMINUS WINERY IN NAPA VALLEY** (1998), with its witty play of piled-up stones perversely graded from small at the bottom to large at the top, takes its reification of pure surface from the tenets of "classical modernism."²

The larger context within which this movement has emerged is far broader, and this context includes tendencies that, although superficially divergent or even antagonistic, take the terms of their disagreements from the same modernist sources. Among the fruits of the modernist tree are not only Frank Gehry's figural bodies and the cool allusions of Rem Koolhaas's streamlined spaces, but also straight revivals like Gensler's San Diego airport (1999), which mimics, without any of the soaring poetry, Eero Saarinen's Dulles Airport Terminal of 1962; structural expressionism like Santiago Calatrava's 1991 proposal to complete the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City; what Robert Venturi calls the "industrial *rocaille*" of such architects as Eric Owen Moss, Morphosis, and RoTo; the critical postures of neo-avant-garde architects and theoreticians; the neo-Baroque lineup recently touted by *Time* as the architecture of the future already camped out on our Main Streets; and the incongruities of the modernist founded proposals for the Museum of Modern Art (1997), an institution founded to promote a continuing revolution in art.³

The case of the MoMA addition highlights the idea of modernism as a novel, critical response to the problems of society, opposed in America by the idea of modernism as style. Long before its elevation to the status of a major mode of American building, assessments of modern architecture in the United States began to rehearse the same rhetoric: modernism as record of the times, modernism's crisis of authenticity, and modernism as style, revolutionary or not. Born, in the words of Colin Rowe, amidst "predictions of an imminent cataclysm" and "prophecies of an morfluent revolution," founded on assumptions of

"ineluctable social change," "irresistible progress," and the existence of a modern zeitgeist, conceived as "establishing moral imperatives which can in no way be rejected," modernism was required to be:

"[a] style which is not a style because it is being created by the accumulation of objective reactions to external events and which, therefore, is pure and clean, authentic, valid, self-renewing, and self-perpetuating."⁴

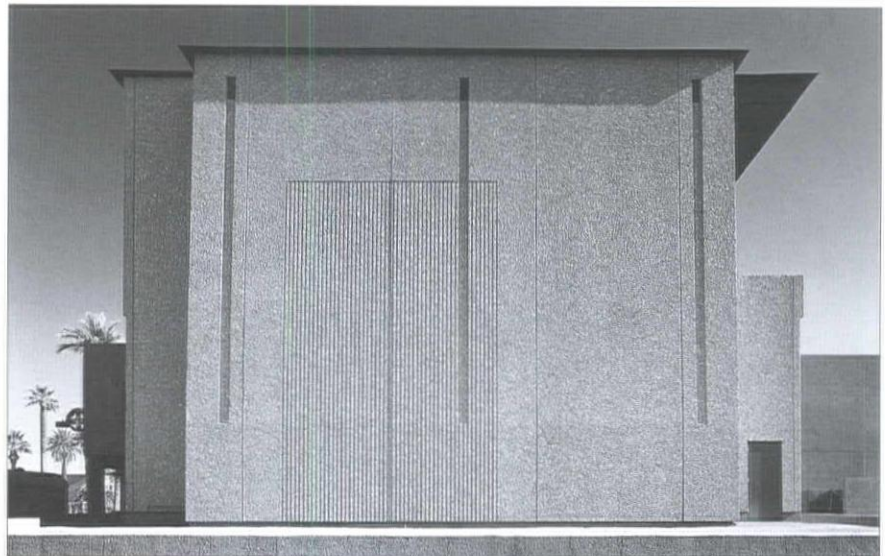
As modernism has matured in the United States, this demand for ever-original reflection and renewal has had its difficulties, and where, as in an addition to a modernist building, modernism has become the context for the new rather than the new itself, the incongruities have been even more marked. "Theoretically, MoMA is about newness," Koolhaas remarks in his competition statement for the Museum of Modern Art addition. "Newness is ambiguous. It cannot last; it cannot have a tradition."⁵ Buildings designed as self-contained embodiments of the new cannot in theory function as matrices for something still more modern. This is not a problem peculiar to MoMA; other examples include Williams and Tsien's addition to Aldo Dow's 1956 **PHOENIX ART MUSEUM AND LITTLE THEATER** (1996), Juan Navarro Baldeweg's extension of Moore and Hutchkins's 1962 Woolworth Conservatory at Princeton University (1997), and Gluckman Mayner's (1998) expansion of Marcel Breuer's 1966 Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

The anomaly of adding onto a modernist icon raises issues that are general to any post-postmodern revival of the style of the ever new.⁶ Even such an advocate of modernism as Herbert Muschamp is compelled to acknowledge the historicity of a pure glass façade that turns the Beaubourg inside out.⁷ Muschamp calls the Polshek Partnership's recently completed **ROSE CENTER FOR EARTH AND SPACE** in New York "the finest example of glass curtain wall construction ever realized in the United States." Taking a swipe at postmodernism, he accords this addition to the American Museum of Natural History his highest accolade: "architecture, not the theme park simulation of it that has distorted [New York's] cityscape for so long like the convex lens on a rear-view mirror." But he also records the building's historical precedents:

"Whatever your feelings about the old [Hayden] planetarium, you cannot accuse the new one of lacking long-term historical memory. The design is saturated with it. This is a mature modern building, a structure unafraid of revealing the deep roots from which modern architecture arose. The design's historical awareness far exceeds that of buildings that merely ape period styles. ...Does it serve any purpose to peg the Rose Center stylistically? ...[I]t turns out that modern architecture cannot be equated with a particular style. ...Like many contemporary buildings, the Rose Center is eclectic. It absorbs historical elements and contemporary influences into an organic whole. Neo-classicism. Bauhaus. Popluxe. Euro Millennial."⁸



▲ **Manhattan Townhouse**
New York City. Billie Tsien & Tod Williams, 1997.



▲ **Addition to Alden Dow's 1956 Phoenix Art Museum**
Arizona. Billie Tsien & Tod Williams, 1990-96.

Despite making the obligatory assertion that modern architecture is not a style, Muschamp's tribute to the Rose Center appeals to history for validation, recognizing that no resurfacing of modernism can completely sidestep the postmodernist re-configuration of architecture in terms of reference and history.

The paradoxes involved in regenerating modernism at the turn of the twenty-first century come into sharp focus in two adjacent projects on the campus of Wellesley College in Massachusetts: Rafael Moneo's **DAVIS MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER** (1993) and Paul Rudolph's **MARY COOPER JEWETT ARTS CENTER** (1958). Both built in secure, prosperous times, these two complexes are deeply imbedded in the context of modernism as well as the verdant landscape of a nineteenth-century American college—physical and intellectual settings that place the problem of modernism and history in high relief. Both share a mastery of the modern idiom. For both architects, modernism is a given, simultaneously a secure background and a subject for their work. Modernism is, for both, a style whose terms can be appropriated in the service of the particular situation. Rudolph's building, once rejected as facile, empty styling, now seems, in the light of the skilled structural decoration of much neo-modernist architecture, scintillatingly intellectual and beautiful. Moneo's architecture, suave and sure, embodies the stress on the surface present in all neo-modernist work. But since both buildings are additions—a neo-modern addition to a modern addition to a neo-Gothic college—the sense of history, the understanding of the relationship of the present to the past, is highly developed in both schemes. Whereas for Rudolph, history is something to which modernism must be adapted, for Moneo, modernism is a part of history. Thus, an analysis of the similarities and differences between the two buildings provides an exposition of neo-modernism's complicated relationship to history. It also confronts, yet again, the issue of modernism as style, and perhaps illuminates some of the ironies of the modernist style in the post-millennial present.

Moneo's express intention in the design of the Davis Center is to enhance Rudolph's Jewett Center. As a student in the late 1950s, Moneo had admired Rudolph's building as an exemplar of an "American architecture that would take some liberties with the strict modernism of those years." Moneo's museum, with its theater and café, is intended to "embrace the space [between the two architect's buildings] and give

it a certain character, which would, of course, work in favor of Paul Rudolph's building."⁹ Now seen as early evidence of the shift toward postmodern contextualism, Rudolph's architecture was during Moneo's student years accounted some of the most accomplished modernism in the United States.

As has been frequently emphasized, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's three major propositions in their 1932 volume *The International Style*—architecture as volume rather than mass, regularity rather than axial symmetry, and lack of applied decoration—tended to define modernism as a style. Structure and function were honored in the breach, expression of structure being subordinate to the first axiom, and functionalism, although acknowledged as the principle behind the second axiom, questioned as the sole basis for the *art* of architecture. Indeed, Hitchcock and Johnson faulted some American practitioners for adhering to function as a first principle of design.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Walter Gropius, as chair of Harvard's architecture department after 1937, and Sigfried Giedion, in his Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1938-1939, stressed the ideas later recapitulated by Rowe: modernism as a response to a cultural need for revolution, and in architecture connected, through expression of structure and function, to a revolt against the falsity of historical styles.

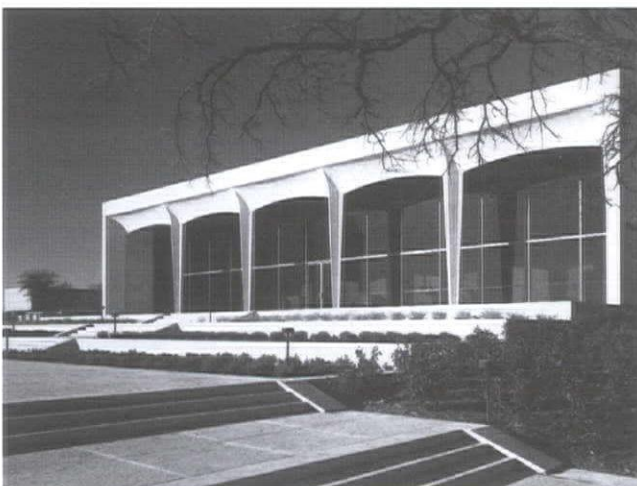
In 1948, only a decade before the Jewett Center's completion, Hitchcock and Johnson's definition of modernism as International Style was reiterated in "What is Happening in Modern Architecture?," a Museum of Modern Art symposium that worried over the devolution of the doctrine of functionalism into cold commercial materialism.¹¹ As a "Class of 1944" student of Gropius at Harvard, enrolled at the same time as Philip Johnson, Edward Larrabee Barnes, John Johansen, and I. M. Pei, Rudolph imbibed these formal tenets or procedures imbued with positive moral value.¹² Following the rule of modernism, Rudolph's early houses were structurally innovative and, as he himself noted, even over-expressive.¹³

As Rowe pointed out, modernism was deeply concerned with history; while the modern architect "set himself against historical *precedent*, he did so in order to emerge as some protagonist of historical *process*." Rowe noted that: "Some strained and involuted relationship with the historical consciousness is, indeed, one of the most predominant, most obvious, most significantly 'modern' characteristics of the modern movement in architecture."¹⁴

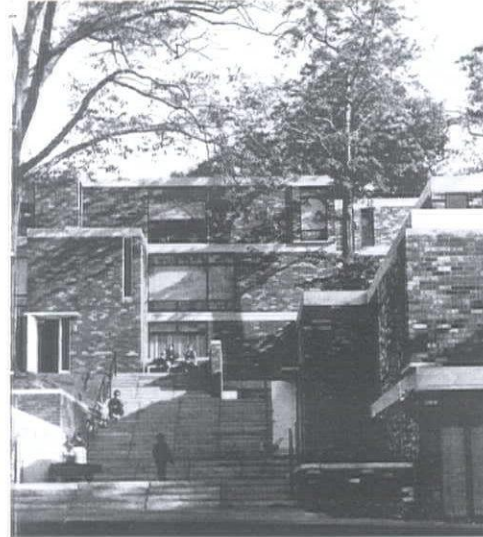
Although Gropius had, in 1955, reiterated that architecture ought to be the “inevitable, consequential product of the intellectual, social and technical conditions of our age,” by the early 1960s Rudolph had concluded something more than adherence to the zeitgeist was needed for the creation of modern architecture: “We cannot pretend to solve problems of space without precedent in form!”¹⁵ In this he echoed Johnson, who had made a similar and pithier observation that “form follows form” as early as 1953.¹⁶

Thus the historical references in Rudolph’s first major nonresidential project, the Jewett Center, come as no surprise. The complex was completed only a year after his appointment to the chairmanship of the Yale School of Architecture, a post he held until 1965.¹⁷ Besides establishing Rudolph’s ability to marry the modernist idiom to historic settings, the building helped propel his meteoric career on its rise as one of the most accomplished modern stylists of the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁸ Set on one edge of Wellesley’s central quadrangle, the Center is divided into two parts, connected by a bridge under which an elaborate system of stairs connects the lower level campus northwest of the buildings to the higher yard. The Performing Arts Building houses an auditorium, music classrooms, and practice rooms; the Studio Arts Building holds art studios, a slide library, and classrooms. The connecting bridge originally contained a small art gallery, which has now been much expanded by the Davis Center.

Rudolph described the Jewett Center as “extending its pseudo-Gothic environment” by many means: site planning, structural dimensioning, detailing, and choice of materials.¹⁹ Matched in its overall dimensions to the buildings around it, the complex’s fifteen foot structural module also echoes the bay size of the surrounding 1920s neo-Gothic buildings. Its columns are broken down into clusters of four seven-and-a-half-inch square colonettes, a more delicate and “Gothic” arrangement than the same bearing area would be as a simple fifteen-inch-square form. The fretted ornamental window mullions match the ornamental multiplication of structure in Gothic buildings.²⁰ The twenty-two sharply peaked skylights of the Studio Arts Building recall the steep slopes of the neighboring roofs. Delicate white porcelain enamel-covered aluminum screens, in an abstraction of Gothic openwork, hang over the top floor windows. The flat rectangular armatures from which they are suspended jab into the sky in close alternation with the skylights, creating a serrated roofline that recalls crockets, gables, pinnacles, and flying buttresses. The whole brick ensemble, like the older brick buildings, is tied together with horizontal ribbons, white stripes emulating stone lintels and string courses.



^ Amon Carter Museum of Western Art
Fort Worth, Texas. Philip Johnson, 1961.



^ Married Student Housing
New Haven, Connecticut. Paul Rudolph, 1961.

Although architects such as Philip Johnson had earlier incorporated parts of past styles in their work, the Jewett Center differs from other historicizing buildings of the 1950s both in the exquisite subtlety of its finely detailed contextual references and in its relative faithfulness to modernism. Its ornamental strategy is to abstract and generalize the neo-Gothic elements, replicating their characteristics as structure and function within the modern idiom. Less diagrammatic than Johnson’s buildings during this period, such as the **AMON CARTER MUSEUM** (1961), and less figurative than Minoru Yamasaki’s works, such as the **COLLEGE OF EDUCATION BUILDING AT WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY IN DETROIT** (1959), it follows a formal logic hovering on the edge of imitation. Yet it looks in retrospect more authentically modern than either Johnson or Yamasaki’s work, while at the same time coming closer to being ornamented.

In its site planning as well as its design, the Jewett Center was seen by Rudolph’s contemporaries as radically contextual. The complex completes the academic quadrangle. Replicating the long, jointed forms of the neo-Gothic buildings, the site plan explicitly invokes Siena’s Piazza del Campo.²¹ But while Rudolph’s site planning, like his building design, gestures to its historical setting, it betrays its modernism in the details. Whereas the Studio Arts Building is a long volume comparable to the Gothic buildings, the Performing Arts Building is square. Whereas the neo-Gothic buildings are entered at porticoes spaced so as to make intimate contact with the tissue of pathways crisscrossing the lawn, the Jewett Center has only one entry area, raised up and pulled away from the plane of the quadrangle by the convoluted system of stairs that pass under it.

The majority of the complex sits floating in its pool of space on floor plates detached from their surroundings, with no direct access between building and ground. The long volume of the Studio Arts Building has a self-contained power, the two-story slab rising on its columns above a white datum plane at the level of the auditorium lobby and gallery. Below this, however, the columns descend to ground level amidst a series of surfaces that slide out from under the building without resolving into comprehensible volumes. And whereas in the neo-Gothic buildings the solids of the porticoes and the crossing tower mark the entries and building intersections, in both plan and section the Jewett Center’s entry point is a hollow between solid wings, articulating a hinge or a void created by the entry stair into the quadrangle from the northwest.

In fact this stair, the pivotal moment in the site, is the place where the incongruities of Rudolph's contextual moves are most clearly seen. From below, it passes under the art gallery to a horseshoe-crab-shape that splits into two returning flights—a design as elaborate as any seventeenth-century urban set piece, and almost as extravagant. One moves up and under, around and back, finally arriving at the door to the gallery between the two buildings. From this landing, raised above the green, one has a view out over the quad. Although the gentle slope of the stairs somewhat slows the tempo of movement, this dramatic spatial succession seems essentially out of place in the pastoral setting of the Wellesley campus. Thus while the Studio Arts Building suits itself to its neo-Gothic environment with delicate elaboration that falls just short of decoration, the complex as a whole also displays its separation from the site. In its ideational as well as physical detachment from its context, it reveals the caesuras in Rudolph's modernist way of thinking about representation and history. Rudolph embedded abstracted quotations and syntactical similarities in a design based on modernist principles of composition and structure, as he embedded his modernist building in a neo-Gothic setting. For Rudolph, modernism could include history, but it was not itself historical.

Although with one exception Rudolph's building designs did not again make such explicit stylistic references, Rudolph's site planning continued to implant Italian urban forms in American settings.²² European close-cropped urban space was a theme of several of his later projects. The Boston Government Center (1967) is the most important example, but the **MARRIED STUDENT HOUSING AT YALE UNIVERSITY** (1961), and even the entry stair to the Yale Art and Architecture Building (1964), also owe something of their form to Italy. Rudolph's lectures and occasional writings also stressed the relationship of historical to modern planning.²³

In the years following the construction of the Jewett Center, this urge to consider context and history would become more widespread. Its effects can be seen, for example, in a "seminar by correspondence" held by *Progressive Architecture* three years later in 1961. Entitled "The Sixties: A P/A Symposium on the State of Architecture," it was organized in two parts by Thomas Creighton, the journal's editor. The first portion, "The Period of Chaotism" (the title inspired by systems theorist Norbert Weiner's characterization of the times as ones of increasing "entropy") referred to the perceived lack of clear direction in architectural design. The second, "New Influences on Practice," was occasioned by the prevalence of corporate clients and the problems of an increasingly complex construction industry. In the face of what they saw as willful and idiosyncratic "styling" on the part of architects like Rudolph and Eero Saarinen, on the one hand, and a more conformist clientele on the other, the majority of the respondents echoed modernism's old saws on space, structure, and function, and inveighed against decoration: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe reiterated the view that architecture was an expression of the times; Yamasaki stated that architecture reflected its civilization; Dow insisted that architecture should be honest; and Ralph Rapson stressed the need for "truth" in design.²⁴

Most of the participants saw historical references ungrounded in structural and functional necessity as a symptom of the problem, but several of the correspondents invoked tradition or history as an antidote to the proliferation of "styling." John Johansen mentioned recent interest in "remote cultures" and "historic monuments"; Robert Geddes emphasized the consideration of a "sense of 'place'" and "the symbolic meaning of buildings in cities"; and Harry Weese spoke of the need to "form out of the past a program for the future" and the need to create a "tradition for our time."²⁵ Certain interlocutors also proposed the idea of a style—succinctly defined by Victor Gruen as "the forms of expression peculiar

to one or more countries over a long period of time"—as a solution to excessive "styling."²⁶ For Craig Ellwood, the steel frame and glass curtain wall constituted this style.²⁷ Karl Koch related curtain wall construction to the building practices of an earlier time, thus locating modernism in a historical continuum of construction types:

"A wallpaper-like curtain wall, which in 20th-Century terms does the same job that the early New England clapboard did in 18th-Century terms, can be just as satisfying and economical a skin for today as the clapboard was then. None of us complains about the standardization of parts, colors, shapes, and surfaces of the old New England Village. ... We mustn't make the curtain wall take all the blame today for a growing addiction to an empty façadism that threatens to outdo the Beaux Arts approach at its worst. We must give new form not to curtain walls but to our neighborhoods made of curtain walls, by building standardized buildings—but with imagination."²⁸

Transformed into a positive strategy, the recognition that use of the curtain wall intimates a "façadist" architecture would, of course, soon become a basis of postmodernism. In this symposium, Louis Kahn had already pointed to the implications of the problem Koch hinted at—that twentieth-century construction methods had insured that structure could not be a sufficient cause for form:

"[W]ithin the limitations of such a material as stone there was a fundamental rhythm: you had to conclude with columns at certain intervals which, even if you knew nothing about architecture very profoundly, made a kind of architecture. When you looked at it you said, 'By God, isn't that pretty nice.' In it was built a kind of rhythm that you couldn't help. Today you can span 100 feet; the column is so distant from the other column that rhythm doesn't exist any more. And other qualities have changed: you don't feel the music of it; you don't feel the judgment of it. Is it architecture or is it not?"²⁹

Kahn's statement perfectly illuminated the quixotic character of Paul Rudolph's "pseudo-structural" contextualism, with its fifteen-foot bays. However much they had stressed that architecture was an art, the compositional rules of Hitchcock and Johnson had been justified in construction and function. In the rulebook of modernism, historical reference, unless as something to avoid, was not a good reason for form. Indeed, it was precisely this problem that would lead to postmodernism's obsession with language and reference. Koolhaas would restate Kahn's point even more forcefully some thirty years later—that the reasons of modernism, based in its authentic structural and functional nature, were, by the terms of that very nature, irrelevant as architecture.³⁰

If the Jewett Center is an exploration of the possibilities for an "unnecessary" or even decorative history within modernism, the Davis Center is a proficient performance of modernism as a "historical present." In his description of the building, Moneo says that the Davis Center "enters on tiptoe," but at five stories tall it suffers, despite its modesty, from the problem of appearing more massive than the object to which it is added. Sited to the northwest of the Jewett Center, a level below the quadrangle buildings, the museum nonetheless outstrips the older building's roof peaks, competing for notice with Day and Klaunder's neo-Gothic tower. Like Rudolph's complex, the Davis Center appears in site plan to be a jointed building—several squarish pieces connected to each other and to the earlier structures by narrower hinge pieces. A large volume topped with saw-toothed skylights contains the art museum; a smaller mass houses a film theatre and café; and a low connecting wing between the museum and the Jewett Center is devoted to administrative activities.

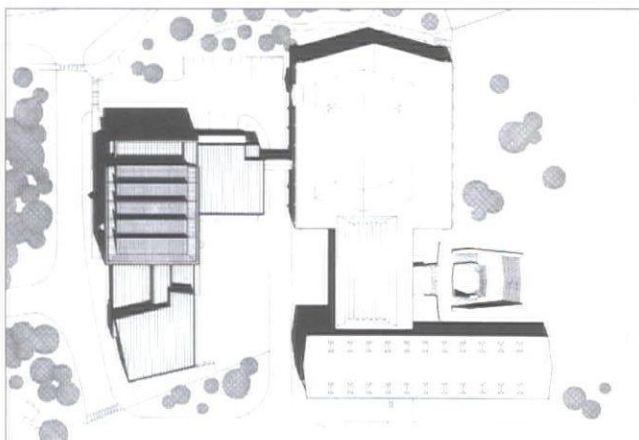
Modernism is a style so deeply ingrained in Moneo's work that he can present its most important tenets as ideas already perfectly understood, stories so well-worn that only the punch-lines need be told. Here, because Rudolph has already inserted a modern building into the neo-Gothic fabric, Moneo can make do with the slightest of gestures, both to modernism and to the earlier style. In deference to the brick of the Wellesley campus, the Davis Center's concrete slabs and steel frame are surfaced in a smooth pattern of red brick panels whose junctions are picked out by white steel bands. In conformity with Rudolph's reiteration of neo-Gothic elements, Moneo carefully reduplicates specific components of the Jewett Center—the horizontal white strips, the bands of narrow vertical windows outlined in white structural or structurally-derived elements, the steeply-pitched skylights—the same elements, called out also in white, that tie Rudolph's building to the neo-Gothic campus. In contrast to Rudolph's attempt to match the scale and rhythm of the older buildings, Moneo replicates these common elements within a completely different syntax. One example will illustrate the distinction: little triangular bay windows that, in Rudolph's building, are subordinated to an overall order of horizontal bands are, in Moneo's building, individual incidents in the walls of the box.

This difference in syntax is closely connected to the lack of structural expressiveness that is the most significant distinction between the Davis Center and the Jewett Center. Rudolph made decoration out of structure and the functions of light. But oddly for a building by an architect who has written about tectonics as a basis for architecture, the Davis Center is neither obviously tectonic nor decorative in any usual sense.³¹ For if decoration presumes a division between structure and ornament, this building has nothing that opposes decoration as structure. Instead everything has floated equally to the surface to create a façade that no longer acts as a covering for something more essential, but is itself the whole architecture. In contrast to the extroverted coruscations of the Jewett Center, the brick and concrete paneled skin of the Davis Center has a reticent neutrality that belies all its contextual gestures. The art museum is just as Moneo describes it. Wrapped in brick, tied with ribbons of white, and bowed with skylights, it is a "treasure-box for art" that must be entered to be understood. Inside, the art museum creates—with modest means, as Moneo has pointed out—an ineffable experience of rising up into light. The hollow volume is organized around a series of slow stair runs, which are related to the airy galleries around them by means of asymmetrically placed openings.

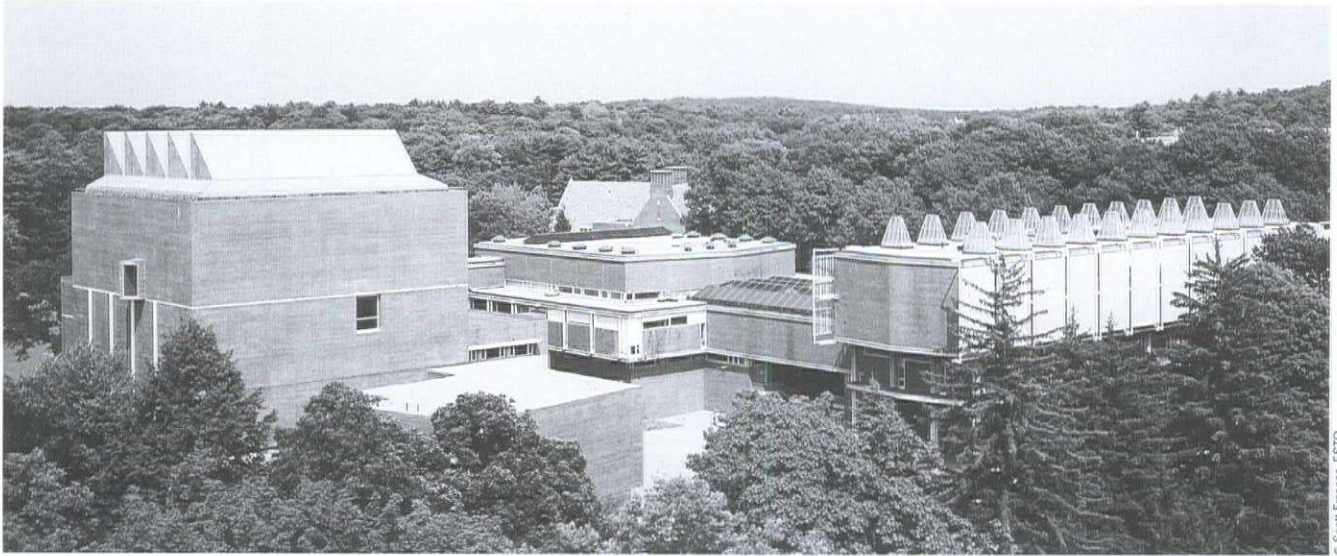
Just as in the Jewett Center, however, it is the site planning that reveals most clearly the principles of the Davis Center's relationship to history. His architecture is supremely contextual in its overall approach. Some of Moneo's recent buildings, such as the Museum of Modern Art and Architecture in Stockholm (1998), seem almost to disappear into their sites, their status as entities dissolving into a flow of small parts. Here,

however, the Davis Center faces the back of the Jewett Center across a piazza, as Moneo terms it—a hard-surfaced space quite unlike the informal quadrangle to which it is appended. This court is approached from the northwest by steps laid out on line with Rudolph's monumental stair, moving up under the hinge between the Davis Center's auditorium and art museum. While Rudolph's cluster of buildings is oriented toward the quadrangle a level above, the main entrances to Moneo's group are necessarily from this piazza. Rudolph's Jewett Center was just beginning to learn the lessons of mannerly relationships with older neighbors, but it could not help asserting its modernism by the details of its siting. The forms of the Davis Center are determined by the small site available and by the views they provide of the Studio Arts wing of the Jewett Center, as Moneo's sketches and his description demonstrate. This means that the large volume of the art museum is placed as far away as possible, and the two wings on either side of it are kept low and inconspicuous. Yet the design of the piazza gestures not towards the picturesque green above, but toward a more closed, more complex, harder-surfaced urbanism. This urban strategy does not work as well here as it might in a denser fabric. The southwest faces of Rudolph's buildings, meant to be a "back side," were not designed to be rubbed up against, as the piazza forces pedestrians to do. And the curtain wall of Moneo's building that runs around the piazza introduces a different referent yet: American postwar commercial architecture in its unmitigated juxtaposition to the sidewalk, blank glass at right angles to concrete. The piazza becomes an unresolved intersection of two or three different kinds of urban design.

Moneo's addition thus attaches a third, hybrid form of site planning to the other two—the neo-Gothic and the late-modern—already cohabiting in one spot. All three are concerned with the creation of an arena for the modern public activity of circulation and unspecific gathering, and all three are "referential" in the sense that they point back to historical conditions of gathering. Moneo's contextualism allows him to marshal the moves of the Mediterranean urbanism that Rudolph's generation was beginning to emulate—piazza as outdoor room, building as facade, procession of vertical stages—as well as might be done on this site which is unequivocally a back stage. One could interpret Moneo's stair and piazza as an homage to the late-modernist hunger for pedestrian-scaled space. It is more interesting, and more exact, to view it as an index of the existence of an international historico-modern lexicon, in which pre-industrial European urbanism functions as some sort of architectural Esperanto for the concept of context. As the distinction between structure and decoration has dissolved into surface, so the antagonism between the historical and the modern is dissolved into the context.



< Davis Museum and Cultural Center
Wellesley, Massachusetts. Rafael Moneo, 1993. site plan.



▲ **Davis Museum and Cultural Center**
Wellesley, Massachusetts. Rafael Moneo, 1993.

"Beauty is not today familiar in an architectural vocabulary. Architects seem to be absorbed by the idea that architecture is simply the reflection of a culture at a specific time. So many architects now seek to manifest motion instead of stability, the ephemeral instead of the perpetual, the fragmented instead of the whole and the fictitious instead of the real... When the building enjoys being itself ...then pleasure and truth engender the feeling of plenitude that seems to me to be felt when we are close to something which emanates beauty."

—Rafael Moneo (1996)³²

"The whole duty of the rococo... was to release art from being the carrier of preconceptions; it need not contain a religious message, nor a moral one, and ultimately need not be serious at all."

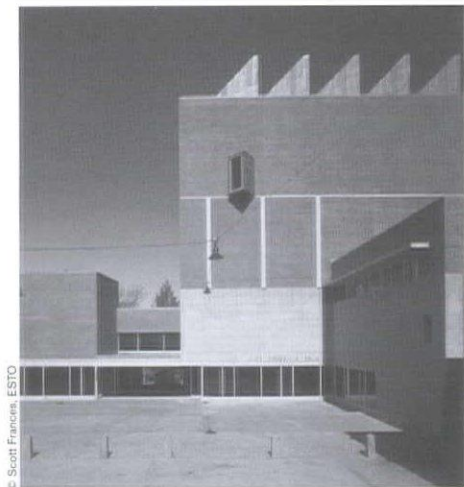
—Michael Levey (1966)³³

Despite the differences between its surface modernism and Rudolph's structural style, the Davis Center attains a quiet elegance with respect to its complicated historical context. Whereas Rudolph's architecture does not always seem conscious of how it relates the historical and the modern, in Moneo's building the elements, including the modern ones, all are equally historical, and all are equally present, without reference to any underlying reality of societal or structural truth. This surface quality of Moneo's work is shared by other American neo-modernist projects. In "Tectonic Masks," Sandro Marpillero has called attention to a similar phenomenon in two other recent buildings, Steven Holl's **SAINT IGNATIUS CHAPEL AT SEATTLE UNIVERSITY** (1997), and Juan Navarro Baldeweg's addition to the **WOOLWORTH CENTER OF MUSIC AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY** (1997). He points to the incommensurability between structure and both interior volume and exterior "expression" in both buildings. This incommensurability derives, through a figural opacity, from the truths of each buildings' construction. Marpillero connects these projects to traditional modernist values, viewing the design of surface as the agent of a Freudian reconciliation, assimilation, or accommodation of the material and spiritual. The surface is thus a symbolic layering that refers, obliquely, to a tectonic underlayer.³⁴ In the case of the Davis Center, however, the building's construction is so much taken for granted that it is not made thematic, but rather functions as a kind of unstated understanding, a quality also present in Navarro's and Holl's buildings. Structure, in other words, has no special role as truth, but operates as formal.

Thus although it takes the shape of modernism, the value of the surface embodied in these buildings cannot be explained by modernist theory. This break from modernist essentialism, and from the oppositions into which it has driven architectural thought, can be seen in Moneo's 1996 Pritzker Prize acceptance speech, in which he discusses his practice in terms of beauty. Banned from the architectural vocabulary for most of the past century, the word "beauty"—that tender, sweet, stereotypically feminine value, adjusted to the human (not royal or godlike) scale, but also, since the Romantic period, that complaisant, even possibly immoral trait—ought to claim our attention. Surprisingly, Moneo connects the quality of beauty with both pleasure and truth. Like Paulette Singley's recent characterization of Philip Johnson's work as "sincere style," Moneo's speech equilibrates two values that would be placed on opposite sides of a modernist moral system—momentary pleasure opposed to the enduring universal value of truth, and skin deep beauty at odds with structure that gets down to the heart—or the bones—of things.³⁵

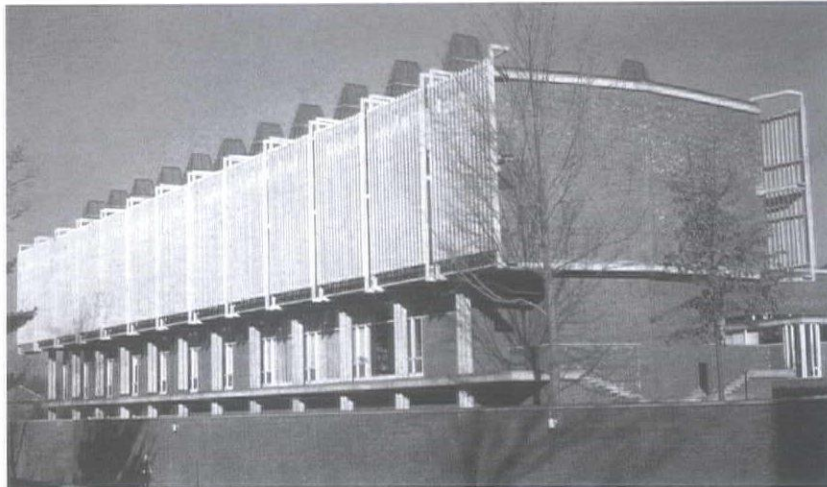
Moneo himself does not follow his own lead—his speech condemns current work that reflects what might be called the "millennial zeitgeist," criticizing it for being mobile, ephemeral, fragmented, and fictitious—all terms that would, in the modernist glossary, be classed with beauty as being other than truth. But as H el ene Cixous once observed, the Other can only be seen in its multiplicity when it emerges from the shadow of the One. Moneo's words are suggestive of some additional ethical/aesthetic system, one in which pleasure and beauty, as well as fiction, fragment, and style, would be arrayed on the side of a certain kind of truth which is not *the* essential truth.

The qualities of such a system, which would include the mobile, the ephemeral, the fragmented, and the fictitious, are among the principles advocated by contemporary architects who, citing Gilles Deleuze and invoking the name of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, have advanced their work under the auspices of the Baroque.³⁶ The surface brilliance their architecture exhibits has, however, more usually been deemed the accomplishment of the artists and architects of the Rococo. Succeeding the official classicism of Louis XIV, the Rococo was human rather than heroic, intelligent rather than impressive, graceful and exuberant rather than powerful, decorative rather than structural. Most often thought of as an age of frivolous excess, it was also true, as Michael Levey noted, that Rococo artists were in no danger of "mistaking fiction for truth—being utterly of their century in their commonsense. ... And it



© Scott Francis, ESTO

▲ **Davis Museum and Cultural Center**
Wellesley, Massachusetts. Rafael Moneo, 1993.



▲ **Jewett Art Center**
Wellesley Massachusetts. Paul Rudolph, 1955.

was perhaps the very sureness of their grasp on reality that allowed them to go off into such firmly-controlled and fully-realized fantasies, spiced with wit.³⁷ If “Rococo art aimed solely to delight a leisured, indeed idle, society, in which the only sin was to be boring,” still, its architecture also became more convenient and more intimate than the Baroque royal palaces designed to deify a monarch’s every movement.³⁸ If some Rococo work was “faintly iridescent, bubble-blown, run up out of a few twists of silk and some feathers,” it was also created “with an assurance which is itself attractive, and an economy of detail that delight[ed] the eye... [N]othing [was] very solemn, or solid, but it beautifully fulfil[ed] its function.”³⁹

Many of the virtues as well as the vices of the Rococo are present in the architecture of our fin-de-millennium age. Current practices, seemingly predicated on opposing philosophies, can instead be seen as linked by the intelligence and wit, the sure grasp of the human, the attractive economy, and the grace, charm, and beauty possessed by the architecture of the Rococo. In particular, both the Rococo period and our own are marked by a change in the relationship to nature and history. The Rococo stepped down from embodying a divine nature that underwrote human action and hierarchy, to mirroring the refinement of human nature. In place of heroic enactments of history were the *tristes* pastimes of Antoine Watteau’s nostalgic mythological scenes; Gabriel Germain Boffrand’s interiors were no longer the scenes for the making of history, but rather for the living out of social relationships.⁴⁰

Like the Rococo, our times are now post: post-industrial, post-structuralist, post-functional, post-truth, post-authenticity, post-crisis, post-modernist, and even post-millennium. We are beyond modernism and even beyond postmodernism, in the same way that the Rococo was beyond the Renaissance and the Baroque. In the Rococo period, understanding the forms of art and architecture was predicated upon a knowledge of the classical past.⁴¹ This is now true of much of the architecture of our time—both neo-avant-garde and neo-modern—but it instead refers back to modernism. Bernard Tschumi’s refracted plans as well as Herzog and de Meuron’s foregrounded façades exhibit, in their play on modernist ideas and forms, the same essential relationship to the classical style of modernism that Moneo’s Davis Center does. They surface from within modernism, they take their terms from the discourse of modernism, they historicize equally modernism and themselves. Thus while it is still our inescapable vernacular, our style, “the forms of expression peculiar to one or more countries” (or perhaps

the post-industrial region of the globe) “over a long period of time,” no neo-modernist move can now be other than historical. When Muschamp extols the Rose Center’s beautiful water glass as “the transcendent material envisioned by architects who pioneered its use in the early 20th century,” he inevitably elegizes what he evokes.⁴²

Our style is profoundly urbane, intelligent, both complete and assured, deeply connected to a present that includes the past. Of Watteau’s paintings, Levey said that they showed that “sincerity in art does not have to be uncouth, and that perfection of form does not mean poverty of content.”⁴³ As the modernist style becomes ever more intelligent, beautiful, and bittersweet, it neither looks ahead to a millennial future nor back to a lost utopian past, but is content with the goal of making architecture suitable to its present situation. Some of the best of our current architecture exhibits the economy, the elegance, and the assurance of this kind of style.

Notes

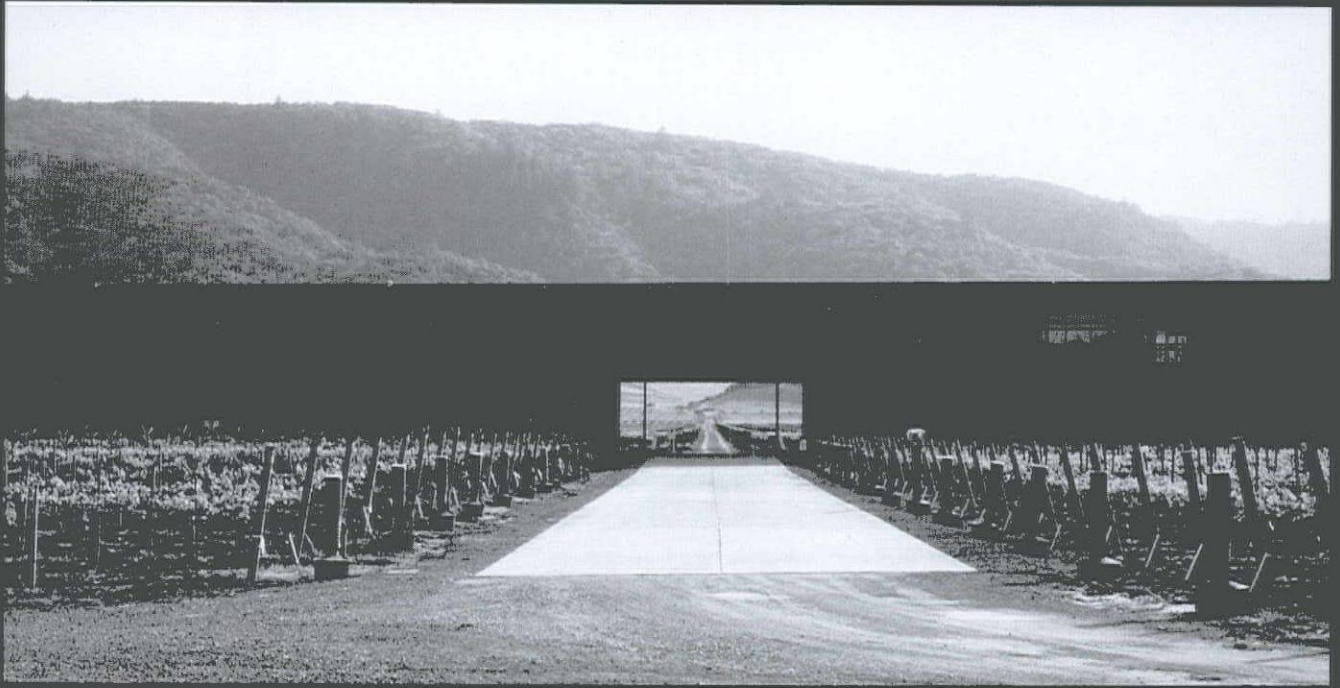
¹ Colin Rowe, *The Architecture of Good Intentions: Towards a Possible Retrospect* (London: Academy Editions, 1994) 17. The book is a publication of Rowe’s Preston H. Thomas Lectures, given at Cornell University in 1982.

² See “William Bruder, New Phoenix Central Library,” *A + U* 321 (June 1997): 60-73; William J. R. Curtis, “Desert Illumination (Phoenix Central Library, Arizona),” *Architecture* 84 (October 1995): 56-65; Margaret Seal, “Scarpa in the South-West (Phoenix Central Library),” *Architectural Review* 199 (March 1996): 48-53; “Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, New York City House,” *A + U* 321 (June 1997): 30-43; Karen Stein, “Family Home or Modern Icon? Williams and Tsien Do Both at Once (House, New York),” *Architectural Record* 185 (April 1997): 76-83; “Herzog & de Meuron: Dominus Winery, Napa Valley, California,” *A + U* 331 (April 1998): 4-23; Aaron Betsky, “Swiss Reserve,” *Architecture* 87 (June 1998): 122-127.

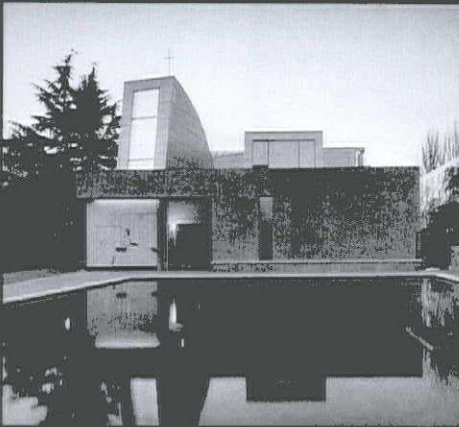
³ See Ned Cramer, “Copy Cat,” *Architecture* 87 (June 1998): 67; William Bryant Logan, “The Gothic According to Calatrava: Completion of the New York Cathedral,” *Lotus International* 72 (1992): 64-69; Robert Venturi, “Sweet and Sour,” *Iconography and Electronics Upon a Generic Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996) 6, originally published in *Architecture* (May 1994): 51-52; “Toward the New Museum of Modern Art,” *A + U* 321 (June 1997): 10-11; Joanna Merwood, “Ten Projects for the MoMA,” *Lotus International* 95 (1997): 27-45; “The MoMA Expansion: A Conversation with Terence Riley (Symposium),” *October* 84 (Spring 1998): 3-30; Allan Schwartzman, “Why Does MoMA Matter?” *Architecture* 87 (June 1998): 102-103; Joseph Giovannini and Terence Riley, “Fisticuffs on 53rd Street,” *Architecture* 87 (June 1998): 104-108; R. E. Somol, “Statement of Editorial Withdrawal,” *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, ed. R. E. Somol (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997) 19-30; Richard Lacayo, “What Will Our Skyline Look Like?,” *Time* 155 (February 21, 2000): 80-82.

⁴ Colin Rowe, “On Architectural Education,” *Form Work: Colin Rowe, ANY 7/8* (1994): 48-49; originally given at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies conference “Architectural Education/USA: Issues, Ideas, and People,” 1971.

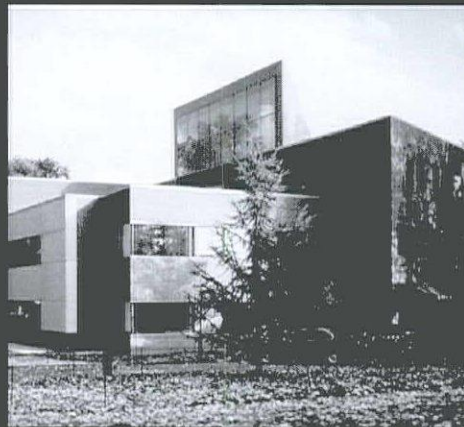
⁵ Rem Koolhaas, “Architects’ Statement,” in “Toward the New Museum of Modern Art: Sketchbook by Ten Architects,” www.moma.org/expansion/charette/index.html.



^ **Dominus Winery**
Napa Valley, California
Herzog & de Meuron, 1998.



^ **Saint Ignatius Chapel**
Seattle, Washington
Steven Holl, 1994-97.

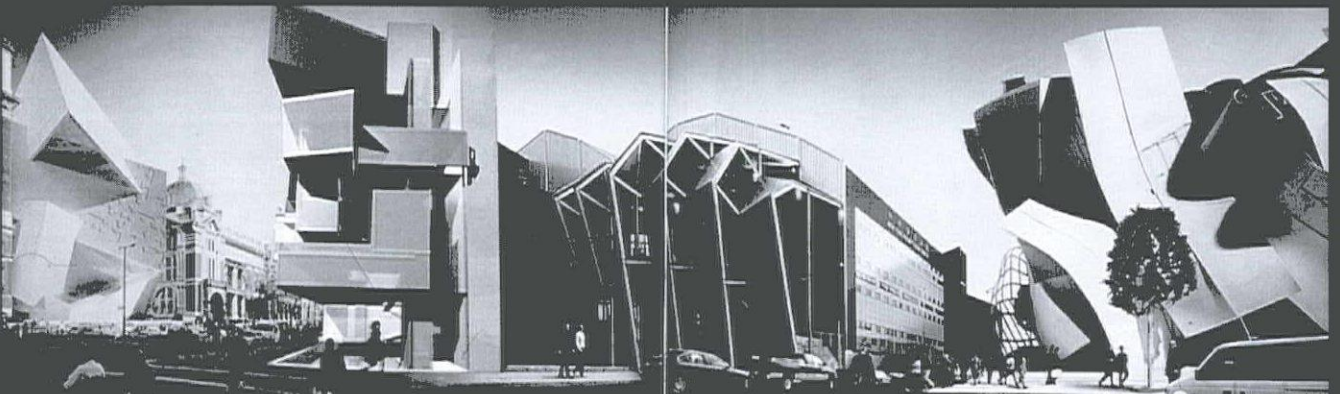


^ **Extension of Moore & Hutchkin's 1962 Woolworth Music Conservatory**
Princeton, New Jersey
Juan Navarro Baldeweg, 1997-98.



^ **Rose Center for Earth and Space**
New York City
Polshek Partnership, 2000.

c. John G. Giesberg, ESTO



^ **"What Will Our Skyline Look Like?"**
Time Magazine, February 21, 2000.

⁶ Following Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), recent proponents of an architectural neo-avant-garde have proposed to elide the incongruities of modernism's aging by distinguishing between an autonomous modernism and an engaged avant-garde, taking the latter as the basis for a contemporary critical stance. The term neo-avant-garde thus replaces the Deleuzian and Derridean "post-structuralist" or "deconstructivist," awkward appellations to apply to buildings, as the positive valuator for a critical position with respect to contemporary society. It takes over, too, the former terms' inclusive character, embracing a shape-shifting succession of forms. In the introduction to the 1996 conference "Autonomy and Ideology," Robert Somol subsumes under this label such disparate figures as Rem Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi, and Peter Eisenman. But as I will argue later, even a neo-avant-garde cannot escape the loss of a critical position for architecture.

⁷ The career of Piano and Rogers's Centre Pompidou (1977) exemplifies one drastic solution to the problem of the waning of the new. A building conceived on the premise of shock, its coming-of-age has been violently enforced by means of a renovation that has damaged the premises of the original design. See Paul Goldberger, "Beaubourg Grows Up: Paris's Pop Monument Has Undergone a Controversial Renovation," *The New Yorker*, 22 May 2000: 88-91.

⁸ Herbert Muschamp, "It's Something New Under the Stars (And Looking Up)," *The New York Times* 13 February 2000, Arts & Leisure Section: 1.

⁹ Rafael Moneo, "Excerpts from an Interview with Rafael Moneo, Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College," *A + U* 294 (March 1994): 70.

¹⁰ Alfred H. Barr, Jr., quoting Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *The International Style*, "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?," *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* XV, no. 3 (Spring 1948): 6.

¹¹ In 1947, Lewis Mumford wrote a "Skyline" column in *The New Yorker* in which he proposed a "native and humane modernism" that he called the "Bay Region style" as an alternative to the abstractions of modernism then being produced in the United States. In "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?," Mumford again championed a modern response to West Coast vernacular wood construction as exemplified by the work of Galen Howard, Bernard Maybeck, William Wurster, and others. Lewis Mumford, "The Skyline [The Bay Region Style]," *The New Yorker* 11 October 1947: 106, 109; Barr, *MoMA Bulletin*: 2-21.

¹² Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, in her monograph on Rudolph, described these tenets as: "no façade, no visible roof, no ornament, no regional adaptation, no separation of enclosing form from enclosed space, no individual taste beyond standardized materials and techniques—and back-to-back plumbing." Introduction to *The Architecture of Paul Rudolph*, eds. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy and Gerhard Schwab, (New York: Praeger, 1970) 9. Klaus Herdeg's *The Decorated Diagram: Harvard Architecture and the Failure of the Bauhaus Legacy* (1983; paperback edition, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985) 4 provides information about these Harvard students' tenure. See also Stephanie Williams, "Class of '44," *World Architecture*, (1992): 28-47.

¹³ Moholy-Nagy and Schwab 10.

¹⁴ Rowe, *Good Intentions* 27-28.

¹⁵ Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1955) 75, cited in Rowe, *Good Intentions* 26; Rudolph quoted in Moholy-Nagy and Schwab 21.

¹⁶ Philip Johnson, "The Responsibility of the Architect," *Perspecta* 1 (1952): 50-52. As part of his interest in precedent, Rudolph was an early proponent of regionalism; his houses built with partner Ralph Twitchell in the south were regional in what Sibyl Moholy-Nagy called a "nonromantic, nonfolkloristic response to the place," Moholy-Nagy and Schwab, 10. On Rudolph's regionalism, see his "Regionalism in Architecture," *Perspecta* 4 (1957): 12-19.

¹⁷ On the Jewett Center see Moholy-Nagy and Schwab, *Architecture of Paul Rudolph*, 50-55; "Fitting the Future into the Past," *Architectural Forum* 105 (December 1956): 100-106; "The Mary Cooper Jewett Arts Center," *Architectural Record* 121 (February 1957): 166-169; "Wellesley's Alternative to 'Collegiate Gothic,'" *Architectural Forum* 111 (July 1959): 88-95.

¹⁸ It was a career that would end abruptly, however, with the perceived failure of his Yale Art and Architecture Building (1963), whose burning in the late 60's also immolated Rudolph's prospects. Withdrawing from the limelight, Rudolph spent many years essentially in retirement before enjoying a second period of success building high-rise towers in Southeast Asia from the early 80's until his death in 1997.

¹⁹ Rudolph, in Moholy-Nagy and Schwab 50.

²⁰ These bear a marked resemblance to some of Wright's more exuberant ornament. Moholy-Nagy called Wright Rudolph's "earliest and most lasting inspiration." Moholy-Nagy, Introduction 10.

²¹ Rudolph shared with his peers a self-professed preoccupation with Italian urbanism, which animated discussions of site planning in the late modern and postmodern period. Rudolph described his project for the City Hall in Syracuse, New York (1964), as defining a "sense of place," creating a "plaza," and forming an "amphitheater for public celebrations and ceremonies." Rudolph, in Moholy-Nagy and Schwab, 108. In "Remarks on Continuity and Change," *Perspecta* 9/10 (1965): 291-298. Kevin Lynch whose studies of Italian urbanism culminated in *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT, 1960), and those of Robert Venturi, who noted, "Our generation discovered Rome in the 50's. ... As post-heroic Moderns reading Sigfried Giedion, we rediscovered history and acknowledged a traditional basis for architecture and urbanism." Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "A Definition of Architecture as Shelter with Decoration on It, and Another Plea for a Symbolism of the Ordinary in Architecture," *A View from the Campidoglio: Selected Essays 1953-1984* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984) 62; first published in *A+U* 87 (January 1978): 3-14.

²² The exception is the 1964 John Wallace Residence, a theatrical modern evocation of a Greek Revival southern mansion built in Athens, Alabama.

²³ For example, Paul Rudolph, "Paul Rudolph Cites Old Principles as Bases for an Analysis of Today's Work," *Architectural Record* 131 (January 1962): 12, 62, 74, 84.

²⁴ Paul Schweikher complained in a way that recalled the Jewett Center: "Architecture may be defined as a logic of space. ...Architecture is also structure. ...Its philosophy is involved in problems of order and proportion. These are its constants. Many are impatient with the definition and impatient or contemptuous of structure. There is a revival of ornament and decoration: one makes structure ornamental, another uses decoration as an appliqué of inconsequential elements." In "The Sixties: A P/A Symposium on the State of Architecture: Part I," *Progressive Architecture* 3 (1961): 128. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Minoru Yamasaki's comments appear in "The Sixties: A P/A Symposium on the State of Architecture: Part II," *Progressive Architecture* 4 (1961): 167-168; Ralph Rapson in "The Sixties, I," 129.

²⁵ John M. Johansen, in "The Sixties, I," 124; Robert Geddes, in "The Sixties, I," 128; Harry Weese, "The Sixties, I," 131.

²⁶ Victor Gruen, in "The Sixties, I," 130. In *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?* a similar definition of style had been proposed by Walter Gropius: "a successive repetition of an expression which has become settled, as a common denominator," Walter Gropius, in *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?*, 11.

²⁷ Craig Ellwood, in "The Sixties, I," 131.

²⁸ Karl Koch, in "The Sixties, II," 169.

²⁹ Louis Kahn, in "The Sixties, I," 127.

³⁰ "Bigness," Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, S, M, L, XL (New York: Monicelli Press, 1995).

³¹ Rafael Moneo, "The Idea of Lasting: A Conversation with Rafael Moneo," *Perspecta* 24 (1988): 146-157.

³² Rafael Moneo, "1996 Pritzker Prize Acceptance Speech," in "Rafael Moneo, Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate, 1996," http://www.pritzkerprize.com/moncere.htm#RAFAEL_MONEO.

³³ Michael Levey, *Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth-Century Painting* (New York: Oxford UP, 1966) 35.

³⁴ Sandro Marpillero, "Tectonic Masks," *Lotus* 99 (1998): 52-75.

³⁵ Paulette Singley, "The Importance of Not Being Earnest: 'Trivial Comedy for Serious People,'" in *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, ed. R. E. Somol (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997) 178-179; see also Somol, "Statement," 23.

³⁶ See Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

³⁷ Levey 90.

³⁸ Stephen Jones, *The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985) 10; Wend von Kalnein, *Architecture in France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995 [1972]) 2.

³⁹ Levey 39-42.

⁴⁰ "The crisis of the last years of Louis XIV's reign had compromised the verisimilitude of history—that is, its claim to a higher truth—and cut loose mythology from its mooring at the center of royal apotheosis. Prey to the manipulations of a noble and *mondain* society determined to regain lost political ground, myth became a vehicle both for exposing the underside of the *raison d'état* and for exploring the nature of influence alive in a court society." Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 211.

⁴¹ "The rococo... invoked classicism expressly to demonstrate a refusal to receive it passively. Instead, the rococo parodied, criticised and reworked classical precepts and formulae, relying on an assumed and implicit knowledge of tradition to accomplish a novel and astonishing contrast. However, if originally the rococo had worked above all to relativise and subjectivise standards of taste, at the hands of mid-century critics it became not an alternative to but the antithesis of classical, or good, taste. The symbiotic relationship between the cultural categories of classicism and rococo, ancient and modern, upon which so much of rococo pleasure and enlightenment depended, was thus effectively broken. Instead, the rococo was re-presented as an absence—an absence of proportion, harmony, symmetry, balance, sense, judgment, taste—and thus the liberation that it had offered by its aggressive meddling in canonical cultural matters was reinterpreted as a license, a weakness, which undermined by impotence the bases of French civilisation." Scott 263.

⁴² Muschamp 37.

⁴³ Levey 56.

Pandora's Box: An Essay on Metropolitan Portraits

DEMETRI PORPHYRIOS

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the theme of the ideal city—the prototypical *urbium*—has perhaps been the most stubbornly persistent saga animating deeply architectural thought. Not that such a theme did not enchant pre-nineteenth century thought—on the contrary—but never had history seen the profusion and frantic incubation of urban idealizations as from the nineteenth century onwards. Scanning the tradition of ideal urban schemes, from Ledoux's Salt Works to Fourier's Phalangstère, or from Jules Borie's **AÉRODOMES** to Le Corbusier's **PLAN VOISIN**, or even from Archigram's Instant City to Superstudio's **CONTINUOUS MONUMENT**, one clearly discerns the deep parenthood of **EXODUS**, the first representational statement of Koolhaas and Zenghelis which won them recognition in the *Casabella* competition in 1973.

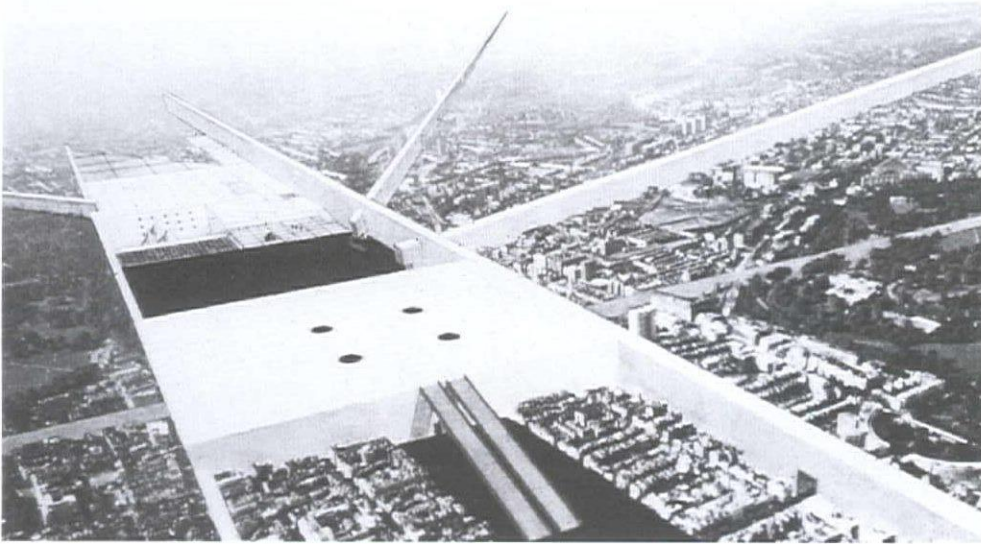
Intrinsically an ideal city, Exodus is a dropped-in *deus-ex-machina* which forces London into a gradual but sure extinction. The tips of this ideal urban strip are the points of ideological friction between the old and the new, while the nine squares of the city proper refer to its collective ideological rituals: the ideology of private property (the Square of the Private Allotments), of ceremonial festivities (the Ceremonial Square), of civic initiation (the Reception Hall), of historical consciousness (the preservation of Nash London), of sensuous pleasurable (the Baths), of the artificial alternative to nature (the Park of the Four Elements), of cure and immortalization (the Hospital), and of scientific knowledge (the University Square).

There is, of course, nothing new featuring in the permissive ideological coexistence of these squares of bourgeois reification. The old dream of Ledoux for erecting a city comprising Temples to Love, Memory, Knowledge, etc., or that of Fourier for founding an ideal brotherhood, or that of Jules Borie for allowing the traditional city to wither away while its inhabitants escape to the crystalline dropped-in aerodomes, or that of Le Corbusier for the perpetual warfare that the Plan Voisin would initiate, or that of Archigram for an overnight physical transformation of the world, or that of Superstudio for an uninterrupted crystalline monument meandering around the globe—all these dreams and still many others are present in Exodus, yielding with their superimposition a Freudian tableau of contemporary urban memory.

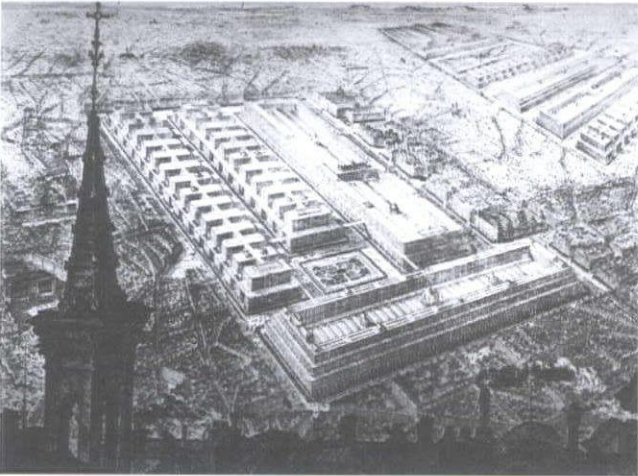
But the architectural gaze is now organized in a new way. It is no longer the gaze of the redeemer, as was the case with all urban idealizations from the nineteenth century onwards. The effort now is not to single out the ills of contemporary cities, nor to propose solutions for their cure. In that sense, there is no intention for unburying the debate about problems and solutions so popular in the tradition of the 1950s and 1960s. Interestingly enough, Zenghelis, though a student of Smithson at the AA, never returned to the positivist tradition of bubble-diagrams, nor to the "scientist" assumption that thorough analysis is the mandatory precedent for design. All the nuances of positivist consciousness—from Christopher Jones, Christopher Alexander, Lionel March, and Steadman, or the long list of behavioral scientists—are here denied any legitimacy with the implicit accusation of pseudo-scientism.

Instead, the task so obvious in Exodus is to plunge straight into pure ideology and comprise for the first time an inventory of today's urban episodes: a clinical description of the various unquestioned habits which have become mundane realities and without which it would be inconceivable to date our lifestyles. This portraiture, however, is not a mere depiction; on the contrary, by analyzing, patterning, and articulating the metropolitan imagery it has the power to link our knowledge of things across the dimension of history, while at the same time attempting a re-interpretation of that history and a possible materialization. In that sense it would be untrue, no doubt, to see in Koolhaas and Zenghelis's work a mere annihilation of design long burdened with the tradition of conceptual art. It is not even a question of a displacement of the traditional means and media of design, or of the denial to draw—as was the case, for example, with the advocacy planning movement in the late 1960s. Instead, in constituting anew the composite portrait of contemporary urban life, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture gives birth to a new representational tactic which gradually formalizes itself to the point of becoming a *modus vivendi*. It is this representational tactic and its effective insertion and functioning in contemporary architectural discourse that I would like to discuss in this short essay.

Originally published in *Architectural Design* magazine, volume 47, no. 5, 1977.

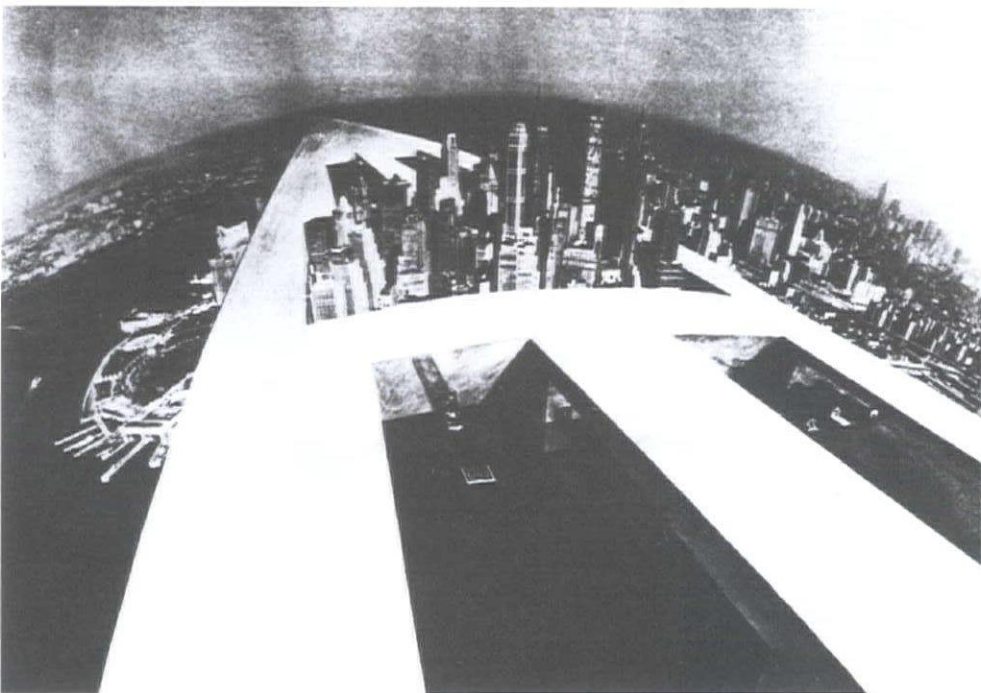


< **Exodus**
London, project
Rem Koolhaas, 1972. collage.

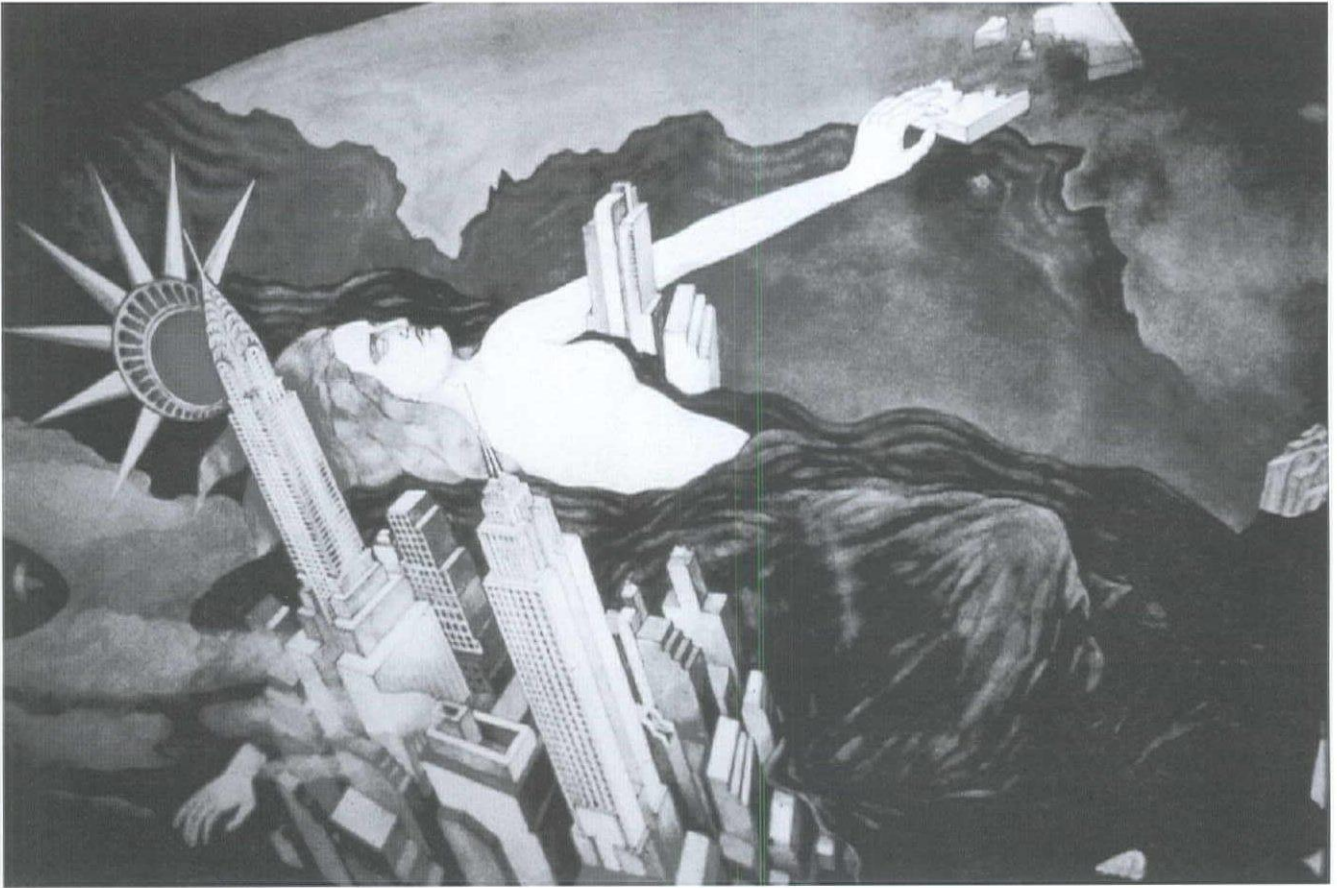


^ **Aerodomes**
Paris, project
Henry Jules Barie, 1865.

^ **Plan Voisin**
Paris, project
Le Corbusier, 1925. collage.



< **Continuous Monument**
Project
Superstudio, 1969. collage.



^ *Dreamland*
Madeline Vreesendorf, 1974. painting.



^ *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*
Robert Wiene, 1920. film still.

The Sensuousness of Representation

The first consequence that the portraiture of the metropolis has had is the unreserved preoccupation with sensuous imagery. From the first sketches of Exodus, the Hotel Sphinx or the City of the Captive Globe, it became obvious that mere architectural delineation—no matter how intricate in detail or overburdened with axonometric projections—would be incapable of capturing an urban portrait. Color and above all secondary non-architectural information was needed. In Exodus one finds it impossible to grasp the pictorial implications of the childish drawing of the Square of the Private Allotments, or that of the Park of the Four Elements, were it not for the adjunct images borrowed from daily experience. In the City of the Captive Globe, one is not merely confronted with the towers of the Plan Voisin, or with the expressionist shells, or the constructivist tower of Lissitsky, but rather with the vast regions of theoretical debate and practical implementation that they stand for. This incessant reference to an associational density and to the whole profusion of adjunct and complementary images defines a representational tactic far removed from the Orthodox Modernist ethos, and very similar to that of the nineteenth-century Ecole des Beaux Arts. Against modernism's positivist dream of an architecture with no memory (at least not an explicitly discussed one), Koolhaas and Zenghelis will insist on a sensuously corporeal architecture that is capable of triggering an unlimited flow of associations. In their visible, tactile, and almost hedonistic status, the highway, the pigeon-hole window, the escalator, or the so many metropolitan fragments that animate their vision are by no means abstract and universal names (as, for example, the column, line, or plane were for modernism), but on the contrary they carry within them a spontaneous unfolding of representation (like, for example, the ionic column, the traveated pediment, or the Louis Quatorze window did for the Beaux Arts mind).

