

VICEVERSA

ISSUE 8

“The weariness with regard to ‘theory’, and the miserable slackening that goes along with it (new this, new that, post-this, post-that, etc-). The time has come to philosophize.”

Jean-François Lyotard,
The Differend,
1983



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malapartecafé

Issue 8

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**ON TASTE,
HAVING CHANGED BY NOW**

Valerio Paolo Mosco

Valerio Paolo

FOREWORD

Mosco

We have decided it would be worthwhile to start this new cycle of *Viceversa* with a critical anthology.

In the past, such anthologies of selected writings with commentary had a dual function: that of gathering the texts considered most outstanding or in any case most significant, and that of offering comments, an exegesis capable of substantiating and thus widening the reasoning of the texts in question.

We have agreed that this format can work very well today, in a moment when the burgeoning quantity of news and viewpoints makes getting one's bearings in current thought increasingly complex and bewildering. So we asked Giacomo Pala to begin a true investigation, to find the people best suited to provide this exegesis. Each of them has been asked to choose a text from recent years and to comment on that choice, to definitively undertake a meta-critique, a critique of criticism. Of course those invited were granted absolute freedom of choice. The suggested time span starts from 1989, the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also the year that marked the outset of the digital revolution through which, with the birth of the Internet, information has not only expanded out of all proportion, but has also moved through new channels and new communicative media.

Therefore this is a critical anthology for orientation and to try to hold things together, but also to bear witness to the fact that in spite of defeatist stances and millenarianism, in these complex years there has been plenty of architectural criticism, and often of high quality. This compendium will be followed by other critical anthologies, also coordinated by Giacomo Pala.

Giacomo

INTRODUCTION

Pala

You think. You write a theory. You think about what to write. You write about writings. You produce and reproduce ideas. Then, you find ways and arguments useful for the legitimization of your ideas. Finally, you have something original in your hands. Yet, where is your theory situated? Isn't it – maybe – the simple reiteration of an existing argument? Maybe it is nothing more than a patchwork of rhetorical tricks (like addressing directly the reader: you). Maybe your theory is the pure figment of your own imagination: *Eureka!* Still, what is your theory seeking for? Are you looking for a truth? Are you defining a system? If not... what is your goal? Has your theory the pretention to change architecture? If yes: with whom are you planning to do so? If not: do you really believe to be an intellectual in the public debate? Isn't your theory the imaginary fabrication of a truth? Isn't it an image? Maybe it is a poetic. "Well, it might be"; you *might* say.

These are the questions of theory: is a theory a repetition of old arguments? or is it the production something new? Does it have to necessarily be one or the other? Ideally, a theoretical argument conforms to precise methodological rules. It is consistent, it is based on axioms and its arguments are referenced to precedents. This condition can be called as the mechanics of theory: an assemblage of components. The components are previous theories, which are composed to produce a new whole; a new meaning. Still, the new argument is supposed to produce novelties: ideas, images and words; in one word: concepts. How is such newness produced?

To produce it, you need a *theorem*. You cannot rely on the reductionism of mechanics. You need a deductive proposition; an idea. You have to imagine how to assemble the parts (or rather the body) constituting a new theory. In other words, you have to start with a deduction: "my theory will be about

this, because there is *such* particular problem”; a theory needs a starting hypothesis; it needs a theorem.

The objective of this critical anthology is to state that, today, theory should be addressed as a form of enquiry and invention. The word “theorem”, then, is proposed as a concept useful to imagine such a dimension of theory. What we propose is the examination of “theorems”. In order to do so, authors have been asked to couple a theory (or a drawing), with a theoretical (or poetic) comment: theory over theory. Authors, referring to texts, images, and poetics from the recent past, have analyzed the theorem beyond the theory, its strengths and its fallacies and, in so doing, they have developed concepts over concepts. Thus, theory is presented to the reader as an ensemble of productive concepts. Finally, the aim of this anthology is double faced. On the one hand, it aims at providing an anthological collections or recent classics (published after 1989); on the other, it aims at asking questions: how does our culture’s complexity change architectural knowledge?, how to use the constantly growing set of precedents? Is it possible to elaborate forms of theory over theory?

These questions are yet to be answered but, after all, *Theorem*’s aim is not to theorize a definitive answer. It wants to question. Is it possible to get along with the fall in disgrace of the discourses without falling into positivism? Is it possible to produce theory without falling into the techno-scientific pragmatics (green and smart), which hide systems that are no less hegemonic than the ones of the discourses, though masked with a liberal appearance?



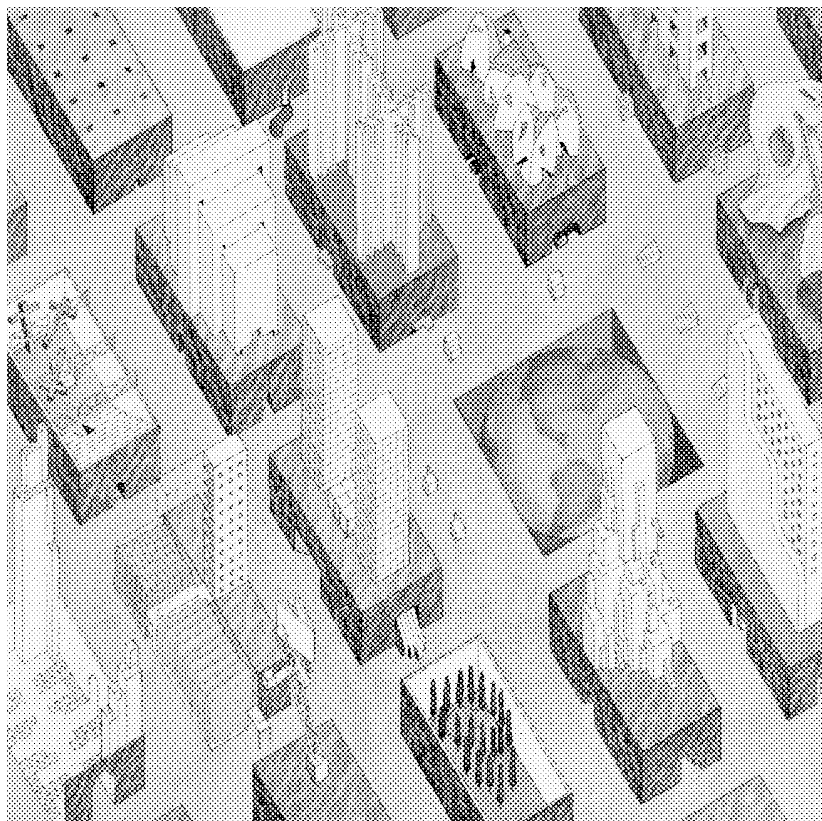
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Alexey

Is an artist from Saint Petersburg, a draughtsman in whose work architecture is mostly the main subject. He studied at the architectural faculty of the Russian Academy of Arts, where he had very good studies in classical drawing. Being a student, he took part in the Venice Biennale of 2016 with a series of drawings dedicated to the VDNH - the main exhibition of the Soviet industry and agriculture. His work is inspired by the postmodern art and architecture, Russian Soviet architectural graphic creativity of the 1930's and by the French architects of 18th century, especially Jean Jaques Lequeu.

Rezvy

RE-BIGNESS



Rem Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp,
The City of the Captive Globe Project, 1972



Alexey Rezvy
Bigness, 2018

Verónica

Is a researcher, architect and teacher – at the moment working at ESNE – School of Design, Innovation and Technology as a teacher and director of the Academic planning and management. She earned her PhD and the Degree in Architect from the ETSAM – UPM in Madrid; where she taught in 2008. In 2017 she achieved the accreditation as Professor issued by the National Agency for Accreditation (ANECA). She developed her PhD dissertation on the idea of Intellectual Management and the instrumental capacity of communication for architecture and design in the 1980s and 1990s. She is an expert in communication and architecture, brand management, Rem Koolhaas and OMA, and more thoroughly in the process of production of OMA's monograph S,M,L,XL. Most of her research was supported by the grant awarded by La Caixa Foundation in 2011, which allowed her to be Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in New York for 2 years. During that time she was mostly attached to the Critical, Curatorial and Conceptual Practices Masters degree at Columbia U., whose directors Mark Wasiuta and Felicity Scott were her advisors. As an architect she worked for 8 years for Herreros Arquitectos. At the moment, she works independently or in association with architects, and combines that practice with academic management, curatorial work, consulting, writing, researching and teaching.

Melendez

**INEVITABLE THEORIES
BY REM KOOLHAAS**

“Through Delirious New York I was trying to describe a space in which I could later work... In SMLXL there are perhaps two different ambitions. One of them was to find a way to give an unbuilt project the same status as a building so that all the work we had done until that time could be presented as equal, without introducing the notion of success or failure.... It was basically a way of establishing the ‘reality’ of certain projects, regardless of realization. The second was to establish a heavily contextual framework to reveal the exact moment within globalization that they were produced, to which pressures they responded, by which political moments they were triggered.”¹

Rem Koolhaas,
From: Architectural Association, London,
1995

¹ KOOLHAAS, Rem; COLOMINA, Beatriz: “The Architecture of Publication. Rem Koolhaas in conversation with Beatriz Colomina,” *El Croquis* n°134+135. Office for Metropolitan Architecture: AMOMA, Rem Koolhaas [II] 1996-2007: teoría y práctica = theory and practice. El Escorial, 2007.

“Beyond a certain scale, architecture acquires the properties of Bigness. The best reason to broach Bigness is the one given by climbers of Mount Everest: “because it is there.” Bigness is ultimate architecture.

Fuelled initially by the thoughtless energy of the purely quantitative, Bigness has been, for nearly a century, a condition almost without thinkers, a revolution without program. Delirious New York implied a latent “Theory of Bigness” based on five theorems.

1. Beyond a certain critical mass, a building becomes a Big Building. Such a mass can no longer be controlled by a single architectural gesture (...). That is not the same as fragmentation: the parts remain committed to the whole.
2. The elevator and its family of related inventions render null and void the classical repertoire of architecture.
3. In Bigness, the distance between core and envelope increases to the point where facade can no longer reveal what happens inside. (...) Where architecture reveals, Bigness perplexes.
4. Through size alone, such buildings enter an amoral domain, beyond good or bad.
5. Together, all these breaks (...) imply the final, most radical break: Bigness is no longer part of any urban tissue. It exists; at most, it coexists. Its subtext is ‘fuck’ context.”¹

Rem Koolhaas,
From: *Bigness, or the problem of large* (1994). S,M,L,XL,
1995

¹ KOOLHAAS, Rem; MAU, Bruce; WERLEMANN, Hans: S,M,L,XL. The Monacelli Press. Nueva York, 1995.

REM KOOLHAAS AND THE INSTRUMENTAL CAPACITY OF SMLXL

The idea of “Theorem” is not new in Architecture theory. Actually there exist recent applications of it. When I was informed about the topic of this issue it came to my mind immediately, the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas had used this format to present the 5 key aspects that would define the theory of *Bigness*, or the *problem of Large*. It was 1994 and OMA, Office for Metropolitan Architecture, had been working on a number of projects which scale was in a way out of control. Certain projects were larger than ever, or at least, conceived and designed as huge volumes expected to contain libraries, media centers, or big conference and events centers. Beyond that, there was an inner conflict in the practice of OMA as they were also used to work on cities, in a much larger scale, not just in terms of construction or architecture, but also in respect to the kind and number of agents involved in them. When intervening in any urban operation, there are users, citizens, designers, public servants, politicians, (etc), who may not be present in every project of architecture, if limited to the boundaries of the building. So, what happened to buildings -and actors involved- that produced a remarkable impact on cities due to their large scale? What happened To buildings that, due to their size, suggested urban matters never questioned before out of the premises of urbanism? But also, as for the building itself, there was much for Koolhaas to consider about the resolution of new problems that just appeared in relation to new sizes. *Bigness* was apparently written to address part of these concerns.

Of course, its inclusion within the popular hefty volume *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large* – generally known simply as *S,M,L,XL* – the monograph about OMA published in 1995, provides a further glimpse of the relevance of sizes and

scales for the office, but not necessarily by being a scientific and obsessive classification of projects and ideas. It was more similar to an argument, or a proposition. It operated on a practical level, since the mere construction of an increasing sequence guided the audience through a sort of logical order. If there were a sequence, contents of both L (large) and XL (extra large) sections would be accepted as stages of it and their practice more naturally, as if it was obvious for architects to operate on the XL scale and in cities as well as vast territories. In other words, the largest architecture and urbanism would belong to a progression. Hence, OMA could easily integrate urban projects within the same practice of their office and, therefore, the limits between those two would be almost vanished, in respect to the capacity of architects to operate in the largest scales. Interpreted from this perspective, S,M,L,XL is a statement about the professional capacities of the architect in the 21st century.

During the process of production of the monograph, the classification of project by their size was not the initial will. It was not a predetermined condition. The monographic volume started being an exercise of revision of the past, with several attempts of distribution of contents. Previous attempts and drafts tested classifications by location, name or typology, but none of these options seemed to work for a publication that needed to accommodate not only projects of architecture, but also pieces of theory and elements that would appear in the last stages of the process. Or, as Rem Koolhaas stated in the presentation of the monograph at the AA in December 1995: *the book is clearly designed to accommodate my eccentricities and incoherences*¹.

The whole duration of the process has proved to be longer than how one can deduct from the information within the

¹ KOOLHAAS, Rem. Public presentation of the book S,M,L,XL at the Architectural Association, London. December 1st, 1995.

book, as well as from some interviews. It started back in the late 1980s, when it was supposed to become part of a series of monographs of architecture published by Rizzoli in the USA. Simultaneously, Rem had launched the Groszstadt Foundation, a new entity parallel to OMA, that would have been used in order to develop some theoretical positions and ideas, as well as for the coordination of public interventions such as publications or exhibitions; among other curious strategies. One of the scopes of this “body”, was to foster research about the contemporary city and, in fact, it was the first actual theoretical venture after *Delirious New York*; and for this we can argue that the S,M,L,XL’s mission was to serve as a laboratory for testing ideas that would have later been part of a project alone, or of a broader curatorial opportunity led by the Foundation.

A PROJECT FOR A BOOK

When the opportunity to edit a monograph about OMA emerged in America, the intention to present a new theoretical proposition was already active. Koolhaas had been anticipating that in several magazines, including *A+U* in 1988, with the article “Introduction for New Research: ‘The Contemporary City’”.

Delirious New York was a search in the influence of the metropolitan masses and culture on architecture and urbanism. (...) The -never expressed- conclusion of the book is that between the two World Wars architecture did undergo a definite change. The cultural significance of traditional forms had lost unmistakably its univocability. (...)

The Contemporary City is a research into emerging forms of architecture in the city today, and wants to search in the consequences and possibilities of actual mutations. This will not be directed to the ‘official debate’, but to documentation and

*interpretation of a number of apparently spontaneous and independent processes.*²

At this point, in 1988, there was no evidence of any process for a book of theory –although some individuals involved affirm there was an actual intention – but a new period of reflection had started to produce results. One may think it was just a collection of texts, but the project of the monograph triggered their practice to the extent that theory and projects could not be separated anymore in the design of the volume. If we look only at texts and projects at that time separately we may not appreciate this joint exercise, but it becomes more evident when checking the documents and drafts of S,M,L,XL.³

Although it is not the main topic of this essay, it is important to mention that the monograph was about to be canceled due to the lack of actual interest from Koolhaas during the first stage. It had become a latent process, which only started to be interesting enough for Koolhaas when there was a more powerful reason for it to exist, particularly at the time when they assumed its capacity to blend projects and texts, so practice and theory, with the impulse provided by the designer Bruce Mau and other inner complicated situations at OMA⁴. The desire for a change forced the need to evaluate all at once. In this way, texts about a single project or about the contemporary city would be all part of the same volume, altogether with works of architecture or urbanism. A remark by Koolhaas is symptomatic of this situation: *a parking can be a text*.⁵

All in all S,M,L,XL became instrumental, to the extent that

² KOOLHAAS, Rem: "Introduction for New Research The Contemporary City", A+U no.217. October 1988.

³ Archives OMA, Rotterdam (2013), and Bruce Mau Design, Toronto (2014).

⁴ OMA was immersed in a financial crisis in 1992, the same year that Rem's father died.

⁵ Ibid. Rem Koolhaas. AA, December 1995.

documents and drawings related to some projects were eventually produced firstly for the book, and then were incorporated to the project, or to a lecture or intervention⁶ Events, books, texts and projects were more integrated than ever, and that was possible mainly because of the mission of the Groszstadt Foundation. Through it, OMA started to gain more capacity of intervention in their own exhibitions and books and, therefore, to acquire more influence on relevant decisions about how to be presented in public. since the late 1980s, books and exhibitions would have become means of exposure, as well as means of experimentation.

BIGNESS

If the question is whether *Bigness* was written in order to legitimize a way to address big scale architecture, or if it was a theoretical reflection that turned into a piece of theory - undoubtedly - the former would be an immediate reaction to the demands of clients at the time, but not necessarily a need for public or even specialized validation. In other words, socioeconomic, technological and programmatic contemporary parameters may have fostered a new scale for buildings and, therefore, architects would simply fulfill the expectations of the audience and the society at large. Legitimation would just assure correctness or consensus. But also, the latter argument might be a feasible option, given the tendency in the field to contribute to architectural discourse, mainly in the circles Koolhaas belonged to. As a result of any of these positions, *Bigness* would be finally rendered and shared by the time of its publication in 1994, it would be just an instrument to frame new architectural operations into a more stable scheme, as if one could deduct that, if it is written and accepted, it must be true and solid.

⁶ SIGLER, Jennifer. Interview. GSD, Harvard University, Cambridge, February 2013.

However, if we look carefully at the transition of concepts developed by OMA during the previous years, it is possible to find out that there was a more exhaustive development of the idea of *Bigness*, precisely emerging from previous theoretical propositions. So it was not an invention created overnight, or an urgent answer to large-scale demands. Hence it was not invented, neither imposed. In a way it just happened after a series of attempts. In this respect, the emergence of *Bigness* would be more transitional than providential.

Just to provide some specificity, we can prove that, back in 1989, Koolhaas introduced the first notions of the text in a lecture at Columbia University. In that moment he talked about what the images of architecture he was projecting to the public represented.⁷ After some interventions, where the way of naming the main points had been showing little differences, we find evidence of it in a rolling monographic exhibition Paris-Lille-Barcelona. In its turn in Spain in 1991, on the occasion of the opening, Rem gave a lecture and introduced again a number of key aspects of a new proposition to the audience. It was *Bigness*. At that point, this proposal was not made of theorems yet, but of *axioms, indications, laws or points*;⁸ he used all of these terms. There was no more doubt that he was about to complete the argument of *Bigness*, and to come to the conclusions of the impact this may have on architectural production and the experience of it:

My thesis is that through Bigness alone, through size alone, this architecture becomes completely different from all the classical architecture. (Rem Koolhaas. Barcelona, 1991)

⁷ Lecture by Rem Koolhaas at Columbia University in 1989, reproduced in KOOLHAAS, Rem: "We are like a surfer on the wave: Work Methods at OMA", Rem Koolhaas: Projectes Urbans / Urban Projects. 1985-1990. Quaderns. Barcelona, 1990.

⁸ KOOLHAAS, Rem: OMA - Rem Koolhaas. Lecture at COAC, Barcelona, February 5th, 1991.

The same exercise could be done about other pieces of S,M,L,XL, including the book itself. But focusing on *Bigness* alone can help to discuss further Koolhaas' approach to ideas that become theory; particularly if they concern hard-to-discuss concepts such as congestion – when describing New York – or shopping and consumption at the beginning of the 21st century. The same for the mid 1990s with *Bigness*, when the size of buildings may have potentially been so large to even not being solved as conventional architecture, but more as independent bodies that could might have even ignored their closest urban environment; as Koolhaas puts it: *fuck context*⁹.

CONCLUSIONS

A characteristic of his texts and some public interventions is the capacity to face certain risky arguments or inconvenient realities. According to Bekaert, Martin and other critics, Koolhaas operates abruptly by accepting the reality, as the only possible way to foster change:

*Only by recognizing and acknowledging the given situation can he [Rem Koolhaas] act upon it –much to his credit– and try to find a solution, thereby quashing its seeming inevitably. Recognition is itself is a crucial intervention, the first stage of the design. It creates a distance.*¹⁰

*To negativity and resistance, Koolhaas opposes an exhilarating acceleration of the real as the only strategy for achieving change.*¹¹

This attitude towards reality is also interesting as it appears in testimonies and texts that narrate crucial episodes of

⁹ KOOLHAAS, Rem: "Bigness, or the problema of large". S,M,L,XL.

¹⁰ BEKAERT, Geert: "Dealing with Rem Koolhaas" (2004), Rooted in the Real: Writings on Architecture by Geert Bekaert. WZW Editions & Productions, Ghent University. Belgium 2011., p.477-504. (p.492)

¹¹ MARTIN, Louis: "Fredric Jameson and Critical Architecture", The Political unconscious of Architecture: Re-Opening Jameson's Narrative. Nadir Lahiji (ed). Ashgate Publishing Group, 2011., p.169-208

projects within S,M,L,XL. That is the case of Euralille or ZKM. A short essay or caption tells more than a classical piece of theory, since one can understand the nature of a political environment, or the repercussion of the cancellation of a project for an office of architecture. For instance Congrexpo, the architectural sole intervention of OMA in Euralille¹², could be described with a list and types of events that could have taken place in its huge spaces, then talking clearly about program, circulations or equipment, without intricate architectural terms. Using an atypical presentation for architecture, as Koolhaas aimed and declared at the presentation of S,M,L,XL, the boundaries between theory, physical and unbuilt architecture were blurred.

Some events mentioned that could be hosted at Congrexpo:

1 day

- Host the World Chess Association Conference
- Host the European Grand Tractor Pull
- Cater a banquet for butterfly collectors
- Prepare 400 croque-monsieurs to go
- Serve a formal dinner for 250
- Provide refreshments at any of 17 bars
- Park 1,200 cars
- Sell 6,000 concert tickets
- Register 2,350 electronic ballots
- And hang 10,000 coats
- ... With space left for 17 independent meetings, each for 80 or more people¹³

What is possibly most interesting about S,M,L,XL, is the fact that it functions as a device to articulate theory and projects all at once. By combining and balancing both aspects of the whole practice of architecture - that is thinking and doing - the understanding of inner difficulties in architecture or

¹² OMA acted as Director of the Master Plan in its first stage, until 1995.

¹³ Ibid. S,M,L,XL.

contemporary demands and the solutions or projects seem to be more logical. We wouldn't say define it as a deductive process, but as an articulation of different components, as if we were presenting all the necessary ingredients for a chemical formula. What is more, once we dig into previous stages of a text or theoretical proposition by Koolhaas, as it has been explained with *Bigness*, it generally happens that there is more deep development of the ideas, all of them tested in distinct scenarios such as books, shows, lectures or projects¹⁴. A remarkable public moment related to *Bigness* is the inscription of the theorems in a solo exhibition at MoMA, also in the midst of this S,M,L,XL production period (1994)¹⁵.

Koolhaas determination to blend all his work in a single practice, including also dissemination activities, skips old controversies such as dualistic theories ("yes" or "no"), that used to be the center of debates, such as the one between Michael Speaks (After Theory) and Reinhold Martin (Leave Theory alone)¹⁶. Instead of insisting on the relevance of theory, Rem just uses it and integrating it in a whole. This becomes quite evident in the chapter "Large", where the main projects of OMA in the late 1980s, that is the big library of France in Paris, ZKM or Zeebrugge (among others), are presented together with the text *Bigness*, but also with a written intervention by Cecil Balmond, included in order to add a proper structural explanation to the problems/solutions related to the huge scale of these projects.

¹⁴ This became a conclusion of the PhD Dissertation presented in January 2016, where the trajectory of OMA and Koolhaas between 1988 and 1997 was studied.