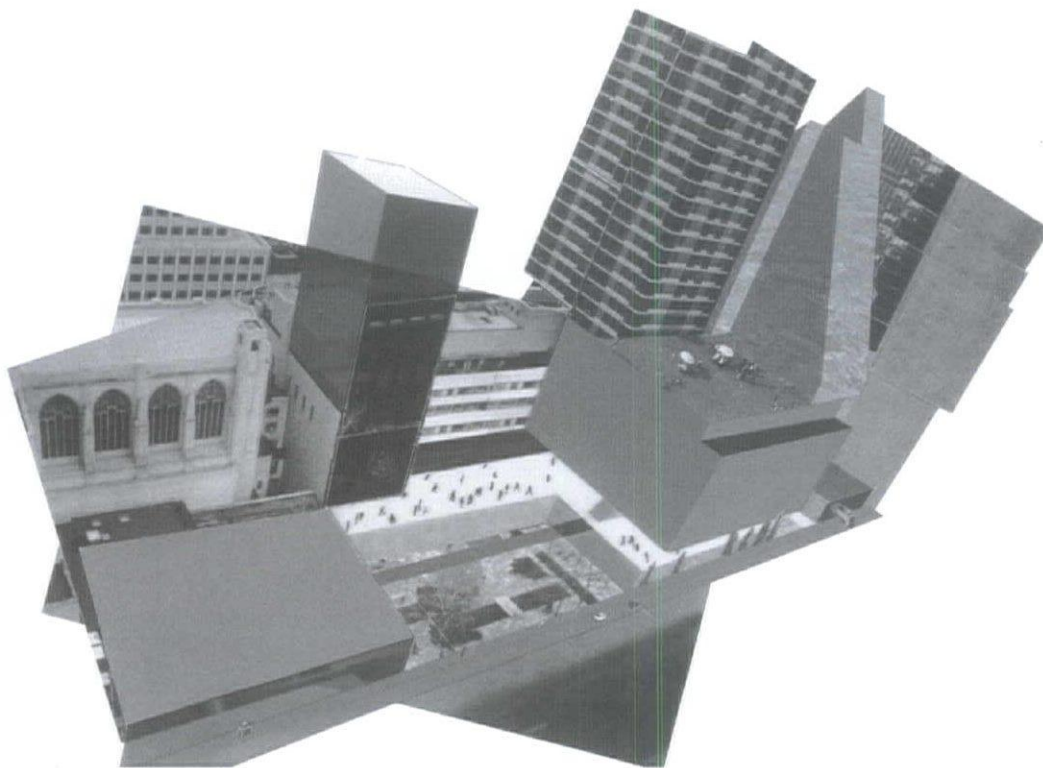
These sensuous clues which open up whole regions of references owe their power to the very sensuousness they possess. Bereft of their color, crispness, harshness, or delicacy, they become impotent three-dimensional gestures with no parenthood or horizon of decendancy. And it is not without significance that such preoccupation with the corporeality of architectural elements coincides with a general rebirth of a decorative architectural consciousness. Since the pioneering work of Venturi in the middle 1960s, and with the gross popularization of semiological tools among architectural circles—a job for which Jencks is to be held responsible in London, the Five and Agrest/Gandelsonas in New York, Charles Moore and Bob Stern in the tradition of the shingles—architecture thought it possible to return to the nineteenth-century sensibility of decoration as signficatory clothing. It is true that such thought must have crossed the architectural mind as early as the postwar years, for otherwise the excesses of Brutalism or the stylistics of Corporate design (i.e. Yamasaki or Portman) would have been unintelligible. Yet it was not until the early 1970s that such a proposition was clearly stated and theoretically formalized without the implicit fear of stepping onto morally risky ground.

The Opening of Architectural Language

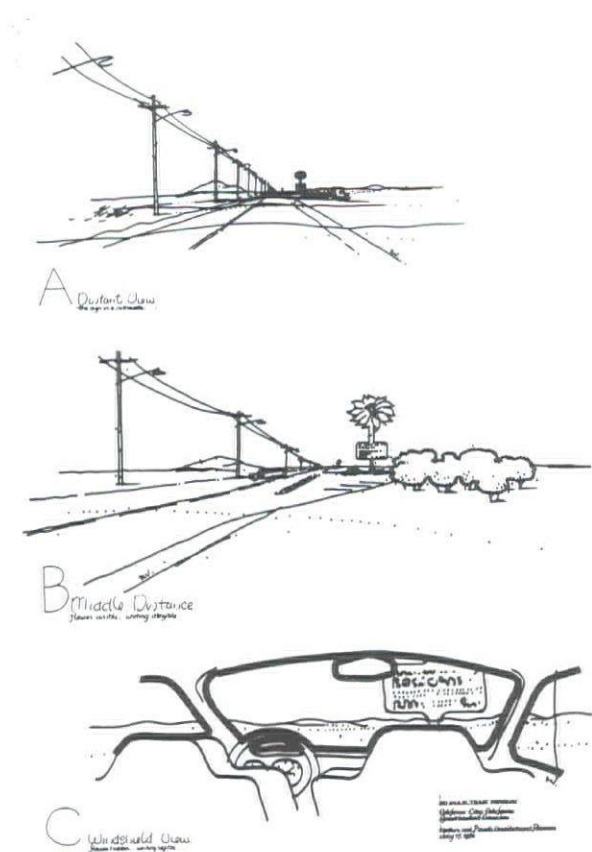
The preoccupation with sensuous imagery that was to be pictorial and realistic ran contrary to any syntactic interests, crossing out the possibility of an elementarist system of organization and, by extension, any effort to circumscribe the limits of the architectural language.¹ The task that Koolhaas and Zenghelis set for themselves is not to demarcate the elements and the organizational rules of architectural composition (as was the case, for example, with the Five), but on the contrary to burst open the confines of architecture until it embraces the full spectrum of everyday visibility. The profusion of sensuous objects scattered in the Egg of Columbus Center, the oases, athletic runways, or hanging garden dreamlands populating the roof terraces of the Hotel Sphinx, or the Hollywoodesque scenarios of the ground and top floors of the Welfare Palace Hotel, do point clearly to the wish to trespass the boundaries of institutionalized architectural language.

This issue of the specificity or non-specificity of architectural language, though not explicitly discussed as such, has been of great importance in the debates of contemporary architectural thinking.² The issue, whether we are conscious of it or not, is a constant dilemma that any architectural production has to face at one or another time since it addresses the priorities of formal exclusions or inclusions. In fact, there are two aspects to the question: first, the degree of specificity of architectural language (i.e. whether an inclusive or an exclusive tactic is to be followed), and second, the direction towards which architectural language opens (i.e. in case an inclusive system is followed, which area of life is to be embraced). Contemporary thought has shown a great propensity towards inclusivist representational systems, destroying in that sense all pictorial common grounds that modernism labored to formalize and institutionalize.³ The multinational stylistic eclecticism of the 1950s, the science fiction of the Metabolist and Archigram era, the popular ethos of the consumerist Las Vegas Strip, or the gilded monuments of a putrefied western world erected in the Middle East, are all sure symptoms of a truly inclusivist representational ethos under the spell of which contemporary architectural thought is trying to patch up its void.

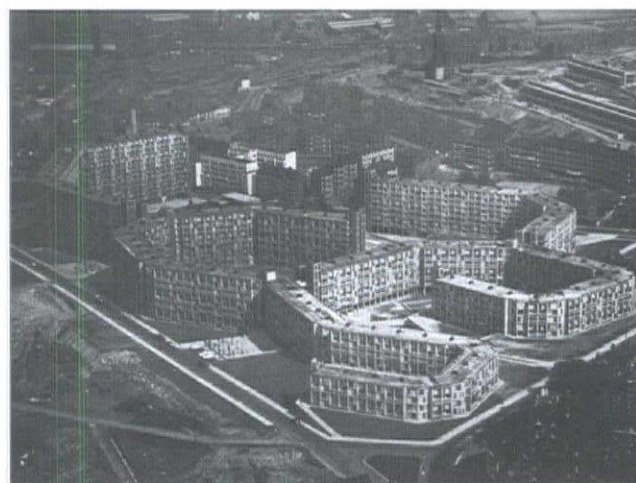
It is within this general arrangement of an inclusivist representational tactic that Koolhaas and Zenghelis work. Bathing in a purely inclusivist ethos, these two urban portraitists will plunge into the non-designed world of appearances, bringing back to their drawing boards the scattered memories and savored glimpses of the metropolis.⁴ But if their inclusivist ethos binds them with contemporary thought, their denial to celebrate technology or consumption economy distinguishes them from parallel currents. It would, no doubt, be impossible to conceive of the Hotel Sphinx did there not exist the implicit trust in an advanced technology. Yet, technology itself does not feature as a spectacle; though heavily counted upon, it is not allowed to surface, nor is it allowed to define the lines, forms, or reliefs of this urban *phalangstère* (as, on the contrary, was the case with a whole tradition from Cesar Daly to Sant'Elia or Peter Cook). Similarly, none of the bricolaged images would have materialized were it not for the vast advertising and consumerist repertoire to choose from. Yet, the contextual displacement of the borrowed metropolitan features, their projection into new surroundings and the plethora of metaphorical readings induced by the subtle choices of scale or sensuousness (i.e. color, material, texture, etc.), give a sense of surrealist familiarity to the projects, at once close to and removed from the everyday world and thus not easily consumed (as, on the contrary, was the case with a whole tradition from Krafft or Dubut to Venturi).⁵ In viewing the work of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture everything seems at first-hand familiar; but then abruptly the rape of commonsense occurs, usually in broad daylight. It is exactly here that the critical and non-consumable aspect of their work resides; in their ability to portray the metropolis while at the same time challenging our visual and social habits and triggering an awakening of consciousness.



▲ Proposal for Museum of Modern Art addition
New York City, OMA, 1997. collage.



▲ California City Study
Venturi Rauch Architects, 1970.



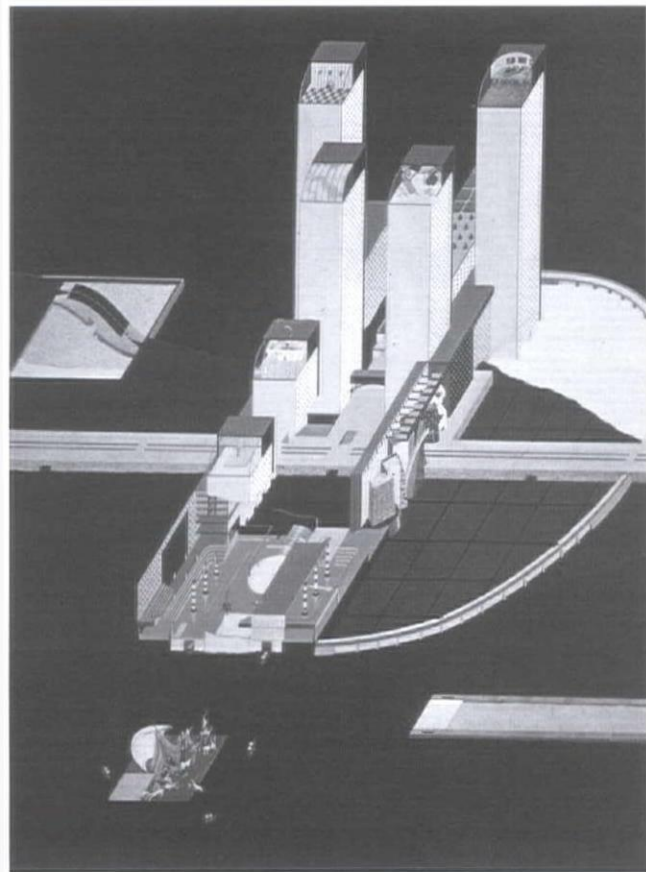
▲ Park Hill Housing
Sheffield, England. Lynn and Smith, 1961.

Architecture and Psychology

At the moment when it became possible to denounce the commemoration of scientism and consumerism, Koolhaas and Zenghelis were establishing an alliance at once tangled and extremely vague with a number of non-architectural disciplines: literature, painting, and psychology. The innumerable references to a *Brave New World*, the *en bloc* transpositions of pictorial thematics as with the romantic story of the Raft of the Medusa, the ingenious fabrication of the legend of the Pool, the direct allusions to the pictorial tradition of color post-cards of the 1920s and 1930s, the polemic and irritative tone of the language in their texts, the Dadaesque quality of their pictorial narratives, or even still, their almost medieval determination to produce by hand a second or third copy of the same colorful drawing for an exhibition or a museum purchase—all these are sure indices of minds that have accepted the notion of interdisciplinary quotation. In this way they outwitted in advance the positivist attempts of their contemporaries to insert architecture's chronology within that of science, technology, or consumerism, and sanctioned instead the inverse endeavor to align the experience that man has of things with the knowledge he has acquired of them through a psychological internalization.⁶ This led to a significant temptation: to make psychology into a sort of general tactic of design. On the horizon of their architectural thinking there is the project of bringing consciousness back to its real conditions, of restoring it to the contents and forms that brought it into being. This is why the problem of the unconscious—its possibility, status, mode of existence, the means of knowing it and bringing it to light—is not simply an excuse for a formal exercise but it is a problem that is ultimately coextensive with the very ability to imagine, draw, and build. In setting themselves the task of restoring the domain of the psychological, Koolhaas and Zenghelis tacitly imply that the unveiling of the unconscious is posited in its greatest clarity—as with Madelon Vriesendorp's metropolitan tableaux—the better the work becomes, demarcating in an unambiguous way an architecture with the task of making the discourse of the unconscious speak through consciousness.

An Iconographic Typology

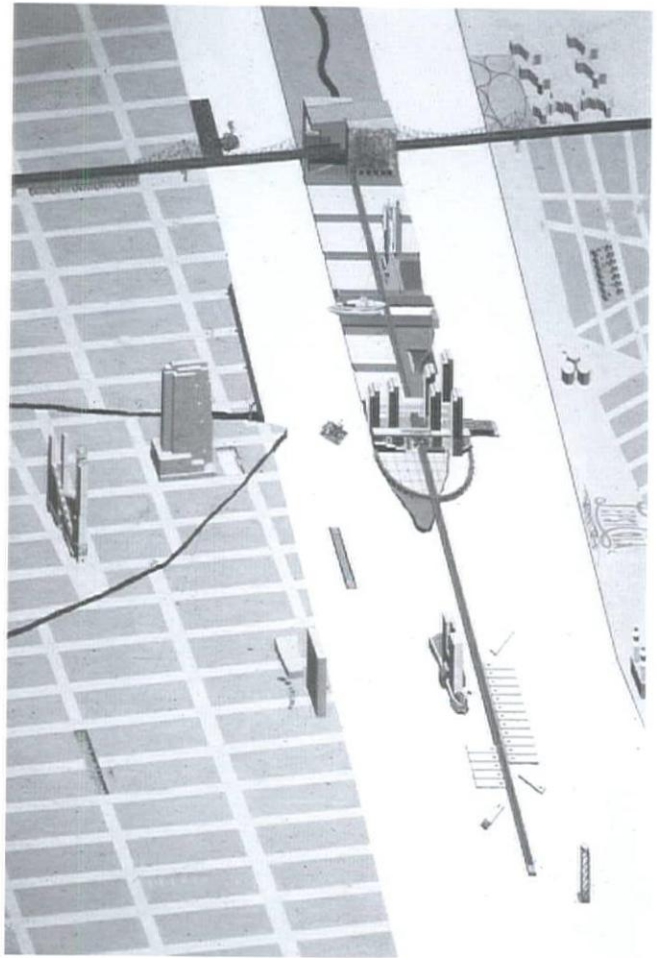
We have dealt with the preoccupation with sensuous imagery, with the opening of architectural language, and with the interdisciplinary quotation it inaugurated, leading eventually to a privileged alliance between architecture and psychology. The other consequence of the portraiture of the metropolis has been to initiate an analysis and classification of buildings according to their visible characters. All the treasure that the metropolis had accumulated—and which concerned the virtues of its skyscrapers, the sparkling honesty of its overpasses and highways, or the secret correspondences and sentimental sympathies of its canals, smokestacks, waterfronts, "travelators," or subway tunnels—all this, since *Delirious New York* was first conceived of, had become marginal knowledge for both Koolhaas and Zenghelis. What remained to be discovered, however, were the species and classes of objects that comprised the metropolis, that is, their forms, their spatial arrangements, their number, size, and physical characteristics. It is at this point that the Office for Metropolitan Architecture took upon itself the task of mapping them, of transcribing them in an alphabetically ordered Metropolitan inventory, of preserving, confronting, and combining them in order to make it possible, on the one hand to determine the vicinities and kinships of metropolitan objects (and therefore the unity of the metropolis), and on the other, to recognize rapidly their individuality (and therefore their unique place in the metropolis).



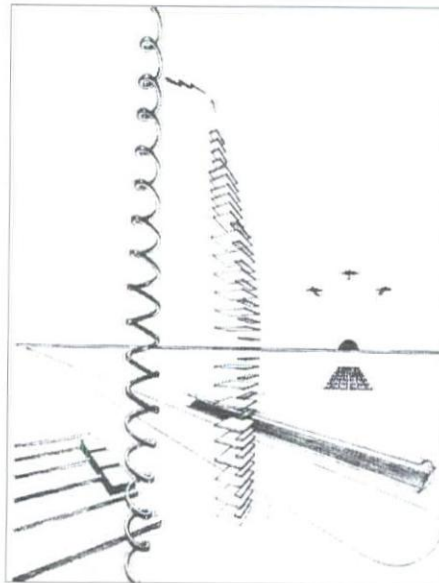
▲ Welfare Palace Hotel
New York City, project, OMA, 1976-77, painting.



^ Campo Marzo
project. G. B. Piranesi, 1762.



^ New Welfare Island
New York City, project. OMA, 1976. painting.

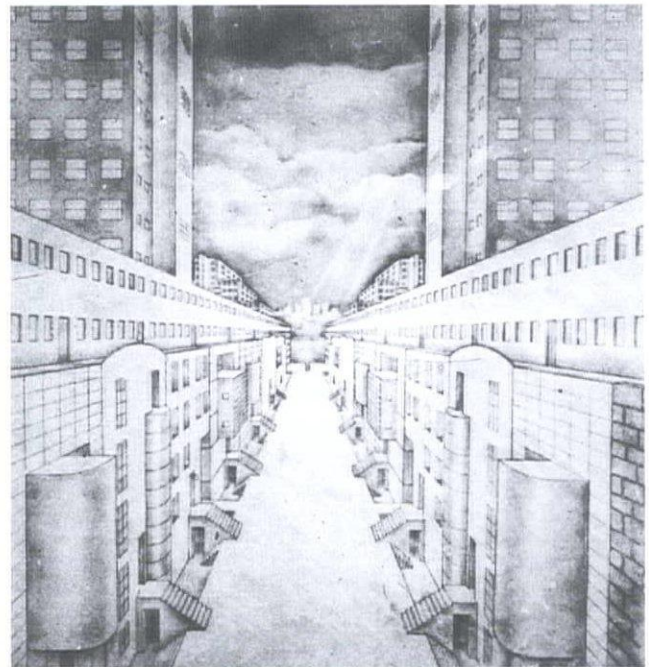


^ Exodus: Park of Agression
London, project. OMA, 1972. drawing.

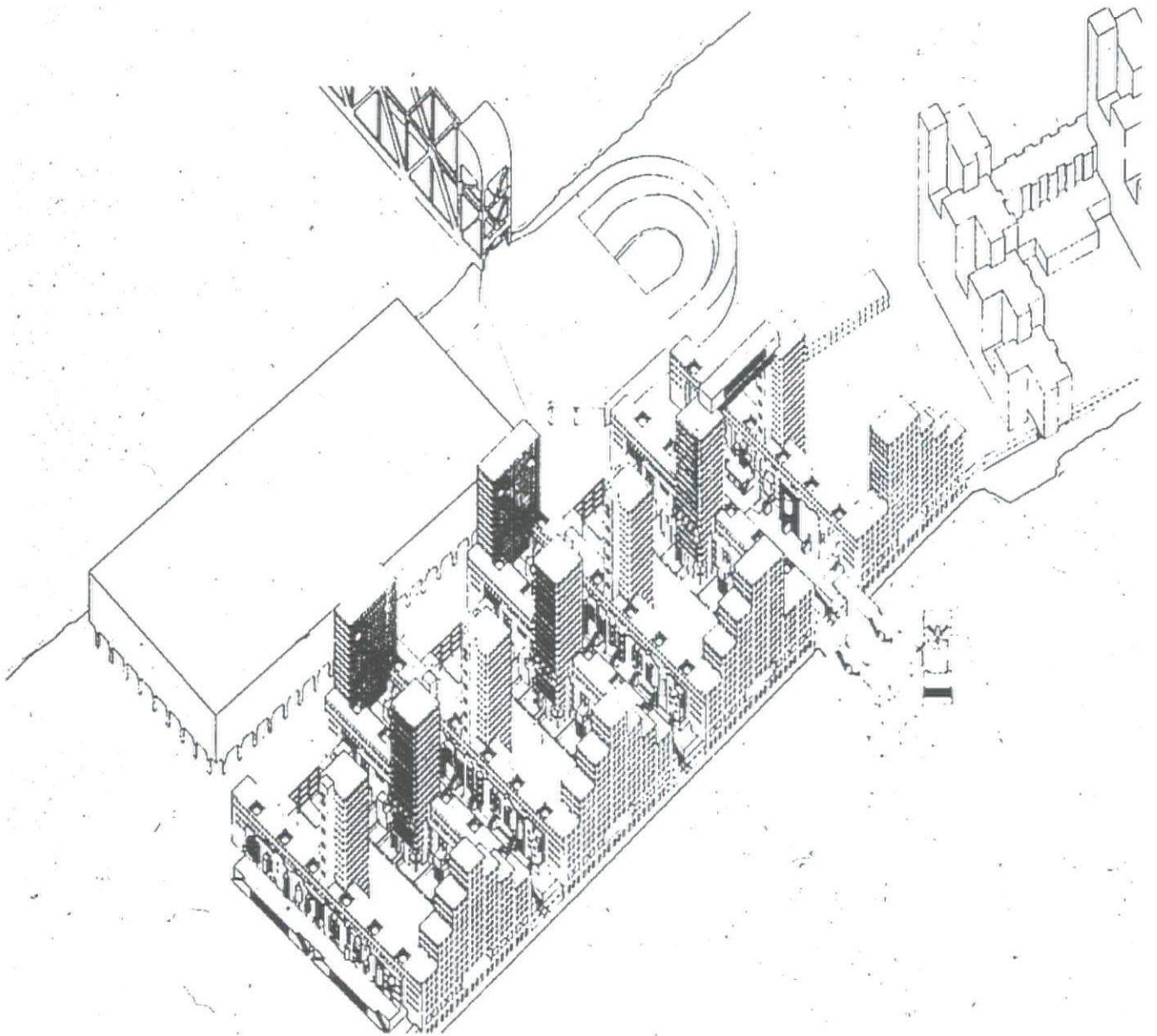
It is in that sense that we can say that Koolhaas and Zenghelis set as their task to record and classify the iconographic typologies of the metropolis. The theme of typological thinking, though alien to the theoretical formalizations of modernism, was of course not new in the post-war period. From the early codifications of building types by Aalto in the 1950s and 1960s, the theoretical formulations of Alan Colquhoun on "Typology and Design Method" in 1969, the innumerable typological studies of O. M. Ungers, or the laconic proclamations for a primeval built typology by the Krier brothers, the conception of a typological design has been constantly cultivated and experimented upon in various modes and directions. With Koolhaas and Zenghelis what becomes obvious is their preoccupation with the iconographic aspect of typological thinking, discarding from the beginning all syntactic typology, all historical valuations, arriving with no hesitation at an almost amoral encodement of metropolitan reality.

The towers, the brownstones, the streets, or the waterfront in the Roosevelt Island Competition are the mirror truth of Manhattan wholly given to the gaze; their links and status refer to a promising futureland by pointing to an experienced legend that is replayed and therefore recognized, yet not reproduced *in toto* and therefore not prone to non-reflective consumption. Iconographic typology, therefore, constitutes a primary stratum indissociably signifier and signified. In their material reality the iconographic types are identified with their referentials themselves; they are bathing in the ideology which produced them and with which they have fused; finally, they transpose the economy of the visible in the realm of the identifiable: the pyramidal skyscraper, the constructivist tower, the tubular silos, the industrial machinery, the glazed expanses, the transplanted palm trees, the peculiar almost cabalistic instruments of initiation scattered in the Park of Aggression, the kitschily veneered marble podia of the City of the Captive Globe, the three-dimensionality of the frozen legends of the Raft of the Medusa or that of the Pool, or the petrified immobility of the birth of the metropolitan Venus, they all point in their strange clarity to the totality of the real world and to the impossibility of avoiding confrontation with it.

This conception of analyzing the metropolis into its constituent iconographic types was decisive; it opened up to investigation a domain in which each object, observed, isolated, and compared, could take its place in a whole series of metropolitan portraits whose convergence or divergence was, in principle, measurable. It combined at the same time the techniques of hierarchization and those of normalization, since it was a gaze that classified, qualified, and institutionalized. It introduced the metropolitan visibility into the realm of the historical document founding once again the historiographical "dossier" similar to that of Durand or, better, Piranesi. In other words, the various iconographic types of the metropolis, their chronicles and their pictorial genealogy are there not in order to be savored as monuments to future memory, but fundamentally in order to insert them into the realm of the document. In that sense, the portraiture of the metropolis is not a procedure of heroization; it functions basically as a procedure of objectification with an implicit power of normalization. It objectifies the metropolis and renders its silent discourse legitimate.



▲ Roosevelt Island Housing competition
New York City, project: OMA, 1975, drawing.



▲ Roosevelt Island Housing competition
New York City, project. OMA, 1975. axonometric.

The De-professionalization of Architecture

By the mid-1960s, the notion of the non-specificity of the architectural language (its inclusivist ethos) was already a non-embarrassing fact.⁷ Architecture had opened its frontiers welcoming indiscriminately all extraneous languages, sacrificing in that way all compositional rigor and, by extension, all codified readability. The degree of sacrifice of the architectural language was of course not the same at all levels of architectural practice. The corporate firms remained faithful to the teachings of the second and third generation modernists with a gradual but steady regression to decorative touchups; in the booming 1960s and counting on the macroscale intervention of either the state or the corporate capital, architecture thought it possible to embark on a wholesale megastructural rehabilitation of the globe, a dream which very soon became a bitter remembrance. In the late 1960s, the second-hand-taught admirers of white modernism undertook the task of its enlightened reconstruction; while concurrently, and when the revived hope for the social mission of architecture had dissolved in the sentimentalities of the welfare state, a climate of utter irrelevancy spread, endangering at the same time the significance of the architectural academy, that of the architect, and more deeply the legitimacy of his professional status. If one added the economic regression in the 1970s, one would have a rather clear picture of the historical confluence within which to situate the work of Koolhaas and Zenghelis.

For an architecture that consciously interrogates the unconscious to appear, flourish, and sustain itself, it was necessary that its authors were first encouraged by art dealers, museums, research grants, and the Academy itself. In fact, by the mid-1970s, this form of architecture was gradually being institutionalized and was featuring strongly in the marginalia of the avant-garde. After all, the pictorial exercises of John Hejduk, Emilio Ambasz, Raimond Abraham or recently those of Cesar Pelli in the Venice Biennale, have been unequivocal efforts to legitimize a form of architectural reflection that involved man's being in that dimension where consciousness addresses the unconscious and articulates itself upon it. For Koolhaas and Zenghelis, what now constituted the legitimacy of their architecture was not the revolutionary or aphoristic vein (common sense was already saturated by such innuendoes, especially through the long and wearisome traditions of literary and artistic "anti" movements), but its seductive, almost sensuously entertaining density of the unconscious.

Architecture has thus achieved its own *raison d'être*: an architecture that comments, caresses, details, enumerates, and forecasts the secrets of the metropolis is that oneiric architecture which, from the height of its phantasmagoria, has condemned professionalism. In its turn, it would be inevitable that professionalism would have dismissed such an architecture since to a knowledge situated within positivist functionality anything lying on the outside was by definition invisible and therefore a fantasy. But when one traverses the spaces of this architecture, when one allows for a moment the date of its realization to be a real date soon to come, one sees welling up the very finitude upon the basis of which we are, we think, and we know: a finitude at once real and impossible is there before us to be conquered.

Notes

¹ By "syntactic interests," I refer to the exclusive preoccupation with the relational aspects of the elements of an architecture, as opposed to the signifiatory power of the elements themselves. In that sense, syntax has to do more with composition (topological, relational, etc. arrangement), whereas sensuous imagery focuses exclusively on the signifiatory dimension (I am aware, of course, that even syntax, in its power to trigger associations, has a signifiatory dimension as well).

² By "specificity or non-specificity" of architectural language, I refer to the limits of an architecture's representative features. Architecture, like all discursive practices, is characterized by a set of elements, rules, and norms which define its field of functioning, while delimiting its relative autonomy (its disciplinary autonomy). Whenever these boundaries (formal, conceptual, economic, ethical, etc.) become ill-defined, we can speak of an "opening" (non-specificity) of architectural language, while the more rigid and exclusivist they become, we can speak of a "closing" of architectural language (specificity). Pictorial revolutions always imply either an audacious opening of architectural language, or a de-hierarchization (a shift or inversion of emphasis) of its internal economy (compare for example, Renaissance to Mannerism or nineteenth century Eclecticism to the Orthodox Modernism of the 1920s). For a theoretical discussion of the notions of specificity and non-specificity of language, see Roland Barthes, "Le Troisième Sens," *Cahiers du Cinema* No. 222, 12-19. Also see the famous article by Christian Metz, "Spécificité des Codes et Spécificité du Langage."

³ In relation to the pictorial language of nineteenth century Beaux Arts, Orthodox Modernism of the 1920s represents an audacious opening of architectural language towards the regions of technology, science, and political socialism. With the guidance of the positivist dream of an architecture of essentialism, modernism soon formalized an exclusive set of elements of composition (i.e. point, line, plane), and a number of transformational rules or norms (i.e. uninterrupted flow of space, correspondence between plan and façade, etc.), describing in that way the boundaries of an architectural language outside which one was to be morally and professionally doomed. This formalization of a modernist representational language could have not materialized were it not for the gradual but sure institutionalization that modernism as an ideology entertained. It is the degree and mode of institutionalization of an architectural language which, in the final analysis, sustains (or does not sustain) its apparent coherency, respectability, and legitimacy, giving it (or not giving it) value and practical application as a signifiatory discourse.

⁴ In a description of intentions compiled by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, one finds the following opening paragraph: "The Office for Metropolitan Architecture produces an architecture that embraces aspects of the maligned Metropolitan Condition with enthusiasm and which restores mythical, symbolic, literary, oneiric, critical, and popular functions to large urban centers; an architecture which accommodates and supports the particular forms of social intercourse which are characteristics of Metropolitan densities, an architecture that houses in the most positive way the 'culture of congestion'." (capitals and quotation marks are those of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture).

⁵ The laconic, almost pictographic, simplicity of the drawing of the Pool, or the highly allegorical scene of the *Freud Unlimited*, are marked at once with an unequivocal realism and at the same time are haunted by dislocations of reality. The sense of "surrealist familiarity" refers to the parallel pictorial techniques that Magritte, De Chirico or Yves Tanguy had cultivated in the 1930s.

⁶ By architecture's "chronology" I refer not so much to the calendar time as to that peculiar time within which every discursive practice (architecture among others) unfolds and which defines its own, so to speak, history. Any effort to try and align by force the "times" of the various discursive practices with calendar time itself is an exercise in futility for it gives no insight to the nexus of determination and dominance that relates the various discursive practices among themselves. For a theoretical elaboration of the concept of historical time see Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Editions, 1972), chapter 4, "The Errors of Classical Economics: Outline of a Concept of Historical Time," 91-118. On the relations of determination between discursive practices see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), chapter 4, "The Comparative Facts," 157-165.

⁷ By the middle 1960s, the opening of architectural language (vis-à-vis Orthodox Modernism) towards non-architectural regions (that is, regions which modernist common sense did not acknowledge as falling within the boundaries of "good" architecture) was not only a non-embarrassing fact, but even further, it could be argued that it was sanctioned by a number of normalizing institutions; Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, for example, was written under a grant from the Graham Foundation, was published by the Museum of Modern Art, and was further sanctioned by Vincent Scully who, by then, was an acknowledged architectural historian.

OMA, “Neo-Modern,” and Modernity:

GEORGE BAIRD IN “CONVERSATION” WITH THE EDITORS OF *PERSPECTA* 32

The following “conversation” with George Baird was prompted by the editors’ familiarity with two texts he wrote over twenty years apart. The first, “Les Extrêmes Qui se Touchent,” appeared with Demetri Porphyrios’s “Pandora’s Box” in the May 1977 issue of *Architectural Design*, while the second, an encyclopedia entry discussing the role of semiotics within late twentieth-century architectural debates, was published in 1998.¹

In conceiving of this issue of *Perspecta*, with its focus on the 1970s as a vital hinge between mid-century modernism and the more contemporary resurfacing of some of its stylistic attributes, the work of OMA/Rem Koolhaas from the 1970s seemed to us not only nearly forgotten, but also noticeably under-valued. While in Baird’s earlier essay, he claimed that OMA referenced and resuscitated aspects of mid-century modernism at a moment that was apparently the nadir of its reputation in academic circles, in the later piece, he bemoaned what he saw as an ever-widening split between “the intelligentsia of the profession” and “its mainstream practitioners.”

A certain confluence of these two contentions suggested that their author would likely have some insights into OMA/Koolhaas’s work from the 1970s, and what it might mean regarding commercial/critical tensions as they have played out in architectural discourse since. Not only were we curious as to how his earlier observations had evolved over time, we were also interested in any new thoughts he might have on the connection of earlier events to contemporary production and debates. We thus sent him a number of questions circling around the topics of “neo-modernism” and modernity; what follows are those questions and his replies, edited into conversational form.

PERSPECTA 32 You wrote in your 1977 essay, “OMA constitutes one of current architecture’s most provocative revisionisms.” Would you characterize such a revisionist strategy as producing neo-modernism? Can a particular achievement be historically attributed to neo-modernism over other sorts of returns, specifically those associated with postmodernism?

GEORGE BAIRD I feel compelled at the outset of this conversation to raise an issue that is at least terminological and perhaps even epistemological. You have employed the term “neo-modernism” within the context of an issue invested in what you refer to in your editorial statement as “the resurfacing of mid-century modernism that has been occurring over the past ten years.”

It seems to me that these terms, and the distinctions you allow may exist between them, unavoidably raise the difficult question of “style.” It might seem, for example, that you suppose “the resurfacing of mid-century modernism” to be primarily a stylistic development. On the other hand, you may see the possibility to read “neo-modernism” as a cultural phenomenon that runs deeper than simple style. It is also not

hard to imagine more wary observers than yourselves construing “neo-modernism” primarily stylistically. It all depends on the propensity of any given commentator to see cultural products as primarily epiphenomena, or alternatively, as constructs deeply rooted in a complex history that are not exhausted through stylistic considerations.

For my own part, I am willing, for the sake of launching our conversation, to take your characterization of neo-modern as running deeper than style. And in that case, it seems to me that the OMA I described in 1977 *can* be said to produce a form of neo-modernism. In a narrow sense, this would seem to be true in that so many of the OMA projects of that era were so explicitly “quotational” from earlier modernist projects—much more than more recently published projects of the office. In this regard, it is interesting to note how efforts have been made, from time to time between the mid-1970s and now, by some members of the contemporary international architectural avant-garde—who see such quotational practices as inherently postmodern—to challenge Koolhaas on this and to put his own avant-gardist credentials into question. But I also think my statement is true in a broad sense. For if we do agree that we see neo-modernism as running deeper than style, then for me it will be appropriate to use the term to describe OMA/Koolhaas’s productive effort to gather up a number of strands from the earlier history of the great, ongoing project of modernity.

Given the terminological/epistemological discussion just concluded, it is probably clear that for me, any answer to the second part of your question (“Can a particular achievement be historically attributed to neo-modernism over other sorts of returns?”) cannot be framed outside of a consideration of the relationship of architecture to what used to be known, before the philosophical critique mounted by poststructuralism, as the “zeitgeist”—or as we might now (following Foucault) call the “episteme” of our era. As you are no doubt aware, the nineteenth-century philosophical construct of the zeitgeist has come to be seen as intellectually and morally unsustainable in recent times, on account of its unsupportable and unverifiable claims to omnipotence and its complicity in the acts of a variety of murderous ideologies. Efforts to replace it with a more intellectually supple and ethically accountable construct for explaining historical patterns have met with some recent success. Foucault’s proffering of the concept of the “episteme” is one of them.

The City of the Captive Globe/1972

show Metropolitanism had been turned into a manifesto, that on closer inspection it appeared that many of New York's skyscrapers had in fact ideological ambitions, to the extent that they represented in many ways the realizations of those European avant-garde movements — such as Futurism, Constructivism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Socialist Realism — that had with their own way been preoccupied with the invention and subsequent imposition of a completely new way of life.

But in Europe, where they had been invented, these movements had considered themselves absolutely inalienable and their continuities irrevocable. Each of them therefore sought to impose the hegemony of its doctrines at the expense of the others.

But in Manhattan, where they lived 'accidentally' so to speak, they coexisted within the Grid as if they had always been intended as each other's necessary complement without any tempering of their hostility.

The City of the Captive Globe then, is an enumeration of the ingredients of OMA's perverse 'Yiddish', finding themselves together in a surprising 'reversion' in Manhattan.

Religion in ruins. (1) The conservative rituals of the church are replaced in Manhattan by new religious accommodations for a 'thousand new religions'.

Architecture in the process of reproducing itself. (2) perhaps this was a subconscious portrait of O.M. Ungers' architecture that is generated by an unstoppable impulse of continuous transformation, regeneration and regeneration.

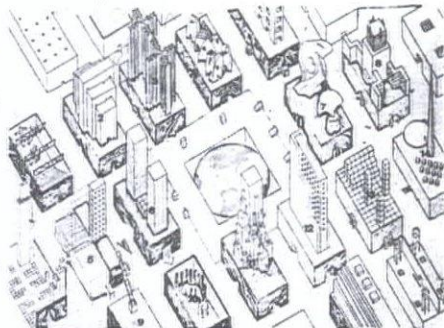
Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin. (3) Two towers in grass. (This turned out later to be the actual model of the Rockefeller Centre where 5 high-rise towers were implanted in an artificial 'park' on the 10th story roofs of the lower blocks, so that one of the 'layers' of the Centre is the European City of CIAM and the Athens Charter.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. (4) The Expressionist movie that takes place in the mind of a patient in a mental asylum. Manhattan's architecture is equally the outcome of such mania, but of such a multitude and of such undeniable reality that their cumulative effect is a new form of sanity.

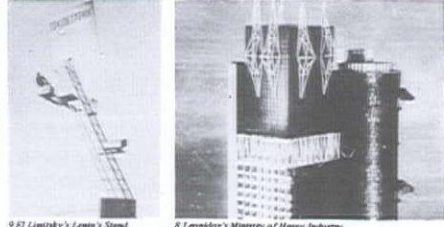
The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. (5) a characteristic — (which had been just grasped at the time of Manhattan's architecture — and in principle of all architecture whose volume reaches beyond a certain 'critical mass' — is that there can be no direct relationship between interior and exterior. The richness and variety of their interior activities — often contradictory — is such that it cannot be represented on any facade. Buildings such as the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel are the result of two distinct architectures: the serene exterior is a minimalist sculpture that, through its size alone, has to be a monument, not to a particular cause or ideal, but a monument that symbolizes nothing but its own existence — an auto-monument. Inside though, there 'rages' a deliberately shallow form of interior design, whose continuous iconographic transmutations accommodate the volatile changes in manner, fashion and values which is the essence of the Metropolis.

Homage to Mies. (6) the discredit — in the 70s — of an architecture of such originality, seriousness, extravagance, permeability and the liberating potential as that of Mies van der Rohe is a tragically self-destructive example of the widespread gerrander and literacy that now threaten architecture.

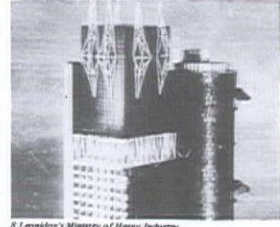
Dali's 'Architectural Angelus'. 1933. (7) two



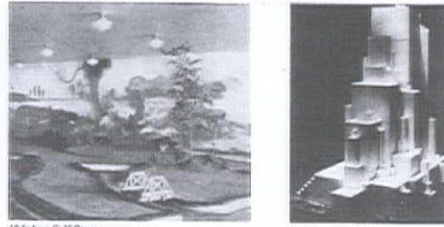
City of the Captive Globe Key



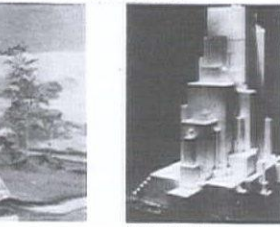
9 El Lissitzky's Lenin's Stair.



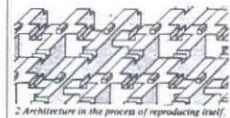
8 Leonidov's Ministry of Heavy Industry.



19 Indoor Golf Course



11 Mies van der Rohe's Architecture.



2 Architecture in the process of reproducing itself.



3 Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin.



4 The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.



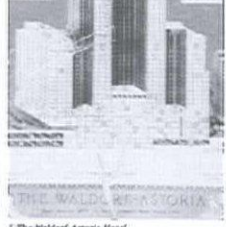
3 The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.



7 Dali's 'Architectural Angelus'.



12 RCA Building, Rockefeller Center.



14 Theme exhibit 'Democracy'.



14 Theme exhibit 'Democracy'.



14 Theme exhibit 'Democracy'.

(familiar) bits, of an unspecified white substance, that support each other through their very spooliness. For Dali such shapely blobs — shapely like concrete before the insertion of reinforcements — represent the volatile substance of peasant speculations that need the crucibles of our national underpinnings to be established as more solid than exist like spots in the world: the more unspooled their existence, the better they can devote themselves to a society's ultimate collapse. Such strictly rational 'reinforcements' applied to irrational desires have the not-so-secret intention of discrediting completely the world of reality; something they have in common with Manhattan's architecture.

Ivan Leonidov's Ministry of Heavy Industry. (8) In 1933 the futurist Constructivism of Leonidov confronted itself with the doctrine of Socialist Realism on an historically loaded site along Red Square — a cluster of three towers explicitly engages the iconographies of the local context — the golden domes, St. Basil's Cathedral, the Kremlin walls, Lenin's mausoleum — in an early example of a modern architecture that constructs a viable relationship with history.

El Lissitzky's Lenin's Stair. (9) the forward thrust of the beam reinforces the movement of the 'progressive' speaker — Lenin — always pointing forward (although in many different directions). Outdoor indoor. (10) before the actual discovery of existing examples in Manhattan such as the interior golfcourse in the Dowagoo Athletic Club, this black represents the intention that, in the Metropolis, nature could only be preserved inside buildings — where its life functions are actually supported by complex technical apparatus.

Architecture of Mies van der Rohe. (11) in the early 20s Mies van der Rohe and his UNOVIS Atelier in Virebak produced a series of architectural models that display a striking parallelism with the forms that would emerge later in Manhattan through the imposition of the Zoning Law. They were an 'architectural forecast' (requivalent of weather forecast) without scale, location, programme, occupants, to be realized by later civilizations (p. 7).

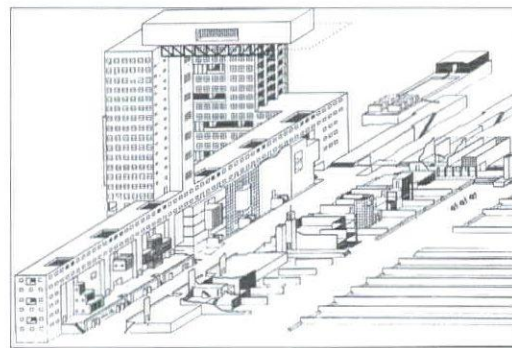
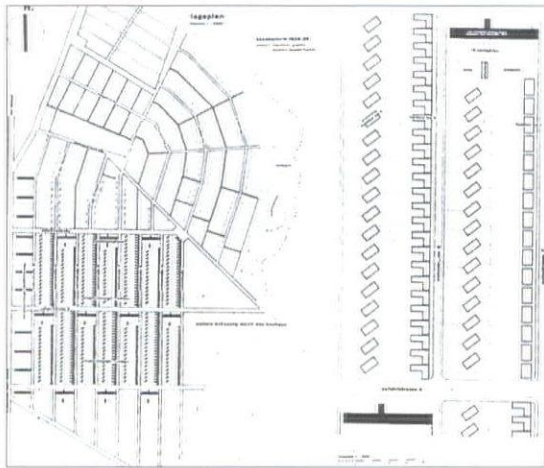
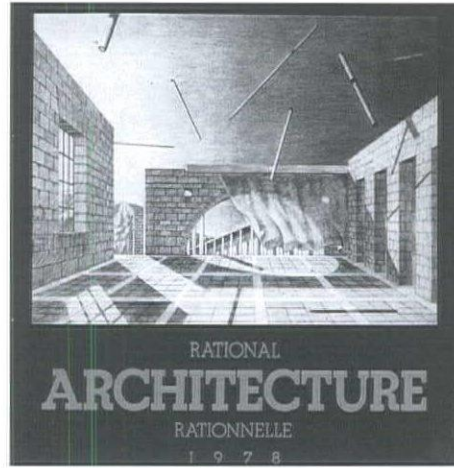
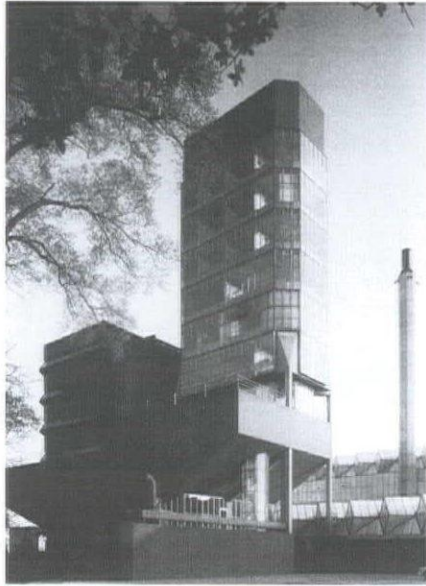
RCA Building, Rockefeller Center, 1933. (12) the first Manhattan skyscraper planned according to the principles of European functionalism, with the penetration of daylight as the dominant parameter. But its apparent modernity is contradicted by the irrational speculations — such as the high-banking Rockettes in the purple glass of the synthetic sunset — that take place within the building's base. The Rockefeller Center — several superimposed projects/ideologies that overlaid at the same address. Homage to Mies van der Rohe. (13) in the late 60s Superstudio offered one of the few interesting and stimulating models of the retrieval of a modern tradition applied to a new sensibility. (Next to the Berlin '90, this Consumer Movement was an obvious inspiration for Leonidov.)

Trylon and Perisphere. (14) the theme exhibit of the 1939 World's Fair designed by Wallace Harrison. As it turned out later, the interior of the sphere contained 'Democracy', a Le Corbusier-inspired 'Metropolis of the future' i.e. towers in grass — an anti-Manhattan. This is not a city of canyons and passive forms, it is one of simple functional buildings — most of them low — all of them surrounded by green vegetation and clean air. . . . The exhibit marked the death of Manhattanism.

A City of the Captive Globe OMA, 1972. page layout from Architectural Design, May 1977.

In our own field of architecture, Colin Rowe and Manfredo Tafuri are numbered among the contemporary theoreticians of architecture who have made compelling propositions intended to address the large, historical/theoretical question: What would be the features of an architecture that would be definitively appropriate to our era? Without presuming even to attempt to deal with such a large question here, let me simply table what are surely two of the likely dimensions of such an architecture. If we speak of social program, for example, it is clear that we will not agree any longer with the declamatory 1930 statement of Karel Teige against Le Corbusier: "today we have no architectural solutions for churches, palaces, castles..."² But even if we would agree nowadays that Teige's exclusionary stance went too far, surely we will agree nonetheless that we will not, today, have very many buildings with, for example, monumental flights of steps at their entrances or with separate zones for separate classes of users.

Or, alternatively, consider the matter of the material tectonics of building. In *The Space of Appearance*, I rehearsed an argument that would extend this kind of thinking to a consideration of contemporary building construction.³ In that book, I conceded to an old argument of Robert Stern's that it is still possible nowadays to find skilled craftspeople to execute decorative plasterwork or stone carving, such as might have previously been employed on residential projects for the very wealthy. At the same time, I argued that one cannot proceed from this fact to suppose that there does not exist what I called a contemporary "political economy of construction" that determines what most, typical North American buildings will be built of nowadays. I am convinced that this economy will preclude most of these buildings (most of the time) from incorporating such decorative plasterwork or stone carving. I commended such architects as Frank Gehry and Dan Hoffman for their efforts to make the constraints of such an "economy" part of the



▲ Leicester Engineering Building England. James Stirling, 1963.
 Torten-Dessau Housing Estate Germany. Hannes Meyer, 1934. plan.

▲ Rational Architecture 1978. cover.
 Roosevelt Island Competition Entry New York City, project. OMA, 1975.

conceptual content of the specific architectures they have invented. Thus, out of a broad combination of considerations such as these two I have just mentioned (program and tectonics), it seems to me that it eventually may well be possible to determine roughly what the "episteme" of architecture in our time is, or, what it can be.

It is in this context that my concern about a merely "stylistic" reading of "neo-modern" arises. After all, even if "modernity," in the large, deep sense we used to know, is now historically behind us, it is not true that it has been historically superseded. As a result, I can say that whatever the differences of terminological emphasis between us may be, I have no difficulty in making the following statement: Even if the future of architecture does not belong to Koolhaas, or (as you later claim) "the New York Five or Deconstructivism," it certainly doesn't belong to the advocates of "the neo-Georgian, the neo-Palladian, the neo-classical or the neo-vernacular."⁴

During the revisionist ferment of the 1970s it was not yet clear that would turn out to be the case. Many of the explorations that have since

fallen definitively under the rubric of "postmodernism" still looked at that time like potentially productive explorations within the expanded territory of modernism. A notable example is Michael Graves's revisionist explorations beyond the post-Corbusian vocabulary that typified the early work of the entire New York Five group. By the mid-1980s, however, the overwhelming emphasis of postmodernism on the semantic dimension of architectural form and on increasingly literal historical revivals drastically reduced its creative potential.

PERSPECTA 32 Considering the pronounced return over the last ten years of imagery associated with the 1950s, would you say that the resurfacing of mid-century modernism now (which also might or might not constitute neo-modernism) differs significantly from other forms of architectural revisionism that have occurred since 1945? And if so, have other kinds of neo-modernism—such as the New York Five or Deconstructivism during the late 1980s—emerged in the 25 years, either proclaimed theoretically by its instigators or, in the manner of Koolhaas's Manhattanism, retroactively theorized by others? And are any of these capable of offering headway in what you described in 1998

as the split between intelligensia and mainstream that has expanded during the 1990s?

GEORGE BAIRD Let me deal first with earlier cases, and then with more contemporary ones.

The first key case of revisionism that I would cite would be Charles and Ray Eames. For there is no doubt in my mind that they made an innovative connection between fabrication technologies imported from defense industries on the one hand and folk arts and vernaculars on the other. This provocative link significantly broadened the potential field of modern design in a strategic (and as far as I can tell) still insufficiently understood or appreciated way.

From the 1960s and 1970s, I would cite James Stirling and Robert Venturi. As far as I know, Stirling qualifies as the first neo-modernist, since early on in his career he began to incorporate references to forms from the modern architecture of the 1920s and 1930s. A well-known example is the **LEICESTER ENGINEERING BUILDING**, which included references to constructivist worker's clubs in Moscow by Melnikov and the Johnson Wax Building in Milwaukee by Wright. While I have never heard Koolhaas talk about Stirling, it would be interesting to know if he would so quickly have fastened on Leonidov early in his own career if Stirling had not already made Melnikov a topic of interest among his peers. Interestingly enough, Stirling also had three other traits in common with Koolhaas: first, a personal propensity to act provocatively; second, a highly heterogeneous visual sensibility; and third, an extraordinarily inventive plastic capability.

But then there are differences that are just as important. To start with, Stirling's interests in earlier architectures were not limited to modernism. He was as curious about Hawksmoor, Soane, and Butterfield as he was about Melnikov and Wright. Then too, for Stirling, program was only one component of architecture that warranted consideration; he never saw it as a primary driving force, as Koolhaas often does. Despite his similarly provocative persona, Stirling early on developed an aversion to polemics and to public theorizing about architecture, an aversion that Koolhaas does not share.

As fellow revisionists, Venturi and Koolhaas share the intriguing distinction of having become well known as designers and as polemicists at one and the same time. But of course, Venturi, unlike Stirling, hardly qualifies as a neo-modernist. To be sure, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* includes references to high-modern architecture as well as to modernist vernaculars. So, also, do some of his most important buildings and projects, such as Guild House and the competition entry for Brighton Beach. But the only modernist architects who receive *sustained* interpretation in his famous book are Aalto, Le Corbusier, and Moretti. And these three are easily outnumbered by Lutyens, Vanbrugh, Borromini, Guarini, Michelangelo, etc. Then too, program—especially social program—was seen by Venturi as a distraction for serious architects. Even though his architectural revisionism manifested itself in a high-profile polemic—a “gentle manifesto,” as he put it—his sensibility was much more that of an aloof observer than an activist.

In fact, Venturi's disappointing stance regarding the limits he saw on architecture's potential social power has the effect of throwing Koolhaas's obsessive preoccupation with “professional efficacy” into sharp relief. It is not for nothing that Robert Moses, Wallace Harrison, and John Portman are numbered among Koolhaas's American heroes, and it is their prodigious professional energy and impact on American society that so strongly attracts him to them. In fact, it is my view that this

preoccupation with efficacy is a deeply important, though little discussed, aspect of Koolhaas's professional persona.

To turn now to more recent developments; here, too, it is not difficult to point to promising examples of architectural praxis that offer “headway,” though the New York Five and Deconstructivism do not, for me, lead the way.

I could speak instead, for example, of the work of Philippe Starck. Manifesting a sensibility that spans from the real to the surreal and from the vernacular to the rarified, Starck also exhibits a remarkable loyalty to the traditions of 1968 and to the idea that design ambition and populist economy are not mutually exclusive concepts. Or take the case of Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, who have made a highly successful marriage of architecture and art installation and who have used video more effectively than any other contemporary architects I can think of. At the same time, this couple has also carried on more vigorously than any other current practitioners the fragile tectonic traditions of assembly associated with Carlo Scarpa, and they have paid a very modern homage to Scarpa's own intense curiosity as to the place of the human body in architecture.

Toyo Ito seems to me to have demonstrated an especially effective capacity to dematerialize architecture without losing control of its tectonically specific characteristics. This, it seems to me, distinguishes him among those of his peers who manifest strong interest in architecture's prospective digitization.

But even this listing excludes innumerable interesting contemporary architects—I have recently been most engaged by publications of recent work from Spain—who continue to work productively within lineages of revisionist modernism—or perhaps, as you would have it, the “neo-modern.”

PERSPECTA 32 In your 1977 *AD* piece on OMA, you suggested that Mies was “surely, except for Ludwig Hilberseimer, today's least fashionable architect,” and continued, “OMA reasserts the pertinence of the work of Mies. ... the grid, the curtain wall, and the sheer plane surface all make their significant reappearance in OMA's work.” Given his recent competition-winning design for a student center at IIT that includes the renovation/expansion of a 1950s Mies building, this particular fixation would necessarily “resurface” in any serious evaluation of Koolhaas' sustained interests and achievements (if indeed it can ever be thought of as having gone away).⁵

What do you now see as being the special significance of Koolhaas's use—during his earlier production—of what can be viewed as historicist references to mid-century modernism?

GEORGE BAIRD Is there a special significance to OMA/Koolhaas's use in the 1970s of references to mid-century modernism? I think the answer to this question is yes. There are many reasons for this, which I will try to expand upon as we go along. To start with, however, I would simply note that a quick comparison between the era of the 1970s and that of the 1950's would demonstrate two very different climates of opinion. The later period—the period of Koolhaas's own formation—was one of acute professional doubts and self-questioning. The incapacitating shadow of the '68 events still hung heavy over the profession. The earlier period, on the other hand, was one during which the sunny optimism of orthodox modern architecture had not yet been called into question. What is more, it was also the period of modern architecture's broadest social and cultural dissemination and of its greatest mainstream popularity.

From Latourrette to Neiman-Marcus

The 1950s evolution from Latourrette to Neiman-Marcus is a characteristic development of formalist symbolism in late Modern architecture. Le Corbusier's three manifestations of late genre, a monastery in a Burgundian field, a shell in Belgium, an adaptation of a white plastic vernacular of the western Mediterranean. Its forms became an Art and Architecture Building on a street corner in New Haven, a brick laboratory on the campus at Cornell, and a piazza publico in a plaza in Boston. A later version of this Burgundian order is a department store off the Westheimer Street in suburban Houston — a pure symbol of progressive gentility set in a sea of parking. Again, we do not criticize these replications of a classic masterpiece in a different place for a different use, although we suggest the replication would have been done better if it had been accepted philosophically and used with flexibility, as in the case of a Swiss Arts department store designed by an Italian piazza. This series of buildings from Burgundy to Texas illustrates the Modern architect's tendency to glorify originality through copying it.



- 81. Monastery of La Couronne, France, 1957-1963, Le Corbusier
- 82. Yale University Art and Architecture Building, New Haven, 1957-1963, Le Corbusier
- 83. Cornell University Agronomy Building, Ithaca, New York, 1957-1958, Le Corbusier
- 84. Neiman-Marcus Building, Houston, TX, 1962, Philip Johnson

96

Stavish Formalism and Articulated Expressionism



85. Neiman-Marcus building, Houston, Texas, 1962, Philip Johnson and Associates

86. Neiman-Marcus building

Stavish formalism, consisting of a series of adjustments to preconceived form, has resulted not only in confusion and irony, but in a formalism that is the more suitable for being unadmitted. Those planners and architects who deny formalism in architecture are frequently rigid and arbitrary when the time comes for submitting their projects to form. Given designers, having learned the art of formalism of the architectural profession and the critique of "physical bias" in the planning profession, are often caught in the dilemma: "Once the 'planning process' has been planned and the 'guidelines for development' have been set, plans are fixed in stone — possible developments?" In the favorable stages of the architectural leader, forced by the recent graduates who happen to be "on the design side" of the project, is the office that must, whether or not they realize it, formal vocabulary, which is more relevant to the project than the vernacular formal vocabulary.

The substitution of expression for representation through reduction to symbolization and presence has resulted in architecture where expression has become expressionism. Clearly, perhaps to the image-making available from abstract forms and unadorned functional elements, the characteristic forms of late Modern architecture are of overcast. Conversely, they are often understood in their context as with Latourrette on the Westheimer Street. Urban forms once used to exaggerate the architect's role in the environment. But, suggest on of structure and program, as in the 1950s and 1960s, mechanical work, the architectural decoration has become a habit for ornament.

97

^ "Brutalism" sequence page layout from *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972.

Now while Koolhaas was indisputably both a product of, and a participant in the events of, the 1970s, there is no doubt that he has always been attracted to the kind of optimistic climate of opinion about architecture that typified the earlier period. What is more, a series of revisionist modernisms had occurred in the intervening decades that were not attractive to Koolhaas (I am thinking here of various derivations of Brutalism, about which I'll say more later). Thus, from a number of points of view, it can be said that to make explicit references to the architecture of mid-century in the 1970s was a strategic polemical gesture.

PERSPECTA 32 Before we go on, let's clarify your primary characterization of OMA's ideological strategy back in 1977. You said then that the most revealing aspect of the work was how it consciously attempted to be both contradictory and ambiguous. [Baird's essay in *AD* echoes many of the same themes as Porphyrios's "Pandora's Box," which we have reprinted in tandem with this conversation; for that reason, we have not reprinted Baird's piece.] In your words, "[OMA's work] turns out to be visionary at the same time as it is implementable; surreal at the same time as it is commonsensical; puritanical at the same time as

it is luxurious." Was OMA's penchant for employing a Miesian vocabulary during this period intrinsically more apt than the use of any other historical vocabulary for the sort of provocation embedded in their design strategy, with its predilection for being "contradictory and ambiguous?"

GEORGE BAIRD "Intrinsically" is perhaps overstated, but, again, I think the answer is yes. Two primary reasons are worth noting. First of all, to return for a moment to the 1960s era of Brutalism and of other architectural revisionisms, this was a period when Mies was already out of fashion. The postmodernist critique of modernism's so-called "soullessness" still lay off in the future, but even so, leading architects of the 1960s were already looking for forms of plastic expression that left Miesian propriety behind. One could even say that Brutalism was a historical phase that Mies simply sat out.

Then, too, it cannot be denied that the powerful "reduction" that typifies Mies's formal method makes it especially suitable for "contradictory and ambiguous" purposes. Thus, in returning to a specifically

Miesian modernism, OMA/Koolhaas was able to snub the current vogue of Brutalism and at the same time was able to work with the absorptive voluptuousness of Mies's characteristic approach to surface.

PERSPECTA 32 Are curtain walls and sheer plane surfaces (of which we have recently seen a decisive comeback) more conducive to a have-it-both-ways position than other modernist stylistic traits, say *pilotis*, *brises soleils*, ramps, spirals, strip windows, marble veneer, and tension cables?

GEORGE BAIRD For the polemical purposes of early OMA/Koolhaas, yes, I think they proved to be so. It has to do with the shift between 1950s and 1960s emphases in the evolution of modernism that I just referred to. For some of the motifs common then—*pilotis*, *brises soleils*, and ramps particularly, or at least derivations of them—were prominent components of the ubiquitous brutalist architecture of the 1960s. Remember the fateful **BRUTALISM SEQUENCE** of images in Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas*: the deteriorating trajectory that leads from Le Corbusier's La Tourette Monastery through the Boston City Hall, ending with an HOK design for a Nieman-Marcus store in a suburban Texas shopping center? This was the tendency that resulted in the creation of innumerable, egregiously assertive concrete buildings around the world. This description reminds me of a particular personal episode with Koolhaas that sharpens my point. He and I were being driven around Sydney, Australia together during a 1980 visit. Seeing a typical (but, up until that point, unfamiliar) example of the architectural tendency in question looming up on the horizon ahead of us, my sharp-tongued companion observed ascerbically that it "looked like a dormitory for elephants."

In this climate of opinion, to return to the forms of the 1950s not only had a certain shock value (after all, these were forms that were seen by conventional taste at that time as *passé*), but doing so also served to separate OMA/Koolhaas off from the by-then tired modernist revisionism of Brutalism. Still, it is important to note that returning to the 1950s did not exclude all the other forms you include in your list of suggestions. In fact, many of them (spirals, strip windows, marble veneer, and tension cables—the ones that were already prominent in the vocabulary prior to the onset of Brutalism) do show up in the OMA oeuvre.

PERSPECTA 32 In your recent encyclopedia entry on semiotics and architecture, you attach much importance to the international emergence during the 1970s of typology and urban morphology as a basis for design methodologies that privilege the "social." One could conjecture that OMA/Koolhaas's own 1975 **ROOSEVELT ISLAND HOUSING PROJECT** is an important but neglected event within this moment. Do you see this as an exception in their work or an investigation more central to their project?

Furthermore, the Rationalist and Miesian references in this project suggest unexamined complexities within the supposed "anti-modernist" stance associated with both Rationalism and early postmodernism. So then where does the OMA/Koolhaas 1970s work, with its mid-century "quotation," sit in reference to the critique of modernism as it unfolded during that decade?

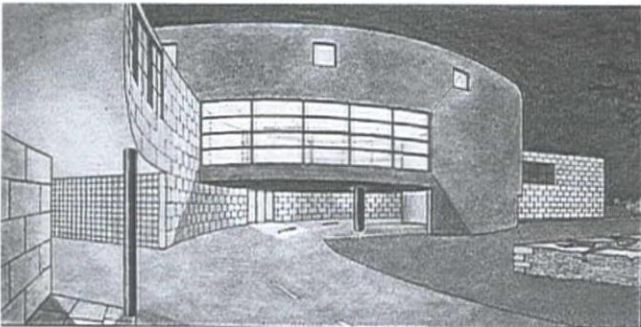
GEORGE BAIRD Interestingly enough, I think the Roosevelt Island competition entry has to be seen as an integral part of the critique you mention. Surprising as it may seem from the end of the millennium, the 1970s production of OMA/Koolhaas participated in the developing critique of modernism at the same time that it revived certain strong modernist themes (contradictory and ambiguous indeed!). A brief amplification of the climate of opinion of the 1970s will help to explain this. One of the consequences of the bifurcation referred to above has been

the laying down of a sharp ideological demarcation line, and most activist architects have difficulty in resisting the strong pressure to declare allegiance to one faction or another. But the fact of the matter is that this line did not yet exist in the 1970s, and OMA/Koolhaas was one of many beneficiaries of the ideological confusion and promiscuity that reigned then. Influences, ideas, and formal devices were shared across a broader band of different architectural positions than has been possible more recently.

To demonstrate this, let me remind you of the notable publication **RATIONAL ARCHITECTURE** from 1978 (one year later than my *AD* article), assembled by Maurice Culot and Leon Krier. It included projects by OMA alongside those of the Krier brothers, Giorgio Grassi, and, most significantly of all, O. M. Ungers. Ungers, of course, had been Koolhaas's mentor and colleague during his unhappy Harkness Fellow's sojourn at Cornell University in the early 1970s. And in the early years, Ungers was even billed by Koolhaas as a participant in the collective practice of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, all this, interestingly, despite Ungers's close ideological and professional associations with the Krier brothers, as well as with other European Rationalists.

These observations (as to the specific tenor of discourse about architecture in Europe at that time) have important implications for my response to your question. First, the Rationalist interest I am ascribing to Koolhaas here is a mid-1970s European one, which is more stylistically neutral than the more explicit, postmodern North American one that overtook it some years later. Remember that Aldo Rossi saw Hannes Meyer as being as much of a precedent for Rationalism as Heinrich Tessenow. And by Koolhaas's lights, Mies himself would certainly qualify as one. The entire OMA/Koolhaas oeuvre during those years had a thoroughgoing Rationalist tenor to it. Thus I do not see the Roosevelt Island competition as being an exception, as you suggest. Indeed, I see the prominence it is given in the series of projects illustrated in the same issue of *AD* as evidence of his estimate of its importance—an estimate, by the way, which I share. It is only a decade or so later (as part of the problematic "bifurcation") that Rationalism—especially its North American variant—came to seem irretrievably post-modern and that Koolhaas (for partly ideological and partly public relations reasons) eventually more or less consented to his appropriation into the canons of Deconstructivism.

Just to show how durable Koolhaas's ideological promiscuity has turned out to be, let me refer to its effects on a recent project of his: the well-known contribution to the **HOUSING COMPLEX IN FUKUOKA, JAPAN**. This is a project that manifests all sorts of traditional urbanities that have gone entirely unrecognized, as far as I am aware. Has anyone, for example, noted how the Koolhaas's Fukuoka project is a "mat building," in quite faithful emulation of Team 10 principles? Or that in the pairing of two masses around the main entrance to the project as a whole, the complex acts as a traditional urban gate? Or, for that matter, how its perimeter defers to the property line, in utterly traditional urban design terms? As far as I can tell from published photographs, the ensemble of buildings that makes up the Fukuoka project as a whole suffers from the insufficiently mediated conjunction of too many over-assertive architectural egos on a relatively small parcel of land. In such circumstances, Koolhaas's housing blocks have the exceptional—and in my view decisive—virtue of producing a small precinct of traditional urbanity, in what otherwise comprises a problematic field of self-aggrandizing architectural objects. So it would seem to me, the author's Rationalist inclinations have not left him, even at this late date in the expansion of his fame.



▲ Fukuoka Housing Block Japan. OMA, 1990.
 Mosigkau Siedlung Germany, project. Heinrich Tessenow, 1942.
 Irish Embassy Competition Entry Dublin. OMA, 1978.



▲ IBM Headquarters Montreal, Canada. Kohn Peterson Fox, 1986.
 125 E. 57th St. New York City. Kohn Peterson Fox, 1986.

We agree OMA's method was from the beginning "contradictory and ambiguous" in any event. Given this, it is not difficult to see its production at a given moment in time as being more—or alternatively less—Rationalist (or for that matter, Deconstructivist) than it looks in retrospect.

PERSPECTA 32 Then do you see any direct connection between referencing the sleek surfaces of 1950s modernism and employing a design strategy that showcases ideological contradiction? And does this strategy differ markedly from the formalist ambiguity of Venturi's earlier championing of double-functioning elements? Does it instead oscillate between seemingly conflicting scenarios?

GEORGE BAIRD My answer to this difficult question is: perhaps. But I am not sure. There is no doubt that there is a large gap between the overall professional approaches of Venturi and Koolhaas. Back in 1978, I already flagged Koolhaas's difference from Venturi's disparagement of explicit political commitments by architects. And it is also true that Koolhaas's professional stance has consistently demonstrated a robustness that differentiates him from the older American revisionist.

But whether there is a fundamental difference between "double-functioning elements" and an "active conceptual oscillation between seemingly conflicting scenarios" is another matter. It may be just that the latter operates on a larger architectural canvas than the former. Certainly it is my view that the ongoing cycle of architectural fashion has Venturi under an ideological cloud at the present time. And as a result, the brilliance—and the continuing pertinence—of the arguments of *Complexity and Contradiction* are at the present time seriously undervalued.

PERSPECTA 32 Let's look at some of these themes from a different angle. You claim in the *AD* article that "insofar as [the OMA polemic] raises to the level of heroes...contentious figures, ...[it] strives merely to *épater*—not this time *les bourgeois*—but rather, today's complacent arbiters of respectable taste." This comment suggests that quotation of the anonymous, commercial, or even sentimental aspects of some 1950s modernism (such as the work of Morris Lapidus or, as you point out, Wallace Harrison) serves to encode a revisionism with possibly more radical potential than that associated with the 1970s Gray

position. Can this quotation be seen as having a punk component and thus more extreme and challenging than that proposed by most other work during the 1970s?

Let us clarify what we mean by this: all quotation and revival tends to require a sophisticated familiarity with vocabularies in order to be read productively by viewers. However, the unique, shall we say *outré*, subversion of currently "acceptable" codes that one associates with pop art and later punk sensibilities—and the ensuing communicative power it can afford the marginalized who instigate it—could be seen as bringing with it reasonable call for the reconfiguring of accepted social structures. Is it reasonable to read this particular "subversion" into the work of OMA/Koolhaas from this period?

GEORGE BAIRD This is an issue in the oeuvre of OMA to which I have not previously given much consideration. On reflection, however, I am inclined to think that there is considerable truth in your speculation. In the beginning, there is no doubt that OMA's references of this sort were indeed intended to shock. Perhaps, in retrospect, some of them can also be seen at least to open the door to a consideration of the hitherto "marginalized."

Let me deal first with the intention to shock. To start with, remember how, in early slide presentations by Koolhaas on tour, representations of projects such as *Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of the Architecture* were interspersed with occasional, unexplained sexual images. And some of this (by now vintage) 1970s pornography has even made it into the pages of *S,M,L,XL*.⁶ Then too, your reference to Morris Lapidus has reminded me how a trajectory of populist imagery formed a strong theme in the work of OMA/Koolhaas from the late 1970s through the mid-1980s, following the 1977 issue of *AD* but preceding the fateful "bifurcation" discussed above.

We might cite an OMA project which has not been much discussed—especially recently. It was an entry in a 1979 competition for a new **RESIDENCE FOR THE PRIME MINISTER OF IRELAND**. The design's sinuous curves made strong associations with the work of such figures as Lapidus. By the early 1980s, the issue of "sentimental aspects of some 50's modernism" in the work (as you phrase it) was explicit enough to have become the subject of comment and controversy.

This matter arose in exchanges between Koolhaas and others at both the Charlottesville and Chicago conferences of 1982 and 1986 respectively. The exchanges began with Cesar Pelli and Jaquelin Robertson putting it to Koolhaas in Charlottesville that his historical references (they called them 1940s references—Miami Beach, palm trees, McDonald's arches, kidney-shaped swimming pools) manifested "nostalgia." Three years later in Chicago, Graves took up the term "nostalgic" again and used it in reference to a project that Koolhaas was presenting there. But this speculative attribution of a specific historical tone in his work prompted Koolhaas to close down the discourse, defiantly stonewalling as follows:

"If you define it that way, I would say that this project really has no longing for a better time or the memory of a better time. It is extremely and precisely ecstatic about this time, this year, this place, this moment, and nothing else."⁷

So we can see that too explicit an ascription of a historicizing intention will not be countenanced, certainly not after the fateful "bifurcation" had already commenced (it is noteworthy that Leon Krier is present together with Koolhaas at both events, and the tone of the exchanges between them makes it clear that the collective publication of only five

years earlier could no longer have occurred). By 1986 then, not only was the bifurcation well under way, but the modalities of shock available to Koolhaas had evidently begun to shift as well.

Leaving such polemics aside, let me return to the main thrust of your question: the matter of "subversion" and of any opening that can be seen in the work of OMA towards the "marginalized." Despite the tension of the exchanges in Charlottesville and Chicago, I find myself supposing that the opening to popular culture evident in the early projects *does* reveal a glimpse of an unspoken ethics in the work. I say unspoken, since there are a number of quite ethically aversive things deeply embedded in OMA's method and none of them runs deeper than the one against liberal do-goodery and the notorious "good intentions" commonly ascribed to orthodox modern architecture. As far as I can tell, a significant part of this aversion springs from that same preoccupation with "professional efficacy" that has prompted Koolhaas's admiration for Moses, Harrison and Portman. Far better, this approach to practice would seem to say, to be incorrect and yet efficacious, than to be correct but ineffectual.

Perhaps it can also be said that the other side of this ethical coin came into view during a fascinating episode in a recent exchange at the Harvard Graduate School of Design between Koolhaas and Andres Duany. The exchange had been set up as part of a symposium on "The New Urbanism," and as far as I could tell, the expectation was that Duany would argue in favor of its practices, and that Koolhaas would attack them. To the surprise of most observers present Koolhaas largely declined to do so. Instead, he used the platform of the Harvard Graduate School of Design to mount an insistent and indignant challenge to Duany to use *his* influence as a now-prominent American practitioner to attack New York City's recent program of gentrification of 42nd Street. Duany attempted to return the discussion to a consideration of New Urbanist principles and to their presumed debate. But Koolhaas would not be deflected. He shook his finger at Duany and chastised him for his (*unethical?*) failure to resist the obliteration by the political establishment of New York City of the distinctive (can we also say "marginalized?") subculture of hawking, hustling, petty crime, and pornography that typified 42nd Street until recently.⁹

PERSPECTA 32 Couldn't the particular subversion of OMA/Koolhaas work at this moment also be interpreted as a *sortie* targeting the values usually associated with historical knowledge, especially as it is privileged in the academy? Would this aspect of OMA's historicist resurfacing of mid-century modern stylistic elements further distinguish their project from that of the Whites and the Grays, contrasting with their apparent faith in symbolic content removed from contemporary professional conventions (i.e., 1920s modernism and Le Corbusier for the Whites, vernacular and classical imagery for the Grays)—and thus, by extension, challenging the Whites and the Grays firmly held belief in the power of the academy over the profession?

GEORGE BAIRD Does the OMA "subversion" distinguish them from the Whites and the Grays? Could they be seen as *not* sharing the other two groups' "firmly held belief in the power of the academy over the profession?" I think that there is truth to this speculation as well. Koolhaas's admiration for Portman, Harrison, and Moses all point to it, as does his complex regard for the un-famous Chinese architects who build so many more square feet of construction per year than their western colleagues. Clinching evidence of such a possibility can also be seen in a little-publicized report of a Koolhaas outburst at the 1994 ANY (Architecture New York) Conference in Montreal. Sitting among the members of the American avant-garde who have striven so assiduously over the years to co-opt him and listening to them express disdain for the complicit behavior of

most architects towards prevailing ideologies, Koolhaas lost patience and took on his colleagues head-on. "Why," he demanded to know, "is the only respectable position a critical one?" He continued:

"The problem with the prevailing discourse of architectural criticism is this inability to recognize that there is in the deepest motivations of architecture something that cannot be critical. Maybe some of our most interesting engagements are uncritical, emphatic engagements, which deal with the sometimes insane difficulty of an architectural project to deal with the incredible accumulation of economic, cultural, political but also logistical issues."¹⁰

PERSPECTA 32 In the 1977 *AD* article, you claimed, "Insofar as [OMA's work] reveals for our astonishment 'the secret life of buildings,' it lastly demonstrates the iconic barrenness of most contemporary architectural debate." While by no means believing that today's climate is equally barren, we do share your feeling that OMA's sophisticated, early polemical efforts were not merely unimportant (forgive the pun) "academic" exercises. Furthermore—in a large part following your own observations—we see it as a vision containing unresolved antinomies that have yet to be given their historical due, containing diagrammatic schisms between utopian transformation and pragmatic expediency, between White autonomy and Gray heteronomy, between high art and lowbrow culture, and between elite design and mainstream practice.

So one last speculation: can the Gray position be seen to have evolved—over the quarter century since it was first codified as a sensibility (with ideological overtones)—so as nowadays to encompass a respectful, playful, and possibly even subversive neo-modernism in addition to the neo-Georgian, the neo-Palladian, the neo-classical, and the neo-vernaculars by which it has most often been recognized? If numerous instances of references to mid-century modernism have occurred since the 1970s (and still more continue to occur), all of them would need to be evaluated in terms of different conceptual strategies: from the early efforts of OMA/Koolhaas to more recent work by figures such as those architects featured in our signature section. Wouldn't this continued viability imply practices of quotation—rather than merely being the schematic foundations of Gray postmodernism—deserve to be treated all-around as a more complex proposition than they frequently have been?

To follow a line of reasoning that seems important for this issue of *Perspecta*, whether these practices are spear-headed by Louis Kahn or the more active commercial populisms of Robert Venturi/Denise Scott Brown, Charles Moore, and Robert A.M. Stern (all legacies connected to Yale who have hinged their theoretical and methodological strategies to certain "resurfacings" of the past), couldn't it be seen that a Gray position *expanded* by neo-modernism points toward a more complex spectrum hidden in the binaries associated with 1970s American architectural debates? Might such a contention not only blur the line between the Whites' hermetic neo-modernism and the Grays' mimetic postmodernism but also reconfigure some of the important post-war developments leading up to the current moment? Perhaps a third historical position—resolutely professional and sympathetic to strategic quotation, yet dialectically encompassing White/Gray, autonomous withdrawal/pluralist cacophony, utopian optimism/commercial acceptance, and theory/practice—could be detected, lurking as a hidden historical thread that leads from the late 1940s to the late 1990s?

GEORGE BAIRD Interestingly enough, I find that I agree with this—for me—unexpected insight of yours as well. And I (let alone Koolhaas) would not have imagined that one could draw a parallel between the sensibilities of Venturi, Moore, and Stern on the one hand and of Kool-

haas on the other. In fact, to the extent that I do agree, I would tend to draw the parallel much more closely with Venturi and Moore than I would with Stern, for a reason you have adduced in your earlier question about "punk" subversion. For I have always seen Stern's interest in popular culture as radically qualified by his especially strong "belief in the power of the academy over the profession."

But I think you are correct to see a connection between Venturi's interest in pop art, Moore's interest in popular culture more generally, and Koolhaas's characteristically proto-punk maneuvers. This observation has the effect of sharpening the distinction between the earlier, "quotational" Koolhaas, and the later—however reluctant—"fellow traveler" of Deconstructivism.

Still, this agreement between us notwithstanding, I return to your reference to a hypothetical "Gray position expanded by neo-modernism" and to the sought-after "more complex spectrum." I do so in order to express a cautionary observation. It does not follow, for me, that such an expanded practice can be expected in and of itself to cause all relationships of ideology to tectonics to be happily evened out. To illustrate this, let me discuss the intriguing example of the evolution of the firm Kohn Pedersen Fox from the era of "high" postmodernism to that of neo-modernism. It came home to me as I found myself comparing one of their neo-modernist skyscrapers from the 1990s (the **IBM HEADQUARTERS BUILDING** in Montreal) with one of their more conventionally postmodern 1980s ones (**125 EAST 57TH STREET** in New York City).

As one would expect, the 1980s project exhibited lots of local symmetries and classicizing details. In the case of the later Montreal building, I found myself approaching it from a distance, savoring the drama of its almost Constructivist tower and uppermost prow angling into the sky. But then, as I got closer to the base of the building, I noticed that a surprising number of the more local details of the skin and of its manner of abutting the ground were all too reminiscent of the earlier tower I had shortly before seen in New York. And these details, for me, carried awkwardly classicizing elements forward into the ostensibly neo-modernist project of a decade later.

To be sure, I understand that in a large office such as KPF, a certain number of cladding details for programmatically similar buildings are likely to be carried over from one project to another. And I don't even suggest that such a practice is necessarily cause for reproach. After all, if it was Miesian skins we were discussing, rather than those of KPF, we would be savoring the conceptual continuities that can be read from one project to another. No, it seems to me that the issue at stake here is the extent of the *depth* of reconceptualization of the tectonics of building that proved feasible within such a firm, between the two projects in question. As an old-time semiotician, I am tempted to argue in this case that the deeply rooted *langue* of the KPF office has proved more tenacious than the more epiphenomenal shift of architectural "styling" that ensued between the 1980s and the 1990s at that particular firm.

So you will understand if I conclude by observing that the attainment of "a Gray position expanded by neo-modernism" will not be a simple process, and that the sought after "more complex spectrum" will also not come so easily. All the same, I remain persuaded by your basic insights and believe that a surprising series of provocative linkages between heterogeneous figures from the late 1940s to the late 1990s really can be made. If this "hidden historical thread" leading from then until now really does exist, perhaps we should not be surprised that it has been sufficiently well hidden *not* to have been apparent even to the key protagonists to whom we have been ascribing its evolution. Perhaps this is one more testament to the power of the episteme in history.

GEORGE BAIRD Les Extrêmes Qui se Touchent?



In this introduction to the work of OMA, GEORGE BAIRD observes that much of the power of these drawings and the texts which accompany them, lies in the quality of permitting the reader with opposing positions — both at the same time. OMA's observations on metropolitanism, he notes, contain, simultaneously, the autonomy and ambivalence, surreal and common-sensical, revolutionary and evolutionary, and post-rational and futuristic. Baird poses one that rarely in the work are these oppositions satisfactorily resolved — they are extremes which do not, as yet, mesh, but rather, touch.

In my view, the work of OMA constitutes one of current architecture's most provocative revisionisms. To show this, one needs only to set OMA's position against two or three other important current tendencies. Colin Rowe, for example, has in his introduction to *Five Architects* conceded the contemporary relevance of the social programmes of modern architecture, and pondered for us, with mixed feelings, the residue of forms — the "physique" without the "soul" of OMA, on the other hand, argues instead that it is the forms that are meaningful, and elaborates a new formal vocabulary around precisely these "social condensers" which once formed the core of modern architecture's programme.

To take another important case, the central status of the reputation of Mies van der Rohe — except for Ludwig Habermeyer, today's least fashionable modern architect. Figures such as Van Eyck and Rijkman would deplore his influence — even Aljosa Drexler, his earliest American promoter, now speaks of Charles Gwathmey. Yet OMA asserts the pertinence of the work of Mies and the grid, the curtain wall and the sheer plane surface all make their significant reappearance in OMA's work.

Of again, Robert Venturi's plea for a less ambitious, but more effacing modern architecture than that practiced by his predecessors. To this, OMA responds by pointing the continuing relevance of Venturi's projects. By virtue of these oppositions alone, OMA's position must be regarded as significant. It is a highly complex revisionism, bringing together such diverse sets of heroes as the aforementioned Mies van der Rohe, together with Ivan Leonidou, Salvador Dalí, John Portman, Wallace Harrison and Norman Bel Geddes. What is more, it also involves, in a more intimate way, the concepts of OMA's sometime mentor/someone collaborator, O.M. Ungers.

All of this produces an architecture of a nature which is, for today, quite astonishing. For it turns out to be necessary at the same time as it is emblematic, surreal at the same time as it is common-sensical, post-rational at the same time as it is luxurious. And it possesses a "revolutionary" character which has precisely in its untypical — for

Eating oysters with boxing gloves, naked? OMA's post-rational nihilism somewhat Corbusian Superman, nonchalant and daring, but somewhat reserved in their ongoing confrontation with metropolitan desire.

a modern architecture — loyalty to an historical tradition of the metropolis.

To be sure, the demeanor of *exhibits sensibles* plays a certain evocative role in OMA's polemic. For example, (and as it leads Leonidou's heroism, and spins Le Corbusier's, the polemic relies for its impact on the relative unfamiliarity of the former, as opposed to the latter, heroism as it rises to the level of heroes such contentious figures as Harlan and Portman, the OMA polemic, in large measure, relies merely to *order* — not this *order* however — but rather, today's complacent arbiters of respectable taste. Insofar as it reveals for our astonishment "the secret life of buildings", it lastly demystifies the iconic, burlesques of most contemporary architectural debate.

But even allowing for a certain rhetorical tone — after all, Koolhaas has himself advised us of the methodological implications of the paradoxical critical method — there remains for more serious, and more substantial examination, the fascinating set of conceptual polarities outlined above.

Let us take them in turn. First, an architecture which is visionary at the same time as it is implementational. OMA's work presents an image of the metropolis which is itself, indisputably, visionary. Its luminous profiles and gleaming towers both represent an "ideal" city. What is more, the projects propose the most elaborately disposed and equipped "social condensers" seen in modern architecture since the heroic period. Yet at the same time that all of this is true, the projects involve no tours-de-force of engineering, no "mile-high" skyscrapers, no transformations of extant urban patterns of public and private space. From time to time, buildings span streets (Hotel Sphère) or bridges become buildings (Wolfe Packer Hotel) in a fashion which would necessitate the entrepreneurial initiative of a Hausman or a Robert Moses, but save for these exceptional cases, these redressive drawings depict eminently — if surgically — buildable buildings.

Second, an architecture which is surreal at the same time as it is common-sensical. In its most elaborate, and most voluptuous details, OMA's work indeed evokes a "secret life of buildings". Yet, following Art Deco precedents, such details tend to concern quite specifically the tops, bottoms and edges of buildings. The principal volumes in between these limits in most cases display a quite evidently "stubby and ordinary" neutrality which is not exceeded by that of Robert Venturi's Guild House or Richard Rogers' competition entry. So common-sensical in fact are these forms, that it may be surmised how the projects of built, would be regarded as less exceptional by the lay public, than they would be by informed architects.

Third, an architecture which is post-rational at the same time as it is luxurious. This is perhaps the most fascinating of OMA's polarities. On the face of it, the projects seem to offer up the most hedonistic of social possibilities — "eating oysters, naked, with boxing gloves" — as a definitive example. Yet it is significant to what degree the programmatic roles of OMA's social condensers are aesthetic and/or sedentary, rather than sedentary or gratificatory. Indeed, so true is this, that I find it difficult to see OMA's commitment to the metropolitan tradition revolving around *flânerie* as originally conceived by Walter Benjamin. Rather, I see OMA's metropolitanism, as they proceed, whereby through architectural spaces of ostentatious drama and luxury, as somewhat Corbusian Supermen, nonchalant and daring, but somewhat reserved in their ongoing confrontation with metropolitan desire.

Last, an architecture which is revolutionary at the same time as it is evolutionary. In its definitive commitment to the metropolis, OMA announces what must be seen as a clear caesura in the history of modern architecture. For there is nowhere in the orthodox history even a leaning towards such a heretical sympathy. (It was OMA's hero, Leonidou, did not accept congestion as the hallmark of modern urbanity.) But OMA has not only made an unprecedented commitment to the principle of the metropolis, it has also given urban form to that commitment, through its absorption in the matter of urban morphologies characteristic of, and appropriate to, the metropolis itself. (It is, of course, not possible to discuss morphologies without citing the name of Ungers, and I can only assume that this input to the work of OMA is Ungers' major contribution — even to the projects in which he is not an active collaborator.) But of course, as it is morphological in urban intention, OMA's work is necessarily evolutionary, since no morphological enterprise can proceed independently of a grasp of the generic form of any given urban entity. Hence, as a morphological commitment to the metropolis, the work of OMA is revolutionary and evolutionary at the same time.

As I have said, all these aspects of their work can be interpreted as a highly significant revisionism. Yet it remains to be seen, what the ongoing impact will be of OMA's polemic on OMA's production. For it is here that certain major reservations arise, for me, in respect to the possibility of sustaining all the polarities addressed. When they succeed, OMA's syntheses of polarities manifest a liberating and exhilarating potential. We may take as dramatic, existential instances two of which — typically enough — are concerned with swimming. In the project for a house in Miami there is proposed the double diving board, from which one can choose either the salt water of the ocean, or the fresh water of the pool. In the Hotel Sphère, the tower swimming pool extends at one point right to the edge of the building, so that it is possible, from the water, to savour the view of the metropolitan skyline beyond.

In these exuberant circumstances, the heretical optimism of OMA's vision is precisely crystallized. Yet there is a rhetorical counter-current to the work, in which the synthesis attempted remains unfulfilled. One may, for instance, cite the precedents of Electric Bathing, and Barris of Love, in which the hedonistic gratification are so automatic in nature, and so unmediated, as to be unconsciously behavioural. Or, alternatively, despite the "stubby" outward looking orientation of all the facilities of the Hotel Sphère — to such a degree that the view itself risks absorption into the cycle of consumption. In this perspective, we may return to the Story of the Pool, which swimming again — arises out of its own paradoxical position of swimming in a floating pool. In the heroic — if not utopian — intentions of the Constructivist architect/ideologue, "baldness" and "post-rational rigor" — to employ Koolhaas' own terms — really do converge, and the implications astute. Yet in the rhetorical invocations of metropolitanism, these convergences are not always sustained, and spectra of legitimated, tacit, and unfulfilled gratification re-emerge.

Still, in all of the work of OMA, the paradoxical extension of experience appropriated do not always touch, I, for one, an ambivalence prepared to wait. For, with such unobvious syntheses as are attempted here, it will be worth it.

Les Extrêmes Qui Se Touchent? Dans cette polarisation des travaux de OMA, GEORGE BAIRD observe que la puissance de leurs dessins et des textes qui les accompagnent repose sur le fait qu'ils arrivent à présenter en même temps et à lecture des positions opposées. Il remarque que les observations d'OMA sur le métropolitainisme contiennent simultanément les extrêmes d'une architecture qui est à la fois utopiste et pratique, surréaliste et matérialiste, révolutionnaire et évolutive, post-rational et luxueux. Baird fait remarquer que nulle part dans le livre ces oppositions ne sont résolues de façon satisfaisante. Il s'agit d'extrêmes qui ne se concilient pas, mais tout au plus, se touchent.

Les Extrêmes Qui Se Touchent? In dieser Einführung zu OMA's Werk beobachtet GEORGE BAIRD, daß ein Großteil der Faszination der darin enthaltenen Zeichnungen und Texte daraus beruht, daß der Leser gleichzeitig mit entgegengesetzten Standpunkten konfrontiert wird. OMA's Beobachtungen über das Großstadtleben, so erklärt er, enthalten miteinander die Extreme einer Architektur, die sowohl visionär als auch durchführbar, surreal und alltagsverträglich, revolutionär und evolutionär, post-rationalistisch und luxuriös ist. Baird weist darauf hin, daß diese Gegensätze nirgends in dem Werk zufriedenstellend vereinbart sind. Es sind dies in der Tat Extreme, die sich nicht gegenseitig aufheben, sondern einander vielmehr berühren.

Les extrêmes qui se touchent? In questa introduzione al lavoro dell'OMA, GEORGE BAIRD osserva che gran parte della potenza emanata dai disegni e dai testi che li accompagnano, risiede nella qualità con cui vengono presentate ai lettori le posizioni opposte — contrarie allo stesso tempo. La coesistenza dell'OMA sul metropolitainisme, afferma l'autore, contemporaneamente, è poli oppositi di un'architettura che sono a un tempo utopista e realizzabile, surreale e pratico, rivoluzionario ed evolutivo, post-rationalistico e lussuoso. Baird sottolinea che in nessun aspetto del lavoro vengono queste contrapposizioni risolte in maniera soddisfacente — esse rappresentano dati estremi che non si sommano ancora, ma piuttosto, si toccano.

Les Extrêmes Qui Se Touchent? 在这本书中，OMA 的著作展示了其作品的力量，在于它能够同时呈现对立的观点。作者指出，OMA 对大都市主义的分析，同时包含了建筑中极端的乌托邦和现实、超现实主义和唯物主义、革命性和进化性、后理性主义和奢侈性。作者指出，书中并没有任何地方将这些对立观点令人满意地调和在一起。它们确实是极端的，但它们并不相互抵消，而是相互接触。

^ Les Extrêmes Qui se Touchent? page layout from Architectural Design, May 1997.

Notes

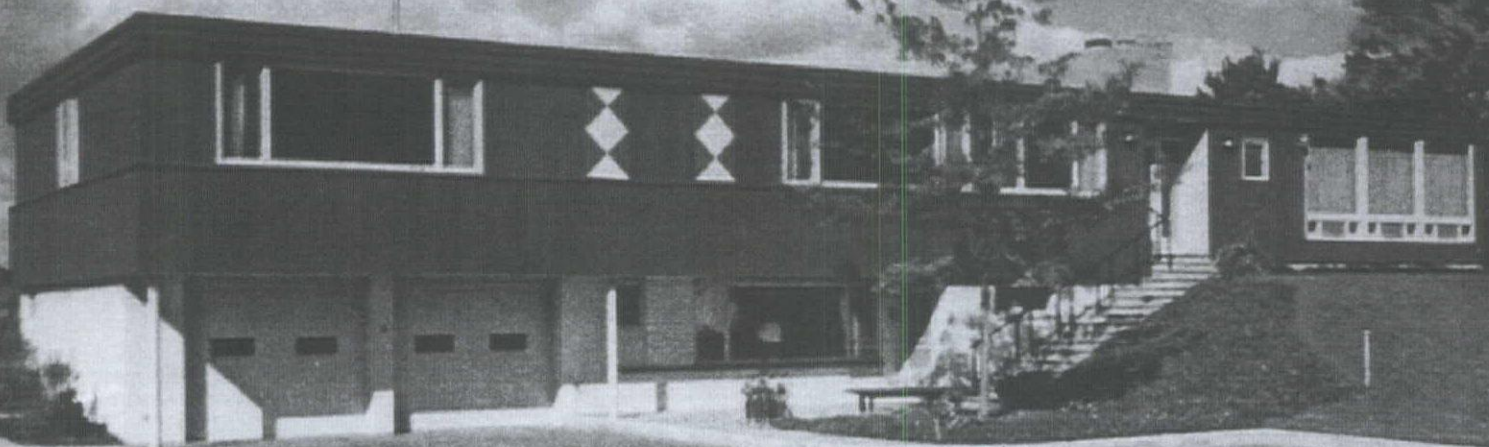
- 1 Architectural Design, Vol. 47 (May 1977): 326-327; "Semiotics and Architecture," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 271-275.
- 2 Karel Teige, "Mundaneum," *Oppositions* 4 (1975): 89.
- 3 George Baird, *The Space of Appearance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995). See Chapter 3: "The Labor of Our Body and the Work of Our Hands."
- 4 Here Baird is referring in the second quote to the 1970s Gray architects, using the editors' phrasing from a later question: the sources of both references appear below.
- 5 It is, however, a fixation that has figured polemically in OMA's exhibition entries for both the 1980 Venice Biennale and the 1985 Milan Triennale. See the catalogue *The Presence of the Past* (Venice: Edizione "La Biennale di Venezia," 1980) and Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S.M.L.XL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995) 46-61. See also Koolhaas' contribution to the Philip Johnson Festschrift Conference held in 1996, "EnO/bling Architecture," *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning the Avant-Garde*, ed. R. E. Somol (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997) 292-299.

- 6 Koolhaas and Mau 14.
- 7 The two exchanges occur as follows: Pelli, Robertson, and Koolhaas, *The Charlottesville Tapes*, ed. Jaquelin Robertson (New York: Rizzoli, 1983) 81-87; Graves and Koolhaas, *The Chicago Tapes*, ed. Stanley Tigerman (New York: Rizzoli, 1987) 168. Koolhaas's quoted retort is on page 87 of the first book.
- 8 This is in the first instance a reference to a phrase that appeared in Colin Rowe's "Introduction" to *Five Architects* (New York: MoMA, 1972). Rowe later went on to publish a book employing the same phrase in its title: *The Architecture of Good Intentions: Towards a Possible Retrospect* (London, Academy Editions, 1994).
- 9 *Studio Works 7* (Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2000): 142.
- 10 Koolhaas, quoted by Beth Kapusta, *The Canadian Architect* Vol. 39 (August 1994): 10.

Low Cost HOMES

AN ARCO
HOW-TO BOOK

50 HOMES
WITH PLANS
AVAILABLE



*What you should
know about:*

**FINANCING
PLANNING TO EXPAND
ORIENTATION
ADEQUATE WIRING
INSULATION
AIR CONDITIONING**

MAKING THE MODIFIED MODERN

DAVID SMILEY

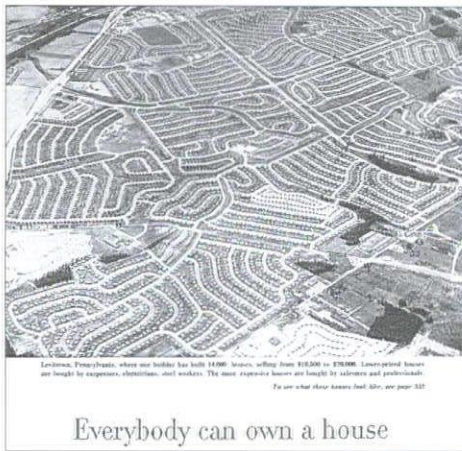
"The Demings were home this afternoon, busy at various tasks in their split-level suburban house, a long low two-tone colonial with a picture window, a breezeway and bright siding. ... Erica was in the kitchen making Jell-o chicken mousse for dinner. ... The trees at the edge of the lawn were new, like everything else in the area. All up and down the curving streets there were young trees and small new box shrubs and a sense of openness, a sense of seeing everything there is to see at a single glance, with nothing shrouded or walled or protected from the glare. ... Out in the breezeway husband Rick was simonizing their two-tone Ford Fairlane convertible, brand-new, like the houses and the trees, with whitewall tires and stripes of jetstreak chrome. ... One of Erica's favorite words in the language was breezeway. It spoke of ease and breeze and being contemporary and having something others did not. Another word she loved was crisper. The Kelvinator had a nice roomy crisper and she liked to tell the men that such-and-such was in the crisper. Not the refrigerator, the crisper. The carrots are in the crisper, Rick. ... All the things around her were important. Things and words. Words to believe in and live by. Breezeway, Crisper, Sectional, Storage Walls, Room Divider."¹

In this excerpt from *Underworld*, Don DeLillo's portrayal of postwar culture gives a rich, if slightly surreal, sense of how modern machines smoothed over the little frictions of everyday life at home. Equally incisive is the ease with which a language of modernity suffused perception and expectation. Shiny, efficient, push-button, effortless lifestyles appeared to have no politics; it was as if just saying words such as "crisper" and "breezeway" could deliver on promises of the "good life." Not one to leave an image without commentary, however, DeLillo also hints that this same modernity was a delusion to which postwar homeowners were subject and in which they happily participated. What force plotted to supply all those appliances and houses and how did they become words "to believe in and live by"?

Underlying DeLillo's double-sided image of the postwar home is a set of overlapping modernisms which stem from the debates among a vast array of cultural actors including architects, builders, professional magazines and associations, banks and loan organizations, mass-circulation magazines, real estate organizations, museums, and schools, not to mention potential buyers. Through their combined efforts at interpreting modernity, they participated in what might be called a *domestic culture industry*, out of which emerged the pervasive, if disparaged, single-family landscape.

My reference to the *culture industry* is a qualified endorsement of an analysis of the over-arching ways in which a capitalist social system reproduces subjects that best fit its rationalistic structures. Although the "culture industry" model risks the presumption of unthinking actors and an over-estimation of the capacity of social structures to comprehensively control the course of historical events, it does offer an opportunity to see the web of relations among the actors.² A specifically *domestic* culture industry offers a sense of how the single family home implicates and is implicated in a vast machinery organized, in the postwar United States, around the production of new landscapes for a largely white, middle-class citizenry. That the proliferation of the suburban single-family home was understood as a vast marketing opportunity as much as it was perceived as proof of American democracy shows the ideological depth and elasticity of the domestic culture industry. This essay explores the values and concerns among the array of people and institutions that produced and consumed the culture of the home. How were ideas of the home effected by the vast cultural apparatus through which they were represented? Conversely, what role did the single family house—the mythic heart and litmus test of "American values"—play in the reception and transformation of postwar modernism?

< Cover, *Low Cost Homes*
eds. Larry Eisinger and Ray Gill (1958).



▲ "Everybody Can Own a House"
House Beautiful (November 1956).



▲ "The Lush New Suburban Market"
Fortune (November 1953).

THE DOMESTIC CULTURE INDUSTRY: 1946

A survey of New York's domestic culture events during a single year reveals the vast expansion of the industry after wartime restrictions. Images of full and small-scale model houses, plans, rendered views, surveys, and photographs of built houses and furnishings were widely circulated. Conferences, expositions, lectures, store displays, magazines, and newspapers fostered intense debates about the appropriate form and role of the modern house.

The 1946 National Modern Homes Exposition at Grand Central Palace in New York City provided one arena for a house-hungry public to examine new ways of planning, furnishing, and equipping their future homes. Five thousand visitors crowded the exhibit on its opening day in May.³ One star of the show was a full-scale model of a plywood prefabricated house called the "Shelter Home" by the noted designer Donald Deskey.⁴ *Good Housekeeping* magazine exhibited scale models from its "Homes America Wants" series, including what they called a "traditional little red house" and a colonial cottage as well as a "modern brick design" by Edward Durrell Stone. The New York Savings Bank Association, a major supporter of the show, exhibited scale model houses, including a "strictly modern-oriented" home by John Funk featured in *McCall's* magazine. Scale models of the basementless "Answer Home" by Anthracite Industries were also exhibited.⁵ In addition to the house models and exhibits were booths for home "gadgets," including storm window systems and electric fly screens.⁶

Department stores sponsored their own domestic exhibits. Macy's displayed the scale models of the winning house designs from *House and Garden's* 1945 "Blueprints for Tomorrow" competition.⁷ For their 75th anniversary, Bloomingdale's displayed the models from their "Suburban Houses for New Yorkers" competition and distributed a book of the winning plans. Based on the models, the store also enlisted noted designers—including Norman MacGregor, Edward J. Wormley, and George Nelson—to furnish full-scale interiors highlighting the store's fabrics, furniture, and other household items.⁸ John Wanamaker opened its "Village of Vision" with seven full-sized, furnished model homes built by the prefabrication company Johnson Quality Homes.⁹

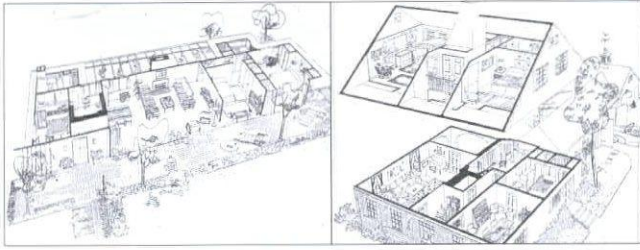
Cultural institutions also ventured into the web of the domestic culture industry. The School of Architecture at Columbia University offered a

home building lecture series by architects Frederic Woodbridge and Harold Sleeper to assist middle-income builders and buyers.¹⁰ *Builders News* announced the formation of a new national curriculum of home building courses, in 21 colleges across the country, leading to Bachelor of Science degrees in Light Construction, Engineering, and Marketing.¹¹ The advice-filled *If You Want to Build a House* (1946) by Museum of Modern Art curator Elizabeth Mock and a photographic exhibit of work by the architects featured in the book, added to the depth and breadth of the domestic culture industry.¹²

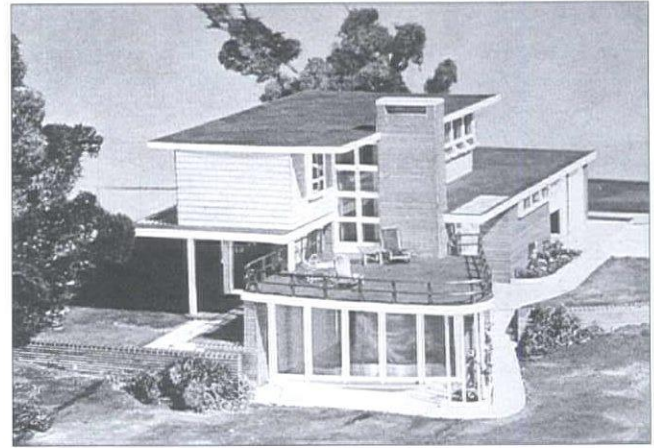
Unsurprisingly, there was a wide variety of terms by which different participants in housing culture described the modern home. Exhibitors like *Good Housekeeping's* "Homes America Wants" and Bloomingdale's, for example, were careful to represent both "traditional" and "modern" designs. At the same time, a "pleasant middle course" hybrid emerged that some architectural writers optimistically anticipated as a step in the gradual transformation of public taste.¹³ The houses sponsored by *Good Housekeeping* were praised by the editors of *Architectural Forum* as a "vote[...] against Cape Codding the public." The approbation was conditional and revolved around a distinction that became instrumental and familiar in subsequent debates about the modern house: the *Forum* editors took exception to the full-scale "Williamsburg" exterior of a Westinghouse-sponsored model house while they approved of its fully modernized interior.¹⁴ And the Bloomingdale's jury, advised by *Progressive*



▲ Cover *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).



▲ House by John Funk and House by Royal Barry Wills *McCall's* excerpt, "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).



▲ House by Caleb Hornbostel *Woman's Home Companion* excerpt, "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).

Architecture editor Kenneth Reid, praised one entry's "modern freedom of plan despite the conventional exteriors."¹⁵

MODIFIED MODERN

The ambiguous relationship between architectural journals and popular magazines in representing modernity and the home is evident in a special issue of *Architectural Forum* from 1945. Called the "House Omnibus," it was comprised of excerpts of advice, articles, and reader surveys from several major mass-circulation magazines including *Ladies Home Journal* and *House Beautiful*. In their introduction the editors simultaneously embraced and distanced themselves from popular considerations of the modern house. They took pride in the fact that the *Forum* led the way in the "trend toward modern design" taking root in the popular imagination. At the same time, they grudgingly acknowledged that popular opinions were indicative of what "the customer wants." They cautioned readers that selections from the various magazines ranged from status-quo traditional designs to unrealistic "electronic-swimming-pool-in-the-library" fantasies.¹⁶ Expressing the delicacy, if not the elitism, of their professional role, the editors concluded that the information taken from the popular magazines should prove valuable for the careful practitioner "prepared to move at least with the public, if not ahead."¹⁷

In the *Forum*, the architecture editor from *McCall's* placed her readers into three groups: "practical realists," who leaned towards the modern, "sentimentalists" who preferred traditional, and those who liked bits of each. In drawings and photographs of two houses—a modern house by John Funk and a traditional house by Royal Barry Wills—the editor showed the opposing sides of the debate. The former had an "open modern plan" while the latter had "compact privacy." Muddying this opposition were extensive reader surveys on planning and layout, furnishings, and equipment. The conclusion was that *McCall's* readers preferred Cape Cod over modern for house exteriors, but they generally preferred modern interiors over traditional layouts.¹⁸

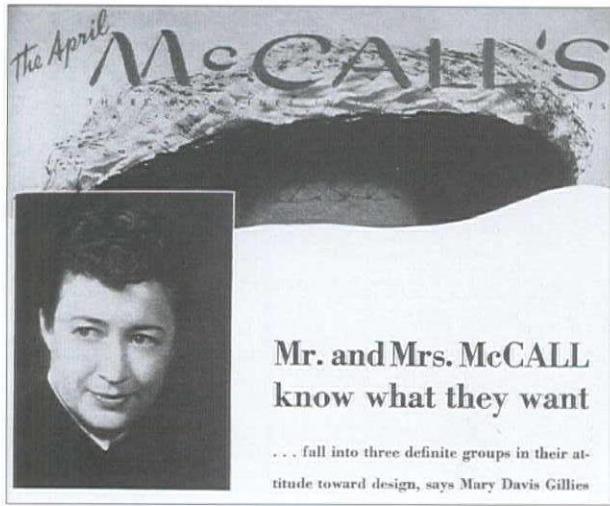
In a similar vein, *Better Homes and Gardens* associate editor John Normile said his readers prefer "combining old and new... in a sensible" manner although he hoped to provide a "leavening influence" between the designer and the market. Rather than present two opposing houses, Normile re-framed the issue by treating the modern as an interior condition: he featured a series of "modern rooms" which stressed innovative

planning, views to the outdoors, combined activities, "pivot walls" and built-in furnishings.¹⁹

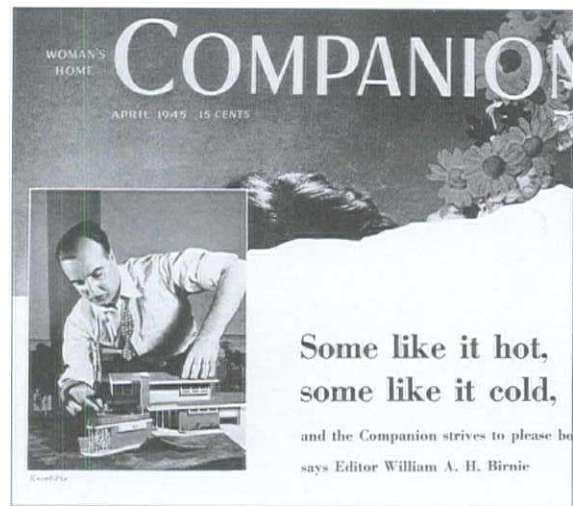
Woman's Home Companion consultant Caleb Hornbostel framed his examination of two traditional and two modern houses as "hot and cold" extremes. The two modern houses were described in terms of their open-planning, "expansibility," modular construction, and extensive use of glass. The traditional houses were described in terms of their "warmth" and, almost derisively, those features included "at the customer's request." In characterizing one traditional house as "mask[ing] a modern machine for living in," Hornbostel more than indicated his Corbusian preference. At the same time, he recognized the popular limits of what he called "radical modern" and, citing a *Companion* reader who said his family wanted "everything modern inside, but we also want a warm traditional exterior," presented a house of his own design as "modern but not mannered, efficient but not mechanical, easy to live in but beautiful."²⁰

House Beautiful editor Elizabeth Gordon made it clear her readers wanted "the function of modern architecture, without the look." She reported that her readers wanted an abundance of large windows but they wanted them with traditional detailing, not "whole hog modern." While she found modern design incompatible with the traditional furniture most people already owned, Gordon praised the modern emphasis on interior flexibility, "engineered storage," and rational planning. This point was made clear by the almost exclusive use of interior photographs as against one exterior sketch.²¹

In the *Ladies' Home Journal*, perhaps the most interesting of all the magazines featured, architectural editor Richard Pratt took the position that readers might not want to look at ideas or homes with which they are already familiar. By showing "the best that progressive architects can produce," the *Journal* sought to "transcend" the debate between traditional and modern.²² At the same time, Pratt displayed a less flattering, if honest, appraisal of his readers who "won't worry about the simplified forms of appearances and simplified methods of manufacture" once they are provided with a good home at a low price. Readers were uninterested in technical studies, Pratt said, "so what I do is feed them spoonfuls of [information] in beakers of Frank Lloyd Wright [and] Hugh Stubbins."²³



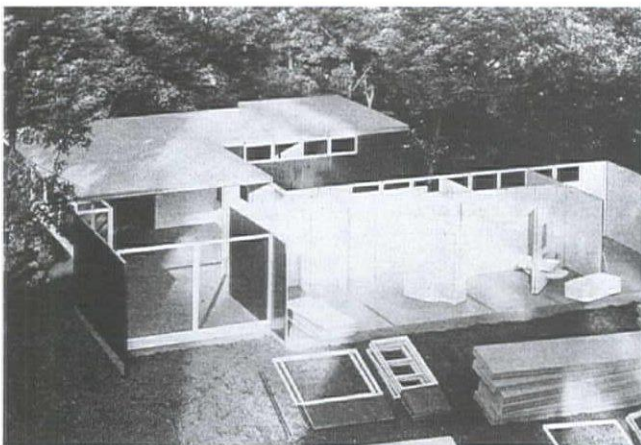
▲ *McCall's* excerpt "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).



▲ *Women's Home Companion* excerpt "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).

Under Pratt, the *Ladies Home Journal* promoted modern design by commissioning proposals for "factory-built" houses by top architects and designers. Beginning in January 1944 and running through late 1946, Pratt's photographs of meticulously furnished and landscaped scale house models were published almost every month, along with occasional tie-in articles by the magazine's interior design staff.²⁴ The proposals displayed the variety and flexibility many commentators predicted would result from the application of the same mass-production processes that had already widened the choices in automobiles, clothing, and appliances. Pratt predicted, "you will not only be able to get the special sections which will make the kind of looking house you want but the kind of working house as well." Interchangeable and standard parts would produce modern living patterns with flexible and multi-use spaces, interior and exterior "living gardens," extensive glazing, new appliances, and complete mechanical services.²⁵

The *Ladies Home Journal* Houses were extremely popular. Panels of model photographs from the magazine were exhibited at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and at MIT. In the summer of 1945, while the *Journal* series was still running, the Museum of Modern Art re-prepared and exhibited the original scale models in their *Tomorrow's Small House* exhibit.²⁶ In her introduction to the catalogue, Elizabeth Mock encouraged the reader/viewer to consider the spatial potential of modern design in tandem with what she hoped would be its genuinely radical



▲ "House in a Day," Plan-Tech Associates *Ladies Home Journal* excerpt, "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).

future: the capacity of prefabrication to bring "innumerable possible combinations" to the house-buying public.²⁷ In a further recycling of images, in September 1945, *Pencil Points* published photographs of the Museum's models alongside laudatory letters by *Ladies Home Journal* readers.²⁸

Judging from these magazines, two overlapping views of domestic modernism emerge. On one side was a modernism based on an aesthetic of production. Like the well-known *Arts & Architecture* Case Study Houses, this was an architecture of repetitive forms and structure, flat roofs, standardized parts, modular construction, and centralized mechanical services, all of which were suggested by prefabrication and factory production. On the other side was Erica Deming's modernism, a modernism that stressed patterns of inhabitation such as flexibility, open planning, "engineered storage," convenience (including new appliances), and views through large areas of glass. Both modernisms—the modernism of production aesthetics and the modernism of "effortless inhabitation"—shared spatial flexibility, built-in furnishings, indoor-outdoor living, and, perhaps most importantly, the ideal of an infinite variety of personal patterns of living. For the former, prefabrication and mass production played a crucial symbolic role in shaping modernity while for the latter, they were merely instrumental. For a production-based, aesthetic modernism, modern living could only occur in a modern house that *looked* modern. For a socially-derived modernism of inhabitation, modern living could be enjoyed in a traditional-looking *or* in a modern-looking house *or* in some hybrid of the two. In other words, a modernism emerged that formalized a separation of exterior appearances from interior performance.

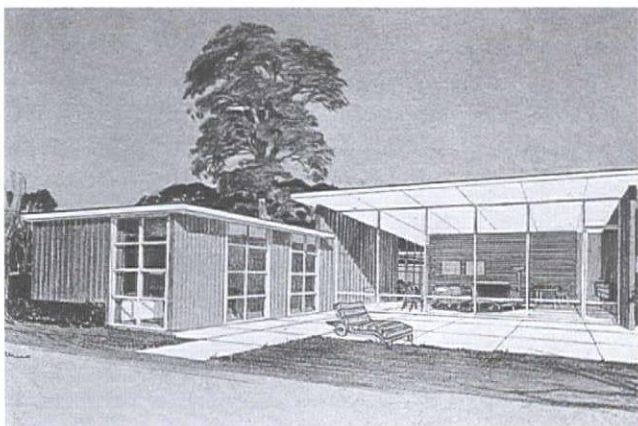
Moreover, by stressing a life of convenience and flexibility that could be lived in either a modern-looking or traditional-looking house, the popular journals reframed and created what *Architectural Forum* editors called a "modified modern": a new style from which bits and pieces could be selected and combined with other styles.²⁹ Abetting this process of re-defining modernism was the circulation of images among both popular and progressively-minded journals. The photographs of full—and small-scale models of houses and rooms that permeated the media had the effect of re-configuring the modern house as a catalogue of parts—a roof, a window, a kitchen, a piece of furniture—all of which could be brought to, or assembled at, a site. The circulation of images



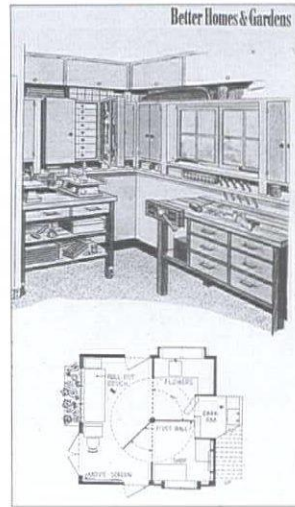
▲ *House Beautiful* excerpt "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).

also re-configured the modern house as a sum of attributes or experiences—a flexible space, a view through an expanse of glass, and efficient storage. Increasingly, the domestic culture industry sponsored an elastic conception of modernity that made it the functional equivalent of a process of selection.

Underscoring this capacity for finding just the right combination of parts were the surveys, questionnaires, letters, and polls found throughout the popular magazines. Not only did these devices contribute to an idea of building elements as atomized parts to be selected and reassembled, but surveys were also instrumental in conscripting subjects. They helped create a national audience of individual consumers for the domestic culture industry and fostered a sense of identification and connection among this audience. Through images of their own active participation in the discussions about the modern home, a mass public was forged and each reader engaged. This engagement was doubly enacted by the re-publication of the surveys in the special issue of the *Architectural Forum*. By creating a themed issue culled from the popular press, *Forum* editors acknowledged the distance between their usual professional articles and the taste of the non-architectural public. At the same time, however, they implicitly acknowledged the deep connection between domestic culture industry producers and consumers. Alongside warnings against sentimental colonials and technological fantasies, the *Forum* editors helped clear the conceptual











▲ *House* by Ketchum, Gina, and Sharpe *Woman's Home Companion* excerpt, "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).



▲ *Pivot Wall* by Michael Goodman *Better Homes and Gardens* excerpt, "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).

> *Survey McCall's* excerpt, "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945).

M ^c CALL'S	
13,539 women give reasons for disliking their LIVING ROOMS.	
Too small	37%
Hard to entertain	32%
Furniture doesn't fit	30%
Not enough windows	29%
Everything old	27%
Hard to clean	22%
Color scheme ugly	18%
Everything shabby	14%
Uncomfortable	12%
SOFA STYLE PREFERENCE	
 Sectional	47%
 Lawson	29%
 Camel Back	20%
 Ornate	4%
ARMCHAIR PREFERENCE	
Lounge 	53%
Modern 	26%
Wing 	17%
Ornate 	4%

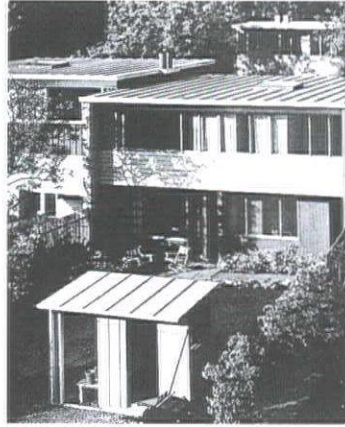
ground for what would become the vast majority of domestic architectural production: "modified modern" houses that would soon carpet the suburban landscape.

SELLING PREFABRICATION

Although these two modernisms—production aesthetics and frictionless inhabitation—assessed it differently, the ease with which the language of prefabrication moved within the domestic culture industry was grounded, in part, in wartime and postwar thinking about housing needs. Prewar houses such as Fuller's 1927 Dymaxion House, Kocher and Frey's 1931 Aluminaire House, or George Fred Keck's 1934 House of Tomorrow introduced prefabrication to the public, but the efforts to market these and similar houses were undercapitalized and too expensive for low-cost mass production.³⁰ By the early 1940s, however—and this was pre-Levittown—there was little question that years of meager housing production would eventually reach crisis proportions. Expert and popular commentators alike knew that massive numbers of housing units were required; "a million units per year" became a mantra among architecture, builder, and shelter magazines. While there were as many different housing proposals (many pre-dating World War II) as there were speakers, the concept of prefabrication increasingly floated throughout the discussion and soon became a primary concern among a variety of contributors to the industry. Beyond the technical intricacies of the off-site assembly of buildings, or building sections, was the rhetorical capacity of terms such as "pre-assembly," "panelized construction," "factory produced," and "mass produced" to stand in for, or partially constitute, an image of modernity.

The September 1942 issue of *Architectural Forum* was devoted to the coming postwar housing crunch. Called the "The New House 194x" (referring to the unknown date of the war's end), the article asked:

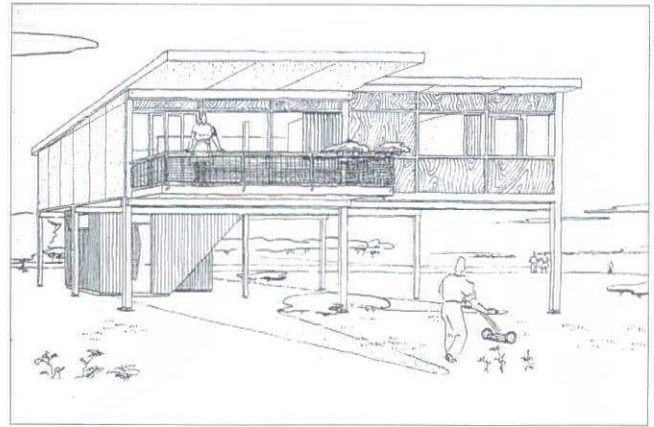
> Rowhouse by Vernon deMars
Ladies Home Journal excerpt,
 "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum*
 (April 1945).



"Assuming prefabrication... how can the house of 194x be made the most-wanted commodity in the competitive postwar marketplace?" In the *Forum's* opinion, the technical mastery that had enabled the mass production of thousands of wartime housing units was far superior to their design quality. With such poor examples of industrially-built housing, they wondered how the house of the future would convince a hungry public to relinquish their pre-conceived domestic images and adopt an "appropriate" or "honest" modernity. The answer, unsurprisingly, lay in improving the design standards cast aside for emergency production. To achieve a truly modern postwar house, "progressive, forward-looking designers" would have to "catch-up" with factory-based methods of mass production.³¹

To aid in this enterprise, the *Forum* editors selected the work of 33 modern architects and designers—a who's who of the postwar scene—that exemplified the current state of domestic design research. Included in this 75-page survey were Mario Corbett, SOM, Richard Neutra, Ralph Rapson, Albert Frey, and William Wurster. Shared features of the projects were multi-use, flexible spaces and furnishings, extensive use of floor-to-ceiling glazing, movable partitions, new forms of heating and air conditioning, and the interpenetration of interior and exterior space; in short, all the indices of modern living. A variety of prefabrication strategies was also explored in the work and included new materials, off-site panel and structural assemblies, modular units of interchangeable parts, and entire molded rooms trucked to a site. The architects' ability to work within the "adequate but absolute limits of mass production" conclusively showed, the editors said, that mass-produced houses could be designed to look and function in numerous ways; the projects proved the capacity of mass production in general, and prefabrication in particular, to realize "variety within standardization."³²

Other architectural studies in the early 1940s also addressed the impending housing shortage through prefabrication and improved design standards. *Architectural Forum* introduced a new six-part series on prefabricated housing in December 1942, in which the editors repeatedly worried that the quantitative successes of the emerging industry were not matched by qualitative improvements. The "reengineering" of the house was not yet evident.³³ In a 1943 *Architectural Record* evaluation of the state of prefabrication, the editors concluded "new roles cannot be played in antique costumes... Somehow a new breadth, depth, and directness has to be made visible."³⁴ Typical of many of the winners of *Arts & Architecture's* 1943 "Designs for Post-



^ House by Lt Charles Wiley "Designs for Post-War Living"
Arts & Architecture (March 1944).

War Living" competition were visions of Corbusian modernity à l'*Americaine*—mowing an infinite lawn instead of boxing above the Virgilian landscape—but the more clearly shared aspect of the work was the flexibility of interchangeable, mass-produced, prefabricated components.³⁵ In a 1944 *Arts & Architecture* article titled "What is a House?," Herbert Matter, Charles Eames, and Buckminster Fuller predicted that the public would embrace the prefabricated house once it was better designed. The public, they wrote, "is not committed to the living standard of the past; they only await the opportunity to accept the benefits of industrial progress."³⁶ An *Architectural Forum* note on the Architectural League's 1944 "Prefabrication Conference" chided designers and manufacturers for failing to recognize that "production and design are indivisible."³⁷ These comments typified the view of the design and professional magazines that prefabrication and mass production had the capacity to provide the soil from which modern homes and modern living would inevitably spring united. Once shown the potential of new technologies, they assumed, the public would make the correct choice.³⁸

In contrast, advertisements for prefabricators in professional and popular magazines did little to help the cause of those advocating an aesthetic of production. A 1942 advertisement for the Homasote Company in *Architectural Forum* showed both traditional and modern houses under the headline: "Tomorrow's Houses—any size, any style—will be Prefabricated." The "complete freedom" offered by new prefabrication methods extended to stylistic variety and choice.³⁹ This understanding of prefabrication is amplified in a Homasote ad in a 1943 *House and Garden* in which the company boasts that their "Precision-Built Homes" are planned "not as a rigid shell to which you must accommodate yourself, but as a machine whose function is to help you live more comfortably."⁴⁰ While the ad appeared consistent with a production-aesthetic faith that a properly modern house would emerge from mass production, the Homasote Company also included colonial houses in the ad; the machine for living did not necessarily look like one.

Other participants in the domestic culture industry also recognized that traditional-looking prefabricated houses could just as easily accommodate modern living; while the transformative potential of prefabrication remained central, they embraced the modified modern aesthetic of inhabitation. In fact, a 1947 "how-to" book called *The Prefabricated House: A Practical Guide for the Prospective Buyer* by architects Raymond K. Graff and Rudolph A. Matern and writer Henry Lionel Williams was illustrated almost entirely with traditional and Cape Cod-type designs,



▲ House by Albert Frey "The New House 194x"
Architectural Forum (September 1942).

including some of their own.⁴¹ In ironic contrast to the photos of Richard Pratt's house models in the *Ladies Home Journal*, the only indications of prefabrication in the model photographs in *The Prefabricated House* were in their captions. Moreover, the authors asserted that traditional or less radical modern design could "incorporate modern aids for house-keeping efficiency," better fit in a neighborhood, and more easily comply with building financing regulations. No prefabricator, they concluded, could afford to experiment with "ultramodern or freakish" designs since, in the end, traditional design was "what most people want."⁴² The authors explained prefabrication not by showing its historic inevitability nor by assuming a proper or "honest" expression for new technologies or needs, rather, they affirmed prefabrication as a consumer's dream: the variety born of new methods could satisfy any taste.

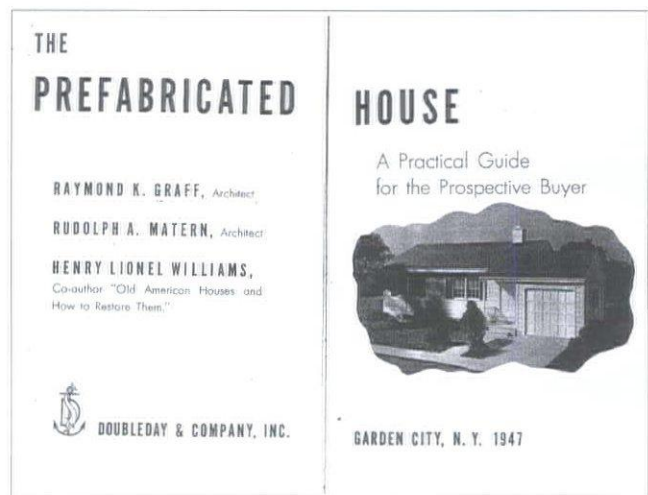
If journals and other advice books opened the way for the accommodating spirit of the modified modern and the prefabricated house, the mid-century department store opened the floodgates. Embedded in urban cultural life since the late nineteenth century, the department store offered the publicity and distribution infrastructures to turn the prefabricated house into a truly mass-produced and mass-consumed product.⁴³ The downtown department store served a huge sector of the public, provided highly accessible sites for house displays, and, extending their reach, acted as co-sponsors for off-site displays. Typically, a department store would team up with a prefabricator; the store could display furnishings and appliances alongside or inside the exhibited houses, and the prefabricator could use the store as a marketing device to compete against developer housing. In New York and other major cities, stores such as Gimbel's, Wanamaker's, Bloomingdale's, and Macy's used both full-scale model houses and small-scale house models to entice an avidly shopping public.⁴⁴

In 1943, the "House of the Future" exhibit at Macy's in New York included quarter-scale prefabricated colonial house models sponsored by the Homasote Company. Due to wartime restrictions, the houses could not be ordered, but architect George Nelson praised the exhibit since "sooner or later" prefabricated houses, "like airplanes, will roll off the assembly line [and] be sold over the counter." Like Eames and Fuller, Nelson advocated the production aesthetic when he predicted that the taste for traditional-looking houses would disappear with the onset of new, mass-produced houses, explaining that the colonial style "isn't a natural mass product."⁴⁵



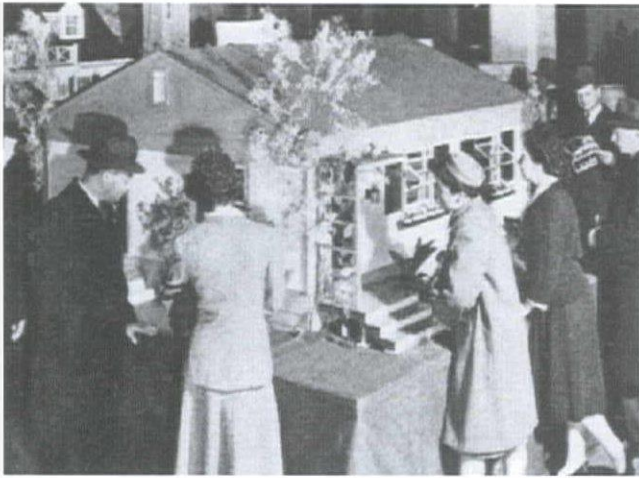
▲ Homasote Company ad
Architectural Forum (January 1942).

Department store displays were packed with crowds and widely published in the popular press. In 1946 the Homasote Company exhibited eight full-sized, mostly traditional-looking model houses inside Macy's in New York City. The same year, as noted above, Johnson Quality Homes joined Wanamaker's in New York City and Philadelphia to exhibit "The Village of Vision," comprised of seven Johnson model homes.⁴⁶ In 1948, Gimbel's teamed up with Adirondack Homes and *Look* magazine to exhibit a furnished model of a "factory-produced" house designed by Walter Dorwin Teague.⁴⁷ Lord and Taylor, Sears, Roebuck, and Bamberger's also exhibited full-scale model houses (as well as small-scale house models) sponsored by prefabricators.⁴⁸



▲ Title page, *The Prefabricated House: A Practical Guide for the Prospective Buyer* Raymond K. Graff, Rudolph A. Matern and Henry Lionel Williams (1946).

Widening the scope of cultural connections, prefabricators went directly to their potential customers by building on vacant street corners—with department stores still furnishing and decorating them—and enlisting charity organizations to assist in the marketing, which lent the exhibits an air of good citizenship.⁴⁹ The year 1948 was especially busy: in January, Pre-Fab Homes, Inc. built a prefabricated "cottage" at 5th Avenue and 48th Street in New York City; in April, Lustron Corporation built a simplified Cape Cod model house on the corner of 6th Avenue and 52nd Street; and in July, Johnson Quality Homes built a "colonial-style" prefabricated house resembling Cary Grant's house in the film *Mr. Blandings*



▲ Macy's Homasote Co. exhibit "Prefabrication in the Post-War World" *House and Garden* (July 1943).

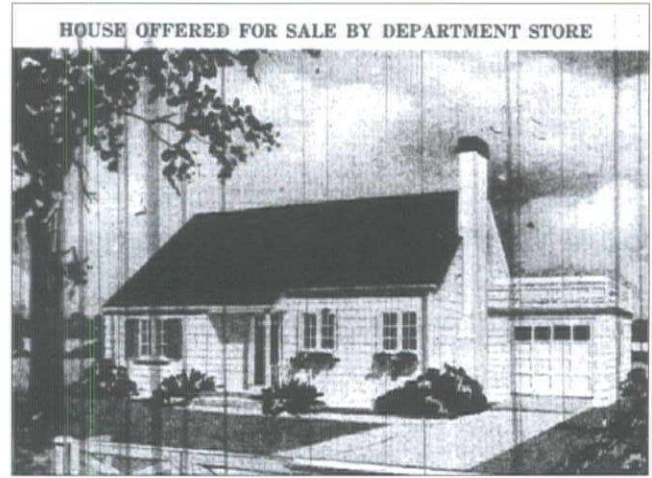
Builds His Dream House, again at 5th Avenue and 48th Street—a model house for a prefabricated house based on a movie about the building of a custom house!⁵⁰

Although the architectural press placed great hopes on prefabrication and represented it as an integral feature of modern housing, some took a skeptical view of the department store and mass-marketing strategies that bypassed the architectural establishment. The editors of *Architectural Record* did little to hide their disdain: "It seems to have become fashionable for city department stores to show, and sometimes to sell, neat little prefabricated houses. The crowds love it, flocking to the shows in almost terrifying numbers, and asking innumerable questions."⁵¹

The integration of prefabrication into the domestic culture industry—through models and photographs in department stores, on street corners, popular newspapers and magazines, and professional magazines—mitigated the importance of the actual production of the house and contributed to the aesthetic of inhabitation, a vision of the modern as a sense of personal, frictionless interior convenience. Just as Graff and Matern's "Practical Guide" to prefabrication had dismissed any incongruity between modern appliances and traditional architectural form, most of the participants in the domestic culture industry recognized no meaningful contradiction between a modern means of production and traditional appearance. Increasingly, prefabrication figured as a means to an end, one that, the stores assured, would be as individual as every purchaser. The variety and individuality promised by prefabrication reshaped modernity into a process of selection. That this individuality matched only part of the rhetoric of the architectural community fueled professional scorn for what they saw as misguided or deceitful production.

VARIETY WITHIN STANDARDIZATION

Despite the combined industry and department store programs, wide coverage in popular magazines, daily newspapers, and the architectural press, the well-known proposals of Gropius and Wachsmann, Fuller, and a host of other prefabrication researchers, prefabricated houses were never successfully mass marketed—traditional or modern. The technical capacities of the industry that had performed so well during the war did not help prefabricators compete with developer housing. The Lustron Corporation, one of the best capitalized of the firms, produced



▲ "House Offered for Sale By Department Store" *New York Times* (February 3, 1946).

only 2,500 houses in its ten-year life.⁵² Even as *Architectural Forum* continued to advocate prefabrication, by 1950 they mourned that many "prefabbers have already worn a path to the bankruptcy courts."⁵³

A "human interest" story told in *The New York Times* in 1949 reveals part of the problem of prefabrication. A Mr. and Mrs. Burnbaum of New York City won the raffle for the Cape Cod-like "Pacemaker Dreamhouse" displayed at 6th Avenue and 52nd Street, but they owned no land and the purchase of land was outside their budget. After a short time, the owner of the exhibition lot demanded rent or payment to move and store the house after the manufacturer's legal obligation ended. Although difficulties ensued—the prospect of storing the house, hiring lawyers to negotiate with manufacturer and lot owner, finding a new buyer with property—the Burnbaums found a buyer and all ended well.⁵⁴

Johnson builds the Blandings' Dream House



RIGHT ON FIFTH AVENUE
... and Mr. Blandings knows the exact cost before he starts to build!

YOU, TOO, CAN KNOW THE COST

AVAILABLE TO BUILDERS AT WHOLESALE

This home, a completely decorated and furnished "design for graceful living" at 5th Avenue and 48th Street, is sponsored by the New York Heart Association in cooperation with "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House," the Selznick released RKO picture. It is built by Johnson Quality Homes, Inc. and landscaped by Wadley & Smythe. Watch the New York Heart Association announcements for date as to how you may become the fortunate owner of this "Blandings Dream House." Purchasers know before they build what the completed contract cost will be, 10 room De Luxe home shown, from \$24,750.

With a background of over 45,000 housing units, with recognized superior construction, we have decided advantages to offer progressive builders. These large facilities and close cooperation are available to help you increase volume, guarantee completed cost, speed construction and ease material procurement. We will also produce for architects, developers and building organizations either Single Family Homes or 2-story Garden Apartments from your plans. All models with or without basement. Produced under the A. F. of L. label in conformity with FHA standards. Prices subject to change.

JOHN WANAMAKER EXHIBIT open daily—Wednesday to 9 P. M. Illustrated Brochure Upon Request. NORMAN BROKENSHIRE broadcasts from the "Dream House" on WNBC 9:30-10 A.M. Mon. to Friday (Dial 645)

Johnson Quality Homes, Inc.

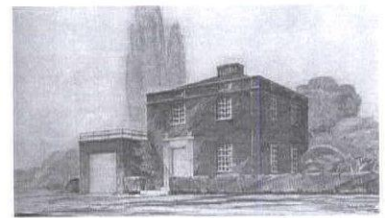
"A FIRM FOUNDATION SINCE 1896"

NEW YORK OFFICE: JOHN WANAMAKER 8th Floor, Broadway, 8th to 9th Sts. "HOME EXHIBIT"	PLANTS and BRANCH OFFICES: Brooklyn, N. Y.; New York, N. Y.; Danbury, N. J.; Washington, D. C.; Columbus, Ohio; Newark, N. J.; Mountstown, N. J.; East Orange, N. J.; Conway, S. C.; Johnson City, Tenn.; Atlanta, Ga.
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

▲ Advertisement, "Johnson Builds the Blandings' Dream House" *New York Times* (July 25, 1948).



▲ "Dream House' on Fifty-Second Street Parking Lot Sold'
New York Times (August 24, 1949).



▲ Various Exteriors with Same Interior Plan Victor Civkin,
Building The House of Health, ed. Odd Albert (1937).

But their experience illustrates why, in part, the sub-division—from its lot-by-lot nineteenth century beginnings to its Levitt-scaled apotheosis—remained the norm: the house is only one portion of a far more complex package. For the prefabricated house, the purchaser was asked to provide the plot survey, local zoning, building and fire codes, and soil information.⁵⁶ For the developer house, a signature and a deposit (no deposit for veterans) secured the buyer a house on a legal lot with utilities, sewers, streets, and, in larger cases, neighborhood schools and stores, all included in the price. In other words, the prefabricated house required the buyer to perform the duties of the contractor, surveyor, expeditor, and real estate agent, while the developer house merely asked the purchaser to be a consumer.⁵⁶

The intricacy of providing a ready-to-occupy house and the extent to which opinions of factory production were shifting is shown in a special issue of a 1949 *Architectural Forum* called "The Builder's House." The editors unequivocally state that "housebuilding stands as the only surviving *local* industry of any consequence. So long as the house is attached to the land, it seems likely to remain so. While a Ford is a Ford, a low-cost house *is* one thing in Chicago, another in Minneapolis... and two very different things even in two adjoining Long Island developments."⁵⁷ If that wasn't clear enough, the *Forum* quoted the man who "made a factory of the whole site," William Levitt, who pronounced: "You can't prefabricate the land and since the house, however made, eventually has to be conveyed and attached to the land, the housebuilding process is likely to remain quite different from that continually cited exemplar—the automobile industry."⁵⁸

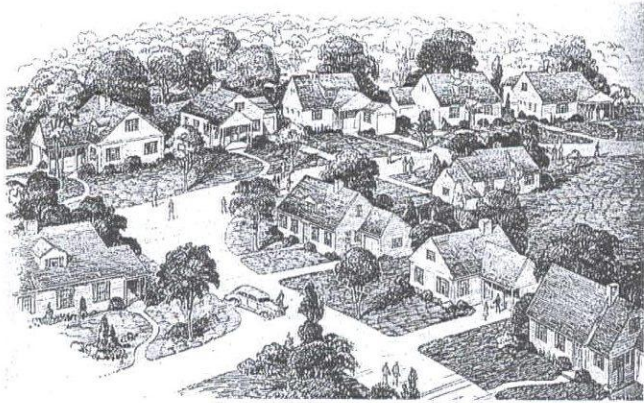
The luster of factory-produced housing began to fade by the early 1950s but the promise of "individualization" and "variety within standardization" remained vital principles of middle-class housing design. One of the means by which variety was attained was the use of a standard plan with a selection of elevations (whole and partial) and orientations, a strategy with roots in the history of nineteenth century architectural pattern books and mail-order houses and reiterated in Depression-era building practices sanctioned by the Federal Housing Administration.⁵⁹ The architect-designed standard house plan, with varied exteriors, and intended for mass production was sporadically examined in the early twentieth century.⁶⁰ Early examples included Chicago architect Lawrence Buck's 1911 "Studies of Different Exterior Treatments of the Same Plan," and New York architect Victor Civkin's 1937 "Various Exteriors with Same Interior Plan," which offered Modern, English, Georgian, and

early American exteriors for the same ground plan.⁶¹ In his 1944 *Architectural Record* article "House Design for the Mass Market," Randolph Evans showed how siting, massing, orientation, and surface variation in a prewar sub-division gave each identically-planned house a unique character. In addition, he showed four perspective variations for a new sub-division proposal that hovered between traditional and modern designs for a "modern" plan. Simplifying further, architect Harold Group's 1946 "House with Eight Faces," in *House of the Month Book of Small Houses*, illustrated how one basic plan could be sited in several orientations and how a variety of elements could be added.⁶² By the late 1940s, the choices offered by mass builders were less among styles than among specific features like overhangs or siding. Composed of a selection of features—picture windows, combined living and dining areas, outdoor spaces, sliding glass doors, new kitchen equipment, and the occasional breezeway—the infinite variety of housing choices provided a comforting if indeterminate "individuality."

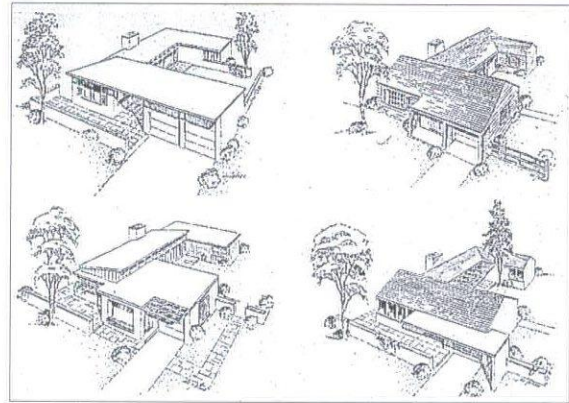
MODIFIED MODERNIST

Rudolph Matern, writer and advocate of prefabrication, also practiced architecture on Long Island from the late 1930s until the mid-1960s and, with his partner Herman York, was responsible for almost 40,000 houses in Nassau County alone. The firm worked closely with Long Island builders and was active in many professional architectural associations in the New York area. Both Matern and York sold thousands of stock plans between 1946 and 1951 and served as planning consultants for home shows and expositions; their practice was instrumental in designing a mass market.⁶³ Matern in particular is notable for his mediation among different modernisms as an architect and through his role in the circulation of images of the modern house.⁶⁴

The 1947 National Home Show in New York City featured a full-scale model of a "ranch-type" home by Matern. The "rambling one-story" home was, according to *The New York Times*, "indicative of the trend [that] made full use of glass in all rooms." For the 1948 National Home Show a full-scale ranch by Matern was praised for its use of the "latest home conveniences" and its flexible plan, multi-use rooms, private garden, and solarium.⁶⁵ The *Times* praised the "eye appeal" of Matern's 1949 model for a 300-house development on Long Island, writing that its low, broad lines gave a sense of both "California and New England architecture"—the former a euphemism for modern design, the latter



▲ "House with Eight Faces" Harold Group,
House of the Month Book of Small Houses (1946).