¹⁵ OMA at MoMA. New York, 1994. Rem himself wrote the Five theorems with chalk on a wall of the room of the exhibition. He repeated it in the next two exhibitions of the same series, in the USA and Japan.

¹⁶ SPEAKS, Michael: "After Theory: Debate in architectural schools rages about the value of theory and its effects on innovation in design", *Architecture Record*. Junio 2005. In response to that: MARTIN, Reinhold: "Leave Theory Alone", *Architectural Record*. Agosto 2005. "This humorless, anti-intellectual attack on theory was gratuitous at best, cynically opportunistic at worst."

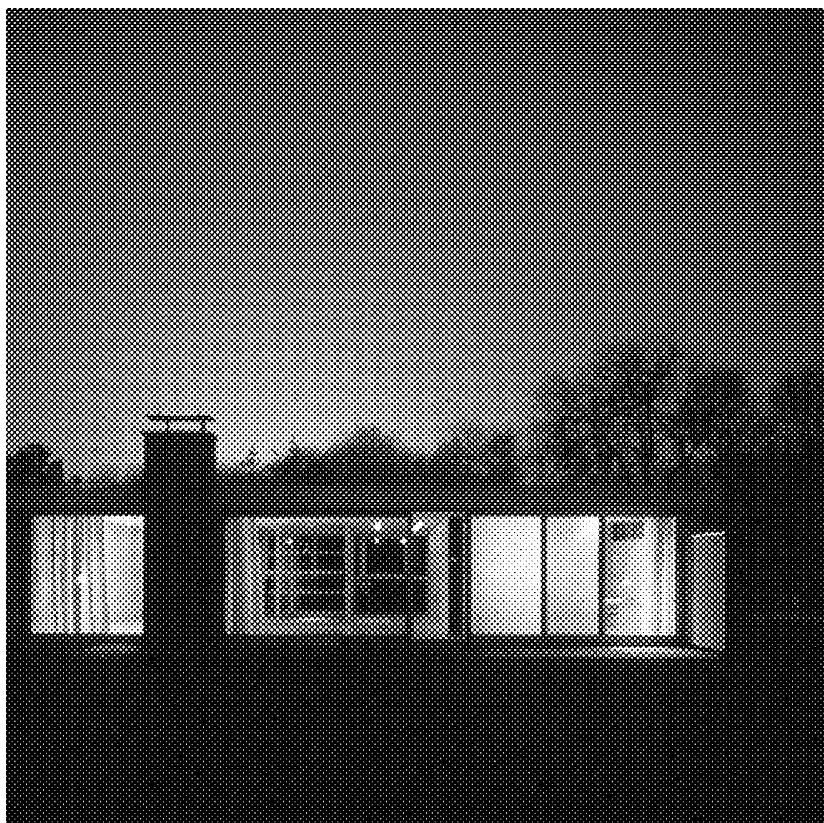
Exposed in this way, the whole represented by the book seems to be almost inevitable, as it is the impression we can get after reading *Bigness*' theorems. We can argue then that Koolhaas elaborates full statements, not just a piece of theory or isolated projects, since they become indistinguishable to him. Perhaps this ability to show "the inevitable", as he does by showing "the reality", is the most challenging feature of Koolhaas' propositions. A feature that becomes true before being public. Yet, if not inevitable, they shall be, at best, progressively validated by facts, or multiple appearances disseminated in projects and media.

Office

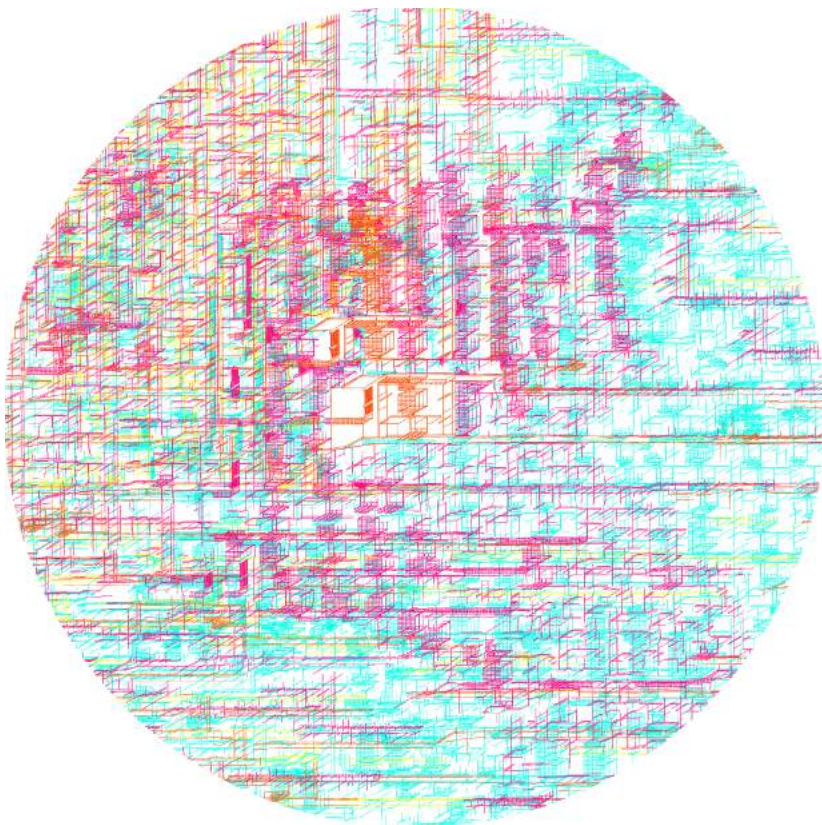
Is directed by Andrew Santa Lucia (assitant Professor of Practice at Portland State University's School of Architecture), a Portland, OR based architect, activist, critic, and educator working at the intersection of interior architectures, representation/simulation, political activism and vernacular exchanges between people, buildings and cities. Office Andorus was co-founded with Miami natives (and best friends) Nathalie Guedes and David M. de Cespedes. Office Andorus connects design, pedagogy and criticism through the creation of plastic propositions for lifestyle - drawn, written, performed and/or built - to change the way our audiences receive and experience our architecture. In addition, Office Andorus aligns itself with several progressive social causes and attempts to create new relationships between aesthetics and ethics in a hope to reinvigorate architecture's contemporary potential.

Andorus

CIRCULAR DRAWINGS



OMA,
Patio Villa, 1984-88



Office Andorus,
Circular drawings, 2018

The nature of this drawing is unclear. Descriptively, it is a cavalier projection of OMA's 1988 Patio Villa, otherwise known as the Dutch Section or Two Patio Villa's. Koolhaas used this modest project and others like it (Villa Dall'ava) to interject his work into a historical discourse via references (Mies and Le Corbusier.) Conversely, the work is also a built form of architectural criticism in that it engages architecture as an instrument of culture and a product of a discipline.

At its center, the drawing is not a drawing in that I did not actually draw lines to create it. Instead, it is an image of a drawing, a representation of a plausible act of drawing. Starting with the original cavalier projection by Koolhaas, I centered in on a Photoshop page and began using a computer vision clone tool called "Content Aware Fill," to produce three distinct layers of architectural drawing that used the original Patio Villa as an impetus. The Villa is kept in a red line color. Each subsequent layer is represented using pink, yellow, and turquoise line colors to show how the three operations created different, but eerily similar AI drawings of Patio Villa. The resultant drawing shows how architecture can organize the world around itself in cavalier projection. If New York inspired the interior urbanism of the Captive Globe, then Patio Villa marks an interior with urban ambitions, one that does not need the old world grid to reproduce itself into neat blocks. Instead, the emergent Villas (the most prominent repetitive element in this drawing and the original), replicate at an alarming rate, densifying a form of interior sprawl. This drawing (which is not a drawing) frames an architectural ambition (interiors that organize the world at the scale of the city) that is rooted in an origin (whether primitive hut or .png file) and makes a case for new disciplinary tools (computer vision and AI already helps us through BIM, so why can't it serve architectural theory) in the production of an architecture for today.

Hans

Is an architectural historian and critic. Since 2012, he has been the editor and publisher of *The Architecture Observer*. Prior to this, he was the editor of *A10 new European architecture*, a magazine he founded in 2004 together with graphic designer Arjan Groot. Ibelings is the author of a number of books, including *European Architecture Since 1890* (2011), published in English, Dutch, German, and Russian, and *Supermodernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalization* (1998 and 2003), published in English, Dutch, Spanish, French, and Italian.

Ibelings

MARC AUGÉ'S NOWHERE IN PARTICULAR



Unknown,
Unknown airport, 2018

In recent decades the architectural discourse has benefitted greatly from insights from outside the field. Several of the most influential perspectives on architecture originate elsewhere, whether it is in arts or anthropology, economy or ecology, psychology or philosophy, sociology or science. Whereas it is hard to imagine that, say, economists would consider a book on architecture highly illuminating for their discipline, it is easy to give examples of architects, architectural critics and historians who readily borrow from economists, with Thomas Piketty's *Capital* as one recent example. This is true for many other disciplines as well.

Most of the books from other disciplines which have been influential for the field of architecture are not about architecture at all - think of the work of Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Ulrich Beck - yet every now and then there is a publication which comes from outside the discipline but touches upon the built environment. Marc Augé's *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995), originally published in French in 1992 as *Non-Lieux: Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* is a case in point. For Augé architecture is certainly not the central subject of his book but it forms a constant presence in the background, as an illustration of his thesis that in contemporary societies people have developed a new understanding, and usage, of an increasingly larger part of the public domain, which he has called the non-place. (To put *Non-places* in perspective: Rem Koolhaas published his 'Generic City', the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* and 'Junkspace' respectively three, eight, nine years later.)

Augé is a prolific and thought-provoking anthropologist who, as one of the founders of the "Centre d'anthropologie des mondes contemporains », has proven to be a keen observer of what is beyond the purview of conventional anthropology. Simply put, conventional anthropology has the 'other' as its subject, and this 'other' is often elsewhere,

outside the world and experience of the observer. Augé's interest is what happens 'here and now', and with 'us'. In other words, he is trying to understand our own otherness.

Non-Places is an investigation into our uneasy relationship with place today, now that many sites have lost their conventional anthropological significance as settings where people meet, and feel a deep connection with. Traditionally the village or town square, and the street corner have been places people are attached to and where, over time, all the events that happened here have formed thick layers of meaning, of collective memory. As a Christian Norberg-Schulz has written in the preface of his *Meaning in Western Architecture*, in this conventional anthropological understanding architecture is place making, enabling humans to make their 'existence meaningful'. Elsewhere, Norberg-Schulz has elaborated on the common expression to say that when something happens 'it takes place'. This led him to the conclusion that place and life are deeply interrelated.

Augé begs to differ and shows that life goes on even without existentially meaningful places.

Non-Places invites us to look from a different angle at those apparently meaningless environments where we spend an increasing amount of our time, and to appreciate what is going on in shopping malls, in chain hotels, holiday resorts, theme parks, parking garages, airport terminals, and all those other non-places which are in many ways the built version of white noise. We use them, but they are rarely a destination for us; rather they are places in between destinations, places of transit and passage. In this respect, the highway is a key example of a non-place for Augé, where - at least in France - motorists are notified by brown and white road sign of the existence of historical monuments and touristic attractions. For Augé it underlines the distance between the non-place of the highway and the signifiers of 'real' places to the left

and right of it.

Nearly nobody pays attention to non-places, and not many of us are particularly fond of all those transient, interchangeable settings where we are passers-by, accidental visitors. Even if non-places often feel comfortably familiar, they rarely invoke a sense of being at home. (In an article in *Qua-derns*, reflecting on his own book a decade after its publication, Augé acknowledged that for the people who work in a non-place like an airport, or a shopping mall and spend time there on a daily basis, they can actually be meaningful, but this amendment does not weaken the fundamental argument about our understanding and usage of places that do not deserve the name). In non-places, human interaction is typically limited to what the famous sociologist Erving Goffman in the 1960s has called 'civil inattention': a telling label to describe the polite indifference that is the core of human behaviour of people in public space. Acknowledging the presence of others while minding one's own business. More and more human interactions in shops, fast food restaurants, at the airport counter, and the reception desk of a hotel have become scripted exchanges, a point made clear by George Ritzer in a number of books which address what he calls the "McDonaldization" of the world. And a growing number of these transactions do not even need human interaction anymore. With the proliferation of scanners, card readers, credit cards, apps on smart phones, and all the options for self-checkin and self-checkout, it is actually possible to avoid human contact almost completely in many instances. Augé hinted already at the credit card as one tool to reduce interpersonal contact; if his book would have been published a bit later, he would most likely have included the smart phone as well.

Augé published his book in an era when an awareness of processes and effects of globalization started to increase. Augé

did not use the word globalization, although it is obvious that the sameness and interchangeability he refers to in relation to non-places, are part and parcel of it. The general awareness of globalization in the 1990s was partially triggered by the feeling that the world was becoming more and more homogeneous, with an ever growing number of McDonald's and Starbucks outlets everywhere, and the realization that one could find the same products in every store everywhere, while hearing the same background music in every part of the world. The collapse of Communist regimes, enhanced the perception of One World. With the ubiquitousness of internet connections and the instantaneous dissemination of every event, this awareness of global unification has only increased, to such extent that we can pretend that we are now truly living the global village life which Marshall McLuhan had predicted in 1968.

Augé's book was written too early to include a discussion of the worldwide web, but in retrospect it can be seen in many ways the extension, and intensification of the notion of the non-place, creating a sense of simultaneously being everywhere and nowhere in particular, being in the same detached state as the motorist passing a touristic sign on the *autoroute*.

Instead of globalization, Augé used the word *supermodernity* to describe the present, and even if there was no direct correspondence with anything architectural, this idea triggered (at least for me) a link with the prevailing contemporary architecture, which after a postmodern period, tended towards a return to modern principles, but this time in a superlative version. This then-new architecture often was a built equivalent of Goffman's idea of civil inattention: abstract, neutral almost building, which did not convey much of their use, program, or purpose and often displayed a remarkable indifference to the specificity of the site. In other words, many of the key projects of the 1990s were detached,

taciturn, and not ostentatious connected to their context.

The supermodernity in Augé's subtitle could be interpreted as the periodization of a condition after postmodernity. In architecture, the postmodern has had a double impact, questioning the validity of modern ideas, and bringing forth a new set of ideas, related to symbols, significance, meaning, and a sense of place. The supermodern condition which succeeded, and in several ways superseded, the postmodern, was in a certain sense its opposite. It distanced itself from postmodernism not by proposing an anti-postmodernism but rather making an architecture that was deliberately non-postmodern: an architecture that intentionally was non-symbolic, non-significant, non-meaningful without being unsymbolic, insignificant, or meaningless.

Just as the postmodernism couldn't deny its dependence on modernism, supermodernism could not exist without the postmodernism that preceded it. And by being the opposite of postmodernism, which in itself was a reversal of modernism, supermodernism in many respects picked up the thread of modernism where postmodernism had left it. If modernism can be summarized by Ezra Pound's 'make it new', the supermodern creed could be 'make it anew'.

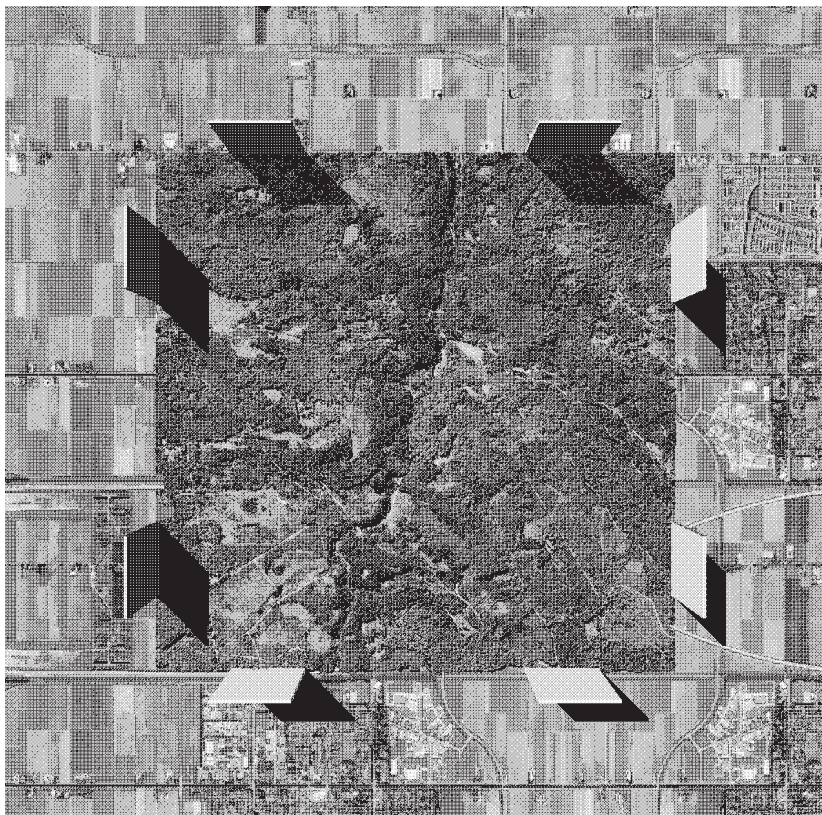
In retrospect postmodernity was too fast in declaring modernity in their last throes; twenty-five years after Augé proposed the idea of a supermodernity, it is no longer certain that this sealed the fate of postmodernity either. In a very postmodern way, it seems that we are now in a phase in which it is hard to deny that multiple perspective can coexist (perhaps the most fundamental legacy of postmodernism), meaning that the current condition in architecture is comparable to quantum mechanic's waves and particles duality, that neither postmodern nor supermodern can completely describe what we can observe.

False Mirror

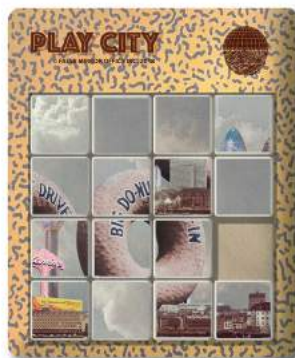
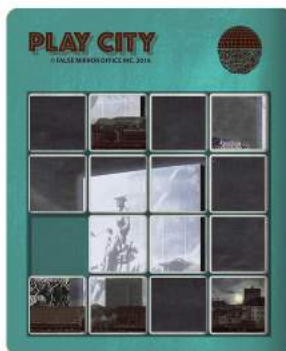
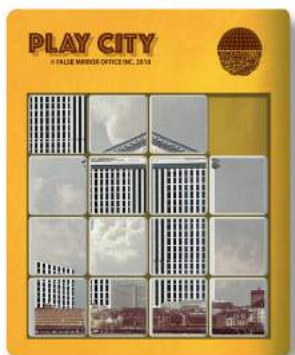
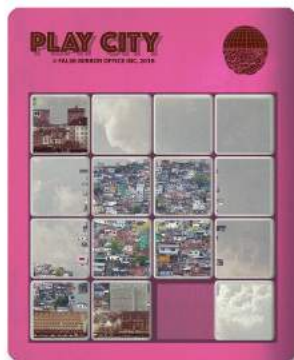
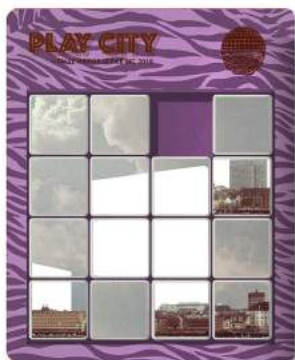
Gathers five architects who share the Polytechnic School of Genoa as a common background. While collaborating with leading European firms, its members share the interest for selected themes of major relevance, spanning from disciplinary topics to unrelated matters. If architecture design combines them in the form of a conclusive reasoning, theoretical research and debate set them up for re-questioning. Believing that new only originates as a reaction to the existing, false mirror office re-discovers the past as the present, re-signifies high as mass culture, re-values forms and functions. As a matter of fact, false mirror office mis-represents Architecture.

Office

PLAY CITY



DOGMA,
Stop City, 2007-08



PLAY CITY®

Have you ever felt lost in the middle of *"laissez-faire policies"*, *"de-regulation"*, *"fordist modes of production"*, or *"neo-liberal urban policies"*? How often do you get up in the morning feeling that irrepresible need for images, styles, forms and a glittering touch of *"eleganza extravaganza"*?

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Slide the tiles around the board in order to compose your own stylish picture of a *"figurative city"*.
The image will be unlocked as you play, but only the most worthy will SEE these beauties!

Happy sliding!

Warning! **Play city®** may contain form of *"architecture with attributes"*, sexually speaking. Intended for mature audience only.

Riccardo M.

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Villa

THE ARCHITECT AS PRODUCER:

**PIER VITTORIO AURELI AND THE ARCHIPELAGO
OF ABSOLUTE FORMS**

“The very condition of architectural form is to separate and to be separated. Through its act of separation and being separated, architecture reveals at once the essence of the city and the essence of itself as political form: the city as the composition position of (separate) parts. [...]

Both the idea of architecture and the idea of the city as defined through the categories of the formal and the political are mobilized against the ethos of urbanization [...] the ever-expanding and all-encompassing apparatus that is at the basis of modern forms of governance. These modern forms of governance consist in the absorption of the political dimension of coexistence (the city) within the economic logic of social management (urbanization).

It is precisely within the rise of the space of urbanization that architecture as the project of the finite, and thus separated, form(s) can be read as critical, inasmuch as it both obeys the managerial principle of urbanization and its extensive logic of total integration, yet makes explicit and tangible the inexorable separateness of the city [...]

“The idea of separated parts links the possibility of an absolute architecture to the idea of the archipelago as a form for the city. The concept of the archipelago describes a condition where parts are separated yet united by the common ground of their juxtaposition. In contrast to the integrative apparatus of urbanization, the archipelago envisions the city as the agonistic struggle of parts whose forms are finite and yet, by virtue of their finiteness, are in constant relationship both with each other and with the “sea” that frames and delimits them. The islands of the archipelago describe the role of architectural form within a space more and more dominated by the “sea” of urbanization. [...]

[T]his book does not argue for the autonomy of design, but rather for the *autonomy of the project*, for the possibility of architectural thought to propose pose an alternative idea of the city rather than simply confirming its existing conditions. [...] In the idea of the project, the strategy exceeds the mere act of building and acquires a meaning in itself: an act of decision and judgment on the reality that the design or building of something addresses.

The possibility of an absolute architecture is thus both the possibility of *making* the city and also the possibility of *understanding* the city and its opposing force urbanization through the very finite nature of architectural form.”

Pier Vittorio Aureli,
From: *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*,
2011

Architectural form and its autonomy are one of the main focal points—if not *the* focal point—around which Aureli’s book revolves. The autonomy of form is here not to be understood in the sense of a self-referential formalism, but quite as the opposite: an intelligible boundary, a *figura*, the limit of which is at the same time a condition of description and of understanding. *Rerum videre formas* is no less important than *rerum cognoscere causas*, according to Cassirer¹; yet the two are depending on each other. The concept of *eidōs*, a Greek word that carries at the same time the meanings of “idea” and “form”, plays a central role in the investigations of the German philosopher. Moreover, it is here interesting to remark that *eidōs* comes from *hōra* (to see), a root which is partially shared by “theory”, as being the composition of *thea* (the vision) and *hōra*. “Theory” could therefore be translated as something that *makes things visible*, «*sichtbar machen*»: an approach originally defined in such words by Paul Klee, and that Aureli shares with other intellectuals that have been at the center of his investigations, like the Italian philosopher and founder of the *worke-rist* political theory, Mario Tronti².

In the specific case of architecture—and of the project—form is not only something to be *seen*, but also something that is actively *produced*. Tracing a line in the earth (*nemein*) and cutting an enclosure (*temenos*) out of an undefined space are the constitutive acts that stand at the very foundation of architecture as a form of order, be it political or religious. This close interconnection between an anthropological order and the formalization of space is well defined by Carl Schmitt in the opening chapter of *The Nomos of the Earth*:

¹ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on the Man. An Introduction to Philosophy of Culture* (Yale University Press, 1944), 216.