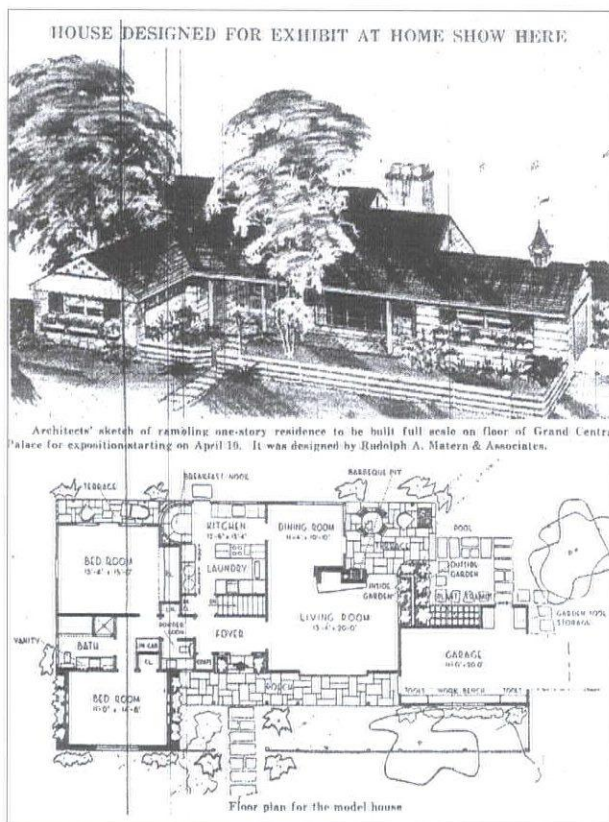


▲ "Variations on a plan" Randolph Evans and Henry Otis Chapman Architects,
in Randolph Evans, "House Design for the Mass Market," *Architectural Record*
(November 1944).

for traditional. With a roof overhang, angled picture window forming a small garden inside and out, built-in bookshelves, expandable attic space, and a "multi-purpose" room separated from the living room by an accordion partition, the house—with its three plan and four elevation variations—offered a "new conception of an economy home."⁶⁶ The 1949 project was praised in professional magazines exploring the potential markets opened by successful "builder and architect" relationships.⁶⁷

An interview with Matern in *Architectural Forum* in 1951 offers a clear picture of this "modified modern" from the architect's optimistic perspective. He portrayed his work as a part of an architectural transition on the way to something "more" modern: "We feel we're gradually bringing up the level of home design, flattening out the roof little by little, introducing more and more open-planning and functional ideas.

But we'd rather take one jump ahead of the people's tastes and sell houses than take two and fall flat on our faces, which can cost a builder his whole building season."⁶⁸ The *Forum* writer praised Matern's work for using modern technology to open up the interior, for improving the plan, and for providing more flexible work areas; in other words, for his innovations in the modernity of inhabitation, but not for any aesthetic innovation.

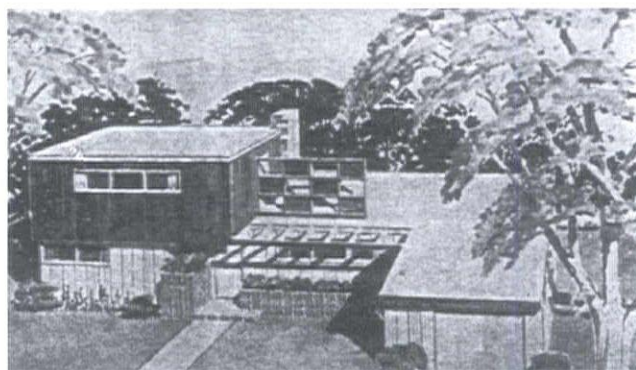


▲ "House Design for Exhibit at Home Show Here"
New York Times (March 9, 1947).

Matern also proposed less "modified" and more strictly modern work during the 1950s, but these were designed in addition to the hybrid stylistic variety produced by Matern and York. A 1958 mass-market book called *Low Cost Homes* shows the scope of the practice; it included more designs by Matern than any other single architect. Unsurprisingly, the descriptions of the houses focused on good planning, flexible arrangements and movable partitions, built-in furniture, lots of glass and views to the outdoors, indoor-outdoor gardens, a sense of expansiveness, and, of course, breezeways. The houses were called "subdued modern," and "conservative modern," and the occasional references to colonial or "early American" were always followed by the assurance that the interior is "up-to-the-minute America."⁶⁹

Matern's successful housing practice was based on the uncoupling of interior from exterior that we see at work in the mass marketing of single-family homes during this period. He used the technologies of mass production for interior comfort without requiring their expression or representation on the exterior. Without a moral or programmatic necessity to link the two, Matern was able to reconcile or mediate the aesthetics of production with the mores of convenience that drove mass-market building. In addition, the separation of interior from exterior gave Matern the leeway to slowly "improve" and "raise" appreciation of modern design; a dormer in one room could be balanced by a corner window in another. As the sub-division house was transformed, however, so were the aesthetic principles of modernism that Matern gently introduced in his designs. Flooding the market with his hybrids, Matern participated in a shift in the nature of modernist design categories that critics of the 1950s increasingly disparaged as "middlebrow."

According to historian Joan Shelley Rubin, middlebrow culture emerged earlier in the twentieth century as an "adaptive mechanism" through which elite aesthetic principles were disseminated, reconciled with,

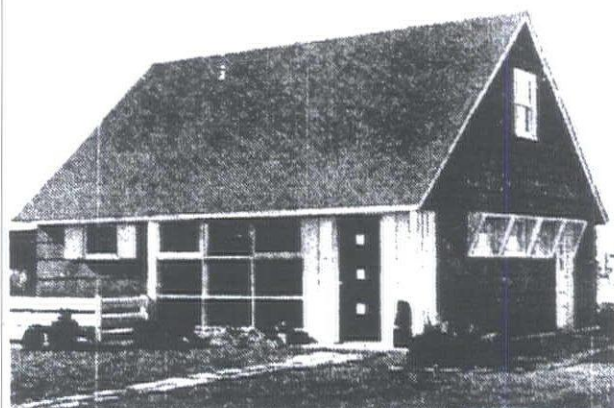


▲ House by Rudolph Matern "The Builder's Architect,"
Architectural Forum (December 1951).

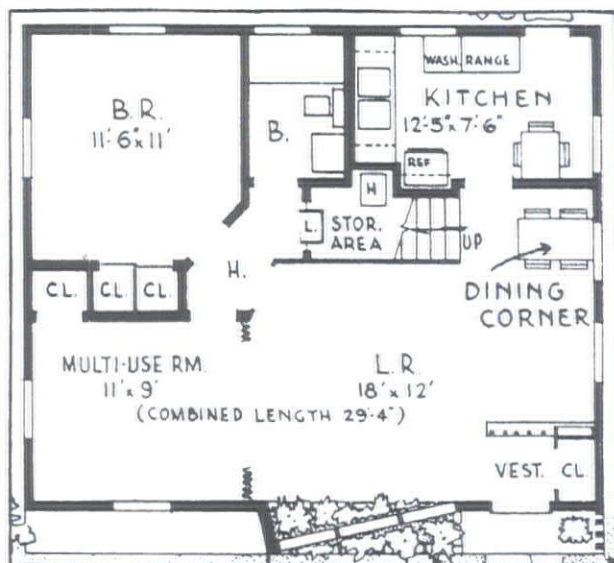
and ultimately transformed by popular cultural values.⁷⁰ Postwar economic expansion provided plenty of new material for debates about culture, and it was precisely the social transformations wrought by middlebrow culture that emerged as a flashpoint among cultural observers of all political persuasions. In 1953, Dwight MacDonald echoed critics as far apart as Clement Greenberg and T. S. Eliot when he described middlebrow culture as a formulaic, pre-digested, mind-numbing mass product: "There is slowly emerging a tepid, flaccid Middlebrow Culture that threatens to engulf everything in its spreading ooze."⁷¹ Despite their oft-times opposing social programs, many of these critics sought refuge in the traditional distinctions between high and low or between avant-garde and popular culture. Similarly, critics like MacDonald accepted the transformation of "folk" and popular cultures into mass-cultural forms if, as in the case of *Life* magazine, they retained a clear difference from the objects and discourse of high culture. The new and special threat to the established cultural hierarchy was the "ooze" of middlebrow culture, or what MacDonald later called "midcult." Like mass culture, midcult was created by the technical capacities of mass production and marketing, but what so infuriated critics was its veneer of respectability or "cultural figleaf." Midcult, MacDonald wrote, "pretends to respect the standards of high culture while in fact it waters them down and vulgarizes."⁷²

The modern way of life augured by middlebrow culture in the postwar years is best described in a 1949 article called "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow" by *Harper's* editor Russel Lynes. Writing that the middlebrows are "caught between the muses and the masses," Lynes followed many critics by arguing that highbrow and lowbrow cultures should remain distinct. More specifically, Lynes distinguished between what he called "high-middlebrow producers"—the "purveyors of high-brow ideas"—and "low-middlebrow consumers"—"the consumers of what the upper middlebrows pass along to them."⁷³ In other words, he explained the concept of the middlebrow entirely in terms of commerce and the promises offered by the consumption of objects and ideas. A Saul Steinberg cartoon accompanying the article succinctly demonstrated the implications of this condition. In his rendering, the highbrow male reaches for the highest, purest, ideal illumination using only a simple "Eames-ish" chair to assist in his project of elevation. In stark contrast, the lowbrow male is ensconced in a kitschy chair of indeterminate style(s); for him "knowledge" is transformed into a buxom

Builders Will Offer a Low-Priced House With 'Eye Appeal' at East Hempstead

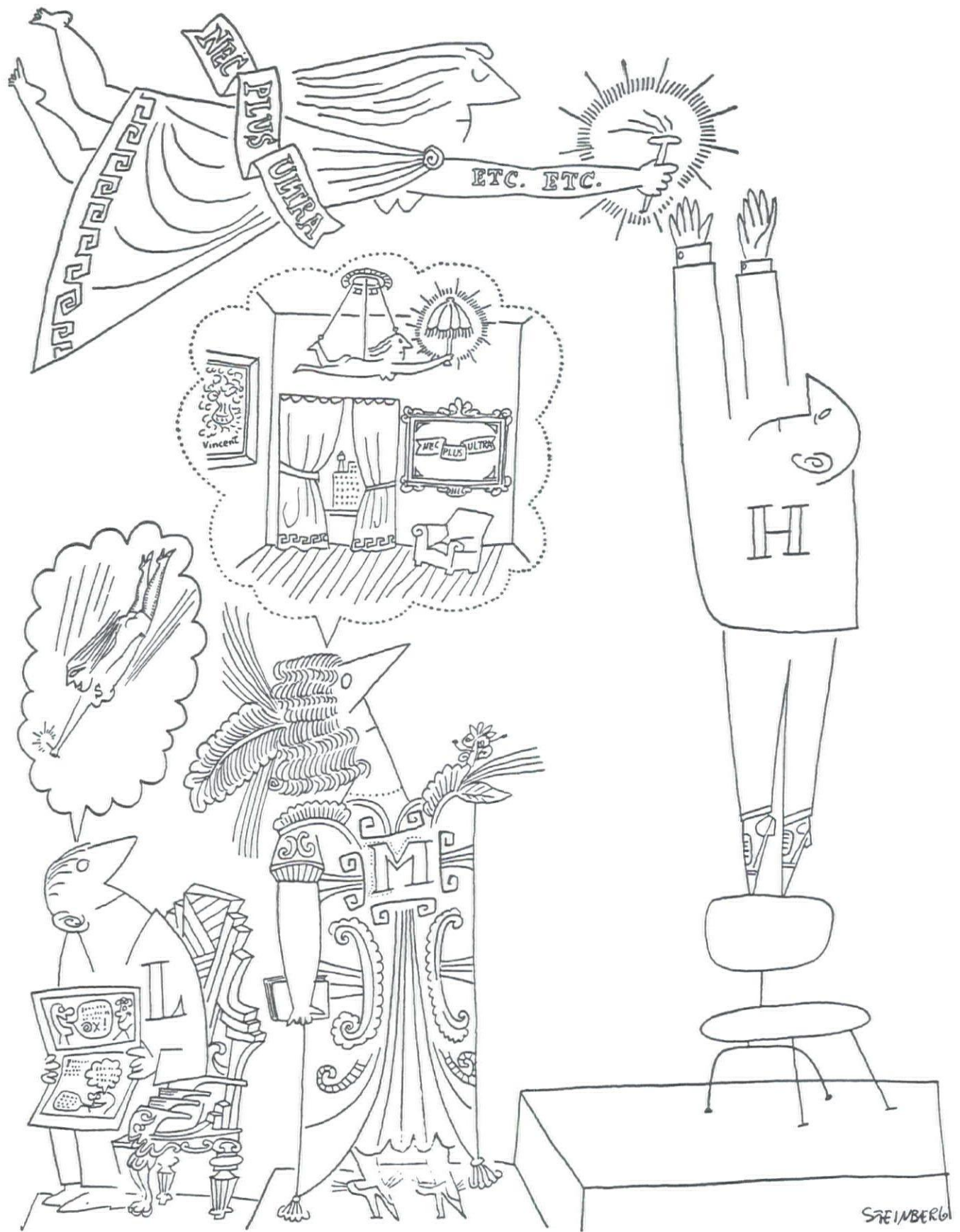


Model home in group planned by N. K. Winston Associates in East Hempstead, L. I., to sell at \$8,390.



A large roof overhang, an "angled" picture window with flower space inside and outside, built-in bookshelves and general purpose room adjoining the living room are features of the East Hempstead design by Matern & York, architects.

▲ "Builders Will Offer a Low-Priced Home With 'Eye Appeal' at East Hempstead"
New York Times (April 10, 1949).



^ Cartoon by Saul Steinberg
Harper's 198 (February 1949).

comic-book heroine. In between stands the middlebrow matron. She is ornately dressed, carries a book (which she probably hasn't read) and dreams of a home with a comfy chair, thick curtains, and pretty pictures, a home in which the ideal light of knowledge has become a decorative lamp. In Steinberg's hands, the middlebrow or modified conception of modernity consists of a "feminized" interior, an upholstered dream, and worse, a dream of ideas turned into commodities available in the department store.⁷⁴

"MODERN IS AS MODERN DOES"

Other discussions of the home also turned on the relation of satisfaction and ease to the precepts of modernity. In a 1945 *House and Garden* article "Modern is as Modern Does" that showed the work of a variety of modern architects such as John Funk, Walter Gropius, and William Wurster, historian Talbot Hamlin examined what he considered the transparent simplicity that undergirded modern homes. If sensitive to people's needs and contemporary living patterns, he wrote, the architect will necessarily design houses both modern and rooted in the American tradition and, furthermore, that are expressive of the individuality of the occupants. Houses conceived in terms of rational planning, comfort, flexibility, and indoor-outdoor living would result in a properly modern architecture.⁷⁵ But definitions based on performance could equally describe the work of Rudolph Matern. After a 1955 visit to Puerto Rico, Matern reported that the flexible and adaptable qualities of what he called the "Caribbean contemporary" style he found there would be suitable for houses in New York. "Modern in feeling," with overhang-protected glazing, low-pitched roofs, and indoor-outdoor plan features, the style could be built from pre-cast elements and could "accommodate numerous exterior variations around one basic floor plan."⁷⁶ While Hamlin privileged the historicist idea of the necessarily modern object and Matern the service potential for mass production, these two descriptions created an image of the modern house ultimately based on its capacity to provide for variety and individuality.

Rather than assuming that only certain cultural actors were using the word correctly, a broader historical picture reveals that several different modernisms were at work in the making of the modern house in the immediate postwar period. Most broadly, there was the modernism of the mass production and circulation of images; enmeshed in a culture of magazines, department stores, and home shows, this modernity was

constituted by its technical capacity to create and respond to a variety of ever-widening audiences. Then there was the "high" architectural modernism of the production aesthetic which believed that new techniques, forms, spaces, and materials appropriate to the time and used honestly would naturally and necessarily foster a new, modern life of precision and ease. And finally there was also a modernism of inhabitation, often dismissed as middlebrow, in which flexible planning assisted by improved technologies and new appliances provided comfort and convenience within an unscripted variety of architectural expressions.

Operating sometimes in tandem and other times at cross-purposes, these modernisms propelled the single-family house to the center of postwar cultural debate even as they rendered moot any single idea of how the house should look. The iconic fruit of these debates was the middlebrow or modified modern house for an expanding middle class, because it was this group that most participated in the domestic culture industry, as Lynes hypothesized, as *both* producers and consumers.⁷⁷ Since this group most actively participated in the dissemination of the new single-family housing, the middle-class values of comfort and convenience formed the basis of a modernism that suited and represented them. The capacity of the modified modern to create and sustain a sense of "variety within standardization" *without* implying a larger social or aesthetic program enabled it to become the suburban vernacular, disappointing a generation of newly modernist-trained architects. Despite the assessment by architectural culture that these houses were not modern enough, the postwar modified modern might have been considerably more modern than they realized.⁷⁸

In a culture of infinite choice, the central feature of the middlebrow modern house was its formation through the process of browsing and selection of desirable features, attributes, and effects. Modified modern homes were assemblages of parts and "bundle[s] of features" selected from the array of products offered by architects, in department stores, and in images circulated in the magazines.⁷⁹ Represented by vaguely familiar exteriors and efficient, flexible interiors, the results were consumer collages that eschewed a classical idea of aesthetic unity. It is not an accident that many architects and critics considered these houses degraded and hopelessly compromised as aesthetic objects. The ideas of organic unity and wholeness that undergirded the spirit of "high" modernism were not compatible with the discontinuities, fragments, and syntheses introduced by middlebrow or "modified" domestic practices. That these practices of selection were fully integrated

into the vast apparatus of shopping and marketing only amplified the pejorative rendering of the middlebrow as female. The modified modern was made of bits and pieces of recognizable purchases that could only have been made by a customer with no commitment to the organic purity of the production aesthetic. To the guardians of high culture, the middlebrow production of Matern and his ilk was nothing less than an assault on culture itself.

The formation of the modified modern shows that the cultural process by which the postwar house was configured was more complex than the passing down of a single set of forms. The domestic culture industry operated in a multi-directional manner. Not only did the various participants have competing and often conflicting values, but their engagement with, and construction of, modernity was filtered through the means by which they visualized and experienced it. Mass production of houses, like the mass circulation of their images, created a new terrain of interchangeable features whose spokesmen (and women) participated in the reshaping of an authentic modernism.

Notes

This essay has been immeasurably improved by the clear thinking and guidance of Lauren Kogod.

¹ Don DeLillo, *Underworld* (New York: Scribner, 1997) 513-20.

² The term comes from Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1996 [1944]) 120-167. For recent critiques of the culture industry-based interpretations, see John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 13-42 and James Scott, "False Consciousness or Laying It On Thick," *Domination & the Arts of Resistance* (New York, 1994).

In "Good Life Modernism," Mark Jarzombek frames an analysis of postwar domestic architecture through a culture industry model in which the necessary resistance to corporate manipulation is provided by an avant-garde practice that exposes and resists the daily practices of control. I hope to show that production and consumption of culture was not so clearly determined. One of the perhaps ironic hallmarks of middle class culture, especially in the postwar period, is that it shaped the culture that many of its members could both praise and vilify. Mark Jarzombek, "Good-Life Modernism," *Cornell Journal of Architecture* (Fall 1996).

³ The exposition was sponsored by the Metropolitan Association of Real Estate Boards, the New York chapter of the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) which sponsored shows and "Home Weeks" across the country. "Modern Home Show Attracts Thousands," *New York Times* 5/6/46 (future references will read NYT).

⁴ Mary Roche, "Designers Exhibit New Type of House," NYT 5/2/46; idem, "Designed to Grow Old Gracefully," NYT 5/3/46.

⁵ Mary Roche, "Modern Home Show to Open Today," NYT 5/4/46.

⁶ "Gadgets on View for Modern Home," NYT 5/5/46.

⁷ "House Models on Display," NYT 2/22/46.

⁸ Mary Roche, "Exhibit Will Open for Home Planner," NYT 2/9/47. The free book included names and addresses of the architects, but the houses were not available through the store. On Nelson's collection, see Stanley Abercrombie, *George Nelson: The Design of Modern Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995) 83-101.

⁹ NYT 1/25/46. See also "Over-the-Counter Prefabs," *Architectural Forum* (February 1946): 7.

¹⁰ "Lectures to Guide the Home Builder," NYT 1/20/46. Woodbridge was a partner of Randolph Evans, who wrote on mass market homes; Sleeper (co-author of *Architectural Graphic Standards*) co-wrote, with Catherine Sleeper, *The House for You: To Build, Buy or Rent* (New York: John Wiley, 1948), based on his lectures.

¹¹ The new program trained men to understand "packaged consumer service in construction." "21 Colleges Offering Training For Careers in Building Field," NYT 1/27/46.

¹² Elizabeth Mock, *If You Want to Build a House* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), Edith Sonn, "Museum Display Features Houses," NYT 1/9/46.

¹³ The *New York Times* critic Mary Roche wrote that Deskey's "Shelter Home" "follows a pleasant middle course between the most advanced modern theories on the one hand and hackneyed traditional designs on the other..." Mary Roche, "Designers Exhibit New Type of House," NYT 5/2/46.

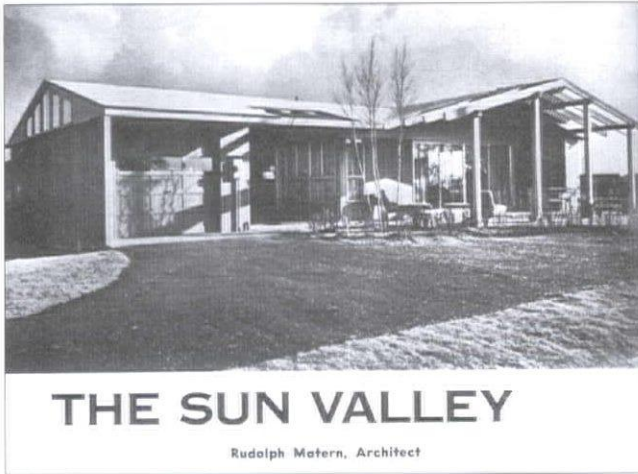
¹⁴ "Model Houses," *Architectural Forum* (August 1945): 9; italics added.

¹⁵ "19 Architects Get Prizes for Houses," NYT 4/11/46; italics added.

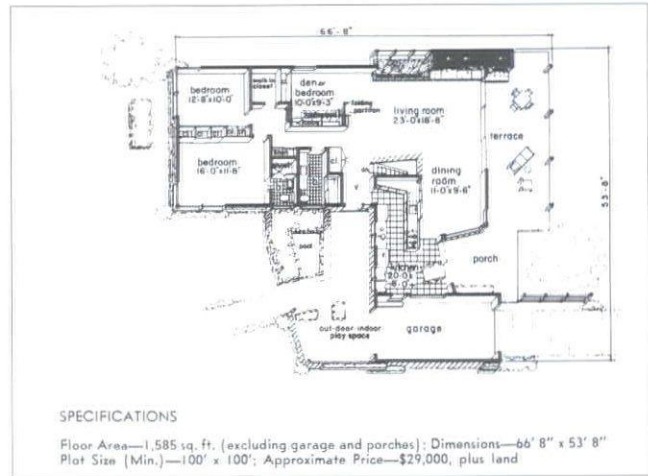
¹⁶ "House Omnibus," *Architectural Forum* (April 1945): 89.

¹⁷ "House Omnibus," 90. The role of magazines and other agents of the domestic culture industry is not new: mass production transformed the building industry over the course of the nineteenth century, and magazines and advice literature were plentiful in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Architects and builders have had tense, if not inimical, relations throughout. See Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980) and Michael Doucet & John Weaver, *Housing the North American City* (McGill: McGill Queen's Univ. Press, 1991).

¹⁸ The Funk house was published in the *Forum* in 1941. Featured designers for the surveys were: for the modern, Carl Koch, William Muschenheim, R. Doner, C. Dale Badgely; and for the traditional, Lewis Bowman, Pomerance and Breines, and the department store Lord and Taylor; "House Omnibus," 102-107.



A "The Sun Valley," Rudolph Matern, *Low Cost Homes*, eds. Larry Eisenger & Ray Gill (1958).



¹⁹ Featured designers in the *Better Homes and Gardens* excerpt are Russel Wright, Alfons Bach, George Kosmak, Morris Ketchum, Victorine Homsey, Michael Goodman, Carl Koch, Morris Sanders; "House Omnibus," 91-100. See John Normile, "Minimum-Cost House," *Better Homes and Gardens* (September 1948). The magazine's "Five Star Home Series," was initiated in the 1930s.

²⁰ The modern houses in *Woman's Home Companion* are by Ketchum, Gina and Sharpe, Harwell Hamilton Harris; the traditional houses are by Royal Barry Wills and Llewelyn Price; "House Omnibus," 135-36. The magazine later went on to sponsor Gregory Ain's house at the Museum of Modern Art in 1950; see "Designed For Subdivisions," *Architectural Record* (July 1950): 91-95. Ain's house was preceded at MoMA by Marcel Breuer's in 1949; see *Architectural Forum* (May 1949): 96-98.

²¹ "House Omnibus," 119-126. See also "The Post-War House" *House Beautiful* (May 1946) by Wurdeman and Beckett and builder Fritz Burns. Gordon's position in the "House Omnibus anticipates *House Beautiful's* later critique of modern design; see "The Threats to the Next America," (April 1953): 126-31; Joseph A. Barry, "Is Modern Dead?" (May, 1954) 152-57; Robin Boyd, "The Functional Neurosis," (May 1956) 158-59, 198, 235. See also "Traditional Furniture with Modern Manners," *House and Garden* (March 1949): 113-114; and George H. Marcus, *Design in the Fifties: When Everyone Went Modern* (Munich and New York: Prestel-Verlag, 1998): 117-44.

²² "House Omnibus," 109.

²³ *The Ladies Home Journal* excerpt shows work by Plan-Tech Associates, Vernon DeMars, Hugh Stubbins, and Gardner A. Dailey; "House Omnibus," 109-118. In November, 1946 *Journal* editor Pratt presented the last modernist-inspired houses and began a new series exploring traditional houses called "Regional Houses." The series was later published as Bruce Gould and Beatrice Blackman Gould, eds., *Regional Houses* (*Ladies Home Journal* and Curtis Publishing Co., Philadelphia, 1947).

²⁴ *The Ladies Home Journal* series consisted of 24 projects by George Fred Keck, Carl Koch, Malcolm Graeme Duncan (two projects), A. Lawrence Kocher, Hugh Stubbins (two), Vernon De Mars (the only multi-family project except for the potential two-family by Duncan), Plan-Tech Associates, Mario Corbett (with landscape architect Garrett Eckbo), Frank Lloyd Wright, Philip Johnson (two), John Funk (two, with Garrett Eckbo), Wurster and Bernardi with Ernest Kump, Ferdinand Kramer and Calvert Coggeshall, Victorine and Samuel Homsey, Edward Durell Stone, Cameron Clark (the one "traditional"), H. T. Williams, Antonin Raymond, Ladislav Rado & Robert Hays Rosenberg.

²⁵ Richard Pratt, "The House Planned for Peace," *Ladies Home Journal* (January 1944): 54.

²⁶ "Opus 497," *Ladies Home Journal* (June 1945): 139.

²⁷ Elizabeth Mock, *Tomorrow's Small House* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1945) 5-7.

²⁸ "Houses for the People," *Pencil Points* (September 1945).

²⁹ "Model Houses," *Architectural Forum* (August 1945): 9.

³⁰ See "New Housing Designs and Construction Systems," *Architectural Record* 75 (January 1934): 3-36; several houses from the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago were featured. On these and other prefabrication efforts see: H. Ward Jandl with Michael J. Auer and John A. Burns, *Yesterdays Houses of Tomorrow: Innovative American Homes, 1850-1950* (Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historical Preservation, Preservation Press, 1991).

³¹ "The New House 194x," *Architectural Forum* (September 1942): 65.

³² "The New House 194x," 66. Notable in their absence are Frank Lloyd Wright, Buckminster Fuller, Walter Gropius, and Konrad Wachsmann.

³³ "The Prefabricated House, Part 6: Reengineering," *Architectural Forum* (June 1943): 89-96; earlier installments of the series ran in December, 1942 and January, February, March and April, 1943.

³⁴ "Prefabrication," *Architectural Record* (June 1943): 69.

³⁵ "Designs for Post-War Living" competition: first place, Eero Saarinen and Oliver Lundquist; second, I. M. Pei and E. H. Duhart; third, Raphael Soriano; *Arts & Architecture* (August 1943).

³⁶ Herbert Matter, Charles Eames, and Buckminster Fuller, "What is a House?" *Arts & Architecture* (July 1944).

³⁷ "Showing Progress in Prefabrication," *NYT* 3/10/44, "Prefabrication Conference," *Architectural Forum* (May 1944): 71-74.

³⁸ An often overlooked section of Paul Zucker's *New Architecture and City Planning* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944) is devoted to prefabrication, new housing and new materials. One article on standardization concludes that science will become "the partner of architecture" to create a new style. See Prentice Bradley, "Standardization in the Building Industry," 164-173.

³⁹ "Homastote Company," advertisement, *Architectural Forum* (January 1942): 53.

⁴⁰ "Homastote Precision-Built Homes," advertisement, *House and Garden* (July 1943): 61.

⁴¹ Raymond K. Graff, Rudolph A. Matern, and Henry Lionel Williams, *The Prefabricated House: A Practical Guide for the Prospective Buyer* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1947). See also Samuel Paul (of Matern, Graff and Paul Architects), "Prefabrication Pattern," *Pencil Points* (April 1943).

⁴² Graff, Matern and Williams, 8. Citing the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) refusal to guarantee loans for houses deemed "too modern," the authors point out that traditional houses have greater resale value. This was not an isolated problem; the Chicago FHA office rejected a development of flat-roofed houses saying that the "exterior design does not appear to be highly favorable from a market standpoint." "Still Too Modern," *House and Home* (November 1953): 52.

⁴³ On the transformations wrought by the department store and mass marketing, see Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989) and Gunter Barth, *City People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); see also William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power & the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), Daniel Bluestone et al., *The Retail Revolution: Market Transformation, Investment and Labor in the Modern Department Store* (Boston: Auburn, 1981) 10-27, and Susan Porter Benson, "Palace of Consumption and Machine for Selling: The American Department Store 1880-1940," *Radical History Review* (Fall, 1979): 199-221.

⁴⁴ Department store house displays preceded the war but were not typically aimed at low-cost housing. Macy's exhibited several houses in "The Forward House" exhibit of 1933 and a Russell Wright house in 1935, see *House and Garden* (January, 1934): 35; Lord & Taylor sponsored a house exhibit in 1934, *House Beautiful* (May, 1934): 77; W. J. Sloan exhibited the "House of Years" by Henry Otis Chapman in 1934, see *Architectural Forum* (January, 1934): 17-22. One early push for prefabricated housing was Wanamaker's display of the "Motohome" (with a prefabricated mechanical core) in April, 1935, *Women's Home Companion* (May, 1935). See also Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, Thomas Mellins, *New York, 1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995) 352-55.

⁴⁵ "Home Models on View," *NYT* 4/8/43. George Nelson, "Prefabrication in the Post-War World," *House and Garden* (July, 1943): 43.

⁴⁶ On Macy's: "Sale of New Homes is Begun By Macy's," *NYT*, 1/31/46; "House Offered for Sale By Department Store," *NYT* 2/3/46. On Wanamaker's: Mary Roche, "Housing Cost Seen at Store Display," *NYT* 1/25/46, Mary Roche, "Lower Prices for 1947 Prefabs," *NYT* 6/5/47. "Department Store Sub-division," *Architectural Forum* (Feb. 1946): 7.

⁴⁷ The *Times* notes that a "duplicate" could be seen at the Museum of Science and Industry's "Modern Living Exposition," "Gimbel's to Show a 4-1/2 Room House," *NYT* 4/9/48.

⁴⁸ Henry Wright decorated the "modern living room" of the "1949 Pace-Setter House" at Lord & Taylor's in Orange, NJ, *NYT* 9/30/49. Sears exhibited the "Homart model house" in Saddle River, NJ, *NYT* 5/22/49. Bamberger's displayed 26 scale-model ranch houses in "Climate control for New Jersey," *NYT* 1/18/50.

⁴⁹ Street corner displays were not entirely new: in 1934, the New York Committee of "Better Homes in America" displayed a Georgian house at Park Avenue and 39th Street. This was followed in 1936 by William Van Alen's "House of the Modern Age" on the same corner. On the former, see *Architectural Record* (October 1934): 217; *Architectural Forum* (February 1935): 173-76; on the latter, see *NYT* 5/30/36.

⁵⁰ On Pre-Fab Homes: "Little House Draws 38,500 Visitors," *NYT* 1/11/48; on Lustron: "Model of Steel House To Be Exhibited Here," *NYT* 4/5/48; on Johnson Quality Homes, "An Honored Guest at the Dream House," *NYT* 7/23/48; advertisement, *NYT* 7/25/48. The beneficiary for Pre-fab Homes was the Spence-Chapin Adoption Services; for Lustron, the American Overseas Aid and United Nations Appeal for Children; for Johnson, the New York Heart Association.

⁵¹ "Prefabs Shown," *Architectural Record* (March 1946): 10.

⁵² Douglas Glenn Nerr, *The House America Has Been Waiting For: The Lustron Experiment In Factory Made Housing, 1946-1954* (Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1996). Of

the 100 prefabricated houses Gimbel's stocked in 1946, only 30 sold. "Prefabrication Code Drafted," *Interiors* (June 1946): 14.

⁵³ "The Builder and Prefabrication," *Architectural Forum* (April 1950): 160. See also Gilbert Herbert, *The Dream of the Factory Made House: Walter Gropius and Conrad Wachsmann* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

⁵⁴ "Winners of a House Try in Vain to Sell It," *NYT* 8/23/49; Doris Greenberg, "'Lucky Couple' Get Rid of 'Dream House:' Realty Man to Move it to Long Island," *NYT* 8/24/49.

⁵⁵ See, for example, "Sale of New Homes is Begun By Macy's," *NYT* 1/31/46.

⁵⁶ Other problems ensued for prefabricators. Neither zoning and building codes nor banking and loan regulations — especially those issued by the FHA — accounted for the needs of prefabricators, especially those experimenting with new materials. The FHA took a skeptical view of the "prospect" of prefabrication; *Principles of Planning Small Houses, Technical Bulletin #4*, rev., (Washington, D.C., 1938 [1936]): 1. In addition, until after the Korean War, metals needed for panel assemblies were federally regulated; "Urges 'Package Loans' for Homes," *Interiors* (May, 1946); Burnham Kelley, *The Prefabrication of Houses* (Boston: MIT and John Wiley, 1951) 86-96; Herbert, *The Dream of the Factory Made House*, 299-313.

⁵⁷ "The Builder's House," *Architectural Forum* (April 1949): 84; italics in original. Comparisons of Levitt houses to cars and the "Model T" were still legion, see for instance, Eric Larrabee, "The 6,000 Houses that Levitt Built," *Harper's* (September 1948): 85.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 93. There were only a few improved sub-divisions of prefabricated housing that might have proved Levitt wrong. In the 1940s, American Houses built a community in Baltimore and National Homes built in Indianapolis; others, such as Kaiser Homes, were built in Los Angeles. See Kelley, *The Prefabrication of Houses*; Keller Easterling and Richard Prelinger, *Call it Home: The House that Private Enterprise Built* (CD ROM: Voyager, 1992); Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth Century Metropolis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ The FHA advised: "When a developer uses only a limited number of house plans, variety and interest may be secured by sometimes having the end elevation and sometimes the side elevation toward the street, by the placement of the garages and by varying the setback line." Federal Housing Administration, *Planning Neighborhoods for Small Houses, Technical Bulletin #5* (Washington, D.C., 1936): 29. In the revised edition of *Principles of Planning Small Houses*, the FHA advised material variations as well as reversed and turned plans to ensure visual variety; *Technical Bulletin #4*, rev., (Washington, D.C., 1940 [1936]): 39. See also Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Pantheon, 1981) and *idem.*, *Moralism and the Model Home*.

⁶⁰ Gustav Stickley and Frank Lloyd Wright, among others, sought to widen the market but their plans were more often unique and repeatable rather than the same and repeatable. In the 1920's, the AIA took steps to retain a share of the housing market by offering stock plans for sale through the Depression-era Architects Small House Service Bureau. See Lisa Schrenk, "The Work of the Architects Small House Service Bureau," in *Your Future Home: Architect Designed Houses of the Early 1920's* (Washington, D.C.: AIA Press, 1992 [1923]). See also Janet Hutchison, "Building for Babbitt: The State and the Suburban Home Ideal," *Journal of Policy History* 9, #2 (1997): 184-210.

⁶¹ Lawrence Buck, "Studies of Different Exterior Treatments of the Same Plan," in Alan Gowans, *The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture 1890-1930* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986): 70-74; Victor Civkin, "Various Exteriors with Same Interior Plan," in Odd Albert, ed., *Building the House of Health* (Garden City, NY: 1937) 12-13.

⁶² Randolph Evans, "House Design for the Mass Market," *Architectural Forum* (Nov. 1944): 75; Harold Group, *House of the Month Book of Small Houses* (New York, 1946). Catherine and Harold Sleeper took this one step further in their 1948 *The House for You To Build, Buy or Rent* (New York: Wiley, 1948) 236-39: in a chapter titled, "Designing the Exterior," they showed a plan for which 8 stylistically different exteriors were possible and also provided advice on the proper design of dormers.

⁶³ "The Builder's Architect," *Architectural Forum* (Dec. 1951): 118, 122-23. Announcing the firm's role as consultant for the 1956 Home Building Exposition, the *Times* noted the firm's 100,000 house record, *NYT* 9/25/55. A typical Sunday *New York Times* real estate section in the late 1940s and early 50s might feature a dozen new sub-divisions in Nassau and Queens counties, several of which were often designed by Matern and York. Projects included fifty to several hundred houses, the more typical scale of development rather than the extraordinary 17,500 plus houses Levitt built in Hempstead.

⁶⁴ Matern (b. 1912) graduated from the University of Michigan and studied for one year

with Eiel Saarinen at Cranbrook. In 1937, Matern (with architect George Nemeny) placed in the "20th Century Home Competition" sponsored by the Harnischfeger Corp (a building material manufacturer); *Architectural Forum* (February 1937): 96-97. In 1939, Matern's flat roofed, expressed-frame entry (with a breezeway-garage) won the "Productive Home for the South" in the "Productive Home Architectural Competition," "Productive Garden Homes," *Pencil Points* (May 1939): 307-314.

⁶⁵ On the 1947 Show: "To Show Model Home," *NYT* 2/9/47, "House Designed for Exhibit at Home Show Here," *NYT* 3/9/47. On the 1948 Show, "Exhibition Home and New Housing Facilities for the New York Area," *NYT* 2/22/48.

⁶⁶ "Builders Offer a Low-Priced House With 'Eye Appeal' at East Hempstead," *NYT* 4/10/49.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, "The Small House" special issue, *Architectural Forum* (April 1950): 123.

⁶⁸ "The Builder's Architect," *Architectural Forum* (December 1951): 122.

⁶⁹ Larry Eisenger and Ray Gill, eds., *Low Cost Homes* (New York: Do-it-Yourself Series, Arco, 1958).

⁷⁰ Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992): 144. The terms and problems of the highbrow and lowbrow were examined in Van Wyck Brooks' *America's Coming of Age* (New York: V. W. Heubsch, 1915); the highbrow arts were intellectual and idealist while the lowbrow's were commercial and practical. See also Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1988): 221-25.

⁷¹ Dwight MacDonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," [1953] in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* (NY: Free Press, 1957): 65.

⁷² Dwight MacDonald, "Masscult and Midcult" [1960] *Against the American Grain* (London, 1963) 37. While this is a lens through which to view Matern's housing production, MacDonald had additional targets. In 1953, he wrote: "Bauhaus modernism has at last trickled down, in a debased form of course, into our furniture, cafeterias, movie theaters, electric toasters, office buildings, drug stores, and railroad trains." MacDonald included designers ranging from Raymond Loewy to George Nelson and institutional efforts such as the Museum of Modern Art's Good Design Program or the Arts and Architecture Case Study Houses. Bringing design to the public through mass production and mass media blurred the distinctions of modernist cultural production: Matern's and Nelson's modernism seemed equally suited to the culturally debilitating tendencies of middlebrow practices. On MoMA's Good Design Program see Terence Riley and Edward Eigen, "Between the Museum and the Marketplace: Selling Good Design," *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad, Studies in Modern Art 4* (New York: MoMA, 1994): 150-180.

⁷³ Russel Lynes, "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow," *Harper's* 198 (February 1949): 26, 25.

⁷⁴ On the middlebrow and gender, see Janice Radway, "On the Gender of the Middlebrow Consumer and the Threat of the Culturally Fraudulent Female," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 93: 4 (Fall 1994): 872-93.

⁷⁵ Talbot Hamlin, "Modern is as Modern Does: An Introduction to the Intelligent Appraisal of Modern House Design," *House and Garden* (October 1945): 84-87, 138, 140. The article was preceded by Hamlin's "The Roots of Modern Architecture," in which he sought to broaden modern architecture by calling it "perennial," *House and Garden* (September 1945): 85.

⁷⁶ "Home Planning Here Influenced by Style Popular in Puerto Rico," *NYT* 5/13/56. In the mid-1960s Matern retired to Puerto Rico.

⁷⁷ The dual role of the new managerial class was emphasized by William H. Whyte, Jr. in his 1953 *Fortune* magazine series "The Transients" that became part of his 1956 *The Organization Man*.

⁷⁸ For a similar argument about furnishings, see George H. Marcus, *Design in the Fifties*, 35-86.

⁷⁹ The term is from Thomas Hine, "The Search for the Postwar House," in *Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1989) 173. See also Stanley Tigerman, "The Postwar American Dream" in *Architecture In Context: The Postwar American Dream* (Chicago, 1985).

THE STYLE OF EDUCATION

HERBERT MCLAUGHLIN JR.

Since the end of the last war, student design in the Department of Architecture at Yale University has gone through three distinct stylistic phases, which have been surprisingly well defined in both terms of forms used and the time in which they occurred. This fact raises a number of questions. If these phases are truly distinct, is their difference a function of the School, or of the students themselves? Do they reflect changes in design occurring in the work of practicing architects? Have there been three "style" phases in U.S. architecture during this time?

It has always been the philosophy of the Yale School that it is unwise to impose any particular stylistic discipline. On the contrary, there has been encouragement of as wide a variety of attitudes as possible. As a result, the student work is of particular interest in that it has been a matter of free choice with innovation highly valued, and it is of even more particular interest that, with this freedom, these very distinct phases of design have dominated the work.

Immediately the question arises: Is such a thing as style a valid term in this age? This may seem a pointless question, but for a long time architectural philosophy was dominated by the concept that while there were styles in the past, in this age in which architecture is properly based on function as influenced by sociology, climatology, and other pseudo-scientific determinants, each solution is unique to the conditions obtaining. Yet, at the same time, a very definite and identifiable vocabulary of forms was developed, pretty well negating this argument even while it was being most strongly advanced.

1945-1950 It was to these forms, in fact, that the Yale School turned in the postwar period. It was an architecture which featured irregular angles, within buildings themselves and in their layout as groups. There was a definite sense of the building as being a series of related, but separated functional areas, each to be expressed individually. This was often done by actually separating these "zones," but usually by fenestrating them differently.

Detailing was spare and severe, casting small shadows on plain boxes generally of vertically sided wood, often set up on lally columns. It was an architecture that derived a large part of its form and philosophy from Gropius and Breuer; but there was a certain amount of conflict. For these tense, tightly detailed structures often had their vertical siding stained in natural colors, and the familiar free, twin, metal-stack fireplaces were often made of rough stone, rather than the more correct

plaster box. This introduction of nature-evoking materials did not, however, overshadow the general trend toward this lean architecture of the thin box, often with a butterfly roof, and the window punched through skin, the end elevation sometimes varied in detail so that the roof, the floor, and side-wall planes created a frame effect. This was a period in which presentation sheets were covered with sun-angle calculations, and flow charts formed the plans. This style was influential in the School to the point that the type of project selected was generally domestic in scale and thus favorable to this type of work. Within these limits a style—or perhaps one phase of a style—emerged.

This work was not the product of the schools alone, but was general. Breuer and Gropius have already been cited as leaders, but as there were imitators in school there were imitators in practice. The magazines were full of store fronts with vertical siding, unrelieved except for the sprawling script of the owner's name. Houses and other structures with this same detailing and siding were common and widely published. It was a general movement.

1950-1954 After this period, there arose with clear-cut suddenness an entirely new style within the School, so definite and prevalent that it eventually came to have a name among the students: *The Yale Box*. These Yale Boxes consisted of simple, clearly proportioned envelopes into which almost any function was fitted without jarring the symmetry. Perhaps one description of the work would be pseudo-Miesian, since it was obviously derived from the postwar work of Mies van der Rohe.

But it was Mies with some consistent variations. It was based on the values of simplicity, unity of mass and structure, refinement of proportion and detail, commonly associated with his work, but there was an element of romanticism and concern with spatial play and more dramatic structure which made this derivative architecture looser than the original. The most noted exponent of this work, and a man who was active in the School at the time, was Philip Johnson—a follower of Mies, yet one who has always been specially concerned with problems of light, the variation and sculpture of space, and openness and enclosure within the envelope.

But what the arrival in the School of Johnson himself and this style signified, more than anything else, was the beginning of an attempt on the part of the student to establish himself as an artist. This architecture,

while symbolizing the classic and serene, also symbolized a rejection of the function of the architect as solely a social and sun-angle coordinator. Here was an architecture of aloof perfection, which very obviously ignored the old sun-god, and often the workability and practicality of a building in its drive to attain balance and clarity. If it often seemed to ignore the world sweating past, outside the thermopane, this was also a part of the beginnings of this artistic consciousness. A part of the necessary process of re-evaluation was a certain amount of withdrawal.

Again this development in the school coincided with a similar trend on the outside. This was the period in which Saarinen was working on the G.M. Technical Center, and admitting he owed a great deal to both Mies and Versailles. It was a period when, as we have said, Johnson was coming to the fore, and with him the group of New Canaan architects that still owed a great deal to the Harvard influence. And last, but certainly not least, it was also at this time that SOM was developing its present formula.

This period was perhaps paradoxically one of groping, a period of finding a new confidence, a new set of beliefs. Then a new development began, growing more directly out of its predecessor than had the previous one.

1954-1957 Clear articulation of structure had always been an important part of the Miesian idiom, and the development and romanticizing of this aspect of architecture was, and is, the focal point for the present trend in design. This romanticism of the structure generally takes the form of repetitive elements used in the roof plane, such as exposed bents, vaulting of all types, usually involving a thin shell, folded planes, paraboloids, and other shapes. This structuralism has also taken the form of space frames, whose use had originated in a desire to create one simple Miesian space. Today these space frames are used to create a complex interweaving of masses and planes within the exposed structure and thus the space itself.

A part of this new movement is interest in structure-in-tension, often in actual movement. These tension structures may also foreshadow development in another direction, in that their total forms approach abstract sculpture. However, if sculptural work is to be done we will probably need the discipline of structure to justify and to provide limits, for very few can do well this personal architecture of genius. Another important factor in limiting this type of work, however, may be the ingrained American sensibility for the rectangular, the post and beam as contrasted to the more plastic European tradition of stone, stucco, and plaster. Corbusier is an important influence, but it is likely that the *Unité* will be much more widely imitated than *Ronchamps*, which, however, is currently the most widely discussed building at the School.

Another major concern of this new movement has been a study of history, and an acceptance of past forms as valid in themselves. As a result, a great deal of effort is given to relating new buildings to old, not only in massing, but in texture and profile, something largely ignored before. Even ornament is returning.

Since Spring, 1957 (when this paper was first written), work at the Yale School has tended to develop further in this sculptural direction. This development, however, has not been in the direction of large, plastic shapes, but has tended to express itself in the abstraction of elements repeated in a pattern. These elements are usually walls, or building-block-like cubes of space, not generally structural elements. If they are structural, this function is secondary to their comprehension as forms.

This work, through this quality of abstraction, has a curious lack of scale, as we are familiar with it. Planes of glass or masonry are expressed so that customary references of proportion and door and window heights are lost, and the cubes are designed to make the most of their quality of abstract geometry.

This lack of scale also tends to be important in work which still follows the structural discipline. Where before, precise detailing had always been a strong feature, buildings now appear with detail purposely cut to a minimum, again increasing the abstract quality.

It is hard to define this work, and to analyze it, because it is new, and one is unable to say whether it is a real direction, or just an aberrant. The question is asked, where is this work being done by practicing architects—although in its specifics this work has not borne any close resemblances to the work of Louis Kahn, and although its philosophy is generally nonstructural, which Kahn's never is, there is a similarity. The similarity exists in the desire to make sculpture of the building, and in many ways to depart from familiar forms and disciplines. In many ways this trend is reflected in the current revival of popularity of Gaudi and other highly individualistic creators of forms.

This history of clearly defined change, and, hopefully, development, raises two basic questions. The first: Is the idea of style valid? Obviously, this has been assumed to be true throughout this paper, and it would seem that the paper itself has borne out the assumption. There seems to be a definite relationship between work in school and that of practicing architects, and it has been seen that the work of both has existed in three distinct periods, which are definable in terms of forms. This would seem to be clear evidence of the existence of style.

As an aside, this then raises the question of the purpose and proper form of a school. If very few students can be expected to be really creative should the school, as Yale does, try as much as possible to foster originality? Or is this a lost cause, and should some other teaching method be used? The other two most widely adopted methods seem to be either to follow the work of a great master, and learn through concentration in one discipline, or to be concerned primarily with research into areas such as structure or climatology. The differences perhaps lie in what attitudes of the schools are toward the development of architecture as a whole.

This leads to the second question: Has this postwar development been one style, or a series? Generally it would seem that it has all been part of one general tendency: although the division between the first and second of the periods since the war is certainly much more distinct than that between the second and the third. In addition to this, work in these second two phases seems more likely to last for a good period of time, and is certainly more widespread than that of the first, even at this early date, in its development.

So perhaps this is our ideal: one of rectangular clarity, symmetry, and modular order, with boldness in the structure as the distinguishing mark of more important buildings. If this is true the new, very positive, so-called "brutal" architecture is a revolt. We seek the security of an ideal, but are ashamed to admit that such an absolute thing can exist. Perhaps the time has come when we are again able to concern ourselves with very firm values, and the limits they impose.



▲ Nestlé Headquarters renovation/addition
Vevey, Switzerland. Jacques Richter and Ignazio Dahl Rocha, 1997-2000.

REDEFINING THE BOX In keeping with the theme of *Resurfacing Modernism*, this gatefold assembles a small sample of recent international work. A frieze of historical icons runs below them as visual footnotes to a certain mid-century modernism. By aligning contemporary construction with 1950s projects under the banner of McLaughlin's second paradigm, the "Yale Box," "correspondences" between new and old constitute a renewed propensity to reinvest the surface of contemporary buildings with grace, wit, and play.

With the form of the box firmly established, surface is now viewed as an opportunity to experiment with new materials and technology as well as new effects. Resurfacing brings with it a number of architectural issues: the

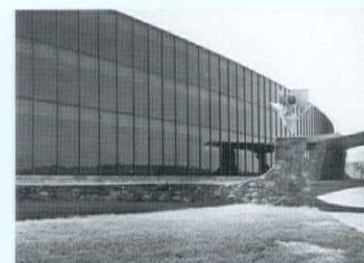
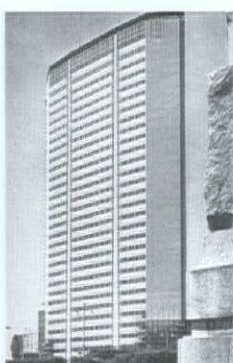
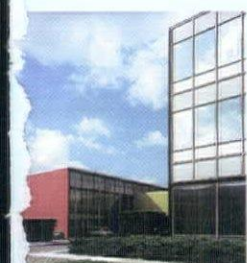
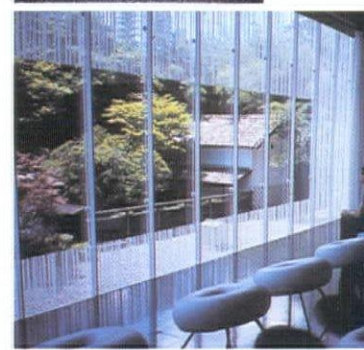
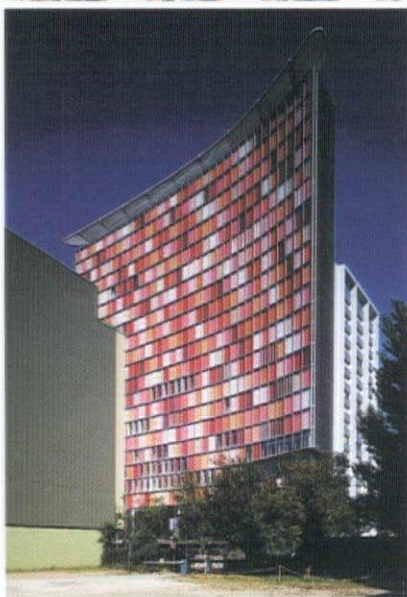
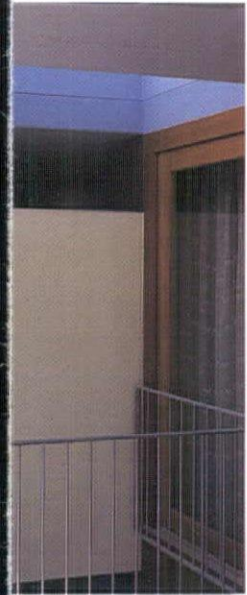
permanence, beauty, and appropriateness of both historical and newly-developed exterior finish materials; the continued flexibility and practicality of the "dumb" architectural envelope; and reflection on the terms of appreciation of earlier aesthetic practices and their quotation.

The Lever House, Nestlé Headquarters, GSW Tower, and the Tulane University Center all called for the renovation and re-cladding of existing modernist buildings. In the case of the UEFA and Bang & Olufsen Headquarters, the mute container of flexible space is revived through simple proportions and delicate detailing. The South Gallery Housing Complex echoes the vitality of vibrant color patterns reminiscent of the 1950s, while the dynamic curves of that era reappear in the undulating wrappers of the Ronald McDonald House.

∨ GSW Headquarters Tower
 Berlin, Germany
 Sauerbruch Hutton Architects, 1999.

∨ Cemetery Reception Space
 Zorgvlied, The Netherlands
 Claus en Kaan Architects, 1998.

∨ O-Museum
 Lida, Japan
 Kazuyo Sejima, 2000.



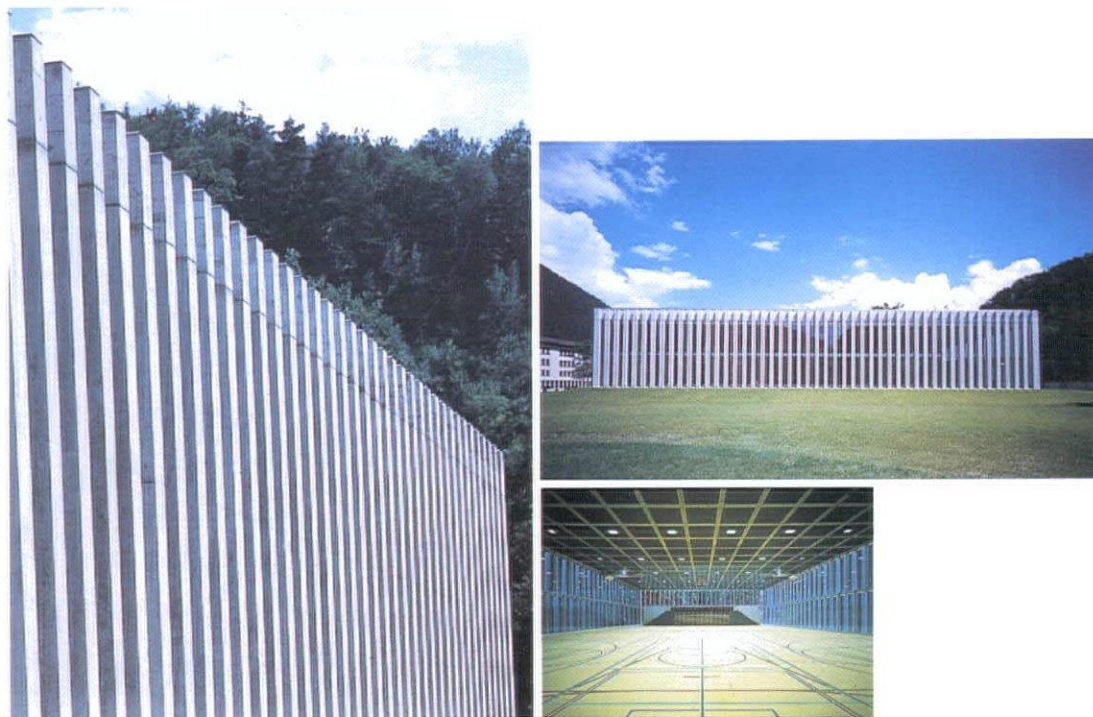
GM Technical Center
 Detroit, Michigan
 Eero Saarinen, 1951.

< Pirelli Tower
 Milan, Italy
 Gio Ponti, 1958.

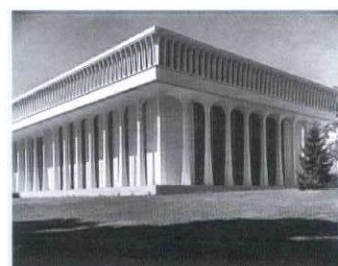
∧ Nina and Gordon Bunshaft Residence
 East Hampton, New York
 Gordon Bunshaft, 1963.

∧ IBM Research Center
 Yorktown Heights, New York
 Eero Saarinen, 1961.

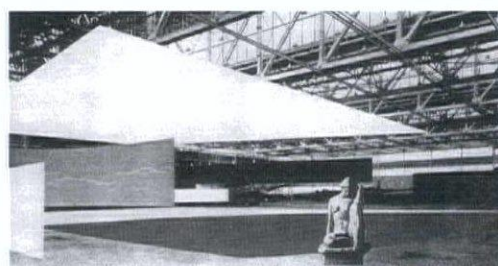
V Multi-use Gymnasium
Losone, Switzerland
Livio Vacchini, 1990-1997.



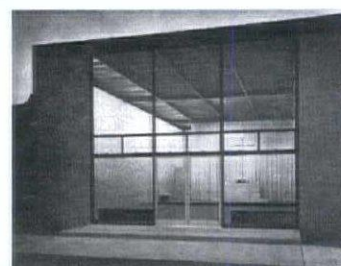
V Trumpf Customer and Technology Center
Farmington, Connecticut
Barkow Leibinger Architects, 1999.



A Woodrow Wilson School
Princeton, New Jersey
Minoru Yamasaki, 1966.



A Project for a Concert Hall
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1942.

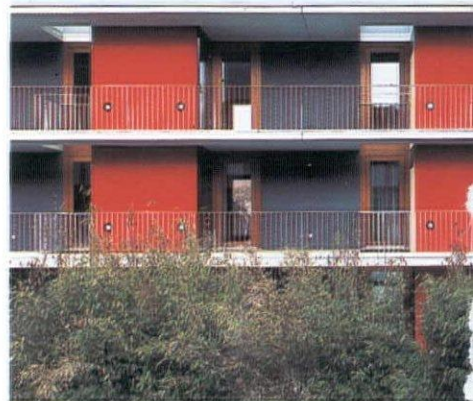
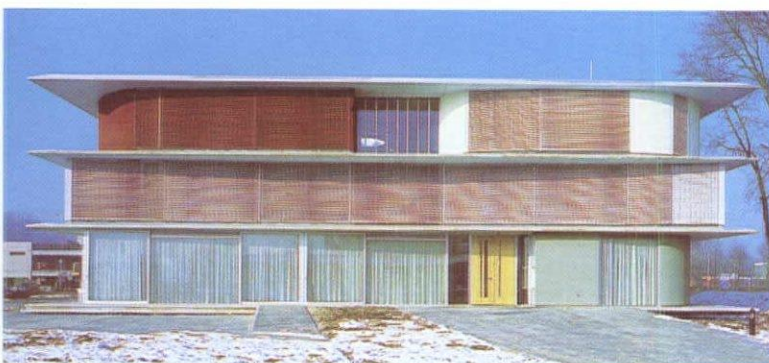
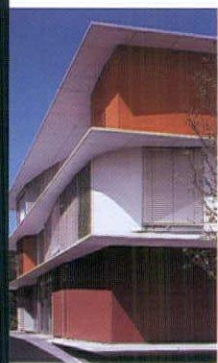
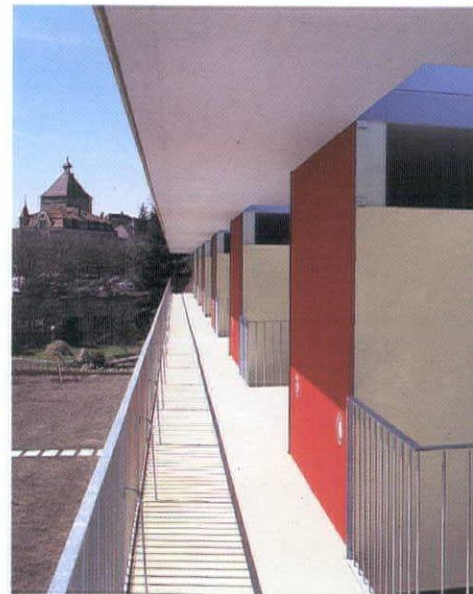


A Chapel at IIT Campus
Chicago, Illinois
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1952.

V Tulane University Center remodeling/addition project
 New Orleans, Louisiana
 Vincent James Associates.

V Ronald McDonald House
 Utrecht, The Netherlands
 Bosch Haslett, 1998.

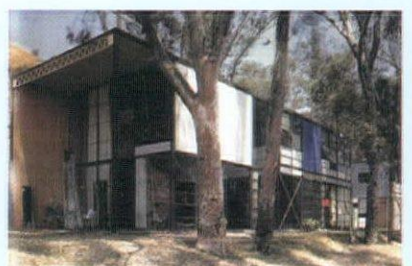
V South Gallery Housing Complex
 Laufenburg, Switzerland
 Burkhalter + Sumi, 1996.



△ New York State Theater at Lincoln Center
 New York City
 Philip Johnson, 1964.



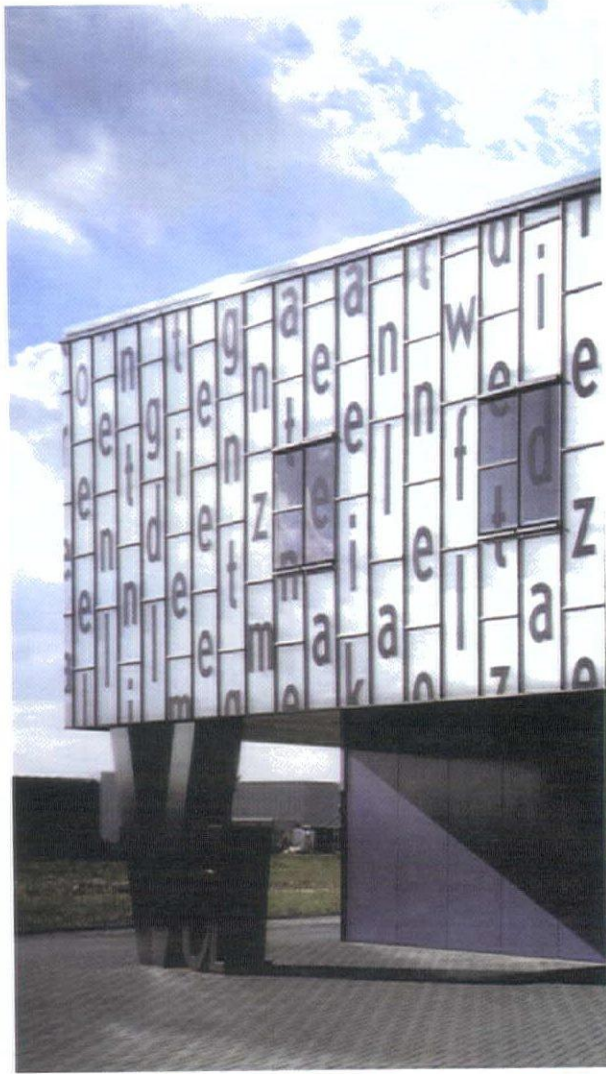
△ American Embassy
 New Delhi, India
 Edward D. Stone, 1954-58.



△ Eames Residence
 Pacific Palisades, California
 Charles and Ray Eames, 1945-49.

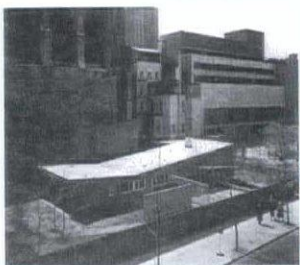
V **Vreeman Printers**

Ede, The Netherlands
Neutelings Riedijk Architects, 1997.

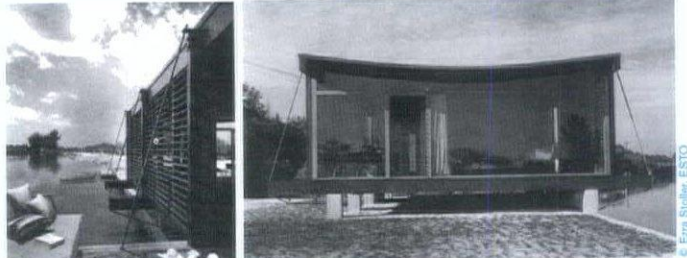


V **Kew House**

Melbourne, Australia
Sean Godsell, 1997.



^ **House in the Garden at MOMA**
New York City
Marcel Breuer, 1949.

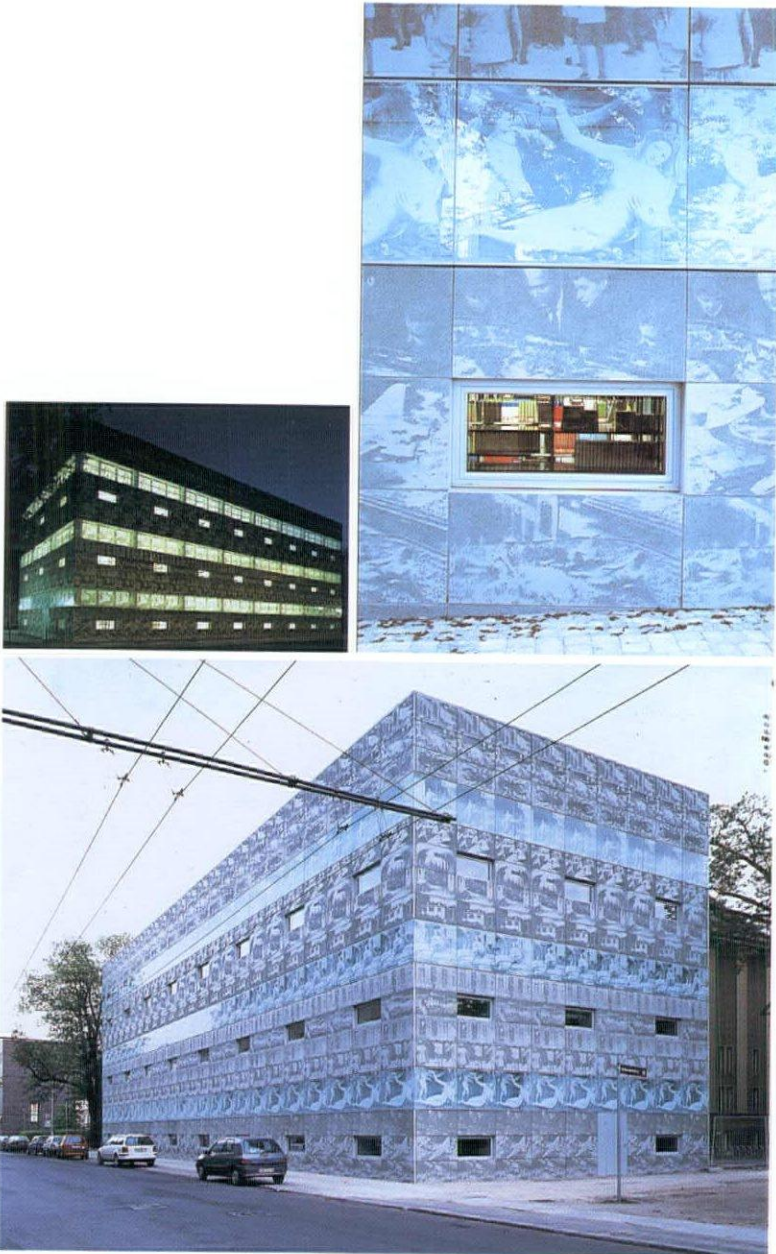


^ **Healy Residence**
Sarasota, Florida
Paul Rudolph and Ralph Twitchell, 1948-1949.

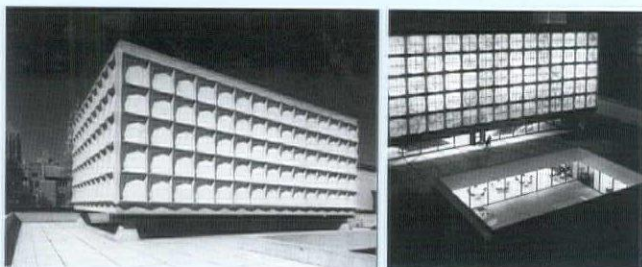
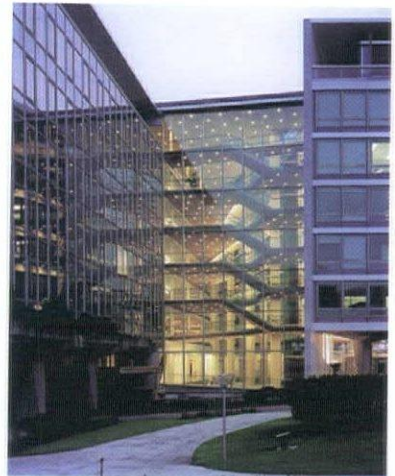
© Ezra Stoller, ESTO

© Ezra Stoller, ESTO

V Fachhochschule Library
 Basel, Switzerland
 Herzog & de Meuron Architects, 1995-1999.



V Nestlé Headquarters renovation/addition
 Vevey, Switzerland
 Jacques Richter and Ignazio Dahl Rocha, 1997-2000.



^ Beinecke Rare Book Library
 New Haven, Connecticut
 Gordon Bunshaft/Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1963.



^ UN Headquarters
 New York City
 Wallace Harrison and Max Abramowitz, 1948-50.



▲ Nestlé Headquarters

Vevey, Switzerland, Jean Tschumi, 1960.

The building prototypes previously established on the Connecticut industrial park site of the Trumpf Technology Center inspired the structure of that new project; the resultant ensemble of steel-framed flat-roofed structures, in-filled with natural or white painted brick, makes for an integrated statement developed over time. In the Fachhochschule Library, O-Museum, and Vreeman Printers, the surface of the box has been visually enlivened in new ways, through the employment of recently-developed technologies for applying imagery directly to the surfaces of the buildings.

By emphasizing the *surface* nature of recent work, through our “superficial” gloss on it, this collection evinces a positive spin on the usually pejorative associations of both words. Nowadays, it does not necessarily hold—as it

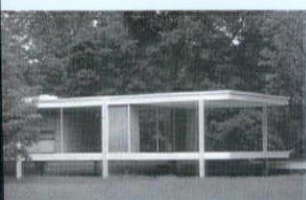
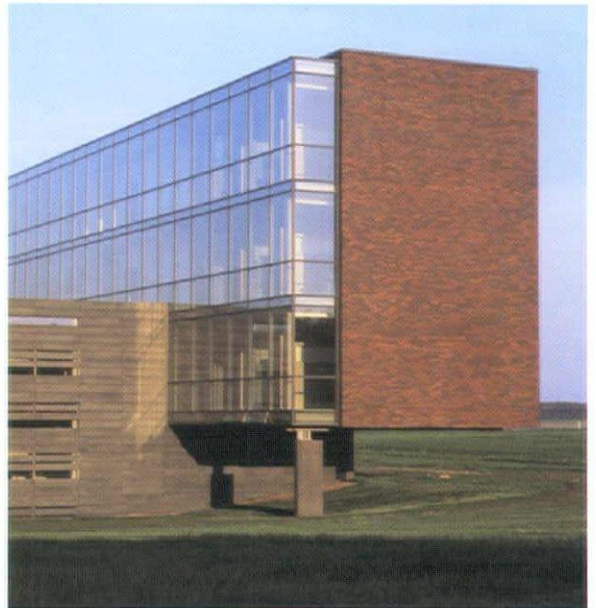
perhaps did in the 1970s—that there is no life left in the box. On the contrary, the current predominance of such forms puts a new twist on Venturi and Scott Brown’s early 1970s pronouncement that much of architectural production consists of decorated sheds. Paying close attention to the exteriors of otherwise mute forms provides opportunities not only to experiment with new materials and technological developments, but to exploit the communicative potential of optimistic modernism, all but ignored until recently.

What more can be said of a body of work that simply needs a little resurfacing now and then? These projects demonstrate that perhaps the form of the box is (still) a viable alternative for a global culture with ever-shifting programmatic and cultural demands.

Union of European Football Association Headquarters
 Nyon, Switzerland
 Patrick Berger, 1999.



V New Bang & Olufsen Headquarters
 Jutland, Denmark
 KHR S/Jan Søndergaard, 1997-1998.



Farnsworth House
 Plano, Illinois
 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1946-50.



^ Albright-Knox Museum Art Gallery
 Buffalo, New York
 Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1961.



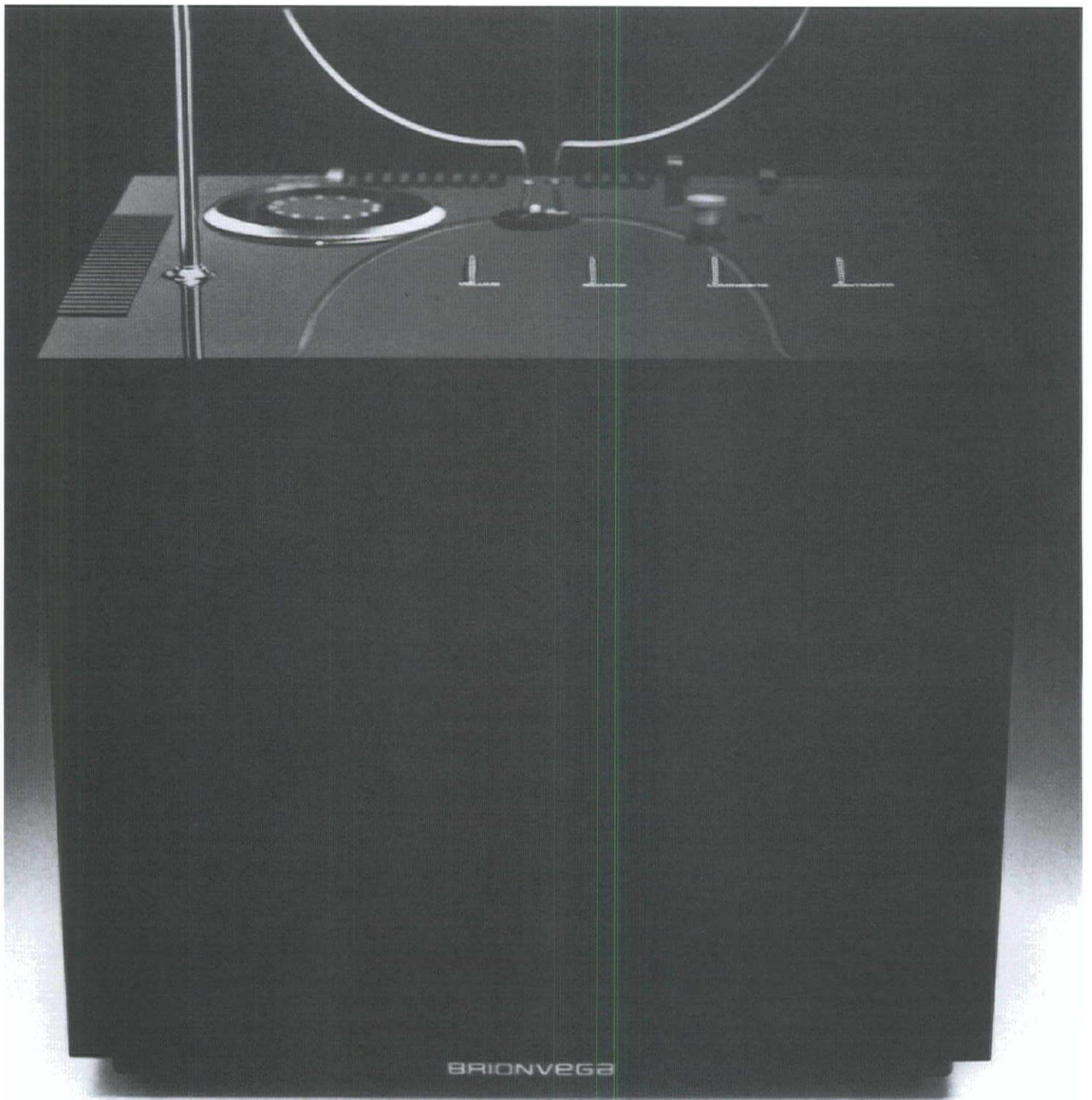
^ Connecticut General Life Insurance Building
 Bloomfield, Connecticut
 Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1957.

© Erna Stollér, ESTO

© Erna Stollér, ESTO



READING SURFACES



^ Brionvega "Black 201" Television
Marco Zanuso, designer, 1969.

Atrocities. Or, Curtain Wall as Mass Medium

REINHOLD MARTIN

Like the urban masses that Walter Benjamin found crowded into Charles Baudelaire's poetry without their even having been named, the curtain wall looms silently behind the exhaustion of modern architecture's mythos that attended the post-World War II recuperation of functionalist dogmas under both state and corporate sponsorship and their well-documented compatibility with both an efficient consumerism and the violence of urban renewal. Which is also to say that the curtain wall hovers, spectrally, over subsequent and apparently competitive drives toward an abstract autonomy on the one hand and an historically derived, figurative plurality on the other. Bearing witness to this passage, and lodged chronologically midway between the realization of the first large-scale curtain wall facade (at the United Nations Secretariat in 1948) and the present, is the so-called debate between the "Whites" and the "Grays" thoroughly memorialized in the annals of the discipline. This event signaled the end of any utopianism that had survived liquidation at the hands of the state and corporate sponsors and the consolidation of an introspective turn that was subject nevertheless to the mass-mediatic logic of the curtain wall.

It would not be enough simply to recall that this debate took place against the background of the Vietnam War, the first "media" war, to recognize what was at stake for architecture at this moment. In his seminal diagnosis of the event and its context, Manfredo Tafuri announced that the simultaneous withdrawals into autonomy and into complacent historicism were in fact terse acknowledgements that "the war is over." It was not immediately clear, however, that the only war in question was that waged by avant-gardes—equipped with "knight's moves," to be sure, but unable to avoid checkmate at the hands of a consumerist culture industry grown up out of the "ashes of Jefferson."¹ It would be inadequate merely to note, as a matter of context, the significance of the war game called chess—its knight's move long ago codified in a nascent Soviet Union and identified, by Tafuri, with the modern avant-gardes—as one of many allegorical battlefields on which the Cold War was waged. Nor would it be sufficient to recall that precisely this game had become the measure of machine intelligence in the military-industrial think tanks in which American computers were being taught to read Russian and from which the "electronic battlefield" of Vietnam was being managed.² No, but each of these observations points toward the possibility that Tafuri's war, the war of the avant-gardes (a term with nineteenth-century military origins), was not simply over but, rather, long obsolete.

Pursuit of this hypothesis requires articulating the manner in which the "debate" between the Whites and the Grays was played out on the chessboard of the curtain wall. Each camp sought to gain control of this battlefield, the one by subverting the syntactical codes engraved into its surfaces (A-B-A modularities, etc.), the other by neutralizing its mechanicity with dissimulations aimed at restoring the long-lost humanity of its figurines. But neither took into account what was plainly visible

on the screen—the drama of architecture's own dissolution into the mediatic matrix in which battles were being fought, wars won and lost. The terms for all such debates had already been established by the televised encounter between Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy, a debate that proved to be a struggle with and for television itself. But merely to compare the architectural event to a televised spectacle would be covertly to protect the distinction between architectural content and mediatic content, and indeed between architecture and mass media, by allowing the transaction to take place only at the level of analogy. This was the same distinction—between architecture and mass media—around which the White/Gray debate was constructed and which in fact allowed it to be construed as a debate at all. It was a distinction that was figured most decisively in the curtain wall, which was also the privileged site of its undoing.

Abstraction

First, it is important to recognize that all references to the curtain wall in this context are and must be to the curtain wall in general, rather than to any specific curtain wall. By the early 1960s, it was axiomatic that the various forms of architectural enclosure loosely gathered under that term belonged to a widespread technological phenomenon. The physiognomic cataloguing of metal and glass curtain wall types usually associated with office buildings had been underway for some time, beginning with a 1955 Princeton University report on "Curtain Walls of Stainless Steel Construction." This report became the basis for the distinction made between "sheath," "grid," "mullion," and "spandrel" types of curtain walls as illustrated in the 1957 "Machine Made America" special issue of *Architectural Review*, which was only one of many such enumerations to be found in the professional

journals of the period.³ Such cataloguing necessarily entailed the suppression of qualitative distinctions between buildings designed by architects like Emery Roth & Sons and those designed by architects like Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in favor of a general equivalence against which were measured the variations undergone by the curtain wall through the course of its historical emergence as a dominant architectural form. In that sense, the notion of architecture as an autonomous aesthetic practice, manifest in works such as Mies's Seagram building, was already undercut by the very idea of the curtain wall as a generalized technological system, the characteristics of which became fully visible only when the products of an ostensibly autonomous art were seen alongside their quotidian relatives.

In documenting the properties of this system, the professional journals thus collapsed the distinction that Colin Rowe was at pains to make in his "Chicago Frame" essay of 1956, between office buildings designed by commercial architects and those designed by architects like Mies, advocating instead an equivalence of objects produced under the technological imperative of mass reproducibility. In his 1972 introduction to *Five Architects*, Rowe himself found it necessary to refer indirectly to the curtain wall as a general phenomenon in reiterating such a distinction. There, he cast the work of Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier against the backdrop of a post-ideological American reception of European modernism, which had converted modern architecture's revolutionary rhetoric into what Rowe called "a suitable veneer for the corporate activities of 'enlightened' capitalism."⁴ According to Rowe, the evident "gap" between the utopian promises of the 1920s and the commercialized postwar modernism delivered to American consumers in the form of such a veneer nevertheless "establishes the base line for any responsible contemporary production and, in doing so, introduces the context for consideration of such buildings and projects as are here published"—thus the significance of the five architects' return to European sources and, in particular, to Le Corbusier. But with respect to the most literal manifestation of such a "veneer," the problem, hardly foreign to modern architecture, is clear enough. The very fact that an architect like Mies employed techniques that could be catalogued alongside those employed by commercial firms suggests the inseparability of his work from a mass phenomenon, despite claims to the contrary by critics like Rowe.

As a mass phenomenon, the curtain wall was also subject to accusations to which singular architects like Mies remained largely immune. Paradigmatic here was Peter Blake's essay "Slaughter on Sixth Avenue" of 1965, in which he derisively characterized the newly built-out stretch of office towers on Manhattan's Sixth Avenue between 50th and 55th Streets as "a giant sample case for the curtain wall salesman."⁵ According to Blake, the contours of a "slaughter that is our cities today" emerged on Sixth Avenue when seen against the vitality of

the "complete organism" of Rockefeller Center, immediately adjacent. With its unified cladding and network of plazas and underground concourses, Rockefeller Center, hemmed in by the new development, was for Blake everything that Sixth Avenue was not. Sixth Avenue's unity was merely "the unity of the glass-and-metal curtain wall, generally picked to satisfy budgets rather than art," its objects severed from one another by windswept plazas and indifferent fountains. Significantly, the one new building in the area that Blake singles out for praise is Eero Saarinen's dark gray, granite-clad CBS headquarters, declaring that "this is really a BUILDING, not speculative cubage wrapped in exterior wallpaper." To readers of Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, intoning on Seagram's reflective "silence" amidst the commercialized cacophony of Park Avenue, Blake's words may seem uncannily familiar: "And so CBS—Eero Saarinen's final pot-shot—stands aloof, alone, serene. And by its very presence, it offers a mute but unmistakable commentary on the slaughter on Sixth Avenue."⁶

Should it be surprising then that Blake's assessment was taken up by Tafuri in his own history of the American skyscraper, which anticipated the celebrated paragraphs on Mies in *Modern Architecture*? Writing in 1973, Tafuri accepts Blake's condemnations, while criticizing him for not extending his analysis beyond "civic art" to the economic imperatives that drove both Rockefeller Center and Sixth Avenue. But he does not question Blake's underlying organicism, an organicism similar to that which drove Tafuri to begin his own account with an analogous demonstration of Elieel Saarinen's failure to extend the organicist principles evidenced in his 1922 Chicago Tribune tower competition entry into the city at large. "Disenchantment" is Tafuri's version of Blake's "slaughter," a literally unspeakable atrocity to which architecture can only bear silent witness.⁷

Tafuri and Dal Co found an architectural witness adequate to the task in the Seagram building, which faced the regulated chaos of the mass media with a stolid silence. The fact that they do not actually exchange "city" for "media" in delimiting the scope of Mies's refusal to communicate is only of secondary importance, as has been demonstrated by K. Michael Hays in pursuing the iterability of Tafuri's thought with that of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, whence it becomes possible to discern the degree to which a general crisis of the subject—now constituted as a "mass," and associated with the modern media—finds its architectural articulation in the curtain wall. Yet despite the cogency of Hays's use of Adorno and Horkheimer, this crisis—in architecture—ultimately bears little resemblance to that experienced by Odysseus, tied to the mast and exposed to the Sirens' enchantments while his oarsmen steer the ship with ears plugged, thus dividing aesthetic experience from practical life and, in the process, securing autonomous, rigid abstraction as the basis of both.⁸ It is not enough to relocate the Miesian silence within a dialectical oscillation, at the far end of which hangs a guilty, sublimated indulgence—dimmed almost to the point of

unrecognizability—in the pleasures of mass communication. No, this crisis does not issue from a confrontation between architecture *and* the modern mass media. It issues from that fearful moment when architecture recognizes itself, reflected in the curtain wall, *as one among many media*.

The White/Gray debate is symptomatic of this moment, a kind of architectural mirror stage, in which avant-garde and rear guard joined together to restore architecture's unity, only to incorporate its fragmentation at the level of medium in the first instance and message in the second. This is why Rowe, unlike the other participants, is in near violation of the debate's unwritten codes when he attempts to measure the work of the New York Five against the "base line" constituted by the "gap" opened up by American corporate modernism with respect to the ideologies espoused by its European antecedents. No contextualizations of this sort were attempted by any of the respondents to *Five Architects* gathered together in the "Five on Five" critique published in *Architectural Forum* in 1973. Those other five, bound as they were to the terms of a debate they construed as internal to architecture, were both unwilling and unable to inquire directly into their own roles in articulating a disciplinary crisis. And so Robert A.M. Stern, Jaquelin Robertson, Charles Moore, Allan Greenberg, and Romaldo Giurgola looked into the mirror at their doubles. What they saw, and what they wrote about, were eleven houses designed by five architects—no "base lines" and no "gaps" organizing the field, just identifiable pieces of architecture that could be assessed as such.⁹

Above all, they did not see any curtain walls. Certainly, the domestic scale of the work largely precluded the use of this device. But the mirror itself, the mirror in which five were reflected as five and *architecture as such* could still be discussed—by architects—was invisible for different reasons. It was invisible precisely because it was everywhere, in sublimated form. It was there in the form of the "cardboard architecture" identified with the five Whites (and with Eisenman in particular), in the sheer whiteness of their walls, in the hollowness of their "structures," and in the empty surfaces through which *architecture as such* asserted its precarious autonomy. It was also there in the over-determined tendency of their respondents to confront this blankness with "materials," or rather images of materials—messages themselves bearing the name of *architecture as such*: shingles, sticks, siding.

Vincent Scully, Rowe's counterpart as apologist for the other (Gray) five, demonstrated this tendency when he observed in the preface to the revised edition of *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style*, originally written in 1971 and a key reference for the new historicism, that:

"Regarded purely as architecture, those houses were surely even better than I thought they were when I wrote about them, and they have

proved to be even more important in an historical sense as the inspiration for new architecture themselves. ... In their own way they were also the gentlest forms: the most relaxed and spiritually open. ... Generous and gentle: they are not words that we can easily apply to ourselves in these years of blood and madness. There was evil in the nineteenth century too. All the more reason to value these houses and their architects, long dead, whose purposes were humane."¹⁰

Enjoining his readers to look into the mirror with him, Scully saw wars, but he did not see the architecture in which their "blood and madness" were made visible. He only saw an image of humanity, "generous and gentle," embodied in a system of architectural signs projected against the backdrop of atrocities moving across a neutral screen.

Television

Certain precursors to the curtain wall were also to be found in the midst of the mass-mediatic complex Adorno and Horkheimer called the "culture industry." Writing in Los Angeles in the early 1940s, before the United Nations, before Lever House, before the Seagram building, before the redevelopment of Park Avenue and Sixth Avenue, and before Los Angeles itself saw similar developments, Adorno and Horkheimer began the chapter in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* on "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" with a list of interrelated phenomena symptomatic of an indistinction in the cultural output of capitalist and fascist societies, including architecture: "The huge gleaming towers that shoot up everywhere are outward signs of the ingenious planning of international concerns, toward which the unleashed entrepreneurial system (whose monuments are a mass of gloomy houses and business premises in grimy, spiritless cities) was already hastening."¹¹ These towers were forerunners of those that Blake would accuse of perpetrating a "slaughter" two decades later. But despite its occasional appearances in the text, architecture *per se* is not the central object of Adorno and Horkheimer's reflections. To the extent that they favor a particular medium in their panoramic survey of the "ruthless unity" of mass culture imposed by a seamless series of interchangeabilities and repetitions (including mass-reproduced character types and mass-reproduced office buildings), it would appear to be the popular cinema. But just as we can follow Hays in retrospectively projecting the full force of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique onto the curtain wall, we can, as is implied by the authors, insist that the one medium—if any—to which the "Culture Industry" chapter refers most directly had also not yet reached its full historical actuality: television.

Even in the brief comments that Adorno and Horkheimer devote to television, it becomes apparent that they regard it as an integration and incorporation of the previously distinct properties of earlier media into a single complex:

"Television aims at a synthesis of radio and film, and is held up only because the interested parties have not yet reached agreement, but its consequences will be quite enormous and promise to intensify the impoverishment of aesthetic matter so drastically, that by tomorrow the thinly veiled identity of all industrial culture products can come triumphantly out into the open, derisively fulfilling the Wagnerian dream of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the fusion of all the arts in one work. The alliance of word, image, and music is all the more perfect than in *Tristan* because the sensuous elements which approvingly reflect the surface of social reality are in principle embodied in the same technical process, the unity of which becomes its distinctive content. This process integrates all the elements of the production, from the novel (shaped with an eye to the film) to the last sound effect."⁴²

The seamlessness of this complex is what guarantees, for Adorno and Horkheimer, the capitulation of the formerly autonomous bourgeois subject to the "mass deception" of the chapter's subtitle. This is a process based on the conversion of subjectivity itself into a commodity circulating through media networks in the form of reduplicated personality-types that have internalized the mechanisms of social control, as is underlined by Adorno, writing some years later, specifically with regard to television.⁴³ There, Adorno recommends a "depth-psychological" approach that would, among other things, track the workings of what his colleague Leo Loewenthal had called a "psychoanalysis in reverse" in the various sublimations discernible in television content, including the assignation of moral value to stereotyped behavior. For Adorno, such manipulations of the unconscious were an essential component of the fully administered lifeworld foreshadowed by the penetration of a rationalized culture industry into every crevice of subjective experience. Premised as they were, however, on a notion of spectatorship in which the subject is positioned at one end of a perfectly sealed sender-receiver circuit, Adorno's and Horkheimer's diagnoses are both chillingly totalizing in their own right and are themselves symptomatic of a spatialization incompatible with that effectuated by both television and the curtain wall.⁴⁴

Like television and with television, the curtain wall unhinged the apparent closure of the same fully administered lifeworld that it would seem to have prefigured. Its implied subjects, perfect replicas of the docile organization men and servile housewives parading across Adorno's television set, are further abstracted into mere digits, modulations pulsing across a shimmering surface. As television tends toward integration with other communications networks, its mass-mediatic function, still somewhat masked by its residual "content," thus shifts from the administration of things—which are now, in any event, utterly interchangeable—to the administration of open-ended flows. The result is indeed—as Adorno and Horkheimer had foreseen—the instrumentalization of even that which cannot be predicted. However (and somewhat paradoxically), standardized formats with standardized content also

become channels for a wildly fluctuating set of forces unleashed by capitalism in the process of reinventing itself. The channels themselves thus acquire a commodity function in excess of that which is attached to their content. What began as a theater for the circulation of spectacularized commodities is thus converted into an infrastructure for the commodification and control of circulation as such.⁴⁵

Operating on its own terms and with its own techniques, the architecture of the postwar office building followed the same—and not merely an analogous—tendency. In the words of Gordon Bunshaft, speaking of the many office buildings he had designed with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill following the success of Lever House, "what emerged over the years...was the word 'flexibility'...non-specialized space."⁴⁶ In the name of such "flexibility," the curtain wall's modular surfaces, projected back into the office interior, became the basis for space-planning systems designed to integrate the unpredictable needs of a rapidly changing workplace into an organized flux. For example, in Bunshaft's Union Carbide building of 1960, an extreme manifestation of efforts that were typical of the period, modular architectonic units were synchronized with the building's skin—office partitions, lighting fixtures, furniture, etc.—and occupied variable positions within an overall grid, the continuity of which absorbed all internal differentiation. Thus, standardization (or modularization) of content—the target for critics like Blake—was by this time only an instrument for the management of unpredictable (and therefore non-standardized) realignments of the work environment and its subjects within the ongoing mutations undergone by capital. Thus, far from being an end in itself, the apparently rigid, reified modularity of the curtain wall was nothing less than a vehicle for the organization of flux—an enterprise that was not restricted to the level of space-planning, as becomes apparent when we inspect the curtain wall's particulars more closely.

All media can be said to possess what Samuel Weber has called a "differential specificity," a set of properties that distinguish a medium from other media but also internally, from itself, thus undermining any effort to ontologize the medium as such. To discern such a specificity with respect to the curtain wall would be to test architecture's susceptibility to media-theoretical analysis, while insisting on a kind of double differentiation, externally and internally. For Weber, the specificity of television is located in a tightly configured heterogeneity, "splitting the unity of place" in terms of the operations of production, transmission, and reception, each of which can be seen in turn to harbor their own particular heterogeneities. But even before this, the specificity of all media that allows them to be so designated is that "they confront their viewers and listeners primarily as media, and only secondarily as specific instantiations, that is, as *programs*."⁴⁷ As in the expression "watching television," media present themselves and their processes, rather than their content, as the primary object of attention. Thus the apparent collapse of distance through televisual transmission (so necessary to the

paranoid fantasy of the "global village"), is merely a rendering invisible, an internalization of distance through the act of (tele)vision itself. According to Weber:

"[I]n this sense, the television screen can be said to live up to its name in at least three distinct, contradictory and yet interrelated senses. First, it serves as a screen which allows distant vision [tele-vision] to be watched. Second, it screens, in the sense of selecting or filtering, the vision that is watched. And finally, it serves as a screen in the sense of standing between the viewer and the viewed, since what is rendered visible covers the separation that distinguished the *other vision* [the seeing someone or something seeing] from that of the sight of the spectator sitting in front of the set."¹⁸

Under such internally heterogeneous conditions, it is difficult to imagine the absolute closure of the sender-receiver circuit implied in Adorno's and Horkheimer's hypothesis. Television is, if anything, full of unbridgeable gaps that are not merely imperfections awaiting the culture industry's incursions but rather, constitutive of the medium's very specificity *qua* medium. One implication, therefore, is that even as it is assimilated into infrastructures of circulation as a medium of control, television carries with it an aporetic spatiality that undermines the seamlessness it appears to realize, due to its own mediatic specificity. With respect to this specificity, Weber also suggests that what distinguishes mass media like television from traditional aesthetic forms is the latter's inseparability from the notion of the individual "work," as in the "*work of art*, a delimited, self-contained, significant unit, localizable in space and time."¹⁹ Thus we do not speak of seeing a "work" of television. Instead, television's specificity lies in the somewhat paradoxical spatiality of being (in the words of Mary Ann Doane) "both on the scene and in your living room."²⁰ As its name indicates, television is always a vision that is seen—watched—in more than one place at once, a property also realized (we can add) in the mass distribution of television sets and the images they screen in living rooms around the world.

In the hands of an architect like Mies however, the curtain wall would still appear impermeable to such an analysis. For if there is anything that its interpreters have agreed on, it is that the Seagram building constitutes a "work" of architecture, standing as irrefutable evidence of architecture's refusal to confront its audience primarily as medium and only secondarily as a specific instantiation. And yet, that is exactly what the professional architectural journals were undoing even before the building was completed, by treating Mies's object as merely one element in the complex of objects subsumed under the general category of the curtain wall. What is more, that the Seagram building was designed to be repeated—and therefore contains within itself the mechanism of its own dissemination—is evident not only in the much lamented "copies" that rapidly infiltrated the New York skyline, but also in the many "lesser" curtain-walled variations to be found within Mies's own

work. Like television, the curtain wall is always in more than one place at once, but in a different sense. What it makes visible and conceals (i.e., screens) at the same time—the event, hidden behind a curtain, to which it bears silent witness—is not an external event simultaneously near and far, but its own modular reduplication, its own dispersion at all scales, both outward and inward, like so many advertisements for so many nameless corporations passing through the infrastructures of postwar urban development and office planning. In that sense, the curtain wall collapses near and far, inside and outside onto its surfaces. It is, like its mass mediatic contemporary television, an apparatus that gathers together heterogeneous components—standardized production formats, the open-ended "deep space" of the fluorescent-lit, air-conditioned office, mass-produced monoliths and plazas, the flux of the city and of the workplace—into a single, organized complex. Or so it seems.

As Tafuri and Dal Co would have it, the susceptibility of Mies's singular, silent "void" to mass reproduction was the heroic essence of "contradiction interjected," in which "what is tragic in the Seagram building is repeated in these [copies] in the form of farce."²¹ But the moment the Seagram building is detached from the category of the "work," its mediatic surplus exceeds what the authors refer to as the "intentions" of the "German master." That moment is to be found—without contradiction—in its curtain wall, the very instrument that sealed its silence with what Tafuri and Dal Co call a "maximum absence of images."

Hays has already offered a characterization of Seagram that fine-tunes contradiction into dialectic, designating the building as something akin to a "handmade readymade," whose simultaneous assertion and disavowal of aesthetic autonomy through a series of transductions grant it access to a form of abstraction adequate to its historical moment. This designation applies most appropriately to the building's customized bronze curtain wall, which sought out, with maximum precision, the last refuge of aesthetic experience while also allowing itself to be catalogued alongside numerous other "found" architectural objects in the professional journals. But if, as Hays suggests, the historically specific fact that the "logic of *image reception* has begun to displace that of *object production*" is internalized in the dialectic, it still remains that the image of mass reproducibility being received is that of the spectacularized commodity and that the abstraction to which Hays refers is confined to positing itself against the experience of reification—including, to be sure, the reification of experience itself—associated with the culture industry and its products, now construed as images rather than as useful objects.²²

For their part, Tafuri and Dal Co have suggested that in Mies's Federal Court Building in Chicago, "the perfectly homogeneous, broad glassed expanse is also a mirror in the literal sense: the 'almost nothing' has become a 'big glass,' although imprinted not with the hermetic surrealistic ploys of Duchamp, but reflecting images of the urban chaos that

surrounds the timeless Miesian purity." For them, this curtain wall "obliges the American metropolis to look at itself reflected—and Mies was not one to accentuate the horror of the image thus produced—in the neutral mirror that breaks the city web."²³ It is precisely in this neutral reflection that, according to the authors, "architecture arrives at the limits of its own possibilities," to which Hays adds, with respect to Seagram, that "by designating itself as abstract, architecture acquires a means to escape that same [reified] status, to refuse to become a mere thing among things. Abstraction—the pure sound of the Sirens, the organizing absent presence—is the maximal limit of modern architecture. With it, Mies constructed an architectural object on the very edge of the category of architecture."²⁴ Both of these characterizations thus conclude, with Colin Rowe, on the side of the singular "work" of architecture, albeit one that reaches an outer limit in the curtain wall.

Yet one effect of the silent refusal to communicate is the optimization of the very act of communication itself, an act that is technically dependent on the suppression of noise. The less noise there is in the channels—that is, the more silence there is—the more efficient the communication, independent of whatever messages may be coming through them. In their muteness, Seagram's grids thus actively convert background "noise" into "signal," organizing the mass-cultural flux of the city—of which the dissemination of its copies, and the fractalization of its modules, was to form an inseparable part—into an event to be watched. What Hays, with Tafuri in the background, calls Mies's abstraction is therefore hardly an architectural outer limit, an impossibly "pure" absence, but rather only a displacement of architecture's representational function from that of message to that of medium. Modern architecture's abstraction, as realized in such "works," ends up turning in on itself, becoming the very agent of an optimized communication machine. Like television, what matters is less what is or is not on the screen than the process of screening itself, which is what the Seagram building's silence is all about. And thus Mies's curtain wall presents itself, *in its withdrawal*, as mass medium.

In naming Mies's silence, Tafuri and Dal Co make no mention of the grids stretched across his supposedly neutral mirrors. Hays redresses the omission with a closer look at the Seagram facade, in which "the modulations of the surface—the reticulated grid of welded mullions and panels" become, when seen at a distance, content-less "metal-marked calibrations of autonomous vision."²⁵ Indeed for Hays, "Mies's abstraction" lies in the evenness of the grids and their renunciation of subjective intent. And so it would seem that in Mies's curtain wall we do indeed have an apparatus akin to the cinema (as Hays suggests) or to television, a recording device that, as Weber puts it in an essay on Benjamin, "is always ready, always prepared (*apparare*), to take in and take up everything without ever looking back."²⁶ Except that for Hays as well as for Tafuri and Dal Co, Mies's curtain wall *does* look back. It returns the gaze in the form of a "work," a singular event that summons

the viewer to regard its facture up close only to refuse its own significations (Hays following Rosalind Krauss). In so doing, it also returns the gaze as does a mirror (Tafuri and Dal Co), in which architecture witnesses its own subordination to the economic whirlwinds sweeping through the plazas, even as its grids make those whirlwinds visible by organizing them, modulating them to the point of recognizability. Indeed, despite Hays's claim, the module is itself the carrier of this "look," its optical oscillations spanning a four-foot, seven-and-a-half-inch unit, the irregularity of which denotes numerically and proportionally Mies's singular deviation from the four-foot, six-inch to five-foot standard utilized by the profession, thus eliciting affect both near and far even as it appears to cancel it out. There is reassurance in this, since in refusing to communicate, the Seagram building speaks eloquently of invisible disasters in which it recognizes its own role, only to withdraw again in sublime horror. And yet, we are left to wonder whether even this characterization is adequate to another form of abstraction that arises from the emergence of the curtain wall as a mass phenomenon—the abstraction of the mass itself.

Modulations

More elusive and more enigmatic than the abstraction of the singular object seeking to remove itself from the circuits of communication, the abstraction of the mass must be approached by setting aside the curtain wall as it is incorporated into an individualized work like the Seagram building, in favor of that work's appearance as medium. For if historians to date have sought to account for the singularity of Seagram amidst the mass of copies that it spawned, we must insist that these copies—the curtain wall as a mass phenomenon—exhibit a singularity of their own, which is not the singularity of the artwork but of the medium. As a mass and as a medium, they constitute a field in which Mies's building appears, to borrow an expression from J. G. Ballard, as a "mere modulus."

As Ballard puts it in his novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1969):

"In the perspectives of the plaza, the junctions of the underpass and embankment, Talbot at last recognized a modulus that could be multiplied into the landscape of his consciousness. The descending triangle of the plaza was repeated in the facial geometry of the young woman. The diagram of her bones formed a key to his own postures and musculature..."²⁷

Units of image are exchanged throughout this book, wherein the atrocity of the title—figured multiply in the car crashes, assassinations, and war crimes that appear in disarticulated, televisual segments—is shown ultimately to lie in the exchanges themselves. They lay to ruin all spatial contiguity and communicative coherence, an event to which the curtain wall again bears witness: "The glass curtain-walling formed an element in a vertical sky, a mirror of this deteriorating landscape."²⁸

But if Ballard's book is exemplary of the new regime of commodified, regulated flux of television, the curtain wall's role as mirror conceals another, more instrumental function. According to Jonathan Crary, Ballard's heterotopic juxtaposition of media fragments—the Zapruder film, Jacqueline Kennedy, the Vietnam War, wrecked automobiles—“coincides with a dissolution of legibility generated by the very efficacy and supremacy of the spectacle.”²⁹ The undecipherability of these collisions is secured by the equivalence of their content. Thus, with the cybernetic commodification of information as data flow, television loses whatever semblance of autonomous agency it may have retained. As Crary puts it, television becomes primarily a “switching device,” optimizing and thereby intensifying such flows, “while at the same time imposing intricate circuitries of control.”³⁰ This, too, is the effect of modernism's abstraction as materialized in the curtain wall. In Mies, but also in Emery Roth & Sons and in many others, the curtain wall both acts as a recording device bearing witness to the atrocities—the “slaughters”—effected by its own reduplication *and*, through the modulations of its grids, acts as a switching device that channels the very same flows it records. In doing so, the curtain wall does not so much accomplish a metaphorical or analogical extension of television's logics as it does a material interface with them. We are no longer speaking here of a landscape made up of autonomous or semi-autonomous aesthetic processes, but of a landscape in which all such processes tend toward integration through mediatic linkages like those catalogued in Ballard's book.

Gilles Deleuze has designated such a regime—the instruments of which constitute a “*modulation*, like a self-transmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next, or like a sieve whose mesh varies from one point to another”—as a post-disciplinary, cybernetic “control society.” It is a regime whose violence lies less in the confinement and management of bodies in spaces than it does in the disarticulation of those individualized units into “*dividuals*,” where “masses become samples, data, markets, or ‘*banks*.’”³¹ This is the violence witnessed by *The Atrocity Exhibition*, in which body parts, sexual positions, buildings, highway interchanges, and images of mechanized death become mirrors of one another in a continuous, undecipherable modulation cascading through inner and outer landscapes, up and down in scale. Each unit in the exchange is a “mere modulus,” marking the utter neutralization of the very limits of subjective experience—sex and death—in what Ballard calls a “conceptual game.” As his Dr. Nathan puts it, brutally:

“Any great human tragedy—Vietnam, let us say—can be considered experimentally as a larger model of a mental crisis mimetized in faulty stair angles or skin junctions, breakdowns in the perception of environment and consciousness. In terms of television and news magazines the war in Vietnam has a latent significance very different from its manifest content. Far from repelling us, it *appeals* to us by virtue of its

complex of polyperverse acts. We must bear in mind, however sadly, that psychopathology is no longer the exclusive preserve of the degenerate and perverse. The Congo, Vietnam, Biafra—these are games anyone can play.”³²

And so, in the “conceptual games” of the New York Five, as in the semiotic games of their adversaries, the war was anything but over. Withdrawing in horror from its own dissolution into the switching device of the curtain wall, architecture could not shed its complicity with the violence of the mass media. Instead, it internalized this violence, not in the form of a debate that mimicked the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War, but rather, in the form of a “mental crisis mimetized in faulty stair angles or skin junctions, breakdowns in the perception of environment and consciousness.” The war in Vietnam, and the wars in the cities, were written into the very grids and shingles of the supposedly architectural objects around which the debate turned. Each element of each house, including its architect—as enumerable as the units of any curtain wall (Five on Five, House I, II, III, . . . , A-B-A, etc.)—was nothing but a modulus in a chain of equivalences. The possibility of the autonomous work was lost forever in this mirrored cascade, even as one pole of a dialectical sweep. In its place were only media, reproducing one another and interfacing with one another *ad infinitum*.

In his requiem for the avant-gardes, Tafuri identified such games, residue of the “languages of battle” from the 1920s and 1930s, with a Barthesian “pleasure of the text,” or what Tafuri describes as “*a Marseillaise without Bastilles to take by storm*.” He continues:

“Precisely this, on the other hand, permits us ‘to enjoy’ Cardboard Architecture and neoclectic pastiches as theoretical experiments; the ‘pleasure’ that derives from the reading of the works of Hejduk, Eisenman, and Venturi is all intellectual. The pleasure of subtle mental games that subjugate the absoluteness of forms (whether they are designed or constructed matters little, at this point): there is clearly no ‘social’ value in this. And, in fact, is not pleasure perhaps on the whole egotistic and private? It is too easy to conclude that these architectures perpetrate a ‘betrayal’ vis-à-vis the ethical ideals of the Modern Movement. They register, rather, the state of mind of *someone who feels himself betrayed*; they reveal to the very depths the condition in which he who still wants to make ‘Architecture’ is confined.”³³

But this confinement (of what Hays, again with respect to the Seagram building, also calls art “with a capital A”) to the boudoir of the private houses and private languages in which the White/Gray debate was carried out is deceptive. The pleasures of these texts were entirely public. They were the very same pleasures that Ballard associates with television, the pleasures of witnessing an atrocity at a safe enough distance to react in moral outrage even while experiencing perverse satisfaction through the mimetic reduplication of such acts in aestheticized form.

Television's spatiality, of being both out there and in here at the same time, is the unstable ground on which such pleasures are built. Likewise for the screen of the curtain wall, its fault lines mimicked in the games played by combatants going through the motions of avant-gardist militancy, the pleasures of which derive not from private withdrawal but from the publicity—in both senses of the term—of war itself.

In the curtain wall, the primary instrument of war was the module, a unit of measure that is also a unit of exchange issuing from the logic of mass reproducibility, which Benjamin famously identified with the decline of the artwork's aura. But in curtain walls designed by architects like Mies, and further still in those designed by architects like Emery Roth & Sons, the module also had the paradoxical effect of reproducing aura itself, even as it contributed to its further dissipation. What emanates from such curtain walls, however, is not the aura of the singular work but rather, the aura of the mass, the singularity of the "mere modulus." In that sense, Tafuri and Hays notwithstanding, the Seagram building does not find architecture at its outer limit but rather at a threshold of epistemic proportions.

As Weber says of Benjamin's use of the term *massenweise* (mass-like) to describe the technically reproducible artwork, "[t]he work of art, which throughout the tradition was conceived in terms of a single and unique 'here and now,' takes place, takes its place qua reproduction, not simply as a *plurality*, but rather as a *mass*."³⁴ At first glance, Weber points out, this would seem to bring the artwork ever closer to the spectacles staged by and for the "mass movements" of the 1930s, to which Benjamin refers elsewhere in his text. But Weber complicates this reading by introducing the question of the aura's persistence in the age of mass reproducibility, observing that "aura, despite all of its withering away, dilapidation, and decline, never fully disappears. Far from it, since it returns with a vengeance, one might say, in those forms of representation that would, according to Benjamin, seem most hostile to it: film, for instance, and we can now add, television as well."³⁵

Reading Benjamin on Baudelaire, Weber reminds us that the "mass-as-crowd" appears there only in the form of an apparition before the apparently individualized passerby—the *passant*—who in her own passing:

"[R]eveals herself to be the allegorical emblem of the mass, its coming to be in and as the other, in and as the singularity of an ephemeral apparition. The mass movement—the mass in/as movement—produces itself as this apparition, which provides itself as an alternative to the formed and mobilized masses of the political movements of the Thirties."³⁶

Weber juxtaposes this apparitional passing-by against the mass that looks itself in the face on the movie screen and (it is implied) on television: "The Star and the Dictator had a similar function and origin. In both, the 'amorphous mass' could find a face and a voice that it might call its own, or if not its own, that it could at least recognize and use to secure its own position. A face with eyes that seemed to look back and a voice that seemed to address it directly."³⁷

This is how the otherwise multivalent Heideggerian "world-picture," and with it the human subject as self-consistent mass, is locked into place:

"Fascism allows the mass to look itself in the face and thereby to find a gaze that ostensibly looks back. Fascism thus reinstates the aura of the world-picture by means of the very media that undermine it. By contrast, in his study of Baudelaire, Benjamin, as we have seen, insists on the fact that the urban mass, although it is omnipresent in Baudelaire's poetry, is never represented or depicted as such. It is, in short, never made the object of a picture, although its effects and workings are everywhere."³⁸

Weber designates this other form of aura, the aura that appears only in passing, looking up but not looking back, as "the *mediauric*: auratic flashes and shadows that are not just produced and reproduced by the media but which are themselves the media."³⁹ In contrast to the "world-picture" it sees reflected in the screens, however, the mass does not recognize itself in this "mediaura." Instead, what is reflected in the passing of the mass through media is something constitutively *other*, a non-identity that emerges as a shadow out of the very modulations that regulate its circulation and reduplication.

This is the significance of the curtain wall's appearing, apparition-like, as mass medium without being named as such in the debates that followed the delivery of modern architecture into the age of technical reproducibility. The module, *en passant*, is its agent. Even as it engineers "flexibility"—the hallmark of the control society—and its surfaces organize flux itself into an auratic world-picture, the curtain wall brings architecture into contact with an alternative to the fascistic aura that was the object of Benjamin's critique. Here architecture opens out onto new collectivities and new freedoms, as well as onto new forms of domination. In recognizing that it is not ourselves that we see reflected in the curtain wall, and that in its mirror five can never simply be reflected as five, we encounter the differential abstraction of alterity as it is inscribed into the mass. This "mediauric" abstraction has a function distinct from that of the absolute distance from and absolute proximity to mass media in which we might find ourselves simultaneously placed, standing in the Seagram plaza *looking up* at Mies's wall. It is an abstraction that flashes by while we *watch* the curtain wall as it both witnesses and organizes its violent exchanges, its media wars.

Notes

¹ Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, trans. Pellegrino D'Acerno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), Chap. 9, "The Ashes of Jefferson," 291-303. On the "swerve," or "knight's move," a figure borrowed by Tafuri from Russian formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky to characterize the process of avant-gardist estrangement, see Tafuri's introduction, "The Historical 'Project'." 16-17.

² Paul N. Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), Chapter 4, "From Operations Research to the Electronic Battlefield," 113-145.

³ *Curtain Walls of Stainless Steel Construction*, School of Architecture, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, 1955, prepared for the Committee of Stainless Steel Producers, American Iron and Steel Institute. The subsequent (1956) American Building Research Institute conference on the same topic is cited in Ian McCallum, ed. "Machine Made America," *Architectural Review*, vol. 121, May 1957: 299. The curtain wall classifications appear on 299-300. See also, for example, "High Rise Office Buildings," *Progressive Architecture*, vol. 38, June 1957: 159-224.

⁴ Colin Rowe, Introduction to *Five Architects: Eisenman Graves Gwathmey Hejduk Meier* (New York: Rittenborn & Company, 1972) 4. On the Chicago School, see Rowe, "Chicago Frame: Chicago's Place in the Modern Movement," *Architectural Review*, vol. 120, Nov. 1956: 285-289.

⁵ Peter Blake, "Slaughter on 6th Avenue," *Architectural Forum*, vol. 122 (June 1965): 18.

⁶ Blake, 19. On Mies's "silence," see Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture vol. 2*, trans. Robert Erich Wolf (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), Chapter XVII, "The Activity of the Masters After World War II," 309-314.

⁷ Manfredo Tafuri, "The Disenfranchisement Mountain: The Skyscraper and the City," in G. Ciucci, F. Dal Co, M. Manieri-Elia, M. Tafuri, *The American Century: From The Civil War to the New Deal*, trans. Barbara L. La Penta (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979) 389-503.

⁸ K. Michael Hays, "Odysseus and the Oarsman, or, Mies's Abstraction Once Again," in *The Presence of Mies*, ed. Detlef Mertins (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994): 235-248. Another version of this essay appears as "Abstraction's Appearance (Seagram Building)," in *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, ed. R. E. Somol (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997) 276-291.

⁹ "Five on Five," response to *Five Architects* organized by Robert A.M. Stern, *The Architectural Forum*, vol. 138, May 1973: 46-576. The articles included were: Stern, "Stomach to the Savoye," 46-48; Jaquelin Robertson, "Machines in the Garden," 49-53; Charles Moore, "In Similar States of Undress," 53-54; Allan Greenberg, "The Lurking American Legacy," 54-55; and Romaldo Giurgola, "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie," 56-57. See also, "White and Gray: Eleven Modern American Architects," eds. Peter Eisenman and Stern, *A + U*, vol. 4, April 1975: 25-180.

¹⁰ Vincent J. Scully Jr., *The Shingle Style and The Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Richardson to the Origins of Wright*, revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971) xix-xx.

¹¹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972) 120.

¹² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 124.

¹³ See Theodor W. Adorno, "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture," originally published in the *Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television*, vol. 8, 1954. Reprinted in *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, eds. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957).

¹⁴ Seeing the logical conclusion of Adorno and Horkheimer's efforts to outline what they call a "system that is uniform and whole in every part" in the mournful, apocalyptic, crypto-humanism of Jean Baudrillard, Jonathan Crary has contrasted the universal implosion implied by this model, which sees the "dialectic of enlightenment" as a progressive closing down of the space separating spectator and spectacle, with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's

emphasis on capitalism's continual need to renew itself as a perpetually emergent "neo-capitalism." According to Crary, the consequent re-territorialization of which television forms a part is defined not by the absolute identification of spectator with spectacularized commodity in an implausible closed circuit, but by the redistribution of both spectator and spectacle into the vast telecommunications networks into which television has been progressively linked. Within these networks, the tangibility of the commodity that had, for a writer like Guy Debord, secured its auratic grip on the spectator's attention, has dissipated. See Crary, "Eclipse of the Spectacle," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and Boston: David R. Godine, 1984) 283-294. As Crary puts it, "television, which had elevated the commodity to the height of spectacular space, is now implicated in the collapse of that space and the consequent evaporation of aura around the body of the commodity." As a result, aura is displaced from "images of possessible objects to digitized flows of data," 287.

¹⁵ As Crary has again put it with respect to television, "[w]ith the eradication of any simulation of interiority, one invests not into images but onto the formal management of those images," "Eclipse of the Spectacle," 289.

¹⁶ Gordon Bunshaft, in a taped interview with Arthur Drexler, 1980, in *The Gordon Bunshaft Architectural Drawings and Papers*, The Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library and Archives, Box 14.

¹⁷ Samuel Weber, "Television: Set and Screen," in *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) 118-119.

¹⁸ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 122-123.

¹⁹ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 119.

²⁰ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 120.

²¹ Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture* 312.

²² Hays, "Odysseus and the Oarsman," 243. Hays is referring here to the work of Beatriz Colomina in *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

²³ Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture* 314.

²⁴ Hays, "Odysseus and the Oarsman," 247.

²⁵ Hays, "Odysseus and the Oarsman," 240.

²⁶ Weber, "Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin," in *Mass Mediauras* 100.

²⁷ J. G. Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1969) 23. On Ballard, see Crary, "J. G. Ballard and the Promiscuity of Forms," *Zone* 1/2, 1986, 159-165.

²⁸ Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition* 68.

²⁹ Crary, "Eclipse of the Spectacle," 291.

³⁰ Crary, "Eclipse of the Spectacle," 293.

³¹ Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies," in *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 178, 180.

³² Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition* 107.

³³ Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* 302.

³⁴ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 84.

³⁵ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 86.

³⁶ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 97.

³⁷ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 101.

³⁸ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 102-103.

³⁹ Weber, *Mass Mediauras* 106.

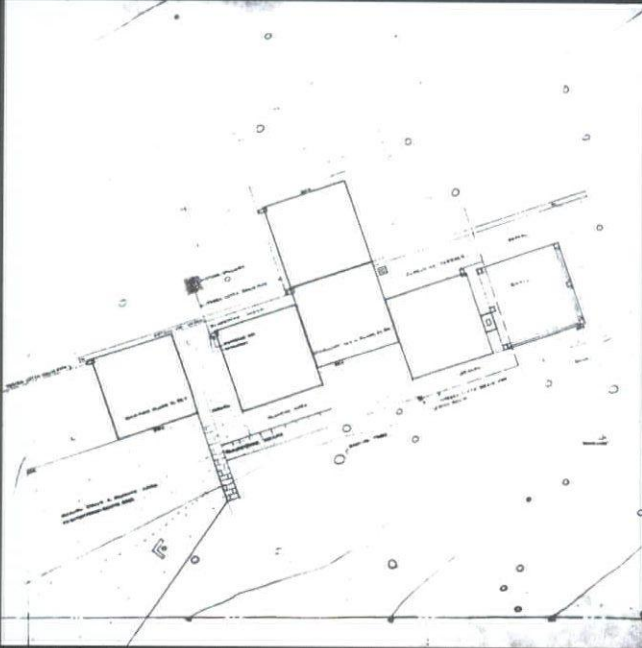


△ Point West Place Offices Massachusetts. Robert A.M. Stern Architects, 1985.

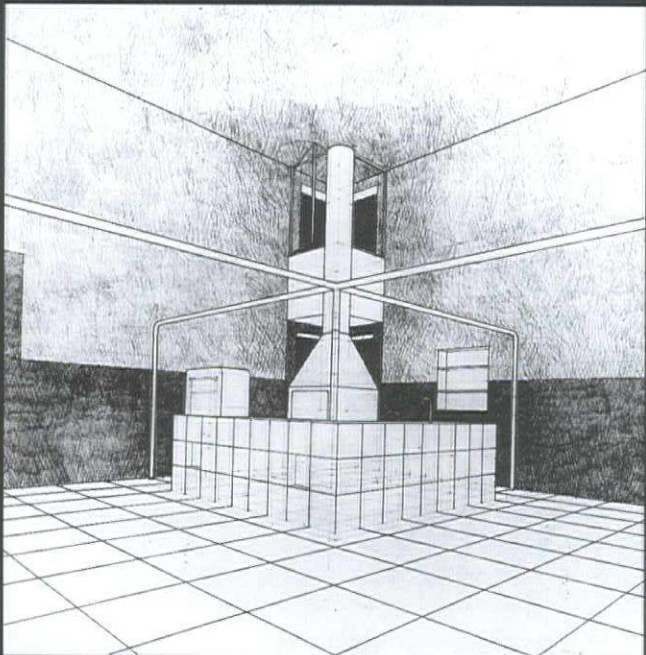
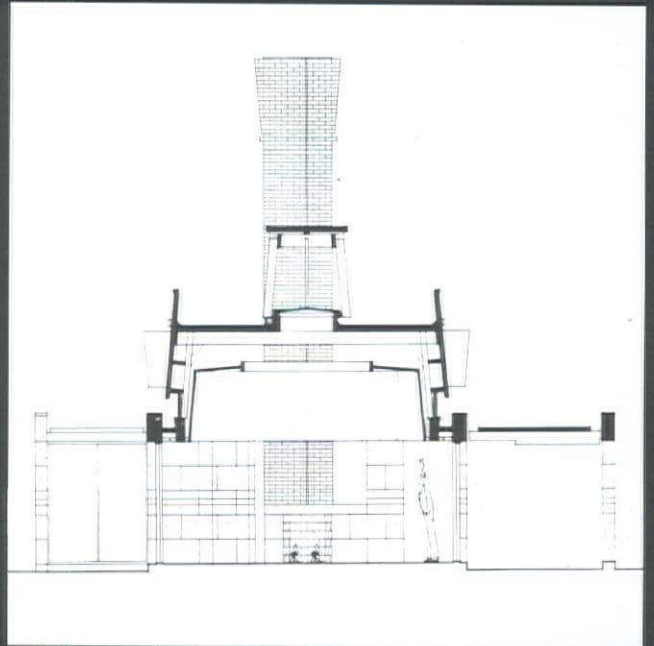
> Travelers Financial Center Hempstead, New York. Eisenman/Robertson Architects, 1986.



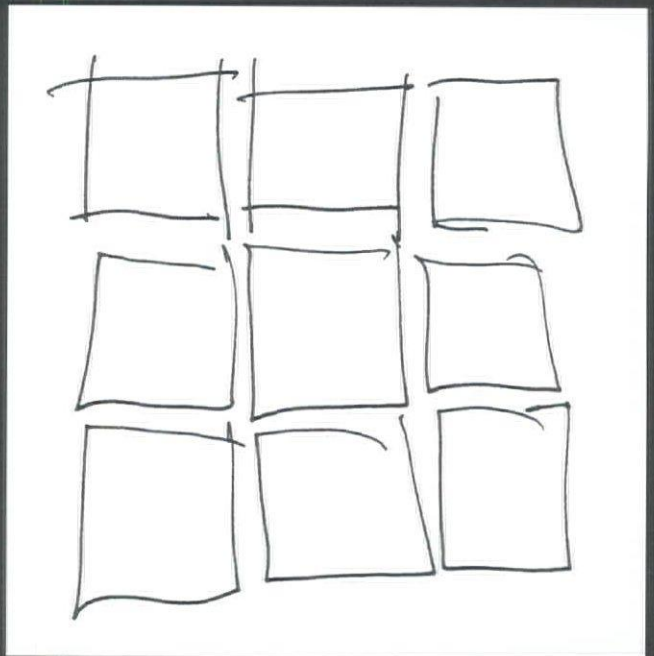
V
De Vore House
project
Louis Kahn, 1954-55, initial plan.



V
Pearson House
project
Robert Venturi, 1957, section.



A
Virginia Country House
project
Rodolfo Machado, 1978, perspective.



A
Tract House in Three Parts
project
Frank Gehry, 1986-8, sketch plan.

Four Stops Along an Architecture of Postwar America

RICHARD M. SOMMER

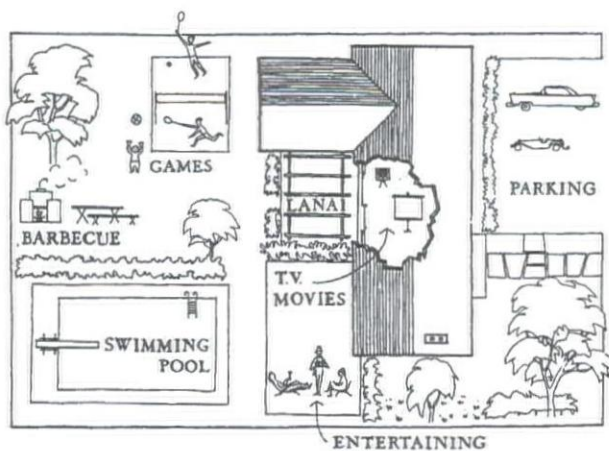
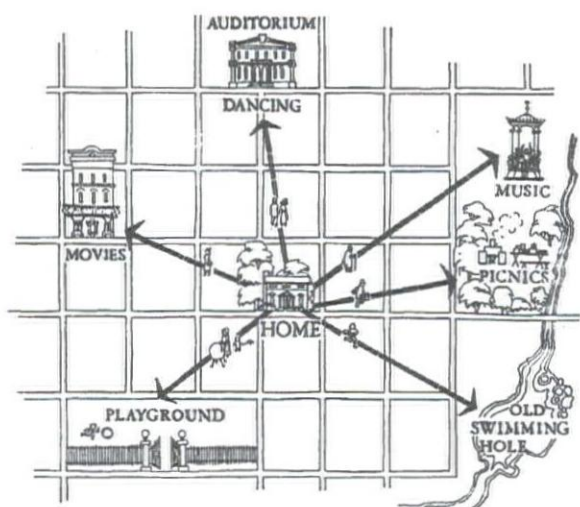
In several of his seminal writings from the 1970s, Manfredo Tafuri described the work of Louis Kahn and Robert Venturi as representing two sides of a coin that stood for a crisis in American architecture: one side retreating to the safe haven of autonomous formal abstraction, the other venturing into the free play of signs in a capitalist marketplace.¹ This account was situated within Tafuri's larger historical assessment of the limits of modern architecture and the fate of the avant-garde. Whether creating a provisional utopia or producing an expressionistic form, the main tools of the avant-garde could never be anything more than attempts to falsely transcend or reconcile, at the super-structural level, conditions that continued unabated at the base, structural level. Modern architecture in the postwar period was caught in an unsolvable dilemma between its utopian mission, to become a constructive agent in the transformation of the environment, and the profound limits placed upon that goal by corrupt and fractious forms of economic and political governance: capitalism and weak forms of democracy.

In the face of architecture's continuing alienation from political power and the economic means of production, Tafuri saw the architect as having two choices: pursue avenues of political empowerment or make a profoundly silent architecture which, in its alienated aesthetic, revealed an absence that begged to be overcome in some better future. Thus, in his assessments of modern architecture before the Second World War, Tafuri reserved his greatest praise for, on one hand, the "political" achievements of Ernst May in Frankfurt and Clarence Stein and Henry Wright in the United States and, on the other, for the "negative" architectures of Adolf Loos and Mies van der Rohe.²

Have the political and economic conditions that the Italian critic read as hastening a crisis in architecture persisted for so long as to now form the very ground upon which architecture is practiced in the United States? Was the work of Kahn and Venturi the barometer of such a crisis—or rather, was it the formulation of pragmatic intellectuals well aware that a professional elite has limited power in a plural, commercially driven, democracy? Tafuri was not alone among architects and critics in suspecting that much of what became known as "postmodernism" represented a fall from the imagined grace of early European modernism. Taking into account the shift in historical and geographic context, what might actually constitute the philosophical and creative breaks between the works of Mies and Loos and those of Kahn and Venturi? Accepting the characterization of work by the former set as critical-negation and the latter pair as an escapist-formalism depended upon a belief that the value of the earlier work was tied to the putative political agency of the early twentieth century European avant-garde. According to this view, the avant-garde—having lost the "war"

to aesthetically reform the material and social practices that govern everyday experience—became a demure partner in a market economy seeking novelties (the fugitive new or *what's next*) to feed an ever-increasing cycle of consumption and commodification. This "de-politization" of the avant-garde was seen as especially acute in the post-World-War II United States: hence the perceived need for architectural discourse, beginning in the 1960s, to mine its own history and rehearse the "oppositional" posture of the early avant-garde.

What was the manifestation of this opposing stance? In seeking to make everyday experience the locus of modernist aesthetic practices, the avant-garde's main goal had been to collapse the boundary between high art and low life. But by assuming this old avant-garde mantle, the critical establishment of the 1970s may have been fighting a battle that had already been won within the Creole-like cultural landscape of the United States.³ Accordingly, Las Vegas *is* the mutant, ever-changing Futurist city, the Gap elevates the art of fashion to a game of pure 'object-types,' and the edited image bank of almost any MTV video deploys formalist de-familiarization to a degree that makes the methods of Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind appear somehow old-fashioned. By examining work from this period against *this* background—instead of through a strictly stylistic or ideological lens, i.e., White/Gray, PoMo, High-Tech, Neo-Modern—I hope to restore the rhetorical effect that a term such as postmodernism (or American avant-garde for that matter) was originally meant to provoke. To this end, I will examine four house projects. While it may seem far from the "public" role assumed by modern architecture, the single house accounts, significantly, for more than two-thirds of all dwelling units in the United States, making it by far



▲ The American House Yesterday and Today
from *House Beautiful*, 1960s.

the most pervasive built figure in the American landscape.⁴ The four projects are drawn from two distinct historical phases: the first represented by Louis Kahn's **DE VORE HOUSE** (1958) and Robert Venturi's **PEARSON HOUSE** (1959) and the second by Rodolfo Machado's **VIRGINIA COUNTRY HOUSE** (1978) and Frank Gehry's **TRACT HOUSE** (1978-80). Kahn's and Venturi's unbuilt projects challenged modernist space-making in the late 1950s and serve as proto-postmodern examples, while Machado's and Gehry's projects, more theoretical and comprised of "figurative attributes," crown the postmodern ethos of the late 1970s. Although the projects are reviewed in chronological order, my argument is not strictly teleological, positioning Kahn and Gehry as the beginning and end, respectively, of some emerging tendency.⁵ Rather, the projects are taken as exemplars of an experimental approach in which some of the most promising historical themes and techniques associated with modern architecture are recast in the light of new realities posed by postwar American culture.

All four projects share a formal approach in which the repetition of a single, square building envelope or room module engenders an architecture whose language and surfaces are given precedence over spatial complexity or differentiation. These projects are indications of the circumspect attitudes their architects shared toward the fate of high-modern architecture in the United States. I will use their formal similarities as a means to reveal how the diverging array of critical researches encompassed by these projects can be seen to exceed easy categorization within the spectrum of ideological positions summarized by Tafuri.

Stop One: De Vore House Louis Kahn, 1954-1955

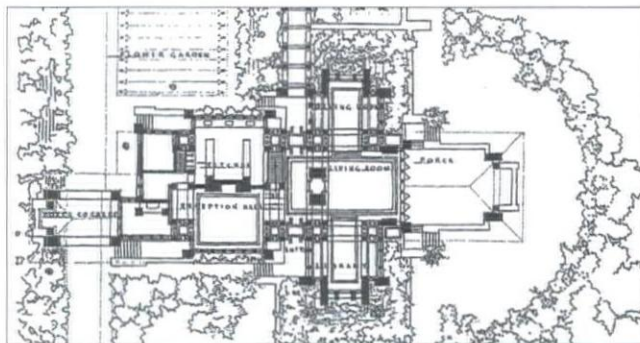
Kahn's work in the 1950s contained an implicit critique of modernism that coincides with the erosion of the idealistic, New Deal atmosphere in which his early involvement with government-funded housing and community design had been based.⁶ The De Vore House project illustrates this shift in Kahn's consciousness, presaging later, built projects for the Bath House at Trenton (1959) and the **RICHARDS MEDICAL RESEARCH BUILDING** (1960).

The design of the De Vore House can be understood as a synthesis of several influences. Primary among these were the typological approach absorbed during his Beaux-Arts training at the University of Pennsylvania, and the modernist goals of transparency, spatial differentiation, and material expression, drawn from the work of (among others) Wright and Mies.⁷ Like the Adler House of the same period, the De Vore House decisively broke with the functionalist orthodoxy of open planning based on dimensionally differentiated uses, by organizing the house into a series of six identical pavilions or "room-spaces."

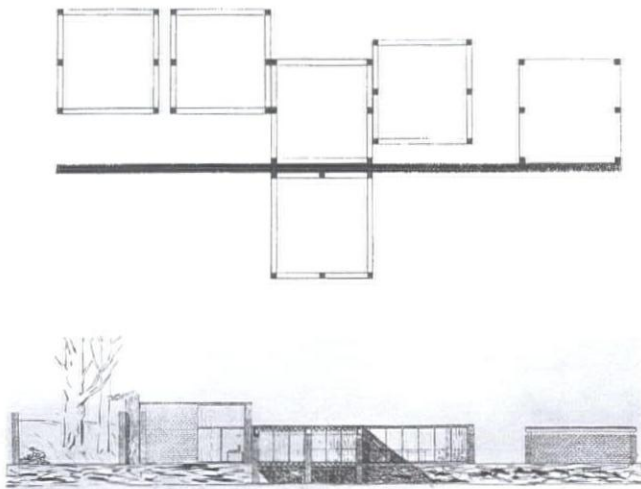
Some of the ambiguity or even ill-resolved moments in the De Vore House can be understood as resulting from an uncomfortable synthesis of Wright and Mies' divergent approach toward the arrangement of program. Where Wright (especially in his early work) employed a plaid-like plan strategy, distinguishing major bands of ceremonial space from minor bands of service and circulation, Mies repressed the presence of the "service" elements altogether, turning them into free-floating furniture-like pieces dissolved within a repetitive field of structure or, when possible, relegating them to the base or attic story. The De Vore house disposed of program in both ways; some of the specifically programmed parts lie between or below the six main glass and steel pavilions, others adhere to structural lines internal to the pavilions.

More specifically, after subdividing each of the pavilions into a one-by-two bay structure with a columnar grid, each pavilion was shifted relative to the next in either the lateral or transverse dimension. The leftover areas resulting from these shifts were adjusted to accommodate site characteristics, programmatic adjacencies, and service elements. The stairs and fireplace—once focal points for the organization of the American house, as in the case of the stair hall of the Colonial or the inglenook of the Victorian house—Kahn situated either within or between the pavilions. Thus, the repeated room spaces were differentiated by reducing their program to a figure *rather* than by dimensional or spatial elaborations.

The repetitive, modular character of the De Vore House clearly drew on the geometrically derived, technologically-driven approaches of Kahn's



▲ Martin House Buffalo, New York. Frank Lloyd Wright, 1904.



▲ **De Vore House** project.
Louis Kahn, 1954-55. Initial plan and rear elevation.

contemporary and academic colleague, Buckminster Fuller. The project's six steel and glass pavilions have the appearance of being dropped on the site, perhaps even by helicopter, in the manner of Fuller's experimental projects for the U.S. military. Unlike Fuller, though, Kahn further situated the pavilions, overcoming their absolute abstraction. The major figurative gesture of the project, aside from the division of the house into essentially identical room-spaces, was the grounding of the pavilions on a retaining wall. Running approximately east-west, this retaining wall collected the site's north to south slope and situated a line parallel to the front entry face of the site, creating a drop towards the rear. Five of the pavilions are single-story volumes that sit in front of the retaining wall, with one (containing bedrooms) extending over the wall, creating a higher volume toward the back. This siting strategy allowed the house to maintain a consistent profile to the front and a varied profile to the rear, recalling the traditional public and private profiles of the country manor.

The near-synthesis of the plaid planimetric hierarchies of Wright, the programmatic scrimms of Mies, and the technological determinism of Fuller, along with a new concern—the relief-like transformation of the site—all coincided in the De Vore House with Kahn's adoption of an overtly phenomenological philosophy. This philosophy, concerned with the ontological nature of things revealed in existence, offered Kahn a replacement for the social utopianism that had sustained him in the New Deal years of his early career.

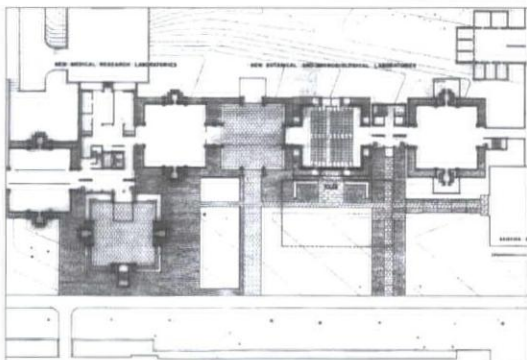
Many of Kahn's statements from this later period stem from the phenomenological tenet that promises us the capacity to speak and express concepts before we have a conventional language to do so:

"...[D]ealing with aesthetics, which are the rules of art, is very dangerous. I would say that one should not employ any aesthetics. Aesthetics are realized out of the singularity of a making in which someone, sensitive to how the rules might be employed, makes an aesthetic principle. Aesthetics come after you make something, not before. ... Form has no shape or dimension. It is completely inaudible, un-seeable. It has no presence; its existence is in the mind. You turn to nature to make it actually present. Form precedes Design. Form is What, Design is How."⁸

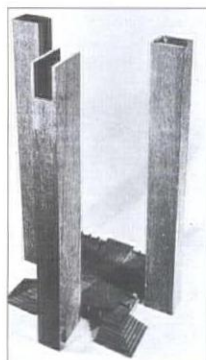
For Kahn, the transcendent value of (ideal) Platonic geometry was one of architecture's phenomenological givens. What he called "Form"—some ethereal, ineffable matter waiting to be ordered—seems suspiciously like Platonic geometry in phenomenological clothing. If for Kahn architecture was a phenomenon of cultural, human affairs, Platonic geometry constituted its only possible bridge to the organic, biological processes of nature. Nowhere is this nature/culture dualism as evident as in the distinction between served and servant spaces Kahn first introduces in projects like the De Vore House.

The De Vore House's weak hierarchical stratification of that which is "served" from that which "serves" incorporated a strategy where service elements can be both concealed within, and represented by, abstracted architectural elements, such as large hollowed-out walls and columns. Kahn extended this stratification by choosing to encode these "servant" architectural forms with different structural systems and cladding materials. Effacing the influence of Wright and Mies here, Kahn responded to questions concerning the ability of a series of rooms to address the "complex problems of a house" by pointing to the "strictly Palladian spirit" found in the De Vore House.⁹ Yet when Kahn essentially emptied the served, ceremonial spaces of overt signs of their function, rather than replace the articulation of function with an ornamental program, such as one might find in a Palladian villa, he resorted to the "truth" of structural expression. In this project—as with many to come after—"served" spaces were characterized by tectonic forms of structural expression (steel and glass "space-frames"), while "servant" spaces called for more mute or stereometric structural forms (concrete and stone monoliths). Tectonic structure expressed the cultural eminence of the hallowed, served space, while "hollow stones" concealed the circulation of humans and serving utilities.

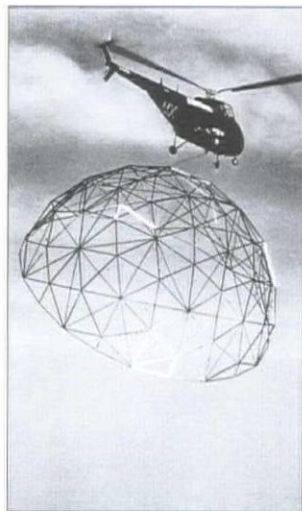
Kahn's phenomenological reduction paralleled non-representational strains taken up in other postwar American art forms. Believing that "in architecture, as in all art, the artist instinctively keeps the marks which reveal how a thing was done" and rejecting architectural embellishments and "the tendency to fair joints out," Kahn proposed a process in which we might "draw as we build, from bottom up, stopping our pencils at the points of pouring or erecting, [to an extent that] ornament would evolve out of our love for the perfection of construction and we would develop new methods of construction."¹⁰ Such a rejection of the image and applied ornament, in favor of an engagement with the



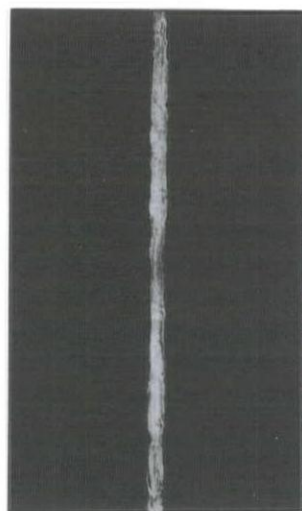
▲ **Richards Medical Lab** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Louis Kahn, 1961. plan and structural model.



▲ **Brick Country House** project. Mies van der Rohe, 1920. plan.



▲ **US Army Studies**
Buckminster Fuller.



▲ **Onemant I**
Barnett Newman, 1948.

Barnett Newman Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

fundamental craft of architecture, was akin to the abstract expressionists' break with pictorialism and their concentration on painting as a record of the painter's encounter with his medium.