² Such an understanding of theory is highlighted by Aureli in his earlier book, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and Against Capitalism* (Princeton, 2008), 55.

Nomos comes from *nemein* –a [Greek] word that means both “to divide” and “to pasture.” Thus, *nomos* is the immediate form in which the political and social order of a people becomes spatially visible the initial measure and division of pasture land, i.e., the land-appropriation as well as the concrete order contained in it and following from it. [...] *Nomos* is the *measure* by which the land in a particular order is divided and situated it is also the form of political, social, and religious order determined by this process. Here, measure, order, and form constitute a spatially concrete unity³.

Such an act of *division* is particularly significant as the “cut” that it implies is understood as something profoundly connected to the act of *decision* (as from Latin *de-caedere*, to cut off), and therefore to the possibility of *judgement*.

In its spatial and formal grounding, the *nomos* is not to be considered as a sort of positive law, but rather as a “frame” that allows for judgement and political decision. The archetype in which such framing has been the most manifest is the one of the Greek polis, where «the *nomos* limits actions and prevents the from dissipating into an unforeseeable, constantly expanding system of relationships, and by doing so gives actions their enduring form» the limitation of action ensured by the *nomos* inside the polis is considered by Arendt—whose work is to Aureli a declared source of inspiration—as the necessary condition in which political freedom can be achieved⁴.

³ Carl Schmitt, “On the meaning of the Word Nomos”, in *The Nomos of the Earth* (Telos Press, 2003 [1950]), 70.

⁴ Arendt’s elaboration over the concept of politics play a fundamental role Aureli’s book. She writes: «“Politics,” in the Greek sense of the word, is therefore centered around freedom, whereby freedom is understood negatively as not being ruled or ruling, and positively as a space which can be created only by men and in which each man moves among his peers» (Hannah Arendt, “Introduction into Politics”, in *The Promise of Politics* (Schocken, New York, 2005), 93-200).

Yet–Aureli argues–the contemporary condition is not at all the one of the “limited” Greek polis, but rather one of an «endless» urbanization, the model of which is not the *nomos*, but the one of the Roman *lex*. «While the *nomos*, by forming a limit, prevented the Greek polis from unfolding into a totality», it is instead «the inclusive concept of the *lex* that turned Rome from a polis into a *civitas*, and thus into an empire».⁵ In Aureli’s reconstruction, the rise of Roman law meant also the dissolution of a concept where order and form would «constitute a spatially concrete unity» and the adherence of *nomos* and polis was then broken in the dichotomy of *urbs*, «a universal and generic condition of cohabitation», and *civitas*, a «gathering of people of different origins who decide to coexist under the same law» and therefore shared a condition of citizenship. Such “disentanglement” was aimed at imperialistic expansion, and against limitation. If the *civitas* still shared the political dimension of the polis, the material dimension of the inhabited space, independent from any political sense, was instead the prerogative of the *urbs*.⁶ Once untied from the spatial constraints of the polis, the political dimension expressed by the *civitas* loses its “material anchorage” and is left exposed to the overtaking by the «economical impetus of *urbs*».⁷ This is, for Aureli, the principle that governs the development of the Western city, where the “infrastructural” support of the *urbs* binds together with the affirmation of the economical paradigm as a «total fact»,⁸ and overcome the city by the “monstrous” product of their

⁵ Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (MIT Press, 2011), 5.

⁶ «Unlike *urbs*, *civitas* concerns not the materiality of inhabited space but the political status of its inhabitants». Aureli, *op.cit.*, 6.

⁷ Aureli, *op.cit.*, 7.

⁸ The definition of the economical as a «totalizing social fact» (*fait social total*) is a definition provided by Marcel Hénaff (*La valeur du temps. Remarques sur le destin économique des sociétés modernes*, in *«Esprit»*, January 2010, 164184), that Aureli does not quote; this is not the place to discuss a parallelism between the two theories, which would nevertheless be undoubtedly an operation of interesting results.

union: *urbanization*.

To Aureli, the paradigm of urbanization relies in the «condition of limitlessness and the complete integration of movement and communication brought about by capitalism»⁹. An “apparatus” (the foucauldian “*dispositif*”) of capitalist power that has «no representative or iconic function. It is simply a device—it is what it *does*»¹⁰. As being a “totality”—like Marx’s *Capital*—it cannot be identified, but only conceptualized. Such “machinic” nature, moved by the “motor” of economic optimization, extends the space of urbanization in accordance to its technological and economic capabilities.

The powerful critique of urbanization—which stands as the *pars destruens* of the book—is achieved by looking at it through the key figures that made the some most significant efforts to formalize it in a “theory”: Ildefons Cerdà, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Archizoom Associati and Rem Koolhaas. If Cerdà is recognized as the first one to address of the “managerial paradigm” of urbanization, in his effort of providing a “scientific” ground to his project of an *ensanche* for Barcelona (1860), Hilberseimer’s *Hochhausstadt* (1924), Archizoom’s *No-Stop City* (1969) and Koolhaas’ *City of the Captive Globe* (1972) are seen as rather critical projects that «make visible» the paradigms of the modern urban condition.

It is exactly in response to this field of conditions that «the possibility of an absolute architecture» is evoked. “Absolute”—Aureli carefully remarks—not as something “pure” or selfreferential, but as «something being resolutely it self

⁹ Aureli, op.cit., 9.

¹⁰ Aureli, op.cit., 11.

after being “separated” from its other»¹¹. Precisely such condition of *separation* constitutes architecture as a «political form» by “framing” space, like the *nomos* frames action, architectural form reveals as a negative (*per via negativa*) the essence of the city and its «inexorable separateness». According to Aureli’s proposal, «the political is equated with the formal, and the formal is finally rendered as the idea of a *limit*».¹²

The architecture of Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe is an exemplary case of such separateness:¹³ through the recurring introduction of a plinth—a reminiscence of the Greek *stylobate*, in Aureli’s words—the German architect claims back the «finiteness» of his architectures; in doing so, the building is estranged from the flows of urbanization, allowing the dialectic with the city to happen again. Upon its *positioning* on the plinth, architecture provides the possibility to judge the city as *the other*.

In the accomplishment of such operation, architecture cannot *must* —obey the “managerial paradigm” of urbanization, in order to make it tangible. This *complexio oppositorum* is explained by Aureli through the complementary examples of Hilberseimer and Mies. On one hand Hilberseimer’s «diagrammatic minimalism» provides a «highly evocative rendering» of urbanization’s core-value of management and its distinctive character of being a «composition of systems

¹¹ Aureli, op.cit., ix. It is interesting to remark that, while Aureli here refers his definition of “absolute” to the one provided by Agamben, at the same time his refusal of “purity” seems to echo Tafuri’s claim over the “drama” of contemporary architecture: to see itself «obliged to return to pure architecture, to form without Utopia; in the best cases, to sublime uselessness» (Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia. Design and Capitalist Development* (MIT Press, 1976 [1973]), ix).

¹² Aureli, op.cit., 27.

¹³ Another example is the one of Aldo Rossi: «Against the presumed open-ended form of cityterritory planning, then, Rossi’s group opposed an urban space of finite, juxtaposed parts. The limitation implied by the circumscribed form of the urban artifact was seen as the foundation of the architecture of the city» (Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, op.cit., 65).

and flows rather than places and forms» on the other, with a similar attitude, Mies renders the same forces through the aesthetics of his buildings, by allowing no other “decoration” than the one of mass production and industrial technology.¹⁴ To Aureli, both seem to accomplish their task in a sort of *epochè*, without judgement nor comment. Such a lack of “political substance” (where “substance” is here to be understood as also opposed to “form”) recalls the words of Hannah Arendt when she states that « *man* is a-political. Politics arises *between men*, and so quite *outside of man*. There is therefore no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies *between men* and is established as relationships». ¹⁵

It is then in this «in-between» that the image of the *archipelago* arises. The “maritime” nature of its metaphor emerges in direct confrontation with the object it tries to frame: the «sea of urbanization», a designation that seems again to recall Schmitt’s elaborations over the *nomos*:

The sea knows no such apparent unity of space and law, of order and localization. [...] On the sea, fields cannot be planted and firm lines cannot be engraved. Ships that sail across the sea leave no trace. “On the waves, there is nothing but waves.” The sea has no character, in the original sense of the word, which comes from the Greek *charassein*, meaning to engrave, to scratch, to imprint. The sea is free.¹⁶

¹⁴ According to Aureli, the gesture of Mies towards urbanization is one of profanation (Agamben), as it makes it graspable by extrapolating its transcendental aura and by placing it in a condition of normal use. «Mies allowed the attributes of industrial technology [...] to enter and envelop his architecture. In this way the forces of urbanization in the form of the mass production of building technology became the very appearance of his architecture» Aureli, op.cit.

¹⁵ H. Arendt, op.cit., 95.

¹⁶ C. Schmitt, op.cit., 42-43.

If architecture's *finiteness* constitutes the possibility of framing and limiting the spatial apparatus of capitalism, then the «archipelago» that emerges from the constellation of these finite forms in the «sea» of urbanization can open a way towards the constitution of a «project of the city», as Aureli calls it. In support of such argument, he dedicates the *pars construens* of his book (four chapters out of five) to the architects whose work, in his view, could be read in the light of this “insular” construction. The works of Andrea Palladio, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Étienne Louis Boullée, Oswald Mathias Ungers and—to a certain extent—Koolhaas’ and Zenghelis’ «Office for Metropolitan Architecture» (O.M.A.) are here presented as attempts to build an archipelago of «examples» of architectural interventions in response to the «overwhelming vastness of urban scale».¹⁷

Such an interpretation—Aureli states it clearly—is not moved by a quest for historical or “philological” truth: the selection of these «exemplary» figures is rather motivated by the affinity of «an architect interested in the work of other architects».¹⁸

In the light of such “subjective” note, it is perhaps interesting to take into consideration—amongst all these examples—Aureli’s formalization of Boullée’s architecture as a «state of exception». In order to argue for such a definition, he borrows Rossi’s definition of Boullée’s «exalted rationalism», defining it as an approach that, instead of relying on norms that would «automatically produce their application», would rather operate through the definition of «exceptional moments» that would themselves provide a new normative framework. Such distinction—according to Aureli—can be compared to Schmitt’s concept of the «state of exception», as being the true source of production of order, and the-

¹⁷ Aureli, *op.cit.*, xiii.

¹⁸ Aureli, *op.cit.*, xii.

refore of norm. Yet, in Schmitt's formalization, the state of exception is not itself the *subject* responsible for the establishment of order: it is rather an *adjective* of it. The real subject detaining such potentiality is the *sovereign*.

For Schmitt, order rests not on the exception, but on its *decision*.¹⁹ Decision, like judgement, presupposes in this case not only a subject, but a *political* one.

The point here is not to discredit or contest Aureli's formalization of architecture as «a state of exception»: this is probably a discussion for philosophers and lawyers, not for architects. What is interesting to take into account here is that the highlighting of such "omission" brings our attention to the other focal point of the book, the one of the architect as a *political subject*.

A "subjective" stance that reflects the equally subjective (and authoritative) position in which the book is situated, from which it speaks, and to which it addresses: the one of the architect as an author. The interrogative to which Aureli is responding through this book is probably the one posed by Walter Benjamin several decades ago:

Rather than asking, "What is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time?" I would like to ask, "What is its position in them?" [...] It has perhaps struck you that the train of thought which is about to be concluded presents the writer with only one demand: the demand to think, to reflect on his position in the process of production.²⁰

¹⁹ ««Like every other order, the legal order rests on a decision and not on a norm» (Carl Schmitt, "Definition of Sovereignty", in *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (University of Chicago, 1985) 10).

²⁰ Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer. Address at the Institute for the Study of Fascism, Paris, April 27, 1934", in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931 – 1934 (Harvard University Press, 1999), 770.

The reflection over one's *position* goes hand-in-hand with the definition of boundaries: the necessity of *form* is prior condition to any dialectics.²¹ If—as Schmitt explains—through the figure of the “enemy” we recognize the negative of our identity and our position, it is through the autonomy of form that we can be «liberated»—in Arendt's terms—by the economical as a «totalizing social fact». If we follow Aureli in his argument for the *formal* and the *political* as overlapping categories, the *auto-nomia* of form is the precondition for political freedom, that is to say the possibility of judgement.²² It is precisely this kind of freedom that, according to Aureli, distinguishes architecture from design or crafts. The *project* not just as «a simple act of building» but, as the etymology of the word suggests, a true possibility of modification of the existing reality; *theory* not just as a possibility of understanding, but also of making.

The question then is not—or not simply— *what is architecture?*, but rather *why* do we make architecture and what *position* can we assume, as architects, inside the all-encompassing totality of the capitalist production, where the role of the architect seem to be destined to social and political irrelevance and architecture «to be obliged to return to pure —not absolute— architecture».²³ By defining architecture as a «state of exception», and placing *decision* as its foundation, Aureli claims back the role of the architect as a political subject, arguing against its dissolution and advocating for its renewed *sovereignty*.

²¹ To this regard it is interesting to report Aureli's transposition of Mario Tronti's thought: «in order to seize this possibility to engage in direct negotiation with capitalist institutions, the workers had to discover their own nature in the most radical way, through the very form of the working class» (Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, op.cit., 36); the stress

²² Discussing the concept of freedom in the context of the Greek polis, Arendt says: «The crucial point about this kind of political freedom is that it is a spatial construct» (Arendt, op.cit., 119).

²³ M. Tafuri, op.cit.

Warehouse

Was founded in Rome in 2013. Its essence lies between the concept of a mannerist architecture studio and an independent space for research in the contemporary practice. The Warehouse of Architecture and Research is extremely tied to the roman culture. Theory alongside practice, dialogue before design. In the warehouse, a collective hive-mind of documents, books and drawings, the team elaborates architectures and books, exhibitions and furnitures, schemes of urban development and questionable ideas. WAR held lectures at La Sapienza in Rome, Politecnico in Milan, Parsons School of Design and Pratt Institute in New York. Their works have been exhibited in Rome, Venice, Milan, New York, at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London, and published in international magazines such as Artribune, Corriere della Sera, Domus, Summa+, The Architect's Newspaper among others.

Architecture

FIRMA URBIS

“The modern exists and it’s important, even if someone has forgotten it. [...] Indeed, such is the responsibility that designers should have of things that are still standing, that I would everyone to sign. That is, all things in Rome should be signed with the author’s name and surname. If there was a name on them, maybe there would be a different circle, a virtuous one perhaps, that would force architects to design with a greater sense of responsibility.

It’s a matter of quality and culture of the designers, everything else really matters very little. I almost do not see the distance between the history and the project: when you make history in a certain way and when you build is the same operation, you work with the most architectural material, as long as you have a minimum of cultural depth.”

Giorgio Muratore,

From: *Tutte le cose di Roma andrebbero firmate con nome e cognome dell'autore.*

1997



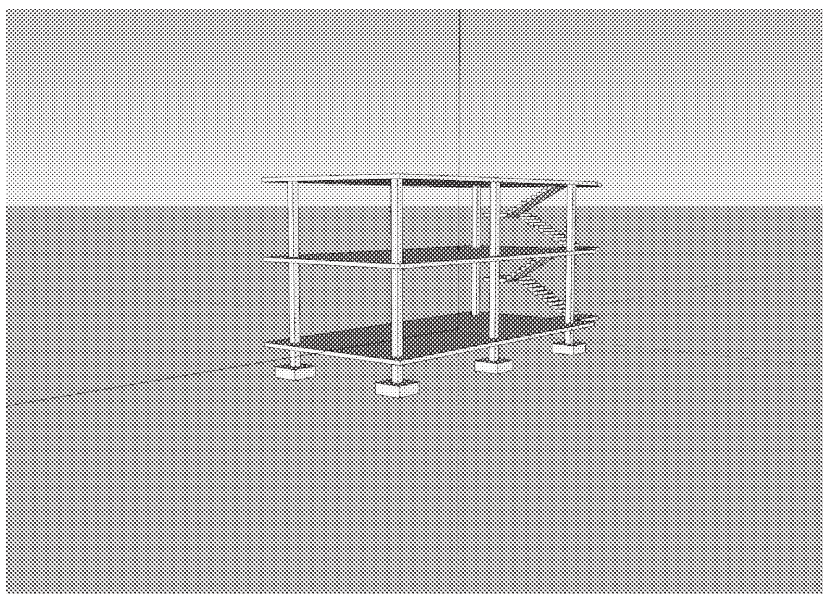
WAR, Warehouse of Architecture and Research,
Firma Urbis, 2018

Pedro

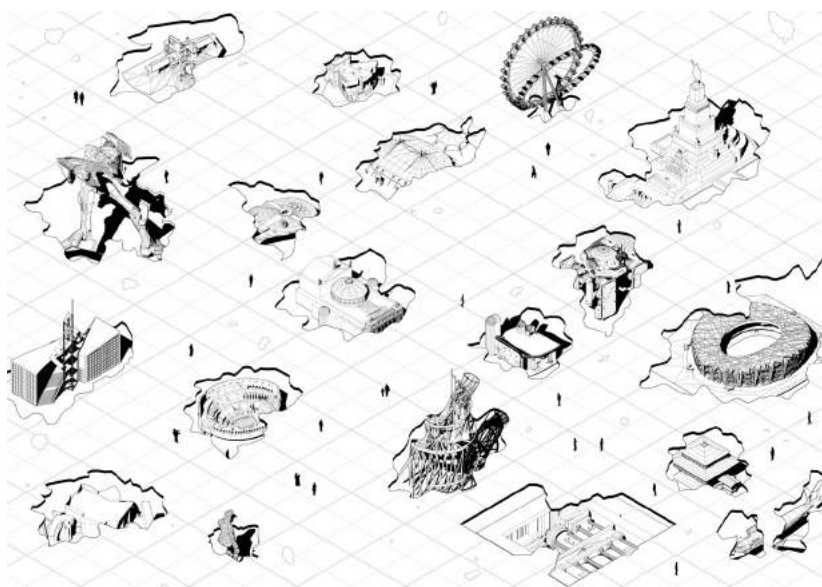
Is architect and contemporary musician. He works and lives in Madrid. Occupying a somewhat tangential position within the architectural practice, his investigations focus on the interrelations between society, contemporary culture and media. He has been selected for the 4th Lisbon Architecture Triennale, Architectus Omnibus and 9th EME3. He is Teaching Fellow in Architectural Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture (University College of London), teaching at the BSc Architecture (ARB/RIBA Part1). He has been teaching at ETSAM, UPM (2014-2017) and invited to UA and IE. His projects and writings have been published in several magazines and platforms such as Domus, Arquitectura Viva, Pasajes, El País, Archdaily or Plataforma Arquitectura.

Pitarch

EVERYTHING NOW



**Sketchup 3D Warehouse, User: Morgen,
Le Corbusier's Maison Domino, 2014**



Pedro Pitarch,
Everything Now, 2018

Susana

Is an architect, curator and postdoctoral researcher in Theory of Architecture and Aesthetics (Philosophy) based in Lisbon. Currently, she is developing a postdoctoral research project Towards an intensive architecture: how to compose sensations in architecture, at The Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP). She holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy (Aesthetics) from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of Nova University Lisbon (FCSH-UNL, 2013), under scientific supervision of José Gil with the thesis Architecture's Body without Organs.

Ventura

HAS DELEUZE LEFT THE THEORY OF ARCHITECTURE?

**IGNASI DE SOLÀ-MORALES, THE INFLUENCE OF
GILLES DELEUZE IN THE THEORY OF ARCHITECTURE
AND ITS CONTEMPORARY INSCRIPTION**

“When architecture and urban design project their desire onto a vacant space, a *terrain vague*, they seem incapable of doing anything other than introducing violent transformations, changing estrangement into citizenship, and striving at all costs to dissolve uncontaminated magic of the obsolete in the realism of efficacy. To employ a terminology current in the aesthetics underlying Gilles Deleuze’s thinking, architecture is forever on the side of forms, of the distant, of the optical and the figurative, while the divided individual of the contemporary city looks for forces instead of forms, for the incorporated instead of the distant, for the haptic instead of the optic, the rhizomatic instead of the figurative.

Our culture detests the monument of the one and the same. Only an architecture of dualism, of the difference of discontinuity installs within the continuity of time, can stand up against the anguished aggression of technological reason, telematic universalism, cybernetic totalitarianism, and egalitarian and homogenizing terror.”¹

Ignasi de Solà-Morales,

From: “*Terrain Vague*” (*Anyplace*, pp. 122-123),

1995

¹ Davidson, Cynthia (ed.); *Anyplace*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995.

“Deleuze and Guattari propose a fragmentary theory of the body and of the productive flows to which the body gives rise in order to explain the relationship that links the productive energies of late capitalism. In the capitalist body without organs there is no longer any possibility that the body can provide support for a space from which to inscribe the rituals of initiation and exchange characteristic of primitive societies. The permanence of operations in which gestures and words (assigned to bodies) responds only to a deliberate resistance to capitalist dissolution, formed from a new archaism that leads our society and its bodies without organs to seek everlasting signifiers in primitive words and gestures.

For Deleuze and Guattari, however, the body in late capitalism is, in its totality, constantly territorialized by the abstract flow of numbers, money, and the market. Only a schizo-economy of diversification maintains the presence of signs which remain as signals of desire. In this post-humanist diagnosis, there is nothing left of the supposed unity of bodies nor of their permanence; all that remains is traces of their production transformed into signs that, as they continue to circulate, constitute nodes of reterritorialization in a permanent state of exchange of desires transformed into fluctuating commodities. [...]

Only an art and an architecture that recognize the precariousness of bodies and their objectivized fragmentation, along with the persistent dynamism and energy that nonetheless continue to circulate in them, are capable of presenting a convincing discourse at the present moment.”¹

Ignasi de Solà-Morales,
From: “*Absent Bodies*” (*Anybody*, pp. 23-24),
1997

¹ Davidson, Cynthia (ed.); *Anybody*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997.

Ignasi de Solà-Morales was born in Barcelona in 1942 and died prematurely in Amsterdam in the year 2000.

He was majorly known as an architect and Professor at ETSAB (Cataluña's main architecture school), having also taught at the universities of Princeton, Columbia, Turin, and Cambridge; among others. Moreover, Solà-Morales also held a diploma in Philosophy, having taught Aesthetics at the University of Barcelona between 1970 and 1973.

His double training and unique methodology distinguished him from most of the architects that tend to incorporate philosophical knowledge into their theoretical incursions, however based on autodidactic approaches. The result was a theoretical work and a rare example of what we may consider being at the foundations of the contemporary theory of architecture, notwithstanding relying on continuity and tradition. The exercise of the theory of architecture has always been transversal. Drawing, painting, sculpture, narrative, even in its most fictional forms, have always been an indivisible part of the most important architectural theories from Vitruvius to Alberti, Ledoux to Tafuri without putting into question the core of architecture or of what might be fundamental to the discipline.

Undoubtedly due to his rare educational ground, Solà-Morales was able to establish transversal links, not only between architecture and philosophy, but also between the different artistic practices and various cultural fields of production, from photography to cinema and the visual arts, in order to think about the contemporary city (the metropolis) through its representations, or even through the knowledge of other exterior disciplines whose contributions might be as important to map our present condition, such as politics, economics or natural sciences.

Updating and revitalizing a tradition that seemed forgotten in the theory of architecture, where does the novelty introduced by Solà-Morales reside?

And, considering that a theory presupposes a work that per-

sists beyond its conditions of production allowing for new inscriptions in the present state of architectural theory, has it survived until today?

Are Solà-Morales' "prescriptions" for contemporary architecture (the last paragraph of each excerpt) still valid?