What the De Vore House shared with such a diverse set of works as Barnett Newman's color field paintings from the early 1950s and Carl Andre's sculptural installations of the 1960s was a tendency to employ a reduced palette in a regular or repetitive order as a means to reveal the physical and sensual attributes of a work, while highlighting these above any purely *compositional* effects. Rather than organizing experience in a monocular way, the formal strategies employed in these works created an open field for the provisional unfolding of material relative to the surfaces or spaces they inhabited. Newman's sometimes symmetrically organized canvases were characterized by the spectral way in which a line in a field of color affected the viewer. Later, Andre used "base" materials in all three senses: low-register, platform-like, and common, in a way that seemed to map the floor and containing walls of a gallery. Kahn's work partakes of both of these techniques: the almost primordial disposition of steel and glass, or concrete and wood, upon a site was animated by the careful way he modulated light to fall upon these surfaces.

In the De Vore House, we see a grouping of rectilinear volumes whose exterior profiles portend a somewhat ordered delineation of spaces on the interior. Interestingly, it is not the avant-garde experiments of Mies' European interwar years, but one of his earliest American projects that provides the clearest historical counterpoint to Kahn's approach: the Resor House of 1937-38. In this project, space performed as a container through which experience was unfolded, or conversely, as a surface on which perception was projected. By virtue of transparencies and reflections one comes to perceive both these projects in a highly dynamic way. The design of the De Vore House shared in Mies' postwar strategy of providing a seemingly neutral frame in which the perception of the world and the collected objects of the domesticated interior become subtly entangled and distorted. Yet, by means of the retaining wall and the serial repetition of the pavilions, which respectively put the given site and domestic program into relief, Kahn abandoned the Miesian synthesis. Mies may have courted romantic allusions to the ruin by drawing his steel skeletons overtaken by ivy, but the precise bones of his architecture maintain their autonomy from both organic nature and the passing of time. Not so with the De Vore House, whose irregular accretion of volumes and stone figures invite a more overtly allegorical reading.

Stop Two: Pearson House Robert Venturi, 1957

Venturi's Pearson House was built on themes found in Kahn's De Vore House but took them in a distinctly different direction. Kahn's influence on Venturi—and vice-versa—has been well established, but the differences between them (regarding their respective sensibilities and generational affinities) are substantial.³² Although Kahn was a highly influential teacher, his writing was limited to a few published statements, all poetic and enigmatic in style. His colleagues report that he read very little, and that his genius was of a more artistic than scholarly kind.

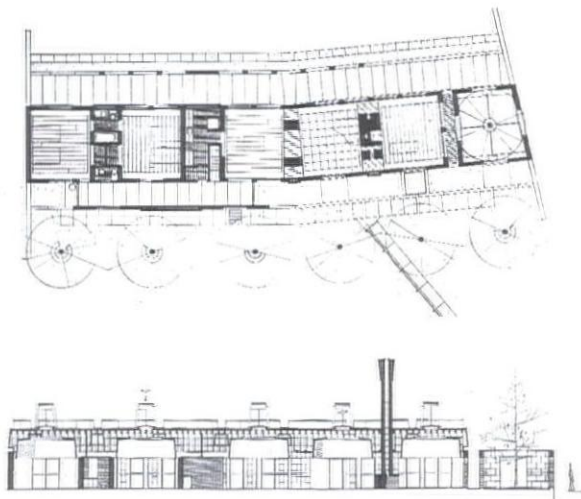
It would be hard, by comparison, to assess Robert Venturi's influence without considering the symbiotic relationship between the writing and the design work that he pursued (later with Denise Scott Brown). Insisting, in the preface to *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, that the architect had become too educated to engage a complex world with the artistic or technical naiveté, Venturi rejected the Puritanism that had often gone hand-in-hand with aesthetic moralizing of the Howard Roark-like modern architect. He also made clear the self-consciousness that distinguished him from Kahn when he stated that "Louis Kahn has referred to 'what a thing wants to be,' but implicit in this statement is its opposite: what the architect wants the thing to be. In the tension and balance between the two lie many of the architect's decisions."³² Venturi ultimately described *Complexity and Contradiction* as "both an attempt at architectural criticism and an apologia—an explanation, indirectly, of my work." But, as is often the case, the reverse may be equally true: the design work bears witness to theoretical arguments. As the first project featured in the "works" chapter at the end of Venturi's earliest book, the Pearson House represents just such an instance.

Venturi described the project's organization this way: "A series of spaces *en-suite* which are general in shape and unspecific in function, separated by servant spaces that are specific in shape and function."³³ In the Pearson House, the servant spaces are more discreet, functionally elaborate, and resolved than are those of the De Vore House. He assigned each of the six identical volumes one activity in the following series (and lined them with corresponding servant spaces, as per the second series):

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 TREE/ENTRY COURT | 1A EXTERIOR PATH |
| 2 LIVING ROOM | 2A A FIREPLACE/MANTEL |
| 3 LIBRARY/STUDY | 3A HOUSEHOLD STORAGE |
| 4 DINING AREA AND | 4A KITCHEN |
| 5+6 BEDROOM | 5+6A BATHROOM/CLOSET CONSOLE |

Instead of muting the servant spaces, Venturi exaggerated their qualities and allowed them to qualify and characterize the spaces they line, so that both the boundaries and the use of the pavilions are understood through their association with the service figures that occupy the gaps between them.

Rather than play with the syntax or basic alignment of the arrayed volumes, Venturi concentrated on the semantic dimension of the wrappers that encase them. After capping five of the six identical volumes with a domed ceiling and cupola, he lined them with layers of fenestration, including clerestory window portals and lateral window walls, all of which appear to adhere to an order entirely alien to the internal organization of the pavilions. For example, the inter-columnal spacing of the porch is centered on a wall plane, which is projected out from the dimension of the kitchen "servant space" and continued three bays to the north and five to the south.³⁴ The asymmetrical spacing of the



▲ Pearson House project.
Venturi and Rauch Architects, 1957. plan and long section.

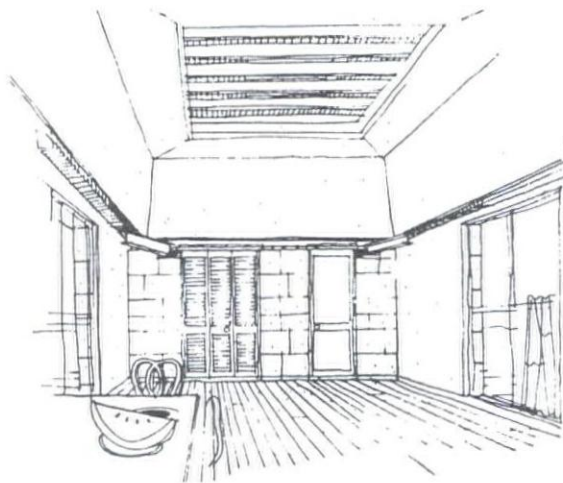
columns implies one center, displaced from the actual middle of the ensemble. But as an overall mass, the porch is centered on the three middle pavilions of the main, enclosed group of five pavilions. These and other highly mannered gestures introduce an indeterminacy and complexity that opens the project up to manifold readings and associations.

Referring to the idea of multiple enclosures and "things in things and things behind things," Venturi gave an early indication in this project of a concept of the Baroque, one that later would be given a more polemical and shed.¹⁵ Baroque architecture admits the possibility that a design can be cunning vis-à-vis the differing context and constituencies it must address. A taste for the Baroque is central to postmodernism's critique of the monocular, disembodied nature of modernist visual culture. As Martin Jay has pointed out:

"The philosophy ... favored [by the Baroque] self-consciously eschewed the model of intellectual clarity expressed in a literal language purified of ambiguity. Instead it recognized the inextricability of rhetoric and vision, which meant that images were signs and that concepts always contained an irreducibly imagistic component."¹⁶

The irreducible play of described surface and occupied depth in Baroque architecture was situated within contingencies and tensions that arose between the language and the shape of the larger, external, and often public situation in which it was set, as well as the local and often private programmatic and iconographic needs of the interior. For Venturi, the ambiguous, hybrid nature of the Baroque was the perfect foil to high-modernism's assumption that it could transform the built environment wholecloth, and therefore not worry about the incremental and inevitably compromised way in which any context is remade to suit competing agendas. There were precedents for this hybridity in notable exceptions to the modernist orthodoxy which Venturi set himself against: for example, in the strategy of Adolf Loos, whose later residential projects (such as the **MÜLLER HOUSE** of 1933) made a radical distinction between interior volumes and sequences and the exterior shell. Loos' prism-like domestic interior contains a rich and varied array of spaces whose shape and materiality were expressive of their use and the tastes of their inhabitants. The exterior, in contrast, formed a mute mask.

The European avant-garde tried to eclipse the highly mediated nature of communication in modern society by either attempting to transform the public realm into a functionally and socially transparent utopia, or as Loos did, by safeguarding the private psyche behind a mask that



▲ Pearson House project.
Venturi and Rauch Architects, 1957. transverse section.

refused the pervasive and dissolving logic of cultural modernism. Still peering from this modernist high ground well into the 1970s, critics like Tafuri could not accept that the capacity of an architecture to communicate according to established values was relatively (if not absolutely) compromised in a society where mongrel forms are taken as a sign of constructive cultural mobility rather than moral decay. Thus Tafuri summarily dismissed the later (more full-blown) work of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown:

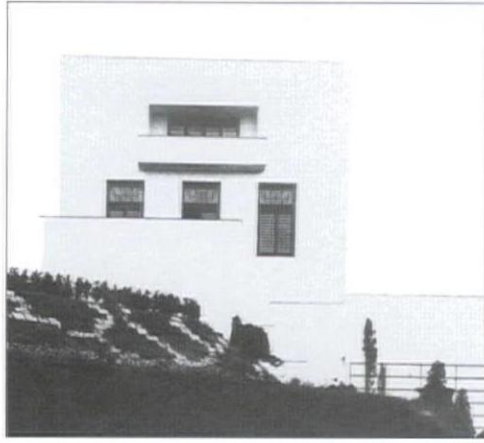
"Here, there is no longer a desire to communicate; the architecture is dissolved into an unstructured system of ephemeral signals. Instead of communication, there is a flux of information; instead of architecture as language, there is an attempt to reduce it to a mass-medium, without any ideological residue; instead of an anxious effort to restructure the urban system, there is a disenchanting acceptance of reality, becoming an excess of pure cynicism."¹⁷

Tafuri continues:

"What Venturi takes from the world he tells us about is never more than its superficial mask: like the kitsch and Pop *Nashville* of the film by Robert Altman, Venturi's Las Vegas makes it seem as if all the contradictions of contemporary America are just a matter of good or bad taste."¹⁸

Using "kitsch" as code for the manufactured desire of capitalism (and ignoring its class-biased overtones), Tafuri rejected the possibility that what one group or individual regards as kitsch can be taken by another as an insightful, artistic triumph.¹⁹ Venturi's ironic conscription of the Baroque is mistaken here, as it has been elsewhere, for cynicism or a lack of values. Just the opposite may be true. Irony is a procedure by which an author's voice or hand is at times dissimulated, opening up a momentary gap in understanding between the author, her or his construct, and the "meaning" taken by an audience. Such a gap allows for the manifold subjectivity of the author to find expression. In doing so, it challenges audience members to question the veracity of what they are being offered, while simultaneously letting them in on the "joke," in which the futility of unfettered communication is often the subject.²⁰ Instead of nostalgia for the shared (and often imposed) cultural values that were the hallmark of pre-modern forms of community, the multivalent message of the ironic work acknowledges the provisional nature of any given reality.

Even in an early work like the Pearson House, Venturi seemed at home in the carnival atmosphere of postwar America. Advertising and entertainment culture and the styles of life and art they influenced played an



▲ Müller House Vienna, Austria, Adolf Loos, 1933.

important role in the construction of group and individual identities, often defining the very forms through which class identity was recognized. But the project's setting—Chestnut Hill, an early railroad suburb in Philadelphia—was, after all, not Rome. The Baroque layers of structure, wall, and fenestration that constitute the "exterior" (as opposed to the "interior" of the pavilions and service figures) appear, from the evidence given, to have been no more than shadowboxing with some imagined context. Here Venturi was still more under the sway of William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New Criticism's worldly yet self-contained poetry) than of Pop art.²¹ The New Criticism saw art as a contemplative, quasi-religious realm in which alienated modern man could be redeemed. It was this, more than anything else, that provided the intellectual grist for the irony, paradox, and ambiguities celebrated in *Complexity and Contradiction*.²² In hindsight though, the house does appear to anticipate certain Pop tendencies. Roughly twenty-five years after this house was designed, Jean-Francois Lyotard touted Pop Art's radical aspects:

"If you look at one of the most effective works of Pop Art, it satisfies all of the conditions of sexual climax, i.e. an extreme tension with a profound release. It is a plastic space, organized in a certain way, in which one element destroys the whole organization. This corresponds to the definition that after Freud, orgasm must be given: the collaboration of Eros and death, the seeking of the most complex, the most differentiated organization, and its destruction..."²³

Two of the main aspects Lyotard ascribes to Pop Art can be read in Venturi's work. First, there is an interest in the pleasure one can find in familiar, sensuous forms, something Venturi and Scott Brown allude to in *Learning from Las Vegas* when they lampoon Walter Gropius as misunderstanding Vitruvius in assuming that "Firmness + Commodity = Delight." More specifically, there is the pleasure and the delightful beauty of excess, as in the seemingly ready-made repetition of the same space over and over again, with each space assigned its own dome and cupola and two additional sources of light. Second, following a Freudian line, there is a destructive impulse—in this case lining seemingly pristine cubic spaces with perfunctory casework and equipment and then wrapping the whole ensemble with the mundane language and disordered spaces of a ranch-house exterior. Upon close examination, the rooms that appear in plan hardly exist as separate entities; rather than land on solid walls, the weight of the domed ceilings rests on diagonal frames supported on highly perforated partitions that do not always complete the implied square figure of the rooms. The Baroque layers that shutter the interior suspend the possibility of attending to the outside world, yet once inside, one does not find easy respite, as all the elements that make up the house seem at play.

Stop Three: Virginia Country House Rodolfo Machado, 1978

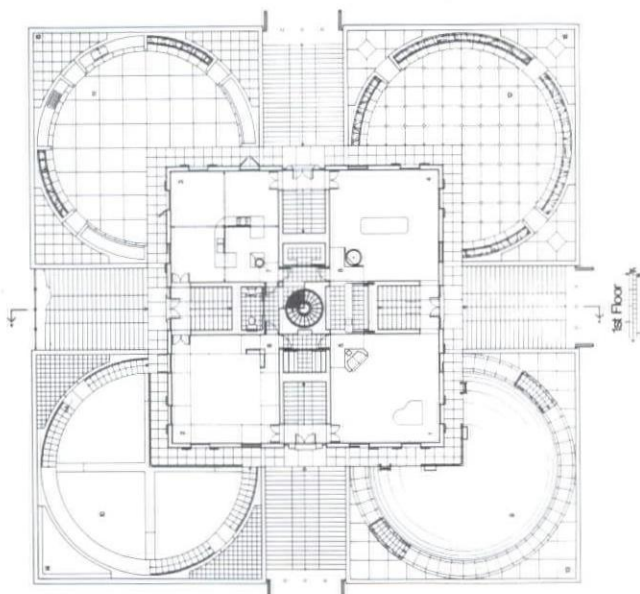
In the Virginia Country House, Rodolfo Machado took many of the terms and conditions intimated in the Kahn and Venturi projects, stating them in a more conscious and specific form.²⁴ The four-square, centralized scheme devised by Machado is a clear departure from the previous, linearly organized plans. In the statement that accompanies this project, Machado explains that the house's morphology stemmed from his memory of a Mannerist villa he studied in 1963, the Villa Emo Capodilista, called Montecchia, built in Selvazano by Dario Varotari in 1570.²⁵ The villa's plan inverts the typical Palladian villa, in that the stairs occupy the center. Machado spoke of dreaming about this house, exaggerating those parts he found "pleasurable" and ignoring others. To this mix of history and personal pleasure, he introduced the issue of character and context, explaining that he wanted to render his morphological dream as though "clothed with the air, painted with the tones" of the Piedmont region of Virginia.²⁶

With his allegorical use of an Italian villa recast to capture the qualities of a particular locality, Machado surpassed even the art historical ruminations of Venturi. Laying bare the fact that education, experience, and desire lie behind a designer's taste and modes of expression, Machado offered a means for considering the role personal motivations play when brought to bear on the seemingly objective, professional aims of structural stability, programmatic accommodation, and even aesthetic delight. In this view, not only must architects own up to (and nurture) their unique predilections and skills, they also must understand them as the very means through which those procedures and techniques that persist from the historical practice of architecture can be properly challenged, distorted, and rethought in contemporary terms.

The design of "rooms" or "chambers" was one such procedure for Machado. In his statement about the Virginia Country House, Machado spoke to the conceits of late-modernism by revealing his concern with making "rooms" as opposed to spaces:

"The notion of room should be understood as opposed to the historically younger, abstract, specialized, and precociously elaborated notion of space. The type of space commonly known as [a] room can be opposed to the space that is said to flow, to the space generated according to mostly pictorial or, more precisely, cubic techniques, to the one endowed with refined transparencies or produced by layering, to the space qualified as taut or planar or deep, to the so-called flexible space, to the space containing representations of space of distorted or correct perspective, to the spatial chain with articulations, to the one that, remaining undefined, is labeled 'postmodern,' or to so many other variations of convoluted spaces, depending on the architectural codes at work in their making. Rooms, in turn, appear as accessible and legible entities, even for the untrained beholder, as well-defined, forceful units without 'spatialisms' of any kind."²⁷

The trajectory that led Machado and his partner Jorge Silvetti to adopt this position contributed to their forging a critical path outside the polar extremes becoming apparent during the 1970s in architecture, those between pragmatic social service and neo-avant-gardism. The Miesian nature of Machado and Silvetti's early training in Argentina was originally tempered not only by the humanist nature of the discourse they found at Berkeley, but also by encounters with structuralist theory, which exposed the positivism inherent in much of modernism. The



A Virginia Country House project.
Rodolfo Machado, 1978. plan.

architecture program at Berkeley, following the lead of the counter-culture surrounding them, put engagement with popular social causes and political activism above all else, including such stands as design as an act of individual will.

The New York Five, on the other hand, exemplified the near total inversion of this position, creating work that retreated from the social chaos by uncoupling the formal apparatus of modern architecture from its suspect social effects, urban renewal among them. The ease with which the East Coast intelligentsia jettisoned the social and political agendas that had, for better or worse, animated the early generations of modernism was only outstripped by their ingenious appropriation and reinvention of the formal language found in the work of early Le Corbusier, Terragni, and various Russian Constructivists.

Machado (and Silveti) were among those who pursued a different direction: similar to Venturi and the other "Grays" in their effort to make a more "communicative," engaged architecture by using a broader range of historical forms and architectural syntax, they sought a more critical transformation of the historical material they were operating with. With the Virginia Country House, Machado more fully explored the implications of a semiotic architecture, using it as a lens to revisit the unfulfilled promise of functionalism. Machado argued that architecture in the past had used pictorial, decorative, and sometimes (under modernism), material and dimensional devices to attribute meaning to a room. The allegorical murals lining Neoclassical rooms, the highly evolved specificity of decorations and furnishings in the English house, and the French concern with *convenance* are all reference points for the highly figurative "attributes" that act as signifiers in the repetitive, cubic chambers of the Virginia Country House.²⁸ Attributes—figural pieces of functionally specific furniture—were placed at the inside corner of each of the four major rooms. And each ground-floor room was connected to an external garden, the use of which the rooms themselves qualified, thereby constructing a chain of functional references playing diagonally across the four-square plan from inside to outside, as follows:

INTERIOR AS ATTRIBUTE TO	EXTERIOR AS ATTRIBUTE
LIVING ROOM W/FIREPLACE	→ SWIMMING POOL W/SOLARIUM
KITCHEN W/OVEN	→ EXTERIOR PATIO W/HERB GARDEN
DINING ROOM W/FOUNTAIN	→ TERRACE W/PAVILION
LIBRARY W/LECTERN	→ CLOISTER W/GROTTO

Machado described the equation between attribute, inside and outside room as ²⁹ :

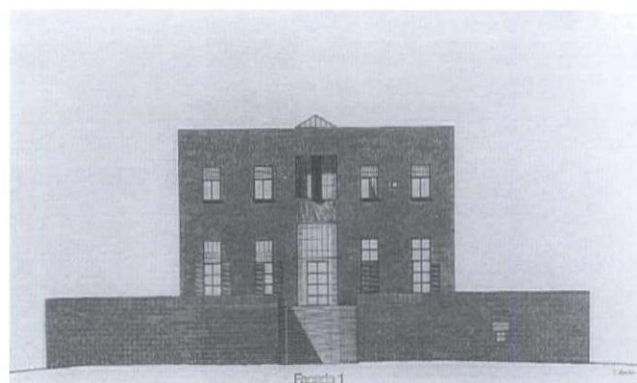
INTERIOR ROOM	:	INTERIOR ATTRIBUTE
EXTERIOR ROOMS	:	INTERIOR ROOMS

and reciprocally

EXTERIOR ROOMS	:	EXTERIOR ATTRIBUTES
INTERIOR ROOMS	:	EXTERIOR ROOMS

Different in character and function than the servant spaces of both Kahn and Venturi, the symbolic attributes were arrayed within the confines of the room, appearing and disappearing more deliberately than servant elements. By virtue of their position along the diagonal (idealized in one-point perspective views) and the way in which they alternately join with and mask the openings behind them, the attributes flicker (depending on one's position) between their roles as animating figures and aggregated ground. These effects are enhanced by the Loosian manner in which Machado wrapped match-cut materials from the edge of one chamber to the next and positioned a large mirror at forty-five degrees on the fireplace mantel. As with Loos and Mies, the overall forms remain regular and orthogonal, but the eye is encouraged to wander.

Stripping the remembered Italian villa of its original character and emptying the rooms in order to test the signifying power of the attributes, Machado separated the project's morphology from its ornamental language, rewrote the surfaces, and added figural elements to give meaning to the spaces within. In short, he appropriated a readymade and redressed it.³⁰ In so doing, the Virginia Country House evidences a strange play between super-realism and a form of masquerade. A variation on the work of Pop Art, but relying more on intensification than quotation, Superrealism depicts typical—even iconic—scenarios and describes them with such a consistent and relentless degree of focus and accuracy that they move towards the unreal.³¹ For example,



A Virginia Country House project.
Rodolfo Machado, 1978. elevation.

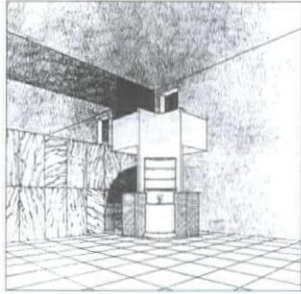
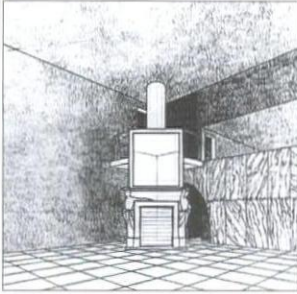
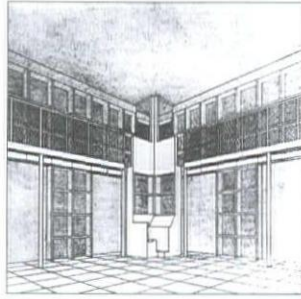
Stop Four: Tract House Project Frank Gehry, 1982

Frank Gehry once stated that when he began his career, in spite of having studied city planning, he felt he could never make an impact on the overall character of the city. If he were going to have any impact, he felt he would have to work at the scale of a small building or a room.³² Among the many projects that have explored this theme, the study for a Tract House occupies a crucial moment in Gehry's development, between the abstract, "unfinished aesthetic" of his projects from the 1970s and his more recent monumental work. Unlike those who espoused theoretical projects and paper architecture, Gehry's practice began with primarily commercial, "bread and butter" projects. Drawing architecture out of such projects, Gehry might have once been the Roger Corman of American architecture. His "cheap-scape" architecture was almost a corollary to Corman's "artsploitation" film.³³ Even the name and subject of this project—Tract House—speaks to the ambition Gehry shared with Corman: engaging, even exploiting, a common genre to artistic effect, and with no small irony, given his current evolution into a "reluctant master" of high-profile projects.³⁴

While Gehry does not appear to be particularly articulate or concerned with theory, he stands out among his peers as an omnivorous synthesizer of contemporary artistic and cultural trends. His involvement with artists such as Claes Oldenburg has been much chronicled, but the high degree to which the culture of "happenings" and Pop Art presage Gehry's work is still worth noting here. Among the messages scrawled on the walls of Oldenburg's 1960 improvisational art performance *The Street* was "Frank Lloyd Wright tried to eliminate painting and we are getting even by eliminating architecture." Such a statement defiantly reclaims the artist's rhetorical superiority in renewing the avant-garde project of collapsing art and life.

When, in a manifesto published in the following year (entitled "I am for an art..."), Oldenburg stated "I am for an art that embroils itself with everyday crap and still comes out on top," he was voicing a sentiment that was to animate much of the art of the 1960s.³⁵ Allan Kaprow's concept of the "happening" had already catalyzed many of the themes central to this era: he offered "ritual, magic and life" against the Western tradition of mimesis and aesthetic reflection.³⁶ Drawing on John Cage's art of chance, happenings privileged the sensuous and temporal situation of art to such a degree that in its emphasis on pure performance, the traditional boundaries between visual art, music, and theatre were collapsed. Temporarily and in vitro, the happening offered a highly differentiated space of engagement in an urban world that was becoming ever more bereft of aleatory social encounters and sensual pleasure.³⁷ Relative to this environmental and situation-based art, Gehry's breakthrough house for himself in 1978 was a rather late entry. Gehry's genius is tied to his eventual realization that in the expanded territory encompassed by contemporary practice, all of the icons and materials that his artist friends had sought to appropriate were already at his disposal. He retrieved the everyday as a conscious subject of architecture.

The Tract House, like many projects that followed it (such as the Schnabel House), was essentially a play on a "bubble diagram," distributing the program into a series of pavilions or containers, each sheathed in a different material. While the fact that this project never developed beyond a series of sketches and models may account for the lack of assignment of a specific program to each of the pavilions, it is more likely that Gehry was indifferent to the relationship between applied

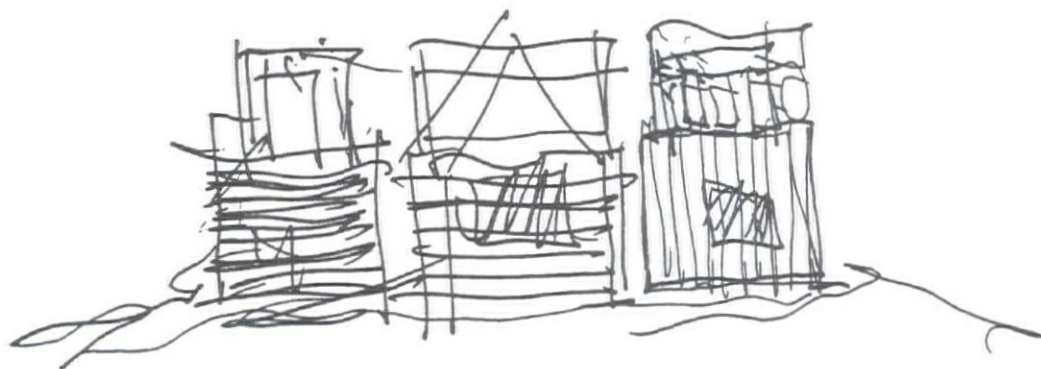


▲ Virginia Country House project.
Rodolfo Machado, 1978. perspectives.

Richard Estes painstakingly renders content latent in the surface reflections of the often architectural settings he paints. By contrast, the masquerade holds the promise of exposing the degree to which (and means by which) the cultural identities ascribed to persons or artifacts have been constructed by way of shared images and icons. Much like the early "pictures" of Cindy Sherman—images depicting her masquerading in the guise of various identities drawn from Hollywood films—the Virginia Country House takes faceless architectural objects and functions (the Mannerist villa, the mantelpiece) and by cloaking them in a new genre of garb, changed their character. For Machado, the intensification of an architecture's visual effects was not a breach of truthful expression but an opportunity to increase the ripple of semiotic signals produced by a furtive exposure of the mask. After being seduced by this highly crafted imagery, one is left with the laconic pleasure of finding an empty core. In this sense Machado has shown that perhaps the most interesting site of invention for the architect is in testing the limits of association between an architecture's objective, "hardened" image and its more pliant, spatial body beneath.



▲ *Untitled Film Still # 63*
Cindy Sherman, 1978.



▲ **Tract House Project**
Frank Gehry, 1982.

cladding and the function housed, as indicated by the way the cladding of volumes changed from one sketch to the next.³⁸ A nine-square grid stood in for a plan of the project—but in reality constituted no more than a quasi-unifying gesture or diagram. For Gehry, the grid was not an occasion for organizing either the structure or function of the project; here the hierarchy of served spaces and servant walls was not distinguished in any way.³⁹

In the manner of Machado's attributes, though, each pavilion became an individual figure in and of itself, a mini-monument.⁴⁰ With adjacencies maintained by the loosely held lines of the nine-square grid, each of the differentiated pavilions is partially collided with another. The implied points of intersection between these volumetric are the critical moments of the project, moments where the iconographic and functional singularity of each clad volume was left incomplete, with the potential for both the space of interior and the exterior skin to leak from one pavilion to the next. The trajectory from the plaid, hierarchical planning of Gehry and Walsh's Wright-inspired Steeves house of 1959 to Gehry's pavilion-like renovation of that house as the Smith project in 1981 indicates the degree to which Gehry consciously sought to collapse conventional equations between the phosphorous bubbles of program that his diagrams imply. The sectional overlaps of the later, built project for **FISHDANCE**, a 1989 restaurant in Kobe, Japan, gives an indication of the effect a more developed version of the Tract House might have had.

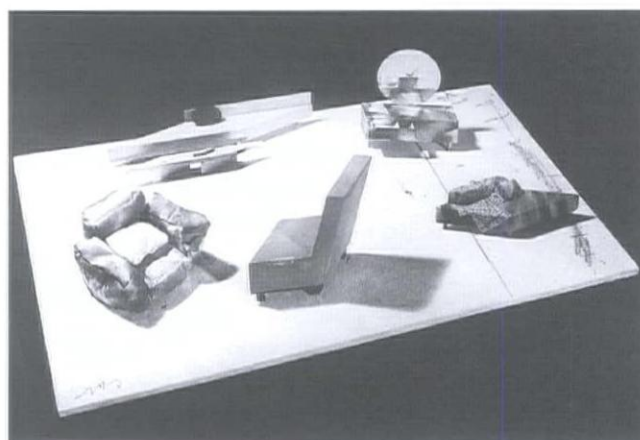
In his attention to, and heightening of, the secondary moments between the programs and figures of an architectural work, Gehry's play on the omnipresent tract house came very close to a phenomenon described by Donald Barthelme in his book *Snow White*. Barthelme set the following speech, an excursus on ordinary language, within the central narrative in the book at a moment when some of the story's characters are being given a tour of a recycling plant. The speech takes the form of concrete poetry, embodying both the tour guide's point concerning the ever-increasing production of trash in the United States and his supposition that one day we may no longer be able to distinguish between what is and is not "trash":

"You know, Klipschorn was right I think when he spoke of the 'blanketing' effect of ordinary language, referring, as I recall to the part that sort of, you know, 'fills in' between the other parts. The part, the 'filling' you might say, of which 'you might say' is a good example, is to me the most interesting part, and of course it might also be called the 'stuffing'

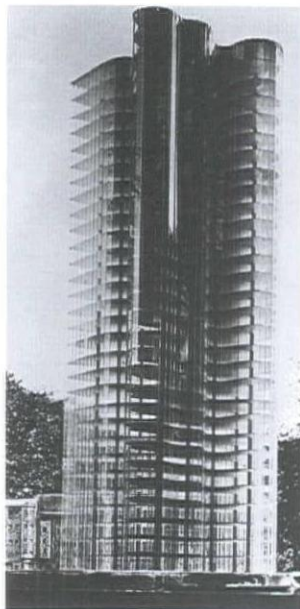
I suppose, and there is probably also, in addition, some other word to describe it, or maybe a number of them. But the quality this stuffing has, that the other parts of verbiage do not have, is two-parted, perhaps: (1) an 'endless' quality and (2) a 'sludge' quality. ... The 'endless' aspect of 'stuffing' is that it goes on and on, in many different forms, and in fact our exchanges are in large measure composed of it, in larger measure even perhaps, than they are composed of that which is not stuffing. The 'sludge' quality is the heaviness the 'stuff' has, similar to the heavier motor oil, a kind of downward pull but still fluid, if you follow me, and I can't help thinking that this is valuable, although it's hard to say just how, right at the moment."⁴¹

Through the evocation of a sludge-like and endlessly self-replicating suburb replete with retaining walls, fences, and shaggy surfaces, the Tract House shifts our focus from the verbs and proper nouns of architecture to the art of the messy preposition and conjunction.

Architecture differs from fine art in this fundamental aspect: experienced over time and in a distracted state, it does not, with the exception of the monument, lend itself well to the profound one liner. An architecture that enables temporary moments of aesthetic transcendence, albeit within the suspended attention of everyday experience, requires sensitivity to efforts that warp the seams of the expected, thereby *invisible*, scene. How does one conjure such invisibility? In a pluralistic democracy, where one man's chain-link security fence is



▲ **Models for Miniature Furniture**
Claes Oldenburg, 1963.



▲ Glass Skyscraper Berlin, project.
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1921-22.



▲ Fishdance Restaurant
Kobe, Japan. Frank Gehry, 1986.

another's monumental sign, the identity of a work of architecture is a conceptual one, contingent upon a nexus between technique, context, and audience. Gehry's most important work has, until recently, always embraced this relative fray of the cultural marketplace.

Responding in 1979 to a question from Barbaralee Diamondstein concerning his desire to make architecture sometimes invisible, Gehry, echoing Oldenburg, said:

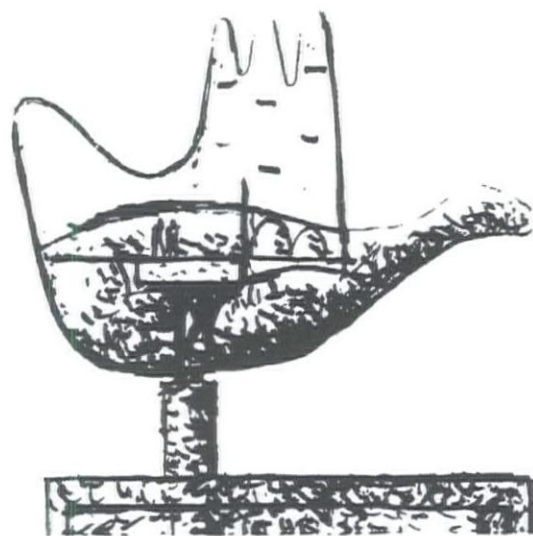
"...I had this funny notion that I would be able to make architecture that you would bump into before you would realize it was architecture. I deluded myself with that idea for a long time. Obviously I haven't been able to do it. I'd love to do it. Probably Venturi gets closer to doing that than anyone else I know.

Diamondstein: And how do you compare your aesthetic and way of dealing with everyday, familiar materials to the way he does?

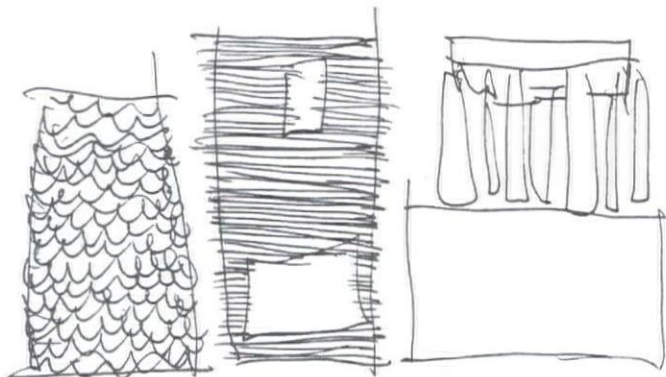
Gehry: I think it's quite different. He's into a kind of story, a verbal polemic. I do know it doesn't fit the same groove. I'm interested in this hands-on-thing, and not in telling stories..."⁴²

With Gehry's desire to make an architecture that does not communicate directly, one that is invisible by virtue of its verisimilitude to the common landscape that surrounds it, we have returned to the half-mute aspect attributed to Loos Müller House: only a half-century later, Loos' white mask is no longer relevant.⁴³ Gehry turns Loos' construct inside out; the private, interior lining is now exposed as exterior surface, and the room is apparently undifferentiated. In contemporary Los Angeles, where what were once considered states of bodily undress are today accepted forms of public presentation, the boundary between the public and private space can only be precariously drawn, perhaps, as Reyner Banham implied, at the highway off-ramp.⁴⁴ In an exhibitionist culture, strong silent types are perhaps the most conspicuous; a florid architecture of fragments blends in better. In other words, in a society where the life of an individual is entirely pervaded by extra-territorial communications technology conveying a "global village" comprised of advertising and commodities, a silent white wall is not what it used to be.

Gehry's "let it all hang-out" (in order to fit-in!) aesthetic belies his presumption that, while Venturi is telling stories, he is just a California guy into a "hands-on-thing." The material palette of the Tract House have historical allusions that indicate otherwise. The most arresting sketch from the study contains the elevation of a glass fish, a brick bunker, and a columnar temple atop a podium. These figures can be seen to represent fundamental construction types described by the German terms *Bauen* (building), *Baukunst* (building-art or architecture as high craftsmanship), and *Architektur* (the high architecture of the "styles").⁴⁵ This drawing even suggests Mies' more extreme projects: the crystalline Glass Skyscraper of 1920-21, the brick houses from the 1920s, and the hyper-reified peristyle of the New National Gallery in Berlin. Through a metonymic shift, Gehry conferred an ichthyoid form and structure on Mies' glass prism, giving it a new mythic identity. Gone with Gehry are modernism's notions of appropriateness between a building's program and social status and its material and stylistic expression. After all, in the Tract House, these "expressions" were only so many skins slapped onto a common wood frame. More acutely



▲ The Open Hand Le Corbusier, 1952-65.



Tract House
in 3 parts

Tract House in Three Parts
Frank Gehry, 1982.

baroque and less structurally firm and accommodating than the semiotically uncoupled Decorated Shed of Venturi and Scott Brown—with its rhetorical *face* and conventional *behind*—Gehry's project fleshes out chimerical differences in the dissipated anatomy of the modern city.

Gehry's performance is more akin to the carnivalesque beaded glove of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* than the hopeful, universal human symbol of Le Corbusier's *Open Hand*. Swearing off the ambitions of humanism, Gehry replaces Le Corbusier's immobile, heavy hand with a glove-like second skin. Jackson cribbed his technique from the magician's sleight of hand; while other, more sophisticated moves are afoot, one's eyes are alternately fixed on the waving of Jackson's spectral glove on high or the transgressive travel of his other hand down to grab his crotch. Gehry achieves a similar effect: distracted by spectacles where the rarified and the vulgar are blurred, one is unwittingly ensnared in a work of architecture.



A *Gloved Hand* Michael Jackson.

Conclusion

The substance of Tafuri's characterization of Kahn's and Venturi's work drew upon art and art-historical ideas surrounding the development of Pop and Minimalism circa 1960. Kahn's retreat into material reduction and formal autonomy align him with Minimalism, whereas Venturi's ironic use of architectural (and other kinds of) signs aligns him with Pop. The very tendencies that Tafuri took as evidence of architecture's pathological willingness to play into the illusions of capitalism by substituting the "aura" of form for real reform were seen by many art critics as the radical endgame of aesthetic modernism.

Arthur Danto has argued that the advent of Pop and Minimalism signaled nothing less than the final revolution of Modern Art. For him they constituted the threshold to a post-historical period in which the practice of art became liberated from the onus of making history thereafter able to flower into many distinct and diverse paths. In this view Pop and Minimalism were not only a return to a realism that rejected the pious formalism that had characterized Abstract Expressionism at the end of the 1950s, but they also represented the ultimate conflation of art, philosophy, and everyday experience implied by Romanticism and concretely presaged by Duchamp.

"What Pop artists showed, like the Minimalists who were working along a parallel track, was that there is no special way a work of art has to look. It can look like a Brillo box if you are a Pop artist, or like a panel of wood if you are a Minimalist. It can look like a piece of pie or it can look like a curl of chicken wire. With this came the recognition that the meaning of art could not be taught by examples, and that what makes the difference between art and non-art is not visual, but conceptual. It is a matter for the philosophy of art to discover, and having brought the matter to this point, Pop and Minimalism brought the quest to an end. Artists no longer needed to be philosophers. They were liberated, having handed the problem of the nature of art over to philosophy, to do what they wanted to, and at this precise historical moment Pluralism became the objective historical truth. There was, from the perspective of history, nothing to choose between Pop and Minimalism or Realism or Expressionism or anything you damned pleased. History in effect was over."⁴⁶

The shift in consciousness described by Danto brought art closer to the contemporary condition of architecture. Less than a hundred years ago it was heretical to think of a work of art and a common article, such as an advertisement, as occupying the same cultural space. Yet within the space of the modern city, the museum and department store had been provoking such a mix well before Warhol came along. In the United States, where marginal controls upon real-estate speculation have produced strange adjacencies of "high" architecture and lowly forms of building, these often coalesce to a degree where, depending on the audience, one is indistinguishable from the other. This market-driven democratization of architecture renders suspect the program of modern architecture, so prized by Tafuri, that conceived architecture as an artful reorganization of the building industries. In his attempt to reconnect architecture to a cycle of production which would have overturned the pyramid of values that has allowed us to falsely believe that "linguistic choices or a structural organization [can] express or try to anticipate 'freer' modes of existence," he refused to recognize the potential agency in the modes of production in which architecture already participated.⁴⁷ In the United States, the culture industry—arts, entertainment, tourism—now threatens to overtake construction in its percentage of the gross national product. The rhetorical exchange-value of an

architecture, as measured by the status it communicates, accounts for much of its currency in these predominating forms of production and consumption.⁴⁸

Due in no small part to its consciousness concerning the historical nature of architectural techniques, postmodernism, as a movement, still possesses a radical potential to enter into and transform the bazaar that is American cultural life. By engaging the decorative, the contingent, the discursive, and the hybrid, architectural postmodernism challenged the cultural authority the modern architect thought could be achieved through masculinist assumptions of originality, internal consistency, and austerity of form. Yet despite postmodernism—or some would say because of its commercial success—creative authority continues to elude the architect. Creative power comes with the ability to compel an audience to value a vision in which they recognize their own desires and ambitions, especially an audience that lacks the skills to achieve such recognition on its own. I would not claim that these “Four Stops,” in and of themselves, offer inherently radical or conservative models for this kind of postmodern engagement. Gehry’s Tract House, for example, suggests that in the psychoanalytic cross-pollination of forms, that modern architecture appropriated (vernacular), with techniques it invented (the bubble diagram) and rejected (icon-making), one can add aura to ordinary architecture and thereby elevate the most common of shared places.

Of all the projects, the language of Machado’s Virginia Country House appears to be most rooted in the *stylings* of postmodernism, although the method by which it was produced contains the ingredients of its own deformation: it could most easily be re-styled to suit other tastes and other contexts. That said, Machado’s projection of a highly crafted and programmatically formal architecture presumed a cultural literacy and standard of building perhaps too rarefied to *parlante* to more than just a few. By contrast, the homey, casual nature of the Pearson House might seem a promising forecast of Venturi and Scott Brown’s later, much-advertised populism, a promise as yet unfulfilled by the very limited palette of references they seem willing to draw from the everyday city.

“Question: ‘What does space conceal?’

Answer: ‘Isn’t it like a game of hide and seek. Of course, the one who is hiding will always say he is somewhere else, and yet he is always there. And you know he will turn around and catch someone. The interminable search for a definition of space serves only to hide the essential structure of art, a process of reification. Any individual who perceives a function of space, especially a convincing one, appropriates it mentally or economically.’”

—Marcel Broodthaers⁴⁹

In stressing that ongoing potentials for design can still be found in the pluralistic, catholic character of the larger body of postwar American work indicated by these projects, I am mindful of a tiresome holdover from the aesthetic monotheism of modernism: over-determined equations between the form or technical manner of an architectural project and its political or cultural meaning(s). As these unbuilt projects have no real audience aside from a small cadre of architects and critics, I have sought to bypass the thorny but still commonplace assumption among some critics that an architectural project can be imputed with a specific political, social, or artistic content by virtue of its original, poetic, or conventional form, regardless of the cultural circumstances of the project’s production, use, or reception (it cannot). Architecture,

as such, does not mean anything until it enters into a social world and once having entered that world, its meaning is theoretically inexhaustible. This does not preclude those who are involved in producing architecture—and criticizing it—from borrowing the techniques, operating with the metaphors, and building on the analogies that tether them to the culture in which they operate.

Risking solipsism, I have chosen these “theoretical” projects as examples, in order to highlight the highly speculative and differing ways in which the ideas and procedures used by these architects construed, and to some degree delimited, the very reality in which their work was projected. In their refusal to make spatial manipulations the currency by which their “functions” were understood (or masked) and concentrating instead on language, character, and appearance, these architects have shared Broodthaers’ insight concerning both art and architecture as acts of reification. Modern architecture’s fundamental reification stemmed from the supposition that the abstract bounding of space constituted its primary means of expression, alongside sculpture’s elaboration of volume in space and painting’s depiction of color. In Broodthaers’ terms, “space-making” became a mantle behind which maneuvers of great social, economic, and aesthetic consequence could hide undetected. If the projects cited here can be seen to stand for the postmodern response to this reification of space, it is because of the rhetorical way they took abstractions, such as the house’s function and cladding, and made them material, insisting that their qualities could appear or be concealed by virtue of their evocative image, allusive shape, and senuous touch. Those who object to the vulgar character of postmodern architecture in America on just these grounds should be mindful of the words of Apollinaire: “When you support a revolutionary movement, you would compromise its development if you were to dissociate it from certain elements in the name of taste.”⁵⁰

Notes

I have gained from the response and criticism received at venues where I have presented this material over the past several years, as well as from the insights of many students who have engaged it in my theory seminars. Versions were delivered at the "Learning the Making" conference at I.I.T. (1992) and the faculty seminar "The Book, The Body and the Building" at the International Center for Writing at Washington University in St. Louis (1994). I owe a particular debt of appreciation to Lauren Kogod, who first invited me to present this material, encouraged me to put it into publishable form and tirelessly edited it, offering valuable suggestions. Finally, I thank Laura Miller, whose insights and editing have been indispensable.

¹ Tafuri addresses this theme in several writings, including: Manfredo Tafuri, "The Ashes of Jefferson," in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970's*, trans. Pellegrino d'Acerno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge: MIT press, 1987) 301; and Manfredo Tafuri, Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, trans. Robert Erich Wolf (New York: Abrams, 1976) 404-408.

² See Tafuri and Dal Co, 115-120; 151-157; and 222-223.

³ An exploration of the reasons why this aesthetic achievement did not always bring with it the "good life" is beyond the scope of this discussion.

⁴ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 7.

⁵ Conversely, while Gehry's work might partake of design tactics initiated by Kahn, something is inevitably lost in the transcription that only the original model can provide.

⁶ David G. De Long, Louis Kahn: *In the Realm of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), Chap. 1, "Adventures of Unexplored Places," 20-49.

⁷ De Long 20-24.

⁸ Transcribed in John Lobell, *Between Silence and Light: Spirit in the Architecture of Louis Kahn* (Boulder: Shambhala 1979) 26, 28.

⁹ The passage is taken from a 1955 entry in *The Notebooks and Drawings of Louis Kahn*, edited by Richard Saul Wurman and Eugene Feldman (Philadelphia: Falcon Press, 1962).

¹⁰ Quoted in "How to Develop New Methods of Construction," *Architectural Forum* 101 (November 1954): 157.

¹¹ Kahn's increasing engagement with "history" as an aspect of his relationship with Venturi during the later part of his career is explored in Denise Scott Brown, "A Worm's Eye View of Recent Architectural History," *Architectural Record* (February 1984): 69-81.

¹² Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977) 13.

¹³ Venturi 106.

¹⁴ Centering the inter-columnation of the porch on the kitchen foreshadows the use of a centrally placed picture window in the kitchen of the Connecticut Brandt House of 1970.

¹⁵ Venturi 106.

¹⁶ Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988) 17.

¹⁷ Manfredo Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir" in *Oppositions* 3, trans. Victor Calian-dro (1974): 55.

¹⁸ Tafuri & Dal Co 408.

¹⁹ Is Altman's *Nashville* not a cinematic triumph? My suspicions regarding the appellation "kitsch" were confirmed by the critic David Hickey, who, responding to a question after a lecture about the "danger of kitsch" offered that it was a term invented by upper class Viennese Protestants to impugn inexpensively made religious icons and decorative items manufactured to suit the tastes of working class Catholics, primarily by Jewish firms. It therefore grew out of (and still reeks of) class biased and anti-Semitic impulses.

²⁰ See Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 210-215.

²¹ Although Venturi borrowed photographs of the sign-ridden, everyday landscape from Peter Blake's *God's Own Junkyard* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), Jasper Johns's *Three Flags* (1958) is the only Pop work cited in *Complexity and Contradiction*.

²² See John Crowe Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk: New Directions, 1941).

²³ Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art," in *Driftworks*, trans. Susan Hanson (New York: Semiotext(e), 1984) 82.

²⁴ The text accompanying the drawings for the Virginia Country House was first published in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (December 1978): 100-103; it appeared again, in expanded and edited version, in K. Michael Hays, *Unprecedented Realism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995) 46-49.

²⁵ In the wake of Colin Rowe and John Hedjuk's influence, the nine-square plan became the *lingua franca* of academic plan-making in the 1970s. The plan of this house is ostensibly four square, but considering the clearly delineated stairs and circulation spaces as central to the experience of the house (which the sections indicate), it might just as well be understood as a mannered nine-square.

²⁶ Hays 47.

²⁷ Hays 47.

²⁸ *Convenance* (after Laugier) refers to the appropriateness or "fitness" of architecture's order, style, and materials to the program and class it houses.

²⁹ This is Machado's diagram, from Hays 48.

³⁰ See Rodolphe el-Khoury, "Paradoxical Seams," in Hays 92-105.

³¹ K. Michael Hays, with Machado and Silveti, has theorized their work as a form of "Unprecedented Realism." While I sympathize with the rhetorical flourish of such a term, I follow Hannah Arendt's stipulation that "ideas, as distinguished from events, are never unprecedented." Taking the making of architecture as an historical performance (an "event"), I consider it in realist terms to be *always-already* unprecedented.

³² See interview, Frank Gehry and Peter Arnell, "A conversation: 'No I'm an Architect'" in *Frank Gehry, Building and Projects* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985) xiv.

³³ Corman has managed over the years to trump the Hollywood establishment by using ingenious young talent to make cheap, B-grade popular genre films such as *Rock & Roll High School* and *Grand Theft Auto*; while technically raw, they are often both financially successful and artistically innovative.

³⁴ See Mildred Friedman, "The Reluctant Master" in *Architecture + Process/Gehry Talks* (New York: Rizzoli 1999) 11-29.

³⁵ Claes Oldenburg, "I am for an art....," as reprinted in Ellen H. Johnson, editor, *American Artists on Art from 1940 to 1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982) 98.

³⁶ See Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings* (New York: Abrams, 1966).

³⁷ The artistic avant-gardes joined the radical left in associating the evaporation of dynamic social life in urban America with ill-effects of urban renewal and "modernist" planning principles.

³⁸ The path traveled from the plaid, hierarchical planning of Gehry and Walsh's Wright inspired Steeves house of 1959 (the same year as Venturi's Pearson) to his pavilionated renovation of that same house as the Smith Project of 1981 indicates the degree to which Gehry consciously sought to collapse conventional equations between the phosporous bubbles of program that his diagrams imply.

³⁹ The Tract House came at the point when Gehry's work was becoming embraced by Johnson and Eisenman et al. One of the project drawings is dedicated to Philip Johnson; one might suppose that this is Gehry's sideways nod to the formal concerns that animated the work of Eisenman, Hedjuk, and a generation or more of students at Cooper Union.

⁴⁰ Hays 29.

⁴¹ Donald Barthelme, *Snow White* (New York: Atheneum, 1967) 102-103.

⁴² Barbaralee Diamonstein, "Interview with Frank Gehry" in *American Architecture Now* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980) 46.

⁴³ Shindler and Neutra, Viennese émigrés and disciples of Loos, exerted a strong influence—both directly and by way of architects such as Raphael Soriano—on modern architecture in Los Angeles and on Gehry in particular. With its play on the stucco commercial vernacular of Los Angeles, Gehry's attempt at mute, Loosian invisibility is the clearest in the exterior of his Danziger Studio and Residence of 1964.

⁴⁴ Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: the Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

⁴⁵ See Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*, ed. John Cava (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ Arthur C. Danto, "Learning to Live with Pluralism" in *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992) 89.

⁴⁷ Danto 57.

⁴⁸ The extreme example of this is Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao, which some claim has, as a tourist attraction, revived an entire city.

⁴⁹ Marcel Broodthaers (after an interview by Irmaline Leber), "Ten Thousand Francs Reward" trans. Paul Schmidt, in *Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs*, ed. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (Cambridge: MIT Press 1988) 45.

⁵⁰ Guillaume Apollinaire, quoted by Walter Benjamin, "False Criticism," trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, vol. 2, 1927-1943* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard Press, 1999) 405-408.

STRUCTURING SURFACES: THE LEGACY OF THE WHITES

PEGGY DEAMER

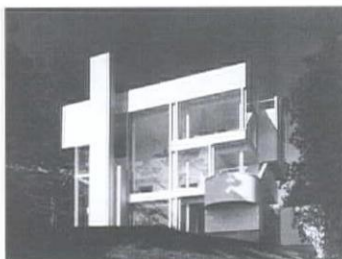
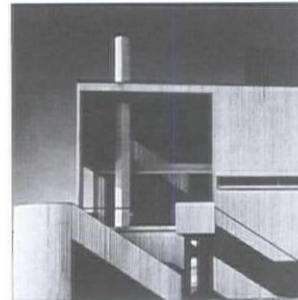
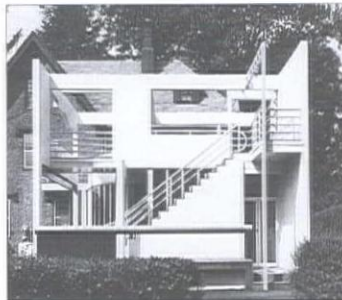
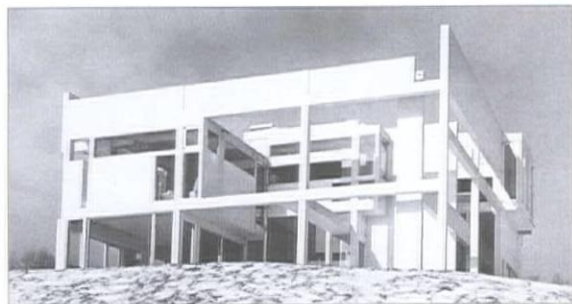
Taking on the legacy of “The Whites” is a daunting task. To speak of them as a whole gives credence to the idea that they were a group, when in fact the association of Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier for the publication of *Five Architects* was, by their own account, as much a publicity device as a position statement. Moreover, the issue of “legacy” implies that the influence has passed on to another generation, when in fact at least one of its members, Eisenman, is still a leading figure in that new generation. At what point do we consider the baton to have been passed? And, if one could agree that there was a legacy, it would seem that it comes unevenly from the five architects involved. Indeed, much of it comes from the surrounding rhetoric that did not even originate with the so-called “New York Five.” What work, what writings, and what institutional codification can rightfully be treated as primary? And lastly, shedding fresh formal light on the work seems not only impossible at this point, but unappealing. The formal characteristics of this work have been examined and reexamined, and doing so again only acquiesces to their aesthetic strategy too easily.

Having said this, it is too intriguing *not* to think through this work historically and *not* to admit there is a legacy to be had. The sense is simply too strong that the discourse would be radically different had the five architects not self-identified and in turn provoked the creation of an oppositional group (the Grays). So it is with certain caveats that one proceeds: namely, that the polemic surrounding the work, both generated by the Whites and by others, is as much a source of the legacy as the work itself; and that two of the figures, Eisenman and Hejduk, contribute to this legacy more than the others. The reach of Eisenman’s Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS), and the influence of Hejduk’s Deanship at Cooper Union are both particularly strong. The actual architecture of all five is, in other words, less a source of the discussion than its evidence.¹

To read both critics and apologists for the Whites, the most that can be said for their shared vision is an enduring interest in Le Corbusier. Various evaluations, then, were based on whether or not the continuation of this legacy was considered good or not for architecture. The Grays—those architects loosely gathered around Robert A.M. Stern, who promoted a less abstract, remote, and intellectual architecture—certainly felt that Le Corbusier’s legacy was not positive. The sins of the Whites were the sins of modernism, with the added guilt that they contaminated America with an imported problem. Colin Rowe, Kenneth Frampton, and Arthur Drexler, on the other hand, all of whom wrote critical pieces in *Five Architects*, felt that there was poetry still to be had in the forms of Le Corbusier (and Mies van der Rohe) and thus supported this ongoing research into the language of modernism.

Insisting that the most compelling position of the Whites was their devotion to Le Corbusier, though, does not identify the nature of their legacy. If it did, then this identity would be indistinguishable from that of modernism proper. Nor can it be said that the insistence on this abiding appreciation of modernism in the face of pro-American, pro-vernacular forces itself constitutes the legacy. This would simultaneously assign the Whites too much power—the ongoing interest in modern masters in a postmodern discourse extends to realms beyond the reach of the Whites (witness this interest among the Dutch and specifically Rem Koolhaas)—and too little imagination. In other words, the stylistic interest in modernism was and is not the main concern of the New York Five.² Instead I would suggest that their contribution lies precisely in what *distinguishes* the Whites from Le Corbusier; namely, their elevation of form from the condition of design to that of epistemology. What was at stake was the claim that form was a type of knowledge; indeed, an *essential* type of knowledge. The true legacy of the Whites is not the formal vocabulary of datums, frontalities, rotations, solids, voids, layering, skin, grid, figure-ground, etc., but the fact that we think these operations have systemic intellectual import at all.³

Le Corbusier, we should remember, while precise and articulate in his formal operations, never identified form in and of itself as the ends of architecture. While he does, unlike Mies, admit that form is a significant consideration of architectural design, it is not because form itself is of interest but because it is the means to emotional, not intellectual, fulfillment. “The Architect, by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is a pure creation of his spirit; by forms and



▲ **House II**
 Hardwick, Vermont
 Peter Eisenman, 1969.
Benaceraff House Addition
 Princeton, New Jersey
 Micheal Graves, 1969.
Gwathmey Residence and Studio
 Amagansett, New York
 Charles Gwathmey, 1966.

< **One-Half House project**
 John Hejduk, 1966.
Smith House
 Darien, Connecticut
 Richard Meier, 1965.

shapes he affects our senses to an acute degree and provokes plastic emotions."⁴ One would never find Le Corbusier, or any of the original modern architects, arguing, as Hejduk does, about the essential merit of the diamond over the square, or the necessity of revealing deep form in the environment, as Eisenman does.⁵ Nor, to take the issue even farther, was Le Corbusier interested in proving that he did not "author" his own works, as the above quote indicates. For Eisenman, in contrast, the logical extension of seeing architectural form as an analogue to intellectual form was and is letting the structure of thought build itself with no subjective intervention.

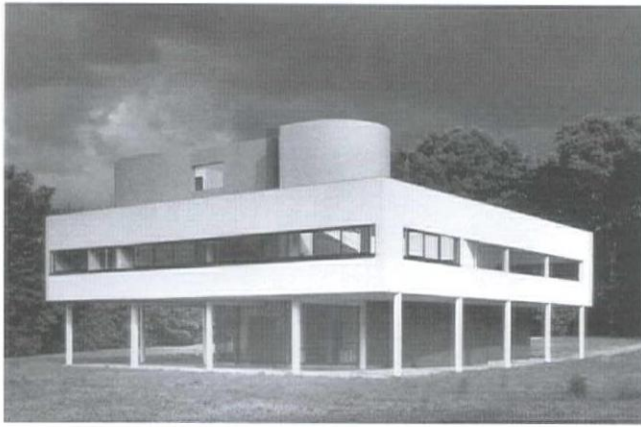
While it is a simple statement to say that the Whites elevated form-making to epistemological status, there are many issues tangled up with this statement, issues that lead directly to a seeming moral authority regarding our obligation toward form. There is the question of authorship and originality—if form is part of the structure of thought, am I not just an agent of that structure? There is the role of history and the *zeitgeist*—is the structure of thinking historically determined and if so, am I not merely an agent of the *zeitgeist*? There is the relationship between percept(ion) and concept(ion)—if architecture is a form of thought, how does visual perception interface with that mental construct?; or the issue of the autonomy of architecture as a discipline and its affinity to painting and sculpture—if architecture is a form of visual thinking, is it quantifiably different from painting and sculpture?; and finally, there lurks the odd role of function—if architecture is a product of thinking, how can it also be a product of use?

For the Five, the attachment of these epistemologically related questions to modernism complicated matters. Not only was the knowledge claim an attempt to grasp the heart of modernism by locating "form" and "formalism" at the center of its discourse, but it was also an effort to attach epistemology to a historical condition. This latter fact tangled the rhetoric enormously, for on the one hand it brought with it the old problem of simultaneously being timeless and "of the time"; and on the other, in referencing work that was already fifty years old, was not even *of its time*.

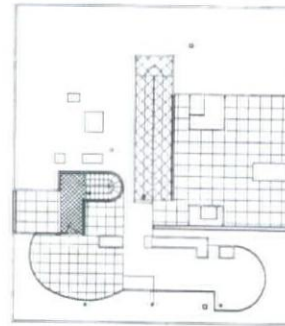
Despite these awkwardnesses, however, the bold attempt on the part of the Five to face these huge and difficult questions directly makes their agenda as fascinating and appealing as it is off-putting and illogical. And our inquiry into their influence can't help but be as much an explanation of the lasting appeal of this extreme formalism as it is an examination of its content.

To understand the formulation of this formalist epistemology, the ideological context that helps explain precisely *how* different the set of questions facing the Whites was from the interests and preoccupations facing Le Corbusier and other Europeans in the 1920s must be laid bare and its origins in Texas in the 1950s analyzed. The initial core of shared intellectual aspiration was formed by the association of Colin Rowe, Robert Slutzky, and John Hejduk from 1954-56 at the University of Texas School of Architecture at Austin (the "Texas Rangers"), and later Eisenman's work with Rowe in England and Italy. Indeed, these associations formed the basis for highly particular positions regarding history, form, perception, and modernism.⁶

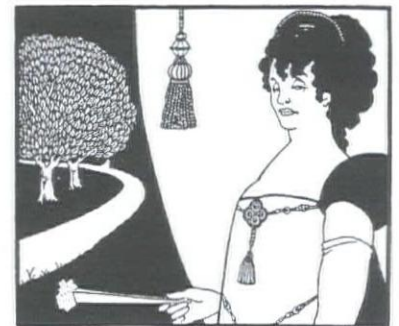
One should begin with Colin Rowe. Arriving in Austin in January of 1954, after studying town planning on a Fulbright with Yale's Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Rowe brought with him to Texas the legacy of the Warburg Institute, primarily the work he had done there from 1945 to 1947 with Rudolf Wittkower. Aby Warburg, the founder of the Institute, promoted the idea that it was the historian's duty "to penetrate beyond the description of style" in order to examine not how *culture* determined style but how it formed the backdrop against which the *individual* would make artistic choices. It was an anti-*zeitgeist* position.⁷ Wittkower joined the Institute's faculty in 1934, at age 32, later publishing *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* in 1949. In this, his focus was less anti-*zeitgeist* than it was "proof" that the Renaissance was not just an aesthetic style but an overriding intellectual, religious, and scientific program. The architecture was "read" by Wittkower as a symbol for this larger enterprise, to which he brought optical and Gestalt psychological concepts to bear. Wittkower assumed form had symbolic meaning and that the historian's task was to reveal it by hermeneutically drawing it out.



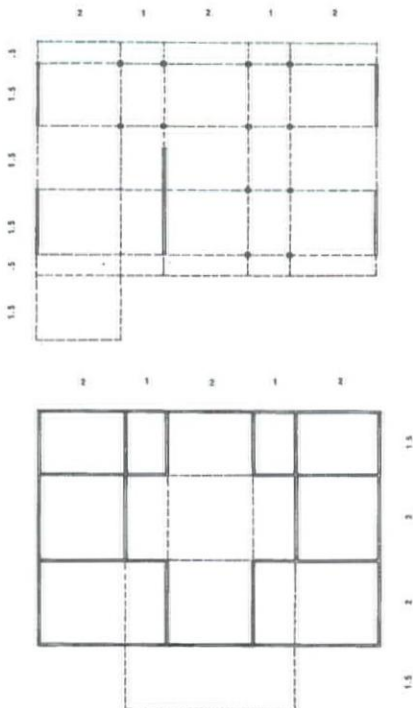
▲ Villa Savoye
Poissy, France. Le Corbusier, 1929-31.



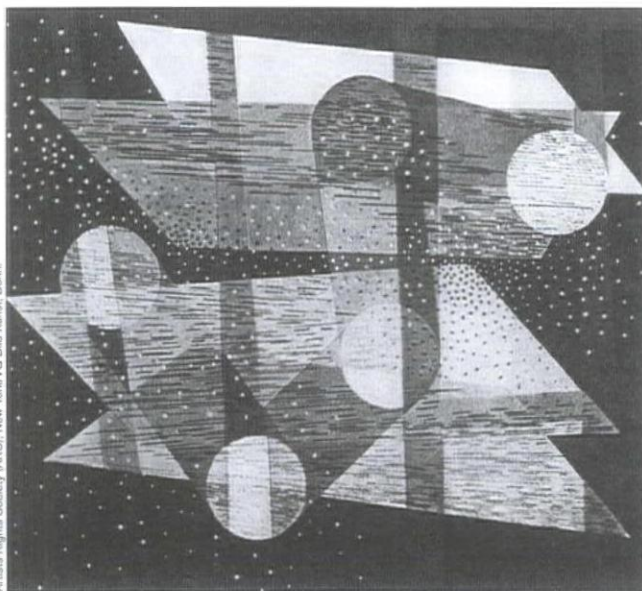
▲ Villa Savoye
Poissy, France.
Le Corbusier, 1929-31. plan.



▲ Example of rendering a painting to create a condition of frontality
Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, 1954.



▲ Analytical diagrams of Villa Malcontenta and Villa Garches
Colin Rowe, "Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," *Architectural Review* 1947.



▲ La Sarraz
László Moholy-Nagy, 1930.

Rowe adopted both the anti-zeitgeist principles of the Warburg Institute and Wittkower's Gestalt-based techniques for reading the form of architecture symbolically. But where Wittkower would have been spared even thinking about modern architecture—given England's late and unpolemical embrace of it—Rowe was thrust directly into this context, which given modernism's a-historicism was difficult territory for the architectural historian. And his "Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," published in 1947 in the British journal *Architectural Review*, did what the proper Warburgian could and would never have done: compare Palladio's **VILLA MALCONTENTA** with Le Corbusier's **VILLA GARCHES**.⁸ He thus implied that form is not a symbol of a particular culture, but something that transcends the specifics of culture and provides the basis for a universal reading of architecture.

While this might seem to be good news for form, it nevertheless implied a significant reevaluation of modernism. In applying Renaissance principles to the analysis of modern architecture, Rowe was in effect criticizing current rhetoric of the "Spirit of the Age." When this anti-zeitgeist perspective was applied to modernism, it deflated the key idea upon which modernism rested. It allowed Rowe to declare that modernism was not unique in its formal typologies and had no claims to being the spirit of the current age. With regard to the architect, Rowe re-emphasized the Warburgian idea that, once the notion of the zeitgeist is dismissed, architects must admit that they are consciously designing a piece of architecture, not just letting the age flow through them. He insisted that responsibility toward design must be embraced by the designer.

Rowe also brought to Austin a particular disdain for the figure (and thought) of Walter Gropius. Gropius, as architect and educator, was anti-history; for him, according to Rowe, designing was about imagination with an overlay of "objectivity." While Rowe allowed that the individual and not the zeitgeist designed buildings, he felt pedagogically that the architect should understand history and the principles it yielded. Thus, while Harvard concentrated on originality and talent, Rowe and the Texas faculty emphasized precedent, observation and synthesis. And, unlike other schools embracing modernism in America, Austin placed Le Corbusier and Mies as the paradigmatic figure(s) of modernism, displacing Gropius.

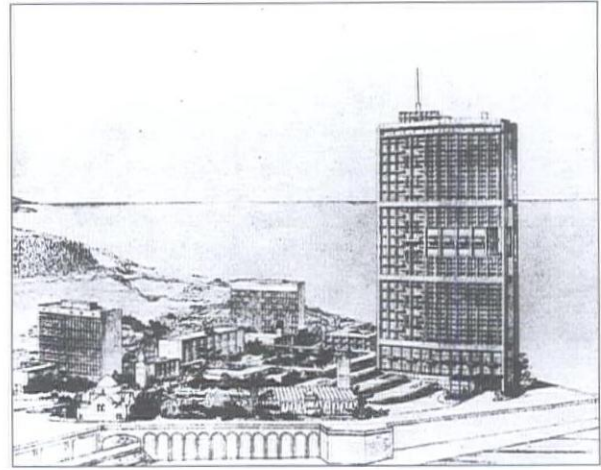
Robert Slutzky, who joined the faculty in the fall of 1954, contributed another set of concerns. A painter who had completed a thesis on the relationship between twentieth-century art and the Gestaltists Kohler,



▲ **Bauhaus**
Dessau, Germany, Walter Gropius, 1925-26.



▲ **Equitable Life Insurance**
Portland, Oregon, Pietro Belluschi, 1948.



▲ **Algiers Block Project**
Le Corbusier, 1930.

Koffka, and Arnheim, Slutzky was not trained as an architect. He was interested in "reading" the spatial effect of the surface, and this formed the basis for his connection to architecture and constituted his intellectual link to Rowe. The Arnheimian lesson championed by Slutzky was the idea that depth on the painted canvas was only successfully achieved when the canvas's two-dimensional surface was emphasized. Frontality—the viewer's parallel and layered position vis-à-vis that surface—was understood to be the dominant visual ordering system, and "space" was understood to operate most profoundly in a dialectic relationship to the two-dimensional surface. Strong separations between foreground figure and background field, while obtaining a depth effect, did so by severing the surface too blatantly and were seen to yield a weak, incomplete, and trivial spatial reading. A more complex, difficult, and ultimately more complete sense of space came with depth created through color, texture, shape, and position on the single surface. Slutzky applied this principle to his own commitment to Cubism and neo-plasticism and found there the essential manifold of spatial perception. The various facades and planes of a building were asked to perform a similar demonstration in architecture.

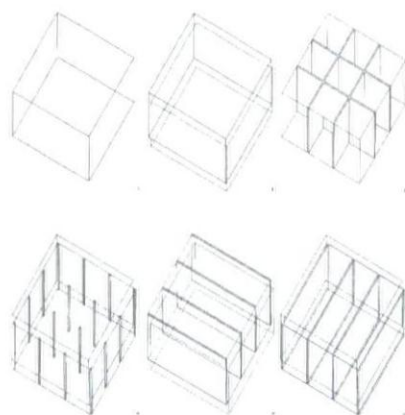
It was then the combined anti-Gropius urge from Rowe and the Gestalt thrust from Slutzky and Rowe that yielded the two "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal" articles. Written in 1955-56 in Austin, they did not appear in print for (respectively) another eight and fifteen years.⁹ In the first of these articles, Rowe and Slutzky promote a notion of transparency that is optical/phenomenal, not literal. Using György Kepes' notion of implied transparency (and here Kepes is reiterating the same concern for frontal, two-dimensional space), in which the shared portion of two seemingly overlapping figures allows for "a simultaneous perception of different spatial locations," the two authors argue that Gropius' architecture, as demonstrated by the **BAUHAUS** at Dessau fails to achieve anything more than the literal transparency offered by glass.¹⁰ To them, Gropius failed to understand the lessons provided by Cubism, they claimed, proof of which is the penchant for photographing the Bauhaus building in Dessau from the diagonal instead of frontally. In contrast, Le Corbusier, himself a painter, fully grasped the spatial potential of phenomenal transparency, as indicated by Garches and his unbuilt League of Nations project.