The excerpts presented here come from two different essays written by Solà-Morales for the Any Conferences. From 1991 to 2000, each year in a different city around the world, multidisciplinary and cross-cultural conferences on the current state of architecture were held, bringing together architects, artists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, among others from many different disciplines, and from which most of the contemporary theoretical work on architecture was born. Solà-Morales had a key role in the organization and he was an assiduous presence through all conferences.

The proceedings were then published in a homonymous books (many of them currently sold out) and in the case of Solà-Morales' essays collected in books of his own, published in several languages including his native Spanish.

The two chosen essays appear in the book *Territorios*, published by Gustavo Gili in 2002, two years after his death. The first excerpt belongs to the original essay "Terrain Vague" presented at the Anyplace Conference in 1994, whereas the second is part of the essay "Absent Bodies" presented at the Anybody Conference in 1996.

In both essays, we witness Solà-Morales' constellation of references and how he carefully weaves them to form what we may define as a multiplicity to borrow the concept from Gilles Deleuze, the French philosopher much admired by Solà-Morales. A multiplicity (*multiplicité*) is a singular unity composed of heterogeneous elements that contribute to the multiplicity's indivisibility and unique expression. It differs from the Multiple which, as the proper name says, can be multiplied or divided *ad infinitum*, as it also differs from the One that is formed or composed by elements of the same

nature, order, material, etc. In this sense, Solà-Morales' theories, present multiplicities since for him it was only possible to understand the contemporary condition of the metropolis and of its inhabitants resorting to examples spanning from different contexts, epochs, authors, styles, etc., resembling Deleuze's own method.

During those years, Deleuze's work, as well as his work with Félix Guattari, was a major influence on several participants at the Any Conferences and not only to Solà-Morales (Elizabeth Grosz, John Rajchman, Brian Massumi - whom later had translated *Mille Plateaux* into English - Greg Lynn, among many others), however the translations of his philosophical thought and concepts into architectural language and theory proved, in our point of view, to be extremely problematic.

In the first essay, we are transported to the outskirts of a growing metropolis through the imaginary of photography, the privileged medium of representation for capturing the energy and fluxes of the informal and vacant territories which, according to Solà-Morales, are the correlated spaces to the immaterial conditions of the metropolitan life, rather than the stratified tissue of the old urban cities.

Curiously enough, Solà-Morales doesn't mention the film *Terrain Vague*, directed by Marcel Carné in 1960, which relates the stories of a group of adolescents that use abandoned spaces located at the periphery of Paris to seal pacts related to their marginalized conducts and acts, leading to the suicide of one of the characters. Even if one might associate these vague plots of land to marginalised and obscure activities, the film implicitly builds-up on the situationist ideals of strolling around the city (*théorie de la dérive*) following its lines of flight (*ligne de fuite*) to use a Deleuzian terminology. The line of flight is a vector of deterritorialisation which draws an escape from the order, the grid, strata, norms, functions, etc. It's a witch line that may transform the invisible or the indiscernible into a pure creation or drive to

chaos.

These informal spaces thus present a paradoxical character that Solà-Morales hasn't fully grasped, which comes from a different interpretation of the Deleuzian philosophical thought, the part of which still might be operative today, thinking about the examples of ruins (and especially the modern ones), abandoned factories and warehouses, deactivated military infrastructures (usually along the coastlines), etc. Due to their difficult condition in the cities' fabric, usually in problematic neighborhoods (in the case of old industries) or natural landscapes of difficult access (as in the example of fortresses and other military infrastructures), or due to their large dimensions - which make their reuse or reconversion difficult to more domestic or everyday uses - they seem condemned to a marginalized state and decay when it is, at the same time, these very characteristics that give these spaces their unique power and expression which, in turn, should be captured and transformed into something new, following the lines of flight or the creative lines these spaces already contain.

One of the most successful examples is the High Line in New York. Shot along different seasons of the year, Joel Sternfeld's photographs revealed a fantastic landscape created by the winds which remained invisible to most people (with the exception of those whose houses had windows to this elevated and deactivated railway). In these photographs, the former lines of flight become evident. The informal landscape was transformed into a designed garden, nevertheless part of its expression comes from the forces it already contained: the changes through the seasons, the yellows and whites of the Spring, the timid browns between the snow, the ochres and the violets of Autumn, the spontaneous postures of the bushes designed by the winds and the fluid lines of the old railway running through the buildings and sometimes draining into the river, which is not only a sight, but rather an inhabitant of this land. Unfortunately,

the transformation of this space brought real estate speculation to the areas that flank the High Line as well, and the old industrial warehouses and factories served by the former railroad became objects of desire for an economy of millions, which corresponds, in fact, to another line of flight, the one that might end in death. Still, the High Line holds within its aesthetic composition a seed of the informal, of the unpredictable, of the chaos (Nature in all its expressions) which transforms both its image and living space.

The opposite approach (eradicating all creative forces) would be similar to the one proposed by Steven Holl around 1979 where the structure would be totally re-purposed as a usable space with a row of dwellings along the rail bed housing from the homeless to the upper classes.

In this sense, it is not about the resemblance one might find between the paradoxical state of these spaces with the condition of the metropolis and its inhabitants, between the informal state or condition and the impermanence of the fluxes that draw our present inhabiting condition, but what we believe to be closer to the paradox enunciated by Massimo Cacciari: independently of the immaterial fluxes of information, energy, money, if we are places (in the sense of our most physical dimension), how can we not desire a place? However, this place is not the one of the old city or even of the metropolis, but rather a place that instead of dissolving the contemporary contradictions and paradoxes, uses them to create a place that follows its lines of flight and creates a plane of desire. Deleuze's concept of space, although Solà-Morales understands it correctly as a plane of forces populated by rhizomatic structures that escape the stratified State apparatus (and with it all the molar institutions, such as family, religion, etc.), shouldn't be understood as an expression of the immaterial or of impermanence (with its correlated desire for constant movement or dislocation) or even strangeness (which Solà-Morales links to the freu-

dian unheimlich), but in turn exactly of its singularities, its “haecceities”, its lines of flight or creative lines that allow new metamorphoses and transformations of space itself (the smooth space, as defined by Deleuze, is not the space of virtual reality as many architects understood, but this space populated by singularities – just like the desert – and the proper Deleuzian concept of virtual refers to the real or plane of immanence where intensities circulate just before actualisation or territorilisation, whenever a force is captured into matter-form). Deleuze is not at the opposite side of forms, but understands them as intensive matter, which in fact is a problem that harkens back to the Greeks. As the Portuguese philosopher Maria Filomena Molder reminds us, it was not until Nietzsche that it was fully understood what should have been an evidence to the Greeks themselves: “The love of form, as the constitution of a figure sustained by an inner principle of perfection and beauty, is engendered at the heart of a struggle never brought to its end, not against chaos in rigor, but especially as a response to chaos, a projective extension of understanding that surprises the inseparability of the destructive and creative forces of nature, of life.”¹ And “If form dares to nullify the forces of chaos, it is no less evident that the forces, insubmissive, return. Whenever we believe we can annihilate chaos, operating its definitive overcoming, we are stuck with what we might call a dead form, that is, the one petrified in a false configuration, based on the misunderstanding that consists in confusing the force as the enemy of form, since the enemy of form is not force, but its total immobilisation.”² Following this idea, Goethe’s metamorphosis implies the awareness of the dangers when form encounters the forces of the chaos, but he finds in it as well an impulse of specification, a force of

¹ Maria Filomena Molder, *As Nuvens e o Vaso Sagrado*. Lisboa: Relógio d’Água, 2014, 152. Translation by the author.

² *Ibidem*, 152-153.

perseverance which allows something to remain. The work of architecture is a vestige of such combat, resulting from the desire to create a permanence, a presence, which nevertheless still holds, in its expressive identity, a sparkle of what once were the unsubmissive forces of chaos – “The creative forces of nature, of life” – returning to us the restlessness of a greater beauty that we are then able to discover in the work of architecture.

In the second excerpt, Solà-Morales rehearses the problem of the contemporary body. However, the body without organs is not the fragmented body of the post-metropolitan and post-capitalist subject. It is not even a body in the sense architects tend to think about, including Solà-Morales. The body without organs is the intensive body, prior to any subject or object. It's the Dogon egg, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, defined only by intensities, velocities, gradients, kinematic movements that envelop a sensation. It is true that our structures of knowledge are ruined, totally dissolved, whenever a body without organs is formed, because it acts on a molecular scale, beneath the molar entities, in the production of desire (whenever we desire, we construct a body without organs for ourselves). In architecture, we find examples of bodies without organs when a certain work of architecture holds a bloc of sensations, metamorphosing the space into an intensive space defined by intensities, and the living body into an intensive body. The body becomes space and, in its turn, the space becomes body. In certain works of architecture, that compose silence as a spatial sensation, for example, our body is “forced” to remain in silence and to become an attentive listener of space itself, of its inaudible forces that transform light into sound at the same time sound becomes a molecular energy affecting our own proper lived bodies, dissolving the organisation of our organs and making our skin, our stomach, our breathing hear (the fabrication of a body without organs implies first an elimination of all

clichés, molar entities, data, everything that may obstruct the free flow of desire, when an undifferentiated organ – the organ is the receptacle of sensation – is formed and starts to circulate in this continuous plane populating it afterwards with temporary organs; in the example given, these would be ears all over through our body – and that’s how the dismantling of the organisation of the organism occurs, Deleuze does not refer to any fragmentation).

Solà-Morales was one of those architects who dare to transpose the Deleuzian thought into architecture, though exposed to the dangers of this translation. Deleuze didn’t like metaphors or comparisons. His examples were literal, as he used to mention. However, for most architects, whenever Deleuze spoke of movement, they thought he was referring to the dislocation between two points happening in a space-time interval, and when he was speaking of a body, they thought he was referring to a subject’s body. When he talked about nomads, they thought he was referring to people who live in transit, and not to those who love the Earth as the absolute deterritorialised space. These misunderstandings around the Deleuzian concepts were responsible for an exhaustion provoking a temporary departure of Deleuze from the theory of architecture. Lately, it has been reappearing especially in gender discussions to which the Deleuzian concept of becoming-woman (*devenir-femme*) may contribute. But once more, the becoming – just like the body without organs (which is also traversed by a series of becomings) – happens on a molecular scale, beyond any preconceived idea or representation of what is a woman or a man. There is also a becoming-woman of the man which has nothing to do with any dress-play of the man or imitating the entity of a woman. Deleuze gives us the example of writing, for instance: “When Virginia Woolf was questioned about a specifically women’s writing, she was appalled at the idea of writing “as a woman.” Rather, writing should produce a be-

coming-woman as atoms of womanhood capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field, and of contaminating men, of sweeping them up in that becoming. Very soft particles – but also very hard and obstinate, irreducible, indomitable. The rise of woman in English novel writing has spared no man: even those who pass for the most virile, the most phallogocentric, such as Lawrence and Miller, in their turn continually tap into and emit particles that enter the proximity or zone of indiscernibility of women. In writing, they become-women” (Mille Plateaux, p. 304).

In architecture, the concept of becoming-woman should question the gender connotations and representations in space as the female and male bodies are usually understood as molar entities. Instead, space may engender zones of indiscernibility where the bodies are no longer defined by their forms or sexual organs. For example, instead of understanding Josephine Baker’s house (the project designed by Adolf Loos) as a erotic desire for Josephine’s body, we may think about a becoming-woman and a becoming-imperceptible whenever a body (male or female) swims in the pool lit from above. The bodies, whether female or male, in the water would be transformed into shadows and an undifferentiated sensuality would be given only by their movements and play with light.

Lluís J.

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Liñán

AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE

“At the beginning of the Modern Age, the power of identical copies arose from two parallel and almost simultaneous developments: on the one hand, identity was an intellectual and cultural ambition of the Renaissance humanists; on the other, it would soon become the inevitable by-product of mechanical technologies, which it has remained to this day. It is Alberti’s precocious and relentless quest for identical copies of all kinds that makes his work so revelatory in this context. Most of his inventions failed, but many of his ideas thrived. Predicated upon the same mandate of identical reproducibility (in this case, the identical translation from project to building), Alberti’s definition of architecture as an authorial, allographic, notational art held sway until very recently, and defines many if not all of the architectural principles that the digital turn is now unmaking.

The shaping of complex geometries and of irregular, ungeometrical or “free” forms, which was the first and most visible achievement of the digital turn in architecture, may have been a transient incident. But due to CAD-CAM integration, and counter to the Albertian principle of separation between notation and construction, digital architects today are increasingly designing and making at the same time. Acting almost like prosthetic extensions of the hands of the artisan, digital design and fabrication tools are creating a curiously high-tech analog of preindustrial artisanal practices. Traditional craftsmen, unlike designers, do not send blueprints to factories or building sites: they make with their hands what they have in their minds. The objection, so frequently raised, that this new mode of digital artisanship may apply only to small objects of manufacturing is theoretically irrelevant: any big object can be assembled from smaller, digitally fabricated parts.

Ultimately, Alberti's modern and humanistic authorial tenet, which called for the final notation of an object (its blueprint, in twentieth-century parlance) to be materially executed without any change, may also be doomed in a digital design environment. Projects (and not only for buildings: the principle can be generalized) are increasingly conceived as open-ended, generative scripts that may beget one or more different objects—redesigned, adapted, messed up, and tampered with by a variety of human and technical agents, some of them uncontrollable and unpredictable.”¹

Mario Carpo,
From: *The Alphabet and the Algorithm*
2011

¹ Mario Carpo, *The Alphabet and the Algorithm* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 44–45.

Five principles define any digital object according to media theorist Lev Manovich: *numerical representation* (all digital objects are made up of code and can be described mathematically), *modularity* (all digital objects are discrete and can be divided into parts), *automation* (all digital objects can be programmed and produced automatically by computers), *variability* (all digital objects are editable and hence variable at their most essential level), and *transcoding* (all digital objects require computers to be translated into readable data in multiple forms by humans).¹ Although these principles have little or no connection with the semantic field traditionally associated with design theory and manifestos –with, perhaps, the exception of modularity– they have unwittingly set the tone for the architectural discourse in the last twenty-five years or, in other words, ever since the last of these principles became a reality in the world of architectural design. In fact, we could say that the embracement of the computer as the primary medium for the production of architectural projects has been paralleled by theoretical propositions pivoting, more or less explicitly, around the creative potentials that stem from each one of these five attributes.

Beginning with the formal universe resulting from the ability of computers to represent and to model complex geometries and numerical data, and followed by explorations of scale-less continuity between architectural objects and the city as parts of the same, uninterrupted system, the first decade of the digital age in architecture revolved around the possibility of thinking and putting into practice a brand-new formal vocabulary that could not be imagined without the computation capabilities of the new medium –a possibility that lost momentum when the first deflation of the digital

¹ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

economy revealed that the connection between electronic tools and physical objects was not as immediate as initially envisaged. In architectural discourse, new forms gave way to new forms of practice, and the turn of the century subsequently moved on to explore the potential of variability, this time as an attribute belonging not to the architectural object but rather to the architectural project, the most direct product of architectural labor.

Mario Carpo's *The Alphabet and the Algorithm* appeared in 2011 as one of the most relevant assessments of this change of mentality. Building on notions of interactivity and responsiveness that result from the inherent variability of digital creations, the text revolves around the crisis of the notational "identity" between object and design in the era of information technologies, an "identity" that, according to Carpo, had been a major cornerstone of modern culture since the XV century. To put it simply, the Italian theorist argues that the modern was an era of "identical copies," i.e., an era rooted, first, in the division of design and fabrication as two separate, consecutive phases of production and, second, in the idea that an object should appear as an identical copy of its design. At both levels of conception and fabrication, digital technologies sever this division, thus calling for a redefinition of the modern paradigm of building by design.

In many ways, the book could be read as a continuation of the main ideas developed by Carpo in his previous work, *Architecture in the Age of Printing*; a book that ends with a chapter devoted to the diagonal connections between the professional model put forth by Leon Battista Alberti in the XV century and the emergence and expansion of the printing industry in Europe during the XVI century². In *The Al-*

² Mario Carpo, *Architecture in the Age of Printing: Orality, writing, typography, and printed images in the history of architectural theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

phabet and the Algorithm, the Italian theorist elaborates on this chapter and identifies the convergence of the theories of Alberti and the development of the printing press with the dawn of the modern paradigm of “identity” between building and design. Carpo explains that, unlike Brunelleschi, Alberti constructed his theory around the separation of architecture in these two consecutive phases –first the project and then the object– arguing that the design of the building was the actual work made by the architect. As a consequence, in order to identify an architect as the author of a building, it became necessary to conceive of the latter as an identical copy of the former or, in other words, it became necessary to regard buildings as precise and invariable translations of drawings into three-dimensional objects.³ In short, the association of authorship with design, the linear division of design and construction, and the notational sameness between project and building became the foundations the Albertian model of production.

The printing press consolidated this model practically and intellectually, for it allowed architects to work on their designs remotely, to reproduce them with accuracy, and, more importantly, it turned into a cultural reality the possibility of producing (a world of) identical copies stemming from authored designs. “Printing, a ditto device,”⁴ opened up an era of multiples and standards in the realm of objects and ideas.

According to Carpo, the paradigm theorized by Alberti and enabled by the printing press grew to become one of the benchmarks of modernity and found its true realization when assembly lines and commercial catalogues filled the world

³ A translation that, as we know from Robin Evans’ meticulous analysis of the chapel dome of the Anet Castle, can only be notational.

⁴ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The medium is the message: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), 49–50.

with standardized objects. After all, the material nature of the Industrial Revolution made it necessary to standardize components and products in order to generate economies of scale, which in turn were reciprocated by a culture ruled by sameness and repetition. In this genealogy, modernism appeared as the boldest manifestation of this cultural paradigm in the field of architecture. Today, it still appears as an unyielding reminder of the inseparable connection between construction and design, regardless of the position, autonomy, and value we assign to these terms in the equation of architecture.

The immaterial essence of the Digital Revolution hindered the balancing of this equation by revolutionizing, first and foremost, just one of the sides –that of design. That’s perhaps one of the reasons why, in just twenty years, the discourse around the digital in architecture has oscillated multiple times between form and process with apparent ease, or even discomfort. Interestingly enough, Crapo’s book insightfully captures this inherent problem, pointing out the troubled adaptation of architecture to an era ruled by electrons. To him, the most important consequence of the rise and expansion of digital technologies from a theoretical perspective is the reversal of the modern paradigm of building by design inaugurated by Alberti and the printing press. This reversal unfolds, however, in two different and uneven ways. First, the division of design and construction as two consecutive phases is overcome. Second, the authorial model associated with the modern system of production finds a new definition.

Speaking from a broader perspective, Carpo argues that digital technologies, not only allow designers to comprehensively think and work with three-dimensional digital models but also bypass the need of recurring to (human) intermediaries in the process of the materialization of their

designs. By means of the CAD/CAM duo, digital media enable a direct translation from the space of the screen to the space of the table, and, in doing so, they put pressure on the linearity of the interaction between object and design. A mediator capable of re-presenting code also as a physical construction, computers have the capacity to recreate in tangible reality the inherent variability of digital products –a capacity that gives birth to a new consumer culture no longer based on sameness but similarity. To put it differently, mass standardization gives way to mass customization at the precise moment when the main driver of technological development shifts from industry to information.

Notwithstanding that the so-called maker's culture stands today on the basis of this shift, it is clear that architecture is still far from sidestepping the need for intermediaries in the translation from drawing –or digital model– to building. In fact, it almost seems that, as it happens with 3D-printed objects, in order to become a direct outcome of what happens on the screen, architecture should embrace a sensible reduction of its material complexity, somehow displacing standardization to a different frequency. In architecture, then, the end of sameness, rather than being a consequence of a new way of building, becomes another way of coupling the rise of digital media with some of the inherent traits of postmodern culture.

Carpo, seems to acknowledge this fact in the text, and he ends up focusing on authorship as the true warhorse of digitization in the world of architectural design. Here, the text pinpoints a fundamental proposition often neglected in the debates around “the digital” in our discipline: in becoming a digital object, it is the project, and not so much the building, that turns into a variable product. Consequently, it is the project, and not so much the building, that lends itself to the new configurations and modes of operation that stem

from the new media.

That is to say that, in its digital transfiguration, it is architectural representation that has directly assumed the mediating role of the computer and, in doing so, the connection of a design with the hand of the architect has been challenged and - with it - the authorial model that characterized the discipline since the XV century. Computers turn the backbone of any design into a numerical representation made up of variables, i.e., dimensions, material properties, or coordinates that can be determined by the architect. Alternatively, it can be left open in order to enable the participation of external agents in the definition of the final configuration of the project. To Carpo, this possibility calls for new forms of practice that renounce full authorial control over the project and focus instead on the articulation of an interactive design process that turns the participation of clients, future users, and other professionals into a projective instrument, a sort of “split agency” by which the architect operates as a “generic author,” designing the essential formal principles of the object but leaving its final definition to other agents. Participation and collective intelligence, rather than folding, parametricism, or topology, are to Carpo the keywords of the second decade of the Digital Turn in architecture.

Arguably, we could say that Carpo’s final advocacy for participatory practices entails an evolution, rather than a reversal, of the Albertian model of building by design. If the Renaissance theorist defended a disembodiment of the process of making buildings, then, with digital technologies, it is the process of making designs that becomes disembodied, escaping full authorial control by the architect and lending itself to the decisions of other actors. Among these, there is one that stands out, albeit conspicuously silenced: the medium itself. If the modern conception of authorship teeters with the advent of digital technologies, it is because the tools we use to produce architecture have become autonomous to

the point of weakening the link that connects the decisions of the architect with the configuration of the project. In this context, it is quite literally the medium, the computer, that becomes the spokesperson of any design, operating as a negotiator with the ability to bring together disparate voices – as Carpo points out– and, more importantly, with the ability to speak up.

Ultimately, *The Alphabet and the Algorithm* can be read today simultaneously as an insightful analysis of the change of mindset that occurred in the first decade of the 21st century with regard to the potential of digitization in architecture and as an indicator of the principle of new media that would define the following decade: automation.⁵ However we decide to read it, it is a text that stands out as a reminder of the primary importance of design and representation in any architectural endeavor, particularly in a moment determined by the immaterial nature of information technologies.

⁵ Interestingly enough, Carpo's recently published book, *The Second Digital Turn: Design Beyond Intelligence*, elaborates on the idea of “the participatory turn that never was”.

Peter

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Trummer

ANTHROPOCENE PIRANESI



Giovanni Battista Piranesi,
Campo Marzio, 1762



Peter Trummer with Jose Carlos Lopez Cervantes and Harfi Ferdaous, Mitterer Norbert, Mitterwurzer Sabine, Mörtl Theresa Luisa, Neumayer Theresa, Niedermeier Bernhard Karl, Pammer Lorenz, Scheitnagl Balbina, Seyrling Josef, Sieder-Semlitsch Jakob, Engensteiner Ines, Troppmair Benita Maria Rosa, Unterrainer Kevin Konstantin. IOUD / University of Innsbruck
Architecture an Hyperobject, 2018

Giacomo

Is an architect and researcher based in Innsbruck, Austria when he conducts his PhD at the Institute of Urban Design under the guidance of Peter Trummer and works at the department of “Architecture Theory” under Bart Lootsma. More specifically, his research is focused Giovanni Battista Piranesi and the notion of time, archaeology, parachronism and historical narrative, as well as the relation between mainstream/pop cultures and architecture. Basically, his interest lies in the possibility of testing the mutual limits between design, history and theory.

Pala

OTHER ORDERS OCCUR

Todd Gannon: As many thinkers associated with OOO [Object Oriented Ontology] have pointed out, so-called philosophies of becoming such as Deleuze's seem more interested in flows, intensities, and the processes operating beneath or beyond things than in the things themselves. In the 1990s architects developed similar interests in flows, continuities, and process, interests that were intensified by digital technologies. [...] If architecture is robbed of its objects, it is also robbed of all the wonder, mystery, surprise, and power they hold."
[...]