In the second of these articles, the authors extend the argument to other buildings and other formal properties, as well as to non-modern examples. They suggest that certain buildings—the United Nations

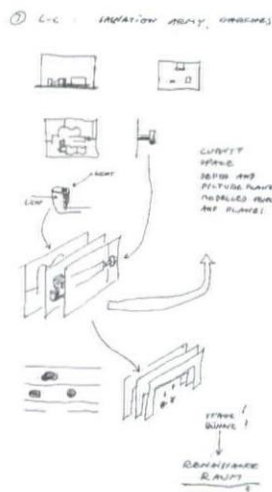
building in New York City and Pietro Belluschi's **EQUITABLE LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING** in Portland, Oregon—are examples of literal transparency because the gridded façades are spatially and structurally unambiguous, while others—Le Corbusier's **ALGIERS BLOCK** skyscraper and I.M. Pei's Mile High Center in Denver—are examples of phenomenal transparency because the gridded façades fluctuate in their foreground/background reversals. At the same time, they analyzed Renaissance façades to reveal similarly ambiguous and fluctuating readings of pattern hierarchy, flatness, and recession. This discussion in turn leads to a comparative analysis between Michelangelo's San Lorenzo façade and Mondrian's *Victory Boogie Woogie* and culminates in Gestaltian diagrams and pronouncements that explain the interest in figure/ground reversals. It becomes clear that phenomenal transparency is less about transparency per se than about the degree to which a flat surface/façade can sustain multiple readings of pattern and layering. Visual complexity is the goal. At the same time, the anti-zeitgeist, historical, and typological urge is pushed via the Renaissance-Modernism cross-referencing.

These articles should also be understood as critical responses to Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time, and Architecture*, which chronicled a historical development of the notion of space that supposedly culminated with the modern movement, exemplified by Gropius's use of hovering planes and the interpenetration of space.¹¹ The "Transparency" articles were, then, a poignant critique of Gropius as well as a decimation of the notion of linear, Hegelian history that culminates in a triumphant modern present. They were also a claim to prove that concern for phenomenal transparency, and the forms that achieved it, were not merely a stylistic preference. The existence of these forms in both pre-modern and modern buildings is an indication of "a basis in a common vision," an "archetypal response." Gestalt principles are used as proof of a perceptual *fact* and hence are seen as a formal necessity.¹² While Rowe would later, in his introduction to *Five Architects*, himself give up this insistence and suggest that modernism was just a style albeit a particularly fascinating one, at this point, the "true," epistemological claim was present and would exert significant influence on the Five.

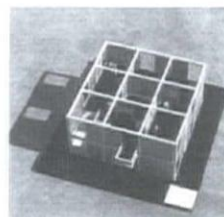
The last pedagogical import shaping the Whites came with Peter Eisenman, who was a post-graduate student of Rowe's at Cambridge during Rowe's self-imposed exile from the United States from 1959 to 1962. Rowe subsequently returned to America to teach in the School of Architecture at Cornell; Eisenman had, coincidentally, earlier graduated



△ Diagrams for House II project.
Peter Eisenman, 1969.



△ Sketches
Bernhard Hoesli, 1956.



△ Nine-square problem
assigned by John Hejduk, 1954-55.

from that same institution. Importantly, Rowe and Eisenman spent two summers together traveling in Italy, analyzing the same Renaissance buildings that had been featured in the second "Transparency" article, as well as other more modern buildings. (This is when Eisenman discovered Terragni.) Eisenman's own contribution to the pedagogy was his interest, developed during his graduate work, in the structuralist linguist Noam Chomsky. Chomsky believed that children have an innate ability to understand—and replicate—the deep structure of language. Our minds, he said, are linguistically wired. Unlike other classical structuralists who focused on language itself and who, for the most part, emphasized the cultural production of language, Chomsky emphasized this universal, structural, linguistic capacity of the linguistic subject. The "deep structure" that Chomsky described—a base system of rules about underlying relations and abstract order—was distinguished from the "surface" structure, which is related to the actual physical phonetic form that language takes. In other words, Chomsky's was a theory of epistemology.

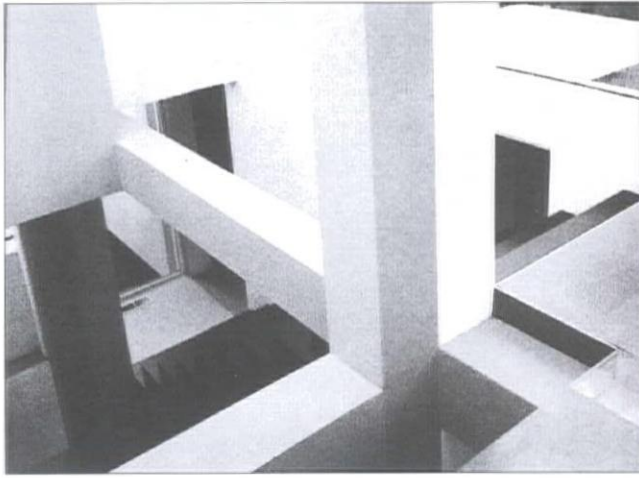
Eisenman imported this concept directly into his work. One can not really describe his interest in linguistics as an influence; it was the work. But behind his direct use of this material were earlier assumptions that allowed the application of a linguistic model to architecture. One such assumption was that architecture itself is a language, one that is sufficiently analogous to spoken and written language to be governed by similar principles and to be "read" in a similar fashion.³³ Another was that an analytic device can be made into a generative device, that one could *design* with a tool meant to *analyze* language. Yet another assumption was that what is generated, in this case architecture, will demonstrate principles. It does not just exist, it educates. Finally, Eisenman assumed that there was a match between the structuring principles in our brains and the exterior world. It is these assumptions, as much as the overt Chomskian ideas, that form the basis of an architectural epistemology, allowing for an overlap with Arnheimian perceptual psychology and an affinity with Rowe and Slutzky. The world, both positions said, is organized like *this*. And given that no one knew what deep structure looked like, it could conveniently, in Eisenman's hands, take on precisely the same formal characteristics as those produced by Cubism and neo-plasticism, and promoted, supposedly, by Gestalt psychology.

Clear compositional strategies are promoted here that will mark the work of the Whites: frontal/rotational; solid/void; layering /recession; figure/ground; grid/dissolution of the grid; virtual/actual solids and voids; whole and partial Platonic figures; regulating lines,

datums, and golden proportions. But what seemed God-given—since it came from history and the avant-garde, from psychology and linguistics—was clearly a fabricated lexicon justifying an ongoing interest in certain 1920s operations that were linked to Le Corbusier (primarily via his work as a painter and his interest in Purism). In this, the grid dominated and, as both field and figure, provided the framework for operations that located planes, solids, and voids relative to each other, while also allowing for transformations to the grid itself. The elements that were distributed constituted a kit of parts that pre-existed any formal operation, and the operations themselves followed their own logic once the rules of the formal game were set in motion. The final product was less the goal than the nature of the process that got one there.

These biases nevertheless formed an amazingly strong methodological and pedagogical framework, one that not only competed with Harvard but with the Beaux-Arts tradition that dominated American schools. And the dissemination of this pedagogy was, given its tiny source in Austin, both vast and powerful. Hejduk, joining the Austin faculty in 1954 with Slutzky, absorbed the lessons of both Rowe and Slutzky and played a major role in translating these ideas into an architectural pedagogy. Bernhard Hoesli, the principle motivator behind reconstituting the nature of teaching at Austin, acted as a catalyst for its codification and larger institutional presence. The dissemination of the pedagogy was unleashed when these teachers were fired from Austin and went to other institutions: Hejduk, Rowe, and Slutzky to Cornell; Eisenman to Princeton; and then later Eisenman and Rowe to the IAUS; Hejduk to Harvard and Yale; and eventually Hejduk, Slutzky and Eisenman to Cooper Union. Hoesli took this pedagogy back to Europe, ending up at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (the ETH).³⁴

Beside the forms, what was disseminated? Mainly, it was the idea that knowledge, architecturally manifest, must look a certain way; it must mirror the way the brain is visually and/or conceptually organized. Eisenman describes the strategy he used for formulating his early "cardboard" houses like this: "The purpose of this procedure was to provide an awareness of the formal information latent in any environment that previously was unavailable to the individual."³⁵ And the forms, "abstract and universal," are those "inherent" in "the internal structure of form itself." As he says describing **HOUSE II**, "[i]t may be in the nature of architecture to present the relationship between what is actual in the environment and some form of deep structure. It may be a fundamental act in the making of architecture



△ House VI
Washington, Connecticut. Peter Eisenman, 1975.

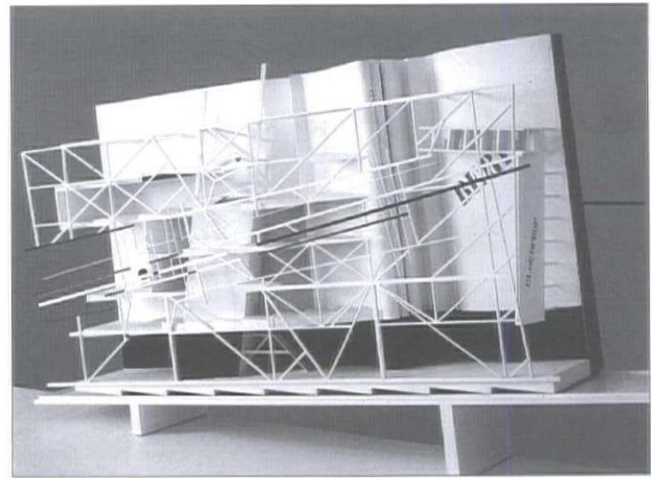
and beyond a mere formalism to take certain regularities which exist in a deep structure and present them systematically so that the user is aware of them."¹⁶ Or, as Hejduk writes, in his 1975 analysis of Le Corbusier's Carpenter Visual Arts Center at Harvard:

"The very profundity of this piece of visual metaphysics brings into question all that went before. ... [T]he proposed ideas cannot be ignored; they can be viewed squarely and understood. The questions and arguments become inexhaustible; they are like the major thesis—the thesis of simultaneity. ... The human body, its auxiliary senses, and the capability of cerebral workings cause architecture to be involved in the movement and dynamics of space."¹⁷

Thus it is that many of the questions regarding the Five's conflicted attitude toward aesthetics and history that introduced this piece get "answered" by following the logic of this epistemology. Certainly the Corbusian bias becomes something more than just an indication of an ongoing affinity with modernism. The disregard for function becomes inevitable, for form—transcendent, following its own Gestalt/Chomskian logic—must pursue its own course regardless of program. It is Eisenman who takes the lead in the dismissal of function, stating in his piece in *Five Architects* that "cardboard" architecture is so named precisely in order to undermine normative, functional associations. And in a 1976 editorial in *Oppositions*, entitled "Postfunctionalism," he dismisses functionalism as an outdated, humanist preoccupation, one that is merely cultural, not universal.¹⁸

Likewise, the admitted disregard for social concerns is both cause and effect of this formal agenda: cause, because the Five would not have arrived at this formalism without the failure of the original modernist agenda, as Rowe points out in his introduction to *Five Architects*. But effect as well, for now the formal concerns and their direct link to knowledge can be seen as something more fundamental to human make-up than incidental social context. Arthur Drexler, in his "Preface" to *Five Architects*, doesn't make such a sweeping intellectual claim for the Five, but he does praise them for their dismissal of social concern: "That architecture is the least likely instrument with which to accomplish the revolution has not yet been noticed by the younger Europeans, and in America is a fact like a convenient stone wall against which architectural journalism can bang heads. An alternative to political romance is to be an architect."¹⁹

Perception and conception, old adversaries in artistic and architectural practices, are seen in this epistemology to be two aspects of the same form of knowledge, a visual knowledge that supposed a fundamental

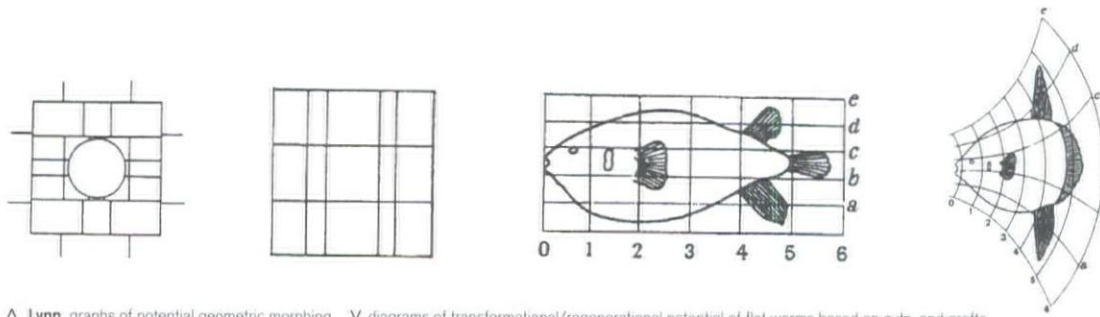


△ Cloud Prop, City Edge project
Berlin, Germany. Daniel Libeskind, 1987.

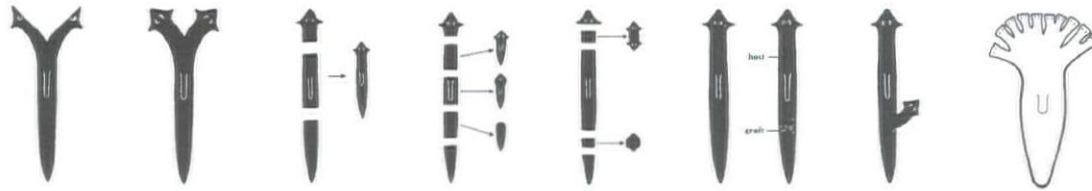
correspondence between the structure of our mind and the visual landscape before us. Given that the architect/artist's obligation was to demonstrate perceptual *principles*, the Whites eliminated the actual vicissitudes of subjective "seeing." While one characterization of the difference between the Whites and the Grays is the supposed privileging of perception by the latter and conception by the former, the Whites in fact have usurped perception to their own end's, making it a conceptual tool.

The concern for a language unique and essential to architecture—a concern for its disciplinary autonomy—in the face of the fundamental interest in painting is, in their hands, anything but contradictory. The struggle of the Cubists and neo-plasticists was essentially a spatial struggle, and architecture, having lost its functional and social directive, was primarily a perceptual phenomenon. Thus, Graves, Hejduk, and Meier all began their architectural search with the study of painting. Both painting and architecture, in other words, shared the fundamental concern for organizing the visual world in a spatially complex, profound and multivalent manner. But all were clear that architecture was still the primary concern, and that architecture needed to discover its own essential principles within these perceptual laws. As Hejduk says: "The painter starts with the real world and works toward abstraction... but architecture takes two lines. The architect starts with the abstract world and... works toward the real world. The significant architect is the one who, when finished with the work, is as close to that original abstraction as he could possibly be."²⁰ The unacknowledged contradictions come in more strongly when the Five give hints that architecture is not just a separate language but the most significant one. This is when they suddenly embrace the functional aspect of architecture to prove its superiority over painting. Thus both Hejduk and Eisenman can suggest that the use of architecture is what puts it into more serious play than other art forms, even as functionalism is dismissed.

Likewise, the importing of linguistics into architecture becomes equally "logical" in a search for architectural autonomy. Seemingly transparent as a medium, language could be imported to architecture as a requirement for establishing epistemological structure, while not itself imposing its own disciplinary form. Or, to think it through another way, language's seeming universality as a logic made it a meta-system, not an outside discipline. Eisenman's unwavering desire—to distill architecture to its own essential language, its own deep form, its own "interiority"—is ironically linked to his equally unwavering desire to search beyond architecture for the answer to architectural autonomy.²¹



A Lynn graphs of potential geometric morphing V diagrams of transformational/regenerational potential of flat worms based on cuts and grafts



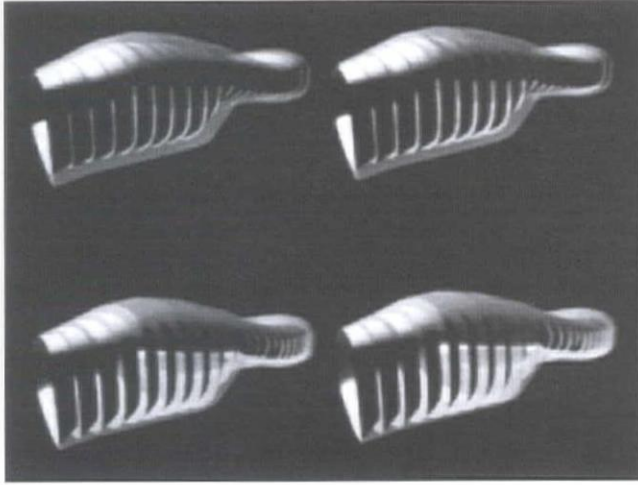
Authorship and originality are also fortuitously resolved with the directive to obey archetypal paradigms. With design understood as an act of interpretation, one could be both selfless and creative; whoever grasps the paradigm most completely and exposes it most plastically serves both masters. Hence, there was no conflict in using the forms of architects who had worked fifty years earlier. That work itself was nothing other than a reinterpretation of enduring archetypal forms, forms that were first revealed (not discovered) in all of their intensity by the architects of the Renaissance. Hejduk's trajectory from early geometric work to later anthropomorphic work is consistent on this score, for throughout the work has had its own personality; the poetry of the work is precisely its faith in its factness, ignorant of the will of the author. Eisenman, pushing anonymity to the extreme, insists, both with his early houses and his most current work, that the buildings are authored without him. Implicit in the early idea that cardboard architecture is merely the marking of deep formal operations, not the will of his hand, this position has become explicit by the time he designs House VI, when he claims that the design is merely a palimpsest of its own coming into being. Again, the epistemology allows for the ironic condition that the most "avant-garde" and self-celebratory position of someone like Eisenman is the one that claims to be the most anonymous. Unacknowledged in this is the distance Eisenman's position has traveled from Rowe's. As stated earlier, Rowe's Warburgian position proposed that, in the absence of the zeitgeist, the choices made individually were the essential cultural acts; good and bad design was a personal responsibility. Eisenman sees himself as merely the agent of intellectual structures.

While many inconsistencies are evident in these attitudes, the issue of history and with it the fate of "modernism" remains the untidiest, at least for Eisenman, who confronts this issue head on. Rowe makes the Five's historical fate the central focus of his introductory essay, and in doing so, writes modernism's epitaph. In describing modernism's own internal inconsistencies and its self-deluded and ultimately failed aim at social reform, he sees the Five as falling into the general pool of alternative successive modernisms, like New Brutalism and neo-classicism, which understood the ridiculousness of the old rhetoric. In being able to hold onto only the "physique" and not the "morale" of modernism, the most that these architects can claim is that in the 1920s, "great revolutions of thought occurred and that then profound visual discoveries resulted, that these are still unexplained, and that rather than assume intrinsic change to be the prerogative of every generation ...certain changes are so enormous as to improve a directive which cannot be resolved in any individual life span."²²

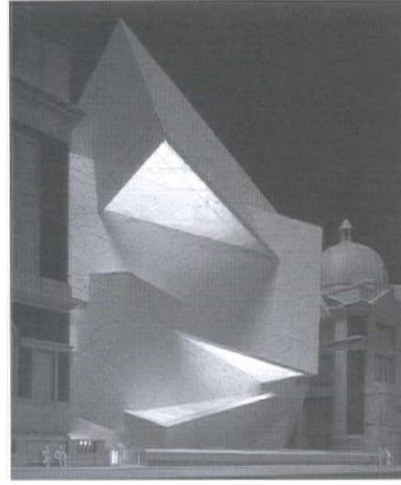
This negative evaluation of the historical value of modernism and the Five clearly can not be intellectually shared by the participants. Nevertheless, Rowe grasps the essential problem in a way that stymies Eisenman, whose dogged effort to distance himself from previous eras and participate in an avant-garde is both his most marked disagreement with Rowe and his most awkward intellectual position. Ignoring the timeless/of the time/ahead of the time dilemma in his early cardboard houses, Eisenman, in "Postfunctionalism," took up the Foucauldian idea of epistemic ruptures—dramatic changes in history that have entailed entirely different thought structures—which allowed him to attach himself to an epistemological position that is current and culturally responsive. In this article, he claimed that modernism constituted an unrecognized rupture, one that disengages us from the humanism of previous eras and makes it impossible for us to deploy the same strategies as the Renaissance. It is a move that allowed him to distance himself from the increasingly conservative Rowe at the same time that it allowed him to claim a place in avant-garde practice. The difficulty with this position is not only that the notion of rupture remains wholly unexplained, but the moments of "rupture" become convenient, characterized differently by Eisenman as time passes and styles change. While identified with the 1920s and modernism in this essay (when his work was "modern"), this rupture is later identified with World War II and Hiroshima in "The Futility of Objects" of 1984 (when his work was chaotic and fragmented) and transforming, again, is currently identified with the change from a machine-based to an electronically-based society (when his work is "smooth" and computer-generated).²³

The legacy this epistemological formalism gives us, then, is less related to the forms themselves (although, as we will see, there are formal relationships) than concerned with being able to update the interpretation of the same epistemological urge as changes in style and fashion occur. What is constant is an adherence to claims of knowledge and, with them, a moral imperative to design a certain way.

The epistemological urge takes on various conceptual formulations since, along with the change in attitude toward modernism altogether, there clearly came the breakup of any singular architectural language and/or position. But the claim for the universality that gives clear formal directive, that insists that the forms must look a certain way, is the same. So is the reliance on forms of thought exterior to architecture, be they philosophical or scientific, as well as the essential afunctional and asocial position that tends to come with such extreme formalism.²⁴



▲ Korean Presbyterian Church
Long Island City, New York. Douglas Garofalo + Greg Lynn, 1999.



▲ Victorian and Albert Museum extension project.
London, England. Daniel Libeskind, 1996.

One case of this is the phenomenological strain of someone like Daniel Libeskind (who studied under John Hejduk at Cooper Union and drew the diagrams of San Lorenzo included in the second "Transparency" article), whose formalist knowledge claims are extremely similar to those of the Five, particularly in the combination of Hejduk-like metaphysical poetry and Eisenman-like conceptual logic. In Libeskind's hands, this combination entails a hermeneutic search for "the real world." Thus, in the introduction to one of Libeskind's most recent books, Kurt Forster writes: "In this case, the idea... has to do with concepts... [that] sound the distance that exists between themselves and what stands physically before us... There are hardly any buildings, with the exception of the *Carceri d'Invenzione* by Piranesi, which bear this double burden of representing both actual buildings and *mental structures* and therefore have to submit to being measured by both standards."²⁵ The claim that architecture is a physical manifestation of the structure of our minds is remarkably close to Eisenman's. While Libeskind doesn't go into any of the problematics of history or authorship that come with this position, nor give a prescribed image of what this mindset looks like, the consistency of his architectural language, despite differences in location, program, or concept, is an indication that he still has a sense of the composition of this mindset. The language of this architectural scaffolding—the emphasis on unrelated linear elements; the overall emphasis on line over plane and plane over mass; the disparagement of the rectilinear in any spatial element—while similar in essence to the Five, fortuitously also looks like other current avant-garde work.

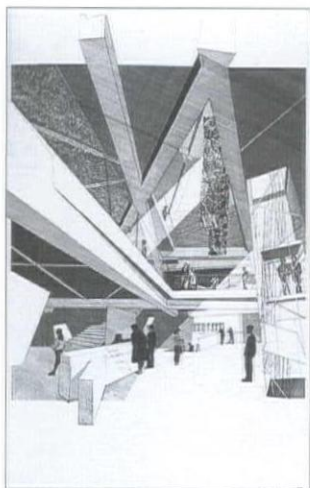
The blob architecture of someone like Greg Lynn (who worked for Peter Eisenman after being his pupil at Princeton) manifests a different kind of epistemological look, one that is more conscious of its historical lineage, and more prescriptive about its formal musts. As Ole Bouman writes in the introductory essay to Lynn's *Folds, Bodies, and Blobs: Collected Essays*: "Only by recognizing the disciplinary autonomy of architecture can Lynn contribute to its modernization. And that is precisely what he has in mind... His line of reasoning is anti-subjectivism. His architecture is no formalistic whim, but a logical step in a post-humanistic architectural theory."²⁶ Here one sees the Eisenmanesque interest in disciplinary autonomy and pre-subjective logic. Trying to avoid the pitfalls of other, earlier geometric formulations with claims to transcendence, wholeness, and closed forms, his search for an "anexact," "amorfal," and "amoral" system of form replaces one set of ultimate formal directives with another. "The challenge to architecture, once geometry and the body enter into a new [sic] alliance, is to write—in form—a monument that is irreducible to

any ideal geometric type."²⁷ The "monument" he wants to write is one that "can represent a complex relationship irreducible either to the contradictions of the many or the holistic unity of the one."²⁸ Lynn sees himself in a dialectical relationship with Wittkower and Rowe, in the sense of moving past humanist architecture to discover a language for post-humanist culture, and he sees his work as overturning the Renaissance-Modernism thesis-antithesis with his own transcendent synthesis. Like Eisenman (who is never mentioned in Lynn's history but is clearly the pivotal figure linking him to Rowe and Wittkower), Lynn's history is Hegelian—the arrival of post-humanist (folded) culture is inevitable, it is avant-gardist—only he can leap ahead of time and pull us out of our out-of-date, humanist, modernist, geometrical stupor.

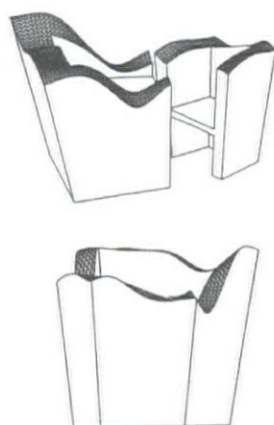
Because, unlike Libeskind, Lynn's "biological" methods are direct, prescriptive, and sequentially clear, they rely on the same transformative processes that Eisenman relied on, "combinational exchanges between multiple, complex, and intricate systems that interact and evolve over time ...teratological processes where order and identity emerge from differential variation and mutation."²⁹ This emphasis on transformational processes links Lynn in turn to both the use of the diagram and the anonymous, authorless creation. Diagrams for Lynn "should not be understood as instrumental ideas... Instead, diagrams should be understood as conceptual techniques that come before any particular technology."³⁰ And, as he says about authoring design: "This recent (folded) work may be described as being pliant; in a state of being plied by *forces beyond control*."³¹ The computer both aids in depicting the anexact operations and sets them to analogical formulas, assuring that an "author" is not actually required.

One can also see the influence of the epistemological approach in the work of Bernard Cache who, alone among these three examples, has no known direct attachment to the Five.³² Although Cache is much more knowing and sophisticated about the aesthetic, historical, and social implications of his work, on the classification of images as well as his interest in the computer as a means for regulating and predicting the architectural image, he is in the same theoretical territory prepared by the Whites.

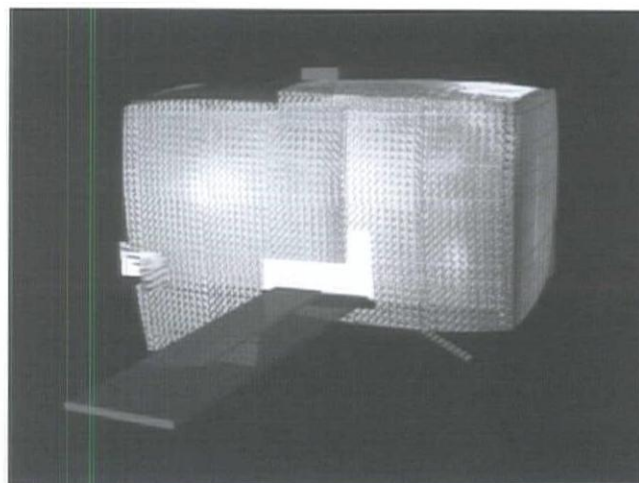
In Cache's epistemology, all images are classified into three types: inflection, vector, and frame. These are reworkings, respectively, of the circle, the triangle, and the square, the original figures of form-making. "Inflection, vector, and frame would constitute an alphabet whose rules are never determined but are always determinable, as they are always present in the images that have been elaborated



△ Victoria and Albert Museum project.
London, Daniel Libeskind, 1996.
perspective of interior.



△ Plywood writing desk and armchair
Bernard Cache.



△ LIM House Project
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Bernard Cache, 1997.

through the ages."³³ Here he gives us the formal framework for analyzing all historical forms, much like Eisenman's "deep structure," and wants to prove not only its universal timeless applicability, but its potential as a generative design tool. "The question then will be to see to what extent our elements might allow us not only to read the works of the past but to understand those of the present, and, we hope, to prepare us for those of the future ...[M]ight we not find in it something today that could afford us the bases of a new constructivism?"³⁴

Beyond this faith in the generative possibility of an analytic tool, or, perhaps, justifying such faith, is the ultimate reliance on numerical predictability, especially that provided for by the computer. Continuing with the above quote: "Moreover, do numerical technologies not give us the tools to realize once again Leibniz's program: 'Everything can be calculated'?"

And here, too, is the concern for linking thought with images, perception with the world outside us. The above quote continues: "Finally, we can give the image its widest meaning, designating thereby anything that presents itself to the mind, whether it be real or not! In this way, we press from visible objects to visibility itself... Our brain is not the seat of a neural cinema that reproduces the world; rather our perceptions are inscribed on the surface of things."³⁵ And negotiating the link between concept and precept, between inside the mind and outside of it is the diagram, which Cache sees as the quintessential visual description of how images operate in the world.

I have emphasized the underlying conceptual/epistemological connection that binds the work of these (and implicitly other) contemporary architects to that of the Whites, trying to avoid delineating any direct formal connection. Yet it is impossible not to draw formal analogies, both because the images published here beg to be compared, and because the connection suggests that the adoption of an epistemological framework that pre-exists architecture cannot help but produce certain organizational similarities. I will conclude then with a list of these correspondences, both as a way of ending and as a way of suggesting that despite the fact that this contemporary work is positioned in the "new," the work as well as the polemic demonstrates how problematic this notion of the "new" is, as long as its parameters are formal and based on a shared belief in demonstrating the structure of knowledge.

The main point of comparison is the idea of an organizational "scaffolding" distributing the forms of the architecture. This is a "scaffolding" corresponding to the architects' mental one; it is their diagram of

how the mind organizes material. For the Whites, this scaffolding was the implied grid that located the datums, the regulating lines, the location of frontal or rotational planes, and the points of recession or layering. For the current architecture, the scaffolding is a sort of an a priori plane or surface. The scaffolding in both cases is seen as having, internal to its own logic, operations that will determine the distribution of forms, thereby sparing the architect the need to make any subjective, willful or arbitrary moves.

While the current work emphasizes the surface as the primary conceptual device—it is the surface Libeskind "writes" on, the surface Lynn folds, the surface the computer turns into a topography for Cache—it nevertheless becomes associated with the grid. In some cases, the grid is the remnant of the mathematical, numerically derived formulas and algorithms generating the planar configuration. The formulas and algorithms then form the context from which the planes are morphed. In other cases, the grid is the structural component holding the planes up or the element that continues the effects of folding through the interior, occupiable space. A cruder way of describing this would be to say that the grids of modernism got twisted by deconstruction and then smoothed by Deleuzian folding, and this transmutation is both diachronic (it describes changes that happened over a fifteen year period) and synchronic (it is embedded in the logic of the forms as they are currently constituted).

Moreover, the seemingly new interest in surface can be understood as nothing other than the more recent version of the Arnheimian concern, most strongly articulated by Slutzky, privileging the two-dimensional surface. For the Whites, the grid, the volumes, the layering, the voids were efforts to achieve a "phenomenal transparency" dependant upon two-dimensional surface. While the planes the Whites deployed were not the structural scaffolding, they were the phenomenal datum onto which three-dimensional space collapsed. Thus one can read the more recent surface work as a final victory for that painterly two-dimensional surface, now freed from the no longer dominant context of grid and volume. And while these planes lose their frontal relationship to the viewer, so important to the Whites, one can still claim that the aim of the planar distribution in the current work is the dialectical intertwining, if not collapsing, of three-dimensional and two-dimensional space.

There is also, among many contemporary architects, an attitude about space that is shared with the Whites. While space was understood to be the essential new discovery of modern architecture, and the Whites continued that legacy in their unbuilt and built work, the epistemological and formal scaffolding is one that ultimately dictates

how to distribute solids (columns, beams, walls); the space between is residual. This is not to say that the work was (or is) a-spatial, for the complex organizations of physical matter did yield complex spatial interiors. However the spaces were never conceived of "positively" and rarely thought of as inhabited. This same condition exists with the current work. While enormously complex spaces result from the current topological, morphed, and inscribed procedures, the conception of space is residual to the physical matter shaping it. As with the Whites, the spatial drama is almost a direct result of the *disjunction* between considerations of space and its actual, almost incidental occupation.

The ultimate visual and spatial goal is the same: complexity and ambiguity. If the plea made in the two "Transparency" articles was ultimately for multiple *phenomenal* readings of space over singular *literal* reading of space, the goal of the current work is the same: to be "multiplicitous," non-static, fluctuating, indeterminate, heterogeneous. The desire to keep the eye "smart," excited, moving, questioning is a constant. In both cases, the desire, given the link between mind and vision, concept and percept, is to have eye and mind equally challenged, equally knowledgeable.

The legacy of the Whites—both the urge for epistemological justification and for the forms that match it—is not their doing alone. The similarities described here between the generations is due less to a causal connection than to their shared inheritance of what Rowe described in his introduction to *Five Architects* as the fallout of modernism's failed social and historical vision. In his cynical and prescient evaluation of the impossibility of finding a stable position from which to operate once the naïve blush of modernism has faded, he writes:

"For with this failure... it... become[s] apparent that theory itself was never so much a literal directive for the making of buildings as it was an elaborately indirect mechanism for the suppression of feelings of guilt: guilt about high culture—felt to be unreal, guilt about art—the most extreme anxiety to disavow the role of private judgment in any analytical or synthetic enterprise. In the end what is understood as the theory of modern architecture reduces itself to little more than a constellation of escapist myths which are all active in endeavoring to relieve the architect of responsibility for his choices and which all alike combine to persuade him that his decisions are not so much his own as they are, somehow, immanent in scientific, or historical, or social process."³⁶

In this description, both the Whites and the proponents of the current hyper-formalism could be said to flounder in the vacuum left by modernism's moral failure. This may well be the case. But whether one thinks the Whites stimulated this turn of events or were merely its victims is less interesting than our evaluation of the dilemma that still remains. On the one hand, this dilemma can be viewed cynically and tragically, as Rowe does or as die-hard modernists might.³⁷ On the other, it can be viewed less judgmentally and with greater curiosity, for we cannot blame the Whites or the current avant-garde for thrusting their vision upon us; we have all been more than receptive. Despite the clear illogic of many of these "masks of guilt," work like theirs indicates our drive for determining the aesthetic dimension of our psyche, and, through this, our culture. Kant struggled with it, Heidegger struggled with it, Freud struggled with it, Adorno struggled with it, Marcuse struggled with it, Lacan struggled with it, and Tafuri struggled with it. It is an unresolved question; it is not inappropriate that we are still struggling with it.

Notes

¹ What could legitimately be said about the Five as a group: Eisenman completely rational, deterministic, and "objective"; Hejduk entirely poetic, elusive and "subjective". Meier and Gwathmey are more background than foreground not because they don't theorize the work but because the work has proved resistant to further speculation. Graves drops away because of his switch, after the publication of *Five Architects* (New York: Wittenborn, 1972), to a post-modern vocabulary; his legacy leads elsewhere.

² As Rem Koolhaas did teach at the IAUS briefly, one could conjecture on the unexamined inter-relationship of these seemingly distinct paths.

³ The linking of form to knowledge was not a new idea. It was a variation of the neo-Kantian formalism of the late nineteenth century thinkers such as Conrad Feidler and Adolf Hildebrand. It also was linked to the perceptual psychologists, such as Rudolf Arnhem, and later phenomenologists like Maurice Merleau-Ponty. What was new was the particular link being made to architectural modernism in the name of this epistemology.

⁴ Quoted from "Towards a New Architecture," in Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964) 59.

⁵ Van Doesburg and the De Stijl movement, which gave us the square/diamond controversy, dismisses form-for-form-sake soundly. "(T)he idea of art as illusion unconnected to real life has to disappear. The word 'art' no longer means anything to us." Conrads 67.

⁶ I am indebted to Alexander Caragone's *The Texas Rangers: Notes from and Architectural Underground*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995) for his sympathetic, astute, and careful analysis of the "Texas Ranger" years at Austin and later its protagonists' dispersal in architectural academia. The true legacy of the Whites is probably most accurately charted in his six-page graph in this volume depicting the "Texas Rangers" academic family tree: 338-342.

⁷ The anti-zeitgeist, anti-teleology position was popular at this time with intellectuals such as E. M. Gombriich and Karl Popper. It was a reaction to the Hegelian underpinnings of Nazi rhetoric.

⁸ Reprinted in Rowe's *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978) 1-28.

⁹ The essays appeared in *Perspecta 8* and *13/14*, respectively. They had been submitted to *Architectural Review* but were turned down because of their anti-Gropius bias. See Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture 1943-68* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993) 205.

¹⁰ Kepes in "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," reprinted in Rowe, *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976) 160.

¹¹ Siegfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1941).

¹² There are interesting defenses of the truth of Gestalt psychology against a supposed critique that Gestalt psychology's claims are merely commensurate with fashionable modernity, defenses which appeal to something surprisingly close to Eisenman's/Chomsky's deep structure. See Ockman 224.

¹³ This was not solely Eisenman's idea. The popularity of structural linguistics at this time was pervasive, and language was seen by many to govern or form the model of all aspects of human production. The marriage between structuralism and formalism was evident in many fields, from literature and painting to cultural studies and psychoanalysis.

¹⁴ See Caragone for a full description of the students of these men who became teachers and themselves spread out to these and other institutions.

¹⁵ *Five Architects* 15.

¹⁶ *Five Architects* 27.

¹⁷ John Hejduk, "Out of Time and Into Space," *A + U*, Vol. 4, May 1975.

¹⁸ Peter Eisenman, "Post-Functionalism," *Oppositions* 6; reprinted in K. Michael Hays, *Architecture iTheory since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998) 236-239.

¹⁹ *Five Architects* 1.

²⁰ "Second Wall House," *Progressive Architecture*, vol. 55, June 1974.

²¹ The Eisenman lectures gave at Cooper Union (2000) were essentially a tracing of this "interiority" back to Bramante. He implicitly argues with Rowe, who attributed it to Palladio.

²² *Five Architects* 7.

²³ For the mid-1980s position, see "The Futility of Objects: Decomposition and the Processes of Difference," in *Harvard Architectural Review* 3: *Autonomous Architecture* (winter 1984): 65-81; comments detailing the most recent position were included in an April 18, 2000 lecture at Cooper Union.

²⁴ This asocial position is one with which Cooper Union (and with it Libeskind) has continuously struggled. Bernard Cache, who is being put in this category, is attempting to attach himself to a social position by connecting his form making to a social system of production. Hence, the asocial claim here is somewhat unfair. The use of the term is meant to signal that the first commitment is to thought, and only secondarily linked to a social position.

²⁵ *Radix-Matrix: Architecture and Writings* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1997) 7, emphasis added.

²⁶ Ole Bouman, "Amor(f)al Architecture or Architectural Multiples in the Post-Humanist Age," in *Greg Lynn, Folds, Bodies and Blobs: Collected Essays* (Bruxelles: La Lettre volée, 1998) 8-9.

²⁷ Lynn 12.

²⁸ Lynn 183.

²⁹ Lynn 15.

³⁰ Lynn 223.

³¹ Lynn 117, emphasis added.

³² To be accurate, his work has appeared in *ANY* magazine, and he was a speaker at the Anymore symposium of June 1999, organized by Eisenman and Cynthia Davidson.

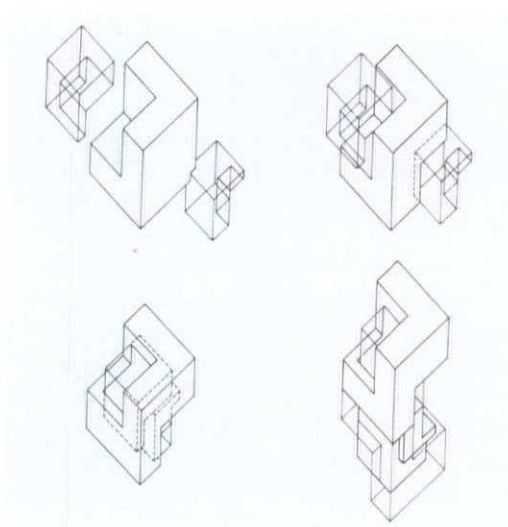
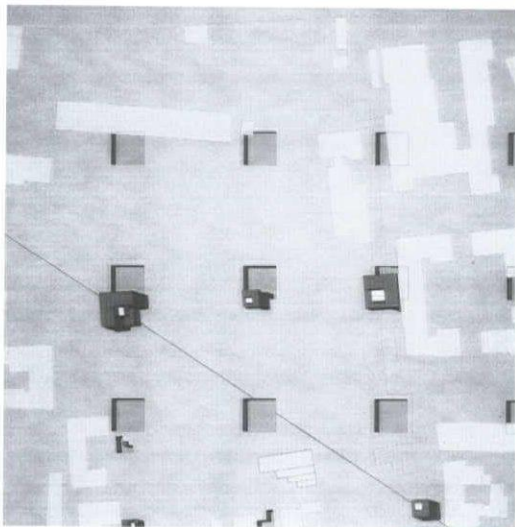
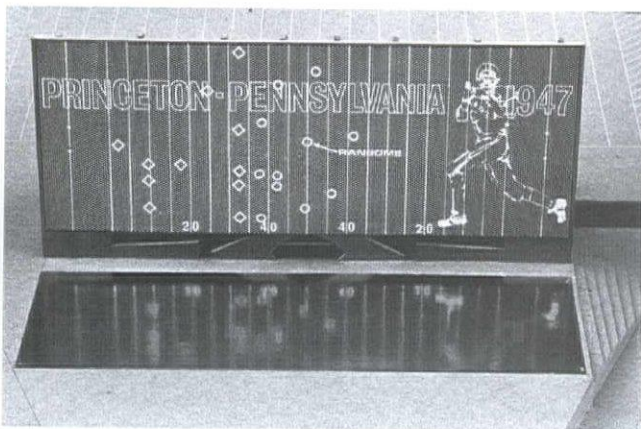
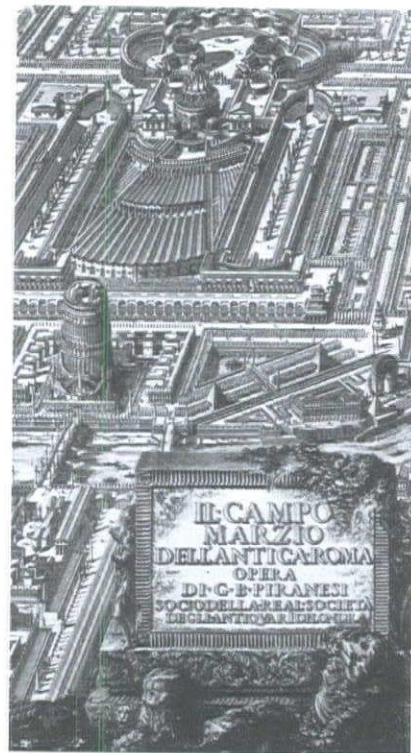
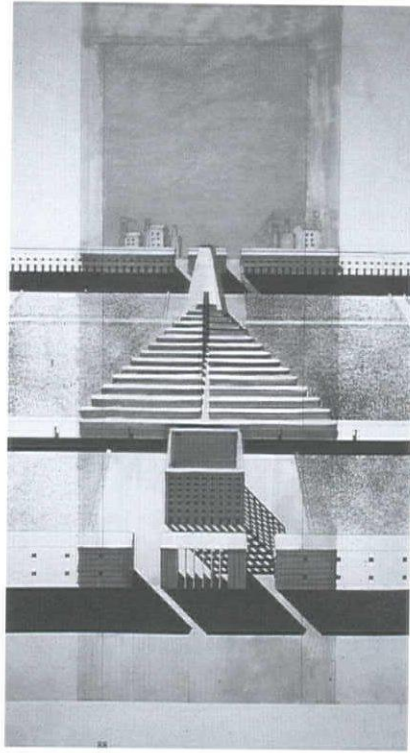
³³ Bernard Cache, *Earth Moves* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995) 2.

³⁴ Cache 2-3.

³⁵ Cache 3.

³⁶ *Five Architects* 6.

³⁷ It is never clear whether Rowe is saddened by the impossibility of architecture's social agenda (like Tafuri) or simply saddened by its attempt to be social (as opposed to merely historically referential). The first is a radical interpretation, the second a highly conservative one.



^ Extension to the Modena Cemetery Italy. Aldo Rossi, 1972.
Sports Hall of Fame project. Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, 1965.
Cannarego Project, 1978 Venice Biennale Italy. Eisenman Architects, 1978. drawing.

^ Campo Marzo G.B. Piranesi, 1792. etching.
Las Vegas "Tayna" Billboard Learning from Las Vegas studio, 1968.
Collision diagram for House 11a project. Eisenman Architects, 1978. drawing.

Prolegomenon for a Study Linking the Advanced Architecture of the Present to that of the 1970s through Ideologies of Media, the Experience of Cities in Transition, and the Ongoing Effects of Reification

K. MICHAEL HAYS

The most theoretically aware of contemporary architects have rejected what was the most important operative concept of architecture theory at the moment of its re-foundation in the 1970s: namely, the aspiration toward autonomous forms and techniques to create and measure the distance between a resistant, critical practice and the degraded languages and ideologies of consumer culture that surround it. Over and against resistance and autonomy—or better, resistance *through* autonomy—recent design theories of various stripes have tended to affirm their cultural sponsors and accept a certain determination by cultural forces outside architecture (information and entertainment technologies, in particular), over which, it is assumed, architecture has no control, and about which it has no reason to fret. While I am not yet able to give a full account for this recent shift in attitude, I wish to briefly reflect on both it and the ideologies it has replaced. I shall proceed historically, sketching in abbreviations of the major markers of what is a still faint and incomplete narrative.

While the ideology of autonomy is properly part of the legacy of modernism, dating from as early as the Enlightenment, the concept gained a renewed resonance in the formation of architecture theory after 1968 (especially, perhaps, in the United States and Italy). This was a time when architecture as traditionally practiced saw itself threatened by technological optimization and utilitarianism, by the demands placed on it as a service industry, as well as by the positivist inquiries of the behavioral sciences, sociology, and operations research, all of which threatened to undermine the specificity of architecture. Architecture theory drew on various models in an effort to think architecture back into its own as a discipline, a cultural practice, and an irreducible mode of knowledge and experience (an epistemology). In particular, architects developed a theory of typology, which allowed the resolution of the contradictory desires for autonomy on the one hand and an architectural representation of the city on the other. Autonomy provided a way for architecture to intervene in culture negatively, through resisting a collapse into some other discourse, to be a medium related to yet different from all others. To give an example, Massimo Scolari speaks for the architecture of the Fifteenth Triennale in Milan in 1973, the so-called *Tendenza*:

"The new architecture's 'renunciation' is actually a full historical awareness. ... For the *Tendenza*, architecture is a cognitive process that in and of itself, in the acknowledgment of its own autonomy, is today necessitating a refounding of the discipline; that refuses interdisciplinary solutions to its own crisis; that does not pursue and immerse itself in political, economic, social, and technological events ... but rather desires to understand them so as to be able to intervene in them with lucidity."¹

There are two theoretical sources I detect in the autonomy-typology thesis that are worth pointing out. First, the notion of typology entails a realist discourse based on a reading of György Lukács that seeks an architecture whose very "authenticity" paradoxically depends on its reiterability—that is, an architecture whose success at evoking and recollecting solid, concrete memories depends on its repetition of an already iterable code. What is more, the interactive subject of any type is just the city itself, understood as a whole, whose nature is induced from its architectural elements (what Anthony Vidler called the "ontology of the city").² The city is responsible for the isolation and fragmentation of architecture into constitutive parts (hence the importance of Piranesi's *Campo Marzio* for an architect like Aldo Rossi or a historian like Manfredo Tafuri), but the city also simultaneously extends its logic uniformly over every patch of the cultural fabric, so that in each isolated type the entire genetic code of the city, as it were, can be found.

Rossi's **MODENA CEMETERY**, for example, seizes on this idea and derives its poignancy from the constructed interaction of the fragments tomb, house, cemetery, and city. Within each of these primary types are insinuated obliquely, anamorphically, all the others, producing a kind of overprinting of types and a conceptual pass through different registers of analogous moments.³ In typological thinking, the relentless fragmenting and atomization of all things, what Lukács called reification (*Verdinglichung*), continues to be felt. And yet typology involves the power to think generally, to take up the fragments and organize them in groups, to recognize processes, tendencies, and qualities where reification yields only lifeless quantities.

At a different level of the autonomy thesis there appears a key concept from Louis Althusser, that of the "semi-autonomy" of "levels" or "instances"

within an ideological field—the economic, political, juridical, cultural, aesthetic realms (and so on). The autonomy of each disciplinary level allows the development and advance of that discipline's particular techniques. But each level also feels pressure from all the others and exerts influence on all the others. What results is a set of insides and outsides that are reciprocally constituted and related by way of their ultimate structural difference and distance from one another rather than their identity, all held together by the "structural totality" of a social formation. Some version of this Althusserian model is necessary, I think, to explain Scolari's otherwise contradictory assertion of autonomy and lucid intervention: architecture's autonomy must be understood as a relational concept, not as an isolationist position. The terms of its relation to consumer culture—which involve nonidentity and negation as well as autonomy—is tantamount to a clearing of space for alternate conceptions of social relations and subject formations. If architecture loses its autonomy, it loses the specificity of its cultural intervention.

While the Tendenza's model of autonomy seems powerful and, in its basic contours, not incorrect, what was missed by its arguments is that the very conditions on which its "ontology" depends—namely the traditional European city as documented in Rossi's *L'architettura della città* (1966)—had, by the time of this theorization, already disappeared as a contemporaneous object of experience. For by the mid-1960s the city in *this* sense was no longer primarily operative but rather the suburbs, edge city, and exurbia were each clamoring for their own architectural representation.

Or perhaps this wasn't missed. For, while Rossi's typological obsessions seem to be a way of constantly confirming the determinate presence of the traditional European city—refracting its historical logic of form through a neo-Enlightenment lens in contingent, contradictory, and quasi-surreal ways—their peculiar mnemonic function also makes it possible to see in them a new beauty in precisely that which is vanishing. The originality of Rossi's work may well be its capacity to convey, alternately with melancholy or unblinking disenchantment, that the traditional European city—which in some sense means architecture itself—is forever lost. Manfredo Tafuri, for one, insisted as much in a direct response to what Scolari called a refounding of the discipline: "The thread of Ariadne with which Rossi weaves his typological research does not lead to the 'reestablishment of the discipline,' but rather to its dissolution, thereby confirming *in extremis* the tragic recognition of Georg Simmel and György Lukács."⁴

What is more, this revelation of loss follows, I believe, from the Lukasian moment in Rossi's thesis, for the one form of experience that concretely represents the force of reification is *crisis*—that point when, as in the present case, the mnemonic function is just about to fail, when the memory banks have become so compartmentalized and arid that

they will hold nothing other than the most bleached out of material: then, the cognitive vocation of architecture is to reflect (or to cause reflection) on the processes behind such crisis. Crisis is modulated into critique; the autonomy of architecture becomes a mode of resistance to the status quo. Thus Rossi's architecture historicizes itself to a certain extent, placing itself in a situation and reflecting on its own plight; thus, also, emerges the palpable sense in his work of a historically determined melancholy, a "renunciation," to use Scolari's words, that is "a full historical awareness."

By 1971 Denise Scott Brown had proposed that the communication across space of the social values of groups had superseded a building's more conventional programmatic—and, one might add, formal typologies and even space itself—as the primary substance of architecture. "Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Levittown, the swinging singles on the Westheimer Strip, golf resorts, boating communities, Co-op City, the residential backgrounds to soap operas, TV commercials and mass mag ads, billboards, and Route 66 are sources for a changing architectural sensibility," writes Scott Brown. "In fact, space is not the most important constituent of suburban form. Communication across space is more important, and it requires a symbolic and a time element in its descriptive systems."⁵

Pondering now how we might indeed describe the terms on which the traditional city was disappearing and a new communicative suburbanism was emerging, one remembers Thomas Pynchon's 1966 novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, when the protagonist Oedipa Maas looks out from her Chevy Impala across California's private property developments (which Pynchon called San Narcisco) and sees them as a printed circuit communicating to her—not communicating directly but in textural patterns or, as Pynchon says, in "a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate. There seemed no limit to what the printed circuit could have told her. ... So in her first minute of San Narcisco, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding."⁶ What is striking here is not only that this veil of hieroglyphs is the suburban form itself, but also that the opposing terms of this new system are, first, the development of electronic technology—represented here by the printed circuit—and, second, communication, the intent to communicate, which must be understood as contradictory vis-à-vis the new technology, since new technologies tend to be illegible, lying "just past the threshold of [our] understanding." But this contradiction is resolved by the third term we now know as media, that is, by the technology of communication itself.

We need not rehearse the ways in which mass media changed the very nature of the experience of public space during this time, except to recall that advertising media joined with the extensive development

of buildings on the outskirts of the city and the new distribution of services to suburban commercial zones, making the control of the quality of urban space through traditional tectonic and typological means more difficult. Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi, and others seized on the new perceptual conventions adequate for comprehension within this new system. Visual reception challenged the tactility of objects. The perception of architectural surfaces began to overtake the experience of urban space in the traditional sense. Image consumption began to replace object production, and the sheer heterogeneity of images exploded any single, stable typology of the city. Public meaning was now to be found in the signs and perceptual habits forged in a pluralist, consumerist, suburban culture. Consequently a split was felt to open up between the European typological tradition and the everyday world of the American popular environment, a split that was fundamental to theoretical debates of the 1970s.

What was further suggested by this event (understood no less completely by Scott Brown and Venturi) is that the collaged, semiotic surface of architecture, understood as a displacement of the older, volumetric "type" form, is entirely commensurate with—entirely conforms to—the new terms of media. Henceforth the social system will be inconceivable without a concept of media and its two constituents: electronic, consumer technology and heterogeneous communication. Media becomes, on up to our own time, *the* spontaneous solution to architecture's representational problem.

In an early study of film, Fredric Jameson suggested that in our present social system, a media term is always present, functioning as what Sartre called an *analogon* (a term of *external* mediation) for one or another more directly representational form (a term of *internal* mediation).⁷ In our present case, it is helpful to think of this collaged, semiotic surface of architecture (or more clearly, the flattened-out surface of Scott Brown and Venturi's decorated shed, with its bits and pieces of referential material) as the internal, architectural mediation. To conceptualize how the semiotic surface can represent the (ultimately unrepresentable) "real" of suburban consumer culture (or provide a "cognitive map," as Jameson would later formulate it), we must interpose the external term of *media* (in the historically specific sense of electronic circuitry, advertising images, appliances, and suburban services) as an interpretant of the content of that culture itself, as Pynchon does in the passage quoted above. What must be further noted is that the very possibility of this mechanism of indirect representation is projected *out* of the total system (suburban consumer culture and electronic communication) as an effect, one which it can then, in turn, claim to represent.

While I have presented the work of Rossi and the Tendenza, and that of Scott Brown and Venturi, as constituting two more or less divergent

problematics, the fact that they are similar even in their differences was recognized in the theoretical literature of the mid- to late-1970s. Mario Gandelsonas's dialectical resolution of the differences between the "neorationalism" of Rossi and the "neorealism" of Scott Brown and Venturi with his category of "neofunctionalism" is only the most obvious example of a widespread theoretical attempt to resolve the contradictory aspirations toward architectural autonomy and an architectural representation of the cultural city.⁸ What has not been sufficiently theorized is the fact that Peter Eisenman's "Postfunctionalism"—formulated in the 1976 editorial response to Gandelsonas and developed in the decade after in his so-called "cities of artificial excavation"—is a simultaneous absorption and displacement of the same two problematics (neorationalism and neorealism)—a double negation or neutralization of Gandelsonas' neofunctionalism. But the counter-dialectic that Eisenman twists out of this scheme is the position that the autonomy project must be extended, not because the tentative stability of the traditional city can be recovered after the explosion of the mediatic city, but because the heterogeneity of the mediatic city itself has now imploded. Architecture does not so much aspire to autonomy, as with Rossi, as it is *forced* into autonomy by the very system it seeks to represent, the price of which is a reduction and a specialization of form that is cut off from other social concerns yet, in its very isolation and aridness, becomes perfectly adequate to, perfectly homologous with, the society that sponsors it.

I have suggested elsewhere that Eisenman's "cities of artificial excavation" are a meditation on the journey of the architectural sign as it transforms into a visual commodity, an allegorical tracing of the very process of reification.⁹ In this sense, the city "represented" in this work (though that is no longer quite the right word) is the same city as that of Scott Brown and Venturi—the city of consumerism, mass media, and multiple publics—except that now, that city has advanced *past* a threshold where heterogeneity becomes utter sameness and communication becomes henceforth impossible. For Eisenman, the logic of the simulacrum—which of course involves the incorporation and institutionalization of multiplicity in consumer capitalism along with its cognate desires manifest in Scott Brown and Venturi's postmodernism—in fact precludes representation in any direct way and makes it anachronistic. Speaking of Venturi's decorated shed, Eisenman writes, "A sign begins to replicate or, in Jean Baudrillard's term, 'simulate,' once the reality it represents is dead. When there is no longer a distinction between representation and reality, when reality is only simulation, then representation loses its a priori source of significance, and it, too, becomes a simulation."¹⁰ What is more, the spinning sameness of the simulation is accompanied by a particular historical (or posthistorical) impossibility of imagining a future that is any different. He continues: "The modern crisis of closure marked the end of the process of moving toward the end. Such crises (or ruptures) in our perception of the continuity of history arise not so much out of a change in our idea of origins

or ends than out of the failure of the present (and its objects) to sustain our expectations about the future."⁴¹

As a result of this loss of referent and loss of future, the various semiotics of Scott Brown and Venturi's surface are, for Eisenman, bits and pieces of difference that make no difference. All that is left is to jettison their populist ballast so that in effect *nothing is left* but its architectural surface hovering in midair, seared hard and brittle. Eisenman's planimetric collages are peeled off and away from any "real." While the grid as a graphic structure is the underpinning of those systems of organization with which Scott Brown and Venturi coordinate their semiotic appropriations (think of the matrices in *Learning from Las Vegas*) as well as the residue of systems of projection like perspective and isometric through which Rossi's laconic types are constructed, Eisenman's relentless repetitions of countervailing grids pressed into laminated surfaces, along with the operations like "grafting" and "scaling" that modulate them, condemn his grids, in contrast, to float as self-referential, self-repeating architectural systems. But the very isolation is itself historically specific, historically produced—Eisenman formulates it as a necessary transitional negation of humanism and anthropomorphism—and, as such, is still mediated through a larger cause: the City, I suggest, if not History itself. The "cities of artificial excavation," if not representations, are a form of non-representational mimesis. In their tenacious pursuit of an architectural system is found a palpable sense of being locked into the larger structure of a social and historical system, perhaps even more so than through Scott Brown and Venturi's direct appropriations. Indeed Eisenman's pursuit of such an architectural system is in some ways indistinguishable from the requirements of the System itself: the relentless, suffocating sameness, the "end of the beginning, the end of the end" that must now be recorded.

Writing in 1979 on the work of Rossi (but perhaps, as always, thinking about his own new problematic), Eisenman asserted the exigent program for present-day architecture to be how to reckon with this utter leveling, which he described as a condition of post-signification:

"The problem [we face now is] choosing between an anachronistic continuance of hope and an acceptance of the bare conditions of survival. ... Incapable of believing in reason, uncertain of the significance of his objects, man [has lost] his capacity for signifying. ... The context which gave ideas and objects their previous significance is gone. ... The [modernist proposal of the] 'death of art' no longer offers a polemical possibility, because the former meaning of art no longer obtains. There is now merely a landscape of objects; new and old are the same; they appear to have meaning but they speak into a void of history. The realization of this void, at once cataclysmic and claustrophobic, demands that past, present, and future be reconfigured. To have meaning, both objects and life must acknowledge and symbolize this new reality."⁴²

We must signify the fact that we can no longer signify; we must represent through architecture the impossibility of architectural representation, and an autonomous architecture does just that. Like a neutron star whose immense gravity pulls in and distorts matter from surrounding stars, Eisenman's problematic sucks the contradictory system of autonomy and representation away from Rossi, compresses it while amplifying the heterogeneity-turned-sameness of Scott Brown and Venturi, and then generalizes the historical condition of reification, producing process-objects that are traits and traces of a transitional moment in the perception and understanding of the cultural city. Eisenman's objects might be thought of as architectural versions of the X-rays emitted from that neutron star, web-like swirls and folds of space whose acoustical approximation would be a dull, slowly pulsating hum, and which are understandable only as marks of the forces of reification itself. It is when those swirls and folds again become architectural images, when the complex surface is hypostatized as an available figure, that they can be dislodged from Eisenman's negativity and pressed into the service of an altogether differently motivated architectural practice.

And so it is a mutation of our second and third paradigms (the two versions of the mediatic city) and the architectural production adequate to it that must concern us now. The examples I could draw from are growing almost daily, but I have in mind recent theoretical and architectural projects of Greg Lynn, Lars Spuybroek, Ocean, and Objectile, among others (among whom distinctions can and should be made, but which I will for now fail to do).⁴³ In general, I have in mind the attempts to shift our thinking about architectural forms and functions from either a model of disciplinary autonomy and typology or of communication and heterogeneity of the semiotic surface toward one that both re-works and volatilizes Eisenman's non-representational laminate, affirming the smooth fusion of relations among digitally synthesized images and information of diverse origins. For its internal mediatic term, this new architecture employs the metaphor not of a semiotic surface but of computer software itself, which coordinates multiple datascares in a smooth, frictionless flow. As a corollary, this position also affirms a unity of techniques from different disciplines and cultural regions—architecture, physics, chemical engineering, computation, biology, and the flows of capital itself. One might characterize this shift as one away from the autonomy of the object, through the heterogeneity of the collaged, semiotic surface—both of which dramatize formal disjunction—toward the production of new wholes, using Eisenman's surface as a sort of neutralized membrane, but linking it conceptually with a liquification of disciplinary boundaries and a radical mixing of not only forms but materials and concepts culled from different disciplines.⁴⁴

This is architecture's full entry into the new communications and entertainment technologies and, with this, a breakdown of the once fiercely defended autonomy of the architectural object and irreducibility of the architectural experience has occurred. Feeling increasing pressure from other forms of contemporary image culture that would displace architecture's collective communicative-symbolic function, it seems that architecture has reacted by trying to *become* just those things—a multimedia fusion of graphic devices collected on an animated, alloyed surface of texture and pattern that can be scanned for information, that seems to send out references, at one scale, to the molecular, biological, informational system of DNA and, at another scale, to the global urbanization of the planet, joining those two poles with an image, a look, that I have previously referred to as an architectural (and ideological) "smoothness."¹⁵

But the slackening of specificity and the de-differentiation of practices seem also to have produced an architecture whose function and visage can drift and expand in culture in unprecedented ways, spreading laterally in a stretched-out mixed-media experience. The production of this architecture explicitly refuses any craven professionalism or disciplinary partitioning; its techniques are the generic ones of *design*, which can be applied to Audi TTs and iMacs as much as to buildings. The perception of the architecture thus produced is woven into the same fabric as the latest high-tech gadgets, video games, and televisual leisure. Architecture is now just part of the smooth media mix, and yet, in all this, architecture strives to maintain its cultural role. What I want to suggest is that the precise nature of its cultural vocation relates this recent stance back to the previous three paradigms mentioned at two levels: one, an internal movement wherein the reified object (or better, the architectural object that traces the forces of reification) becomes a neutralized surface that can then be reappropriated and recoded with different sorts of information; two, an external level wherein shifts in the conceptualization of the city—from a perceived loss of tradition to a triumphantly emergent posturban condition—demand different architectural representations.

The architectural surface is still important in this fourth category, and this is evidence that it builds on the accumulated techniques and effects of the second and third.¹⁶ But notice, for one thing, that this new surface no longer corresponds to a particular social public or locale—the street, the strip, Las Vegas, or Levittown—with quite the same immediacy as, say, the populism of Scott Brown and Venturi.¹⁷ This seeming lack of a locale is, I think, partly what gives these projects their faint air of unreality, but it is also what attests to the global ambitions of this new architecture. Second, the disjunctive heterogeneity of the earlier surface is now collapsed into the singularity of a complex whole; this follows directly from Eisenman's artificial excavations or process-objects. This new surface is not made up of semiotic material that has been sampled, as it were, from popular culture, but,

nevertheless, the surface is modulated through procedures that trace certain external sociological or technological facts (datascares) more directly, perhaps even more literally, than in the first two paradigms. These traces appear in our reading of the architecture as doing the triple duty of articulating the surface, implying differentiated possibilities for occupation, and encoding phenomena outside the object that cannot, in their very nature, be represented directly. These potentials effectively expand the space of the project to include a range of institutional, legal, technical, and cultural arrangements that precede, determine, and extend beyond the architectural object.

A new kind of reception is suggested here in which the sensory, the aesthetic, is somehow mingled with the theoretical (on the model of, for example, the cinematic apparatus), as the surface asks to be read *simultaneously* as a registration of the discursive practices that shape the object and make possible what can become visible and functional within it, *and* as a diagram of potentials for occupation, as a *dispositif* or distribution apparatus for other practices that it in turn enables. As an explanation of this latter diagrammatic function, Greg Lynn gives the example of a boat hull: "Although the form of a boat hull is designed to anticipate motion, there is no expectation that its shape will change. ... The particular form of a hull stores multiple vectors of motion and flow from the space in which it was designed."¹⁸

As for the discourse of type, we can see a development: Out of the vertical imitation or repetition of presumed timeless precedents emerges a different kind of repetition, that of a complex, metonymic series of parts that exist in a continual process of differentiation. Lynn, for one, is explicit about the fact that his reiterative, interconnective "blobs" are themselves deviations that emanate from typology's formal logic. Lynn writes "Typological fixity ... depends on a closed static order to underlie a family of continuous variations. This concept of discreet, ideal, and fixed prototypes can be subsumed by the model of the numerically controlled multi-type that is flexible, mutable, and differential."¹⁹ From the present perspective, what seems to have occurred is a de-differentiation at the level of typological technique as well, such that now a single, generic, emulsion supercedes the already limited field of object-types. To use Lukácsian language: where reification had already hollowed out Rossi's typological shells, fragmenting them into disenchanting objects, now reification extends its power so absolutely that an object as such is no longer possible. But this should not be understood as entirely negative, for where the disjunctive object once stood, there is now a new whole, a surface or a field, that describes the space of propagation, the space of effects.

Though one would not think to associate this new architecture with the realist, narrative ambitions of the *Tendenza*, there is still a historically aware, totalizing impulse in its practice, evident in the attempt to give form to the effective elements of a new post-urban condition and a

globalized media technology—or in other words, as with Eisenman, to make the *system* of city and media the subject and the problem of the work of design. Even in its diagrammatic version, the most obvious manifestation of the sort of distribution apparatus that this architecture seeks to both represent and become is *post-urbanism* itself—edge cities, suburbs, the “thick two-dimensions” of Asian cities, and the whole docket of emergent post-urban life that have heretofore seemed unmapable and unmanageable.

Thus, if the globalized post-urbanism and information technology that have replaced both the traditional city and the suburbs (along with their earlier technologies) are the “real” of this emergent paradigm, and if the architectural representation or term of internal mediation—the digitized, energized, emulsified surface—seems to be given by the media itself, our problem is then to determine what is the *external* term of mediation, the *analogon*, that might allow us to complete the theorization of this paradigm in relation to the previous three. What is the structural nexus in our viewing and aesthetic decoding apparatus that would allow us to conceptualize the experience of the unrepresentable real of post-urbanism and mediatic technology in the way that advertising media allowed us to conceptualize the semiotic surface of architecture in relation to the earlier consumerist suburb?

One formal or structural interpretant that immediately suggests itself is ecology or, more particularly—as Stan Allen has suggested—a matrix or field condition capable of interconnecting elements into a single tissue while respecting their identity. But another interpretant, I think, is going to turn out to be something like what 1970s video theorists called “total flow”: that is, the constant emission of generic but changing bits of information that we move in and out of in a kind of ultimate suture between time and space.²⁰ Interestingly enough, total flow has its roots in the pop culture and media experience of our second paradigm, but, as in our third paradigm, its time-space is ratcheted up (or is it closed down?) far beyond anything that the term “heterogeneity” previously described. In fact, the emissions from the television screen (and the computer terminal with which it will eventually merge) neutralize psychic energy and homogenize experience into a kind of all-pervasive liquid force in such a way as to make it a logical candidate with which to theorize the newer work in question. What is more, the deregulation of television or, at least, the possibility of “surfing” across hundreds of channels whose broadcasts never stop, is a suitable analogue for the sort of spontaneous occupation desired by this recent architecture, as well as its complex economic ties to multinational capital and entertainment technologies.

A further advantage of the notion of total flow is that it has as its distant relative nothing less than distraction itself, which, of course, Walter Benjamin saw as the architectural mode of perception *par*

excellence. And surely the random succession of serialized images presented by the new architecture—which one attends to in varying degrees, pulling in and out of the frame of one’s conscious attention—is very like the experience of television and video. And, too, total flow helps to model the way in which this new architectural practice is able to debit a wide range of sources to obtain its cultural credit, as well as make use of a variety of modes of dissemination, from journals and exhibitions to web sites and CD-ROMs. By weakening disciplinary autonomy, by de-differentiating procedures of design and dissemination, by dissolving the very distinction between the architectural representation and the larger world of image-spectacles, this architecture paradoxically (or dialectically) produces a link between the spatial experiences it enables and the abstract global system of late capitalism; but even more, the link is made in terms of social space, the architecture that locates subject positions in that space, and the actual experience of that space.

I would like to insist upon this last point and return here to Jameson’s sketch of the Sartrean *analogon*, for Jameson suggests that this sort of triangulation (that is, the triangle of the unrepresentable real, the internal mediation, and the external mediation) is historically specific to what he calls postmodernism and that its terms are themselves “unconscious structures and so many afterimages and secondary effects of some properly postmodern cognitive mapping [an instance of what I am here calling representation], whose indispensable media term now passes itself off as this or that philosophical reflection on language, communication, and the media, rather than the manipulation of its figure.”²¹

The development of this work should be seen according to a double movement of, first, internal transformations out of 1970s typology, the semiotic surface and then the post-semiotic surface, and second, a shifting and transitory mapping of those external determinations of urban or post-urban life under capitalism. The vestiges of the raw material of media remain visible within these projects, inevitably, and this work finds its representational endeavor severely constrained. At the same time, however, the transmutation of the datascape of capital can be understood to continue architecture’s vocation to represent (or aspire to represent) totalities, to provide maps of the social systems that sponsored it. Perhaps, then, we have here a rather extraordinary condition in which a mutant form of reification continues its work of flattening out disciplinary techniques, de-differentiating across previously distinct practices, erasing the specific traces of production, and homogenizing particular experiences into one generic experiential flow and yet *at the same time* does not eradicate the architectural impulse but rather is paradoxically pressed into service of altogether new ones more adequate (just maybe) for our present.

Notes

Thanks to Jeffrey Kipnis and Robert McAnulty for discussions of this material. Special thanks to Lauren Kogod for helpful suggestions and support.

¹ Massimo Scolari, "The New Architecture and the Avant-Garde," *Architettura razionale* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1973), English translation in *Architecture (Theory) since 1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998) ed. K. Michael Hays 131-132.

² Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology," *Oppositions* 7 (Winter 1977); in Hays 288-294.