Tom Wiscombe: After a long period of focus on fluidity and connectivity, a new formal lexicon is in order. Chunks, joints, gaps, parts, interstices, contour, near-figure, misalignment, patchiness, low-res, nesting, embedding, interiority, and above all, mystery, are terms that resonate for me. I'm not interested in architecture that is always looking over its shoulder to processes or forces, but rather architecture that is irreducible and inexhaustible. I prefer the idea of buildings that produce new worlds to buildings as products of the world.
[...]

David Ruy: "As a student at Columbia University while Bernard Tschumi was dean, I was quite familiar with Derrida and Deleuze, as was everyone else there at the time. [...] The way in which computers were being recontextualized and estranged as a different kind of machine was, I think, an offshoot of that larger movement. [...] with Graham we're connecting to a different genealogy that echoes other concerns. When I accidentally reconnected with Graham a few years ago I was very surprised to learn from him about these other important lines of thought that continued to develop in the shadows of these famous personalities. I was immediately struck by the originality of these authors, but even more so

by how foreign the ideas at first seemed. What I thought was a philosophical landscape of a few giant trees started looking more like a field of many strange flowers.

[...]

Graham Harman: "Philosophy absolutely must not try to be an instruction manual for architecture or for anything else. [...] If OOO holds any significance for architecture, it's on the metaphorical level. [...] This means that I will never be able to look at an architectural project and say "Aha! This is OOO transported into architecture!" There will always be various degrees of resonance and different possible paths."¹

T. Gannon, G. Harman, D. Ruy and T. Wiscombe,
From: "*The Object Turn: A Conversation*",
2015

¹ Todd Gannon, Graham Harman, David Ruy and Tom Wiscombe, "The Object Turn: A Conversation", in Log, No. 33 (New York: Anyone Corporation, Winter 2015), pp.73-94

More than ten years have passed since the definition of OOO (Object Oriented Ontology) by philosophers such as – among others – Graham Harman, Quentin Meillassoux, Ray Brassies and Iain Hamilton. Suddenly, however, this thought begins to be used in the architectural discourse. After the first and hesitant references to this theory, nowadays, to read this philosophy seems to be a “must”. Nonetheless, how is a philosophical discourse embodied by architecture? For many, there is a simple metaphorical analogy, meaning that there is not any proper translation from one field to the other, but rather a transliteration. In other words, and quite simplistically, the project formalizes philosophy. Object oriented ontology becomes Object Oriented architecture. Which is to say: architecture as an object. Of course, Object Oriented Philosophy tells us that we should not undermine objects, and that they are not the simple manifestation of a more fundamental reality, even the ones that exist without perceiving “dormant objects”) – are at the centre of the universe. Rather, everything is an object, and it is potentially “weird”. In other words, as summarized by Ian Bogost: “OOO puts things at the center of being. We humans are elements, but not the sole elements, of philosophical interest. OOO contends that nothing has special status, but everything exists equally”². Objects are the centre of our world. Yet, to simply design “architectural objects” is not such an interesting idea or, at least, we can easily argue that it is quite a simple architectural interpretation. Nonetheless, such a linear and metaphorical movement of concepts from philosophy to architecture is not uncommon. In the late Eighties, Jacques Derrida’s “deconstructionism”, by becoming “deconstrutivism”, became the

¹ Graham Harman, “Objects, Matter, Sleep, and Death” (2009), in Graham Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism, Essays and Lectures*, (United Kingdom: Zero Books, 2010) p.207

² Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What is Like to be a Thing*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012)mp.6

persistent slogan used to justify contradictory compositions of fragments. A little later, Gilles Deleuze's "Fold" was used to legitimize folded surfaces and flows of information. By doing so, philosophy becomes a sort of theology: I am Derridian, you are Deleuzian, she is Harmanian. Therefore, I design tortuous ruptures and syntactical contradictions, you program folds and flows, she shapes objects. At its best, such a translation of concepts cannot produce anything else but stylistic properties: -isms.

Nonetheless, philosophy should be taken more seriously than that. For instance, according to Mark Wigley, when talking about a Derridian architecture "There is no hygienic starting point, no superior logic to apply".³ These words perfectly apply to today's use of OOO: there is no real common beginning shared by architecture and philosophy. Yet, since exchanges are happening, it is necessary to address how such a translation is taking place. According to Wigley, such an operation is ultimately impossible. In other words, philosophy (in his case Deconstruction) does not outlive its architectural translation and formalization, "because of architecture's unique relationship to translation, it [architecture] cannot simply translate deconstruction. It is so implicated in the economy of translation that it threatens deconstruction."⁴ Yet, if it is true that architecture over-abuses, trivializes and kills philosophy, what is architecture gaining by doing so? In order to answer, we should try to look at the knot of relationships between philosophy and architecture, by trying to understand what it is that architecture gains from philosophy, rather than what it is that philosophy loses by being abused by our discipline. In order to start this analysis, it is worth to first understand what is the architectural back-

³ Mark Wigley, "The Translation of Architecture, the Production of Babel", in *Assemblage*, No. 8 (Cambridge: MIT Press, Feb, 1989). p.8

⁴ *idem*, p.19

ground of such a translation. That is to say, why and under what circumstances architects have started to look at OOO.

Surely, there are many reasons for that to happen: the digital that has been vulgarized as “parametricism”; the fact that, despite its theories proclaimed differently, the digital has produced the same fluid surfaces and biomorphic meshes all over the world; the run out of fashion of the so-called complexity paradigm; the economic crisis of 2008. All true. Nonetheless, the issue is even more complex, if not more complicated. Generally speaking, in the last 20/25 years, there has been the illusion that architecture, by becoming processual, performative and multi-disciplinary, would have been more in the world. It would have contributed in solving complex issues, such as the one of sustainability, by defining new urban paradigms: green cities, bottom-up participation, resilience, sustainability, sustainability, sustainability.

Nonetheless, by doing so, architecture seems to be losing its cultural specificity and, ultimately, its strength. The architectural translation of OOO has then to be seen from this point of view or, as written by David Ruy: “Through the sincere desire to be more in the world, architecture may have accidentally turned away from the very real objects right in front of it, including the architectural object itself”⁵. Then, to look once again at the “architectural object” is a way of reconsidering issues such as composition, form and aesthetics, having in mind today’s cultural and political issues.⁶ The general context is, then, the search for a cultural specificity of architecture, something that is felt as an architectu-

⁵ David Ruy, “Returning to (Strange) Objects” in Theodore Spyropoulos, John Frazer, Patrik Schumacher, (edited by), *Adaptive Ecologies: Correlated Systems of Living*, (London: Architectural Association Publications, 2013), p.277

⁶ It is worth to mention the “Aesthetic Activism” symposium held in October 2016 at Yale University, where architects have discussed with philosophers such as Harman and Jacques Rancière about these issues. See: <https://www.architecture.yale.edu/calendar/53-aesthetic-activism> (18/02/2018)

ral quality that is ultimately lost. Yet, what is the specificity of OOO in the context of architecture? Indeed, the need of seeking for the specificity of architecture is nowadays felt as something necessary by many architects and theorists who do not necessarily refer to this philosophy, or to philosophy at all. To name a few, Pier Vittorio Aureli, Sarah Whiting or Sam Jacob are all looking for ways of focusing once again on architecture as a proper discipline. So, then, why Object Oriented Ontology?

To cut the story short, the translation of OOO seems to be the latest chapter in a certain historiography of architecture that, more or less, goes like this: there once was postmodernism, followed by deconstructivism, overcome by the digital, the “fold” and the “blob”, finally – today – we have “OOO”, or rather “OOA” (Object Oriented Architecture). Still, this historiographical narrative is a huge simplification. In fact, if we focus on a discussion published on *Log* between architects referring to OOO (Tom Wiscombe, David Ruy and Todd Gannon) and Graham Harman himself, we can find more interesting aspects that will enrich such a story. Here, for instance, Tom Wiscombe argues that if it is true that the use of philosophy has produced a whole series of misreading, it is also true that such an operation is avoided when architects refer to OOO: “because OOO makes no specific or obvious overture toward architecture, multiple niches and generations in contemporary architectural discourse, some with opposing agendas, seem to have affinities for it.”⁷ Of course, Wiscombe, being among the ones who refer to OOO, could not say otherwise. Nonetheless, we have to read these words avoiding any malice. In fact, in the adoption of OOO in architecture, there clearly is a common interest shared by both the disciplines: the need of overcoming what was fa-

⁷ Todd Gannon, Graham Harman, David Ruy and Tom Wiscombe, “The Object Turn: A Conversation”, in *Log*, No. 33 (New York: Anyone Corporation, Winter 2015), pp.79

shionable until yesterday by simultaneously negating it and continuing it. On the one hand, architects are struggling to find ways allowing them to keep on working on the digital agenda, avoiding the deadlocks of methodological prescriptions and positivist positions. On the other, philosophers are trying to overcome the postmodern culture, though without forgetting what we can still learn from the former philosophy. Indeed, as noticed by Mario Carpo, this architectural expression can ultimately be read as a description of “one of the core traits” of what he calls as the “second digital style” (which is to say the latest trend of the “digital”)⁸. Nonetheless, since an ever-increasing number of architects are drawing attention to OOO, this phenomenon cannot be read as the simple attempt of defining what “an object oriented architecture would look like”, as Carpo suggests⁹. In fact, in order to properly understand this debate, it would be necessary to discuss this relation looking at architecture in general, forgetting the issue of “the digital”; at least for a moment.

For instance, we should read the different tendencies that, according to Wiscombe, Ruy and Gannon, can profit from a relation to OOO. Among these, we find: “*New ancients*, with their reengagement of the conceptual project through drawings”¹⁰, the “suspicion of physical context as a “generator” of architecture”, the inversion of the “entrenched relational hierarchy of context-to-building by producing context from the resonance of the building itself”, that is to say, “fictional reflections, shadows and other sensual effects emanating from a building”, the use of black to “create realities that lie somewhere at the limit of perception”, “oblique projections”, “patchy and glitch textures”, “form-indepen-

⁸ Mario Carpo, *the Second Digital Turn, Dsign Beyond Intelligence*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017) p.91

⁹ idem

¹⁰ By saying “new Ancients”, Tom Wiscombe refers to the work of the architects presented on Log31 (“New Ancients”). Among these: Mark Ericson, David Gissen, Thomas Kelly, Anna Neimark, Jason Payne, Daniel Sherer

dent figuration”, “independent or hidden spaces within. Like Russian dolls, there is always another space nested inside”, “hyper-objects”, “aggregated cities”, “mute icons”, “non-representational architecture” that looks as such by “deliberately compromising, or breaking, architecture’s own representational tools”.

Obviously, these poetics and formal strategies are potentially independent from any philosophy and they could be read as new forms of digital culture or, rather, and more interestingly, attempts of transcending it by using post-digital media. Nonetheless, the reference to philosophy is particularly important for one simple reason: it allows the formulation of new concepts and, more importantly, both the disciplines have advantages by their mutual exchanges. One finds narratives, the other finds images.

Furthermore, the reference to OOO (as to any other philosophy) allows the production and conceptualization of new contents. If some, in fact, *reinterpret* episodes of architectural history in order to generate novelties, others refer to philosophy or extra-disciplinary concepts. In this sense, Object Oriented Ontology and Speculative Realism are particularly fecund. In fact, the instrumentality of OOO, and more generally speaking, of philosophy, is more profound than how we all superficially tend to think. It is not just a way of justifying a bunch of poetics. The relationship between architecture and philosophy operates in fact the other way around as well. Not only the philosophers use architecture to generate images (Gilles Deleuze famously quotes Bernard Cache in “the Fold”), but it is the reference to philosophy that gives architects the chance of generating new concepts. After all, it is a way of producing new forms. Or, as stated by Graham Harman in his conversation with the OOO archi-

tects: “people will rally to fresh ideas”¹¹.

Finally, the use of OOO (and philosophy) is not anything particularly new, despite producing novelties. It is a very modern way of seeking for newer and newer forms of estrangement. It is a way to turn modernity’s prophecy inside out and to beat its odds. A prophecy – or rather a curse – already remarkably synthesized by Ezra Pound with three famous words: “Make it new”¹².

Whether we agree or not with the philosophical position of OOO; Whether we like or not the aesthetics used by the architects who refer to such a philosophy; we should consider the coupling of architecture and philosophy for what it is: a theoretical fiction enabling the production of new forms, concepts and aesthetics. After all, as already written by Giovanni Battista Piranesi some centuries ago, “the human understanding is not so short and limited, as to be unable to add new graces, and embellishments to the works of architecture”¹³.

Nonetheless, we also know that the simple production of novelties is ultimately bound to the production of boredom. It couldn’t be otherwise: “the new” cannot do anything else but becoming the normal. Consequently, we might argue that, in order to find a real and fecund grounding for these new ideas, these should be negotiated with architecture’s disciplinary core ideas. Without such an interpretation, the dialogue between disciplines will never really be such, being instead nothing else but a sliding mask.

¹¹ Todd Gannon, Graham Harman, David Ruy and Tom Wiscombe, “The Object Turn: A Conversation”, in *Log*, No. 33 (New York: Anyone Corporation, Winter 2015), p.75

¹² *Make it New* is a poem published by Ezra Pound in 1935

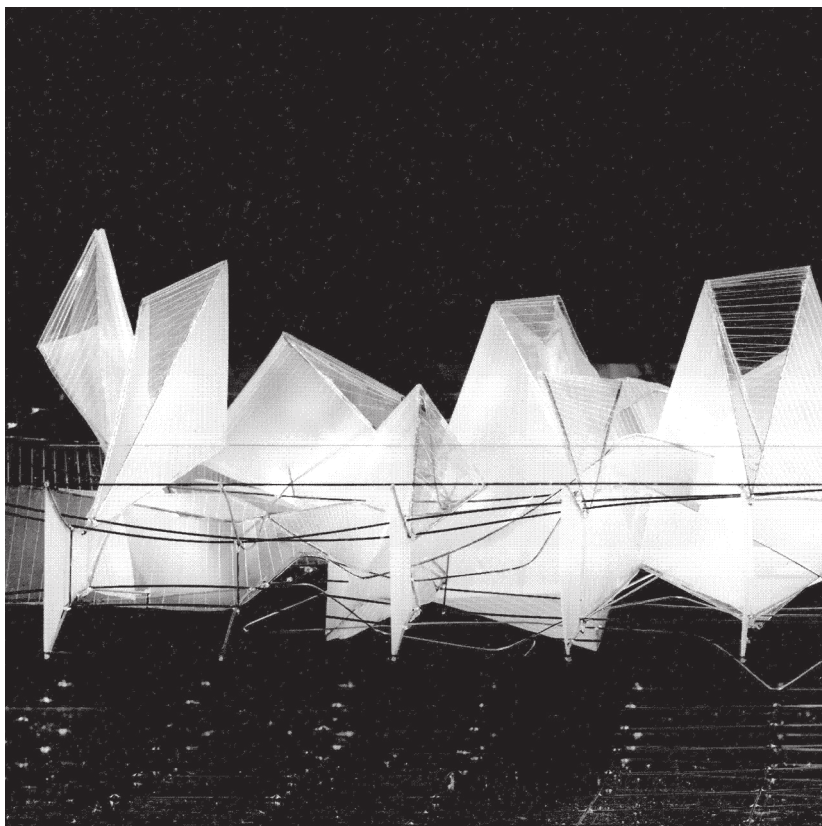
¹³ Giovanni Battista Piranesi (translated by Caroline Beamish and David Britt), *Observations on the Letter of Monsieur Mariette (1769)*, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002) p.55

Space

Is a practice founded by Lara Lesmes and Fredrik Hellberg in 2013. They are graduates from the Architectural Association in London. The practice has since completed built projects both in Asia and Europe and participated in a wide range of international competitions. In 2011 they joined INDA, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok where they were both 2nd and 3rd year coordinators respectively from 2013 to 2016, where they were an integrated part of making the program one of the strongest undergraduate programs in South East Asia. They have lead a wide range of research projects and workshops in Europe and Asia and have through their design and research studio Tools for Architecture investigated topics such as masonry structures, space of political debate, renewable materials and virtual architecture. In the fall of 2016 they launched Tools for Architecture at the Architectural Association in London where they are unit masters of Intermediate One where second and third year students explore experience driven design methods.

Popular

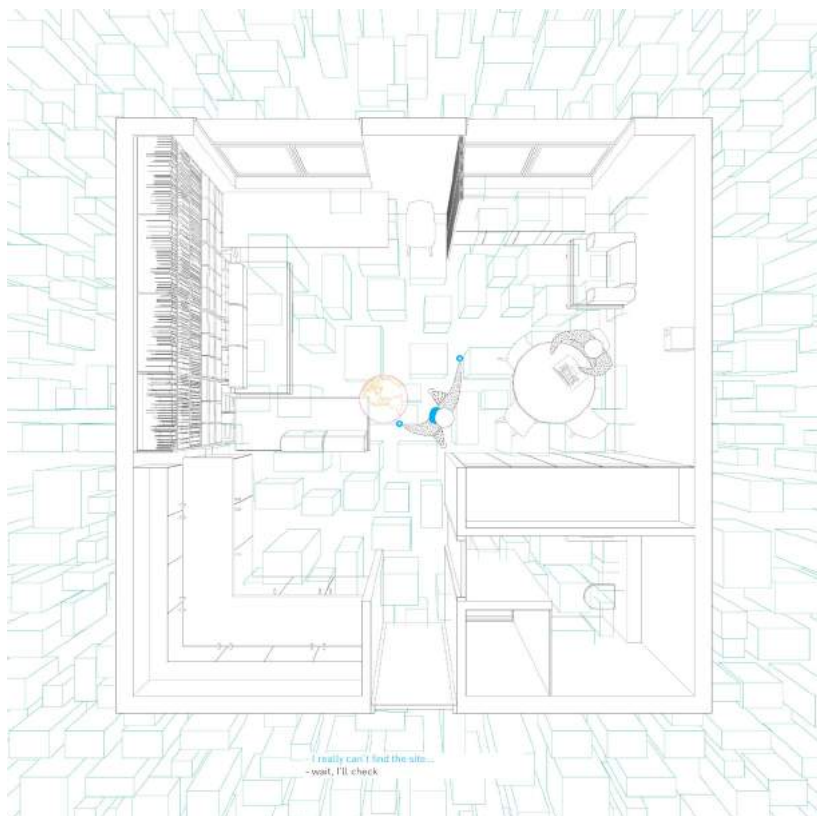
NON SPECULATIVE VR HOUSE



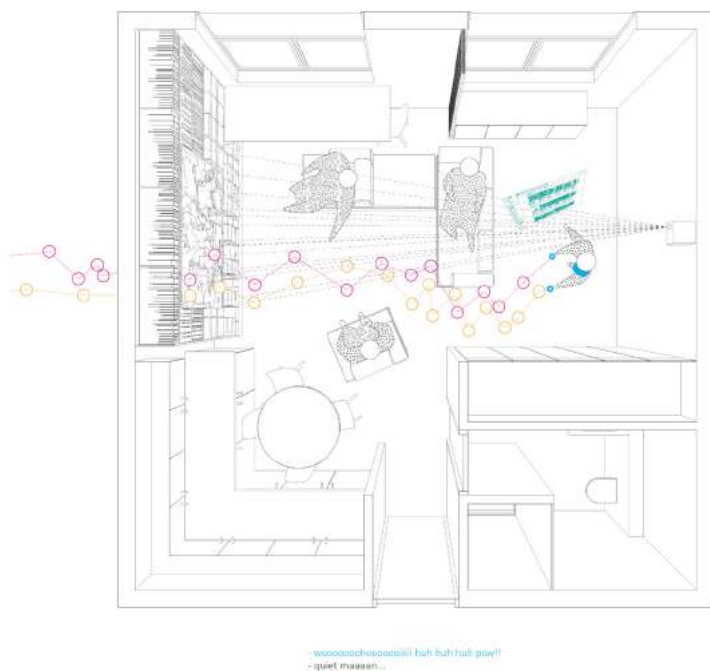
Peter Eisenman
Virtual House, 1997



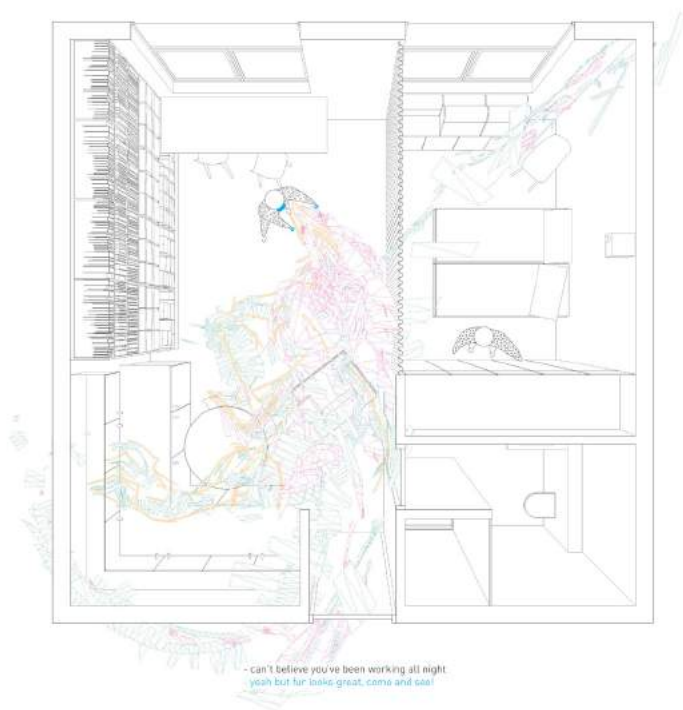
Space Popular
Non Speculative VR House, 2018



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Non Speculative VR House, 2018



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Non Speculative VR House, 2018

Harry Francis

Is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus from Illinois Institute of Technology. He received his PhD in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania and, in addition to teaching, has worked as an architect, translator, editor, and award-winning scholar. He has published more than a dozen books on themes related to architectural history and theory, including “The Architect’s Brain: Neuroscience, Creativity, and Architecture” in 2010; “Architecture and Embodiment: The Implications of the New Sciences and Humanities for Design”, in 2013; “From Object to Experience: The New Culture of Design” in 2018.

Mallgrave

PALLASMAA

“A real architectural experience is not simply a series of retinal images; a building is encountered—it is approached, confronted, related to one’s body, moved about, utilized as a condition for other things, etc. . .

A building is not an end to itself; it frames, articulates, re-structures, gives significance, relates, separates and unites, facilitates and prohibits. Consequently, elements of an architectural experience seem to have a verb form rather than being nouns. Authentic architectural experiences consist then of approaching, or confronting a building rather than the façade; of the act of entering and not simply the frame of the door; or looking in or out of a window, rather than the window itself...

The authenticity of architectural experience is grounded in the tectonic language of building and the comprehensibility of the act of construction to the senses. We behold, touch, listen and measure the world with our entire bodily existence and the experiential world is organized and articulated around the center of the body. Our domicile is the refuge of our body, memory and identity. We are in constant dialogue and interaction with the environment, to the degree that it is impossible to detach the image of the Self from its spatial and situational existence.”

Juhani Pallasmaa,
From: “*Images of Muscle and Bone*,” *An architecture of the
Seven Senses*
1994

“We need to remember that, as stated above, the practical situation “includes not only people doing or experiencing something but also things that contribute to the fulfillment of human life.” The latter category embraces everything associated with human activity: for instance, the table on which we take our daily meal, or the walls that protect the intimacy of our conversation within a room.

Restoring the practical nature of situations as the primary vehicle of design enables us to move away from inconclusive play with abstract forms and functions. Once divorced from the unity of practical life and cultivated separately, forms and their functions can never be satisfactorily integrated. The tendency to express the richness of life through transparent, clearly defined functions grows out of the replacement of the traditional understanding of creativity, based on the creative imitation of praxis and poetic knowledge (techn poitik), by the imitation of rationally formulated standards of theoretical knowledge (techn thertik). This replacement has led to the degeneration of practice to technique and to a serious impoverishment of culture.”

Dalibor Vesely,
From: *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*,
2004

The divide between “muscle and bone” and that “impoverishment of culture” wrought by the rationality of postmodern thought seems to be an unusually large divide to span, even with the similar phenomenological perspectives of these two authors. Yet what unites the two perspectives, separated by a decade, is the fact that the existential nature (or might I say beauty) of architecture, its success, resides not in its material forms but in the pleasure of the individual who dines at a table or enjoys a conversation within the intimacy of a room.

In spanning this gaping divide, I would like to begin with a simple theorem: architectural theory is dead and incapable of resuscitation!

I should at least qualify my theorem by noting that the speculative body of theory to which I am referring is that of the late-20th century—that which reduced design to a rational, visual, symbolic, and therefore conceptual process, one indubitably ensnared or seduced by a form’s meaning or destruction thereof. My contention is that this superannuated exercise in Cartesian dualism has been entirely overtaken by the new perceptual and cultural models, which are centered in the multimodal and embodied nature of the experience, at the same time highlighting the embedded and reciprocal relationship of the human organism with the built and cultural environments in which we live. As Pallasmaa suggests, there is no space between the “self” and the world in which we dwell.

Yet what do we really mean by the experience of architecture? At the most basic level it is a homeostatic one. A good shelter must have a certain range of temperatures and light, together with a few other things, for us to maintain our most basic sensory functions. All architects can agree on this, and these necessities in fact prompted the first members of our

antecedent species (*Homo erectus* and *Homo heidelbergensis*) to erect the first huts.

Beyond homeostasis, however, is another level of sensory coupling with the environment that we might call aesthetic—employing Alexander Baumgarten’s word for sensible cognition without the Kantian imperative of judgment (which will come later). Philosophers and the biologists are now informing us that this aesthetic dimension is multimodal (generally operating across cortical, limbic, and brainstem regions of the brain), emotional (the endocrine system’s hormonal input), inherently meaningful (we read the world not with concepts but through affordances), and intentional (our animal anticipation or readiness for action). Moreover, our sensory coupling with the environment operates within the media of minds, bodies, environments, and cultures interacting with each other in a developmental process on multiple levels over the course of generations. In other words, just as we design our environments, so do our environments (through the process of neural plasticity) design who we are and what our species will become. And we do so with the capabilities and limitations of our bodies—that is, as motile organisms encountering, approaching, confronting, and measuring the built environment with our muscle and bone.

One of the more promising models of perception today is embodied simulation, which is based on the discovery in the early 1990s of mirror neurons. Visible to today’s neuroimaging technologies, systems of mirror neurons become active in premotor and parietal areas (tightly connected with emotional and endocrine circuits) when we perceive the actions, expressions, and intentions of others. Mirror circuits in other areas allow us to read another’s mood or connect with their emotional state. One example of embodied simulation is how we might, in viewing a dancer on a stage, prep the muscles that we see being used within our own premotor

cortex, all without lifting a finger from our seats. Mirror systems and the new models of embodied simulation have profound implications for designers, because they allow us to understand how we actually experience architectural forms and space, in a far more complex way than the semiotic (conceptual) basis of postmodern theory would allow.

Studies in which participants viewed abstract paintings, for instance, have found activity in the cortical premotor system demonstrating that we simulate the intensity with which the artist applied the brush to the canvas. Other studies have shown that we not only simulate the force of chisel marks on figurative sculpture but also the muscular and emotional activity displayed in the sculpted bodies. This makes it very likely that we similarly simulate the heaviness and power of the rusticated blocks of the Palazzo Medici, the more delicate scoring of the applied stonework on the Palazzo Rucellai, the twisting and almost visceral force of a Romanesque spiral column—generally speaking, the material qualities and shapes of any architectural surface.

Certainly, materials have different textural and thermal qualities. The architect may view glass, steel, and concrete as quintessential modern materials, and glass indeed has become the predominate exterior envelope in nearly all tall buildings today. Yet non-professionals may view these same materials in different ways. Glass and steel are generally quite cool to the touch and devoid of any textural interest. Glass in the upper stories affords good views out over the city, but numerous studies have shown that people do not like to walk past glass facades along the street. Concrete is not only a drab material in its coloration but it is also often rough to the touch. Many people associate it (not happily) with car parks and other eye sores within the city. Architects who have used concrete successfully, such as Louis Kahn, have always softened the impression by complementing it

with the textures and warm thermal qualities of wood, as if to humanize the building fabric.

Buildings in their totality, as Heinrich Wölfflin noted more than a century ago, invoke in us vestibular and formal responses. The Leaning Tower of Pisa, most agree, makes us uneasy, and the initial professional craze over the structural ingenuity of Beijing's CCTV tower seems to have waned considerably in just a few short years. The recent exercises in bigness don't seem to have the long shelf-life of, say, the vestibule of S. Marco in Venice. Other longstanding architectural masterworks are viewed today in different ways. Mies van der Rohe's Crown Hall, as I can testify personally, is not a happy place to sit, think, or work. The glass walls resist any temperature control, and are ill-suited to the cold and windy climate (not to mention summer's solar gain), while the soundscape is excessively loud. During studio hours there is a veritable din or cacophony of noise. The lightly supported deep truss of Mies's New Gallery in Berlin suggests to the visitor that it may at any moment crash down upon one's head. In an art installation few years ago, David Chipperfield introduced a forest of thick tree trunks, as if to lend the multi-ton canopy some measure of visual support.

Chipperfield's intervention underscores another aspect of the architectural experience, which is the importance of detailing or grounding it with what Pallasmaa calls a tectonic language. One of the more remarkable fMRI studies of the last few years attempted to monitor human responses to viewing another's touch by introducing a control image of two inanimate materials touching one another. What they found was quite unexpected, in that the contact of two inanimate materials ignited similar tactile responses inside our sensorimotor systems—that is, similar to when we view one person touching another. The experiment demonstrated that the mirroring/simulation principle is active with the

observation of any touch, and embodied simulation is the key to how we conceptualize the world.

Yet what is architecture, if not the art of composing materials that touch one another—or what we generally refer to as detailing? It explains why the classical column in Roman times had a capital and a base, why the Greeks employed entasis and other optical effects to enliven their articulated forms. The English critic Roger Scruton once noted that detailing imparts humanity and grace to the design because it allows us to judge the appropriate use of the detail. For example, the detailing of the Gothic nave, in its striving for height, charms us with its luxurious articulation, while the modern glazed and detail-less skyscraper only scorns us with its “downcasting inhumanity.” This is not to say detailing can only be historical, as Scarpa ingeniously demonstrated. In his various writings on the detail, Edward Ford has referred to detailing as a way not only to escape the abstract and geometrical character of a building but also to animate it with tactile, sculptural, and empathetic qualities. Well considered detailing, Peter Zumthor once noted, establishes a dialogue with the occupant, thereby forming “levels of intimacy.” As Pallasmaa reports above, this dialogue assures the authenticity of the design experience. Nevertheless, many architects in recent years, particular those with a penchant for digital design, have shunned the detail as outmoded and unnecessary. The perceptual models of contemporary neuroscience, however, dispute this claim.

If we are neurologically attuned to the tactile qualities of form and its configuration, the same is also true of space. Dozens upon dozens of neuroimaging studies have demonstrated that the space surrounding our bodies, referred to as peripersonal space, is a highly sensitive zone that moves with the movements of the body. Some neural circuits like to define a comfort or defense zone around the body, while

this zone for other circuits becomes active with the perception of affordances. If we view a toothbrush or hammer in our peripersonal space, for example, our premotor cortex is already rehearsing how to pick them up, even if we have no intention of doing so. In walking toward a staircase, our bodies measure and adjust the length of the gait, in addition to preparing the legs for the lift and ascension. We do so without thinking.

Awe-inspiring spaces allow us to stand tall, lift our heads, and deepen our respiration. Narrow, confining spaces, lacking elbow room as we say, evoke contrary responses, perhaps the first of which is the desire to escape them. Numerous “rubber hand” experiments (where the real hand is shielded from the subject’s sight while a rubber hand is placed on the table in front of the subject) have shown that people experience a tactile response when only the rubber hand is brushed. Other experiments have shown that the body can be fooled as to its actual location, and even experience tactile sensations of being touched from walls that are not touching. The body does not like to move close to a surface with a rough texture, whereas the same surface might be fine in distant or extrapersonal space. In short, space is pregnant with body-related meanings and architects should be aware of this fact. Space is not, as architects believe a half-century ago, an Euclidean or space-time abstraction. We cannot detach our existence from the environmental field in which we dwell.

The strides that neuroscience has made with our relation to form and space have been matched by what the sciences and humanities have learned about our social natures in recent years, and the new perspective draws us back to what Vesely referred to as the “practical nature of situations.” As designers, we often think of designing *the* building and then at some future time handing the keys to the occupant. We

should, however, stop and reflect on whether or not we are viewing the issue from the wrong end of the looking-glass. The table on which we dine or the setting for an intimate conversation is the more proper starting point for our efforts.

Only a generation ago textbooks on human evolution liked to compress modern human behaviors into the last fifty-thousand years, beginning with the cave paintings of southern Europe. Yet we now know that the human species appeared at least 300,000 years ago, and that those behaviors we use to call human—protolanguage, laughter, the use of ochre, cooking, empathy, music, song, dance, and symbolism—all appeared before the inception of our species, in some cases, beginning with *Homo erectus*, up to two million years ago. Sociality, like our cultural need for ritualistic and artistic expression, are not recent additions to our biological resumes; they are deeply written into our genetic codes.

Anthropologists now dismiss the belief that social behavior is simply a cultural program applied to our biological hardware. For this reason, ritualistic expression and our empathetic relationship with others should not be programmatic afterthoughts to the design. Who does not enjoy a warm social setting, and participating on the stage on which human life unfolds? Social and aesthetic experience needs to be both accessible and tangibly relevant to the world in which we live. Manifestations of ritualistic play, for the designer, might consist of striking uses of space, forms textures, materials, light, and color—all in accord with our sensory and cognitive dispositions. As Ellen Dissanayake has noted, ritual play satisfies us when it appeals to our social and emotional natures, when the effects are modulated with the build-up or down-play of intensity, or the play on expectation and surprise. One hundred and fifty years ago Gottfried Semper argued that the “haze of carnival candles” (the carnival spirit and the

mask) was the proper atmosphere for architects to create.

Moreover, today we are learning that ideas such as beauty not only may have a neurobiological basis but also that they need to be reinforced and connected with a social ethos. Environmental degradation or poor design is a form of moral degradation or disrespect toward the occupants of our creations. For too long architecture has been held under the painful arm of theoretical abstractions or the rationally formulated standards of technological progress. What we need today is a fundamental rethinking of our habitats and cities. I am not speaking here of newer digital technologies or driverless cars, but humanistic cities that, through mindful creative labor, enrich our collective existence. What we need today, as Vesely correctly notes, is a more sincere and genuine participation in the order of human reality—specifically, the humanizing and sensuous creativity of “poetic knowledge.”

Adam Nathaniel

Is an artist & designer of Argentine, Japanese and Israeli heritage based in London. He trained in Architecture and Fine Art, and works in those areas as well as products, interiors, writing and teaching. His work has been exhibited in London, Paris, New York, Milan, Rome, Eindhoven, Minneapolis, Portland, Kortrijk, Veszprem, Vienna & Glasgow, is held in the collections of the Design Museum, the Sir John Soane's Museum, the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Abet Museum, & the Architectural Association, and has been published widely. The studio has completed, and ongoing projects both internationally (Europe, the US, S America, East Asia) and in the UK. He has lectured at the RIBA, UC Berkeley, the Carnegie Museum of Art, Cardiff University, Innsbruck University, the Casa dell'Architettura Rome, and the Biennale Interieur, amongst others, and have taught courses at several universities and am a Studio Master at Central St Martins in London.

Furman

ORNAMENT



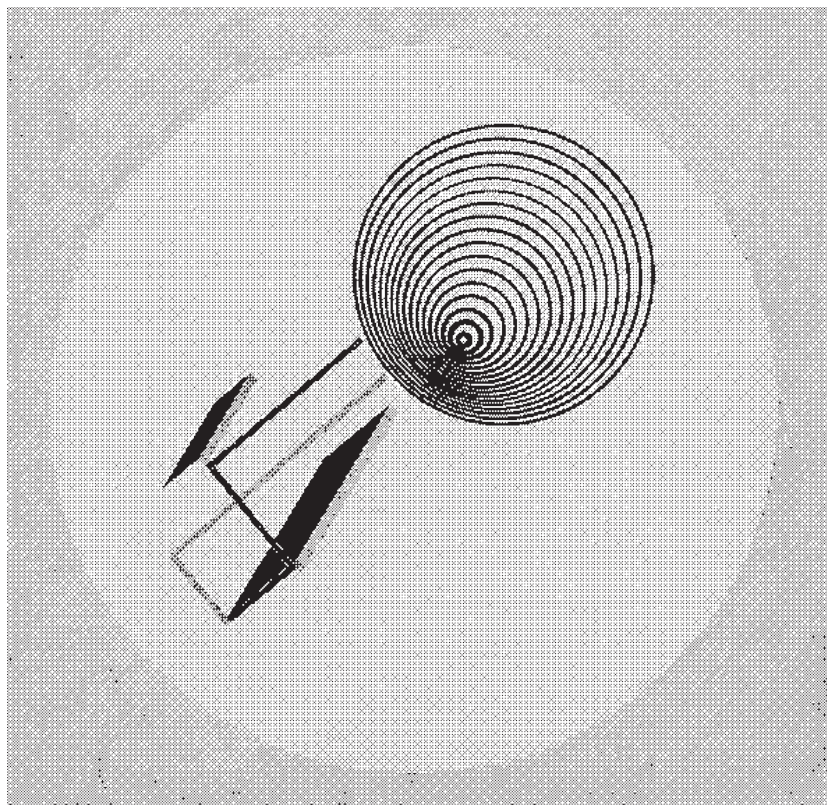
Adam Nathaniel Furman,
Ornament, 2018

Ornament is not a language. Do you carefully explain the precise mechanics of your movements, their intent, their biological imperatives, their cultural origins, and the anthropological explanation for the way you bite the lip of your lover in bed? No, you consume them with your eyes, your hands and your nose. Ornament is of the flesh. It is the architecture of desire. It is the communion of space with identity, with animus, it is the copulation of form and instinct, it is the pure ecstasy of intuition. It is not words, it is colours. It isn't ideas, it's the salty sweat of an era's euphoria. Ornament fucks theory, and they both love it.

gosplan

Was established in Genova in 2010 by Federico Bellegoni, Nicola Lunardi, Veronica Rusca and Lorenzo Trompetto. In 2018 Federico ran his own practice as Federico Bellegoni Architetto.gosplan believes in architecture as a mass medium. As such, architecture is a production of forms, a tale about space. Like every medium, architecture is not based on the message occasionally transmitted (environmental sustainability, functional program, authorial code, etc.) but on establishing new connections: links between forms, concepts, people. An architecture aware of its role as a medium, knows how to evaluate its impact over the world, because a medium always connects two different realities.

KOOLHAAS THE POOL



El Lissitzky,
Proun 93, 1923



gosplan,
The Pool, 2018

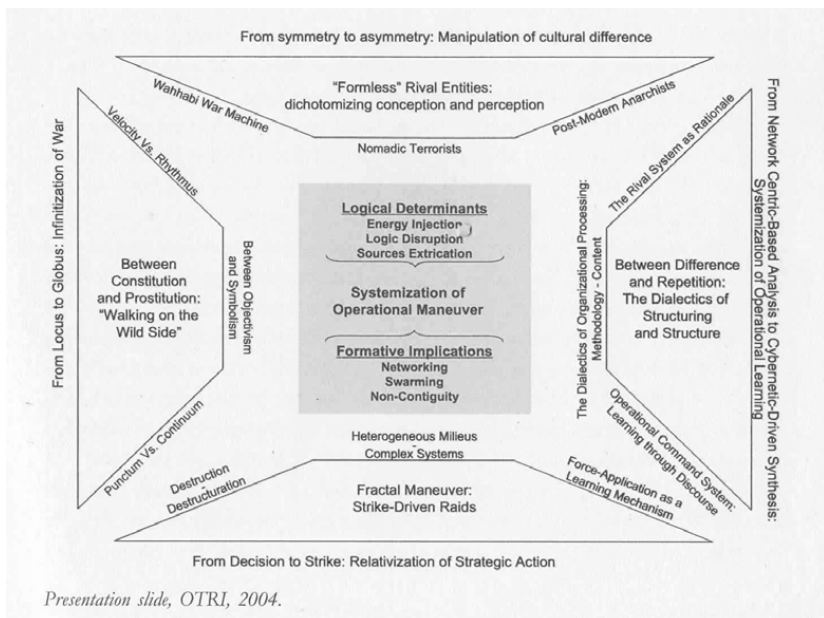
Luis Rojo

Graduated from the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid in 1987, where has been teaching since 1992. He is Ph D Professor at the Department of Architecture, teaching design studios as well as Labs and Workshops at the Master for Advanced Architecture program. He obtained a Masters degree at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University in 1989, and was Visiting Professor of Architecture at the GSD on regular basis between 1994 and 1998, and again in 2001, 2006 and 2011. He was appointed Visiting Professor of Architecture at the City College of New York for the Fall semester of 2017. In 1994 he founded Rojo/Fernandez-Shaw, where he develops his professional work.

de Castro

UNDOING DE-CONSTRUCTION

**OPERATIONAL ARCHITECTS
IN THE WARFARE IMAGINARY
AND THE ENVIRONMENT OF INVERSE GEOMETRIES**



Unknow,
Presentation slide, OTRI, 2004

After two decades of reflecting on how to reinstall critical architecture theory within the common practice, we are confronted by a meaningful dilemma: the sophisticated architecture theory of the 1980 and 90 that brought about a more complex and intricate description of form, matter and the built environment, -deconstruction, fractal structures or rhizomatic scales-, has inadvertently become the reference for the actual state of the arts of contemporary urban warfare.

According to Eyal Weizman text -based on field data and interviews with the directors of the Operational Theory Research Institute in Tel Aviv and other army men that participated on the operations-, the striated and the smooth had provided the paradigms for inventing safer tactics to move through the built fabric avoiding visibility and exposure, thus becoming invisible, undetected, unpredictable and consequently even more lethal.

In an interview on September 24, 2004 with Aviv Kochavi, the Commander of the 2002 attacks on Nablus, he introduces openly the theoretical issues into the tactical description:

"The enemy interprets space in a traditional, classical manner... We opted for the method of walking through walls...like a worm that eats its way forward, emerging at points and then disappearing. We were thus moving from the interior of [Palestinian] homes to their exterior in unexpected ways and in places we were not anticipated... We took this micro-tactical practice of moving through walls and turned it into a method, and thus we were able to interpret the whole space differently."

The public use of such critical terminology by the Israeli generals at the OTRI (Operational Theory Research Institute)

exposes the consequences of the unpredicted implementation of architectural theory to the reading of materiality, enclosure and boundaries.

The movement through the fabric against its materiality and structure –breaking through the buildings, entering on the solid sides, opening holes on the party walls- is described conceptually by the military as ‘non linear, non-predictable anti Newton mechanics’. (see chart above) And the invasion of the camp by multiple self-directed squads is described as a ‘principle of swarming’, a sort of operational theory based on the unexpected understanding and occupation of the urban fabric based on complex fractal-like geometries. Thus, by re- conceptualizing the war and the urban structure all at once and under the label of ‘inverse geometry’, the military manoeuvring is apparently endowed with a new understanding of the city by reorganizing the urban syntax and reversing its logics.

The critical undermining of the discipline of architecture is reedited and reformulated as a conceptual instruments for a more efficient warfare openly labelled –without shame or irony- as ‘post-modern’, and fought in the inside of private homes and layered concrete structures. Coldly re-conceptualized as abstract models, the material logic of architecture and the structure of the city is undermined –this time literally- by working against its basic form, use and construction in the carving out the routes into the camps and the moving through walls, floors and rooms even with vehicles.

Deprived of any human condition and turned into a theoretical model, the city, designated as the actual medium of warfare, is used against its plan.

Warfare strategies and urban planning are thus re-edited as equivalent techniques for the occupations or production

of the urban environment. To make and to destroy are, in this seemingly neutral and conceptual operational approach, two alternative implementations of the same techniques.

What does it mean that advance architecture design and advanced warfare strategies share the same terminology? That they both deploy a common bibliography and use the same terms to describe their subject matter? Or that they theorize their disciplines –to build and to destroy– by the same concepts, with common philosophical paradigms? Are these coincidences fortuitous or rather significant?

The focus shifted from identifying the intricacy and complexity in the unplanned urban fabrics and its conceptual description as a sort of ‘formless liquidity’ to its literal occupation through hard violence and language metaphors, and from de-construction as the exposure of power structures to the sheer destruction of built boundaries and domestic realms. Such is the arrogance of power, their intellectual whims.

The conceptualization of urban warfare through such theoretical models provided the military with an apparently neutral technique, as also with the support of an unrelated bibliography to provide those invasive tactics with conceptual authority. The overtly sophistication of conceptual paradigms –liquidity, the swarm, inversed geometries, operational architect, etc.– and its use to describe the built environment of Palestinian camps and neighbourhoods as complex systems of hidden relationships and unstable balances serve the purpose of upgrading the warfare task to an intellectual endeavour.

But when these concepts, borrowed from post-structuralist philosophy and its implementation in architecture theory, are re-edited in the form of a discourse, is just an act of com-

munication for turning invisible the factual military reality.

Colonial power always used language to erase the traces of its violence and occupation. The narratives of Orientalism first, and economic development later, served the purpose of theorizing the asymmetrical relationship between the two sides. And within those theories the permeability of the boundaries always benefited of the colonial power. Such is the case of the intellectualize army that enters the domestic by hollowing its protective boundaries.

The use of a conceptual language and theory to describe the occupation of the West Bank in spatial and structural terms turns the problem abstract, devoted of a human side.

Not that different from the construction of a 7,4 hectares mock-up town in the Negev desert where to practice the military manoeuvres and assaults, named after Chicago. However enlarged according to the resemblance of the different targets (a Lebanese village 1980, an Iraqi town in 1992 and a Palestinian city of Gaza in 2006), it should not be taken for post modern contextualism. The fact is that the practices in the mock-up environment did not turn theory into practice but into more theory, the words into more words, as the 1/1 scale model never cease to be the simulation of a city without citizens.

At the end of the day, the urban issue at stake was nothing more than transparency, openness and visibility. The West Bank cities are a tight and intricate maze of enclosed spaces –streets, alleyways, homes, rooms and basements– and not the open battle field of the ‘classical’ warfare tactics. But it was the misplacement of the war into the domestic realm of civil areas and urban neighbourhoods that made necessary the critical re-conceptualization of the city form and of the domestic in order to reify it as abstract, a malleable problem

in the need of rational solution.

However, we have to acknowledge that the use of such complex geometrical and conceptual models was not that sophisticated in its practical implementation in design. As the Israeli army also does, architects often confused the conceptual terminology for its metaphorical formal qualities. In both cases, the translations are often literal.