³ Rossi writes: "Together, all of the buildings read as a city in which the private relationship with death happens to be the civil relationship with the institution. Thus the cemetery is also a public building with an inherent clarity in its circulation and its land use. Externally, it is closed by a fenestrated wall. The elegiac theme does not separate it much from other public buildings. Its order and its location also contain the bureaucratic aspect of death. ... Faced with this relationship, architecture can only use its given elements, refusing any suggestion not born out of its own making; therefore, the references to the cemetery are also found in the architecture of the cemetery, the house, and the city." Aldo Rossi, "Cemetery of San Cataldo, Modena," *Oppositions* 5 (Summer 1976); in Hays 68-69.

⁴ Manfredo Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans la Boudoir: the Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language," *Oppositions* 3 (1974); in Hays 155.

⁵ Denise Scott Brown, "Learning from Pop," *Casabella* 359-360 (December 1971); in Hays 62-64.

⁶ Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1966) 24.

⁷ Fredric Jameson, "Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture" (1977), in *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 35-54.

⁸ For a sampling of the realist discourse, see Mario Gandelsonas, "Neo-Functionalism," *Oppositions* 5 (Summer 1976); Jorge Silvetti, "On Realism in Architecture," *Harvard Architecture Review* 1 (Spring 1980); Martin Steinmann, "Reality as History: Notes for a Discussion of Realism in Architecture" (1976); and Bernard Huet, "Formalism—Realism" (1977); last two appear in Hays 248-253 and 256-260 respectively.

⁹ K. Michael Hays, "Allegory into Death: An Etiology of Eisenman's Repetition," *Cities of Artificial Excavation: the Work of Peter Eisenman 1978-1988* (Montreal: CCA, 1994) 104-117.

¹⁰ Peter Eisenman, "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End," *Perspecta* 21 (1984); in Hays 526.

¹¹ Eisenman, "End" 532.

¹² Peter Eisenman, "Introduction," *Aldo Rossi in America, 1976 to 1979*, ed. Kenneth Frampton (New York: IAUS, 1979) 3 (emphasis added).

¹³ See, for example, *Folding in Architecture*, ed. Greg Lynn (London: Academy Editions, 1993); *Hypersurface Architecture*, ed. Stephen Perrella (London: Academy Editions, 1998); and *ArchiLab* (Orléans: Blanchard, 1999).

¹⁴ It should be pointed out that a fuller account of the narrative I am sketching here would have to include a passage through the "event-structure" work of Bernard Tschumi and, as Robert McAnulty has pointed out in conversation, of Diller and Scofidio as well, with their use of television as both appliance and surface or screen. The present emphasis, however, is on the paradigmatic changes due to altered conceptualizations of the city, which, it seems to me, yields a slightly different story.

¹⁵ See K. Michael Hays, "Architecture Theory, Media, and the Question of Audience," *Assemblage* 27 (August 1995).

¹⁶ It is interesting in this regard to note that Greg Lynn's thesis project at Princeton University was a shopping mall, not quite a-la Venturi but close in its inspiration. In Eisenman's office Lynn seemed to have found gridded forms and transformational procedures more adequate for his needs.

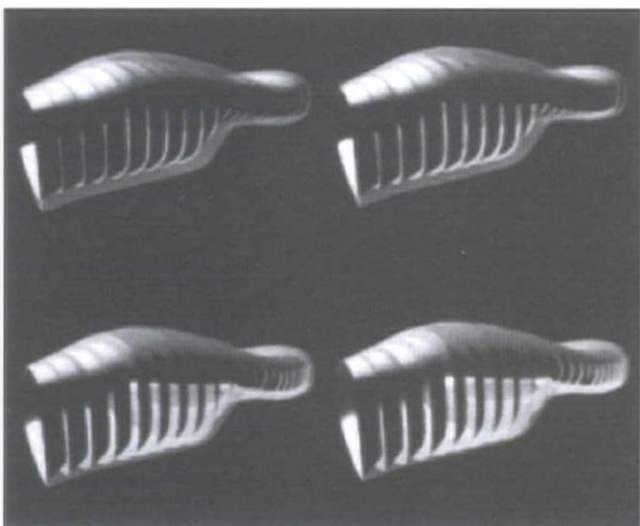
¹⁷ In the aforementioned *Assemblage* article, I suggested that the "proper" audience for this architecture is the generation of baby boomers and their just younger siblings who, through historical circumstance and class alliance, have developed a highly paradoxical mode of perception that one might call specific generalization, in which the distinctions between previously distinct modes of cultural expression are liquidated into the new generic smoothness.

¹⁸ Gregg Lynn, *Animate Form* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999) 10.

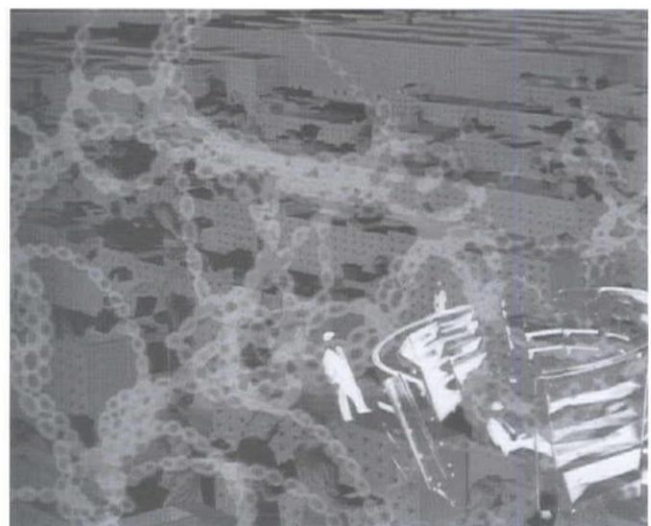
¹⁹ Lynn, *Form* 13.

²⁰ See, above all, Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974).

²¹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) 417.



▲ Korean Presbyterian Church
Long Island City, New York. Douglas Garofalo + Greg Lynn, 1999.



▲ Bruce Mau
page from *Incorporations* (Zone 6).

LE CORBUSIER A LA MODE

Revolution for the Sell of It

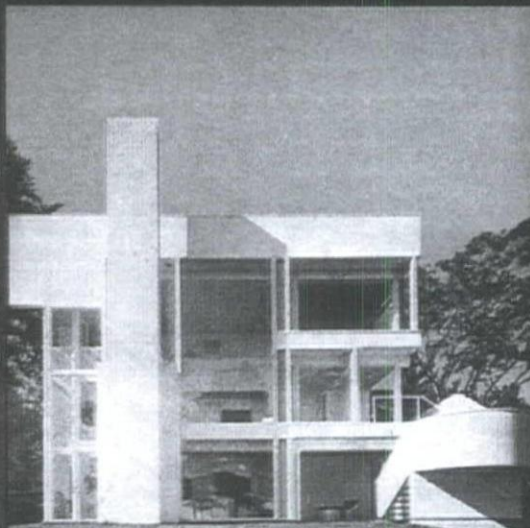
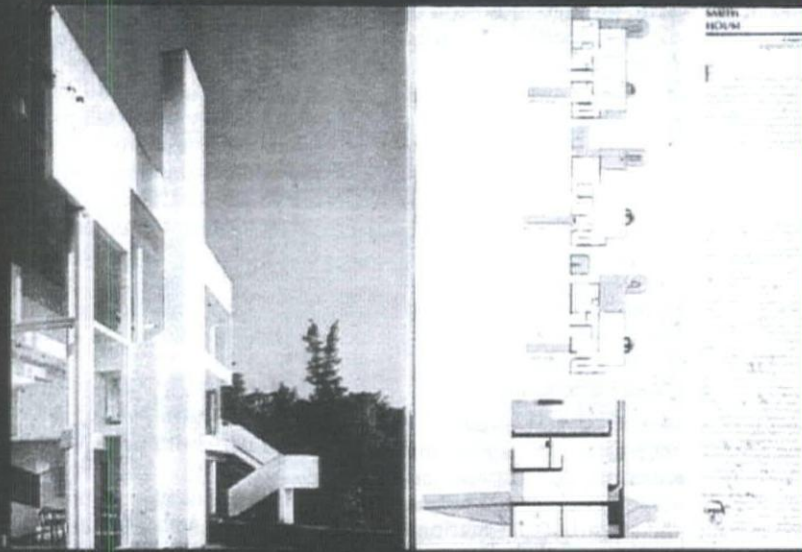
The morality of style is one of the permeating myths of architecture. Within the professional trade journals, the house by Richard Meier 1, 2 was regarded as an elegant statement in the tradition of early modern architecture, *de rigueur*.

Formal analysis of the composition certainly renders a similarity with Le Corbusier's own Five Points of 1926. Its iconographic use of motifs, such as the free facade, the articulated staircase with two different banisters and the round columns set in a shallow space behind the window plane, extends the building well within a professionally orthodox style.

However, the recent appearance of several advertisements relying heavily on employment of this building begs the question of further iconological interpretation 3, 4. As a manifestation of the "House of the Future" syndrome, Meier's design is presented as being somewhat avant-garde and "futuristic". At a point in time some forty years later than its paradigms, such proposals can only seem slightly improbable or, if not, they at least question the relevancy of the style altogether. Being used to push a plush stereo unit through suggestions of extremely sophisticated good taste, and investment in a financial corporation by suggesting a future life, Meier's house appears to possess a schizophrenic symbolic content.

Through a softening of the revolutionary overtones of its sources, it must appear inevitably as another form of packaging, one either currently available to a corporate capitalist elite or one to be aspired to. The dialectical tensions of Le Corbusier are gone, and the International Style stands before us finally to be recognized as a *decor de la vie*.

Peter C. Papademetriou



BUILDING THE STORY
RECORD HOUSES OF 1968
FOUNDED BY THE FINEST ARTS, BECAUSE THE WORLD CHANGES
MODERN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

MAY 1968

Magnavox stereo!
Within that gorgeous cabinet is just about everything electronic science knows about stereo. And we have a wide choice of models (entry with our revolutionary air suspension speakers). Thoughtfully, we built in flexibility that lets you add boom units or extra speakers. You repeat.

You're home with Magnavox.



Two chickens in every pot. A car in every garage.

Progress never looks easy, and considerable change, but America's problems are there to be solved.

If the spectacle of living keeps going up, change in progress demands itself to be solved. How, created in just a few years.

Discretionary income not going to be a problem for most Americans. But knowing how to take care of that money will be.

By the middle of the 1970's, the average wage earner who made a salary of \$10,000 in 1965 will be the lowest wage earner in the country. And he'll be 65 years old.

What's CNA Financial Corporation?

Simply, we can help people handle a variety of ways. Personal loans through CNA's CNA Insurance, CNA Financial, CNA Insurance, Commercial Insurance, and Commercial Insurance. New homes through the CNA Home Loan Insurance, CNA Financial, CNA Insurance. These are the basics of CNA Financial, the largest corporation in the industry, with assets over three billion dollars. A size that's not just a killing operation.

When the time with the average income, however, the biggest market for CNA's financial services, CNA Financial will be there to help.

From insurance policies for new home, American insurance can be the right, financial services.

So why, America's future?

We make money work.

CNA FINANCIAL CORPORATION

^ Page from *Architectural Design* January 1971.

Recurring Surfaces: Architecture in the Experience Economy

SANDY ISENSTADT

Architecture today is split. Arrayed on the one hand are varied, intelligent, and often provocative investigations into the making of form. New materials, new design processes, virtuoso manipulations of irregular geometries, whole new metaphors for the generation of form, surprising borrowings from unlikely sources: each of these characterizes some of the most innovative design thinking of our time. Equally, architects working with self-imposed formal constraints and strict spatial orders have brought minimalist modernism to new levels, while others speculate on the future of architecture in a world increasingly dominated by visual media and virtual flows of information.

On the other hand, and set against such vivid imaginings, is the vast majority of building today: the dreary landscape we spend much of our adult lives unconsciously trying to screen out, a nation of functional footage costumed in the abridged populisms of PomoLite. Just look out your window. It arises from those expedient and often unquestioned conventions that help each of us get through yet another day at work but, in the case of architecture, remain on the surface of the earth for decades and decades to come. There is really no malevolence in its making, just convenience, but the result is a built environment so bleak even those who have profited mightily from it race to live elsewhere.

Between the two stands a gulf. Architects and builders looking to wrap up another project, limited by budgets and client expectations, crowded out from their own initial design dreams by the sheer difficulty of getting anything built at all—let alone a good building—can lose patience with theoretical challenges or, more often, ignore them altogether. Indeed, many of the more thoughtful designers today see themselves operating against a backdrop of banality and tired acquiescence, a tsunami of indifference about how we build. At the same time, an especially inventive area of current commercial practice is the trend toward the creation of themed environments, from resort parks to restaurants, from offices to shopping malls. Relying on the creation of atmosphere through images, whether painted, built up in relief, or projected on screens, themed environments are, for all their visual evocations, literary allusions; they refer to another place. However romantic or thrilling, they are not *about* building or form. Thus, such work, whether lame or cunning, represents not just a diminished degree of design energies, but appears downright antagonistic to a premise of formal development or to the expression of new materials and methods or new processes of design.

This essay contends that both commercial-populist and avant-garde practices today may be gathered under the big tent of theming, despite evident and substantial differences in their design agendas, despite often contradictory motivations in their pursuit, and against all appearances to the contrary. Both coordinate sensory cues within a given place to achieve a consistent set of symbolic expressions; both aim self-consciously to convey specific meaning with form. Both aim as well at target audiences; the goal is not a utopian reconfiguration of society but meaningful communication with a group defined in part by its ability to read the symbolic cues presented.

That this is an overly broad definition for theming is agreed: nearly any design large or complex enough to engage cultural and environmental factors could with this definition be considered an example of theming. This observation, however, only leads to my central claim that the very proliferation of themed environments betokens an emerging mode of architectural reception: serial immersion in narrative environments, itself an effect of an emerging experience economy. We—that is, “the public”—have in fact already become expert at reading a symbolic landscape, one bristling with referential content; we have come to expect this condition and, as a result, we look for it ... everywhere. Theming, in this sense, has become a common way of understanding architecture. As such, it deserves examination as a means of interpreting architecture, as a means of relating architecture to the culture that produces it. This essay looks at the 1970s debate between the Whites and the Grays as one progenitor of today’s split and, by placing that debate within the context of a cultural search for authenticity, argues that both White and Gray positions participated equally in the formation of a new paradigm for the reception of architecture: theming.

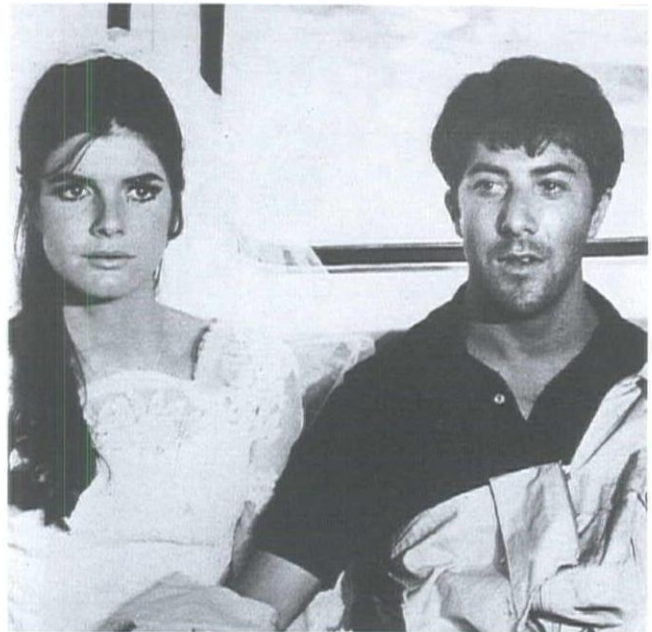
We Have All Been Here Before We Have All Been Here Before

Following spirited critiques of modernism in the 1960s, some architects began to seek new goals for architecture. These goals went off in various directions, but two of the more distinct ones soon found themselves at odds with one another. *Five Architects* and *Learning from Las Vegas*, both published in 1972, are the leading documents for these two directions, pitting an athletic formalism against a cheerfully compromised conviviality in what was soon deemed a "debate" between "Whites" and "Grays." Less an opposition than a dialogue, as Robert A. M. Stern noted, Whites offered a kind of aesthetic withdrawal, an inward focus on the operations and motives of form-making, whereas Grays proposed an engagement with contemporary social life that could be so complete as to make it nearly impossible to tell high and low apart.¹

An impetus for both positions was the recognition that the Modern Movement, to whatever extent there had actually been one, was over. It was not that modernism suddenly disappeared or even that it was waning. Indeed, at just this moment architects steeped in modernism and at the height of their careers launched a number of architecture schools that remain to this day marked by their founding ideals. It was more a matter that, as Colin Rowe put it in his introduction to *Five Architects*: "The intensity of [modernism's] social vision became dissipated. ... and hence, with deflation of conviction, there followed divergence of interest."² In other words, with modern architecture's utopian fuse extinguished, the time had come to propose directions towards a new architecture.

While these future directions were far from settled, the charges leveled against modernism were often aimed at its positivist spirit: its fixation on function, its insistence on formal accord between the manufacture of its parts and their final assembly on the site, and, in general, the sense that a technological or instrumental rationality had eclipsed other values. Critics charged that this tendency to define architectural and urban problems narrowly along their technical dimensions was responsible for modernism's indifference to place and human scale, a trait increasingly apparent in urban-renewal projects of the time. Modernism had lent aesthetic legitimacy to many postwar projects but had also become embroiled in the all-too evident failure of such developments to address a host of other factors. Worse, perhaps, was that the evacuation of humanist content in design thinking had been conducted in the name of improving the human condition. Many of the critiques that followed in the 1960s sought to get beyond what more and more appeared to be the limited scope of modern architecture.

Some of the attacks leveled against architectural modernism were in the same terms as criticisms that were also being brought to bear on the whole of American society at this moment. Since the 1950s, critical analyses of American society—its intoxicating postwar economic expansion and its new global swagger—had focused on a people who'd lost their bearings: who, in the rush for the suburbs forgot their fellow Americans left in the city, as well as their own ethnic roots; who, in their lusty acquisition of goods, had lost sight of life's larger purposes; who, in their quest for filling up every square inch of leisure time, had forgotten the meaning of work and good deeds; and who, in their efforts to fit in, had lost touch with who they were themselves. Authors like William H. Whyte, David Riesman, and Paul Goodman argued there was no center within the shell of well being that Americans had built around themselves. Daniel Boorstin, in his 1961 book *The Image*, described



▲ *The Graduate*
Mike Nichols, 1967, film still.

the "thicket of unreality which stands between us and the facts of life."³ These critiques often focused on new technologies that seemed to be put in use before their implications could even be questioned, let alone understood. Herbert Marcuse's central argument in *One-Dimensional Man*, for example, was that technology influenced thought widely, transforming multivalent social issues into merely technical problems.⁴ Many suspected, moreover, that new technologies were foisted on the populace merely to increase corporate profits; this was a central theme of Vance Packard's popular writings.

No single episode in the 1960s conveys this apprehension better than "plastics," the post-utopian, one-word treatise uttered at a nondescript backyard party in the 1967 film *The Graduate*.⁵ For the protagonist, Benjamin Braddock, and for viewers as well, the term conjured the subordination of matter to the shaping interests of profit-making, along with the molding of consumer preferences to the same end. It was the material from which American society minted its think-alike citizenry, and it was Benjamin's looming cultural inheritance, replete with notions of phoniness, cheap creativity, and a non-reactive nature. "Plastics" and the seductions of bourgeois middle age were exactly what Benjamin ended up fleeing from, although, as the film's final scene makes clear—with the camera centered on the receding past—he had no idea where he was going. Indeed, the final scene unfolds as a veritable tableau of Walter Benjamin's "angel of history"—facing the past and being blown backwards into the future—as we, the viewers, looking back, are driven forward by a tempest of anger from the prior scene—twisted mouths, shaking fists of those whose unsensed self-deceptions Benjamin (the character) rejects—and onward to something unseen either by us or the film's protagonists, who face forward but stare absently. In short, just at the point they started their journey to the heavens, Americans were never more anxious about what it meant to inhabit their piece of the earth.

“The Real Thing”: Authenticity and Architecture

The responses to this anxiety were many, and the consequences are still debated. But perceptions of falseness and inner potential withered by social expectations energized a search for something more honest, more “authentic,” a term that comes to have enormous significance at this time. Marshall Berman, for instance, describes coming of age in the 1960s and his generation’s “search for personal authenticity” as preface to his history of “radical individualism” in Western society. Literary critic Lionel Trilling, also, in a series of lectures from the end of the decade said: “That the word [*authenticity*] has become part of the moral slang of our day points to the peculiar nature of our fallen condition, our anxiety over the credibility of existence and of individual existences.”⁶

The search for authenticity took many forms and led to enterprises both noble and trivial. On the one hand, antagonism toward the growing might of global corporations found inspiration in the allegedly un-self-conscious behaviors of everyday life and the possibility that popular culture might be, if not contrary to commercial interests, at least unpredictable and annoying to them. A number of studies from the 1960s, such as Russell Nye’s *The Unembarrassed Muse* and Susan Sontag’s *Against Interpretation*, argued the validity, or at least the vitality, of popular culture.⁷ On the other hand, a search for fullness led to the radical individualism described by Berman at the start of his book as “a dream of an ideal community in which individuality will not be subsumed and sacrificed, but fully developed and expressed.”⁸ In this dream, the individual opts for a demanding personal morality rather than yielding to social pressures to fit in, even when such a path points toward discomfort, confrontation, or violence. Though hardly unique to this moment, both the celebration of “the people” as bearers of authentic culture and the call for individual liberation were staple preoccupations in the 1960s. Indeed, the decade’s greatest political achievements bring together these concerns, as, for example, with the Civil Rights movement, which joined its awareness of inequity and oppression with a mandate to nurture every human’s inner potential.

At the same time, as critics of all political persuasions have noted, populist ideals dissolved readily into masscult and indulgence of the banal, while liberation of the self sometimes turned to solipsism, with transgression becoming an end in itself. Equally, both attitudes were susceptible to exploitation by the commercial interests they had set out to escape. One need only think of the wildly successful advertising campaign for the Volkswagen Beetle, which combined the people’s car with an appeal to non-conformism, and all toward the end of selling more stuff. In fact, probably nowhere was a self-consciously counter-cultural ideal of authenticity more promulgated than in the very commercial culture so many were seeking respite from.⁹

However admirable in their heyday, architectural modernism’s various goals had become freighted with industrial imagery, which was simply too close to the industrial capitalism that by 1970 was believed to lurk behind environmental degradation, insidious social controls, and a cruel and otherwise paranoid war in Vietnam. Further, as Rowe claimed, the spread of modernism as built fact had devalued its “ideal content”: “The building became no longer a subversive proposition about a possible Utopian future. It became instead the acceptable decoration of a certainly non-Utopian present.”¹⁰ Utopian thinking generally, I would add, was more or less usurped in 1968 with another film event: *2001. A Space Odyssey*.¹¹ With a scope encompassing human evolution itself—from ape to near-perfect artificial intelligence to stargchild—Stanley Kubrick composed a hopeful (if opaque) message,

Lemon.

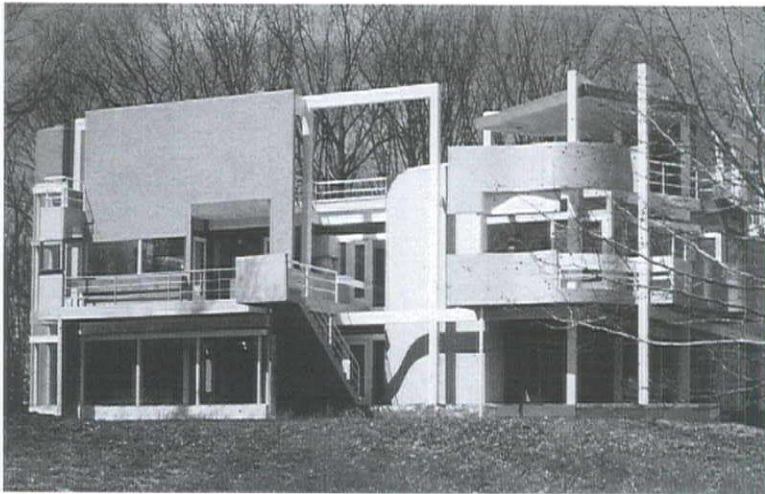
This Volkswagen missed the boat. The chrome strip on the glove compartment is flaked and must be replaced. Chrome: are you wouldn't have noticed it. Inspector: Karl Kramer did. There are 3,200 men at our Wolfsburg factory with only one job: to inspect Volkswagens at each stage of production. 2000 Volkswagens are produced daily: there are more inspectors (than cars). Every black absorbent is tested (not checked, not tested, every windshield is scored). VWs have been rejected for surface scratches: barely visible to the eye. Final inspection is really something! VW inspectors run each car off the line onto the Volkswagen/Infiniti car rear stand, how up (if check points, get ahead to the automatic brake pedal, and say "so" to one VW out of fifty. The precaution with defect means the VW lasts longer and requires less maintenance, by and large, than other cars. It also means a used VW depreciates (less than any other car). We pluck the lemons you get the plums.

▲ Volkswagen Beetle advertisement 1960.

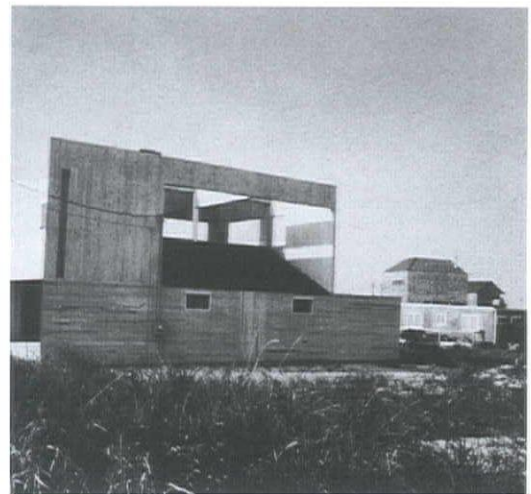
and he did so in a stunning visual format that consequently revolutionized visions of humankind’s prospects. Thus, with utopian visions more vivid elsewhere, architects cast about for other sites of architectural enthusiasm.

Both Gray and White positions emerge in this larger context of a crisis of authenticity. The Gray position emphasized a need to communicate with the users for whom a building was intended, along with a complementary challenge to speak to those users in a language they already knew well. More often than not, this language entailed the commercial vernacular that design elites typically disdain. By referring to vernacular architecture, Grays appealed to a notion of cultural legibility and thus revealed a faith in the authentic sensibilities of the people, however debased by commercial manipulations. By claiming an “ironic detachment” from their sources, Grays implied they were somehow refining that mettle of authenticity from its commercial dross. Architecture would benefit as well: the authors of *Learning from Las Vegas* suggested that the commercial vernacular pointed toward new horizons for architecture, just as pioneer modernists learned from the industrial forms of factories, grain silos, and steamships. Similarly, just as many modernists had hoped to get beyond historicist architecture—that is, architecture inauthentic with respect to its own era—so Grays tried to get beyond a mechanistic mindset that had become a source of inauthenticity in their own time.

In contrast, the eponymous Five Architects fixed themselves within the high formal quality of the work presented, which was intense, self-aware, focused on its own means, and steeped in admiration for the peerless plastic masterpieces of modernism: Le Corbusier’s villas of the 1920s. Focusing on the irreducible operations at the heart of any and all design—that is, manipulation of form—Whites rededicated



▲ **Snyderman House**
Fort Wayne, Indiana. Michael Graves, 1972.



▲ **Snell House**
Amagansett, New York. Frank Israel, 1972.

themselves to aesthetic precepts of modern architecture. John Hejduk, for example, suggested that Corbusier had already sketched in the grand panorama, and his own work merely elaborated aspects of the scene, attending to possibilities that had gone unfulfilled.¹² Whites emphasized in particular what everyday buildings usually lack: formal austerity along with spatial richness, a combination that might be said even to characterize modern architecture. Their projects advertise their commitment to the plastic, not the symbolic imagination; Whites were unblushing beside their exclusively formal preoccupations. After so many calls for form to serve social agendas and for architects to submerge aesthetic aspirations to an unremitting concern for function, unapologetic attention to form itself was liberating.

Certainly, neither White nor Gray should be understood monochromatically, so to speak. Whites included the elaborate theoretical explorations of Peter Eisenman alongside the nearly elemental cubic forms of Richard Meier's beach houses; the muted murals and backyard additions of Michael Graves beside the paintings and poetry of Hejduk. Charles Gwathmey even protested his being painted white. Grays ranged widely as well, including besides Venturi and Scott Brown and Stern, Charles Moore and, as Vincent Scully argued in *The Shingle Style Today*, Romaldo Giurgola, Frank Israel, and even Louis Kahn. The Whites even had an operative historian in Colin Rowe, similar to Scully for the Grays. Besides introducing *Five Architects*, Rowe's later book *Collage City* (written with Fred Koetter) might be understood as a further working out of two opposed impulses, one based in the technological preconditions of art, which modernism at its most moralistic hoped to elevate, and the other rooted in the "half-truth" uncovered by Moore regarding Disney World: people like it. "Do the sewers validate the Opéra or does the Opéra validate the sewers; which has priority, the servant or the served?" Collage becomes an aesthetic device to accommodate urban modes that, although interdependent, refuse to be reduced to one another.¹³

These positions should not be considered mutually exclusive, and neither attitude toward form-making should imply a specific political orientation. Grays eagerly made their case for formal legitimacy, and Whites were highly communicative, albeit in regard to a smaller and more carefully

defined academic audience. Although White architects are more readily seen pursuing what would soon be described as an "autonomous" architecture, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour were careful to reserve their high-style credentials by claiming their ironic distance from popular tastes. Similarly, although Grays are explicit in their references to the past, Whites are no less interested in "history," through sympathy with the notion of *type* as the spatial or, more loosely, formal template designers begin their work with, and, frankly, by drawing from designs a half-century old. Indeed, in this literal sense of history, Gray and White are distinguished not by whether they return to the past, but how far they go, whether they stop in the 1920s or skitter back a bit further to the 1880s (though, to be sure, the break in aesthetic thought bracketed by those years is nothing to be skittered over). With utopian futures closed off and notions of progress discredited, it is perhaps not surprising that architects would believe the past was ripe for redevelopment.

Still, despite their overlaps and distinctions, White and Gray positions may be characterized by an introspective concern for self-actualization and an explicitly populist program. Writing in the aftermath of the 1960s, Christopher Lasch identified this polar pair as a hallmark of the "culture of narcissism." In either case it involves discontent with convention—Lasch's "devaluation of routine"—and an embrace of formerly forbidden pleasures: on the White hand, the hedonism of absorption in internal doings and, on the Gray hand, melting individual identity into the everyday material from which it arose, a swooning surrender to either the self or the setting. Further, explicit justification of one's position, frequent for both White and Gray, often led, Lasch wrote, to a "banal pseudo-self-awareness."¹⁴ In this context, the democratic overtones of the Gray position may be seen to represent a middlebrow, large-print polemic, while White navel-gazing reflects the 1960s turn-on-tune-in-drop-out flight to heightened consciousness that was as far-out as it was self-involved. Both sought authenticity, that is, a sense of ontological virtue: one at the still white-hot, white-walled heart of formal invention and the other outside in a social sphere, or, more precisely, at the very threshold where the social *becomes* the architectural. But for all their careful delineations, Gray ironies were, for the less attentive, lost in the celebration of commercial excess; refined incongruities did not translate well into casino colloquial.

Theming: Literal and Even More Literal

Some thirty years later, both positions also share something else: an affinity with a new mode of architectural reception that, still unnamed at the time, is reflected in the growing trend today toward themed environments. Theming may be defined as the creation of material forms, ranging in scale from a room to a district, that rely for effect on symbolic references to cultural narratives. Of course, symbolic reference is nothing new and such a general definition excludes little. Adrian Forty, for example, questions whether the royal palace and gardens of Versailles might themselves constitute "a political theme park."¹⁵ But the primary trait distinguishing earlier symbolic uses of space from those of the present day is, as Mark Gottdiener puts it, the recent "melding of material forms and commercial culture," along with popular culture and mass media serving as main sources of imagery. With the sheer ubiquity of commercial culture today, and with expectations for technological (rather than architectural) solutions to functional issues in the built environment and, furthermore, granting a growing tendency to understand built environments largely through their symbolic references—which is this essay's main proposition—then at least some of that generality is warranted.¹⁶

Encompassing a broad range of places and uses, themed environments coordinate sensory and symbolic cues to evoke a general mood or, more often, a time or place removed from the local context. A rainforest in a shopping mall or a railroad suburb along a remote stretch of the Gulf Coast would be fine examples. The illusion need not be perfect, merely sufficient to create a steady reference. The interior of Nortel Communications' headquarters in Toronto, for example, is very clearly not a city street, but it effectively communicates an image of "city life." The references actuate an individual's internalized narratives, gleaned over a lifetime from various media, and thus help fill out the visual cues with knowledge of suitable and expected behaviors; the visual cues, in other words, point to a larger narrative framework upon which to organize one's impressions. Of course, such narratives are selective. Nortel's "city," for example, reads as a place for casual conversation and the convenience of nearby personal services rather than, say, a forum for political debate, or an edgy friction between diverse populations.

Already rooted in reference, a Gray position, with its emphasis on image and allusion, is easily judged to be the low-relief precursor to today's environments of reference. Stern, for example, imagined buildings that told stories and spoke to a public in meaningful terms, while Scully demonstrated the inevitability of referentiality even in the freshest works. Favoring purposefully prosaic signification over modernism's plastic forms, Grays readily acknowledged indifference to other issues, even to space itself. As Venturi was quick to point out, a focus on symbolic communication flattens space: Gray space is rendered as the distance of transmission, how far a signal travels before being received.¹⁷

Theming, or, less ambitiously, characteristics of theming are also evident at several levels in the White program, despite its being usually understood as contrary in character to the Gray program. Most apparent is the Corbusian palette. The reappearance of formal traits like smooth white walls, flat roofs, and conspicuous contrasts of solid and void is precisely what Rowe tries to explain away in his introduction to *Five Architects*.¹⁸ Frampton as well, in the same book, suggests that visiting these projects is akin to traveling in time. The manifest anachronism, however, is recast as a kind of equi- or trans-chronism, that is, modernism's aesthetic promise, forgotten during the long winter of Depression, WWII, and dizzy postwar consumption, is, finally, to be fulfilled. Convincing or not, the claim emphasizes the book's



A Nortel Communications Headquarters
Toronto, Canada. Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, 1999.

architectural ambitions and prevents our reading it as a document of stylistic revival.

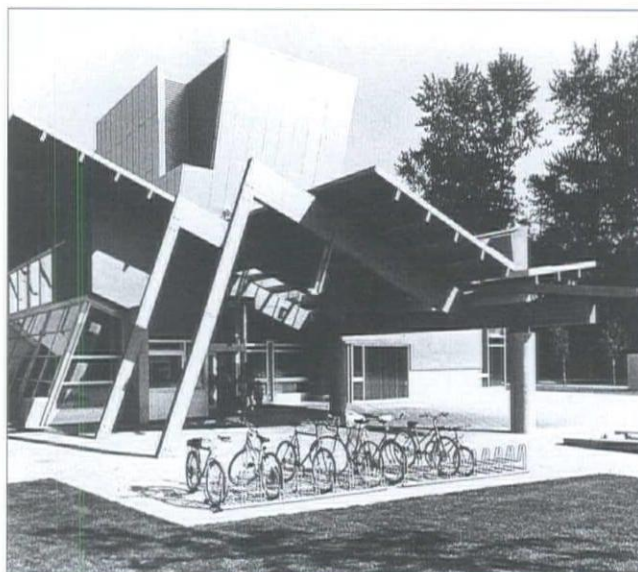
Another level involves the careful delimitation of a conceptual and perceptual context. This is most evident with Eisenman, who, as Stern notes, wrote the White theory. His writings, which focus on formal moves, usher in his designs and further focus the reader's attention in specific ways. He precludes our reading of programmatic accommodation or familiar formal relationships, since these would distract us from seeing the project as a purely geometric operation. Context is cropped, not unlike the extraordinary attention paid in theme parks to screening one period attraction from another: focusing the viewer's attention on the proper objects of perception and providing a privileged narrative for deciphering the given environment are methods used to generate a successful "reading" of the environment in question. Our understanding is, in this way, scripted; proffered as a pair, setting and script trigger each other. The script structures experience of the building; indeed, since actual experience of somebody else's house is limited, the script stands in for experience. It directs experience toward the architectural. In fact, Eisenman's conceptual framing of an otherwise familiar formal vocabulary is exactly what Rosemarie Bletter thought was the most interesting aspect of *Five Architects* when she reviewed it.¹⁹

Related to this is Eisenman's particular concern with linguistic notions. Explicit about trying to control denotation and connotation, and referring to Chomsky's generative transformational grammar, Eisenman implies that signification is, indeed, the larger context for his work. Adamant about the non-referentiality of his projects, he ends up somewhat wordy about non-communication. Still, the reader who invests the time to follow Eisenman's account is rewarded by an intense conceptual journey through a syntactic structure, with few familiar landmarks. Again, though, the effect parallels an effect of themed environments, which aim to take us away from convention and engage us in a narrative adventure that exceeds our everyday routine. In this case, the script not only creates a textualized object, it also functions as a kind of conceptual buffer zone, a theoretical perimeter to screen out both context and banal interpretations.

Further, the explicit script regarding design generation is itself underpinned by two implied scripts. One repeats an essentially psychoanalytic premise, that is, a latent process has given rise to a present organization. To understand that organization fully, then, one must make the latency manifest; the goal is to tell a story of the object's coming-to-be. The narrated design process becomes central to the greater project as Eisenman's text-and-object performs an unveiling, a presentation of a buried truth. Reading the script makes the object-in-the-present transparent to its process of becoming. As in psychoanalysis, this is not a nostalgic exercise but represents real work on the present condition. It is, as well, based on the notions of a tenable substrate that explains and authenticates the present configuration of an object. Eisenman's success in actuating this script may be measured by the extent to which he leads us to see the object through the tale of its generation. The space of a project like the Barenholz House becomes a theater of revelation.

The other script is the story of modernism's passing. To ascribe a state of non-referentiality, using elements of a formal language that was in its own time meant to describe a utopian vision of a transparent society, at the cusp of the decline of that vision and the simultaneous rise of various populist languages, and to do so by employing analytical tools of semiotics that try to explain the syntactic and referential mission of those languages is, from the perspective of today, the stuff of high tragedy: it is a gesture rich in meaning, with an abiding sense of loss and a corollary heroic attempt to restore a faded Camelot. Erased meaning returns as metaphor. The implied moral is that autonomous geometric manipulation, like a rightful hereditary line, is the proper engine for continued avant-garde production.²⁰

At the same time, the White position must be distinguished from other sorts of theming for several reasons. First, the link with commercial culture is not a primary trait, although obviously the idea of resisting or stepping outside commercial culture may easily be construed as one. Second, the narratives being referred to are not pre-given, that is, the particular set of references employed—the geometric manipulations in Eisenman's case—are determined by the architect. They are invented,

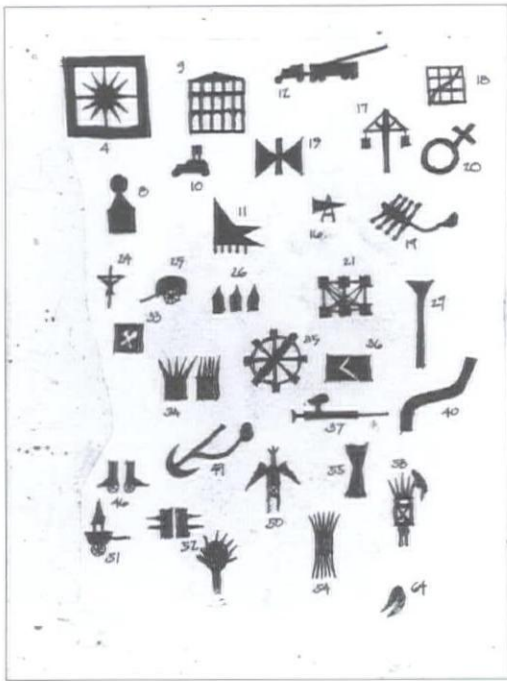


▲ Newton Branch Library
Surrey, British Columbia. Patkau Architects, 1994.

not selected. The story is not about an idealized past or a zippy future; it is, rather, a story about making architecture. Eisenman's houses, along with the texts nailed to their doorposts, refer directly to the process of design. If they are themed, the theme is the stuff of architectural invention—the design process itself—and its readers are those committed to rethinking design. The script is a concern shared at that moment by other architects as well, including Rem Koolhaas, who worked as a scriptwriter before venturing into architecture, and Hejduk, who suggested that continued architectural invention will require new, and not necessarily functional, "programs." Scripts foster absorption in the work, setting up an ideational field that creates meaning after the collapse of commonly held modernist values. Third, the designs end up exceeding their scripts many times over; they cannot be reduced only to a script. The continuing attention gathered by key White works is due less to subsequent influence—whether formally (limited influence) or in terms of encouraging the creation of text/objects (tremendous influence)—than to their formal integrity and richness. Like the best architecture, they are open to and encourage multiple readings.

Oppositioning: the Multiplication of Choice

A far more important contribution to theming, though, than either the Gray or White position, is the fact of *both* of them. Although there might have been conviction within one camp or another, both sides were frank about their own limits and, indeed, undemanding about greater acceptance of their terms. With each position offering unique attractions, and with neither claiming a moral imperative, architects were free to choose. Rowe stated directly that the dissolution of a modernist program had created a "context of choices." The simultaneous appearance of functionally equivalent aesthetic alternatives is, in effect, a kind of pluralism; the proper response to pluralism for practitioner or client, eventually, is a choice. Further, choice is one of the more vexing issues of postmodern society: critics on the right mourn the loss of social imperatives that once placed limits on personal choices, and so fostered social cohesiveness. Critics on the left worry that although choice proliferates, it is only within the marketplace, making the actual difference between choices insignificant. Choice—as an architectural



▲ Sketches for characters for Bovisa
John Hejduk, 1987.

possibility, as a class-based demand—has yet to receive sustained theoretical investigation, perhaps because of its connections with both consumerism and a seemingly inauthentic eclecticism.

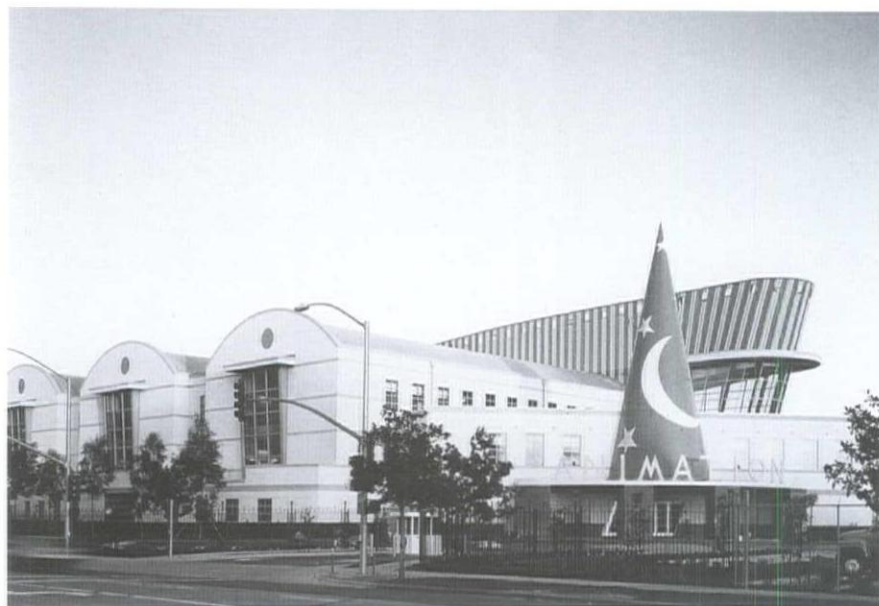
In the business world though, where affecting choice affects survival, the matter was taken up rather carefully. A context of choices was exactly the condition identified as a new problem for industry by Jack Trout and Al Ries, two marketing agency principals, in a series of articles published in *Advertising Age* in 1972 and elaborated in a book several years later. The authors argued that technological advances and faster design-to-market cycles had led to a situation where products were less differentiated in functional terms. This meant, they said, that manufacturers needed to find other means to distinguish their products. The authors proposed that the answer was not in the design of the product at all. Rather, it was in discerning an appropriate mental category, an as-of-yet unrecognized personal need or market niche. Conceding theoretical pronouncements about the presence of absence to the French, Trout and Ries advised advertisers to "*cherchez le creneau*," that is, to find a "hole" in the consumer's mind and exploit it. With this, they announced "The Positioning Era": "positioning is not what you do to a product. Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect. That is, you position the product in the mind of the prospect." Commercial success, in other words, was no longer about making things, it was about framing things, about guiding consumption, not improving production.²¹

This was especially important for those markets dominated by a single brand; inventing choices is one way to actively splinter a market leader's control, just as a context of choices in architecture signaled the end of ideological hegemony. The authors suggested articulating values that were contrary to those of the industry leader and pointed to examples like Seven-Up's successful "*Uncola*" campaign against Coca-Cola, which, along with Pepsi's youth-culture approach, gave soda-pop a vaguely rebellious flavor. Other examples included Volkswagen's effective embrace of ugliness amidst the cosmetic gorp of Detroit, and Avis's profitable emphasis on being second-best. With the prime directive of the positioning era being to multiply choice, the simple fact of opposition could be made a virtue, thus turning the defiant non-conformism of the

1960s into a vast consumer come-on. Positioning, in this sense, requires not new products but fresh scripts.²²

This is not to suggest that Eisenman, Kenneth Frampton, or Mario Gandelsonas were reading *Advertising Age* when, in 1973, they founded *Oppositions*, a journal predicated on, indeed named for, the creation of simultaneous viable alternatives. Rather, I mean only to say that the "climate of opinions" *Oppositions'* editors hoped to foster, along with Rowe's "context of choices," are settings congruous with contemporary consumer expectations, a society growing accustomed not just to making choices but to having them in the first place. Simply put, choice was becoming a cultural condition.²³ *Oppositions* created a space for opposing—or just distinct positions—within a larger architectural field, a field that to some degree was being staked out by those positions. The editors assembled views but were careful not to legislate them; debate was fostered, but no consensual voice was sought. Each position was allowed to seek its own audience.

The possibility of choice surely implies as well the exercise of choice, perhaps even a regular exercise of choice. In this light, Michael Graves' switch from White to Gray is as acceptable as Eisenman's own absorption with one theoretical outlook after another, as would be the shift in Hejduk's work from geometric to figural density. An architect of some talent and ambition might easily be forgiven the desire to follow the logic inherent in relative positions, exploring fluid occupation of different viewpoints rather than a sincere but misplaced conviction regarding one position, which when seen in perspective turns out to be little more than a local truth. A nineteenth-century rationale of formal "development" or "progress" would no longer be necessary to justify a change of position. Thus, in the context of explicit debate and in the wake of a dominant ideology, framing one's work becomes more important, which may be one reason why architectural theory blossoms at just this moment, with the Whites and Grays being among the earliest polemics to take root after modernist hegemony. In retrospect, whole careers were launched in these theoretical waters, including those of Koolhaas, Leon Krier, and Daniel Libeskind, along with Eisenman and Stern.



▲ Disney Feature Animation Building
Burbank, California. Robert A.M. Stern, 1991-94.

Architecture in the Experience Economy

Theming is generalized here to the extent it has been—in order to include both White and Gray positions—for several reasons. For one, it may be understood as an interpretive lens, an extension of an essentially semiotic mode that interprets nearly all human activity in terms of signification, or its contribution to the creation of meaning. As such, theming is subject to many of the same criticisms as semiotics, especially when the latter is used to interpret cultural phenomena. In the present case, reducing human interaction with the built environment to a set of encounters with legible signs, failing to distinguish actual from implied responses, emphasizing formal relations at the expense of affective ones, ignoring the effects of media on the substance of what is communicated, and overlooking intentions that can only be recovered by going outside the object of analysis would all be among the more egregious shortcomings. Such criticisms notwithstanding, theming is also, as mentioned, a goal of much current practice. Thus, it is an appropriate or at least conspicuous viewpoint from which to observe other practices, if only to see how much or how little seemingly antagonistic attitudes overlap. As more and more of the built landscape becomes themed, theming becomes not just an interpretive lens but a proper—or at least a likely—context, even for practices that pursue dissimilar goals.

Another reason to consider theming is that, far from being a hypertrophied strand of our consumer society, it appears to betoken a new phase of economic development. In this sense, theming is an instrument of what has been termed the “experience economy”—an economy where not just symbolic goods are traded but experience itself is the object of processes of commodification. As described recently in an article published in *Harvard Business Review*, an experience economy finds its highest value in the staging of events, that is, in providing settings and the scripts that actuate them. Its key offering is not a functional object, but a memory. The article’s authors suggest it is a fourth historical stage of economic development, following the extraction of value from farm products in agrarian economies, the concentration of value in tangible goods in industrial economies, and in service economies, the creation of value from the delivery of benefits. In the experience economy, foods, material goods, and even services end up as props for, and souvenirs of, an experience.²⁴

A key factor in the creation of experiences is the rapid development of new media and information technologies. With these, theming advances well beyond earlier symbolic uses of space. More and more, the themed environment is an immersive one, involving the creation of whole atmospheres, often through multi-sensory inputs. Current writing in periodicals like *Commercial Building*, *Chain Store Age*, and *Visual Merchandising* in fact often touches on the “retail experience,” and describes the consumer as a “knowing player” in the creation of sensory and motivational environments that support extended notions of merchandising. Such experiences are intended to parallel, if not exactly simulate, “actual” experiences. “Customers look for cohesive and relative experiences in the retail world, and they seek the same in life,” observes one director of a retail design group. Given improvements in technical means, and the absorption of sophisticated production values, these environments aim toward verisimilitude and can no longer afford to appear cheesy. This was, for example, the message Sony Corporation received when it conducted focus groups in preparation for its new Metreon mall in San Francisco. Residents there censured “kitsch” in their shopping environment and instead “demanded ‘authenticity’.”²⁵

A typical day in such an economy involves moving through a number of themed environments: a restaurant, an office, a shop, even one’s home. An individual is immersed in an environment and, as a result, transported along narrative channels to another realm, one more exciting and more vivid than the world of routine and convenience. Such places are designed to be easy, to reveal their references without much anxiety on the part of the visitor, and of course to be both safe to occupy and easy to leave. They usually demand nothing more than some extra money and a willingness to part with it. Negotiating an array of different places and time periods, on a daily basis, is child’s play, literally; immersive technologies are most frequently developed for kids’ games, moving from there to the built environment. In fact, naturalistic visualizations of the physical world and spatializations of abstract data have been leading goals of hard- and software development since the 1980s. Factor in the development of portable technologies—where the “environment” can be virtual and discretionary, that is, entered and exited at will—and everyday experience ends up comprised of not one or another themed environment but a series of them, a movement

within and between immersive, scripted environments. Serial immersion in narrative environments, then, is more and more looking to be the shape of daily life.

As a result, theming emerges as a new context for the reception of architecture in our time. It signals an historical shift from symbolic appeals to cognition toward the creation of diffusive sensory environments that link immediate perceptions with scripts. Already adept at reading symbolic environments, we begin to seek those implanted visual cues we know will trigger the appropriate script, whether the given environment has been designed for one or not. In this way, driving on the highway or riding the subway or walking in nature begins to invite a "reading" of that activity. The given environment begins to appear less like the embodied result of functional considerations and more like a rendition of such considerations, that is, the highway looks more and more like what we imagine the highway should look like. The more success we have navigating life this way, the more this facility becomes naturalized in consciousness.²⁶ Daily experience thus takes on a scripted quality, as we seem to watch ourselves starring in the movie of our life. Cinema is not the source of these sensations, but with its naturalistic possibilities, it is the closest metaphor for them. In other words, as theming begins to influence the general reception of architecture, it moves from being an analytic lens to being a popular expectation.

To the extent that individual subjectivity is conditioned by repeated encounters with environment, we may surmise a new sense of self, one corollary to the emerging shape of daily life. The modern self described by Trilling (following Hegel) is a consciousness deformed by pressures to conform to the opinions of others; the modern self engages in a series of socially acceptable impersonations. It is founded on self-alienation. The resulting sense of detachment is a motive behind the longing for authenticity, or connection, a longing that Trilling and Berman agree is already well formulated by Rousseau. Consumer society adds to this sense of self the possibility of constructing identity through one's choices in the marketplace. The self is no longer visible only as a set of impersonations in varying social settings but may be built up from commercially available goods and services that facilitate certain activities. To go for a run, for example, does not mean simply to move one's legs at a pace faster than a walk. It often involves choices regarding footwear, clothing and accessories, scheduling and routing, possibly some preparatory reading, and conceptually framing the run as work or leisure, sightseeing or exercise, routine or occasional. "Lifestyle" is just this, the self-conscious management of one's choices (for those who have them) regarding activities and acquisitions. From vocational to leisure activities, from dwelling to daily environments, a logic of the lifestyle "ensemble" underpins the construction of selfhood from a range of off-the-shelf products and outlooks. Through such coordinated acts of consumption, the self is articulated and actualized.

As whole environments become objects for consumer choice, the self is transformed yet again. Nowadays, an individual may become differentiated by her or his path through environments. Just as one may assemble a unique set of mass-produced items, so might one trace a unique path through a range of conventionalized experiences. Individuation comes then to be influenced by taste in environmental adventures. In contrast with the industrial assembly line, where workers collectively construct an object moving past them, the self is itself now put together as it moves through a series of themed spaces. As a result, the assumed relation between what is human and what is artifact, or subject and object, is reversed. The environment takes on a shaping agency and the human subject is its chief artifact. Similar to the way the assembly line dehumanized its operators by strictly prescribing their movements, the individual in the themed environment, despite appearing as a protagonist, treads a narrow and pre-figured track.

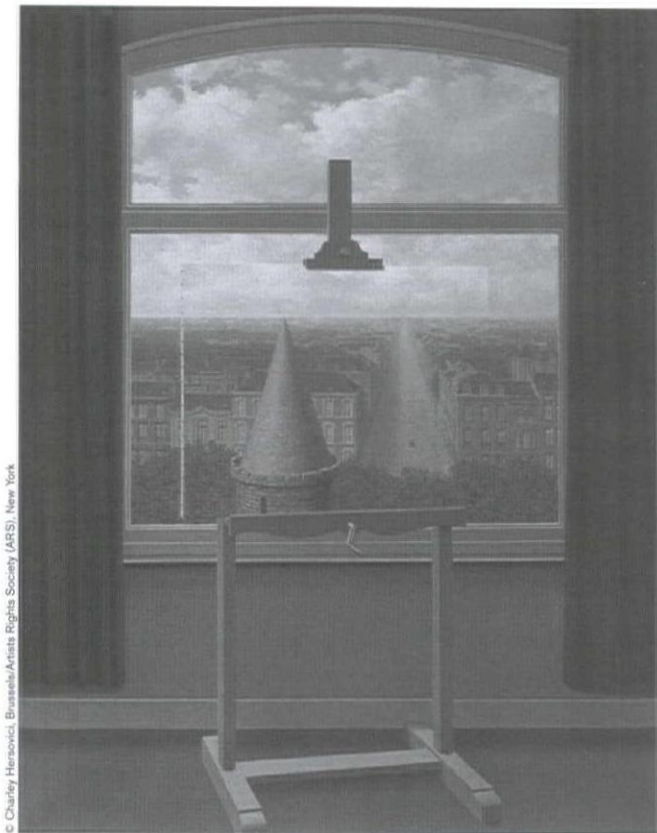
As individuals take on the roles in which the particular environment casts them, theming may well be seen as a final surrender to the inauthentic. One's "character" is given by the environment, that is, by the combination of setting and script. Morality, as a shared code, is in turn no longer internalized during childhood and practiced consistently across different environments, thereby creating an individual's sense of continuity and wholeness. Rather, moral codes are embedded in particular environments and their related scripts, while the socializing process emphasizes the ability to read behavioral norms from ambient visual cues.²⁷ Different behaviors surfacing from one individual are not just possible but desirable, as the ability to perform in varying environments becomes a useful social skill. Conversely, social dysfunction is newly defined as the failure to change scripts when changing environments. Theming in this sense is the built environment finally catching up with the moral relativism of America—often seen as a 1960s legacy—where incommensurate settings and incompatible scripts are nonetheless adjacent to one another. Reality, as Freud detailed, is read from the environment, whether physical or behavioral. With sufficient legible cues, consistent impressions, and most important, like-minded others, the present series of plausible environments might well grow together to form a new and comprehensive reality that will be even harder to see our way out of. Leonard Zelig, in Woody Allen's 1983 film *Zelig*, assumes a character appropriate to whatever story he finds himself in; his is a personality type of our times.²⁸

Illusion of a Future

Architecture, it seems to me, does not become less important in an experience economy. It becomes, rather, more important. Architecture is already that practice that specializes in the shaping of environments and is thus the necessary setting and substance for the creation of memorable experiences. As tourism has already shown, architecture is both destination *and* sign of arrival, the record of lofty cultural endeavors and at the same time the very thing to have a stranger squeeze into the viewfinder alongside your own face. Increasingly, atmosphere is the very focus of design, the projected ambient object that will differentiate otherwise equivalent goods and services. More than ever, the spatial setting is the main event itself and can no longer be understood simply to contain events; likewise, rather than merely reflecting social change, this new role for architecture *is* the change. As Marshall McLuhan might have suggested, extrapolating from his observation regarding two-dimensional media, the setting *is* the significance.

Admittedly, this is not the architecture you now believe in and probably not the one you had hoped for. No longer a fraction of continuous urban fabric, no more the integer of a freestanding monument, no more the sum of human achievement, architecture appears now as a set of destinations randomly encountered in a web built up from the invisible infrastructure of the information age. With daily life turning into a series of settings and scripts, buildings turn from being more or less neutral backdrops of human life to becoming agents in the actuation of scripts, our intimate escorts for the theatricalization of daily life. Where once, as with the Whites, an economy of formal operations led to a diversity of spatial effects, now a unified visual impression is achieved through diverse constructional and technological means. Consequently, the language of aesthetic valuation will likely drift, from an emphasis on features of things, useful to describe artifacts, to sensation, which is the vernacular of human experience.

In contrast with these developments, the terms currently available for evaluating architecture remain rooted in the productive logic of industrial economy. Enlightenment and industrial change accelerated the collapse of a classical order and replaced its universalizing values with



© Charley Heronick, Bratsell/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

▲ *Les Promenades d'Euclide*
René Magritte, 1955.

material ones, generating a set of evaluative terms based on physicality: the materials and processes of making, the structure of the made, and, as a consequence, the makers themselves. This essentially artifactual vocabulary is still with us, leading judgments of architectural quality to bear on the stuff of building. Theories regarding tectonics, for example, encourage our reading material form as a window onto some underlying constructed presence. Tectonic expression directs attention onto internal structure, providing an experience of presence in the revelation of an object. With its materialist bent and model of depth, tectonics consolidates selected material aspects of a building under the sign of making. It reproaches the casual babble of themed places with its own Greater Reality.

In an age of relative values though, tectonics is also a virtue upon which enthusiasts might agree, a community formed around a shared environmental preference. As a license-carrying architect, I can personally attest to the extraordinary power of tectonic moments in architecture, as well as recognize the rather limited appeal of those moments. It is a Greater Reality for a narrowed audience. In the context of an experience economy, tectonics is a case of theming for architects, a symbolic representation of the labors of architecture—and the exquisite delight architects find in that labor—aimed at a relatively small circle of admirers. The same might be said of those attempts to make visible in the finished building the path taken through the design process, in effect thematizing another factor of design. Indeed, admission into this circle is sometimes predicated on the willingness and ability to cherish this limited set of acceptable goals. The problem is not that such architecture is not more popular, but that in our contemporary context it becomes understood as simply the taste of just another consumption community, a market segment that given its desirable demographics is easily accommodated. In an information age, ontological certainty is just another bit.

If, however, the greatest intellectual effect architecture can have is to sharpen consciousness, that is, to sponsor consciousness of the self in the world—a self with (ideally) some measure of independent agency or free will; a world with, well, some depth—and if such an effect is thought to proceed from work that opens a window onto its own making, then where in a model of serial immersion in narrative environments might a critical architecture emerge? The question is not a general one, since themed environments aim precisely to loosen one's sense of self. The former sense of wholeness that one carried across environments, and around which the self might be shaped, is more and more being replaced with a series of temporary allegiances to different activities, such as saving the earth from aliens or buying new shoes. Complete, if ephemeral, absorption in activity leads to an identification with that activity's goals, resembling the "sincere" state of mind Trilling (again after Hegel) attributes to an earlier phase of society and a less-differentiated phase of psychic development. Themed environments in effect dissolve consciousness of self as anything other than being a protagonist in a script. This is why there is no room in immersive environments for what in filmmaking are called "continuity errors," that is, lapses in either narrative or scenery that are either out-of-character or out-of-setting.

In addition to filling out experiences, can architecture also direct aesthetic attention onto the ways the mind structures experience and in so doing fulfill a critical function? If tectonics emphasizes presence and certainty of artifacts, might aesthetic vision also be fortified and refreshed by a focus on the contingent judgment and perceptual readiness of observers? Following this, can architecture provide insights into the infrastructure of perception? Would an architecture based in the epistemology of experience, rather than the ontology of being, avert the otherwise likely contraction of architecture into a tectonic sideshow for a niche market of architectural thrill-seekers? With the increasing role of simulated placefulness, will architecture be able to activate more aspects of human potential than the ability to buy souvenirs?

There is a painting by René Magritte: a window overlooking a town has in front of it a canvas painted with a scene that aligns perfectly with the townscape outside. An easel and, in particular, a crank handle hold the painted canvas in its place, precisely aligned with the view. There is overall a tension (or is it an agreement?) between on the one hand the transparent logic of naturalistic representation (a faithful depiction, a representation both accurate and entirely confident in the objective status of the material world) and on the other hand illusion (the anxiety that our confidence is misplaced, that we are unable to know the real from the represented). The painted scene on the small canvas repeats the same tension: two cones—primary geometric forms—identical but for lighting are read completely differently. One is a road receding, the other the roof of a turret, the same abstract shape, but distinct visual roles based on context and representational convention. So ready to find meaning and form in what is seen, so easily duped, so broad-minded, we take pleasure in the deception. The title, *Les Promenades d'Euclide* (the name of the street below? a series of walks?), likewise evokes the emblematic geometrician, a master reasoner of form, but here caught in a casual, even a picturesque, mood. There is no doubt of a deception, but at what level does it lie? The modest crank—closest to the viewer and uniquely given to the hand—is the key to finding out.

Who is White and who Gray? Euclid the geometer or Euclid the promeneur? Magritte the maker of logical puzzles that invite vertiginous analyses or Magritte the prosaic painter who draws from conventions, directly but with an ironic twist, in the creation of a meaningful canvas? Or is it the perambulating pair on the street in the painted scene,

unknowing of the paradox they are a part of, or the artist standing in the room of the larger canvas, musing on the conventions that create the painting, or the viewer in the museum hall, absorbed in the work for a moment then moving on to the next painting or to the ground floor to pick up a postcard? Is this a convincing, habitable environment, one that flatters our ability to reason abstractly, or is this an ironic pun on the shared conventions that literally make the world available for habitation? What will a critical architecture look like in the coming experience economy? Turn the crank.

Notes

¹ Robert A. M. Stern, "Gray Architecture as Post-Modernism, or, Up and Down from Orthodoxy," *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 186 (August-September 1976): 83. Museum of Modern Art, *Five Architects—Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier* (New York: Wittenborn, 1972). Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972).

² Colin Rowe, "Introduction," *Five Architects* 3.

³ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* [1961] (New York: Atheneum, 1982) 259.

⁴ Understanding all social values simply as technical tasks is what flattens human existence, in Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

⁵ Embassy Pictures Corporation, directed by Mike Nichols.

⁶ Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity, Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society* (New York: Atheneum, 1970). Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971) 93. Miles Orvell describes the ways in which authenticity emerged in the late-nineteenth century as a cultural value in his *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), while Karen Halttunen finds the value active earlier in her *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

⁷ Russell Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse* (New York: Dial Press, 1970); Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (1966), especially "Notes on Camp." Others studies include: Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (New York: Beacon Press, 1964); James Reeves, *Idiom of the People* (New York: MacMillan, 1958), and Norman Jacobs, ed., *Culture for the Millions?* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1961). Such work may be a response precisely to save high culture from its perceived dissolution in popular media. See Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), and Harold Rosenberg, "Pop Culture and Kitsch Criticism," *Dissent* V (1958): 14-19.

⁸ Berman ix.

⁹ This is Thomas Frank's argument in *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Rowe 3.

¹¹ *Polaris*, directed by Stanley Kubrick.

¹² John Hedjuk, *Mask of Medusa* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985) 129; witness the Diamond House, derived from Le Corbusier.

¹³ Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978) 45. Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style Revisited or the Historian's Revenge* (New York: Braziller, 1974).

¹⁴ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1979) 146. The phrase is derived specifically in the context of politics.

¹⁵ He concludes that Versailles, indeed all architecture, requires a clear script to bear its meaning. In the case of Versailles, this would mean the presence of the king. In Adrian Forty, "Versailles—a political theme park?" *Architecture and the Sites of History*, eds. Iain Borden and David Dunster (Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1995) 53-66.

¹⁶ Mark Gottdiener, *The Theming of America: Dreams, Visions, and Commercial Spaces*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997) 4-5.

¹⁷ Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour 8.

¹⁸ "Borrowing," of course, is a charge that could be leveled at any architecture, and the mere fact of borrowing should be excluded from a definition of theming.

¹⁹ Rosemarie Haig Bletter, "Five Architects" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 38:2 (1979) 205-207.

²⁰ Regarding White hermeticism as an intentional "polemic act" see Manfredo Tafuri, "European Graffiti: Five x Five = Twenty Five," trans. Victor Caliendo, *Oppositions* 5 (1976): 35-74.

²¹ Gottdiener, in *The Theming of America*, presents a brief history of competitive commercial strategies that shift from functional and pricing improvements to symbolic competition. At a certain stage, symbolic competition becomes a predominant means of influencing choices in the marketplace. I would add to his outline "design" as a strategy for competition, where function and technology remain the same but other aspects are affected, like ease of use, storage convenience, or shelf life, and so on. With functions more or less equivalent, design, rather than positioning or advertising, becomes a greater factor in product or environmental differentiation.

²² Since then, positioning has become a standard concept in marketing practice and appears in most introductory textbooks on marketing. Al Ries and Jack Trout, *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981) 3. See also, Trout and Ries, "The Positioning Era Cometh," *Advertising Age* 17, (April 24, 1972): 35-38; "Positioning Cuts Through Chaos in Marketplace," *Advertising Age* 18 (May 1, 1972): 51-54; "How to Position Your Product," *Advertising Age* 19 (May 8, 1972): 114-115.

²³ David Harvey dates to 1972 an accelerated stage of capitalism he calls "flexible accumulation," which was paralleled by a cultural embrace of consumerism and a readiness to trade in symbolic capital. David Harvey, "Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanization, Reflections of 'Post-Modernism' in the American City," *Perspecta* 26 (New York: Rizzoli, 1990): 251-272.

²⁴ James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II, "Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review* 76:4 (July-August, 1998): 97-105, and *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

²⁵ The phrase "Retail experience" is from Carrie Smith, "Retail Design Trends," *Commercial Building* 1:1 (1999), 28; "demanding authenticity" from Leslie Kaufman, "Sony Builds a Mall. But Don't Call it That," *New York Times*, 25 July 1999: sec. 3, 1.

²⁶ The "natural nature" of the Picturesque era, a nature more "natural" than nature is able to conjure unaided, is, along with its subsequent naturalization in the American landscape, a good historical example of this process.

²⁷ Indeed, the climax of *The Matrix*, dir. Andy and Larry Wachowski, (Village Roadshow Productions, 1999) occurs only when "Neo" learns to read the code that writes the environment. Is this merely a hacker's fantasy of omniscience or prescient elaboration of present tendencies?

²⁸ *Orion Pictures*, directed by Woody Allen.

Contributors

GEORGE BAIRD is the G. Ware Travelstead Professor of Architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Baird is a partner in the Toronto based architecture and urban design firm Baird Sampson Neuert Architects Inc. The firm has recently completed North America's largest Butterfly Conservatory in Niagara Falls, Ontario and is currently architect to the University of Toronto for a master plan encompassing a portion of its campus. Among his numerous recent publications are *The Space of Appearance*, as well as essays in the anthology *The Presence of Mies* and the journals *Zodiac* and *Assemblage*.

PEGGY DEAMER is the Director of Advanced Studies and Adjunct Associate Professor at the Yale University School of Architecture. She is a principal in the New York City firm Deamer+Phillips, whose recent projects include a college classroom building in Florida and the award winning competition entry for Pier 40 in New York City. Her essays have appeared in *Drawing/Building/Text*, *Architecture and Body*, *Thinking the Present*, *Architecture of the Everyday*, and *Assemblage*.

DEBORAH FAUSCH is Professor of History, Theory, and Criticism of Architecture, Department of Art History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She was co-editor of *Architecture and Fashion*, and her essays appear in the anthologies *Architecture and Feminism* and *The Architecture of the Everyday*. She has published articles in *Archis*, *Archithese*, *ANY*, *Daidalos*, and *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*.

K. MICHAEL HAYS is Professor of Architectural Theory at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and Director of the Advanced Study Programs and Chair of the PhD Committee. The founder of the theoretical journal *Assemblage*, Hays was recently named the first Adjunct Curator of Architecture at the Whitney Museum of American Art. He is the author of *Modernism and the Post-Humanist Subject*, *Unprecedented Realism*, and *Architecture |Theory| since 1968*.

SANDY ISENSTADT teaches architectural history and design at the University of Kentucky's College of Architecture. He has written on postwar reformulations of modernism by Richard Neutra and Josep Luis Sert, visual polemics in the urban proposals of Leon Krier and Rem Koolhaas, the history of refrigerator design, picture windows, real estate appraisal, and the fate of architectural memory in the information age. He is currently writing a history of spatial illusions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century house design in the United States.

REINHOLD MARTIN is an Assistant Professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. He is a co-founder of the new art, architecture, and media journal *Grey Room*. He is a principal in Martin/Baxi Architects, whose recent *The Entropy Project* was featured in the *National Design Triennial: Design Culture Now* at New York's Cooper Hewitt Museum. His writings have appeared in *Assemblage*, the *Journal of Architecture*, and he was guest editor of an issue of *ANY* on Buckminster Fuller.

HERBERT MCLAUGHLIN is a principal in the San Francisco architecture and planning firm Kaplan McLaughlin Diaz. Recent projects include the Pusan High Speed Train Station in Korea, as well as buildings in France, China, Japan, and Malaysia. He has published articles in periodicals such as *Architecture*, *Architectural Record*, and *Architecture Review*.

RICHARD M. SOMMER is Associate Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He is a partner in the office borfax/BLU, whose work includes architectural projects as well as research and exhibitions on contemporary urbanism. He most recently co-curated a traveling exhibition entitled *The Democratic Monument in America, 1900-2000*.

DAVID SMILEY teaches suburban and urban history at Columbia University where he is Adjunct Assistant Professor. He is a PhD candidate at Princeton University working on the intersection between urban theory and shopping centers from 1945-55. He has published articles in *Lotus*, *Domus*, and *A+U*. Mr. Smiley practices architecture with Kogod Smiley Architects and urban design with Design+Urbanism. He has an M. Arch. from Columbia.

DEMETRI PORPHYRIOS has an international reputation as an architect and theorist. He has built in England, Europe, the Middle East and in America and he has received many awards and honorary degrees for excellence in design. He was educated at Princeton University where he received his Master of Architecture and Ph. D. in the History and Theory of Architecture. He has taught at the Architectural Association, PCL and the Royal College of Art in London, and he has been Jefferson Professor at the University of Virginia and Davenport and Bishop Professor at Yale University. His publications include *Sources of Modern Eclecticism*, *On the Methodology of Architectural History*, *Building and Architecture*, *Classicism is Not a Style*, *Demetri Porphyrios: Selected Buildings and Writings*, and more recently, *Classical Architecture* and *Porphyrios Associates: Recent Work*.