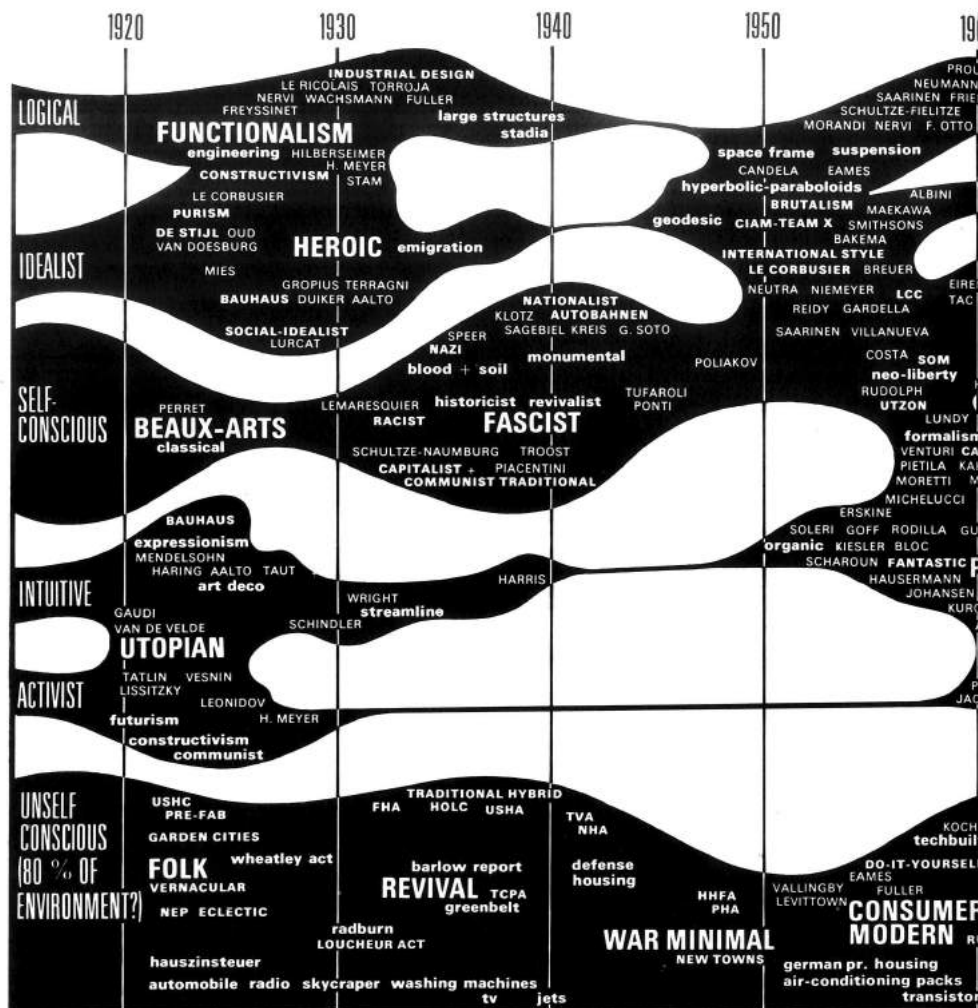
But to turn discursive practices into warfare techniques and applied onto defenceless populations in domestic spaces poses fundamental questions on the purpose of critical theory and its specificity, as it seems to fit anywhere and apply to any argument. Such uncritical adaptability might signal to its questioning for lack of precision or purpose.

Lydia

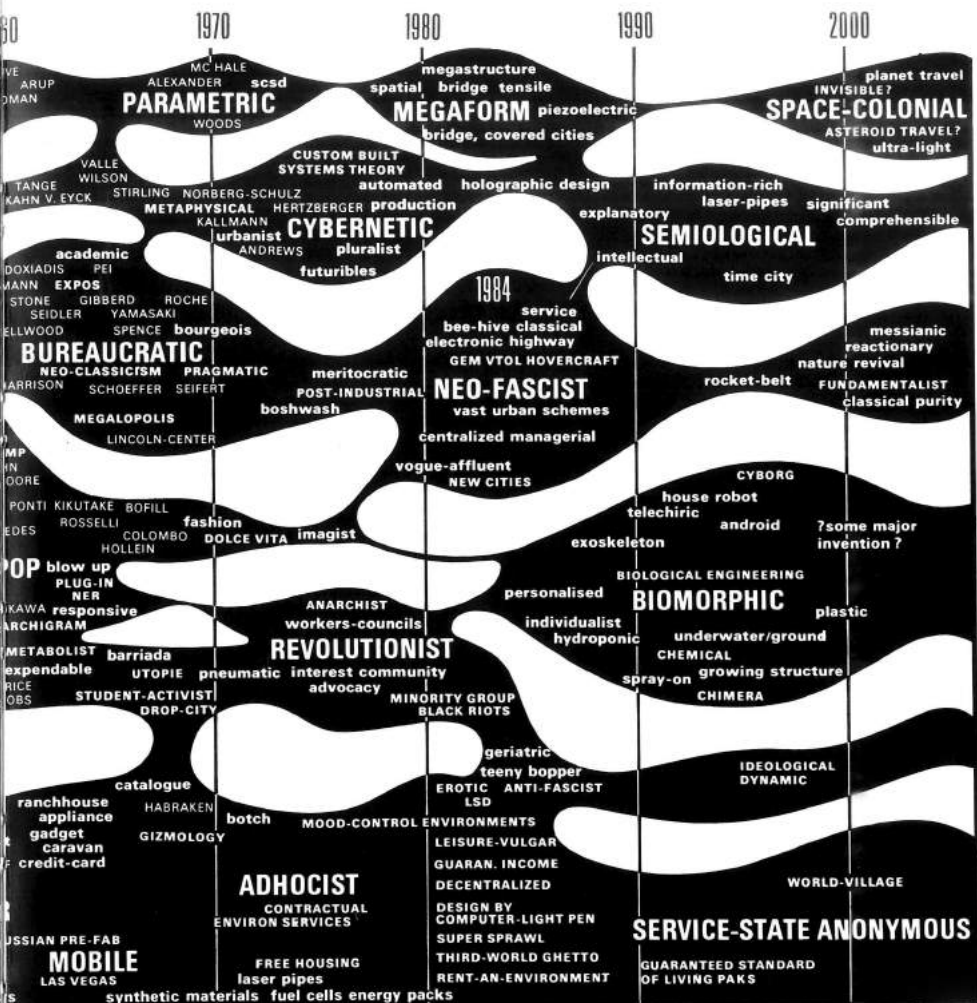
Is an architect, engineer and scholar, currently an Assistant Professor of Architecture and the Director of the Master of Science program at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She holds a Diploma in Architecture and Engineering from AUTH in Greece, a SMArchS from MIT and a PhD from Princeton University. Kallipoliti is the founder of EcoRedux [www.ecoredux.com], an innovative online open-source educational resource and ANAcycle thinktank [www.anacycle.com], a research and writing practice of immersive scholarship. She is the editor of a special issue of Architectural Design in 2011, and the author of the book *The Architecture of Closed Worlds, Or, What is the Power of Shit* (Lars Muller, 2018), as well as the History of Ecological Design for Oxford English Encyclopedia of Environmental Science. Her work has been exhibited in a number of international venues including the Venice Biennial, the Istanbul Design Biennial, the Shenzhen Biennial, the Royal Academy of British Architects and the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York. Kallipoliti is the recipient of an honor at the 14th Webby Awards, grants from the Graham Foundation, and the New York State Council for the Arts, an Honorable Mention at the Shenzhen Biennial, a Fulbright scholarship, and the ACSA annual award for Creative Achievement.

Kallipoliti

THE HISTORY LUMP/ HEAPS, HOARDS AND OTHER DARK DATA CLOUDS



Charles Jencks' "Evolutionary Tree for the Year 2000"
as published in *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods*, 1971



What could a lump possibly mean in architectural history? Mapping visually theories and ideas, trends of times, very much like Charles Jencks did in his famous diagram “Evolutionary Tree to the year 2000,” is a very tricky subject for historians; historiography and the documentation of currency in the collective architectural mind is for many critics a futile project of classification and establishment the *status quo*. Still, when we face a visual representation of our current condition, it is quite powerful and inspirational. Even if every form of representation unavoidably is subject to the desires and obsessions of its author, it offers a concise cosmology of current thought and a reflection of where we stand, as well as where we might go.

Charles Jencks’ “Evolutionary Tree to the year 2000,” which precedes the annunciation of postmodernism included everyone (with a capital E) in the common ground of the map. While working on this, Jencks allegedly tried to operate in a sweeping way very much like a search engine scanning the big data in his head. There are two versions of this diagram, with the original published in Jencks’ book *Architecture 2000* in 1971¹; its soft, blobby space has become a comfortable ground of mediation where fundamentally conflicting architectural traditions may happily coexist encased in pulsating attractor basins. The smooth flow of traditions, in what is claimed as reversible and irreversible time frames², is to Jencks an analogue biological structure directly excerpted from Charles Darwin’s *Theory of Descent* and the evolution of

¹ Charles Jencks, *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), pp.46-47.

² Jencks writes of his Evolutionary Tree for the Year 2000: “The method for determining the six major traditions is based on a structural analysis as outlined by Claude Levi-Strauss, without the claim to completeness which he makes. Some of the relations are obscured because the diagram is only two-dimensional, but generally speaking the pulsations represent reversible time while the inventions and movements are irreversible.” Jencks, *Architecture 2000*, p.45.

species. Jencks even goes as far to suggest the precise differences between ‘architectural species’ and ‘natural species,’ criticizing the former of jumping from one to another, marrying whoever they please and producing offspring; whereas in the case of natural species, for instance, “turtles do not successfully mate with giraffes.”³ Most importantly, nevertheless, the evolutionary analogy is strategically used as a tool of prediction and a prophetic claim, given a series of not yet manifest species that lie in the underground (below the diagram) lurking to appear in the future. In fact, Jencks re-published the diagram (with several modifications) in *Architectural Review* magazine in 2000, to validate how prescient he had been in 1971 and announce the end of the century.⁴

Overall, Jencks’ “Evolutionary Tree” has had significant disciplinary impact. Many tried to emulate and reenact the blob pulsations and evolutionary lines, including *Metropolis* magazine’s diagram coined “Our Charles Jencks’ moment”⁵ and ETH professor’s Adrian Meyer “Synoptic Vision” diagram in 2008⁶. The “Evolutionary Tree” was a powerful representation of ideological currencies, not because it withstood the test of time as many have argued, but precisely because, graphically, it is not really a tree as it verbally suggests. In contrast to Ernst Haeckel’s genealogical tree in *The General Morphology of Organisms* (1866),⁷ Jenck’s tree does not branch knowledge from specific roots, neither does it

³ Jencks, *Architecture* 2000, p.48.

⁴ Charles Jencks “The Century is Over: Evolutionary Tree of Twentieth-Century Architecture” in *Architectural Review* (July 2000) p. 77.

⁵ See Paul Makovsky, “Our Charles Jencks Moment” (April 2011) in <http://www.metropolismag.com/story/20110414/our-charles-jencks-moment> (accessed September 29, 2012).

⁶ Adrian Meyer, Susanne Kuhlbrodt, Beat Aeberhard, *Architecture--A Synoptic Vision: Example of an Evolutionary History* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag AG, 2008).

⁷ Ernst Haeckel, *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen: Allgemeine Grundzüge der Organischen Formen-Wissenschaft; mechanisch begründet durch die von Charles Darwin reformirte Descendenz-Theorie* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1866).

impose a hierarchy based on a rule-based forking system. Moreover, it is neither a network, with all points interconnected in a system. Jenck's tree is a-systematic and a-hierarchical; it suggests information floating, rotating and as he suggests kissing and mating.

What is perhaps less well-known is that Anthony Vidler published a potent critique of the diagram in *Skyline* ten years past its fabrication. Vidler argued against Jenck's blunt evolutionary analogy and his parallel between styles and living species. He wrote: "The species International style, for example, got up one day, and like some giant python, swallowed live expressionism, purism, de Stijl, industrial design, Art Deco, Constructivism, together with almost all the organic architecture of Wright. No wonder the resulting indigestion brought on an attack of post-modern."⁸ At first sight, Vidler's attack was founded on the 19th century tradition of stylistic classification in art history originating from German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann. According to Vidler, Jenck's categorization of the six major architectural traditions is directly linked to the history of styles and tastes, which he evaluates as *a-historical*. This type of classification, therefore, renders a surface understanding of history reducing art and architecture to an exercise of identifying difference between styles.

Digging deeper, it was precisely the idea of favoring a generalized "pluralism," devoid of all social, political or even functional questions that enabled the poignancy of Vidler's critique. Closing the article, he writes, "It is this last, the idea of 'pluralism' as the spirit of the post-modern age, that is perhaps the most pernicious of Dr. Jenck's historicisms. For, disregarding the fact that much the same phenomena of difference and diversity might have been identified from

⁸ See Anthony Vidler, "Cooking Up the Classics," *Skyline* (October 1981): 18–21.

the late seventeenth century on, and most especially, in the modernist period itself, this assumption of a plural universe of culture covers a fundamentally anti-pluralistic agenda.”⁹

Eventually, the debate was focused on the visualization of the world as a collection of ideas, tendencies and concepts, which can all simultaneously coexist without friction or battle. The basic problem of pluralism is not the discipline’s fragmentation in hundreds of different paths and directions, but the absence of resistance. Pluralism offers no ideology; no position; no argument; no fight; no ground for a conflict where we can all agree to disagree. Then, is the act of classification futile in itself? Is it the case that by categorizing genealogies of thought and practice, these genealogies have already become obsolete by being classified as part of the *status quo*? The world is a statistical object understood as an ever-growing body of big data as expressed in the rule of thumb that anything is documented, analyzed and included at some list, somewhere. The world is now full of events without good or evil, but for which our field and our very existence is philosophically and politically unprepared.

In the era of big data, Jencks feels his predictions have been validated. We are still in a splintered era; a time of anxiety and ideological diffusion, with no prevailing schools of thought and only a vast array of sub-genres to mark the lines of paradigms and disciplinary canons. However, this splintering is changing and expanding the very nature of design itself in a very different direction than that of the evolutionary tree or even that of the network. We are observers of practices which suggest an open, collaborative, system-oriented approach: flying drones which create temporary Wi-Fi networks in isolated areas; DIY construction kits; manufacturing at home through personal 3D printers;

⁹ Vidler, “Cooking Up the Classics,” p.21.

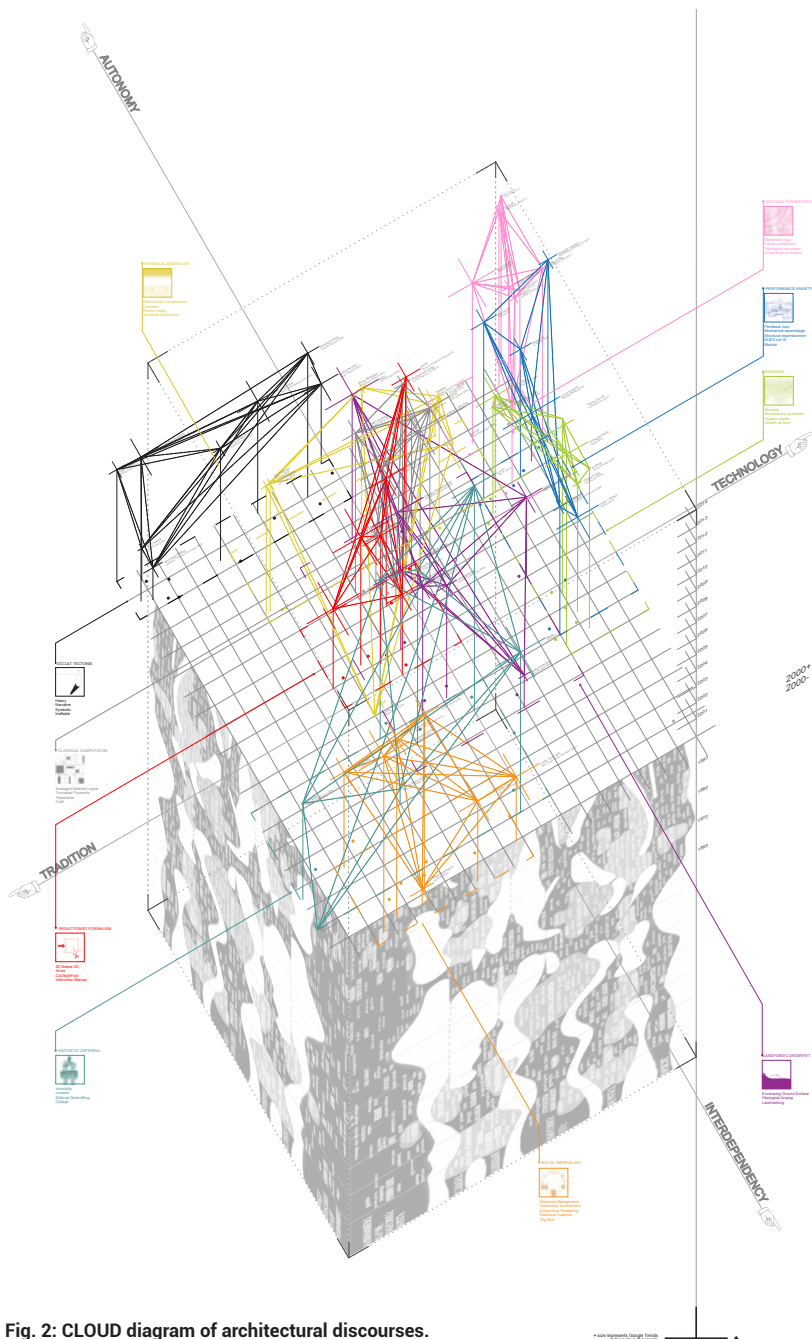


Fig. 2: CLOUD diagram of architectural discourses.
 Lydia Kallipoliti with Eduardo Alfonso, Gabriela D'Angelo, Andrew Lam and
 Shiori Sasaki, The Cooper Union, New York (Spring 2012).

a Wikihouse with open-source plans that can be replicated, improved and updated anywhere; and countless other examples¹⁰. This certainly does not mean that the discipline is dead, but the identity of the architect as single author of space might be. So is the venture to classify disciplinary objects based on their iconicity. Buildings now produce, as Sylvia Lavin suggests, “mood boards” for collective action, “deferring iconicity to the internet, where an endless supply of videos, maps, tourist photographs, tweets, logos, and blogs offer image after image of the lab in use, not in use, about to move, and in motion.”¹¹

In response to these conditions, with a small group of students at the Cooper Union in 2012, we took it as an independent research project to redraw, redefine and render obsolete Jencks’ “evolutionary tree,” by replacing it with a cloud of ideas in contemporary practice. (figure 2) Our cloud diagram was constructed as an open-source collaborative platform where different creators, collectives, ideas and projects come together in a conceptual ecology of discourses. Following the unrealized vision of the “evolutionary tree” as a three-dimensional structure, the cloud was designed in three dimensions, with time on the vertical z axis. The horizontal x-y plane is divided in four regions, dissected by two sets of disciplinary forces. The first axis indicates the line between *tradition and technology*, as was suggested by Reyner Banham in his Stocktaking article series in *Architectural Review* circa 1960. The second axis indicates a line between disciplinary *autonomy* (as witnessed in formalism, tectonic language and syntax) and disciplinary *interdependency* (as witnessed in pursuits of social reform, environmental improvement and political effect and so forth). In the cloud diagram, only projects and buildings are registered as

¹⁰ See Elian Stefa and Ethel Baraona Pohl, “NCR-01 [Agenda]: An Ad-hoc Revolution,” published online on May 24, 2012 in <http://istanbuldesignbiennial.iksv.org/ncr-01-agenda-an-ad-hoc-revolution/> (Accessed September 29, 2012).

¹¹ Sylvia Lavin, “The Report of My Death” in Log 25 (Summer 2012), p.159.

independent events, not movements and traditions. (figure 3) Each project is represented with a cross, the size of which reflects the disciplinary impact of the project according to data retrieval in Google analytics; projects which were Googled extensively at a certain period of time receive a large cross at that time, whereas the cross diminishes along with their impact in the culture of “momentality”.¹² Objects, therefore, have no contour; only associations which can dissolve and reorganize, form and reform. What was surprising in working on this documentation was the mixing of projects in overlapping regions; although when we were conceptually documenting the sub-clouds of the big cloud in categories, as witnessed in this table, we had a fairly clear perception of distinctive categories and principles, in the graphic representation, the data retrieved from Google analytics blurred almost seamlessly our original classification lines and forged associations of conflicting ideological agendas. (figure 4) The cloud therefore necessitates an entirely different way of understanding the world, “one that requires us to lose the tether of data as something that can be visualized in its totality.”¹³ Growing out of Google’s model of detecting correlations through applied mathematics and not through context, the cloud ranks fractional connections above holistic perceptions of phenomena. What is essential about the cloud is the absorption and collection of data that crystallizes in a region, rather than the overall contextual interpretation of the data.

The main question, though, is if our cloud is in any way different from Jencks’? Somewhat yes, I would argue, but not in a truly transformative way. Despite the numerical backup

¹² Momentality is defined in opposition to Monumentality: as a documentation of things according to the moment they occur versus their meaning and diachronic existence.

¹³ See Chris Anderson, “The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete” in *Wired* 16:07 (June 23, 2008).

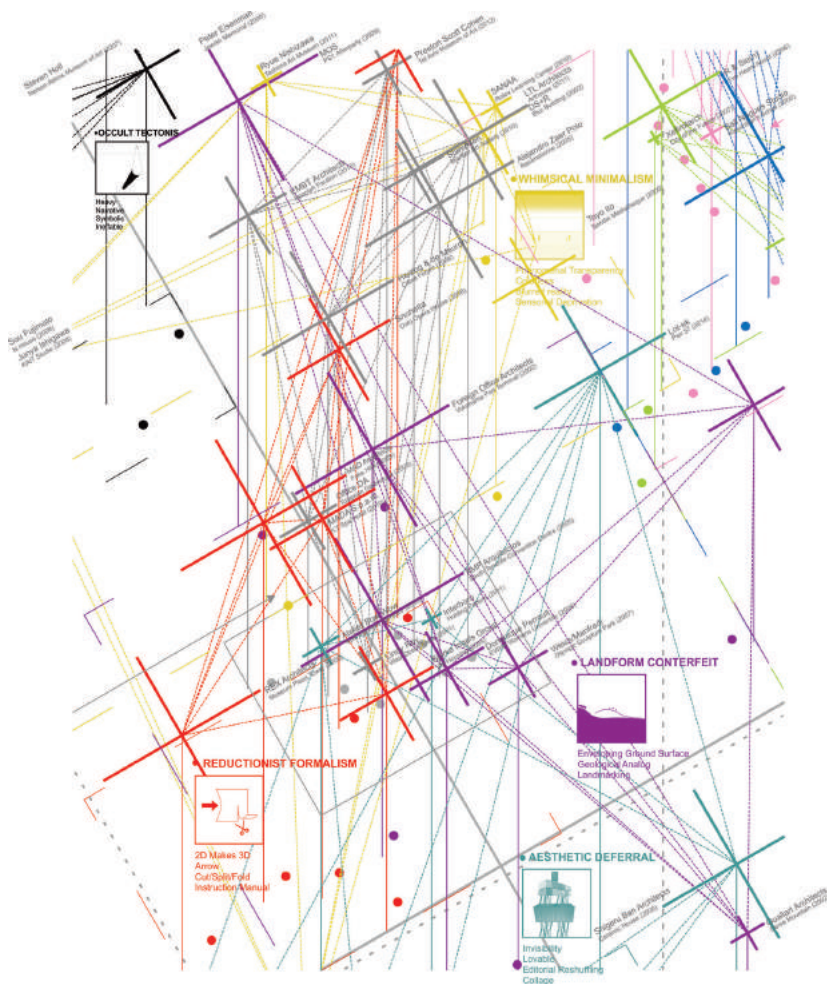


Fig. 3: Zoom-in to CLOUD diagram of architectural discourses.
 Lydia Kallipoliti with Eduardo Alfonso, Gabriela D'Angelo, Andrew Lam and Shiori Sasaki,
 The Cooper Union, New York (Spring 2012).

of Google analytics, there is still representation, still pre-determination. It is a fact that the observer and even more so, the author, influences the object of representation. There is nothing new to this claim. It has been propagated through the theories of self-organization in second order cybernetics, as well as through Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty. Resolutely, the white blobs in Jenck's diagrams are objects of desire and objects of agency, unable to be quantified in precision both in terms of their figuration as well as in terms of their size. What does a white whale mean as a historical void? Jencks only knows, yet he pretends to be as surprised by the findings of his own diagram as he would have been facing a spreadsheet of traffic control in the greater London area. No designer can be an actual observer, as the representational choices inevitably become metalanguages of ideology. This last point, is as much a postmodernist thought as much as the very rise of postmodernism as a phenomenon; that of a happy pluralism emerging from Jenck's diagram. Looking back at our cloud diagram, although we intentionally attempted to resist the survival of the fittest logic of optimization, we failed to allow a pattern alien to us visibly emerge out of the soup. My wish was to see somehow the raw vision of code; not in zeros and ones, but in a new visual language of hoards and piles. It was to see the buried, dark part of data; that which cannot be represented via my own 'metalanguage' of representation, but that which would simply exist as a new nature, independently of whether we created it or not.

The child of dark data might be a featureless lump with accidental properties, an emerging condition which exists beyond our sense of representation and perception of the world as we encounter it. We need new visual tools to understand these conditions. No longer are our personal impressions personal in the sense that they're merely mine or subjective only. They are footprints of larger data heaps and

hoards that register into our every form of existence in the world today.

Data is becoming nature, has already become nature, for there is simply too much data around for it to be decoded and processed into intelligible information. No one has got hold of our data; it is everywhere. It passes through our hands and is used by us, but it is rarely understood. And yet, the presence of advocates for more data collection is ubiquitous. While we are counseled to dream of a better world with more data, the hoards, piles and data debris gather around us like murmurations; a silent yet ever present rumor touching us at every turn. And if we slightly borrow from the Cyberpunk scenarios of the 1980s, this new reality has no room for plots, scenarios, scripts and literary structures where authorship and intentionality are allowed. As Philipp Theisohn mentions in his account of big data's dark side, big data speaks to us from a world in which storytelling is found only as a memory buried beneath the data and this memory has to be salvaged from the detritus of digital reality, the data garbage.¹⁴

Along these lines, Facebook user Matthew Putnam made the following comment in April 2015: "My children don't code even though they are interested and talented in science and technology. My theory is that the pervasiveness of the ease to be a user, rather than a creator of digital technology, has pushed the creativity towards the analog. Could this be the same in design? If so, it is a problem. There is something all too pervasive in the things that feel new, but they are not truly transformative."

In response to this comment, another Facebook User,

¹⁴ Abstrakt No.12 (Pocket Laboratory for the Future) White Noise: Why a Data-Driven Society Needs More Common Sense (Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung Publishing & W.I.R.E thinktank, 2013).

Francis Bitonti wrote: “When I was a kid my parents couldn’t get me off the computer but I was making video games and not playing them. I was creating websites and not surfing the web. The internet was unfinished and fascinating. It was a lesson in the power of computing. I realized that we were shaping a new world and code was the medium... I hope this enthusiasm does not get lost. I consider my generation to be facing problems closer to what modernists had to cope with. Modernism was about creating a design language for new society with a new set of technological capacities. We are making designs for an information driven society. This is not a time to be manipulating language, playing analog games with that language. This is a time for creating language and grammar.”

Coding was once a means to formal complexity; not so long ago. It was a way out of the impasse of reductionist formal intent and a creative way to introduce uncertainty, by superimposing and juxtaposing multiple levels of representational perception. It was a question revolving around possibilities enabled and empowered through digital tools. This premise is already obsolete, though what is it replaced with? An anachronism of kitten shaped buildings for a pop audience? The world is splitting between us as users and players of blissful games and us as enablers of new directions and new natures as lumps of big data. Coding is thus no longer an issue of form making or even of optimization. It becomes a cultural and societal responsibility; it becomes a grain of resistance to the digital hoard animated by corporations and authorities. In this lump of non-discrete architectures, we cannot afford to simply observe. We need to become active enablers of our new natures. This might be our only way to stay relevant.

As Hubert Damisch writes, the cloud is a body without surface, but not without substance. Although it has no

surface, the cloud is visible.¹⁵ In this sense, the emerging ecology of the cloud- the lump of data- is our contemporary obligation to translate. At the center of the lump discourse lies the question: How does the cloud affect our relationship to knowledge? The permeation of organizational tools in our discipline is not innocent. It is not merely about facilitating and managing knowledge; it also transforms the nature of design, with no return. Is it not critical that we give equal attention to reconsidering our classification systems and how they are affecting architectural discourses? Stay tuned.

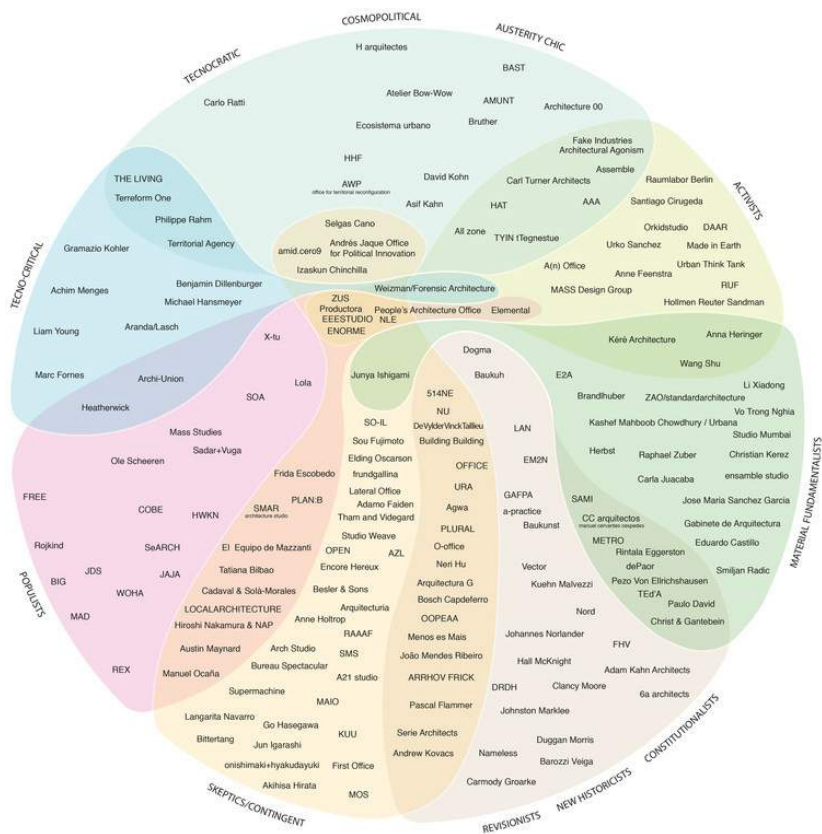
¹⁵ Hubert Damisch (translated by Janet Lloyd), *A Theory of Cloud: Towards a History of Painting*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p.2.

Valerio Paolo

Received a degree in architecture in Rome in 1992, and a Ph.D. in 1998. Since then, he has taught at the University of Rome and Pescara as an assistant, and become a contract professor at Istituto Universitario Architettura Venezia where he became a researcher and later an associate professor. He has been a visiting professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology and taught history of architecture at the Politecnico di Milano. He currently teaches at Università Iuav di Venezia (studio and theory of architecture) and at the University of Navarra in Pamplona (history of architecture). Mosco won three international design competitions as well as other awards. He has written several books including *Architettura italiana. Dal postmoderno ad oggi* (Skirà, 2017); *Naked Architecture* (Skirà, 2012); and *Contemporary Public Spaces, Zero Volume Architecture* (with Aldo Aymonino, Skirà, 2006). He is the director of the magazine *Viceversa*.

Mosco

**ON TASTE,
HAVING CHANGED BY NOW**



Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Guillermo Fernández Abascal,
Global Architectural Political Compass, 2016

In *El Croquis* no. 187 in 2016, Alejandro Zaera-Polo attempts a synoptic interpretation of the present situation¹. This comes ten years after another important essay of his, also published by *El Croquis*, that had the same intention at the time². Both represent a praiseworthy effort: it is difficult, if not impossible, to rein in the contemporary with a series of categories that always, inevitably, have their exceptions. But the effort of synopsis is what has always set the finest critics apart, or at least the most courageous. After all, it is the only scientific method critics have with which to operate, if we are to accept the interpretation of the term “scientific” provided by Karl Popper, namely as a falsifiable product. Zaera-Polo chooses to focus on the architects of the last generation, the ones that began working in the midst of the Great Recession. He groups the many names in a circular diagram: each trend takes up a part of the perimeter, and the names inside the circle can be seen as more paradigmatic of a trend if they are closer to that perimeter, while those closer to the center are the ones that lean towards hybrid approaches, at least partially rejecting the trend of reference. The title of the diagram is meaningful: *Global Architecture Political Compass*, therefore a way of getting one’s bearings in the complex contemporary panorama. But what prompts a pause for reflection is that adjective, *political*. Zaera-Polo is convinced that architecture tends to express the political and economic conditions in which it is destined to exist. In this, we can sense the influence of Manfredo Tafuri, first, then of Rem Koolhaas, and definitively of the critique of ideology that is an evident part of his background³. His thesis is that before the great crisis, i.e. before 2007, the economic

¹ Alejandro Zaera-Polo, “Well into the 21st century. The architecture of post-capitalism?” in *El Croquis*, no. 187, 2016

² Alejandro Zaera-Polo, “Un mundo lleno de agujeros” in *El Croquis* no. 88-89, 1998

³ The hypothesis of a continuity between the thought and action of Manfredo Tafuri and Rem Koolhaas has been raised by Marco Biraghi in *Progetto di crisi: Manfredo Tafuri e l’architettura contemporanea*, Marinotti editore, Milano, 2005

and political paradigm was neo-liberal, namely that of growth, debt, open markets and effective dependency of politics on economics. In architecture – and here his reasoning is acute – this meant equating architecture with a commodity, a fact also proven by the Bilbao effect, that of the impact of Gehry's museum on that Basque city. First the bubble of the new economy, then that of the derivatives and of the weak economically sovereign states, led in less than ten years to what seems to be the implosion of a system born in the early 1980s with the Chicago Boys of Ronald Reagan. A presumed implosion to which the definitive rise of the digital revolution and the sharing economy have made a decisive contribution. Radical changes, then, that have outlined a new panorama, which given the nearly infinite variables produces a condition aptly defined as the “radical present,” in which the very idea of the future seems to implode in its own uncertainty⁴. Here lies the first paradox: radical changes indeed, but present and past remain in coexistence, the new advances because the old is in crisis, but the old does not vanish, and in fact at times – as demonstrated by the economic situation – it even seems to gain ground. A contradictory coexistence that is recorded by architectural taste, where the experiences of the recent past exist parallel to an utterly opposite architecture, that of the new generations⁵. Zae-ra-Polo provides an excellent definition of the architecture of the recent, pre-crisis past, ruled by the likes of Zaha Hadid, Frank O. Gehry, Ben van Berkel, Morphosis and others still: the “parametric generation,” namely that of *hyper-modernism* (a term coined by Manfredo Tafuri), totally focused on the paradigm of form a posteriori, devoted to a sort of

⁴ Shumon Basar, Douglas Coupland, Hans Ulrich Olbrist, *The Age of Earthquakes: A Guide to the Extreme Present*, Blue Rider Press, New York, 2015. The same concept is discussed by John Berger, who speaks of civic and historical amnesia that weakening the past weakens the future. John Berger, *Confabulations*, Penguin, London, 2016

⁵ I am referring to the definition of taste provided by Lionello Venturi in *Il gusto dei primitivi*, Einaudi, Torino, 1972

iconoclasm for which form is the result of a process that is as conceptual as possible⁶. This paradigm of form a posteriori brought with it another ideology, that of infinite resources and the elimination of any limit, meaning in architecture any conventionalism, banished by the need to astonish, to perform. What has happened in recent years seems to bear out the law of Ernst Gombrich, and of Francesco De Santis some time earlier, by which taste tends to radicalize its expressions only to turn itself inside out like a glove, triggering a totally opposite reaction. A law we already saw in action thirty years ago, when post-modern historicism was replaced very quickly by the hyper-modernism of the de-constructivists. Today it is precisely the parametric generation that is being overthrown, so after years of “process”, form seems to once again be a priori, the resources once considered infinite seem to seek their limits, and the conventionalism (which from Koolhaas hence has been called genericity) challenged for years by means of astonishing, disturbing things returns, dictating what just a few years ago was considered utterly out of style. But the parametric generation has not vanished. It survives in major commissions for museums and corporate architecture, and it makes the rules in non-western countries that still have a need for astonishment and performance. So there are two parallel lines of architectural taste, as if taste itself, in this period, had ushered in a complex, if not pathological, diarchy between old and new, indicative of that state of uncertainty that reigns in our time. The fact remains that beyond the coexistence, the new generations seem to close ranks in their rejection of the parametric world, doing so behind the barricades of the academic world, which to an increasing extent acts to protect the antagonism that is spreading through the new generations. Zaera-Polo correct-

⁶ See the chapter by Rafael Moneo on Peter Eisenman in *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporaries*

ly points to Giorgio Agamben as the philosopher of reference for what is permeating the new generations, namely a resurgence of antagonism⁷. Agamben's research on the *homo sacer*, on nudity and a hermeneutics nimbly balanced halfway between materialism and idealism, has intercepted a generation, which as well as Agamben has rediscovered Simone Weil and Existentialism. The generation indicated by Zaira-Polo is post-capitalist, as he puts it, or one that if nothing else yearns to get beyond capitalism through an attitude he defines – rather caustically – as “cute activism.” He sees two expressions of this cute activism: the first can be observed live, in the field, through self-construction and participation. If, as the most extreme French philosophers like Barthes and Deleuze averred, the project is an inevitably *dirigiste* action that implies compromise with capital, then it is better to return to a mythical Arcadia in which project, construction and life coincided, in which there was no wiggle room for manipulation. After decades of neglect, once again the precepts of Rousseau resurface regarding living in natural harmony with others through works (just consider the current revival of the Radical Design movement), and the imperative would seem to be the expression of the most total sincerity, granting dignity to self-construction and participation to the point of legitimizing one's approach at the level of the absolute protective immunity on which political correctness relies. Cute activism also has another spirit, its theoretical side. A political and theoretical banner brandished for some time by Pier Vittorio Aureli, which sees the return to the discipline as the means of countering the iconographic excess induced by financial capitalism, to definitely oppose the architecture-commodity equation⁸. The result is an ar-

⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Meridian Crossing Aesthetics, 1998

⁸ Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2011. Also see, by the same author, *Less is Enough. On Architecture and Ascetism*, Stelka Institute, 2014

chitecture that is so shriveled, so stripped down as to seem toneless, relegated to the background, hieratic, collective, deliberately monumental. Zaera-Polo correctly points to the fact that the two forms of cute activism are glaringly distant from each other, yet again according to that paradigm of co-existence, they seem to live in a situation of mutual respect that is otherwise lacking in the political transfigurations of the two factions. In theoretical cute activism, the myth of the Bloomsbury Group returns, of the “significant form” that as opposed to the past draws its legitimacy from a political commitment that at least in its intentions tends to push the aesthetic value of its configurations into the background⁹. The author also makes another perceptive observation: though at first this attitude might seem to link back to minimalism, that is not actually the case. Minimalism, like the art that first brought it to our attention, was based on the paradigm of composition, through reduced to a minimum, and on a deliberate elitism: only those well-versed in the progress of contemporary art could understand and appreciate the works of Donald Judd or Richard Long. But the theoretical monumentalism does not set out to address an elite: the images it proposes are as accessible as possible, even banal, as if hatched by a puerile unconscious that has a considerable debt to the Aldo Rossi of the later period, in a word the pop period. An iconic accessibility that speaks to us about how the desire to communicate with an audience by now fed up with complex, multifaceted works remains stronger than ever, despite the sulfurous theoretical lucubrations. An audience that wants to get back to a candor whose behavioral models can be traced back in literature to the wise and messianic idiocy of Count Myshkin or the sweet gullibility of *Félicité*, the character in a famous story by Flaubert cited not

⁹ Isaiah Berlin in his book on Romanticism has unmasked, with excellent arguments, the Romantic tendency to legitimize actions and forms with lofty sounding political programs. See Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001

by chance by Aureli¹⁰. Complexity and contradiction, then, no longer appease the radically changed taste that wants to replace the over-design of the recent past with the present over-simplification. And there's more. The new taste produces a new figurative approach from which Zaera-Polo, beside the simplifying stylization, gleans another aspect, the composition using already existing figures, almost considering the project a ready-made, often a collection of ready-mades. As he suitably remarks, there is a similarity here between the new taste and that of the post-modern historicism of thirty-odd years past, but while the latter leaned towards a redundant figuration, referencing the courtly aspect of architecture and shifting it into pop, today sobriety instead gets the upper hand, and the generic past prevails, as if in a passage from Empire Style to Biedermeier. Yet there is one aspect, of some importance, that he does not grasp. Essential, stylized, immediate, evocative, monumental, ready-made forms are certainly nothing new. At the start of the 19th century, specifically in Germany, a group of philosophers, poets and artists deliberately opposed positivist disenchantment with a project: that of re-enchanting the world precisely through the proposition of this type of figuration. Novalis, Schlegel, Schiller and others, namely the first Romantics (*Frühromantik*), championed precisely these aesthetic values, theorizing them with a clarity that seems very timely today. As Novalis and Schiller urged, they "thought in images" in such a way as to activate an emotional and empathic communication with the audience: images that could be facile (just consider moonlight) but also archetypal, accessible and imponderable at the same time¹¹. These images in sounds, words or other guises had to be spontaneous, not composed using the tricks of the trade. Goethe, at the start

¹⁰ In this regard we should mention the verses of Hölderlin: "fearless becomes the man who stands alone before God. His innocence protects him."

¹¹ On the archetypal power of essential, synthetic romantic images see: James Hillman, *The Soul's Code*, Random House, New York, 1996

of his career, in his Romantic period, when with Werther he issued the poetic and behavioral directives for an entire generation, repeated that precisely composition was the downfall of art. No longer composed but imagined, as in a whole, the images would thus activate that flow of similarities and correspondences without which the world would lose its emotional fragrance, becoming merely arid. The program of the first Romantics was therefore to transfigure reality starting from the usual, even from the archetype, to then slip into the unusual, possibly suggesting the invisible essence that is concealed precisely in banal things. The words of Novalis are emblematic in this regard, and offer a concise statement of poetics that could become the caption of many of today's projects: "By giving the common a higher meaning, the everyday a mysterious semblance, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite the appearance of the infinite, I romanticize them"¹². H. Corbin, pertinently cited by Franco Rella in his book on the Romantic aesthetic, speaks of "active imagination," or a noetic or cognitive function that allows us to access a forbidden region of being, opening us towards the *mundus imaginalis*, a world that lies halfway between the intelligible and the sensible: a world where a single law, that of analogy, is in effect¹³. And images of the *mundus imaginalis* can perhaps be glimpsed in various projects by Caruso St. John, Barozzi Veiga, Renato Rizzi, Tham & Videgard, Dogma, Kerez, Olgiati, not coincidentally often represented with utterly romantic, languid, dreamy pictorial effects, in an atmosphere of air emulsified by moonlight. Zaera-Polo insists on the fact that this evocative instantaneity is in tune with the media, with Instagram and Facebook, that it works well for the "likes" that swarm

¹² Rüdiger Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affair*, Northwestern University Press, 2014. Also see Franco Rella, *L'estetica del romanticismo*, Donelli editore, Roma, 1997-2006

¹³ Henri Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989

through social networks. But he does not consider the fact that at the start of the 19th century, from the advent of the bourgeois society, Instagram architecture already existed. So the present taste tends to rediscover, completely unconsciously, Romanticism and the picturesque inseparably linked to it, a synthetic, anti-compositional picturesque that reminds us of the paintings of Ottone Rosai, Mario Sironi and Edward Hopper, a picturesque in which (and this is the point) the image grants itself entirely, at a single glance¹⁴. This would explain the current return to drawn architecture, a phenomenon that attempts to restore, precisely through representation, or the staging of the hypostasis of architecture, a disciplinary aura that deconstructivist disenchantment attempted to delegitimize¹⁵. So while the parametric generation embraced exhibited disenchantment, the new generation displays an equally ostentatious re-enchantment, doing so by evoking a *Stimmung* in which, through the stylized, simplified form that immediately grants its comprehension, the romantic ecstasy is possible, the albeit fleeting apparition of the original essence of which Hölderlin wrote¹⁶.

Two other points are of particular interest in Zaera-Polo's essay: populism and existentialism. It is hard to understand how the populism that infests politics is translated into architecture. Zaera-Polo sees cute activism as an expression – though a veiled one – of populism, in its hieratic forms discussed above, but also and above in what he calls “te-

¹⁴ “The romantic does not imitate nature, but creates it in the form of evocative landscape,” György Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1971

¹⁵ Zaera-Polo suitably notes the strong influence today of the drawings of John Hejduk. In this regard see Renato Rizzi, *John Hejduk, Incarnatio*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2010

¹⁶ Concerning the capacity to evoke the archetype, Walter F. Otto writes: “But the poetic forms are simply metaphors of the original myth, given the fact that they can act on our inner being, but to a great extent no longer possess the power with which ancient myth made man the witness of his own truth.” Otto thus explains the melancholy languor of romantic figuration, in which the evocation of the

chnocratic populism,” namely that architecture that seems like a simplified replica of deconstructivism of the various BIG-Bjarke Ingers Group, MAD or Rex, architects the author correctly describes as proposing a “caricature of the generative process of the form,” to the point where this too can suggest ready-made figurations. This is a trend whose paucity is equal to its vociferous and empty insistence on *performance*. The existentialist sensibility, on the other hand, is decidedly more interesting, and sets out to act as a complement to the romantic sensibility described above. Years ago, precisely in the moment of the change of taste, I wrote a text whose title, citing Agamben, was *Nude Architecture*¹⁷. In it, I discussed the tendency that was emerging of a return to the material nature of the work, expressed in a predominance of rustic over finished elements. So while previously, for the parametric generation, what counted was the principle of cladding, the new taste expressed an opposite leaning, of clearly symbolic value, that of stripping down architecture through the elimination precisely of claddings and finishes. The moment of consecration of this new trend was the opening of the renovation by Lacaton & Vassal of Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2001, in which the architects simply completely stripped the interiors, in such a way as to reveal the rugged, bare surfaces. The result was the apparition of a skeletal, rough architecture, industrial in character, definitively a ruin of great expressive force, an operation that seen from today’s vantage point seems like an indictment of the overdressed architecture of the likes of Libeskind, Gehry, Morphosis, Hadid and others. An indictment that had repercussions, becoming the forerunner of the taste the drives the new generations. That fact remains that as in early Romanticism, in the new taste the contradictions are far from lacking. We know that at the time, in spite

¹⁷ Valerio Paolo Mosco, *Naked Architecture*, Skirà, Milano, 2012. The title took its cue from the book by Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, Stanford University Press, 2010.

of the great theoretical efforts of the Germans, the sense of what was romantic spread in all kinds of directions: it began as revolutionary and was twisted into conservative views; it started from the appeal for unity of the human race and then exalted the myth of one race; it called for pacifism and intimism and then dreamt of sacrifice for the homeland. The same is true today, so we can expect a series of landslips and transformations. Taste, especially in romantic times, cannot bear being stabilized; it fears rest and therefore often sets forth without knowing where it is going, simply following its own instinct. And we follow suit, hesitantly, because some resistance has to be summoned against blind determination.

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